Aesthetic Value in the Built Environment

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Summary

Contemporary architects have a philosophical problem: how to justify the value of good design, specifically aesthetics, in an economy which favours the objective and quantifiable. Philosophy, however, has neglected serious engagement with the aesthetics of the built environment, despite widespread agreement within the architectural world that contemporary building is often ugly or bland.

This thesis examines key philosophical issues in the crisis of aesthetics in architecture. Part One seeks a better understanding of what we mean by aesthetic value in the built environment, couching discussion within an aesthetics of *design* rather than of art. Exploring critical foundations for design aesthetics, it rejects both the Kantian judgement aesthetics favoured by Roger Scruton, and the everyday aesthetics of Yuriko Saito, in favour of Gernot Böhme's aesthetics of atmospheres. Finally, it interrogates the common conflation of aesthetic value with beauty, tackling head on the problem of ugliness and negative aesthetics that is crucial to our understanding of contemporary building.

Part Two examines the competition of values in corporate and political decision-making, most reductively in cost benefit analysis and value engineering, where aesthetics is often compared unfavourably with the expedient and quantifiable. It argues that buildings cannot be understood naively as the creative product of an architect. Rather, they tangibly exhibit the values of the clients – private and public sector – who commission them. Our treatment of aesthetics here is inherently political, bound to our treatment of equality, efficiency, welfare and the good life.

The thesis concludes by arguing, in opposition to Scruton's insistence that our values are objective and rational, that we should cease attempting to justify aesthetic value in these terms. Rather, those arguing for improved, or better distributed, aesthetics in the built environment should turn to Rorty's notion that our social values are constructed for the achievement of an unrealised "dream country".

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Acknowledgements

To my daughters, Viv and Gwen,

for their joy

To my parents, Huw and Jean,

for their love

Introduction

To claim that architecture today faces a philosophical problem [...] is to claim not just that architects have become uncertain of their way and of the maps on which they have been relying, but that such uncertainty reflects a deeper uncertainty about how we ought to live, where our place should be, and how architects are to help shape that place, to "edify", to build in that sense.[1]

Karsten Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*

Among the disparate and warring voices on architecture there is widespread agreement about at least one thing: that contemporary building is failing us.

Proponents of traditional architecture, such as the Prince of Wales, have long decried contemporary building. In 1992 the Prince spoke of his fears that the country would "disappear under a welter of ugliness".[2] His concerns are echoed by the conservative philosopher Roger Scruton who speaks of modern buildings as "blots on the landscape" which "violate the skyline".[3] For such traditionalists, the problem is that we have strayed from traditional design, and the solution is to return to it. The chief enemy is the architectural movement of modernism, which is often conflated with

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[1] Karsten Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997), p. 11.

[2] "Prince Charles Won't Speak Out When he Becomes King", *BBC News* (bbc.co.uk, 8 Nov 2018). Available at https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-46133114 [accessed 21 July 2021].

[3] Roger Scruton, "Classicism Now", in *The Roger Scruton Reader*, ed. Mark Dooley (London: Continuum, 2009), pp. 163-175 (p. 163).

brutalism. For Scruton, modern architecture is, somewhat superlatively, "the greatest crime against beauty that the world has yet seen".[4] Traditionalists fear and argue against architecture that rejects the aesthetic values of beauty, grace and elegance.

However, many advocates of modern design, broadly conceived, also voice concerns about the state of contemporary building. For the architect Frank Gehry, "98 percent of everything that is built and designed today is pure shit. There's no sense of design, no respect for humanity or for anything else. They are damn buildings and that's it".[5] For non-traditionalists, the problem is not that we have strayed from older designs, but rather that we have strayed from any commitment to good design at all. The chief enemy is the architecture of the speculative property developer which produces "[c]lunky-looking blocks of flats, clad with panels in depressing shades of yellow and grey, with a bland coffee shop or supermarket at the bottom".[6] Non-traditionalists fear and argue against architecture which is deemed not worthy of the name, buildings made carelessly or solely to turn a profit.

Public discussion on the aesthetics of the built environment is nonetheless inclined to remain trapped in familiar, polarising themes. There are two in particular. The first is described by the architect Charles Holland as:

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[4] See the documentary *Why Beauty Matters*, written by Roger Scruton, directed by Louise Lockwood (BBC, 2009). Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bHw4MMEnmpc [accessed January 2019].

[5] Frank Gehry, interview with *El Mundo*, reported in English (trans. Jesus Diaz) in Alissa Walker, "Frank Gehry Says Architecture Today Is 'Pure Shit'" (gizmodo.com, 23 Oct 2014). Available at https://gizmodo.com/frank-gehry-thinks-architecture-today-is-pure-shit-1649914255?utm_medium=website&utm_source=archdaily.com [accessed 13 Feb 2021].

[6] India Block, "Why Are Britain's New-Builds All So Ugly?", *The Guardian* (theguardian.com, 4 Feb 2020). Available at https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/feb/04/britain-new-builds-ugly-housing-policy-developers [accessed 21 July 2021].

> [T]he same old binary argument about traditional rather than contemporary architecture, which feels like a tedious hangover from the 1980s, a pantomime Prince Charles speech reverberating forever.[7]

The UK Government's decision in 2018 to appoint Roger Scruton – a divisive figure within architectural circles – to lead its commission on the built environment ensured a continuation of the modern/traditional debate. Scruton's *The Aesthetics of Architecture* (1976) remains one of the few book-length philosophical treatments of the subject, and his traditionalist views remained unchanged, arguing in a 2018 Policy Exchange report that aesthetics in the built environment will be improved, and NIMBYism overcome, "if plans better reflect people's desire for traditional building design, like Victorian terraces and Georgian blocks".[8] In the United States, meanwhile, one of President Trump's last moves in office was to endorse legislation making classical architecture the "preferred" style of federal buildings. Architectural policy can be symbolic and divisive.

The second public argument is the matter of how we *justify* spending on the aesthetics of the built environment. This is described by Robert Croydon as "the schools and hospitals argument", and it is often levelled against quality architecture commissioned through public funds.[9] The award-winning, Richard Rogers-designed Senedd building in Cardiff Bay, for example, was dismissed by the leader of the opposition as "an incredible

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[7] Charles Holland, quoted in India Block, "UK's New Commission for Beautiful Buildings is 'Tedious Hangover from 1980s' Say Architects" (dezeen.com, 6 Nov 2018). Available at https://www.dezeen.com/2018/11/06/building-better-building-beautiful-commission-uk-architects-react-news/ [accessed Jan 2019].

[8] Roger Scruton, Robin Wales and Jack Airey, "Building More, Building Beautiful" (London: Policy Exchange, 2018), p. 50. Available at https://policyexchange.org.uk/publication/building-more/ [accessed Jan 2019].

[9] Robert Croydon, "Patronage, Power and Probity: Accountability and Aspiration in Publicly Funded Development" (PhD Thesis, Cardiff University, Cardiff, 2016), p. 311.

waste of money" and very nearly not built.[10] Presented as "discretionary" rather than "essential" spending, opponents to the Senedd argued that "finite economic resources be better invested in hospitals and schools".[11] In such discussions, writes Croydon, "architectural aspiration is weighed against wider social need", following a "predictable and familiar pattern in arguments about arts funding".[12] Indeed, the ongoing battle in the United States concerning the National Endowment for the Arts mirrors just this pattern.

The same sentiment is captured by Holmes Rolston III when he observes that "aesthetic values are often thought to be high level but low priority: jobs first, scenery second".[13] That architecture, aesthetics and the environment have value, and are valuable to us, is rarely at issue. What is at issue more often is how we may justify this value as being a priority over other values, or even being equal to them. Indeed, the architectural theorist Mhairi McVicar has described the justification of architectural value as "the key defining problem for the architectural profession", particularly since such values are not easily evidenced by the quantifiable measures favoured by both private and public sector clients.[14]

This thesis takes the failure of aesthetics in the built environment as its starting point, together with an intuition that our built environment can and should be better. It aims to redress the shortcomings of public debate on the subject, to break free from the binary arguments described above, and to examine the ways in which philosophical thinking can contribute to

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[10] Nick Bourne, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 268.

[11] Croydon, p. 273.

[12] *Ibid.*

[13] Holmes Rolston III, "From Beauty to Duty: Aesthetics of Nature and Environmental Ethics", in Allen Carlson and Sheila Lintott (eds.), *Nature, Aesthetics, and Environmentalism: From Beauty to Duty* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), pp. 325-335 (p. 326).

[14] Mhairi McVicar, "An Optional Extra: Valuing Architecture at the Brompton Boilers'", in Odgers, McVicar and Kite (eds.), *Economy and Architecture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), pp. 151-161 (p. 158).

addressing these issues. The aim of this thesis, in short, is to address the value of aesthetics in the built environment.

The thesis is divided into two main parts, and each addresses one of the two intractable public debates mentioned above. Part One, Theorising Aesthetic Value in the Built Environment, aims to move beyond the well-worn modern vs. traditional debate in architectural aesthetics, to explore in less divisive and narrow terms what an aesthetics of the built environment could look like. The chapters in Part One discuss the topic's uneasy fit within traditional aesthetics; the theoretical approaches which best enrich our understanding of architecture and the built environment; and the necessity of any such aesthetics of the built environment offering a credible and focussed account not merely of positive, but also negative, aesthetic experience.

Part Two, Justifying Aesthetic Value in the Built Environment, examines the competition of values in corporate and political decision-making, most reductively in cost benefit analysis and value engineering, where aesthetics is often compared unfavourably with the expedient and quantifiable. The chapters in Part Two aim to move beyond the so-called "schools and hospitals argument", and to show the problems we encounter with any attempt to justify aesthetic value in reductive, evidence-based terms. Engaging with the work of Richard Rorty, they argue instead for a political, and relativist, alternative. A more detailed, chapter-by-chapter, summary is offered below.

Chapter Summary

Part One: Theorising Aesthetic Value in the Built Environment

Architecture has long been considered one of the arts, alongside poetry, music, dance and drama, and aesthetic discourse has often treated it as such. More recently, however, architecture and the built environment is treated as a product of *design*: a much more recent notion. Chapter One begins by examining this term and its implications for our understanding

and expectations of aesthetic value in the built environment. It argues that the concept of design well captures a large part of our built environment but that – as a fusion of aesthetic and functional value – challenges philosophical attempts to categorise and control it.

Chapter Two explores critical foundations for an aesthetics of design by engaging with three theoretical approaches to the aesthetics of the built environment: (i) the judgement aesthetics of Kant and Scruton; (ii) the everyday aesthetics of Yuriko Saito; and (iii) Gernot Böhme's aesthetics of atmospheres. It is this last approach, I argue, that offers us the richest and most coherent theory of aesthetics in the built environment.

It is a strength of Böhme's theory that – unlike traditional aesthetics – it is not concerned primarily with beauty. To engage with debate on the aesthetics of the built environment is to engage with the problem of the ugly and disagreeable, yet negative aesthetic responses have commanded much less direct attention than positive. Chapter Three addresses negative aesthetics head on, questioning whether such negative experiences can nonetheless have aesthetic value, whether calls for an improvement in the aesthetic value of our built environment are necessarily synonymous with a call for an improvement in its beauty.

Our feelings about the value and appropriateness of negative aesthetics – it is argued in the preceding chapter – depend upon where it is encountered. Few these days subscribe to the view that the fine arts must restrict themselves to presenting the lovely and the agreeable. However, objects of design such as buildings are most often understood not as part of an artistic world, but rather of the real or everyday world. Chapter Four examines the comprehensibility of this art/life divide, and argues that our built environment, including the everyday spaces of the home and the high street, are products of constructed meaning-making rather than of naïve reality.

Part Two: Justifying Aesthetic Value in the Built Environment

Since a primary problem with our built environment is the poor quality of our architecture, it is tempting to lay responsibility at the foot of the architect. Chapter Five, however, argues that we will better understand the aesthetics of our built environment by looking instead at the values – sometimes reductive, sometimes confused – of the private and public sector clients who commission them.

Chapter Six, in turn, argues that the values underpinning such commissions are political in nature. That is, to design a building is to decide one's values, to act upon or neglect the values of equality, efficiency and aesthetics. Specifically, implicit in our public debates about poor architecture is the acknowledgement that poor aesthetic space is a problem not shared equally, but rather one which disproportionately affects the poorest, raising the possibility that it should be treated as a public good or matter of welfare. This chapter explores the arguments for and against this view.

That policy decisions in matters of the built environment are underpinned by values may not help us, however, if these values themselves – of equality, aesthetic value, liberty – lack foundation and cannot themselves be rationally justified. Chapter Seven examines this problem, in doing so highlighting the limitations of reductive decision-making methods such as cost-benefit analysis. We will not, this chapter argues, shore up justification for spending on design aesthetics by pointing to some neutral and measurable fact or figure.

Chapter Eight explores what remains in the absence of value foundations. It argues that we can accept pluralism of public values without having to endorse small-state politics or a moratorium on government interventions in matters of cultural and aesthetic development. Rather, a Keynesian (interventionist) approach to public value and cultural development is justified just so long as a Keynesian government is democratically elected. Furthermore, it argues, those who wish to promote the value of aesthetics in the built environment, and *equality of access* to

such value, may turn rather to Richard Rorty's notion that the achievement of our social values is a matter of creation, passion and achievement, not of evidence, rationality, and justification.

A Vision Without Foundations

A unifying theme between the two parts of the thesis is this: that our debates on aesthetics in the built environment expose what Isaiah Berlin describes as our "deep and uncurable metaphysical need" to build our value judgements upon objective foundations – but also illustrate the futility of this attempt.[15] That is, this thesis is a defence of relativism. Whether or not a certain building should be beautiful is *relative* to its purpose, to our cultural expectations, to our vision of an ideal society, to its location, to the opportunity cost of lost choices, or to a particular aesthetic or political theory.

However, *this need not matter*. For Rorty, indeed, "*A liberal society is one which is content to call 'true' whatever the upshot of [free and open] encounters turns out to be*";[16] "[t]here will be no such activity as scrutinizing competing values in order to see which are morally privileged".[17] There is no absolute higher standpoint from which we can prove that chairs should be plain rather than ornamented, that churches should be ornamented rather than plain, that architecture should increase wellbeing, or that public money is better invested in the arts than in sports.

Importantly, however, this need not lead to the sort of existential problems suggested by Karsten Harries above, nor to an architectural profession in crisis, or paralysis in public policy. For Rorty there is no "relativist predicament" if we cease expecting values to have absolute foundations. Indeed, for Rorty:

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[15] Isaiah Berlin, quoted in Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 46.

[16] Rorty in *Ibid.*, p. 52. Italics in original.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 50.

> [T]he liberal societies of our century have produced more and more people who are able to recognize the contingency of the vocabulary in which they state their highest hopes - the contingency of their own consciences - and yet have remained faithful to those consciences[18]

We can champion the importance of improving the aesthetics of the built environment even whilst being aware that this aim does not rest on mind-independent foundations or absolute Truth. Indeed, as I will attempt to show, our attempts may be better for doing so.

A Vision Embodied in Design

As argued in the pages that follow, the "free and open encounters" in which we explore our values are not restricted to the discursive. Rather, our values are created, reinforced and challenged from encounters with designed objects and the built environment. The design theorist Jane Forsey is emphatically wrong to suggest that design is "mute".[19] Rather, designed objects and spaces are capable of the same world-making and meaning-making we attribute to the fine arts; capable – through the construction of atmospheres – not merely of representing existing values but of articulating new ones.

Designed objects and spaces, far from being purely conventional, mute, or restricted in expression, can create meaningful atmospheres of infinite complexity, and have a density of meaning that, as described by Nelson Goodman, "far from being mysterious and vague, is explicitly defined; and it arises out of, and sustains, the unsatisfiable demand for absolute precision".[20]

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[18] *Ibid.*, p. 46.

[19] Jane Forsey, *The Aesthetics of Design* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 66.

[20] Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art* (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett, 1976), p. 253.

Part One

Theorising Aesthetic Value in the Built Environment

Chapter One: Architecture as Design

[T]here is no chemically pure purposefulness set up as the opposite of the purpose-free aesthetic. Even the most pure forms of purpose are nourished by ideas—like formal transparency and graspability— which in fact are derived from artistic experience.[21]

Theodor W. Adorno, "Functionalism Today"

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Architecture has long been considered one of the arts, alongside poetry, music, painting, sculpture, dance and drama. However, its status as an art form has often been questioned or undermined. Schopenhauer considered architecture to be the least vital of the arts, a "dull striving of mass", ill-suited to the important task of objectifying the will.[22] Umberto Eco, meanwhile, has described architecture as "rather impoverished as an art", more akin to routine municipal services such as waste disposal and water supply.[23] Architecture is functional, physical and wedded to the economy. Judged as an art, it has often been dismissed as both unsophisticated and as compromised.

In the twentieth century, functionalist architects such as Adolf Loos proffered a corrective. They argued that architecture was not an

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[21] Adorno, "Functionalism Today", trans. Jane Newman and John Smith, in *Rethinking Architecture,* ed. Neil Leach (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 6-19 (p.8).

[22] Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation,* ed. Christopher Janaway (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), I. 282.

[23] Umberto Eco, "Function and Sign: The Semiotics of Architecture", in Leach (ed.), *Rethinking Architecture*, pp. 182-202 (p. 194-195).

impoverished art form but was rather not an art form at all: "[o]nly a very small part of architecture belongs to art: the tomb and the monument. Everything else that fulfils a function is to be excluded from the domain of art".[24] Yet this characterisation of architecture as an object of use, Le Corbusier's "machine for living in", was itself subject to criticism.[25] Adorno and other writers of the Frankfurt School acknowledged functionalism's role in moving beyond the nineteenth century's ornate historicism, and yet nonetheless considered functionalism itself to be inhumane, "barbarous" and "mercilessly practical".[26] In the almost sixty years since Adorno wrote these words in his 1965 essay "Functionalism Today" a new term, however, is more commonly applied to architecture and its related fields: design.

From historicism to functionalism: Left (figure 1) the Vienna State Opera, designed by August Sicard von Sicardsburg and Eduard van der Nüll, 1869; Right (figure 2) Adolf Loos' Villa Müller, 1930

[24] Adolf Loos, "Architecture" (1910), in *The Architecture of Adolf Loos* [exhibition catalogue], with essays by Sir J. Summerson, K. Frampton, D. Steiner and Y. Safran, London: Arts Council.

[25] For Le Corbusier, "We must work against the old house that misused space. We must […] look upon the house as a machine for living in or as a tool". See Le Corbusier, *Toward an Architecture*, trans. John Goodman (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2007), p. 266.

[26] Adorno, "Functionalism Today", p. 10.

For the environmental philosopher Allen Carlson, whose own theory of the built environment is a form of ecological functionalism, our concept of design is linked closely to our concept of art. We assume, he argues, that "[t]he relevant kind of design must be *artistic* in nature".[27] Elsewhere, however, the *Routledge Handbook of Participatory Design* attributes "the birth of modern design" not to the discipline of art, but to the functionalist Bauhaus movement.[28] That design can be considered in both senses betrays the generality of the term. Indeed, in 2007 the designer and writer Gui Bonsiepe, noted that:

> The popularisation of the term "design" during the past decade – not only in English-speaking regions – and its more or less inflationary usage have turned the word design into a commonplace term that has freed itself from the category of projecting and has now attained a sort of autonomous existence.[29]

More recently Bruno Latour has referred to design as an "expanding concept".[30]

This wide scope of design does not signify a mere vagueness of definition. Rather, it reflects attempts, in theory and in practice, to integrate disciplines previously considered in isolation. Penelope Jane Dean refers to this trend as "architecture's expansion into a generalised design field",

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[27] Allen Carlson, *Nature and Landscape: An Introduction to Environmental Aesthetics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), p. 54.

[28] Liam J. Bannon and Pelle Ehn, "Design Matters in Participatory Design", in Jesper Simonsen and Toni Robertson (eds.), *The Routledge International Handbook of Participatory Design* (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 37-63 (p. 38).

[29] Gui Bonsiepe, "The Uneasy Relationship Between Design and Design Research", in *Design Research Now: Essays and Selected Projects*, ed. Ralf Michel (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2007), pp. 25-39 (p. 26).

[30] Bruno Latour, "A Cautious Prometheus? A Few Steps Toward a Philosophy of Design (With Special Attention to Peter Sloterdijk)", in *Networks of Design: Proceedings of the 2008 Annual International Conference of the Design History Society (UK), University College Falmouth, 3-6 September* (Boca Raton, Florida: Universal Publishers, 2009), pp. 2-11 (p. 3).

which might include anything from product and furniture design to urban design.[31] Similarly, in their *Philosophy and Design: From Engineering to Architecture*, Peter Kroes (et al) argue that "[i]f the gap between these two forms of design can be bridged, then we are on our way to an understanding of a more *integrated* philosophy of design" (my italics).[32]

Such calls for an "integrated philosophy of design" are no doubt influenced by the term's widespread, and seemingly uncontroversial, use. Employees of Norman Foster's architectural practice, for instance, work in "integrated design teams", following a "design ethos", monitored by a "design board".[33] We have not only an Arts Council but also a Design Council.

Photo removed

Photo removed for copyright reasons. It showed Norman Foster and his design team in a collaborative pose around a table.

Available to view online by clicking below:
https://tinyurl.com/bd2rbcn9

Full URL in image references.
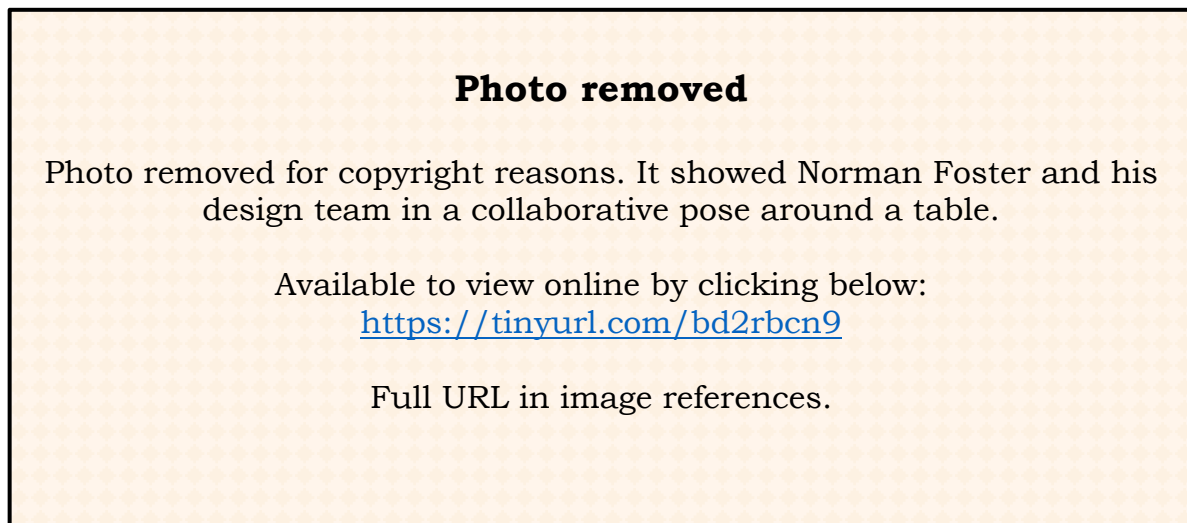
Figure 3: "Integrated design teams": Foster and Partners

To engage with contemporary debates on architectural aesthetics, therefore, we need to engage with the concept of design. This is particularly so since,

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[31] Penelope Jane Dean, "Delivery Without Discipline: Architecture in the Age of Design" (PhD Thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 2008), p. 234.

[32] Peter Kroes et al, "Design in Engineering and Architecture: Towards an Integrated Philosophical Understanding", in *Philosophy and Design: From Engineering to Architecture*, ed. Peter Kroes et al (Berlin: Springer, 2008), pp. 1-20 (p. 2).

[33] See https://www.fosterandpartners.com/studio/[accessed Nov 2021].

as suggested above, how we categorise architecture profoundly affects our aesthetic expectations, and also our aesthetic judgement. In what follows:

- Part One of this chapter asks whether we need the concept of design, or whether our existing categories of art and craft are sufficient.

- Part Two examines whether it is possible to have a philosophy of design, or whether it lacks philosophical complexity.

- Part Three engages with Allen Carlson and Glenn Parsons' ecological theories of design and the built environment, and defends the autonomy of the designer.

- Part Four examines the different nature of design and engineering.

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Part One: Do We Need the Concept of Design?

Art, Technology and Techne

As suggested above, we can conceive of design as a synthesis of the functional and artistic, or indeed a sort of middle ground between them. Such an interpretation is suggested by Vilém Flusser. It is worth reading in its entirety:

> The words "design", "machine", "technique", "ars", and "art" have a very close relationship to one another: one concept is unthinkable without the others, and they all arise from the same existential view of the world. This inner connection, nonetheless, has been denied for ages, at least since the Renaissance. Modern bourgeois society rigidly separated the world of the arts from that of technology and of machines, and, in that way, culture was broken into two branches that were alienated from each other - the scientific, quantifiable "hard" and the aesthetic, qualitative "soft". This ruinous division began to be called into question around the end of the nineteenth century. The

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word "design" leaped into the breach and provided a bridge. It was able to do this because of the internal relationship between technique and art in the word and concept, itself. In this way, "design" currently indicates just about any situation in which art and technique (including evaluative and scientific thought) combine forces to smooth the way to a new culture.[34]

The word that originally links art and technology, according to such an interpretation, is the Greek word *techne*. In the definition popularised by Aristotle, techne is indeed a broad term capturing a range of practical activities such as arts, crafts and technology, and was usually considered in opposition either to *episteme*, a more theoretical form of knowing, or else to the products of nature.

To this one can add, as Larry Shiner notes, that "the idea of fine art is a recent and parochial construction".[35] This interpretation is strengthened if we look at non-Western categorisations. The Chinese "Six Arts", for instance, include such diverse disciplines as music, calligraphy, mathematics and charioteering. Similarly, according to Shiner, "the Japanese language had no collective noun for 'art' in our sense until the nineteenth century".[36]

Heidegger argues that the Greeks' use of techne is often taken, by those who seek to close the gap between craft and art, as evidence of their natural kinship. And yet, for Heidegger, "[h]owever usual and convincing the references may be to the Greek practice of naming craft and art by the same name, techne, it nevertheless remains oblique and superficial".[37] Rather:

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[34] Vilém Flusser, "On the Word Design: An Etymological Essay", trans. John Cullars, *Design Issues,* Vol. 11, No. 3 (1995), pp. 50-53 (p. 51). It should be noted that Flusser, whilst endorsing this interpretation of design, argues that the concept is nonetheless even more nuanced and elusive than this account suggests.

[35] Larry Shiner, *The Invention of Art* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 8.

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 15.

[37] Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art", in Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought,* trans. by Albert Hofstadter (New York: Perennial Classics, 2001), pp. 15-86 (p. 57).

> Techne, as knowledge experienced in the Greek manner, is a bringing forth of beings [...] all this happens in the midst of the being that grows out of its own accord, phusis.[38]

Put more succinctly by Shiner: "[t]he opposite of human art in that older way of thinking was not craft but nature".[39] What art and craft share in this sense, they share also, as Shiner notes, with "horse breaking, verse writing, shoemaking, vase painting, or governing".[40] Techne should therefore be considered a very general sort of human-made rather than natural creation.

If we are seeking to erode the hard distinction between art and craft, therefore, the Greek term techne may be too general, of too high an order, to be of import. Art and craft may share properties that they do not share with e.g. mathematics (episteme) or flowers (phusis) but this does not mean there are not important differences between them. This, indeed, is roughly the view taken by Heidegger, who goes on to argue that whilst both art and craft can be understood as a "bringing forth", they are nonetheless characterised by different *ways* of bringing forth, and furthermore that they have fundamentally different *essences*.

Heidegger's "Origin of the Work of Art" seeks to define art in opposition to craft and objects of use. Were he successful in this project, the concept of design would be redundant: objects and activities would simply fit into one of these two traditional, mutually defining, categories. If unsuccessful, if some objects and activities resist such neat categorisation, then to preserve Heidegger's theory we must either add design as a third term, with its own essence, or else conceive of Heidegger's distinction between art and craft as taking place on a continuum, with some objects and activities having a kind of "mixed" or "conflicted" essence. This latter view is suggested by Adorno in the end of his "Functionalism Today", in

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[38] *Ibid.*, p. 58.

[39] Shiner, *The Invention of Art*, p. 5.

[40] *Ibid.*

which he calls for aesthetics to overcome the distinction between the "purposeful" and "purpose-free" arts:

> [T]here is no chemically pure purposefulness set up as the opposite of the purpose-free aesthetic. Even the most pure forms of purpose are nourished by ideas—like formal transparency and graspability—which in fact are derived from artistic experience.[41]

This chapter will show the problems with Heidegger's approach and endorse Adorno's argument that the functional and the aesthetic are rarely encountered in pure form. It will suggest that design's "leap into the breach" serves the useful purpose of acknowledging and accepting such impurity.

The Essence of Art and Craft

Heidegger begins his essay by setting out three categories: mere things (natural objects such as stones), artworks, and objects of use. As a consequence, all human-made, non-art objects must seemingly fall into this latter category, which Heidegger variously refers to as craft or equipment. Artworks, claims Heidegger, are unfamiliar to us, they create a new world, foreground their materiality, and impart truth. Equipment and craft, in contrast, are familiar to us, they affirm an existing world, "use up" their materiality, and do not impart new truths. They are defined by usefulness and reliability. Heidegger's main claim is that (using his own terminology), "[t]he setting up of a world and the setting forth of earth are two essential features in the work-being of the work".[42] I will therefore examine both these claims with reference to craft.

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[41] Adorno, "Functionalism Today", p.8.

[42] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art", p. 46.

Setting Forth of the Earth

Heidegger's claims about the different nature of materiality (roughly, earth) in art and craft rests on examples of basic tools such as axes and hammers, rather than those objects of craft which might offer greater resistance to his argument. The stone of an axe, he argues, "disappears into usefulness. The material is all the better and more suitable the less it resists perishing in the equipmental being of the equipment".[43] The material of the craft object is *better* if it recedes, if we fail to notice it.

There are, however, many craft objects, such as golden necklaces, for which this argument seems less convincing. Indeed, the very example that Heidegger contrasts with the axe is not uncontroversially an artwork – a Greek temple. For artworks such as the temple, Heidegger argues, "rock comes to bear and rest and so first becomes rock; metals come to glitter and shimmer, colors to glow, tones to sing, the word to speak".[44] The material of the artwork, rather than receding into the background of our consciousness, is transformed and vitalised. Compared with an axe, this different relationship with materiality seems clear, and yet when compared with many functional objects such as furniture and clothing the comparison appears strained. The setting forth of the earth, as a means of distinguishing between the functional and the artistic, illustrates instead the continuum between these categories: the many objects which are, as Adorno writes, "nourished" by them both.

Setting up of a World

For Heidegger artworks are also distinguished from craft by their setting up of a world. In many passages, however, this world-making is so heroic and grand that few artworks could live up to it:

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[43] *Ibid.*, p. 44.

[44] *Ibid.*, p. 45.

As a world opens itself, it submits to the decision of an historical humanity the question of victory and defeat, blessing and curse, mastery and slavery. The dawning world brings out what is as yet undecided and measureless, and thus discloses the hidden necessity of measure and decisiveness.[45]

It is perhaps unsurprising, therefore, that Heidegger reveals that only "great art […] is under consideration here".[46] More modest descriptions of the setting up of a world can be found in the essay, however, such as that the artwork "first gives to things their look and to men their outlook on themselves".[47] If we accept this more achievable interpretation, there is again reason to wonder why such a sharp divide must be drawn between art and craft.

In contrast to the temple, which constructs a cultural world for its people, one of Heidegger's key examples of craft in the essay is a pair of peasant's work shoes. The purpose of the shoes, suggests Heidegger, is solely functional, and as such they display their character best when in use in the fields: "[t]hat is how shoes actually serve. It is in this process of the use of equipment that we must actually encounter the character of equipment".[48] Whereas artworks *open up* a world, the shoes, as equipment, are a familiar source of comfort: "by virtue of the reliability of the equipment she is sure of her world".[49]

Again, however, Heidegger's example is carefully chosen. Whilst a pair of peasant's shoes can arguably be described as equipment, as purely functional, this claim is far less convincing when applied to high-heeled dress shoes, neckties and bowler hats. Umberto Eco has therefore spoken of such items having two functions: the primary, original function (e.g. to protect one's feet) and a secondary, symbolic function (we might say the secondary function, in some small way, "first gives to things their look and

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[45] *Ibid.*, p. 61.

[46] *Ibid.*, p. 39.

[47] *Ibid.*, p. 42.

[48] *Ibid.*, p. 32.

[49] *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34.

to men their outlook on themselves"). Indeed, Eco notes, the symbolic function, such as that of a throne, can be even more important than its supposed original function, to seat somebody.[50] Again, therefore, Heidegger's division between art and craft, if interpreted as a hard divide rather than as an illustration of extremes or paradigm cases, appears to fail. If we admit that a craftsman working on papal vestments is producing something closer to a Greek temple than to a pair of steel toed boots, Heidegger's characterisation of craft as pure function is difficult to support.

Dividing human-made objects into the strictly functional and the strictly artistic is fraught with difficulty: too many objects resist this categorisation. One response to this fact, the response of the functionalists, is to deny the authenticity of such objects, to argue that such hybrids of function and art are cultural mistakes, the products of either confusion or of indiscriminate decadence. Such arguments, however, are normative rather than descriptive. It is not that such hybrids *cannot* exist but rather that they *should not* exist.

Craft vs Design

Adolf Loos claimed that the craftsman at work has "nothing but a purpose in mind and nothing but materials and tools in front of him".[51] We have seen also Heidegger's argument that "[t]he production of equipment is finished when a material has been so formed as to be ready for use. For equipment to be ready means that it is dismissed beyond itself, to be used up in serviceability".[52] If we dismiss these claims as a mischaracterisation of craft's aesthetic and symbolic potential, do we find that the term "craft", part function, part art, is a suitable categorisation of architecture, and that the term design is therefore redundant? I will argue that no, there remain at

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[50] Eco, "Function and Sign", p. 187.

[51] Adolf Loos, *Samtliche Schriften, I*, ed. Franz Gluck (Vienna/Munich: Herold, 1962), p. 345.

[52] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art", p. 62.

least two important differences between craft and design, as these categories are currently understood. The first is perhaps a matter of definition, and the second is perhaps a matter of professional culture. To illustrate this difference, I will again turn to Heidegger, and his description of the silversmith in "The Question Concerning Technology".

A Two-Staged Process

Heidegger begins his essay on modern technology by looking at more traditional "technology" – a silver chalice. What interests Heidegger is, again, the chalice's being "brought forth", and how this coming to be compares with self-growth and creation in nature: "what is brought forth by the artisan or artist, e.g., the silver chalice, has the bursting open belonging to bringing-forth not in itself, but in another (en alloi), in the craftsman or artist".[53] He therefore opens a (nuanced and interpretative) discussion of Aristotle's four causes, which he recasts as "ways of being responsible" or "modes of occasioning". For Heidegger, the four ways of being responsible for the chalice include the silver (its matter), the aspect of this silver (its shape as a chalice), and the object's telos (that the chalice is "circumscribed as sacrificial vessel" – Heidegger rejects the common translation of "purpose").[54] Lastly, "[t]he silversmith considers carefully and gathers together the three aforementioned ways of being responsible and indebted", ultimately producing the finished chalice.[55]

However, Heidegger emphasises that this fourth cause is not to be understood as the mere brute construction of the object but rather as this

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[53] Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology", in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York and London: Garland, 1977), pp. 3-35 (pp. 10-11).

[54] *Ibid.*, p. 7.

[55] *Ibid.*, p. 8.

"*pondering* of the silversmith for the 'that' and the 'how' of [the other causes'] coming into appearance" (my italics).[56] He continues that:

> Whoever builds a house or a ship or forges a sacrificial chalice reveals what is to be brought forth, according to the perspectives of the four modes of occasioning. This revealing gathers together in advance the aspect and the matter of ship or house, with a *view* to the finished thing *envisioned* as completed, and from this gathering determines the manner of its construction. Thus what is decisive in techne does not lie at all in making and manipulating nor in the using of means, but rather in the aforementioned revealing. It is as revealing, and not as manufacturing, that techne is a bringing-forth (my italics).[57]

For Heidegger, then, the "efficient cause" of a house is whoever builds it. Yet whilst a silversmith might conceivably both envisage and construct a chalice, very few houses in the West are produced in such a way. There is, rather, a divide that runs between the process of envisioning the house (the architect), and the process of physically building the house (the builder). As Nelson Goodman has observed, architecture, like musical composition (but unlike painting), is a two-stage rather than one-stage process, and a process which relies on symbolism to bridge the gap between vision and construction.[58]

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[56] *Ibid.*

[57] *Ibid.*, p. 13.

[58] Goodman, *Languages of Art*, pp. 219-221. The existence of this two-stage process leads Goodman to question whether architecture is best understood as, in his terminology, autographic or allographic, the former (as in painting) relating to works whose copies would not be considered genuine artworks, and the latter (as in music) relating to works whose copies *would* be considered genuine. Goodman decides that architecture is "a mixed and transitional" case, and yet the fact that this question can be raised reminds us that architects have a different relationship to a finished building than silversmiths do to chalices. Indeed, Maurice Lagueux has noted that the architect of The Grande Arche de la Defense, Johan Otto von Spreckelsen, died during the first stage of its construction, and yet the building "is not considered an 'unfinished' work" See Maurice Lagueux, "Nelson Goodman and Architecture", *Assemblage,* No. 35 (1998), pp. 18-35 (p. 21).

This two-stage nature of architecture sets it apart from objects of craft, and binds it together with objects of what we call design, to the extent that this distinction seems definitional. As noted by Parsons:

> The difference between the architect, and the Designer more generally, and the furniture maker is a difference of method and experience: the furniture maker is involved with the actual construction of his objects in an intimate way in which the typical Designer is not, and indeed cannot, be.[59]

The difference between a furniture designer and a carpenter; a landscape designer and a gardener; a clothing designer and a seamstress, is the *same* type of difference. In all cases the designer's work is characteristically two-staged and symbolic, whereas the craftsman's work is one-stage and material. The designer sets out a plan for construction but, unlike the craftsperson, is not tasked with executing it.

The Individual vs The Team

The second difference is, as mentioned above, less a difference of definition than one of common professional practice. A craft object, such as a chalice, can be envisioned and produced by just one individual. The realisation of the object, the movement from vision to construction, is contained within the mental to physical activity of just one person. Architecture and design, however, as a two-stage process, usually involve more than one "efficient cause". Furthermore, professional culture is such that even the first-stage is likely to involve many different people. Rather than Loos' (rather romantic) idea of the craftsman ("nothing but a purpose in mind and nothing but materials and tools in front of him"), professional architecture is closer to Norman Foster's "integrated design teams" submitting work to their "design board". The efficient cause of a building, and indeed many other objects of

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[59] Glenn Parsons, *The Philosophy of Design* (Cambridge: Polity, 2016), p. 23.

design, is perhaps better understood, as suggested by Simmel, as a sort of diffuse, collective Geist:

> The development of modern culture is characterised by the predominance of what one can call the objective spirit over the subjective; that is, in language as well as in law, in the technique of production as well as in art, in science as well as in the objects of domestic environment, there is embodied a sort of spirit (*Geist*), the daily growth of which is followed only imperfectly and with an even greater lag by the intellectual development of the individual.[60]

This discrepancy, said Simmel, "is in essence the result of the success of the growing division of labour".[61] In the West at least, design has in many cases superseded craft. In doing so, it has adopted what we might call an architectural model of production: two-staged, collective, and dependent on capital.

There is a very real sense, then, in which the efficient cause of the iPod or iPhone may be best identified not as any one particular designer but rather as the Apple Corporation, where such corporations or teams are more than the sum of their parts, and may predate or outlive any one person within them. The major UK house builder Barratt Homes, for example, continues to operate with its familiar ethic and aesthetic, undeterred by the death of its original founder, Sir Lawrence Barratt, in 2012. This collaborative creation, suggests Forsey, may have "contribut[ed] to the neglect of design by philosophical aesthetics: the activity-based model for defining and understanding art is so prevalent that if we cannot adequately locate the authors of the work or pinpoint their role in its production, we seem unable or unwilling to assess it".[62]

An aesthetics of design will therefore need to release its sole focus on the individual designer and take seriously the concept of corporate

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[60] Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life", trans. Edward Shils, in Leach (ed.), *Rethinking Architecture*, ed. pp. 69-79 (pp. 77-78).

[61] *Ibid.*, p. 78.

[62] Forsey, p. 60.

personhood.[63] Later in this thesis I will also explore the role of the client, the influence of market forces, and the aesthetic impact of planning regulation.

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Part Two: The Possibility of a Philosophy of Design

If we are satisfied that design is not synonymous with craft, that it may constitute a meaningful or useful category of its own, then our next step may be to consider its separate philosophical and aesthetic treatment.

Art's status as a topic worthy of philosophical thought is historically established, if sometimes challenged. Design, in contrast, cannot presume the same status. As noted by Heidegger, an artwork is, in many ways, just a thing like any other: "[t]he picture hangs on the wall like a rifle or a hat".[64] And yet, argues Heidegger, "the art work is something else over and above the thingly element. This something else in the work constitutes its artistic

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[63] In the US in particular it is common on the Left to argue that corporations are not people. Writing for *The Atlantic*, however, the legal academic Kent Greenfield argues that such arguments are wrongheaded: "[T]he attack on corporate personhood is a mistake. And it may, ironically, be playing into the hands of the financial and managerial elite. What's the best way to control corporate power? More corporate personhood, not less". For Greenfield, the answer is to intervene in corporate operations so as to disrupt the myopic pursuit of capital at all costs. See Kent Greenfield, "If Corporations Are People, They Should Act Like It", *The Atlantic* (theatlantic.com, 1 Feb 2015). Available at https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/02/if-corporations-are-people-they-should-act-like-it/385034/ [accessed 22 July 2021].

[64] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art", p. 19.

nature".[65] The hat, it seems, the object of design, lacks this "something else". This does not mean, of course, that nothing interesting can be said about hats. As mentioned earlier, a hat can have what Eco refers to as a symbolic function. It is merely to say that, as suggested by Andrew Edgar, "perhaps fashion [is] simply the sort of thing that can be dealt with exhaustively by a sociology or cultural studies. Fashion may betray something about its age, but unlike art it cannot speak as a world".[66]

Edgar is responding here to Arthur Danto's claim that there can be no philosophy of "fashion, craft, haute cuisine, dog breeding".[67] Fashion, indeed, has rarely been celebrated by philosophy, a discipline generally suspicious of the ephemeral. In his *Critique of Judgement*, for instance, Kant is keen to draw a clear line between objects worthy of artistic appreciation on the one hand, and mere social joys, charms and novelties on the other. In discussing models of taste, he writes:

> Models of taste in the arts of speech must be composed in a language *both dead and scholarly*; dead, so that it will not have to undergo the changes that inevitably affect living ones, whereby noble expressions become flat, familiar ones archaic, and newly created ones enter into circulation for only a short while; scholarly, so that it will have a grammar *that is not subject to the whims of fashion but has its own unalterable rule.*[68]

A philosophy of design therefore has two potential problems. The first is that a truly integrated philosophy of design would include not just architecture but also clothing, furniture and product design, all of which are intimately related to fashion. The second is that, even if design is not corrupted by

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[65] *Ibid.*

[66] Andrew Edgar, "Conclusion", *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (2013), pp. 168-171 (p. 168).

[67] Arthur Danto, quoted in Edgar, "Conclusion", p. 168. Originally in Arthur Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 55.

[68] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. by Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett, 1987), p. 79.

fashion, it may still fall short of offering a "something else" worthy of philosophical investigation.

The Influence of Fashion on Design

In his essay on fashion, Georg Simmel notes that "[w]hereas in general our clothing, for instance, is objectively adapted to our needs, there is not a trace of expediency in the method by which fashion dictates, for example, whether wide or narrow skirts, short or long hair styles, or coloured or black ties should be worn".[69] Fashion, says Simmel, is not driven by intrinsic value, but rather by social forces: our desire, through imitation, to identify with one social group (most often the wealthy elite), and separate ourselves from another. As such, "not the slightest reason can be found for its creation from the standpoint of an objective, aesthetic or other expediency".[70] We see a similar sentiment expressed in Oscar Wilde's "The Philosophy of Dress" which, whilst more playful and stylish, makes a similar argument to that put forward in Kant's *Critique of Judgement*:

> Fashion rests upon folly. Art rests upon law. Fashion is ephemeral. Art is eternal. Indeed what is a fashion really? A fashion is merely a form of ugliness so absolutely unbearable that we have to alter it every six months! It is quite clear that were it beautiful and rational we would not alter anything that combined those two rare qualities. And wherever dress has been so, it has remained unchanged in law and principle for many hundred years.[71]

There are two main objections to fashion put forward by these writers. The first is that, unlike Kant's stable, dead language, fashion is ephemeral. But perhaps of greater concern is a second objection, that a change in fashion is not an objective, rational improvement but is rather simply a change for

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[69] Georg Simmel, "The Philosophy of Fashion", in David Frisby and Mike Featherstone (eds.), *Simmel on Culture: Collected Writings* (London: Sage. 1997), pp.187-206 (pp. 189-190).

[70] *Ibid.*, p. 189.

[71] Oscar Wilde, "The Philosophy of Dress", *New York Tribune* (19 April, 1885).

change's sake, motivated by an irrational drive for social acceptance. Understood in this way, fashion, as Wilde suggests, is pure folly.

However, as noted by Simmel, fashion does not just affect clothing. In fact, he says, fashion has "overstepped the bounds of its original domain, which comprised only externals of dress, and has acquired an increasing influence over taste, theoretical convictions, and even the moral foundations of life in their changing forms".[72] Indeed, Pierre Bourdieu has argued that even *art itself* is affected by fashions, by our desire to associate ourselves with a particular social group.[73]

We might better understand fashion, then, not specifically as the designing and selling of clothes and interior furnishings, but rather as a particular motivation, or particular reason for choosing or creating something: the telos mentioned earlier by Heidegger. If my political affiliation, preferred housing style, or friendship group is chosen chiefly because of its association with wealth or social status then I am motivated by a superficial fashion. Danto may be correct to argue that there is little philosophically interesting to be found in choices and objects motivated by fashion, not least because, at its most reductive, it is always *the same motivation* and because of its *arbitrary* relationship with the specific form of the sought-after object. However, it would be wrong to argue that fashion in this sense affects only objects of design, or that objects of design are only bought, created or appreciated solely as status symbols.[74]

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[72] Simmel, "The Philosophy of Fashion", p. 93.

[73] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction*, trans. Richard Nice (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984).

[74] This point is made in more detail by Gernot Böhme and will be returned to later in Chapter Four.

Design and the "Something Else"

It might still be suggested that design nevertheless lacks the "something else" that is said to belong to art, and is therefore not a relevant topic for philosophical inquiry. I wish to make two claims in this regard.

The first is that, as suggested earlier in my discussion of Heidegger's concepts of world and earth, this "something else", this setting up of a world, is not unique to the purpose-free arts. Heidegger's own illustration, it was seen, is an object of design, an architectural work, and there seems little reason by his own definition of "world" to exclude other objects of craft and design such as papal vestments and thrones, or even sports cars and evening gowns. Indeed, as I will argue in the next chapter, Gernot Böhme's aesthetics of atmospheres offers a significantly more convincing account of designed objects and their capacity for world-making.

Secondly, although it is commonly argued, as it is by Heidegger, that such world-making, the introduction of *new* cultural meaning, is what defines art, this definition fails to capture a significant majority of those works that despite being, as Kuhn might put it, "normal" rather than "revolutionary", we nonetheless consider to be works of art as opposed to mere objects, natural objects, or equipment. As noted by Nelson Goodman, whilst "[t]he literature of aesthetics is littered with desperate attempts to answer the question 'What is art?'", this question is "often hopelessly confused with the question 'What is *good* art?'" (my italics).[75] Such a confusion (intentional or otherwise) can be seen also in the work of Umberto Eco who, as we saw previously, claims that "it is characteristic of art […] to put before the public things they have not yet come to expect", echoing Heidegger's claim that art presents us with new, unfamiliar truths.

Whilst such claims might seem reasonably accurate for a handful of era-defining artworks, they are less convincing when applied to pleasant seascapes, diverting plays, and even those literary works which might touch us deeply without altering our outlook on the world or challenging literary

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[75] Nelson Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1978), p. 66.

form.[76] Conversely, many objects of design demonstrably *do* present us with new, challenging or unfamiliar objects – new in function, form, or style – which fail to fit into our existing concepts or expectations. That is, whether or not a human-made object or activity challenges or comforts us, slots into existing paradigms or creates new ones, is a separate matter from whether or not that object also serves a non-artistic, non-aesthetic function.

Part Three: Design vs Ecological Functionalism

So far I have argued that the concept of design offers a useful, and intuitively accurate, characterisation of architecture, which improves upon its previous definition as art, craft, or functional object. I have furthermore defended the possibility of a philosophy of design. My starting point, however, has been a response to architecture as traditionally conceived in philosophy and theory. We might better understand architecture, I have suggested, if we categorise it as design.

This view is challenged, however, by the environmental philosopher Allen Carlson, who criticises what he refers to as the "designer landscape approach" to aesthetics, which sees the buildings around us primarily as intentional designed objects rather than as organic human habitats:[77]

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[76] Indeed, such is Heidegger's awareness of his narrow definition of art that he ends his essay by questioning whether *any* artworks today still achieve, or even aim at, such ambitions. The more revolutionary we expect art to be, the fewer artworks our definition will capture. Similarly, the more modest our expectations, the harder it becomes to exclude objects of design from such world-making.

[77] Allen Carlson, *Nature and Landscape*, p. 53.

Many human environments, landscapes or cityscapes or even particular buildings, have developed, as it were, "naturally" over time – have grown "organically" – in response to human needs, interests, and concerns and in line with various cultural factors. Such an environment thus has a fit that is the result primarily not of the deliberate design valorised by the designer landscape approach and by the traditional aesthetics of architecture, but of those forces that have so shaped it that a fit of its components has come into being.[78]

What Carlson argues for here, and elsewhere in his *Functional Beauty*, co-written with Glenn Parsons, is a form of ecological functionalism: beauty emerges from a "functional fit" between human need and human environment.[79]

This is not the infamous functionalism of Adolf Loos. Such early modernist theorists, Carlson and Parsons argue, had an overly restrictive interpretation of function (viewed as "the engineering functions of buildings"), put too much emphasis on the intentions of the architect, and considered the project linked to social reform.[80] We can develop a better functionalism, they argue, if we realise that "the concept of proper function can, in fact, be *transferred from the natural world* to the world of architecture and to the built environment in general" (my italics).[81]

For Carlson, a philosophy of design would not have sufficient reach to cover the whole of the built environment both because a) many buildings are not created with any artistic intention and b) even those buildings that have been carefully designed evolve organically over time – sometimes changing use completely – and should therefore not be forever defined by the intentions of their original designer. Carlson makes a further argument, however, which is that c) all buildings are in fact best approached through his account of ecological functionalism, which views the built environment

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[78] *Ibid.*, p. 60.

[79] Glenn Parsons and Allen Carlson, *Functional Beauty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[80] *Ibid.*, p. 145.

[81] *Ibid.*, p. 149.

as "a human ecosystem",[82] even those "paradigmatic works of architecture" which might otherwise be analysed as art or design.[83]

It is a strength of Carlson's approach, as opposed to art-centred architectural aesthetics, that it is able to take a broad and inclusive view of the built environment, capturing not only individual buildings of interest but also everyday buildings such as petrol stations and supermarkets, as well as non-buildings such as bridges, roads and power lines. It is also better able to grasp complex areas such as neighbourhoods, suburbs and squares. Architectural theory has only ignored this unglamorous reality of our built environment, Carlson argues, by "gerrymandering" its examples, focussing primarily on monuments and other carefully designed cultural buildings at the expense of our usual, day-to-day surroundings.[84]

There are problems associated with Carlson and Parsons' approach, however, broadly falling into two types: those relating to its treatment of human-made objects as naturally-occurring species, and those relating to its emphasis on functional value. As will be argued, to give up a concept of design in favour of exclusively treating our built environment as organic, or independent of a will, both mischaracterises the built environments we live in, and provides a deeply flawed model for urban planning and aesthetics.

The Erasure of the Designer: Architecture as Phusis

Carlson suggests that objects of our everyday "human environment", such as "stores, gas stations, banks, (…) and refineries", are best understood by his ecological account of organic functional fit, rather than by a theory of design.[85] However, if we look more closely at these commonplace structures, we will see that this simple "functional beauty", so well adapted to its

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[82] Allen Carlson, "Reconsidering the Aesthetics of Architecture", *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (1986), pp. 21-27 (p. 22).

[83] Allen Carlson, *Nature and Landscape*, p. 68.

[84] *Ibid.*, p. 55.

[85] *Ibid.*, p. 68.

commercial, contemporary environment, did not evolve organically. As Martin Treu points out, the designers of the early twentieth century had no precedent for what a petrol station should look like, and originally borrowed from the design of cottages and even churches in an effort to structure its form.[86] Thus, a 1923 *American Architect* editorial wrote that commercial architecture:

> has had [...] no compunction in appropriating to its use [...] architectural symbols that for centuries have stood for definite things. Should not this be a matter of great regret, and is it not worthy of the serious thought of architects? [...] [Commercial architecture, and filling stations specifically] *warrant their own symbolism* (my italics)[87]

Architects set to work on establishing a suitable form and symbolism for the petrol station, and competitions were held in which judges "considered the style and placement of signs, as well as the application of colors".[88] That is, the petrol station design that we see today was hard won, testament to the work of early and mid-twentieth century designers who struggled to develop an appropriate form. To suggest that an ecological rather than a design model is more appropriate in considering the aesthetics of a petrol station is erroneously to imagine that its form emerged from its function naturally, reminiscent of phusis, "the being that grows out of its own accord".[89]

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[86] Martin Treu, *Signs, Streets, and Storefronts: A History of Architecture and Graphics Along America's Commercial Corridors* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012).

[87] *American Architect* editorial, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 112.

[88] Treu, *Signs, Streets, and Storefronts*, p. 113.

[89] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art", p. 58.

Figures 4 and 5: The evolution of US petrol station design

Functional Fit and "Proper Function"

Carlson and Parsons are emphatic that "the intentions of individuals, including designers, are not sufficient to bestow a proper function on an artefact".[90] Rather, "the proper function of artefacts is determined by the collective behaviour of individuals acting in the marketplace".[91] Proper function on this account is therefore determined a) by users rather than designers, b) with reference to present society rather than the society for which the building was originally designed and c) by a majority opinion rather than the views of any individual or group, however valuable and considered their opinion might be. It is, therefore, a form of functional populism. Several problems emerge from this approach.

The first is that it gives us an impoverished means of analysing, understanding and judging buildings. The uses of many buildings can change over time, such as former churches becoming night clubs or shops. If this change continues for long enough, Carlson argues, "these structures will take on new proper functions".[92] However, if the church is poorly adapted for this new purpose, we must find the church to be exhibiting a "negative aesthetic quality" – poor functional fit. It may be, perhaps, that the poor match between the church's material and form, and its current use,

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[90] Carlson and Parsons, *Functional Beauty*, p. 145.

[91] *Ibid.*, p. 149.

[92] *Ibid.*, p. 151.

may affect our aesthetic judgement somewhat, although it would be a curious aesthetic response which merely grumbled at a cathedral's lack of storage space and echoey acoustics, or which remained uninterested in why this storage facility is so ornamented. As noted by the Kantian design theorist Jane Forsey, purpose and use are not equivalent.[93] That the church is being *used* as a storage facility neither tells us about its original *purpose*, nor helps us understand its material or its form, which under the functional fit model merely become aesthetic hindrances to current use.

In fact, despite his ecological metaphor, Carlson's account does not reflect how function works in nature. If it did, then it would be possible to argue, for example, that the function of a bear is to dance for our entertainment, or that the purpose of an elephant's tusks is to provide us with ivory – so long as a critical mass of people believe this to be the case.[94]

Furthermore, as argued by Gadamer:

> [W]orks of art can assume definite real functions and resist others [...] they themselves prescribe and help to fashion this kind of functional context. They themselves lay claim to their place, and even if they are displaced, e.g. are housed in a modern collection, the trace of their original purpose cannot be destroyed[95]

For Gadamer, then, the original function of a building and the original intentions of its designer are inscribed within its form, and furthermore

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[93] Forsey, p. 120.

[94] Rather than resembling evolution in nature, Carlson's account better resembles the evolution of language. In language, since most signifiers themselves have an arbitrary relationship to what they represent, an entirely new and unrelated meaning can be forged simply by enough people accepting its new function. There is nothing inherently church-like about the word church, and yet there is, as Gadamer suggests, something church-like about the church itself. Whilst the function of words can be altered with often only minimal complications, when we attempt to change the function of a building we will likely be met with resistance.

[95] Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Ontological Foundation of the Occasional and the Decorative", in Leach (ed.), *Rethinking Architecture*, pp. 125-137 (p. 133).

"[w]here the original intention has become completely unrecognisable [...] then the building itself will become incomprehensible".[96]

Parsons, in *Philosophy of Design*, turns away from current use towards production and past use: a thing X's proper function is F, Parsons argues, if Xs exist because in the recent past ancestors of X successfully met a need in the marketplace because they performed F, leading to the manufacture of Xs. There are several problems with this account even in regard to smaller consumer objects,[97] but it is particularly unconvincing when applied to architecture. For Parsons:

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[96] *Ibid.*, p. 134.

[97] For Parsons, the current proper function of a pipe cleaner is to be a craft material rather than to clean pipes, precisely because they are primarily now craft items rather than pipe-cleaning items. However, there are important differences between original pipe-cleaners and craft versions. The former are made from absorbent cotton, are thin enough to fit inside a pipe, and are made in neutral colours; the latter are made from non-absorbent polyester or nylon, are too thick to fit inside a pipe, and are made in vibrant colours. That the latter may be said to have the "proper function" of being a craft item is not merely because consumers have been re-purchasing these items for this use, but because these particular items were made for craft and not pipe-cleaning, as reflected in their colour, material and form. Similarly, on Parson's account if 80% of consumers begin using an aerosol hair spray for its intoxicating properties rather than for its hair-fixing properties then, so long as the consumers keep consuming, and this is the use that keeps the products being made, then this must be its proper function. However, if the manufacturers are ignorant of this use then it will not affect the product's material or form. That is, there will remain many features and ingredients which are (unbeknown to the producers) now redundant (hair-sticking additives; styling advice printed on the canister) and many features which could make the product better suited to its current use but which are not included (higher percentage of intoxicating chemicals for example). Arguing that the hairspray has a "proper use" and that this "proper use" is to act as an intoxicant, however, gives us little insight into the material and form of the product itself, *unless – legalities aside – such use is fed back to manufacturers and alters the purposes of subsequent stock*. See Parsons, *The Philosophy of Design*, p. 89.

> If we want to know the proper function of an artefact, we look to its causal history to see which of its effects played a causal role in the reproduction of its ancestors. Thus, in the more vexed case of our architectural example, the proper function of Libeskind's [Royal Ontario] museum expansion would be to do whatever it is that, in the recent past, has led buildings of that sort to be produced.[98]

Parsons' use of the passive voice here again erases the role of client and designer, and implies that designed objects a) come in particular natural types (Ruth Millikan refers to them as "reproductively established families")[99] and b) that they may reproduce independently from human creators. However, any evolution in use cannot affect a designed object's form, or the form of similar objects which follow it, without a corresponding evolution in human purposes. Human creators may cease production of profitable products for moral reasons, may amend and tweak designs, seek inspiration from the past or from other cultures, or task themselves with designing a product anew, with minimal influence from previous forms. Such actions are either overlooked and downplayed by Parsons' account, or else are presented as threats.

Figure 6: "Defined by its ancestors": Daniel Libeskind's extension to the Royal Ontario Museum

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[98] *Ibid.*, p. 96.

[99] Ruth Millikan, quoted in *Ibid.*, pp. 96-97.

Architecture Without Architects: "Organic" vs Order

Parsons and Carlson are suspicious of the designer and her artistic autonomy. The designer, writes Parsons, is an "invisible tyrant", "a shadowy figure quietly foisting her values upon an unsuspecting public".[100] As suggested by Habermas, however, any attempt to elevate the "Volkgeist" over the autonomy of the architect, is reminiscent of the anti-modern romanticism of Nazi architecture, a promotion of architecture without architects.[101] Indeed, Parsons goes on to argue that "If the ethical problems raised by Design are too much for [designers] to resolve, then perhaps ultimately it must be relieved of them" and handed over to "'qualified ethicists' (usually philosophers)".[102] Parsons' ecological functionalism therefore has the unwelcome effect of romanticising the whims of the populace, demonising independent creators, and ultimately of inserting philosopher rulers to oversee them.

Carlson and Parsons explicitly acknowledge that their theory is vulnerable to accusations of conservatism, yet this "conservatism" is in fact economically liberal.[103] By endorsing the needs of the market and restricting the influence of the architect or designer, ecological functionalism's "organic growth" may in fact be indistinguishable from an unregulated, unplanned growth. In an industrial economy such appeasement of the market may lead, for instance, to a glut of open cast mining sites. In a post-industrial economy it may lead to an increase in what Marc Augé refers to as "non-places" – those superstores, corporate chains, and industrial parks that lack specificity and meaningfulness.[104] Design, in contrast, implies human

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[100] *Ibid.*, p. 149.

[101] Jürgen Habermas, "Modern and Postmodern Architecture", trans. Helen Tsoskounglou, in Leach (ed.), *Rethinking Architecture*, pp. 227-235 (p. 235).

[102] *Ibid.*, p. 151.

[103] Carlson and Parsons, *Functional Beauty*, p. 150 and p. 228.

[104] Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, trans. by John Howe (London and New York: Verso, 1995).

intervention and order. Indeed, Peter Kroes et al have defined design as "changing existing situations into preferred ones".[105] A theory of the built environment which sidelines design therefore not only overlooks or mischaracterises designed objects, but may also obstruct both our ability to shape the built environment and our ability to dispute economically functional, yet aesthetically impoverished, architectural developments.

Despite the serious political and economic implications of the ecological theory, Parsons is reluctant to allow the "proper function" of designed objects to be reduced to their commodity status. A feng shui mirror is bought to soothe us, he argues, whereas a roller coaster is designed to excite us: these, he argues, are important differences.[106] As argued by Adorno, however, such differences, whilst they exist, are *incidental*:

> [I]n present society all usefulness is displaced, bewitched. Society deceives us when it says that it allows things to appear as if they are there by mankind's will. In fact, they are produced for profit's sake; *they satisfy human needs only incidentally* (my italics)[107]

Similarly, as argued by Habermas, the use of housing as a financial investment has meant that:

> [D]ecisions about the purchase and sale of estate, and construction, demolition and reconstruction, about renting and vacating property were freed from the ties of family and local traditions; in other words they made themselves independent of use-value considerations. The laws of the building and housing market *altered the attitude towards building and dwelling* (my italics)[108]

Recent studies have shown that half of new-build homes in England have major structural problems, including "major structural failings that affect

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[105] Peter Kroes et al, *Philosophy and Design,* p. 1.

[106] Parsons, *The Philosophy of Design,* p. 98.

[107] Adorno, "Functionalism Today", p. 17.

[108] Habermas, "Modern and Postmodern Architecture", p. 230.

health and safety".[109] Habermas and Adorno's approach provides insight into these failings. That is, as argued by India Block, to understand the poor standard of modern houses we must understand not merely their "proper function" in Carlson's sense, but rather the purposes and values of those who created them:

> [W]hy build something that can last for decades and accommodate a growing family or a mix of demographics when you can get in, build something vaguely building-shaped, and move on knowing investors or government-subsidised buyers will snap it up? Those depressing facades are cheap, quick to install and a shortcut to a well-enough insulated house to pass planning muster[110]

Parsons' approach may note that the house is poor at keeping residents sheltered and safe, but offers no insight into *why.* However, whether one approaches the question from within a Marxist or liberal theory, this much remains true: that, for a house builder, the purpose of building a house is to sell the house and make a profit.

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[109] Timothy Waitt, quoted in Rebecca Wearn, "Growing Complaints About New-Build Houses", *BBC News* (bbc.co.uk, 5 April 2019). Available at https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-47826166 [accessed on 22 July 2021].

[110] India Block, "Why Are Britain's New-Builds All So Ugly?", *op. cit.*
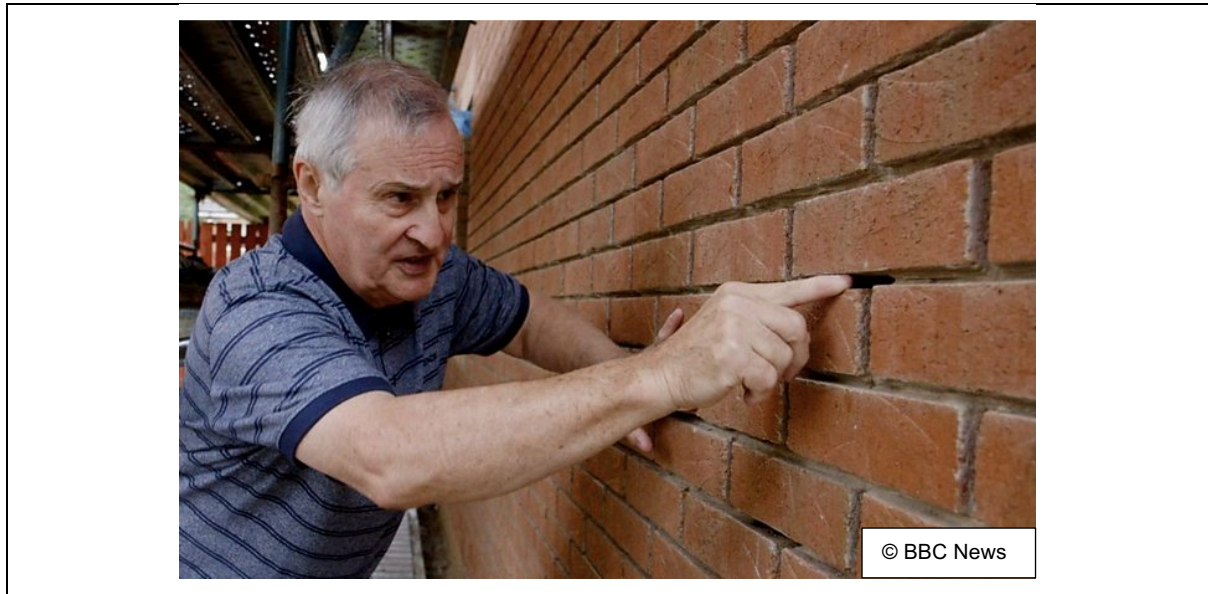
Figure 7: Major structural failings: home owner Vincent Fascione shows the BBC cracked mortar in the exterior walls of his newbuild home[111]

Functional Beauty and Sensuous Surfaces

Even though Carlson's cognitive approach to aesthetics defines functional fit as "everything being and looking as it should",[112] it emphasises being more than looking. Rather than focusing on our perception of architecture, Carlson wants to promote the "*hidden aspects* of buildings"[113] (my italics):

> [T]hings are functionally beautiful where their perceptual appearances are altered by our knowledge of their function [...] Our knowledge of these functions, however, need not be gained from simply looking at the object.[114]

Carlson's theory is transported from his theory of aesthetics in nature, where he argues that many animals and habitats traditionally neglected by aesthetics are, on closer inspection, worthy of aesthetic appreciation. We

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[111] See Jim Reed, "New Homes 'Crumbling Due to Weak Mortar'", *BBC News* (bbc.co.uk, 6 Dec 2018). Available at https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-46454844 [accessed 9 Feb 2022].

[112] Carlson, "Reconsidering the Aesthetics of Architecture", p. 23.

[113] Carlson and Parsons, *Functional Beauty*, p. 139.

[114] *Ibid.*, p. 160.

can learn to appreciate not only pandas, waterfalls and roses, but also beetles, mud flats and algae. We simply need to educate ourselves about the relevant scientific facts. The same applies to human-made objects, he suggests: a scientist who works with a machine such as an x-ray diffraction detector can, through understanding its function, learn to appreciate its outward beauty.[115]

This theory falls foul of what Yuriko Saito describes as environmental determinism and what we might here refer to as functional determinism. It is particularly nonsensical as applied to many designed objects where the relationship between the object's overall function and its sensuous surface is often arbitrary. Objects such as x-ray machines, televisions and audio speakers consist of functional electrical apparatus *encased in* an unrelated plastic or metal exterior. A sound technician might encounter several identical black plastic boxes containing audio apparatus of different complexity and quality, but a convincing account of functional beauty cannot suggest that he award greater functional beauty to the box with the better speaker.[116]

Parsons' subsequent account of functional beauty in his *Philosophy of Design* acknowledges this problem and aims to focus instead on what is perceptible, allowing that on the "functional fit" account "the pursuit of functionality will not always produce this sort of beauty, but there are instances in which it will". This approach from Parsons is more convincing than Carlsons' cognitive account, but it also diminishes the ability of

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[115] *Ibid.*

[116] This is also argued by Penny Sparke: "As a set of constructional principles the machine aesthetic, and the theory of functionalism, were more easily and appropriately applied to a simple wooden chair or a silver teapot than to a vacuum cleaner or a radio, which ended up necessarily concealing, rather than revealing, their inner structural components. The body-shell principle of the car stylists and the commercial industrial designers, used to conceal inner workings and present a visual illusion of simplicity proved much more appropriate in the end however much it negated functionalist principles". Penny Sparke, quoted in Parsons, *The Philosophy of Design*, p. 104.

functional value to affect aesthetic experience, undermining his purported support for functionalism. That is, if the singular pursuit of good function does not lead to steam-engine-esque functional beauty, but rather to inelegance or dreariness, then the designer is left with a choice: accept the form as it is, or make it easier on the eye.

Equality of Species and Buildings

By equating aesthetic value with the notion of "functional fit", and by reducing all buildings to the level of human habitat, Carlson's theory not only encompasses the bus shelter and the cathedral but furthermore works to award them equal value:

> [T]he gas station, the shopping center, and the factory are each as integral a part of the natural human environment and *as viable a candidate for aesthetic appreciation* as are the paradigmatic works of architecture (my italics)[117]

Carlson here echoes Saito's argument that a swine can be aesthetically appreciable for "exuding its swine-like-ness to the fullest degree",[118] endorsing Joshua Reynolds' sentiment that "the works of nature, if we compare one species with another, are all equally beautiful".[119] Extended to a theory of design, however, it would suggest that although we can prefer this or that bus shelter for its functionality or bus-shelter-like-ness, and we can prefer this or that cathedral for its functionality or cathedral-like-ness, we cannot claim that cathedrals have more aesthetic value than bus shelters. This latter claim is hard to accept. Our aesthetic expectations for bus shelters are attainably low, whereas we expect our monuments to be

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[117] Carlson, "Reconsidering the Aesthetics of Architecture", p. 23.

[118] Yuriko Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 106.

[119] Joshua Reynolds, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 99. Published originally in *The Idler*, No. 82 (10 Nov 1979).

aesthetically sophisticated. Whilst it may be a category mistake to judge a simple structure by the standards of high concept design, this does not mean that all well-functioning structures are aesthetically equal: it would be a category mistake to expect the same technological sophistication of a calculator as of a desktop computer, but this does not mean we cannot agree that the computer *has* greater technological sophistication. Carlson's theory gives us no means to claim that the Taj Mahal has greater aesthetic impact than a well-functioning corkscrew.

Dominance of the Functional

Parsons is at pains in his *Philosophy of Design* to argue that "proper function" is a meaningful and specific, rather than vague and elastic, concept. However, Carlson's presentation of function is at times expansively vague, allowing for the "visual interest" of shop facades,[120] "functional fit by means of ornamentation",[121] and "an ambience of fit with the cultural history of a place".[122] However, a functionalism seemingly open to rebranding all other values as "sentimentally functional", "socially functional" or "ornamentally functional" is no longer using the term "function" in the narrower sense intended by Loos, implying a restriction to the practical and necessary. It is, indeed, hardly comprehensible as a "functionalism" at all.

  Elsewhere, however, Parsons adopts Adolf Loos' stricter view of functionalism, echoing the argument that designed objects should be made with function rather than expression in mind. Parsons backs up this claim with what he calls his "better realization argument" which runs as follows:

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[120] Carlson and Parsons, *Functional Beauty*, p. 144.

[121] Carlson, "Reconsidering the Aesthetics of Architecture", p. 25.

[122] *Ibid.*

1. Design is made expressive in order to display our valuable nature
2. If Xs have P in order to perform F (and P has no other advantages), but F is done better by something else, then P is not a good-making feature of Xs
3. The display of our valuable nature is better done by things other than expressive Design objects, (namely, actions)
4. There are no other advantages to expression in Design
5. So, expression is not a good-making feature of Design[123]

There is, Parsons argues, "something *irrational* about the kind of expression that underlies much of our love of ornament in Design".[124] Furthermore, for Parsons expression is untrustworthy: it can present an image that is not the truth. Better, he argues, to follow Loos in suggesting that "Freedom from ornament is a sign of spiritual strength".[125]

The argument has weaknesses: a) Parsons, for unexplained reasons, asks us to obtain a goal by using, instead of a suite of helpful measures, merely the "best" *one*; b) actions, as well as appearances, can be deceptive. We are never in possession of someone's *complete* actions, only a fraction: public acts of kindness may disguise evil deeds in private; c) Parsons significantly underplays the impact of foregoing expression in functional objects: restaurants with no atmosphere; clothes with no style; the inability to use cultural expression as a means of selecting those social groups and locations where we may, as Parsons himself may term it, "fit".[126]

Parsons allows that this would leave the modernist with "the unpalatable view that good Design can have no meaning or expressive power

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[123] Parsons, *The Philosophy of Design*, p. 79.

[124] *Ibid.*

[125] Adolf Loos, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 82.

[126] Parsons' use of the word "display" in his better realisation argument here is also noteworthy. He may, it seems, equally have written that expression in design aims at *expressing* – rather than displaying – our valuable nature. However, in doing so, it would strike us as all the less likely that anything other than expression itself would be best suited to the task of expression. By using the word "display" Parsons may be hinting at a direct access rather than indirect interpretation. It is by no means certain, however, that we ever can obtain such access by *any* means.

whatsoever".[127] The functionalist can avoid this problem, argues Parsons, by suggesting that the *Zeitgeist* is inevitably expressed when we pursue functionalism. Parsons offers no compelling argument for this, however, and a general cultural Zeitgeist would nonetheless not aid us in the sorts of examples mentioned above. Furthermore, Parsons admits that – contrary to the arguments of the original functionalists – pursuit of function is no guarantee of formal aesthetic value or of ethical value: you cannot pursue function and get the others for free.

At the beginning of his *Philosophy of Design*, Parsons argues for the appeal of functionalism as a means of resolving what he terms the "epistemological problem" of design, concerning "the sort of knowledge that good Designers apparently require":[128]

> In addition to the practical aspect, the Designer apparently has to
> consider the functional, the symbolic, the aesthetic, the mediating,
> and even the social and political dimensions of the project [...]
> materials that would satisfy the functional requirements may have the
> wrong symbolic connotations.[129]

One option, that Parsons rejects, is to support "the traditional view that good Designers possess an intuitive 'feel for the problem' that allows them to somehow obtain the right solution".[130] This approach, for Parsons, is uncomfortably mysterious; difficult for the philosopher to pin down. Another option, that Parsons is far more amendable to, is the functionalist approach of "changing our conception of the nature of the Design problem so as to emphasize the search for functionality and downplay other aspects such as symbolism and aesthetics, where any guiding principles are harder to find".[131]

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[127] *Ibid.*, p. 84.

[128] *Ibid.*, p. 35.

[129] *Ibid.*, p. 32.

[130] *Ibid.*, p. 52.

[131] Despite Parsons' attraction to functionalism, however, as mentioned above he ultimately rejects the functionalist's appealing claim that taking care of functional

Functionalism, then, is appealing to Parsons as a means of simplifying and rationalising the work of design, of conceiving of design as *episteme* rather than *techne,* and of avoiding the uncomfortable value appraisals inherent in any design project. Functionalism gives us a theory that is neater, simpler, more rational. Even by Parsons' own lights, however, a myopic pursuit of function over other values does not bring those other values along for free; his "better realisation argument", as an attempt to provide a rational grounding for Loos' rhetorical manifesto, is similarly unable to do the job required of it. There is, in the end, no compelling reason to privilege functional value, other than its continued appeal as a means of "changing our conception of the nature of the Design problem", of minimising our need to grapple with other values, of assuring ourselves of the rational grounding of our "guiding principles".

<p style="text-align:center">◆</p>

Part Four: Design and Engineering

I have argued above against Carlson's claim that design offers a misguided model through which to approach the built environment. The question remains, however, whether *all* functional structures in our built environment can be understood as design.

In theories that define architecture as an art form, it is common to draw a line between two types of structure: the "mere" building, and the "work" of architecture. This sentiment is perhaps best expressed by Nikolaus Pevsner's assertion that "a bicycle shed is a building; Lincoln

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value will guarantee the proper aesthetic and ethical values. Parsons defends a version of functionalism, arguing that design should focus on genuine, basic functional needs rather than unnecessary or frivolous ones.

Cathedral is a piece of architecture".[132] This idea is echoed also in Lefebvre's distinction between buildings and monuments:

> Buildings have functions, forms and structures, but they do not integrate the formal, functional and structural "moments" of social practice [...] Buildings are to monuments as everyday life is to festival, products to works.[133]

Whereas Carlson sought to award the bicycle shed and the cathedral equal status, for Pevsner and Lefebvre the monument and the building are of a fundamentally different nature. So too for Lefebvre (and recalling Habermas' comments above) are what he terms "residence" and "housing", the former applying to settled homes, and the latter applying to transient rental units.[134]

For Lewis Mumford such a division between engineering and architecture is present not merely between two different buildings, but also within an individual building itself:

> On the one side there is the engineering side of building: a matter of calculating loads and stresses, of making joints watertight and roofs rainproof, of setting down foundations so solidly that the building that stands on them will not crack or sink. But on the other side there is the whole sphere of expression [...] feeling more courtly when he enters a palace, more pious when he enters a church.[135]

Mumford argues that "the separate functions are clearly recognisable in any analysis of an architectural structure".[136] Foundations and inner drainage, he suggests, are engineering, whereas the building's shape and scale belong

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[132] Nikolous Pevsner, *An Outline of European Architecture* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1958), p. 23.

[133] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space,* trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 223.

[134] *Ibid.*, 222.

[135] Lewis Mumford, "Symbol and Function in Architecture", *Art and Technics* (New York and Chichester: Colombia University Press, 2000), pp. 111-135 (p. 112).

[136] *Ibid.*

to architecture. However, other elements of a building appear more difficult to classify. What of a gothic vault, or a classical column? Such objects are subject to the "calculating of loads and stresses" associated with engineering, and yet are also essential expressive components of the gothic and classical orders. Furthermore, whilst road crash barriers, for instance, would at first appear to us "clearly" to be works of engineering, this is contingently rather than necessarily true. Examples can be found, such as the Craigieburn Bypass in Melbourne, of such road structures exhibiting both functional *and* artistic purpose, of road crash barriers reimagined as, in the words of Craigieburn's designers, "a poetic reading of the site".[137]

Figures 8 and 9: The foot bridge and crash barriers of Craigieburn Bypass, Melbourne, designed by Robert Owen, Taylor Cullity Lethlean and Tonkin Zulaikha Greer

The difference between engineering and design might therefore be better characterised not as a divide between different types of objects but rather as a difference in approach, creation or purpose. To design, rather than to engineer, an object suggests a concern not only with technical function, but also with how that object is received and appreciated by its users.

For Parsons, we may best speak of a broad concept of design, including engineering, which involves the practical business of intentional problem-solving, and a more narrow conception of design that refers more specifically to professional practice. It is in this latter sense, suggests

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[137] See description of the project on the website of Robert Owen: https://www.robertowen.com.au/craigieburn-project-text [accessed Nov 2021].

Parsons, that there is a difference between design and engineering as commonly understood. The domain of the designer concerns the "interactive dynamics" of the object, "the way the object is used and the way it responds to use".[138] Engineers, notes Parsons, are often concerned rather with the object's function apart from the user's interaction with it. This point may need refinement, however, since the work of engineers will often take into account the human body as a weight, load, or dynamic object, in order to ensure that bridges and floors do not collapse beneath our feet. For engineering, then, the human is a dynamic object, whereas for design the human is also a *subject*.

Whilst Parsons argues that aesthetics is not a necessary condition of design in this broader sense of problem-solving, it is harder to maintain this claim in the latter sense of the term. If we concern ourselves with how an object presents itself to us as subjects, how we interact with it, and the effect it will have on our felt bodies or our mood, then its aesthetic presence will necessarily form part of this consideration. The extent to which we modify our plans to accommodate the human subject will depend upon many factors, such as how often humans are likely to interact with the object, its cultural significance, its location, our financial budget. That is, whilst it is not a given that all designed objects in this sense *will be* beautiful, refined or aesthetically enriching, it is nevertheless – in those cases where designed objects impact upon human subjects – always relevant to take this into consideration even if, as for Adolf Loos, we choose nonetheless to forego adornment and expression in the name of ascetic "spiritual strength". Indeed, as I will argue later, the decision of whether or not we should treat a certain object in our built environment as an object of design rather than engineering, whether to take its aesthetics into account, is a key matter in resolving aesthetic disputes.

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[138] Parsons, *The Philosophy of Design*, p. 23.

Designworld

The intention of this chapter has not been to offer necessary and sufficient conditions for a definition of design. Rather, it has been to explore the uses of the concept and how it affects our aesthetic expectations. As argued by Forsey, attempts at ahistorical and essentialist definitions of art are bound to fail, and any convincing account of design must allow historical movement.

Rather than attempting to police the boundaries of art, design and engineering, or the proper role of function and aesthetics within them, we may rather turn to Arthur Danto's suggestion in "The Artworld" that it is precisely this ongoing debate, and practitioners' different approaches to it, that constitutes the ongoing meaningfulness and richness of artistic practice. We may imagine a grid of artistically relevant predicates, argues Danto, such as whether or not something is expressionist, or is representational. Certain qualities, such as being representational, may forever have been considered an essential part of being an artwork. Other qualities may have been thought of as debarring a definition of art. What matters, says Danto, for whether or not something constitutes art, is not whether it is or isn't F, or is or isn't G, but rather the extent to which it is involved in this ongoing debate and practice, and is responding thoughtfully to it:

> The greater the variety of artistically relevant predicates, the more complex the individual members of the art world become [...] One row in the matrix is as legitimate as another. An artistic breakthrough consists, I suppose, in adding the possibility of a column to the matrix. Artists then, with greater or less alacrity, occupy the positions thus opened up[139]

Rather than, as Parsons does, attempting to provide some rational *grounding* for Adolf Loos' functionalism, therefore, we may be better off

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[139] Arthur Danto, "The Artworld", *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 61, No. 19 (1964), pp. 571-584 (p. 584).

simply considering Loos' rhetoric as a contribution to the design world, an addition to the matrix, under which designers and architects could no longer unthinkingly reach for ornament in their designs but rather, in doing so, must more self-consciously position themselves within the design world's matrix of design-relevant predicates.[140]

Conclusion

The "chemically pure" divide between aesthetics and function is common, but unhelpful. As suggested by Adorno, it is rare to find forms – particularly objects of design – which have not benefited from a consideration of both.

A separation of objects into *either* art *or* function may serve us in making general remarks about the difference between an aesthetic and functional approach or temperament – as we find in Heidegger – yet this cannot be accepted as a serious suggestion that hybrid objects, "nourished" by both do not exist. Indeed, as noted, Heidegger's own example of an artistic object in his "Origin of the Work of Art" is a hybrid object of design, serving a purpose as a temple, and made according to the requirement that it not only serve a world-making, artistic or poetic role, but that it should also stand up. The functional nature of designed objects does not *preclude* an artistic or poetic approach,[141] and there is no reason to presume that designed objects are shackled with an inevitable or defining relationship with social-signalling and fashion.

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[140] A similar point is made by Forsey when she notes that the functionalist injunction "is normative rather than descriptive: for design to be any good, form should be superseded by function, which is clearly not the same as suggesting that designed objects have no form at all". Functionalism offers not a definition of design, but rather a particular normative view of what constitutes good design, at least what constitutes good design *today.*

[141] Although, for Heidegger, *Enframing* itself – a technological, reductive attitude applied to all objects we encounter, even natural objects such as rivers – may be said to block "poesis"

An insistence of the divide between the aesthetic and the functional is therefore not a description of how objects present themselves to us, but rather, as for Loos and Parsons, a normative judgement of how objects *should* be. This judgement, and the virulent opposition to it, may be best understood as a historically-situated contribution to a fledgling designworld, a key row in the matrix of design-relevant predicates within which designed objects situate themselves.[142]

Such theories may furthermore be understood as a way of tidying-up or resolving the difficulties we have in weighing conflicting values against one another: in this case, resolving the tension between function and aesthetics. As will be argued in Part Two, however, the conflict between aesthetic, functional, and even political values, cannot be so easily resolved or avoided – as Parsons himself ultimately accepts.

Furthermore, as argued above, approaching the aesthetics of the built environment through an environmental aesthetics or metaphor of nature mischaracterises, ignores, or even demonises human creativity, and promotes an attitude of acceptance which impedes our ability to understand and challenge the built environment which emerges from economic liberalism. As will be argued, we will not always wish to accept the unregulated, but rather may wish to embrace the notion of design as "changing existing situations into preferred ones", as an important component of a more utopian – instead of accepting – attitude.

The notion of "design", ubiquitous today, is readily understood, but little explored. Approaching the problem of aesthetics in the built environment through an appreciation of design helps us to bypass, or move beyond, the twentieth-century preoccupation with a function/aesthetic divide.

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[142] As suggested by Danto, however, and as will be argued in Part Two, we will not find ourselves able to judge which positions in the matrix are more *legitimate* than others.

It may also refocus attention on those facets of the designworld and design process which differ so notably from art, and which warrant further attention, in particular design's two-staged process of modelling and production; its team-led nature; its relationship to design regulations, taxation, political ideals, and capital; and its perceived association with fashion and social value. In the chapters which follow, this thesis will address the aesthetics of the built environment through an examination of just these issues.

Indeed, what marks design apart from most artworks is that, as Jane Forsey notes, design is "meant to be used rather than contemplated".[143] The traditional aesthetic approach of detached judgement therefore poses a particular problem for an aesthetics of design. It is to this matter that I turn in Chapter Two.

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[143] Forsey, *The Aesthetics of Design*, p. 5.

Chapter Two: Beyond Judgement: The Aesthetics of Atmospheres

The primary "object" of perception is atmospheres. What is first and immediately perceived is neither sensations nor shapes or objects or their constellations, as Gestalt psychology thought, but atmospheres, against whose background the analytic regard distinguishes such things as objects, forms, colours[144]

Gernot Böhme, *The Aesthetics of Atmospheres*

Kant's third critique is named not the *Critique of Aesthetic Experience* nor even the *Critique of Aesthetics* but rather the *Critique of Judgement*, and it is judgement that is its central concern.[145] The judgement that Kant's theory has in mind is furthermore of a particular kind: consistent and universal. That is, for Kant, "we seek a judgement that is to service as a universal rule".[146]

Kant's influence is felt strongly in Roger Scruton's *The Aesthetics of Architecture*. For Scruton, too, aesthetics is properly concerned with judgements of taste rather than with aesthetic experience in the broader sense. Aesthetic preferences, argues Scruton, are "merely capricious".[147] In

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[144] Gernot Böhme, *The Aesthetics of Atmospheres* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), p. 23.

[145] Kant's aesthetic theory is complex and lengthy, and it is not possible to do justice to it here in its entirety. I will focus on those aspects which relate most specifically to the topic at hand.

[146] Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*, p. 160.

[147] Roger Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Architecture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), p. 107.

contrast, "[a] man exercises taste when he regards his enjoyment of one building as part of an aesthetic outlook, and hence as in principle justifiable by reasons that might also apply to another building".[148] For Gernot Böhme, this approach is typical of what he terms the "old aesthetics", best understood as "a judgemental aesthetics, that is, it is concerned not so much with experience, especially sensuous experience [...] as with judgements, discussion, conversation".[149]

Aesthetic theories which foreground judgement have particular problems adapting to the built environment, where our everyday engagement is often pre-critical and unreflective. Indeed, as Karsten Harries notes:

> Given the aesthetic approach, architecture will never manage to become as respectable as painting or sculpture [...] For buildings need to be more than objects for aesthetic contemplation. The architect has to take into account the uses to which a building will be put, while those using it will not be able to keep their distance from it[150]

The traditional approach therefore offers us a rigorous account of a type of aesthetic response that has more limited application to the built environment, designed with the reflective critic, rather than the busy resident, in mind.

The shortcomings of the art-centred judgement approach are pointed to also by Yuriko Saito in her *Everyday Aesthetics*. The traditional approach, she argues, brackets the aesthetic from our everyday life, calls for a detached disinterest which we cannot maintain in normal life, and tends to neglect or denigrate the so-called "lower senses" and sensual experience. Saito and other everyday aestheticians call for greater appreciation of the aesthetic that falls outside of this rarefied experience.

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[148] *Ibid.*

[149] Gernot Böhme, "Atmosphere as the Fundamental Concept of a New Aesthetics", *Thesis Eleven*, Vol. 36, 1993, pp. 113-126 (p. 114).

[150] Harries, p. 5.

In her criticism of Saito's aesthetics, however, Kantian theorist Jane Forsey argues that the everyday aesthetics movement has "a lack of any theoretical structure or clear methodology" and "devolves into a series of broad gestures that fail to cohere and fail to amount to a substantial theory that can stand up to analysis and critique".[151] Furthermore, to plug the gap, Forsey notes, Saito turns to *ethical* theory to bolster the foundations of her analysis, which ultimately skews the autonomy of her aesthetics. For Forsey, then, the solution is to return to the fold and to embrace a Kantian aesthetics of judgement.

This chapter, in contrast, argues that Forsey's aesthetics of judgement is not a suitable replacement for what Saito and other everyday aestheticians are setting out to do.

- Part One will argue that the traditional, judgement-centred Kantian approach has significant limitations in its application to the aesthetics of the built environment.
- Part Two addresses Saito's everyday aesthetics, and outlines a number of problems with it – including those mentioned by Forsey. However, I argue that Forsey's attempts to modify the judgement approach for an aesthetics of design do not adequately address its own limitations.
- In Part Three I argue that aesthetic foundations for the built environment are better found in Gernot Böhme's aesthetics of atmospheres. The advantages of Böhme's approach for an aesthetics of the built environment are then presented.

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[151] Forsey, *The Aesthetics of Design*, p. 218-9.

Part One: The Limitations of an Aesthetics of Judgement

Judgement Usurps Experience

A first criticism of the judgement-centred approach is the most self-evident: that such theories foreground judgement itself, to the detriment of experience.

In his Analytic of the Beautiful, Kant contrasts pre-critical experience with the act of judgement, questioning whether aesthetic pleasure comes before or after we judge an object. He concludes that were the pleasure to precede the judgement, the pleasure could not be aesthetic but merely agreeable, having "only private validity".[152] Rather, Kant argues, the pleasure is based upon, and *follows from*, the judgement of taste.

> [I]t must be the universal communicability of the mental state [...]
> which underlies the judgement of taste as its subjective condition, and
> the pleasure in the object must be its consequence [...] [T]his merely
> subjective (aesthetic) *judging* of the object [...] *precedes* the pleasure in
> the object and is the basis of this pleasure, [a pleasure] in the
> harmony of the cognitive powers (my italics).[153]

As such, any pleasure we might feel in response to a given building or environment cannot be considered aesthetic unless it follows from rather than precedes a judgement of taste.

For Scruton, too:

> The pleasure of aesthetic experience is inseparable from the act of
> attention to its object [...] and when attention ceases, whatever
> pleasure continues can no longer be an exercise of taste. This is part

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[152] Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, p. 61.

[153] *Ibid.*, pp. 61-62.

of what might lead one to say that, here, pleasure is not so much an effect of its object, as a *mode of understanding it.*[154]

For Scruton, aesthetic pleasure is inseparable from reflection upon the built environment, inseparable from thought, consideration, understanding, and judgement. This commitment has profound consequences for his aesthetics of architecture.

In his original introduction, Scruton suggests that architecture is best understood as a vernacular art, a "natural extension of common human activities" such as laying a table or folding a napkin so that it "looks right".[155] Here, his position seems to resemble that of Saito, who puts great aesthetic emphasis on such everyday tasks. Indeed, Scruton's introduction to the book's 2013 edition directly associates his text with these more recent theories, as concerned with "the aesthetics of everyday life".[156] However, Saito's use of the word "everyday" refers not only to the buildings themselves (vernacular, ordinary) but also to our appreciation of them, focusing on "those responses that propel us toward everyday decision and action, *without any accompanying contemplative appreciation*" (my italics).[157] In contrast, Scruton's more traditional, Kantian approach to aesthetics is concerned not with our everyday engagement and interaction with the built environment (riding an elevator to work; shopping on our local high street) but with a special kind of aesthetic attention. As such, Scruton makes the following point:

> Now, someone might argue that people absorb from the organic contours of our ancient towns, with their human details, their softened lines and their "worked" appearance, a kind of pleasure that sustains them in their daily lives; while in the bleak environment of the modern city a dissatisfaction is felt that disturbs people without their knowing why. Even if this were true, it is not necessarily relevant to aesthetic judgement. Such inarticulate pleasures and displeasures have little in common with architectural taste and give us no guidance

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[154] Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Architecture*, p. 103.

[155] *Ibid.*, p. 15.

[156] *Ibid.*, p. ix.

[157] Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*, p. 11.

in the practice of criticism. They can be accommodated, I suspect, only on the level of human "need"[158]

For Scruton, aesthetic theory is chiefly, perhaps entirely, concerned with the business of detached, objective judgement. It is an aesthetics of gentlemanly critique concerned, as Böhme suggests above, "not so much with experience, especially sensuous experience [...] as with judgements, discussion, conversation".

For Scruton, such pre-critical experience of our built environment cannot properly be termed aesthetic because it is too impure: a jumbled mixture of personal associations, sensual experience, accurate and inaccurate understanding, creating an impression that is almost certainly lacking in universalism and certainly lacking in an agent's self-conscious *awareness* of whether their experience is universal or not. Kantian aesthetics, that is, requires an "operation of reflection" to ensure the purity of the judgement.[159] Acknowledging that some might find this a little artful or forced, Kant nonetheless argues that "nothing is more natural than abstracting from charm and emotion *when we seek a judgement that is to service as a universal rule*" (my italics).[160]

Any aesthetics of the built environment which concerns itself solely with critically detached judgements of taste, however, rejects as aesthetically irrelevant the majority of our seemingly legitimate and appropriate interactions with our built environment, and therefore has a niche and limited application and relevance.

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[158] Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Architecture*, p. 103.

[159] Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*, p. 160.

[160] *Ibid.*
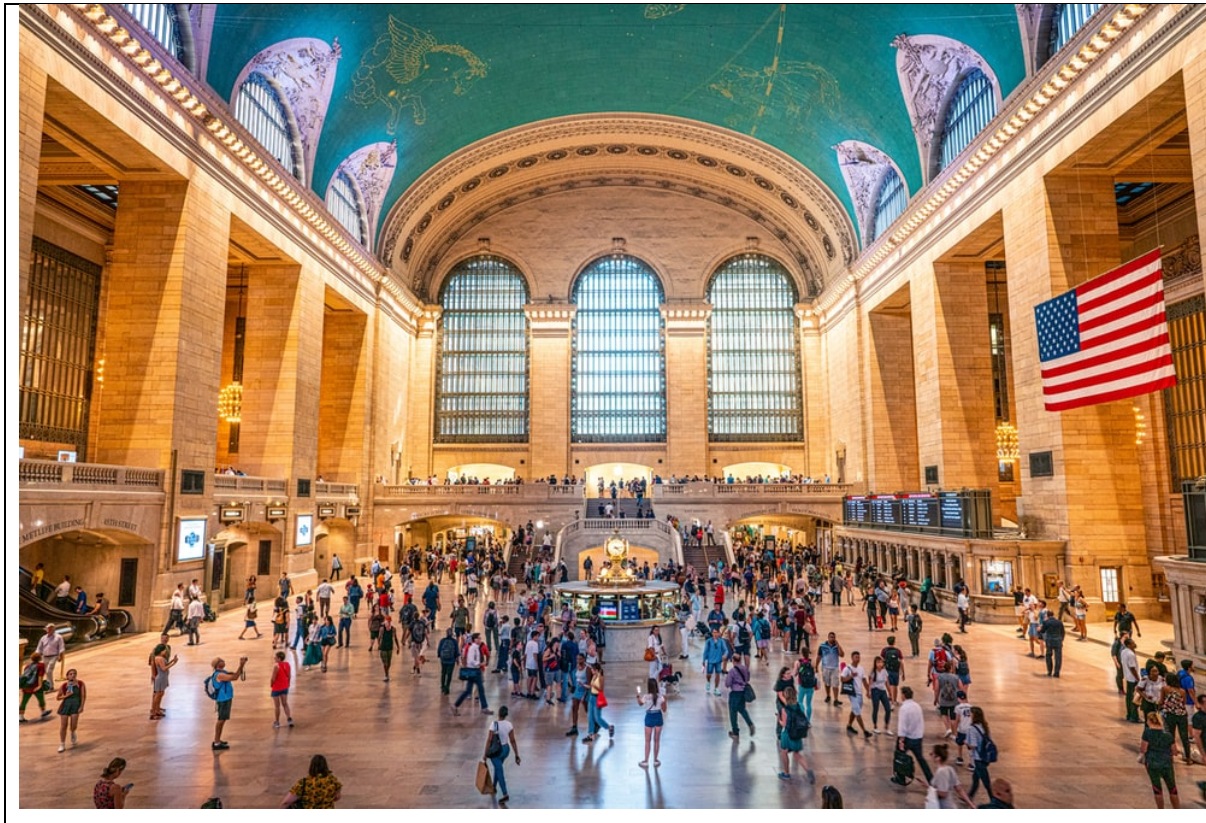
Figure 10: Grand Central Station: Under Scruton's theory, our experience is aesthetic only in moments when we pause, detach and analyse. Our more common inarticulate or "background" feelings of built space are not properly aesthetic

This is not to suggest that theorists such as Böhme, who criticise this emphasis on judgement, do not themselves see the worth in analysing our environment or bringing to more conscious awareness why, for example, some spaces are melancholy and others are tranquil. Indeed, Böhme's aesthetic theory actively encourages such work. However, for Böhme such reflection and analysis directs itself at an experience that will not be aesthetically lacking if reflection does not take place, whereas for Scruton aesthetics is *inseparable* from our asking ourselves "why?", and from the pursuit of universal judgement. It is not enough, for Scruton, to feel that a building is uplifting, sombre, or spiritual. The truly aesthetic response questions the reasons *why* the building is uplifting, sombre or spiritual. Judgement is not presented as a means of *analysing* or *understanding* our pre-critical, inattentive aesthetic experience but is rather itself elevated to the status of being the only true aesthetic experience. Judgement, in effect, *usurps* experience.

An Incoherent Account of Experience

A further problem is that, in their bid for universalism, Kant and Scruton drastically limit the boundaries of the aesthetic, excluding the sensual (for both Kant and Scruton), the cognitive (for Kant), and – when judging architecture – everything non-architectural (explicitly for Scruton and implicitly for Kant). As noted by Derrida,

> The whole analytic of aesthetic judgement forever assumes that one can distinguish rigorously between the intrinsic and extrinsic. Aesthetic judgement *must* properly bear upon intrinsic beauty, not on finery and surrounds.[161]

On Scruton's account, when judging the architectural worth of a house, I must ignore the tasteful or tasteless interior furnishings, the smell of fresh bread or of stale cigarettes, the stifling mugginess or dank coldness, the birdsong or traffic noise intruding from outside, the incidental knowledge that this house belonged to my grandmother or even that it is an active crime scene. We are to attend, rather, to architectural formal style.

This may suit the pursuit of "seek[ing] a judgement that is to service as a universal rule" or of "exercis[ing] taste" through cultivating a consistent critical outlook. However, applied to experience itself, it is experience of a very particular kind – the experience of self-conscious judgement itself – and can require laboured effort or imagination. I may attempt, for example, to judge the form of a dress without reference to its garish colour, its belt and accessories, and my knowledge that the dress is now out of style. However, I cannot have an *experience* of the dress that is colourless, beltless and ahistorical. Scruton's account of architectural experience, however, would

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[161] Jacques Derrida, "The Parergon", in *The Continental Aesthetics Reader*, ed. Clive Cazeaux (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 412-429 (p. 425).

ask us to take just this approach with our aesthetic response to the built environment.[162]

As noted by Merleau-Ponty, in contrast, "My perception is not a sum of visual, tactile and audible givens: I perceive in a total way with my whole being: I grasp a unique structure of the thing, a unique way of being, which speaks to all my senses at once".[163] That is, our experience of a room, a building, a built environment is an integral whole and "[s]ynesthetic perception is the rule".[164] As such, it can be challenging to pick and choose which elements of our environment to attend to. Indeed, if we were easily able to do this we could avoid tidying a room and merely imagine the clutter away, or avoid repainting a house and simply imagine it to be white rather than green, or even having no colour at all. Whilst many ancient monuments ease the way for us by having been long since cleared or cleaned of the extraneous, leaving only pure form, it seems absurd to suggest that architecture is best experienced in old, deserted buildings rather than in living ones.

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[162] For Böhme, this is evidence of a flawed "thing ontology", the assumption that we may somehow grasp something independently of the way it reveals itself to us. The blueness of a cup, he argues, cannot be considered as a "property" of the cup that may be set aside, but rather is "a way in which the cup is present in space, how it makes its presence felt [...] something that radiates out into the cup's surroundings and in a certain way colours and 'tinges' it". When Scruton argues that "aesthetic experience is inseparable from the act of attention to its object", is "a mode of understanding it", this object is *not* the way that the building presents itself to us in space, or how it makes its presence felt, since this presence might in fact have to be *imaginatively overridden* in order to better obtain objectivity. Scruton's aesthetic experience therefore seems to draw us away from our perceptual experience into abstraction.

[163] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense*, trans. Hubert L Dreyfus and Patricia Allen Dreyfus (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 50.

[164] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald A. Landes (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), p. 238.

This is particularly so since recent studies have revealed that our clean, beige ancient temples and statues were in fact originally painted, often in the same bright colours found in the work of Gaudi, whose colourful aesthetics is dismissed by Scruton as "[remaining] at the primitive level".[165] [166]Similarly, despite arguing for the ease of such exercises of abstraction, Kant promotes built environments which exclude these inessentials for us, being themselves formalist, timeless or neutrally coloured: we are told that "charms" should not be allowed to "interfere" with the beautiful form, and that "usually the requirement of beautiful form severely restricts [what] colours [may be used]".[167] That is, Kant here suggests that the purity called for by his aesthetics can (at least sometimes) be best engineered through the creation of *pure objects* rather than by mental abstraction.

Photo removed

Photo removed for copyright reasons. It showed a recreation of the Parthenon in painted colours.

Available to view online by clicking here:
https://exploringgreece.tv/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/parthenosnas-xromata708.jpg.webp

Figure 11: Painted Parthenon: a recreation of the Parthenon in its original painted colours. Studies have also indicated that statues were adorned with colour and even clothing[168]

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[165] Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Architecture*, p. 201.

[166] See for example Natalie Haynes, "When the Parthenon Had Dazzling Colours", *BBC* (bbc.com, 22 Jan 2018). Available at https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20180119-when-the-parthenon-had-dazzling-colours [accessed March 2021].

[167] Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*, p. 71.

[168] See Haynes, "When the Parthenon Had Dazzling Colours".

If extended to all objects of design, however, this would seem to call for aesthetic experiences of bookshelves without books, vases without flowers, clothes without persons. This, however, runs contrary to objects that are made for use. In his "The Origin of the Work of Art", Heidegger notes of a peasant woman's shoes that:

> The peasant woman wears her shoes in the field. Only here are they what they are. They are all the more genuinely so, the less the peasant woman thinks about the shoes while she is at work, or looks at them at all, or is even aware of them. She stands and walks in them. That is how shoes actually serve. It is in this process of the use of equipment that we must actually encounter the character of equipment[169]

Similarly, as noted by Gadamer, to experience architecture as architecture we must see it in use, as a background to other forms, objects and activities:

> Architecture gives shape to space [...] That is why architecture embraces all the other forms of representation: all works of plastic art, all ornament [...] A building [...] should fit into a living unity and not be an end in itself. It seeks to fit into this unity by providing ornament, a background of mood, or a framework[170]

In his *Why We Build*, the architectural writer Rowan Moore builds on Walter Benjamin's assertion that "Architecture is experienced as background or not at all"[171] by arguing that, "the need of all architectural space, however magnificent or perfect, [is] to be *completed by something outside itself*, even if this might sometimes be no more than a private thought by a single person

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[169] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art", p. 32.

[170] Gadamer, p. 135. Gadamer's reference here to a "mood, or a framework" recalls Böhme's notion of "atmospheres", to be discussed later in this chapter. Whilst designed objects are often engaged with as background, or when we are engaged with other matters, this is not to say that, as Heidegger argued, functional objects "*disappear* into usefulness" (my italics). As will be argued by Böhme, we may sense or feel an object's atmosphere even whilst not directly attending to it.

[171] Walter Benjamin, quoted in Rowan Moore, *Why We Build* (London: Picador, 2012), p. 98.

passing through" (my italics).[172] Buildings, bookcases, and vases, in other words, are incomplete, and designed objects such as shoes, buildings and jugs are intended to be used rather than contemplated (although, as Heidegger himself demonstrates, it is possible to contemplate them also). A "true" architectural experience, therefore, is more likely to *include* those very features that Kant and Scruton would exclude.

Elevation of Universalism

There are at least two problems with Kant and Scruton's emphasis on universal judgement. The first is that it relies on an unproven assumption that we share a human nature or common (i.e. universally shared) sense. The second is that it assumes, with minimal argument, that what is universal is also more valuable and important than what is not.

For Kant, "the universal communicability of a feeling presupposes a common sense", which he describes as "a sense shared [by all of us], i.e., a power to judge that in reflecting takes account (a priori), in our thought, of everyone else's way of presenting [something]".[173] Kant argues that such a sense can be assumed a priori, without relying on psychological observations.

In arguing that this common sense allows us to take into account everyone else's way of presenting something, Kant asks us to imagine not only the views of those people we happen to know but of all possible people, including people we will never encounter. Kant is not asking us to pre-empt or imagine cultural aesthetics other than our own ("How would someone steeped in Eastern aesthetics view this temple?") since any culturally-relative preferences are of no interest to his theory. Rather, we are asked to

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[172] Rowan Moore, *Why We Build*, p. 100.

[173] Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*, p. 88 and p. 160. For Kant, "the universal communicability of a feeling presupposes a common sense", which he describes as a "power to judge that in reflecting takes account (a priori), in our thought, of everyone else's way of presenting [something]".

strip away all culturally relative preferences, in order to satisfy ourselves that we will,

> compare our own judgement with human reason in general and thus escape the illusion that arises from the ease of mistaking subjective and private conditions for objective ones, an illusion that would have a prejudicial influence on the judgement.[174]

We are not seeking objectivity by imagining different cultural perspectives but rather identifying which elements of experience can be universally shared, and rejecting the rest.

It is not convincingly clear, however, that we do in fact share a core common nature rather than merely greater or smaller overlapping similarities. Nor is it clear that – even if we do have a shared common nature – we are particularly adept at identifying it. Even Forsey allows that this is a difficulty for Kantian theory, "indebted to Enlightenment notions of the universality of reason".[175] The notorious prejudices of Enlightenment thinkers, including Kant's promotion of white supremacy, are testament to the difficulties we will encounter in endorsing any aesthetics reliant upon our ability to tap into a universally applicable faculty of judgement.

Forsey does not attempt to argue for the existence of such a universality of nature, and indeed seems herself unconvinced by the claim that any such faculty exists. However, she writes:

> [T]he cost of [the Kantian judgement] approach is the presupposition that there is but one way in which the human mind works, cognitively, morally, and aesthetically […] in spite of these problems, the Kantian account is the most consistent and complete theory of beauty available to date […]. If this brings with it corollary problems [that] is the price any account must pay that focuses on elucidating the particular richness of aesthetic judgements.[176]

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[174] Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*, p. 160.

[175] Forsey, *The Aesthetics of Design*, p. 134.

[176] *Ibid.*, p. 134.

For theorists, like Forsey, who are committed to an aesthetics of non-contingent judgement, such an aesthetics relies upon the presupposition of universal nature, and therefore this presupposition must be accepted, albeit (as here) with reservation and discomfort, in the face of evidence to the contrary, and *without supportive argument.*

Even if we could agree, however, that such a common nature exists, it is not clear that what remains after such a stripping away of subjectivity is of any greater *importance to us*, either in general or aesthetically. Indeed, this is a main point of criticism of the Kantian approach to aesthetics, which – in its pursuit of universalism – arrives at a kind of formalism. For Adorno, "[m]ere formal beauty, whatever that might be, is empty and meaningless";[177] Heidegger likewise refers to "that merely aestheticising connoisseurship of the work's formal aspects";[178] Gadamer suggests that when the original purpose of a building is lost, it may "become merely an object of the aesthetic consciousness".[179] What is objected to here is not necessarily aesthetics in its broadest sense but rather in its narrowest: an approach that has stripped away the very cultural and personal meanings, moral associations, and sensual experiences which are nonetheless valued.[180] It is perfectly possible that a given cultural community may award greater aesthetic value to culturally-specific features of architecture than to those features that can necessarily be experienced in the same way by a

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[177] Adorno, "Functionalism Today", p. 19.

[178] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art", p. 66.

[179] Gadamer, p. 134-135.

[180] We may even conceive that we may have been structured differently so as to have even less seemingly "shareable" experience with others and that this shareable component could be even more contingent or inconsequential than design or form. Indeed, strictly speaking even the formal aspects of a building or work can be experienced differently by two people, e.g. if one of these people has visual distortions caused by an irregular retina. One might argue that the accuracy of the undistorted viewpoint can be established objectively, for instance through measurements, and yet the fact would remain that the judgement of beauty itself could not be affirmed by the individual with distorted vision.

different community. We might question, therefore, in what sense we are to argue that the shareable is nonetheless more important, whether it is more important simply *in virtue of* being shareable, or whether the most important aspects of aesthetic experience also, contingently, happen to be those that are shareable.

Scruton, too, shares this elevation of the universal. "A theory of architecture impinges on aesthetics", he writes, "only if it claims a universal validity".[181] Rather than focusing on the notion of a shared human nature, however, Scruton focusses rather on Hegelian theory of self-knowledge, emphasising one's experience of oneself as part of a public world. According to Scruton, the process of self-realisation involves "a making public and objective what is otherwise private and confused".[182] He furthermore, influenced by Wittgenstein's private language argument, writes that:

> To find the "essence" of our mental states we must look not inwards but outwards, to their expressions in activity and in language, to the publicly recognisable practices in which they have their life. *It is only what is publicly accessible that can be publicly described, and it is only what is publicly accessible that is important: nothing else, I should like to argue, can make any difference to our lives* (my italics).[183]

Private, "unshareable" experience is for Scruton, then, confused, unimportant, and inarticulate, and furthermore of no relevance to aesthetics.

For Scruton, aesthetically relevant responses to a building are those which are capable of being communicated in a shared language to others. Similarly, architectural styles must be widely and publicly understood and capable of mutual, critical discussion. Indeed, for Scruton: "If we attempt to discover features of our experiences that are not publicly observable [...] then we simply characterise our experience by means of elaborate

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[181] Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Architecture*, p. 3.

[182] *Ibid.*, p. 227.

[183] *Ibid.*, p. 72.

metaphors".[184] These metaphors "tell us nothing definite about the experiences to which they refer".[185]

Again, however, it is perfectly possible that each individual person experiencing a building will find more value in what is unshareable than in what is shareable. Indeed, by focussing exclusively on what is publicly accessible Kant and Scruton have no means of capturing the kind of personal, intimate relationships we have with buildings, outlined most notably by Gaston Bachelard in his *Poetics of Space*. Whereas Scruton highlights the value of what is shareable, Bachelard focusses on what is necessarily unshareable and even indescribable. For Bachelard, "I alone, in my memories of another century, can open the deep cupboard that still retains for me alone that unique odour of raisins drying on a wicker tray".[186] This sentiment is expressed also with his reference to Sainte-Beuve who, in discussion of the Canaen estate, writes that:

> [I]t is not so much for you, my friend, who never saw this place, and had you visited it, *could not now feel the impressions and colours I feel*, that I have gone over it in such detail, for which I must excuse myself. Nor should you try to see it as a result of what I have said; let the image float inside you; pass lightly; the slightest idea of it will suffice for you (my italics)[187]

Rather than being able to communicate intimate memories and spaces with others through description, Bachelard argues, our best hope is to use poetic language to capture our experience in a way that induces a sort of "reverberation" in the reader, putting them in touch with their own intimate memories of poetic space. We furthermore find in Bachelard an acknowledgement of what he terms "the values of intimacy": the fact that

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[184] Roger Scruton, *Art and Imagination: A Study in the Philosophy of Mind* (Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 1998), p. 11.

[185] *Ibid.*, p. 10.

[186] Gaston Bachelard, "The Poetics of Space (Extract)", trans. Maria Jolas, in Leach (ed.), *Rethinking Architecture*, pp. 86-100 (p. 92).

[187] Sainte-Beuve, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 97.

such personal and often sensual memories and associations remain private to oneself alone is not, for Bachelard, suggestive of a diminished value.[188]

Karsten Harries singles out Scruton for criticism, for having

> an overly reductive understanding of language even in its literal (perhaps we should say, its proper) sense, an understanding that could not begin to do justice to the language of poetry. If the language analogy has something to offer to architectural theory it would seem to be the discourse of poetry to which we should look, rather than to the discourse of science with its true or false assertions - to rhetoric rather than to logic[189]

It is perhaps no coincidence, therefore, that Scruton's own criticism of phenomenology's attempt to articulate private experience is that, as mentioned above, "we simply characterise our experience by means of *elaborate metaphors*" (my italics). Whereas Bachelard would argue that such metaphorical, poetic or indirect language is capable of being meaningfully, and maybe even profoundly, appreciated by others, for Scruton the focus should be on experience and language that is direct, public and capable of truth validation.

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Part Two: Saito's Everyday Aesthetics

The discipline of everyday aesthetics does not, in general, share the problems mentioned above. Indeed, Saito argues that traditional aesthetics is too art-focussed, too visual, and too concerned with those special aesthetic experiences that "stand out" from everyday life rather than being part of it. In contrast, Saito notes that her own definition of aesthetics will

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[188] *Ibid.*, p. 92.

[189] Harries, p. 89.

include "any reactions we form towards the sensuous and/or design qualities of any object, phenomenon, or activity".[190] Rather than being restricted to detached appreciation, says Saito, we may validly experience an object in whatever way is "aesthetically more rewarding".[191] As such, Saito's aesthetics of the built environment includes not only the formal beauty of a given building, but also the cold touch of a steel door handle and the smell of pretzels on a New York street. Similarly, whereas Scruton takes for granted an aesthetics that rewards critical, reflective judgement of a single building, Saito points rather to the immersive, "unbracketed" experience of the entire built environment.

However, whilst Saito's account offers a more convincing and inclusive account of aesthetic experience, Forsey is correct in her criticism that Saito's theory is dominated by ethical values, which overpower, and ultimately undermine, her aesthetics. This chapter will outline four of these ethical intrusions.

1. Aesthetic Value and "Distinctive Characteristics"

It is common among environmental philosophers to argue that, whilst we can make aesthetic judgements between this or that animal of a given species, we are unable to make aesthetic comparisons *between* species. This has the benefit, for an environmental ethics, of allowing slugs and insects to be as aesthetically appreciable as pandas and horses, and therefore equally likely candidates for ecological conservation. For Saito, the "aesthetics of distinctive characteristics" also has a moral component as it appreciates something "on its own terms" rather than "imposing a certain predetermined

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[190] Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*, p. 209.

[191] *Ibid.*, p. 20.

standard of beauty".[192] However – as with Parsons and Carlson previously – the attempt to transfer this model to human environments is problematic.[193]

Saito argues that "each species can be beautiful (or aesthetically appreciable) in many different ways": a swine, for instance, can be appreciated for its "swine-like-ness".[194] However, this would seem to award aesthetic value to any species of animal simply in virtue of its existence, would affirm whatever form such an animal happens to take, however ungainly or ill-proportioned. Transferred to objects from the built environment, it would aesthetically validate any category of building or structure solely in virtue of its existence: Mock Tudor houses, for example, will be celebrated for exhibiting their mock Tudor-ness; corporate flats could be considered all the better for exemplifying the soulless and generic. Such an aesthetics descends into a reductive and conservative approach, praising buildings for how well they resemble a list of expected criteria, which are caricatures or "Platonic ideals" of their architectural category.

Furthermore, there are no clear categories in architecture and the built environment comparable to species in nature. Whilst Saito argues that we cannot compare the "zaniness" of New York City to the "peace and quiet" of a New England town, this need not be because they are from different natural categories.[195] Some seaside towns, such as Brighton in the UK, are buzzy and zany rather than peaceful and quiet; some large cities are, despite their size, conservative and mannered. Saito offers no clear direction regarding what, in the built environment, constitutes the equivalent of a type or kind, whether for instance New York might be able to be compared to London (or whether the American/British difference precludes a type match), whether Milton Keynes can be compared to York (or whether the new town/historic town precludes a type match).

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[192] *Ibid.*, p. 129.

[193] It is problematic too in its original formulation as regarding species, but I will not focus on that here.

[194] *Ibid.*, pp. 106-107.

[195] *Ibid.*, p. 129.

Rather than being comparable to species in nature, Saito is on firmer ground making a comparison with art. Indeed, Saito goes on to argue that correctly categorising an object

> has to do with paying respect to what the object is [...] We have to go out and meet the object on its own terms, rather than demanding that the object come and meet our expectations and satisfy our desires.[196]

This, suggests Saito, helps us in "[a]ppreciating art on its own terms, within the right category".[197] This is a quite different approach, however, from our approach with natural objects, which do not require such a complex interpretation, and which do not themselves, consciously or unconsciously, follow, amend or challenge cultural categories. However, such sympathetic, contextualised interpretation of cultural objects may be adequately dealt with by hermeneutics. The comparison to natural species is misleading and unhelpful.

As will be argued for in Part Two, if we are sometimes unable to make comparisons between species, building types or cities, this is not because of a moral fact that all species and all building types have *equal* value but rather because we do not have objective criteria for such an *all-encompassing* judgement.

2. Dominance of the Ethical: Permission to Aestheticise

In practice, Saito does not always insist upon such equality of aesthetic value between object types. Her reasons, however, are ethical rather than aesthetic. A ghetto, argues Saito, should not be aesthetically appreciated for well-illustrating its defining features: boarded-up windows, gangs on street corners, littered roads; such indiscriminate aesthetic appreciation for Saito

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[196] *Ibid.*, p. 131.

[197] *Ibid.*

is *morally* inappropriate.[198] Thus, we have a choice over whether to aesthetically appreciate something or not.

In her conclusion, Saito returns to this tension. Everyday aesthetics, she suggests, pulls us in two different directions. On the one hand, it will "follow the guide suggested by the traditional aesthetic theory regarding aesthetic attitude and disinterestedness".[199] We might therefore suspend our usual way of interacting with an object and see it, rather, as an aesthetic object. In this way, Saito suggests, we can discover "hidden gems" in ordinary life.[200] Whereas our normal attitude to stained linen is an urge to clean it, and our normal attitude to a broken window might be to mend it, Saito notes that by adopting a disinterested approach we can appreciate the stain and the window aesthetically.

However, Saito is keen to highlight also our normal, everyday, pragmatic aesthetic responses, i.e. our (aesthetic) urge to clean the stain and mend the window. She states:

> [P]erhaps the most challenging aspect of everyday aesthetics is to negotiate between the direction toward the normative mode of aestheticisation facilitated by de-contextualising the experience and the direction toward grounding our aesthetic reaction in the everyday practical concerns. That is, I believe that one of the projects of everyday aesthetics it to discern when we should render the ordinary extraordinary [...] and when we should rather preserve and focus on the ordinary, seemingly non-aesthetic, reaction[201]

Saito refers to these two modes as the normative and descriptive. Saito does not here explicitly argue that it is ethical criteria that dictate whether or not we aestheticise. However, in her ghetto example above the decision is,

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[198] *Ibid.*, p. 140.

[199] *Ibid.*, p. 244.

[200] *Ibid.*

[201] *Ibid.*, p. 245.

ultimately, settled on ethical grounds, suggesting that ethics is the ultimate source of appeal.[202]

3. Dominance of the Ethical: Aesthetic Engineering

In addition to the normative and descriptive mentioned above, Saito advocates what she terms "aesthetic engineering".[203]

Saito is supportive of Marcia Eaton's concept of an "aesthetic ought", concerned "not just with what people do find beautiful but what they *should* find beautiful" (my italics).[204] For Saito, this aesthetic ought involves appreciating "aesthetic underdogs" (snails, weeds, wetlands) in order to "find positive values in things we normally dislike or detest".[205] Similarly:

> green aesthetics regarding artefacts [as opposed to nature] has an additional mission: to render initially attractive objects not so aesthetically positive if they are environmentally harmful[206]

Aesthetic engineering is neither descriptive nor de-contextualised but rather is self-consciously cultivated, and shaped by scientific or ethical information.

Taken to an extreme, suggests Saito, we may end up endorsing what she terms "environmental determinism": awarding aesthetic value on the

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[202] We might question, too, whether Saito's position here regarding design should, for consistency, also apply to her aesthetics of the natural world. Saito elsewhere in the book argues that – again for environmental reasons – we should quell our fondness for crisp garden lawns, raising the possibility that our aesthetic responses to plant life should be ethically and environmentally augmented. Since, for example, red deer are associated with damage to British landscapes and wildlife, Saito's theory may similarly need to grapple with whether such information must temper our aesthetic appreciation of animal species.

[203] *Ibid.*, p. 72.

[204] Marcia Eaton, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 77.

[205] Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*, p. 132.

[206] *Ibid.*, p. 85.

basis of ethical and environmental values, bypassing appraisal of sensual form. Such an approach, she argues, is present in the theory of Allen Carlson since, "if we follow Carlson's view, once we form a moral judgment for or against a certain environment, we don't need to experience it firsthand".[207] In contrast, for Saito, "[e]ven with necessary incorporation of various conceptual considerations, the ultimate reference and basis of our aesthetic judgement has to be what is directly perceivable [...] Acquired knowledge from ecology and natural history must be translated into the way in which [an environment] looks, sounds, smells, and feels".[208] There are, Saito acknowledges, some limitations. We cannot dictate that well-kept, water-hungry lawns should be seen as ugly – this would constitute environmental determinism – but we may "modify" our initial impression of its attractive appearance, perhaps rendering it "garish, sinister, or morbidly beautiful".[209]

Saito offers a conflicting account of how such aesthetic modification can or should operate. At times, she suggests it happens inevitably, upon understanding some new environmental information: "such knowledge, once gained, cannot but affect one's perceptual experience".[210] At other times, she suggests it requires the effort of the perceiver: consumers "have to educate themselves about the ecological ramifications of products and activities and *find a way to relate the knowledge gathered to the sensuous appearance of the object*" (my italics).[211]

There are at least two problems with Saito's suggestion, however. Firstly, environmental meanings are not the only meanings. We may associate the Nespresso coffee maker, and its single-use disposable pods, with environmental damage. However, we will also associate the product with "the face of Nespresso", the actor George Clooney, and his aura of

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[207] *Ibid.*, p. 216.

[208] *Ibid.*, p. 83.

[209] *Ibid.*, p. 85.

[210] *Ibid.*, p. 94.

[211] *Ibid.*, p. 86.

wealth, success, and glamour. Similarly, I may know that rickety, single-paned sash windows offer terrible heat insulation. However, I will also associate them with quaint English historical style. It is a matter of little controversy that cognitive facts and meanings will often shape our aesthetic response. However, there is no compelling reason to suggest that ethical associations have any greater power to effect this change than cultural or personal associations. Indeed, advertising's overwhelming use of glamour and sex appeal as opposed to cold ethical facts suggests the reverse.

Secondly, the instability of our ethical and environmental information means that our response is always subject to change:

> [W]hile I currently maintain that wind turbines are environmentally valuable and I developed an argument for their positive aesthetic values based upon this belief, I also admit that the positive aesthetic values that I attribute to them are subject to change, if unforeseen environmental harm is discovered in the future. I don't think, however, that this possibility of revision should prevent us from forming an aesthetic judgement based upon the best available information. This possibility of revision is not unique to aesthetic judgements but characterises any form of knowledge and moral judgements[212]

Taken at its most literal, however, this approach to designed objects would have absurd results, more absurd than the epistemological and moral judgements Saito refers to. For instance, moral judgements are (ideally) consistently applied across many similar examples, without dissonant results. In contrast, aesthetic judgements *underpinned* by moral judgements cannot be consistently applied across many examples of designed objects since, as mentioned above, designed objects may be formally identical yet differ in their environmental impact, for example two identical tables, one made with sustainable materials, and one implicated with unsustainable deforestation.

Furthermore, aesthetic judgement, unlike moral judgement, requires an additional change in perception, experience or "way of seeing". As Saito

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[212] *Ibid.*, p.103.

herself suggests, however, changes in aesthetic experience effected in response to environmental and other information cannot be perceived differently as though from the flick of a switch. Changes in such aesthetic rather than moral judgements would seem more resistant to frequent or spasmodic change. Should we listen to a compelling case for the environmental indispensability of nuclear energy (as an alternative to fossil fuels), we may change our environmental judgement almost immediately. However, if we have spent several years in the belief that nuclear power plants are dangerous and unethical it seems unlikely that our immediate change in moral judgement will correspond with an immediate change in aesthetic judgement.

Any theory that wishes to normatively align aesthetic judgement, however carefully, with ethical judgement will therefore need to address this problem, a problem which, being so closely related to neuroplasticity, would call for engagement with empirical science, philosophy of perception and/or neuroaesthetics. Indeed, in the terminology of Daniel Kahneman's *Thinking Fast and Slow*, the change to ethical and environmental judgement was a function of our contemplative, rational "System 2", whereas our aesthetic response is part of our impulsive, associative "System 1": "This complex constellation of responses [occurs] quickly, automatically, and effortlessly. You did not will it, and you could not stop it".[213] Saito's aesthetic engineering assumes that we have a level of control over System 1, an ability to re-programme our aesthetic response according to what our reason or rationality prefers, for which we find no obvious evidence. Rather than responding to facts and direction, Kahneman suggests that System 1 is more affected by the associative principles outlined by David Hume: resemblance, contiguity in time and space, and causality.[214]

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[213] Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (London: Allen Lane, 2011), p. 51.
[214] *Ibid.*, p. 52.

4. Green Design

As well as requiring that consumers educate themselves about moral concerns (and modify their aesthetic preferences accordingly), Saito also places a responsibility on designers: green design should not simply make "our popular aesthetic taste" more environmentally friendly. Rather, it should set itself apart and show its greenness, so that "environmental value [can] be expressed, embodied, or revealed through the object's sensuous surface".[215] Minimalist designs that avoid unnecessary parts and colours "become all the more appreciable when perceived as evidence of ecological value".[216] Furthermore, repurposed materials should retain evidence of the material's original use since "Green design is aesthetically successful when it makes its ecological significance *apparent to the senses*" (my italics).[217] Similarly, green design should "make environmental processes *perceivable*" (my italics).[218] Such an approach avoids "environmental determinism". However, it is subject to the same criticisms levelled against twentieth-century functionalism which, as Scruton has argued, reverted to a crude foregrounding of functional forms, for example by exposing, rather than hiding, a building's ventilation pipes. Indeed, Saito promotes the idea of exposed rainwater hydration systems.[219] However, whilst this aesthetic may be appropriate for an interactive environmental education centre, there are other values and meanings, quite apart from environmental ones, that a building can or should express, particularly those buildings of cultural and religious importance. Saito's notion of green design would also seemingly be hostile to technological advancements that would, for instance, better integrate solar panels into the fabric of a building design, in favour of bulky panels which more obviously signal their environmental use.

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[215] Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*, p. 88.

[216] *Ibid.*

[217] *Ibid.*, p. 93.

[218] *Ibid.*

[219] *Ibid.*, pp. 93-94.

Saito's keenness to promote ethical environmentalism is so pervasive and smothering, so willing to grasp all tools available to it, that it renders her theory incoherent: greenness must be expressed *and* projected; aesthetics is lauded for its power to influence us, yet this power can and should be overridden. Despite her rejection of environmental determinism, Saito's approach removes aesthetic autonomy: aesthetics becomes a *tool* in service of environmentalism.[220]

Forsey and Everyday Aesthetics

Whilst it is true that Saito's account suffers from allowing the ethical to dominate the aesthetic, Forsey's Kantian judgement aesthetics cannot offer a viable alternative to what Saito's everyday aesthetics – in its less propagandist moments – hopes to achieve. That is, as mentioned earlier, Saito's everyday aesthetics is not merely concerned with everyday objects but rather also with our varied, everyday, non-art interactions with objects, and with our aesthetic experience of everyday tasks and domestic chores, such as the aesthetics of folding laundry or preparing meals. Forsey's account remains an aesthetics of judgement of particular kinds of objects. It has little to say about experiences, of designed objects or otherwise, that do not constitute appraisal:

> However, the activity involved in design must be more narrowly construed than the experiences Saito and Irvin describe. In considering a broom, I am not interested in the aesthetic elements of the activity of sweeping per se but in the contribution this use of the broom makes to our appraisal of it as a designed object.[221]

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[220] "Sometimes there is a conscious appropriation of this power of the aesthetic to serve a specific social, political agenda. I myself recommended such a strategy by arguing for developing green aesthetics. However, particularly in light of various historical precedents, this strategy needs to negotiate between two poles: aestheticising certain objects and phenomena and at the same time being mindful of the agenda it is meant to serve". Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*, p. 246.

[221] Forsey, p. 206.

Whilst Forsey suggests that her design theory may "stand as a contribution to an aesthetic of the everyday", she acknowledges that her traditional approach to aesthetics is nonetheless more cautious and narrow even if "better able to withstand critical analysis".[222]

Forsey offers an explanation of ideal aesthetic judgement in designed objects. However, she herself acknowledges that we do not always attend to objects of design in order to appraise their beauty:

> There are more ways to experience and judge designed objects than by aesthetic judgements of beauty, but our judgements of beauty, I contend, are of a particular kind [...] When we approach design as an aesthetic phenomenon and give it our appraisal, *this* is the way that our judgements operate.[223]

The sort of appraisal suggested by Forsey, however, has a limited role in our lives, closer to the way we appraise designed objects before buying them than to the way we approach them once they have come into our homes. It is this aesthetics, what Saito elsewhere refers to as the "aesthetics of the familiar", that Saito's everyday theory is more interested in exploring. Furthermore, Forsey's insistence that such aesthetic appraisals should remain purified of ethical and personal concerns, and purified too of associations with glamour and status, suggests an even more rarefied response, limited perhaps to the judging of design competitions.

Everyday Aesthetics and Pragmatism

Saito's *Everyday Aesthetics* is perhaps best considered two books in one: on the one hand it is an open-minded exploration of what a non-art aesthetics of the everyday may look like; on the other hand it is an attempt to see this aesthetics through the lens of environmentalism. We may remove this latter

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[222] *Ibid.*, p. 236.

[223] *Ibid.*

focus while retaining the former, although in doing so may find what Forsey called above "a lack of any theoretical structure or clear methodology".[224]

When less focussed on the demands of environmentalism, Saito's everyday aesthetics attempts at times to understand what "ought" may exist outside of engagement with art, when one finds oneself in some ill-defined situation: when gazing out of my window but not engaged in any particular task of cleaning, improving, judging, creating. Such moments are quite rare. As will be argued in Chapter Four, our non-art life is not best characterised as wholly unstructured, private or free, but rather is itself replete with rules, norms, and directed interest. Saito's questioning of how we may "discern when we should render the ordinary extraordinary [...] and when we should rather preserve and focus on the ordinary, seemingly non-aesthetic, reaction" is, most of the time, a matter of context: I am unlikely to gaze disinterestedly at a fresh wine spill.[225] Similarly, despite Saito's endorsement of "tapping into" personal connections and affections in a bid to support aesthetic responses to our built environment (she is thinking in particular of how it can be used to support environmental projects which might otherwise be unsightly) she writes that:

> If we subscribe to the traditional art-oriented aesthetic theory, our personal relationship to and stake in an object should be irrelevant to its aesthetic value [...] We certainly do not want art critics and art historians to bring in their very personal associations and investment to bear upon their professional aesthetic judgements of a work of art. However, what is appropriate and expected in the field of art is not always readily applicable to our aesthetic life outside the realm of art[226]

Understood in this way, Saito and Scruton's aesthetic theories of architecture need not be seen as incompatible but rather as complementary. It may be misguided for an architectural critic to indulge personal prejudices

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[224] *Ibid.*, p. 218.

[225] Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*, p. 245.

[226] *Ibid.*, p. 100.

and sentiment, but it is wholly appropriate if we are choosing a home for ourselves. Indeed, in his Analytic of the Beautiful Kant writes that:

> In order to *play the judge* in matters of taste, we must not be in the least biased in favor of the thing's existence but must be wholly indifferent about it (my italics). [227]

The sort of judgement Kant, Scruton, and even Forsey, refer to is a *part we play*, which may be interspersed with other parts: home-maker, creator/practitioner, house-hunter, tourist, teacher. In each case there will be context, a goal, and attendant ideas about how we *ought* to see things. As a gazer-out-of-windows we may have no part to play, and no "ought" to attend to. If such a situation seems to call upon no particular theory of "oughtness" this may suggest less a lack of philosophical rigour than an insight about such moments themselves and the normative limits of aesthetics.[228]

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[227] Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*, p. 46.

[228] Indeed, a Deleuzian approach to identity may better serve such an aesthetics. As explained by Andrew Ballantyne, for Deleuze and Guattari, "Personal identity here is something that is taken up, and then dropped or reformulated"; "Our various temporary identities are all the identities we have, and depending on the point that we are addressing, the pertinent identity is the one – or maybe more than one – that has a bearing on the case". See Andrew Ballantyne, *Deleuze and Guattari for Architects* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 1 and 5.

Part Three: The Aesthetics of Atmospheres

A broader and less prescriptive theory of aesthetics, applicable to public and personal space, built, natural, and domestic environments, can be found in the work of Gernot Böhme.

In 1993 Böhme called for a new aesthetic of atmospheres, in place of the "old aesthetics" of judgement.[229] On entering a room, or visiting a new city, he noted, we immediately feel ourselves "enveloped" by a certain atmosphere (serene, melancholic, inviting etc.), an atmosphere that is *felt,* in a bodily sense, before it is comprehended or analysed intellectually, and which emerges from the particular collection of what he terms "generators", including forms, colours and textures, as well as human presence and conversation, and even the weather.

Böhme's concept of atmospheres is largely the same as colloquial use of the term. When we describe a gathering as having a "tense atmosphere" or describe a town as having a "buzzy atmosphere" it is meaningfully understood by others: the term is a useful one and captures something we wish to convey. However, Böhme notes:

> The frequent, rather embarrassed use of the expression atmosphere in aesthetic discourse leads one to conclude that it refers to something which is aesthetically relevant but whose elaboration and articulation remains to be worked out.[230]

Böhme, in contrast, approvingly cites the phenomenological approach of Hermann Schmitz – that atmospheres are real to the extent that they, in Böhme's words, "intrude irrefutably on experience, as well as on the philosophy of the body".[231] Böhme tasks himself, therefore, with just such a "working out", to examine what atmospheres consist of.

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[229] Böhme, "Atmosphere as the Fundamental Concept of a New Aesthetics".

[230] Gernot Böhme, *The Aesthetics of Atmospheres*, p. 12.

[231] Gernot Böhme, *Atmospheric Architectures: The Aesthetics of Felt Spaces,* trans. A.-Chr. Engels-Schwarzpaul (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), p. 20.

For Böhme, if we take seriously the concept of atmospheres, which we know so well in intuition, then we will see it has wide application, constituting nothing less than a general theory of perception.

> The primary "object" of perception is atmospheres. What is first and immediately perceived is neither sensations nor shapes or objects or their constellations, as Gestalt psychology thought, but atmospheres, against whose background the analytic regard distinguishes such things as objects, forms, colours etc.[232]

This concern with atmospheres is also to be distinguished from the language-focussed approach found previously in structuralism and semiotics. We are not "reading" an atmosphere so much as "feeling" it.[233]

There are several benefits to Böhme's theory of atmospheres and its application to architecture, designed objects, and the built environment. This chapter closes by mentioning, below, four chief benefits.

1. A Better Foundation for Everyday Aesthetics

As argued above, Saito's *Everyday Aesthetics* contains, in fact, two strands, one of which primarily attends to matters of the everyday, and another which focusses on environmentalism. Whilst much of the text is dominated by matters of green ethics, Saito also includes a section on ambience and atmosphere, which echoes the concerns of Böhme, arguing that "an equally

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[232] Böhme, *The Aesthetics of Atmospheres*, p. 23.

[233] In this sense, Böhme's approach is fundamentally different from that of Eco, for whom, "cultural phenomena *are*, in reality, systems of signs", and closer to that of phenomenologists such as Henri Lefebvre, for whom "[a] spatial work (monument or architectural project) attains a complexity fundamentally different from the complexity of a text, whether prose or poetry [...] what we are concerned with here is not texts but texture". Semiological readings, Lefebvre argued, missed "the residue" of that which eludes textual codification, particularly our bodily, sensual response to a building. See Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 222, and Eco, "Function and Sign", p. 198.

significant part of our everyday aesthetic life is the appreciation directed toward an ambience, atmosphere, or mood surrounding a certain experience, comprised of many ingredients".[234]

Our everyday experience, writes Saito, is often lacking coherence and unity. However:

> [S]ometimes our multi-sensory and multi-dimensional experiences come together to provide a unified experience which becomes the source of aesthetic appreciation. When so many disparate, but not incongruous, elements come together under one unifying theme [...] we often have memorable experience even within our humdrum life.[235]

These experiences, for Saito, rely on some unity or coherence between the disparate elements. Japanese koto music, she suggests, would be a welcome addition to the experience of eating sushi, but would jar with the experience of eating Italian food; the smell of roast turkey is welcome at Thanksgiving, but not in a hospital.[236] Regarding the built environment, too, Saito points to Marcia Eaton's suggestion that a log cabin may be charming in pristine countryside, but unappreciated in an urban setting, whilst a fast food restaurant may be appreciated in an urban environment and rejected in rural sites.[237]

Saito's concern with aesthetic qualities that are commonly neglected by traditional aesthetics but which concern us in everyday life – such as neatness and messiness – is also well encapsulated by an aesthetics of atmosphere, since for Böhme an aesthetics of atmospheres may widen its concern beyond the beautiful, sublime and picturesque to encompass a wide range of felt spaces.

An aesthetics of atmosphere is also sympathetic to Saito's mission to award value to the "lower senses". The "ingredients" of atmosphere are multi-sensory. Our experience of eating, for example, "[goes] beyond taste

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[234] Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*, p. 119.

[235] *Ibid.*, p. 123.

[236] *Ibid.*, p. 122.

[237] *Ibid.*

and smell, to include other sensory qualities like tactile sensation (crunchy, mushy, chewy), visual impression, and sometimes even sound quality".[238] For Saito, and for Böhme, atmospheres are affected also by temperature, weather, and seasons.

Furthermore, as noted by Saito, a theory of atmospheres may offer a different perspective on Kant's rejection of the aesthetic value of single sensual experiences. For Kant (as for Scruton) such experiences lack the complexity and "purposeiveness without a purpose" to constitute a true aesthetic experience, and therefore must be considered, at best, as agreeable pleasures. However, notes Saito:

> [W]e almost never experience [a single sensory quality such as] animal cries and birdsong in the abstract. We experience the whole complex, including the cause of the sound (warhorse or carthorse), physical environment, time of the day, and the season, which together sometimes give rise to a unified expression, such as cheerfulness or fierceness.[239]

This contextualism, Saito suggests, renders Kant's dismissal of supposedly singular sensations a "moot point" since "we almost never experience a single sensory quality in isolation. Taste is inseparable from smell and texture and the experience of eating is always contextual".[240] This aesthetics of atmospheres, divorced from Saito's environmental commitments – which warp and weaponise aesthetic value – achieves what Saito's everyday aesthetics otherwise sets out to do: it concerns our life outside of art; it focusses on experience rather than judgement; it awards value to the role of our "lower senses"; it is concerned with domestic and everyday aesthetic atmospheres not merely rarefied ones, and everyday spaces not merely high architecture. It is furthermore able to do so, not by disconnecting from Kantian theory, but rather by engaging with it. If everyday aesthetics needs

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[238] *Ibid.*, p. 119.

[239] *Ibid.*, p. 122.

[240] *Ibid.*, p. 121.

a firmer theoretical base, an aesthetics of atmospheres is more promising as a means of satisfying its aims than is Forsey's judgement aesthetics.

2. Atmospheres as Relationship

Forsey recommends the adoption of a Kantian theory of judgement in large part to resolve the subject/object problem she identifies in aesthetics: that we either characterise beauty as a mind-independent property of the object, or else as a subjective projection of our own internal feelings. Kant's theory of judgment, writes Forsey, allows us to locate aesthetic response in judgement, to encapsulate both of these intuitions about aesthetics without the problems inherent in defending either of them in isolation.

However, this same benefit is claimed by Böhme for his theory of atmospheres, which he describes as lying between subject and object, as a *relationship* between them. Furthermore, whilst Böhme's aesthetics encourages us to analyse and question the generation of atmospheres, and is compatible with judgement, it is able to preserve the directness of our experience, whereas Forsey's commitment to judgement finds her moving further away from the manner in which we usually relate to things, since her account must always relate to *appraisal.*

Despite his focus on judgement, and his steadfast defence of classical architecture and beauty, there are passages of Scruton's *Aesthetics of Architecture* which resemble an aesthetics of atmospheres as presented by Böhme and Saito. For Scruton, if we describe a building as sad, we do not mean to say that the building provokes in us a feeling of sadness, as though the building is simply a means to an end, conjuring a feeling that can be carried away without reference to it. To be legitimately aesthetic, argues Scruton, a feeling attributed to a building or object must be "rooted" in the building itself, must be somehow *in* the building: "The building is not just the cause of these reactions; it is their object".[241] It is therefore possible, writes Scruton, to ask *why* a building is sad or exciting, "and the question is

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[241] Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Architecture*, p. 183.

asking for a reason and not a cause".[242] We therefore attempt to explain why the building is sad by pointing to this or that feature of it.

Scruton's discussion of expressive qualities is closely linked to his focus on the importance both of architectural styles generally and, more specifically, stylistic details such as a way of designing a door frame or pillar. For Scruton this process holds true, however, even for more esoteric qualities. A certain room, he writes, may have what he terms an "oatmeal feeling":

> What I mean by an "oatmeal feeling" could be explained only by pointing to this kind of thing, and to the features of it which particularly engage my attention. In this process of "rooting" feeling, I am also representing it as "appropriate" to its object [...] I justify this attribution of an oatmeal character by describing [...] the correspondence of textures, colours, forms. I may attempt to articulate a certain underlying moral idea (an idea of healthy simplicity, of unassuming cleanliness) which might show itself in everything, from the grain of the floorboards and the texture of the bedspread.[243]

For Scruton, knowing how to perceive an oatmeal "look" is a key part of knowing how to dress and furnish and an important part of knowing how to live.

For Böhme, too, if I call a valley serene I am not merely projecting my subjective mood onto the surroundings since the serenity of a valley is felt when we encounter it, and leaves us when we leave it (or perhaps leaves us changed): "Thus, we call a valley serene because it looks as if it were permeated with serenity".[244] Put another way, we might say that a weedy patch of land could be the *cause* of my internal happiness if, for instance, it is bought for me as a gift and I anticipate its gardening potential; this differs, however, from my saying that the land in its current state has a happy atmosphere, or has happiness rooted in it.

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[242] *Ibid.*

[243] *Ibid.*

[244] Böhme, *Atmospheric Architectures*, p. 23.

Just as Scruton wishes to find reasons for the attribution of an oatmeal feeling, so Böhme suggests that we can, through reflection, identify those traits that create a melancholy atmosphere. He points firstly to Christian Cay Lorenz Hirschfeld's analysis on landscape architecture:

> A softly melancholic region occurs in the absence of vistas; through depths and low areas, dense thickets and woodlands, often simply through groups of tall, closely spaced trees with thick foliage and a hollow sound wafting through their upper branches. It contains still or darkly murmuring water, nearly hidden from view; low-hanging, dark, or dusky green leaves and deep shadows spreading everywhere. It boasts nothing to signify life and activity. Sparse rays of light penetrate only to prevent the darkness from becoming mournful or terrible. Quiet and solitude are at home here. A solitary bird fluttering about, the indistinct buzzing of unknown creatures, a wood pigeon cooing from the hollow top of a leafless oak, a stray nightingale lamenting her lonely sorrows – these are enough to furnish the scene.[245]

There are distinct elements mentioned here, notes Böhme, "whose interplay apparently produces the softly melancholic atmosphere": seclusion and silence; still, dark water; shadowy, sparing light; dark colours. Hirschfeld also recommends for a melancholy scene an arrangement of urns, memorials, or hermitages.[246]

This same atmosphere of melancholy, notes Böhme, is presented in Grimm's fairytale, *Jorinda and Joringel*, an extract of which is below:

> Now, there was once a maiden who was called Jorinda [...] She and a handsome youth named Joringel had promised to marry each other [...] One day in order that they might be able to talk together in peace they went for a walk in the forest. "Take care", said Joringel, "that you do not go too near the castle". It was a beautiful evening. The sun shone brightly between the trunks of the trees into the dark green of the forest, and the turtle-doves sang mournfully upon the beech trees. Jorinda wept now and then. She sat down in the sunshine and was sorrowful. Joringel was sorrowful too. They were as sad as if they were about to die. Then they looked around them, and were quite at a loss, for they did not know by which way they should go home. The sun

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[245] Christian Cay Lorenz Hirschfeld, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 26.

[246] Böhme, *Atmospheric Architectures*, p. 26.

was still half above the mountain and half under. Joringel looked through the bushes, and saw the old walls of the castle close at hand. He was horror-stricken and filled with deadly fear. Jorinda was singing, "My little bird, with the necklace red, Sings sorrow, sorrow, sorrow, He sings that the dove must soon be dead, Sings sorrow, sor – jug, jug, jug." Joringel looked for Jorinda. She was changed into a nightingale, and sang, jug, jug, jug. A screech-owl with glowing eyes flew three times round about her, and three times cried, to-whoo, to-whoo, to-whoo. Joringel could not move. He stood there like a stone, and could neither weep nor speak, nor move hand or foot. The sun had now set.[247]

In this text, notes Böhme, we find the same elements of melancholy identified by Hirschfeld – dark and shadowy greens, diminishing sunlight, mournful birdsong; old ruins. What we see here by comparing Hirschfeld and Brothers Grimm is "their highly developed awareness of the means by which to create particular atmospheres".[248]

Figure 12: Munch's *Melancholy* contains many features mentioned above, including dark green colours, an absence of (other) humans and animals, still water, and diminishing sunlight[249]

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[247] Grimm Brothers, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 27.

[248] Böhme, *Atmospheric Architectures*, p. 28.

[249] Edvard Munch, *Melancholy,* oil on canvas, 1891, private collection

3. A More Sympathetic Account of Personal Aesthetics

In the musical *My Fair Lady* the character Freddy Eynsford-Hill calls at the house of Eliza Doolittle, with whom he is infatuated. Upon leaving flowers with the housekeeper, and refusing an offer to see Eliza directly, he begins to sing:

> I have often walked on this street before
> But the pavement always stayed beneath my feet before
> All at once am I several stories high
> Knowing I'm on the street where you live
>
> Are there lilac trees in the heart of town?
> Can you hear a lark in any other part of town?
> Does enchantment pour out of every door?
> No, it's just on the street where you live[250]

Böhme does not dwell on the matter of personal atmospheres, but as the example above reminds us, these too are part of our aesthetic life.

There are two things to note here. Firstly, the street is not merely a *cause* of a separate feeling of romantic enchantment but rather is *infused by* and *radiates* romance: "enchantment [pours] out of every door". For Böhme, indeed, "the sharing of an atmosphere is something like a collective enchantment".[251] Secondly, Freddy is self-aware, not deluded. His suggestion that there are no lilac trees or larks in other parts of town is a description of transformed personal experience, not a serious description of fact. Scruton's theory, with its focus on judgement, must merely push such experiences aside as personal bias. Böhme's theory, however, as an aesthetics of perception, of the *relationship* between subject and object, can better accommodate these experiences. Again, Saito's reference to Yi-Fu Tuan's "topophilia" is relevant in this respect, in noting that "our attitude toward and resultant appreciation of a place *cannot be dissociated* from the

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[250] Alan Jay Lerner (lyricist), Frederick Loewe (music), "On the Street Where You Live", from *My Fair Lady* (Warner Bros, 1964), directed by George Cukor.

[251] Böhme, *Atmospheric Architectures*, p. 106.

personal, as well as cultural and societal, relationship we have with it" (my italics).[252]

Buildings and objects can become infused with meaning for us regardless of whether it is personal or shared. For Richard Rorty:

>]T]he social process of literalizing a metaphor is duplicated in the fantasy life of an individual. We call something "fantasy" rather than "poetry" or "philosophy" when it revolves around metaphors which do not catch on with other people - that is, around ways of speaking or acting which the rest of us cannot find a use for. But Freud shows us how something which seems pointless or ridiculous or vile to society can become the crucial element in the individual's sense of who she is [...] Conversely, when some private obsession produces a metaphor which we can find a use for, we speak of genius rather than of eccentricity or perversity.[253]

It is a matter of contingency that the aura emanating from my late grandmother's house is felt by me and not by others. Indeed, atmospheres may also be felt by a limited collective such as a family. As outlined by the linguist Cynthia Gordon, author of *Making Meanings, Creating Family*:

> Any group of people that has extended contact over time and sees itself as distinctive is going to have some specialized uses of language [...] Listening to recordings of other families is like being immersed in a different world.[254]

For Böhme, conversations themselves have an atmosphere, and he devotes an entire chapter to discussing this. However, family houses and heirlooms are similarly part of family histories, imbued with special significances

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[252] Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*, p. 99.

[253] Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, p. 37.

[254] Cynthia Gordon, quoted in Kathryn Hymes, "Why We Speak More Weirdly at Home", *The Atlantic*, (theatlantic.com, 13 May 2021). Available at https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2021/05/family-secret-language-familect/618871/ [accessed 7 August 2021].

which are not *universally* shared, significances which constitute a *limited* collective enchantment.

Like Freddy, families are usually self-aware. They know that their in-jokes and idiosyncratic phrases are not comprehensible to others and that many of their dearest possessions and houses are infused with an atmosphere that is not widely shared. Similarly, a former victim of bullying can be perfectly aware that her former school does not *for other people* emanate an atmosphere of gloom, threat and foreboding. We need not insist upon the superiority of grand cultural styles. Making reference to his own lifelong passion for and interest in orchids, Rorty writes that:

> Your equivalent of my orchids may always seem merely weird, merely idiosyncratic, to practically everybody else. But that is no reason to be ashamed of, or downgrade, or try to slough off, your Wordsworthian moments, your lover, your family, your pet, your favourite lines of verse, or your quaint religious faith.[255]

A collective enchantment of few people is no less valuable, and may indeed be more valuable, than a collective enchantment of many. Moreover, a critical attitude allows us to decide how widely our enchantments are likely to be shared; which atmospheres will be comprehensible to and appropriate for a given audience.

4. A More Comprehensive Account of Atmosphere's "Generators"

In the passage above on "oatmeal feelings", Scruton appears to allow that what Böhme would term the "generators" of atmosphere include "textures, colours, forms […] the grain of the floorboards and the texture of the bedspread". However, in his analysis of Gaudí's work he writes that Gaudí's buildings address "very different interests, interests in which the sense of detail may well be absent or subdued. It is not here that 'meaning' is likely

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[255] Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and Social Hope* (London and New York: Penguin, 1999), p. 13.13.

to root itself; enjoyment may perforce remain at the primitive level", which he associates with an enjoyment of sensual features such as colour and texture.[256] For Scruton, the value of classical architecture is just this sense of formal detail. We need stylistic details, argues Scruton, to anchor meaning. This appears to directly contradict his earlier discussion of "oatmeal looks", however, and indeed Böhme in contrast devotes a whole chapter to the atmospheric energy of *materials.*

For Böhme:

> The noble, majestic quality of a material, its elegance or old-fashionedness are sensed. But this does not mean merely that the material is able to point to or signal the noble, the majestic, the elegant, or the old-fashioned; rather, it seems to radiate them. They must in some way be connected to, anchored in, its material qualities. This is why it is sometimes difficult to distinguish clearly between the synesthetic and social character of a material.[257]

Scruton uses the analogy of normal language and argues that the parts and wholes pertaining to architecture are similar to the words in a sentence. The smallest unit, he suggests, is whatever has significance not derived from its part.

In the terminology of Nelson Goodman, however, we may argue that buildings and spaces – unlike most written notations – are "dense" and "replete". Alphabet notation, for example, has a finite differentiation between characters and words: a symbol in English refers to one of 24 letters (or perhaps a finite number of punctuation marks), else it does not signify at all. Similarly, if we encounter a scrawl that seems to either be a V or a U we will know this much at least: it must be *either* of these options: there is no infinite array of other letter options corresponding to each subtlety of curvature or angularity in penmanship.[258]

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[256] Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Architecture*, pp. 200-201.

[257] Böhme, *The Aesthetics of Atmospheres*, p. 397.

[258] See Goodman, *Languages of Art.*

Our built environment is not made up of any such discreet units. With colour, for example, we may identify paradigm cases of red and orange, but – unlike with our alphabet notation above – there are an infinite number of subtle differentiations between red and orange which still carry sensual atmospheric meaning. Colour is dense because, between "red" and "orange" we find a rich array of red-yellow hybrid colours which greatly exceed our capacity to name and differentiate them. We can cut into a certain moment of this smooth transition; we can sense whether a given shade is closer to red or orange; we can enrich our colour vocabulary by making finer distinctions; but we cannot think of colour, or indeed texture, light, space, in the same way that we think of simpler coding systems where something is either one thing or the other.

To understand his notion of "repleteness", Goodman asks us to compare an electrocardiogram with a Hokusai drawing of Mt. Fujiyama. They may look identical as presented to us, with precisely the same wiggly black lines, but the former is nonetheless a diagram whereas the latter is a picture, and it is only the latter that is "replete". In the diagram, all that matters is the trajectory of the line: its colour, thickness and size do not matter to what it conveys, and indeed different machines or printers may depict it somewhat differently. In the picture, however, the colour, thickness and size of line all count and need to be paid attention to. They are *constitutive* in the picture and *contingent* in the diagram. The picture here is "replete".[259]

Goodman's argument here is conveyed in the common saying that "a picture paints a thousand words". Indeed, for Goodman density and repleteness are both associated with aesthetic experience:

> Impossibility of finite determination may carry some suggestion of the ineffability so often claimed for, or charged against, the aesthetic. But density, far from being mysterious and vague, is explicitly defined; and it arises out of, and sustains, the unsatisfiable demand for absolute precision.[260]

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[259] *Ibid.*, p. 229.

[260] *Ibid.*, p. 253.

An aesthetics of atmospheres, similarly, has as its object something which is dense and replete. Rooms, scenes, and built environments consist of colours, textures and materials which convey meaning to us through felt experience, and cannot be dismissed as simply a repository of primitively agreeable experiences. They are, rather, as recognised by Goodman, an expressive tool of infinite complexity, richness and precision.

A recognition of atmosphere's density and repleteness may help us in our attempts to monitor and improve failing environments. For Böhme, indeed, "the notion of a landscape can no longer be restricted to the visible", and town planning must "start concerning itself with the character of acoustic atmospheres of squares, pedestrian zones, and whole cities", rather than maintain a narrow preoccupation with noise prevention.[261] Furthermore, "it is important to go beyond a purely scientific approach, which can do little more than measure noise in decibels"; rather we should "ask which acoustic characters the spaces we live in should have".[262] That is, we should not attempt to treat the acoustics of the built environment as something that can be understood through finite differentiation on a decibel monitor precisely because such soundscapes are *dense* and *replete*.

Böhme's focus on sensual experience in a broader sense allows us a more complete and convincing account of the emergence of aesthetic atmospheres. Returning to Scruton's example of an oatmeal feeling, we might suggest that the smell of freshly baked bread is a harmonious addition to this atmosphere, whereas a smell of cigarettes is not; birdsong and folk music is harmonious, whereas traffic noise and heavy metal is not. Similarly, if a new housing development feels "sterile", this may just as likely be due to the odour or sounds we encounter (or lack of them) as due to the formal design. If a designer or resident wished to counter this impression of sterility they must firstly understand, as Scruton might put it, where the sterility is "rooted" or, in Böhme's terminology, what its *generators* are.

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[261] Böhme, *Atmospheric Architectures*, p. 128.

[262] *Ibid.*, p. 134.

These generators will not necessarily be limited to formal styling but may include smells, sounds, tastes, and the feeling of our body in space (for example, cramped or exposed).

For Böhme such generators furthermore include not only formal elements and materials in the built environment but also natural elements such as trees (or lack of them), movement (or lack of) and people:

> [A]n atmosphere is always sensed only in one's own disposition. On the other hand, it is precisely sensed as something external, *something emanating from other people, things, or the environment.*[263]

As well as feeling our city's atmosphere, then, we are also generators of this atmosphere, through our behaviour, voice, styling and activity. The "zany" and "buzzy" atmosphere that Saito associates with New York, for example, cannot be considered separately from its inhabitants. A sterile business park, in contrast, may generate an atmosphere of sterility not merely through its architectural form, but via its quietness, its lack of verdancy (too much concrete; no water; no trees), and its lack of human life and movement.

Scruton's argument in his *Aesthetics of Architecture*, and his subsequent lobbying for a return to traditional and classical architectural styles, fixates on form at the expense of non-formal generators, and invariably locates the solution to failing built environments in the erection of porticos and non-structural classical columns, or similar formal changes. In doing so, however, it has little to say about materials, cleanliness, soundscape, felt space, sunlight, and the presence, or absence, of human – or even animal and plant – generators. An aesthetics of atmosphere, meanwhile, is better able to embrace how all these elements work together as generators of an atmosphere, and can take a broader look at why some spaces in our built environment work and why some do not.

The aesthetics of a down-at-heel street may be improved not merely by formal changes to the building structures, but also by, for example, a busy

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[263] *Ibid.*, p. 78.

café opening on a street corner, bringing with it the sound of friendly laughter, gentle clinking of plates, the movement of passing customers, the smell of fresh food. A street with an eerie or creepy atmosphere may require, rather than any traditional architectural changes, merely the cutting of overgrown weeds and thicket and improved street-lighting. A street with an austere or sterile atmosphere may benefit from a planting scheme.

Creating, manipulating and improving atmospheres requires considerable aesthetic sensitivity, and Böhme, for instance, is keen to learn from those practitioners in the fields of design who demonstrate such sensitivity. As argued by Gordon Cullen, "there is an art of relationship just as there is an art of architecture. Its purpose is to take all the elements that go to create the environment: buildings, trees, nature, water, traffic, advertisements and so on, and to weave them together in such a way that drama is released".[264]

Generators of atmosphere: Left (figure 13) planting scheme in Grangetown, inner city of Cardiff; Right (figure 14) the sounds, smells, movement and people brought by busy cafes alter the atmosphere of what may otherwise be bland or scruffy streetscapes

Conclusion

Traditional aesthetics, particularly the Kantian judgement aesthetics supported by Scruton in his *Aesthetics of Architecture*, has focussed its attention on delineating what is purportedly universal and shared. It thereby emphasises an aesthetic approach in which we – as Kant terms it – "play the

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[264] Gordon Cullen, *Townscape* (London: The Architectural Press, 1961), p. 10.

judge". This approach fails to capture the majority of our aesthetic engagement with designed objects and the built environment, where our experience is only rarely of the detached, critical kind presupposed by Kantian critical discourse. In dismissing aesthetic experience that is, as Saito puts it, "without any accompanying contemplative appreciation", Scruton's theory limits itself to understanding and validating aesthetic encounters in which we are "exercising taste" in the "practice of criticism".

For Jane Forsey, too, retaining judgment as the focal point of her aesthetics of design results in a theory which speaks only to our *appraisal* of designed objects (for example, "How well does this sweeping brush serve its purpose?"). Whilst it may be true that we need to sweep with the brush, to operate the door handle, to wear the shoes in order to judge their fitness for use, this does not mean that our usual appreciation and use of designed objects – as Forsey herself admits – consists of detached appraisal. This is particularly true for objects and spaces which are already part of our lives: the street on which we live; our grandmother's house; our favourite – yet ragged – pair of trousers. Despite her suggestion that her own theory may be a contribution to everyday aesthetics, therefore, Forsey's approach has little to say about our everyday aesthetic life.

Yuriko Saito's everyday aesthetics offers a more holistic theory which validates and accommodates what is excluded by the Kantian approach which privileges the category of universal aesthetic judgement: personal associations, the "lower" senses, experiences which lack critical appraisal. In doing so, she is able to offer a more sympathetic account of our more usual use and engagement with designed objects, including our familiar and unfamiliar built environment. Saito's theory is nonetheless, as outlined above, hampered by its accompanying mission to enlist our aesthetic engagement as a *tool* in the service of environmental causes. This mission causes inconsistencies in her approach and impedes our ability to discriminate between high and low quality architecture. It also, despite Saito's own stated intention to validate our everyday aesthetic life, inserts green ethics as a directing interference between the aesthetic subject and object.

In turning instead to Böhme's theory of atmospheres, we find a theory that offers many of the advantages of Saito's everyday aesthetics, but without having to pay the price of adopting its accompanying ethical intrusions. Like Saito's, Böhme's account does not require or encourage detached, universal judgement. It does not exclude or denigrate the so-called "lower" senses, and aims at a more holistic account of aesthetic experience, rather than a more mannered approach which would pick apart what qualities of an object, and what aspects of our experience, are and are not fit for aesthetic attention. As noted by Böhme, the term "atmosphere" is *already* a part of our aesthetic vocabulary, employed in "frequent, rather embarrassed use". We can and do already talk about, make sense of, and critique aesthetic atmospheres: what we lack is the conviction that such talk is valid and appropriate.

In making such talk valid and appropriate for discussions of the aesthetics of the built environment, however, we clear the way for an aesthetics which sees beyond the formal, which encourages a richness and precision of aesthetic description, which does not dismiss the value of the personal and local, and which does not treat aesthetic experience as a means to an ethical end.

Böhme's aesthetics of atmospheres has an additional benefit: unlike traditional aesthetics it is not focused primarily on beauty. Indeed, for Böhme, beauty, sublimity, and the picturesque can themselves be understood as examples of atmospheres. This is a particular benefit to understanding our built environment, particularly those everyday spaces, and contemporary spaces, which have what we might term a "negative" atmosphere. The focus of our attention in contemporary debates about the built environment is not, most often, the beautiful and magnificent, but rather the ugly, the drab, the soulless. It is to these negative aesthetic atmospheres and experiences that the next chapter now turns.

Chapter Three: Can Negative Aesthetics Have Positive Value?

I do not want to wage war against what is ugly […] some day I wish to be only a Yes-sayer.[265]

Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*

It is easy to presuppose that improving the aesthetic value of the built environment is synonymous with increasing its beauty. For the classical writer and architect Vitruvius, beauty was one of the three pillars of architecture, alongside durability and strength. The eye, he wrote, is always in search of beauty.[266] On this account, the successful architect always aims at beauty; ugly buildings are unfortunate accidents from which lessons may be learned. One improves the aesthetics of the built environment by better educating architects how to attain this ideal, and how to avoid those designs likely to be ungainly, ill-formed or in poor taste.

However, since the beginning for the twentieth century beauty's value and integrity has no longer been taken for granted. Arthur Danto calls this backlash against beauty *kalliphobia*.[267] The Dadaists, writes Danto,

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[265] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1974), p. 223.

[266] Vitruvius, *The Ten Books on Architecture,* trans. Morris Hicky Morgan (New York: Dover, 1960), p. 86.

[267] Arthur Danto, "Kalliphobia in Contemporary Art", *Art Journal*, Vol. 63, No. 2 (Summer, 2004), pp. 24-35.

returned from the brutality of the First World War disillusioned with the aesthetics of harmony and beauty. Through works such as Marcel Duchamp's urinal, the Dadaists rebelled against beauty, proffering instead the jarring, the profane and the ugly. Roger Scruton refers to this trend in the arts as "the cult of ugliness".[268] Early functionalist architects meanwhile were inspired by engineering advancements and reacting against the ornamentation of late nineteenth century historical styles. For Adolf Loos and others, buildings, telephones and chairs were functional objects first and foremost, and unsuitable candidates for ornamentation. Roger Scruton refers to this trend as "the cult of utility".[269] These two trends came together, Scruton argues, in modern architecture which he describes as "the greatest crime against beauty that the world has yet seen".[270]

The stripped back, sculptural style of modern architecture was criticised also by postmodern architects, who reacted against it and reinstated what the modernists had rejected: ornament, overt symbolism, historical reference. They did not reinstate, however, a reverence for beauty. They offered instead a decoration that was rich with irony and often in deliberately poor taste. Postmodernists Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown proudly describe their own architectural style, influenced by pop art and US commercial architecture, as "ugly and ordinary".[271]

Beauty is often associated, on both sides of the debate, with conservatism, and indeed many of the most vocal advocates for beauty are conservatives such as Scruton, who openly lobby for a return to traditional design. Scruton's discussion of modern architecture is often guilty of presenting a straw man argument, however, comparing the most beautiful of original traditional designs (and only rarely the *neo*-traditional designs, such as mock-Georgian, the public purportedly support) with a modernism

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[268] Scruton (writer) and Lockwood (director), *Why Beauty Matters*

[269] *Ibid.*

[270] *Ibid.*

[271] Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, *Learning From Las Vegas* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: MIT Press, 1977), p. 128.

equated with brutalism. Early modernism, however, referred to by Jonathan Meades as "pretty white modernism" has none of the "guts and attack" of brutalist forms, and its re-emergence today in the form of a gentler, lighter, and more popular style is often overlooked by conservatives who require a less sympathetic opposition.[272] This "Ikea Modernism", as Owen Hatherley refers to it, is characterised by an emphasis on wellbeing.[273] The rough dark concrete, austerity and inhuman scale of brutalism is replaced with wooden panelling, large windows, and green space. For Hatherley, however, this is the architecture of "timidity".[274] For Rowan Moore, it "errs on the side of caution".[275] For Timothy Brittain-Catlin "the eternal sunshine of the neo-Modernist practitioner is in danger of becoming the architecture of the grinning idiot".[276] There is no justification, he argues, for the idea that all buildings should be light, airy, and cheerful. In his vigorous defence of brutalism, Meades furthermore argues that such cheerful and friendly

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[272] See the documentary *Bunkers, Brutalism and Bloodymindedness: Concrete Poetry*, written by Jonathan Meades, directed by Francis Hanly (BBC, 2014). Available at https://vimeo.com/93963469 [accessed Jan 2019].

[273] Melissa Woolford, founder and director of the Museum of Architecture, for instance, has said that "We believe architects understand that their role today increasingly extends towards a better consideration of public health". Quoted within Clare Dowdy, "Keeping Fit: The Architecture of Health and Wellbeing" (wallpaper.com, Nov 2016). Available from https://www.wallpaper.com/architecture/wellbeing-exhibition-at-moa-explores-architecture-of-fitness-and-health [accessed Jan 2019].

[274] Owen Hatherley, *Militant Modernism* (Ropley, Hants: O Books, 2008), p. 12.

[275] Rowan Moore, "The Quiet Revolution in British Housing", *The Guardian*, (theguardian.com, Aug 2015). Available at https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/aug/16/quiet-revolution-in-british-housing-architecture [accessed Jan 2019].

[276] Timothy Brittain-Catlin, "'Hallo Darkness!' Why Not All Buildings Need To Be Cheerful All Of The Time" (archdaily.com, Aug 2017). Available at https://www.archdaily.com/876737/hallo-darkness-why-not-all-buildings-need-to-be-cheerful-all-of-the-time [accessed Jan 2019].

architecture "curtails our possibilities".[277] For Karsten Harries, contemporary architects have become "uncertain of their way".[278] Moore describes architecture as being "a half-century after its real and imagined crimes, in rehab".[279]

Debates on aesthetic value in the built environment often make two assumptions. The first is that aesthetic value is synonymous with beauty, and that non-beautiful or negative aesthetic qualities cannot have aesthetic value. The second is that beauty is synonymous with classical and traditional architecture, that modernist architecture cannot be attractive. In a 2018 House of Commons debate on architectural aesthetics, beauty was regularly conflated with traditionalism, with both the Housing Minister Kit Malthouse and John Hayes MP dismissing successful and attractive modern architecture as exceptions to the rule.[280] The extension to Kings Cross station is remarkable, admitted Hayes, but is unlikely to be replicated since "Where modern design does succeed that is largely by accident".[281]

The Government's decision in 2018 to establish a new design commission – entitled "Building Better, Building Beautiful" – under the chairmanship of Scruton angered architects sympathetic to modern design, with one complaining that, as detailed in this thesis' introduction: "This is the same old binary argument about traditional rather than contemporary

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[277] Jonathan Meades, *op. cit.*

[278] Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, p. 2.

[279] Rowan Moore, *op. cit.*

[280] HC Deb (30 October 2018) vol. 648. Available at https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-10-30/debates/A9BF83ED-1610-4603-964E-F8C02EB1E07B/BeautyAndTheBuiltEnvironment [accessed Jan 2019].

[281] *Ibid.*, col. 292WH. Even if this were true – and it does a great disservice to its architect John McAslan to claim so – this would not prove that modern design cannot be beautiful. It would merely suggest that its beauty has to date been achieved by accident or not deliberately sought.

architecture, which feels like a tedious hangover from the 1980s, a pantomime Prince Charles speech reverberating forever"[282]

This chapter will not approach the debate on beauty and ugliness by conflating beauty and classicism or by focussing solely on the well-worn argument concerning traditional versus contemporary architecture. Rather, it attempts a fresh examination of negative aesthetics by outlining some different, broad *types* of negative response (attempting greater specificity/delineation) whilst also presenting the complexity, impurity and tensions within most negative aesthetic experiences:

- Part One begins by examining the conflation of beauty, pleasure and aesthetic value. Such conflations – notably present in the work of Nick Zangwill – are too simplistic and obstruct a convincing theory of negative aesthetic responses.
- Part Two offers an account of four main sources of negative or neutral aesthetic response: the ugly, the disagreeable, the rigidly ordered, and the chaotic. These descriptions are made with reference to Kantian categories, but without the associated value hierarchy of "higher" and "lower" experiences, or Kant's focus on purity.
- Part Three examines more complex aesthetic responses, including the sublime, the ironic, and what I more generally refer to as "cultivated" aesthetics. Such responses, I argue, may commonly be presented as the culmination of man's aesthetic journey, or as a dominance of his animal nature. However, our ability to withstand or enjoy negative aesthetics depends upon it being carefully *stage-managed* and controlled.

Negative aesthetic experiences may indeed be rich, interesting, and valuable, I will argue. However, they may also be lacking in richness, boring or undesirable. A greater focus within this vast, neglected category of aesthetic

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[282] Charles Holland, quoted in India Block, "UK's New Commission for Beautiful Buildings is 'Tedious Hangover from 1980s' Say Architects".

experience will, importantly, begin the process of distinguishing the former from the latter, particularly as they present within the built environment.

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Part One: The Conflation of Beauty, Pleasure and Aesthetic Value

One of the obstacles to explaining how negative aesthetic concepts and experiences may have positive value is that aesthetic value is often conflated with beauty. On this view, if we are in agreement that a building is ugly, drab, or generally unable to be described as beautiful, then we must also concede that – whatever its practical value or design interest – the building cannot be awarded *aesthetic* value. In Frank Sibley's "Some Notes on Ugliness", for example – one of the few texts in aesthetics devoted to this topic – Sibley's treatment of the matter assumes that beauty is always a positive aesthetic value and that ugliness is always negative: "That is, I take 'x has positive aesthetic value because it is ugly', tout court, and 'x has negative aesthetic value because it is beautiful' tout court, as equally unacceptable".[283] It is impossible, therefore, on Sibley's account, to argue for the aesthetic value of an unattractive built environment. For Sibley, beautiful objects have aesthetic value but ugly objects cannot. For Nick Zangwill, meanwhile, aesthetic value is simply *the same thing as* beauty.

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[283] Frank Sibley, "Some Notes on Ugliness", in John Benson, Betty Redfern and Jeremy Roxbee Cox (eds.), *Approach to Aesthetics: Collected Papers on Philosophical Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 190-207 (p. 191).

The Sliding Scale

Such theories commonly use the metaphor of a sliding scale on which aesthetic value can be plotted. For Sibley, for example, beauty and ugliness are extreme points on a sliding scale, with "plain" and "nondescript" occupying the centre ground.[284] Such a scale is employed too by Emily Brady in her work on the sublime, yet her attempt to plot the sublime within it exposes its problems.

For Brady, as for Kant, sublimity is distinct from both ugliness and from (the grandeur of) beauty:

> [A]lthough sublimity and grandeur may share great scale, grandeur lacks the more challenging features of the sublime and its mixed emotional response. Grandeur can be categorised as a type of beauty occurring on a great scale with non-threatening qualities, being positive and unmistakably uplifting in its effects.[285]

The sublime, in contrast, is a challenging, difficult, and partly negative experience, a "negative pleasure".[286] The ornate, stately palace may have grandeur; a hostile, melancholy mountainscape or vast, barren plateau may be sublime. However, despite arguing that sublimity is a different quality from beauty and ugliness, Brady nonetheless plots the sublime on an aesthetic scale ranging from the ugly to the beautiful: "on the more positive side are varieties of beauty, and on the negative side, varieties of ugliness" which can "exist in greater or lesser degrees". The sublime, writes Brady, lies somewhere in the middle. It is both positive and negative, suspended between aesthetic poles.[287]

In occupying a central spot, however, the sublime shares similar territory in Brady's model to the plain and ordinary. Thus, the model is

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[284] *Ibid.*, p. 192.

[285] Emily Brady, *The Sublime in Modern Philosophy: Aesthetics, Ethics, and Nature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 170.

[286] Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, p. 98.

[287] Brady, *The Sublime in Modern Philosophy*, p. 174.

unable to distinguish between concepts which elicit a "mixed" aesthetic response (both positive and negative) and concepts which produce *neither* a positive nor negative response. We are therefore unable to distinguish between our experiences of the sublime mountainscape and the everyday cornershop. To further complicate matters, on reflection Brady argues that the plain and ordinary are better situated further towards ugliness on the scale, rather than in the centre, because to call somebody plain is a "negative judgement" of "disvalue".[288] Indeed, she refers to the scale as a measurement of "positive and negative aesthetic values".[289] On these terms, however, the sublime, occupying the middle space of the scale, must be awarded "middling" aesthetic value, eliciting neither strong approval nor strong disapproval. This seems unsatisfactory for an aesthetic experience that Brady herself describes as extraordinary and astonishing.

The problem with Brady's scale, and those similar to it, is that it attempts to measure several things at once:

1. Relative points along a line from ugliness to beauty
2. Relative points along a line from negative to positive aesthetic concepts defined by how unpleasant or pleasant/repellant or attractive they are
3. Relative points along a line measuring "overall aesthetic merit"

The sublime, however, a) is not best defined as some form of beauty or ugliness (as Brady herself acknowledges); b) provokes a "mixed emotional response" – Kant's "negative pleasure" – that cannot easily be reduced to a simple measure of pleasure and pain; c) is most often, despite this mixed emotional response, or even because of it, considered to have high aesthetic value. The sliding scale metaphor oversimplifies and confuses, and cannot do justice to negative aesthetics.

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[288] Brady, *op. cit.* p. 174.

[289] *Ibid.*

The "Wonderfully Garish": Reclaiming the Negative as Positive

Zangwill's account, too, faces difficulties as a result of his conflation of the beautiful, the aesthetically valuable and the pleasurable. Since his account is unable to award aesthetic value to objects with a negative aesthetic, or even validate our enjoyment of them, Zangwill must account for our appreciation through alternative explanations. In "The Beautiful, The Dainty, and the Dumpy", Zangwill therefore allows that it is possible for a necktie to be "wonderfully garish" or for a primitive sculpture to be "wonderfully dumpy", and for the necktie or sculpture to thereby have aesthetic value.[290] In the built environment, therefore, perhaps we might speak of a brutalist building as "wonderfully threatening" or a postmodern building as "wonderfully kitsch".

However, Zangwill's aim here is not to illustrate that we may take pleasure in the ugly. Rather, it is to argue that many terms that we commonly consider to be always negative in evaluation may sometimes be used positively – as contributing to an object's beauty – and that many terms that we commonly consider to be always positive in evaluation, may sometimes be used negatively – as contributing to an object's ugliness. For Zangwill, indeed, overall aesthetic merit (beauty, ugliness) is dependent upon the operation and existence of these "substantive" aesthetic properties. A saccharine porcelain figurine, he suggests, can be "horribly dainty".[291] In this case the daintiness is a negative evaluation and contributes to the object's lack of aesthetic merit, its ugliness. In the case of the "wonderfully garish" necktie, the garishness is a positive evaluation, and contributes to the object's overall aesthetic merit, its beauty.

The problem with this approach is that it is only able to grant aesthetic value to the necktie by requiring the transformation of our

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[290] Nick Zangwill, "The Beautiful, The Dainty, and the Dumpy", in Nick Zangwill, *The Metaphysics of Beauty* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001), p. 17.

[291] *Ibid.*

experience into enjoyment of the beautiful rather than enjoyment of negative aesthetics per se: "wonderfully garish" is synonymous with "beautifully garish". Similarly, appreciation of kitsch must be interpreted not as an ironic enjoyment in crude or poor taste, but rather, again, as a more traditional appreciation of beauty. In both instances, the explanation does not ring true. We already have words – "vibrant", "vivid" – to describe an appreciation of something brightly coloured. We select the word "garish" to describe something less straightforwardly positive: to be garish is to be *too* vibrant.

Zangwill's account threatens to descend into absurdity due to his use of what he terms a "conversational implicature" model. We can conceive of the "wonderfully garish" and the "horribly dainty", he suggests, and might use these terms in conversation, but cannot conceive of the "horribly graceful".[292] Grace is therefore, for Zangwill, inherently positive, and garishness and dumpiness can be either positive or negative.

However, contra Zangwill, we may conceive of a conversation that praises the kitsch charm of a "wonderfully grotesque" garden gnome or the "wonderfully ugly" naked mole rat. On Zangwill's model we must conclude that "grotesqueness" and "ugliness" may sometimes contribute to an object's beauty rather than ugliness. This conclusion, however, is patently nonsensical.

By conflating aesthetic value and pleasure with beauty, we are nonetheless commonly drawn to describe as beautiful not only objects of classical beauty but also those objects that bring "negative pleasure", ironic pleasure or other mixed responses. Since, in everyday speech, describing something as beautiful is often the only means to grant it aesthetic value, it is a common defence of brutalism to award its most notable works the description "beautiful". In doing so, however, we cannot distinguish between the appeal of The Barbican and the appeal of St Paul's Cathedral. Even the most passionate defenders of brutalism, such as Jonathan Meades, would

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[292] *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

not be confused to hear brutalism described as ugly, yet it would surely be confusing to hear St Paul's described as ugly.

In his description of the artwork of Dieter Roth, which consists of such challenging pieces as a 24-hour recording of a barking dog, Arthur Danto argues that:

> We are all alike when it comes to the barking of dogs, and Roth cannot have been any different from the rest of us [...] he recognised the same things as beautiful that everyone else does. He just did not want them to be part of his art.[293]

We might similarly suggest that brutalist architects recognised the same things as beautiful (or agreeable) that everyone else does. They just did not want them to be part of their architecture.

"The Power of *King Lear* is Not Aesthetic": Reclaiming Negative Aesthetics as Artistic Value

There is a second problem with theories that conflate aesthetic value and beauty: accounting for the appeal of negative aesthetics by arguing that non-beautiful artworks may have artistic, but not aesthetic, value. For Zangwill, therefore:

> It has often been noted that although *Guernica* is a great painting, it would be inappropriate to call it "beautiful". Similarly for the play *King Lear*. What this shows is not that beauty and ugliness are not the preeminent aesthetic concepts, but that these works of art have important nonaesthetic values. What is important about these works is their moral, political, or psychological content, and their emotional appeal. [...] Since it is not appropriate to call King Lear "beautiful", the power of *King Lear* is not aesthetic power.[294]

Zangwill's theory must therefore account for all value in *Guernica* and *King Lear* (aside from "incidental" instances of beauty) as being non-aesthetic.

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[293] Danto, "Kalliphobia", p. 28.

[294] Zangwill, *The Metaphysics of Beauty*, p. 138.

Figure 15: Picasso's *Guernica*:[295] for Zangwill, its power is not aesthetic

This interpretation, however, offers no distinction between those artworks that have moral and political content, or emotional appeal, as a direct result of their aesthetic qualities, and those that do not. *Guernica* has what Arthur Danto would refer to as "internal ugliness" (Danto's explanation of internal and external aesthetic qualities focusses more readily on beauty yet, as noted by Noël Carroll, it applies equally well to negative qualities). In works with internal ugliness, the ugliness is integral to the meaning and interpretation of the work. This contrasts for Danto with "external" ugliness or "external" beauty in which an artwork's aesthetic qualities are incidental to a work's meaning.[296] Danto has in mind here an artwork such as Duchamp's aforementioned urinal which was, in Duchamp's own words, a deliberately "anaesthetic" work, the meaning of which was to be sought solely in its conceptual rather than its aesthetic content. To discuss the urinal's colour, texture or form in relation to the work's meaning would be to wholly miss the point. The same cannot be said, however, for *Guernica*, the emotional impact of which is intimately tied to its restricted colour palette of greys, whites and blacks, its jagged lines, its enormous scale, and bewildering, depthless composition. It is true to say that *Guernica* has tremendous emotional, psychological and moral importance, and yet these

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[295] Pablo Picasso, *Guernica,* oil on canvas, 1937, Museo Reina Sofa, Madrid.

[296] Danto, "Kalliphobia", pp. 33-35.

values cannot be understood in isolation from the aesthetic qualities which give rise to this.[297]

Furthermore, such an attempt to repackage the merit of non-beautiful objects as artistic rather than aesthetic value is an option only straightforwardly available in the case of non-beautiful *artworks*. Non-beautiful natural objects, and functional objects, do not have an artistic value into which to siphon aesthetic power. Interest and enjoyment taken in urban exploration provides one notable example. Urban explorers gain access to abandoned spaces such as disused bunkers, historic asylums, underground sewer systems, and decaying shopping malls. The explorations are most often documented through photographs which are shared online. Importantly, the spaces visited are closer in aesthetic quality to Picasso's *Guernica* than to Raphael's *La Belle Jardinière.* To explain the appeal of these spaces, Zangwill must either acknowledge their aesthetic appeal, but label it as beauty, or else must argue that the appeal of these spaces lies solely in non-aesthetic form such as the feeling of excitement and curiosity explorers feel on experiencing locations that are usually out of bounds. If so we might expect the photographic records to function primarily as souvenirs or as trophies. In fact, however, the photographs are integral to the pursuit of urban exploration and most often are carefully composed, thoughtfully edited, and even compiled for appreciation in coffee table books. Indeed, the aesthetics of urban exploration and its fascination with urban decay has

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[297] In a less direct sense, however, we may argue that aesthetic discussion of Duchamp's urinal does indeed pertain to the work and is internal. That is, part of the joke or statement of the work depends upon the urinal's resemblance to traditional sculpture. It is porcelain, a neutral colour, and a similar size to traditional sculptures which may be presented within a gallery, allowing it to be presented, somewhat absurdly, upon a pedestal. Furthermore, it is undecorated and unpatterned, presenting a purely formal shape. The urinal, therefore, has aesthetic qualities which well suit Duchamp's internal meaning, even if that meaning is ironic. A found object such as a sock, a piece of driftwood, or a transparent measuring jug would have created a different, and less effective, impact.

been compared to Romantic interest in ruins and to the Japanese aesthetic of wabi-sabi.[298]

The negative (or "mixed response") aesthetics of urban exploration sites. Left (figure 16) abandoned nuclear site. Right (figure 17) Detroit Book Depository

In short, some objects and experiences with a negative aesthetic – the wonderfully garish necktie; the jagged composition and drab colours of *Guernica*; the rusted, littered or mouldy urban exploration site – are nonetheless attractive, appealing or valuable to us. The ugliness or disagreeableness is not, in these instances, an unfortunate problem to fix. Rather, it may be integral to a meaningful experience, may bring us pleasure, or may simply demand our aesthetic attention and interest. Zangwill attempts to account for such phenomena either by uncomfortably shoehorning them into his theory of traditional beauty – in which case we lose any distinction between enjoyment taken in negative and positive aesthetics – or by repackaging their value as entirely non-aesthetic. Similarly, by conflating aesthetic value, beauty and aesthetic merit, Brady is stifled in her ability to convincingly account for our complex response to the sublime, which cannot readily be mapped onto a simple sliding scale. In order to better understand the appeal of negative aesthetics I will return

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[298] See Geoff Manaugh, "Forward: Desert Iliad", in Troy Paiva, *Night Vision: The Art of Urban Exploration* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2008), pp. 6-7 and Troy Paiva, "Confessions of an Urban Explorer", in *Night Vision: The Art of Urban Exploration*, pp. 8-14 (p. 11).

instead to Kant's *Critique of Judgement* and the differentiations it contains regarding forms of aesthetic value. For Kant, that is, "In relation to the feeling of pleasure, an object must be classed with either the *agreeable*, or the *beautiful*, or the *sublime*, or the (absolutely) *good*".[299]

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Part Two: The Ugly, The Disagreeable, and the Non-Aesthetic: Kant's Aesthetic Categories and Negative Aesthetics

Although one might expect a critique of aesthetic value to be primarily concerned with distinguishing the beautiful from the ugly, good taste from bad, Kant's critique demonstrates a greater concern with distinguishing the beautiful from the agreeable (and to a lesser extent from the sublime and the good). Both may bring pleasure, he admits, and yet, for Kant, beauty is the greater experience. Its superiority for Kant lies in the fact that, in putting aside our biological and personal interests, we achieve an aesthetics which is more universal.

As such, a great deal of Kant's critique focusses on what he terms the "pure" judgement of taste, free from intrusion of the agreeable and the good. We need not, however, share Kant's concern with policing the boundaries of different aesthetic experiences or his views on which experiences (such as the beautiful) are more valuable than others (such as the agreeable).[300]

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[299] Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, p. 126.

[300] As noted by Böhme, indeed, our engagement with Kant may be more fruitful the more we are able to historicise him: "One does Kant the most justice if one refrains from coming to him with [...] totalizing intentions, inspired by veneration for the philosopher. As fundamental as is the work of this philosopher, he nevertheless was also limited as a man and thinker of a particular epoch [...] Kant's aesthetics is

Instead, we may adopt Kant's model precisely for the opposite reason: to examine without judgement how our aesthetic responses are, more often than not, mixed and conflicted rather than pure, and how this complexity sheds light on our ability to be, at times, attracted and repelled by the same object.

1. Dependent Beauty: The Beautiful and the Good

An important example of impure aesthetic judgement, and one that Kant permits himself greater attention to, is the mixture of the beautiful and the good: dependent beauty. Dependent beauty is not simply the good viewed aesthetically. Many things are good, and may be appreciated as such, and yet are not beautiful. Dependent beauty, in contrast, must still employ beautiful forms. Our concept of the good does not entirely define whether or not we take pleasure in the object. Rather, it acts as a restriction regarding which beautiful forms may be employed. For that reason, it is contrasted with what Kant terms "free beauty", which is a beauty independent of any concept that would allow us to decide whether the object is "good" or "bad" in relation to what it is supposed to be.

Regarding dependent beauty, Kant writes that:

> Much that would be liked directly in intuition could be added to a building, if only the building were not [meant] to be a church [...] And this human being might have had much more delicate features and a facial structure with a softer and more likeable outline, if only he were not [meant] to represent a man, let alone a warlike one.[301]

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the adequate theory of the aesthetic sensibility of the rococo and the cultivated bourgeois style of life in the second half of the eighteenth century. This historicization of Kantian theory in no way diminishes its significance and its truth. It is rather the case that the aesthetic experience of the cultivated bourgeoisie constitutes one possible form, one could say perhaps one dimension, of experiencing the beautiful". Böhme, *The Aesthetics of Atmospheres*, p. 151.

[301] Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, p. 77.

People are unable to appreciate delicate features in a warlike man – in contrast, perhaps, to an innocent young woman – because their concept of a "good" warlike man demands ruggedness and strength rather than softness and delicacy. Similarly, we have acquired some criteria of what a "good" church must look like, and are unable to appreciate those forms, however beautiful, which contradict this. Dependent beauty, and dependent ugliness, are key therefore in any aesthetics of designed objects and the built environment, where our judgements are most often coloured by our idea of what is appropriate for a given building, building part, or environment.

The aesthetic impact of good and bad in architecture is downplayed by Zangwill who argues that "Even though delicacy destroys the dependent powerfulness of [a triumphal] arch, the delicacy itself remains a valuable quality".[302] This would be a curious kind of value, however, appreciable only if we abstract entirely from the object's status as a triumphal arch and appreciate it as a free beauty. Delicacy, however, may itself be incomprehensible as a category of free rather than dependent beauty, affected by our expectation of what sort of object something is. As noted by James Shelley:

> Perceived as belonging to the category of Shetland ponies, a large Shetland pony may be perceived as lumbering; perceived as belonging to the category of horses, the same pony may be perceived as cute and charming but certainly not lumbering.[303]

Similarly, within architecture an arch that appears delicate within an Islamic design may appear merely spindly in a classical one. As argued by Scruton, "our sense of the beauty in architectural forms cannot be divorced from our conception of buildings and of the functions that they fulfil".[304]

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302 Zangwill, *Metaphysics of Beauty*, p. 18.

303 James Shelley, "The Concept of the Aesthetic", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.). Available at https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aesthetic-concept/ [accessed Jan 2019].

304 Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Architecture*, p. 9.

For Zangwill, in contrast, there is always some truth of the matter regarding whether something is best described as graceful (and therefore beautiful) or effete (and therefore ugly) – "The difference then devolves on a disagreement about whether the agreed nonaesthetic features determine grace [...] as opposed to effeteness".[305] In our example above, however, it is difficult to imagine how one could argue that the arch is delicate (and therefore beautiful) or spindly (and therefore ugly) without making any reference to its use and to comparable forms that are more or less slight for that type of object. It would be like holding a debate on whether a creature is large or small without making reference to whether it is a Shetland pony or a horse. Similarly, the same pair of hands may be described as graceful or effete depending upon whether they are the hands of a woman (likely to be termed graceful) or a man (likely to be termed effete). We will get nowhere, however, in attempting to resolve whether the hands *really are* delicate or effete without any reference to conceptual context and notions of the good.[306]

This intrusion of the good into our aesthetic judgement, however, brings instability, ambiguity and ambivalence. In Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*, for example, Hall writes of her protagonist Stephen (a female) that she:

> [W]as never able to decide whether [her friend Jonathan Brockett] attracted or repelled her [...] his hands were as white and soft as a woman's—she would feel a queer little sense of outrage creeping over

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[305] Zangwill, *Metaphysics of Beauty*, p. 20.

[306] Returning to the example of a triumphal arch, it seems more likely that either the arch would not be described as "delicate" at all (since, as Zangwill himself argues, the term delicacy most often implies approval) and may rather be described as "spindly" or similar – or else that the term "delicate" may be used but, in this instance at least, used to imply disapproval for want of a better alternative word – the arch is "too delicate", and the word here does not imply praise or value.

her when she looked at his hands. For those hands of his went so ill with him somehow.[307]

Stephen's ambivalent response results from the tension present between her idea of the beautiful and her idea of the good. The hands themselves, if present on a woman rather than a man, would be considered by Stephen as straightforwardly attractive. Yet as part of a man they are not. The sight of Brockett – for Stephen, and reflective of her own values – represents a sort of grotesque.[308]

As noted by Geoffrey Galt Harpham:

> When we use the word "grotesque" we record, among other things, the sense that though our attention has been arrested, our understanding is unsatisfied. Grotesqueries both require and defeat definition: they are neither so regular and rhythmical that they settle easily into our categories, nor so unprecedented that we do not recognise them at all […] *calling into question the adequacy of our ways of organising the world* [my emphasis][309]

Objects are more grotesque, therefore, the more they flout these categories, the more they bring into focus the way in which our categories – and the notions of good and bad that go along with them – affect our aesthetic experience of the world. Our aesthetic response to grotesques offers an immediate impression of our values and a sense of when these values and categories have been most egregiously threatened. The result is often

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[307] Radclyffe Hall, *The Well of Loneliness* (Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 2005), p. 205.

[308] The depiction of gender in Hall's novel is more nuanced than my example above suggests, but also uses language of its time and is a product of the culture (1920s Britain) from which it emerged. Celebrated as an early lesbian novel, the book nonetheless often conflates sexuality and gender identity and uses language we would be unlikely to use today, such as the description of gender non-conforming lesbians as "inverts".

[309] Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *On the Grotesque: Strategies of Contradiction in Art and Literature,* 2nd ed. (Aurora: Davies Group, 2006), p. 3.

fascination: the simultaneous attraction and repulsion described by Hall above.

Indeed, for Sibley our notion of ugliness *always* includes reference to some concept. The same is not true, he writes, of beauty, which may – as Kant suggests – be either "free" or "dependent". In Sibley's terminology, ugliness is always attributive ("X is an ugly N") whereas beauty may be either attributive ("X is a beautiful N") or predicative ("X is beautiful"). Ugliness, says Sibley, is always attributive, since our notion of ugliness depends upon some idea that the object is a deformity from expectation of standard form.[310] Crucially, for Sibley since our ideas of good and bad *change over time*, our ideas of dependent beauty (and ugliness) change over time – and across cultures – also.[311]

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[310] This standard form, for Sibley, is not the same as ideal form, e.g. the "perfect" human body, neither is it the same as the most common form. Indeed, whilst most adults in the UK and other developed countries are currently overweight or obese, we still consider overweight and obesity, by their very definition, as deviations from some normal standard. Finally, it is also distinct from being a deviation from aesthetic standards. That ugliness is an aesthetic deviation is merely trivially the case for Sibley. The more important point, he says, is that the aesthetic experience of ugliness, the experience of ugliness in its deviation from aesthetic norms, is based upon deviation and deformity of non-aesthetic form. Sibley, "Some Notes on Ugliness", p. 191.

[311] As outlined by Jonathan Johnson, some Kant scholars have attempted to argue that a "pure ugliness" akin to "pure beauty" is possible within the Kantian framework. However, there is little consensus regarding what form this would take. This chapter will focus instead on presenting chaos and order as the counterpoints to Kantian pure beauty. See Jonathan Johnson, "Understandings of Ugliness in Kant's Aesthetics" in Jane Forsey and Lars Aagaard-Mogensen (eds.) *On The Ugly* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019), pp. 47-66.

Beauty as Boring; Ugliness as Interesting

Importantly, then, many criticisms of beauty are better understood not as criticisms of beauty as such, but of a rigid conformity to our current ideal of the good. A common criticism of beauty is that, as argued by the fashion designer Dries Van Noten:

> Nothing is so boring as something beautiful. I prefer ugly things, I prefer things which are surprising. It forces you to ask yourself questions.[312]

Beauty, on this account, is boring, safe and predictable. Ugliness, by contrast, is interesting, subversive and diverse. If this were wholly true, we may argue that ugliness in the built environment is offset by the interest and surprise it offers to us. Ugly spaces may be welcomed for being intellectually stimulating or interesting. This, however, is not entirely the case.

The argument that beauty is boring, and ugliness interesting, may be partly attributed to what is sometimes termed the Anna Karenina Principle, named after Tolstoy's observation that "Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way". That is: those examples of a phenomenon which conform to some ideal must necessarily share those traits in common. In contrast, those examples which do not conform may fail to do so in diverse ways. There is often one way to achieve dependent beauty, but many ways to exhibit (dependent) ugliness. The monotony of such conforming beauty is captured in F Scott Fitzgerald's remark that,

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[312] Dries Van Noten, quoted in Lou Stoppard, "Why is Fashion So Ugly?", *The Financial Times* (ft.com, 15 Nov 2017). Available at https://www.ft.com/content/3d5ad52c-9f01-11e7-8b50-0b9f565a23e1 [accessed Jan 2019].

"After a certain degree of prettiness, one pretty girl is as pretty as another".[313]

What Van Noten may be objecting to, therefore, is not beauty as such, but restrictive or ossified cultural ideals of goodness associated with particular styles of, in this case, clothing, and yet also present in architecture, furniture, and elsewhere. Rather than starting from scratch every time a new project is started, many designers will begin with reference to this common way of doing things, and some may do so slavishly, reproducing styles that have worked in the past. A "good" church may be thought to have high ceilings, dramatic lighting, Gothic styling. A "good" evening dress may be thought be long in length and in a smooth, luxurious fabric. A "good" house may be thought to have a pitched roof. Similarly, and with reference to Fitzgerald's comments above, a "pretty" girl may be thought to have a small nose, a dainty jaw, and long eyelashes.

However, whilst at any one time we may harbour some restrictive notions of good and bad form for any number of categories, most often these restrictions are neither entirely reducible to one ideal nor in practice incapable of being expanded. Our idea of human beauty can include not only the rugged features of Kant's "warlike man" but also the ideal of so-called boyish good looks. Similarly, we do not criticise a rose for lacking the crisp and sleek form of a tulip, nor a tulip for lacking the intricacy of a rose. Finally, whilst it is true that "[m]uch that would be liked directly in intuition could be added to a building, if only the building were not [meant] to be a church", there is no reason why we should endorse only one style that has the means to achieve this. There are many styles which, although not identical in form, may capture the purpose and spirit of a place of worship. There is more than one way to attain appropriate form.

This is perhaps at the heart of the debate between contemporary architects and traditionalists such as Scruton and Kit Malthouse. As noted by the architect Charles Holland:

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[313] F. Scott Fitzgerald, "The Popular Girl", in *The Complete Short Stories and Essays, Volume 2* (New York: Scribner, 2004), pp. 236-289 (p. 238).

I have nothing against beauty being discussed in relation to architecture. But I object to beauty being defined in such narrow and predictable terms – yet more neo-Victorian and neo-Georgian housing.[314]

Our notions of the good are restrictions on our appreciation of beautiful form. The narrowness and the flexibility of these restrictions, however, is up to us to decide.

Three churches with different styles: Left (figure 18) St Paul's Cathedral, London; Middle (figure 19) Beauvais Cathedral, France; Right (figure 20) The Kopavogur Church, Reykjavik

There is, finally, no guarantee that ugly forms will fulfil Van Noten's description of being surprising or provocative. Grotesquery, for example, is rare rather than common, is often fantastical, and is precisely formed to confound our categories of the world: animals and humans combine; children are aged; female and male traits coalesce. However, as noted by Sibley, whilst ugliness may be considered a deviation from standard form, this does not require that standard form must be the most common. Ugliness, that is, need not be rare but may be humdrum and commonplace, present on every street corner. Furthermore, not all deviations from or deformities of standard form will be insightful or interesting. Many or most deformities – such as gutter-stained walls or broken paving slabs – are commonplace and also immediately comprehensible rather than

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[314] Charles Holland, quoted in "UK's New Commission for Beautiful Buildings is 'Tedious Hangover from 1980s' Say Architects".

fascinating.[315] The beauty of dependent beauty, then, may at times be unfairly criticized as monotonous or boring, whereas in fact it is not beauty that bores us, but the narrowness of our criteria of the good. Carte blanche ugliness is not the solution to overly restrictive norms, but rather some deviation from that norm that has some merit of its own to offer, either in putting forward some new standard of beauty, or else – and more controversially – some form of ugliness that challenges rather than merely deviates from our current standards.

Our Anthropomorphised World

According to Sibley's initial theory, we should only judge a toad to be ugly if it is a deformity from the standard form of a toad. However, as he acknowledges, this is not the case. We frequently refer to whole species of animals as ugly. What we are doing, he suggests, is applying our own anthropocentric ideas of good and bad to non-human objects. What we are really saying, therefore, is that "toads are ugly creatures" – they do not conform to our idea of what an aesthetically pleasing animal should look like – or else that that the toad's bulging eyes and broad mouth would be ugly if human.[316] Sibley ends his essay, therefore, by suggesting that whether we see something as ugly or not depends on how we look upon it. If we measure the toad's face in comparison to a human one then we will find it ugly. However, "considered in themselves", with no comparison to human ideals, we may even learn to find some of them beautiful. Furthermore, even an ugly human face may be appreciated as beautiful, Sibley argues, if we are able to entirely abstract from its status as a human face and look upon it merely as a generic form.[317]

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[315] That is, when they are considered as dependent forms rather than free ones. It remains true that, as noted by Saito, broken paving slabs and stained walls could be attractive or interesting in rare instances where we abstract from their purpose.

[316] Sibley, "Some Notes on Ugliness", p. 198.

[317] *Ibid.*, p. 205.

Indeed, the scale of our anthropocentric projection onto the world around us may be on a grander scale than we often allow. For Nietzsche, indeed, "[W]hen it comes to beauty, man posits himself as the norm of perfection [...]. What does man hate? There is no doubt about this: he hates *the twilight of his own type*".[318] Umberto Eco describes this assessment as "narcissistically anthropomorphous".[319] This projection is not confined merely to the animal kingdom. Within architecture, the classical orders are themselves developed from the projection of the human body onto architectural form. Proportions between elements are calculated with reference to the proportions of the human body. More specifically, the Doric column was envisaged as masculine, and the Ionic feminine. The former "resembles" the male form by being straighter and plainer. The latter "resembles" the female form and female ideal by being curved and adorned. A preference for symmetry in architecture, it has been suggested, may follow from the preference for symmetry in human form.[320] As such, we may dismiss as ugly an ungainly, asymmetric, sallow-toned, pock-marked building, for failing to meet our ideal of beauty, whilst we may praise those buildings that are unblemished, with graceful limb-like columns and symmetrical facades.

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[318] Nietzsche, cited in Umberto Eco, *On Ugliness*, trans. by Alastair McEwen (London: Harvill Secker, 2007), p. 15. The exact English translation of Nietzsche here appears to be unique to McEwen's translation of Eco's Italian. Nietzsche's original is translated elsewhere as follows: "In beautiful things, man posits himself as the measure of perfection [...] who is man hating here? But there is no doubt: the *decline of his type*", in Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Twilight of the Idols*, trans. by Duncan Large (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 52-53.

[319] Eco, *On Ugliness*, p. 15.

[320] See for example Vitruvius: "Therefore, since nature has designed the human body so that its members are duly proportioned to the frame as a whole, it appears that the ancients had good reason for their rule, that in perfect buildings the different members must be in exact symmetrical relations to the whole general scheme", Vitruvius, *The Ten Books on Architecture,* p. 73.

Similarly, the objects and buildings we most readily describe as cute are those that share traits with human infants. Studies analysing the aesthetics of cuteness have noted how those animals that appeal to us as cute share with human children the characteristics of having large eyes and foreheads, retreating chins, short and thick limbs, and clumsy movements.[321] Koalas are cute; sparrow hawks are not. Importantly, however, cuteness is not something we identify and appreciate merely in children and animals. As with the projection of masculine and feminine ideals of beauty, the appeal of cuteness is projected onto cars, houses, bags and other designed objects that are diminutive in stature with simple, curved forms. Indeed, the contemporary car most often described as cute, the Volkswagen Beetle, has inspired a host of accessories including long, childlike eyelashes that may be applied above the car's over-sized, Bambi-esque headlights. Furthermore, academic studies suggest that across cultures:

> [C]ars with a big windscreen, round headlights and a small grill tend to be considered young and feminine while those with flatter headlights and a bigger, squarer under-body are older and more masculine.[322]

The enduring influence of such anthropocentric projections in architecture may be seen in the photograph below in which the smaller upstairs window has been surrounded with a coloured border of the same size and proportion as the larger window beside it in an – perhaps not entirely successful – effort

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[321] See Konrad Lorenz, *Studies in Animal and Human Behavior* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971). Also Stephen Jay Gould, "A Biological Homage to Mickey Mouse", in his *The Panda's Thumb: More Reflections in Natural History* (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1980), pp. 95-108.

[322] David Robson, "Neuroscience: Why Do We See Faces in Everyday Objects?", *BBC* (bbc.com, 30 July 2014). Available at http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20140730-why-do-we-see-faces-in-objects [accessed Jan 2019]. Robson is here paraphrasing the findings of the work of Sonja Windhager at the University of Vienna.

to reduce the asymmetric impression that the mismatched "eyes" of the house are squinting.
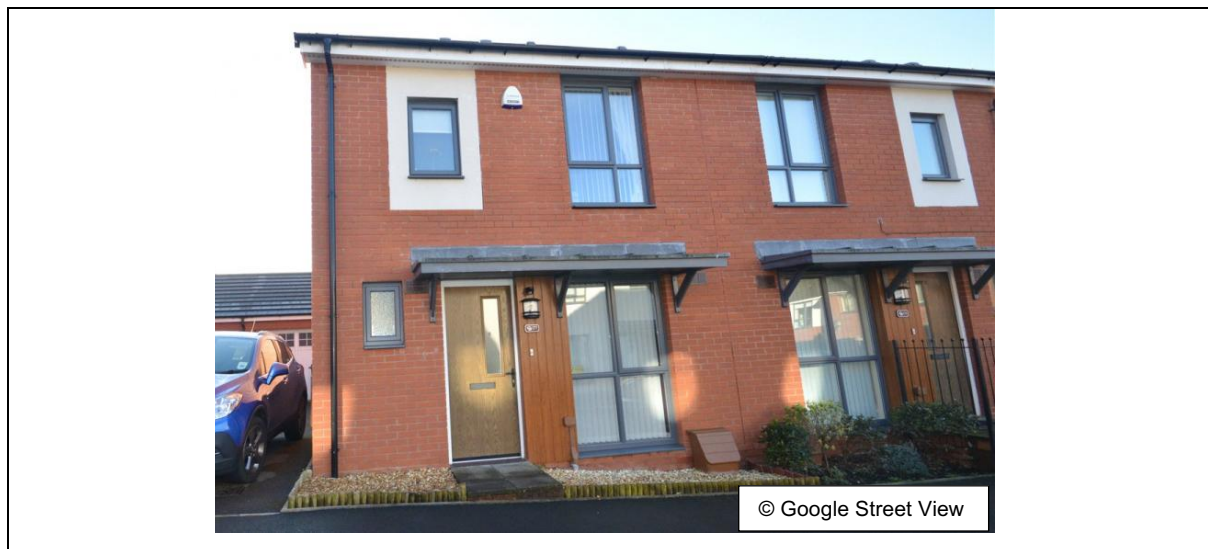
Figure 21: Windows as eyes

The benefit of attempting to cast aside our anthropocentric prejudices is that we may, as Sibley suggests, find beauty where we previously saw only ugliness. Whilst this may be true for natural categories such as animal species, the matter is – as argued previously – more complicated regarding objects of design, which are made by human beings rather than growing of their own accord. We do not need to accept or embrace design categories: we may criticise, experiment with and challenge them.

Secondly, there are reasons to resist an aesthetics that would too keenly advise us to cast aside our partial, human way of looking at the world in favour of attempting to achieve a less partial, Gods-eye view. The human body and its movement in space, argue George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, is not only at the heart of our physical lived experience but rather constitutes the foundation on which our metaphorical and conceptual schemes are based.[323] Their work focusses mostly on verbal language, and

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[323] "A great deal of everyday, conventional language is metaphorical, and the metaphorical meanings are given by conceptual metaphorical mappings that ultimately arise from correlations in our embodied experience". George Lakoff and

yet such metaphors exist also in aesthetic and visual form. Indeed, for Juhani Pallasmaa:

> The timeless task of architecture is to create embodied and lived existential metaphors that concretise and structure our being in the world [...] Our domicile becomes integrated with our self identity; it becomes part of our own body and being[324]

The anthropocentric outlook, the desire to see ourselves reflected in our environment, may prejudice our judgement. However, it is also the means by which we make sense of our world.

2. Order and Chaos: The Other Opposites of Beauty

Dependent ugliness is not the only contrast to beautiful form. There is also, in free forms unhindered by concepts, what we may consider the *unaesthetic*: the failure to achieve free beauty.[325] It may operate in two different ways.[326]

For John Dewey, aesthetic experience is found not merely in art but also in daily life and yet not all, or even the majority, of daily life is aesthetic. Instead, he argues, most experience is characterised by one of two things: mechanical "tightness" on the one hand and meandering "looseness" on the other.[327] A work day with a fixed and inflexible schedule is too mechanical

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Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 247.

[324] Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses* (Chichester: Wiley, 2012), p. 76.

[325] This is not the "anaesthetic" referred to by Arthur Danto, for whom the term refers to those artworks which do not include their aesthetic qualities as part of their artistic meaning. Such works may, as Danto acknowledges, still be beautiful or ugly: the beauty or ugliness is simply not part of the artwork.

[326] As noted earlier, free beauty, which is unhindered by concepts, does not have ugliness as its opposite, argues Sibley, since ugliness requires a concept.

[327] John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Perigee Books, 1980), p. 40.

to be aesthetic. A day indoors drifting randomly from one task to another is too loose. Aesthetic experiences, argues Dewey, are meaningful and formal. Like a carefully crafted novel, they have a beginning, middle, and end. This ending, furthermore, is due to internal completion rather than to arbitrary or extraneous reasons.

For Kant, too, beauty is neither random nor loose, but rather gives the impression of purposiveness (although, for Kant, there is no fixed purpose). When we enjoy nature we do not judge it as "governed by its purposeless mechanism" but rather see it by analogy with art as something that has been formed with purpose and meaning.[328] Beauty is also, for Kant, not rigid and ordered. A pepper garden laid with stakes in parallel lines may please someone briefly, he suggests, due to its neat order and yet shortly afterwards:

> [T]he object ceases to entertain him and instead inflicts on his imagination an irksome constraint; whereas nature in those regions, extravagant in all its diversity to the point of opulence, subject to no constraint from artificial rules, can nourish his taste permanently.[329]

Random looseness and mechanical order fail to offer human meaning and purpose. In contrast, when we encounter beauty, writes Kant, we "can grasp the explanation of its possibility only by deriving it from a will".[330] We are drawn, then, to forms which suggest will, agency and intention – even if, as is characteristic of free beauties, no clear purpose is identified.

This principle is echoed, too, in Martin Gardner's article on "White, Brown, and Fractal Music" which expounds upon research carried out by Richard F. Voss and others.[331] A "white" tune' is entirely random. It can be composed by simply taking a spinner labelled with seven notes and marking

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[328] Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, p. 99.

[329] *Ibid.*, p. 94.

[330] *Ibid.*, p. 65.

[331] Martin Gardner, "White, Brown, and Fractal Music", in *Fractal Music, Hypercards and More: Mathematical Recreations from Scientific American Magazine* (New York: W.H. Freeman, 1992), pp. 1-24.

down whichever the spinner falls upon. The result, notes Gardner, is random music reminiscent of the sound of a toddler hitting a piano keyboard. The notes in a "brown" tune, in contrast, are highly correlated to what has come beforehand. It can be composed by starting on middle C and using a spinner labelled with instructions to either add one, two, or three notes, or subtract one, two or three notes from the previous one. The result is "highly correlated" and constrained: a note cannot significantly deviate from its most recent pattern. The result, notes Gardner, also "has little aesthetic appeal".[332] Pink music, or fractal music, in contrast, is "moderately correlated". It can be composed using a system much more complex than the ones mentioned above (involving three coloured dice). The result, however, is music that is neither entirely random nor rigidly correlated. Notes may (like brown music) progress in a correlated way for some time, and then (like white music) leap several notes up or down.

Voss' team played white, brown and fractal music to people across many universities and laboratories: fractal music was preferred by far. For Gardner:

> It is commonplace in musical criticism to say that we enjoy good music because it offers a mixture of order and surprise. How could it be otherwise? Surprise would not be surprise if there were no sufficient order for us to anticipate what is likely to come next. If we guess too accurately, say in listening to a tune that is no more than walking up and down the keyboard in one-step intervals, there is no surprise at all. Good music, like a person's life or the pageant of history, is a wonderous mixture of expectation and unanticipated turns.[333]

Like Dewey's aesthetic experience, and Kant's purposeiveness without a purpose, fractal music suggests a willed order. Unlike white music it sounds ordered and composed; unlike brown music this composition sounds free and meaningful.

White, Brown and Pink Architecture

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[332] *Ibid.*, p. 5.

[333] *Ibid.*, pp. 15-19.

In architecture – often termed "frozen music" – it is similarly possible for a building to be unaesthetic simply by being too ordered, like Kant's pepper garden. Indeed, neuroscientist Colin Ellard studied human responses to a "boring" Whole Foods building in Manhattan, a vast, regimented structure with little deviation or surprise. Respondents passing the building exhibited a physical stress response, and described the building as "bland", "monotonous" and "passionless".[334] In contrast, claims Ellard, "The holy grail in urban design is to produce some kind of novelty or change every few seconds".[335] This, as we have seen above, is much like the pattern of fractal music. Similar criticisms are made not merely of buildings but of entire town and city plans. The structured townscapes of Le Corbusier, argues Andrew Ballantyne, are domineering.[336] Meanwhile, travel writer Bill Bryson famously suggested that the planned city of Canberra's marketing slogan might be "Why wait for death?".[337]

"Brown architecture": Left (figure 22) Whole Foods store, Manhattan; Right (figure 23) Canberra

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[334] Colin Ellard, *Places of the Heart: The Psychogeography of Everyday Life* (New York: Bellevue, 2015), p. 109.

[335] Colin Ellard, quoted within Jacoba Urist, "The Psychological Cost of Boring Buildings", *The Cut* (thecut.com, 12 April, 2016). Available at https://www.thecut.com/2016/04/the-psychological-cost-of-boring-buildings.html [accessed Jan 2019].

[336] Andrew Ballantyne, *Deleuze and Guattari for Architects*, pp. 88-89.

[337] Bill Bryson, *Down Under: Travels in a Sunburned Country* (London: Black Swan, 2001), p. 137.

Theorists who reject planned design sometimes extol the virtues of the unplanned. For Carlson, we saw in Chapter One, we should not impose designs on cities but rather gain inspiration from those spaces that have "developed, as it were, 'naturally' over time – have grown 'organically'". Andrew Ballantyne similarly argues against planned architecture and in favour of design that "emerges" not from one Godlike design figure but rather, as in the case of Manchester, thousands of small decisions made by the petit bourgeoisie.[338]

What Carlson and Ballantyne have in mind, perhaps, is design that – even without the will of a single creator – attains coherence and meaning along the lines of Dewey's aesthetic experience and Kant's free beauty. However, it is important to note that such emergent form is not a given. Whilst the historic centre of Manchester might embody this aesthetic, the current unplanned skyline of London, notoriously, does not. London's skyline is admittedly not boring or monotonous. However, it is disordered: tall, outlandish statement buildings such as The Gherkin and Walkie Talkie jostle for attention, scattered randomly among historic low-rises. Gwyn Richards, head of design at the City of London's planning team, refers to the skyline as an "incoherent riot".[339] The Walkie-Talkie, suggest Oliver Wainwright and Monica Ulmanu of *The Guardian*, "is widely regarded to have destroyed any semblance of planning logic the City ever had".[340] Meanwhile, the mission statement of the Skyline Campaign claims that "The skyline of London is out of control".[341] In this instance, the many small decisions taken by the city's corporate establishment has resulted not in a

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[338] Ballantyne, *Deleuze and Guattari for Architects*, pp. 89-92.

[339] Gwyn Richards, quoted in Oliver Wainwright and Monica Ulmanu, "'A Tortured Heap of Towers': The London Skyline of Tomorrow", *The Guardian* (theguardian.com, 11 Dec 2015). Available at https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/dec/11/city-of-london-skyline-of-tomorrow-interactive [accessed Jan 2019].

[340] *Ibid.*

[341] Mission Statement of the Skyline Campaign. Available at http://www.skylinecampaign.org/statement/ [accessed Jan 2019].

meaningful emergent architecture but rather, in a kind of aesthetic tragedy of the commons, the architectural equivalent of chaotic white music.

Figure 24: Pink organic architecture: Manchester's historic centre

Figure 25: White organic architecture: London

Figure 26: Brown skyline: Communist-era housing blocks, Bratislava

In Gardner's musical example, both white music and fractal music are "emergent", developing from a given system. However, the systems from which they develop are very different. In white music, or what we might term "white architecture", each note or building is produced without reference to what went before it. It is therefore incoherent. In fractal music, or "fractal architecture", each note or building makes reference to what preceded it, and may cohere or contrast. Indeed, it is this rhythm of contrast and coherence that, in those cities with less permissive planning regulations, allows the dramatic soaring of church spires above low-rise buildings.

As will be argued further in Chapter Eight, building codes and regulations are themselves part of the aesthetic score or structure from which our built environment emerges. Despite the comments of Carlson and Ballantyne above, building regulation has existed in the UK since approximately the 12th Century[342] and was certainly present in various

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[342] See Jean Manco, "History of Building Regulations" (buildinghistory.org, 26 June 2009). Available at: http://www.buildinghistory.org/regulations.shtml [accessed Jan 2019]. With reference to *Munimenta Gildhallae Londoniensis Vol.1: Liber Albus*, Rolls Series [12] (1859), pp.321-31 (the original Latin text); English translation: H.T. Riley, (ed. and trans.), *Liber Albus* (1861), pp. 276-87.

forms in British cities of the 18th and 19th Century.[343] In the present day, London's skyline is a direct result of the relaxed planning laws that permitted modern skyscrapers to eclipse historic landmarks. In Paris, meanwhile, the deep unpopularity of the Tour Montparnasse led to strict rules on building height that preserved the historic skyline and maintained the dominance of the iconic Eiffel Tower. At just over 300m, if the Eiffel Tower were in central London it would compete for dominance with the 306m Shard. The Gherkin and Walkie-Talkie would obscure over half of its lower structure. If Paris had had a blanket restriction on building height, however, the Eiffel Tower would never have been built and the skyline would be characterised exclusively by a monotony of low-rise buildings. As it is, Paris' skyline is neither brown nor white, but rather – like Voss' fractal music – characterised by similarity and surprise; coherence and contrast.

3. A Mixture of Positive and Negative: The Ugly Agreeable

Whilst brutalist modernism has often been criticised as monotonous and boring, postmodernism has been criticised as incoherent and chaotic: a random mix of styles. For Venturi and Scott Brown this irreverent approach to architectural style is to be celebrated, even if it is "ugly and ordinary". American urban sprawl, meanwhile, is enthusiastically defended by them, despite an acknowledgement that it "looks awful".[344] By way of explanation they write that:

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[343] See Jean Manco, "History of Building Regulations": "By the 18th century some kind of building control had been established in many British cities [...] The London Building Acts provided prototypes for provincial towns". Subsequently, a "burst of Victorian regulation" permitted, among other things, "local boards in England and Wales to require the deposit of plans for any new buildings or alterations".

[344] Venturi and Scott Brown, *Learning From Las Vegas*, p. 118.

> [T]his is not the time and ours is not the environment for heroic communication through pure architecture. Each medium has its day[345]

Las Vegas, in contrast, is "an impure architecture of form and symbols".[346] However, the Las Vegas strip, on which much of their argument is based, is not "ugly and ordinary" in quite the same way that their own Guild House, or any number of soulless out-of-town shopping complexes are ugly and ordinary: Las Vegas has appeal, it is merely that this appeal derives from what Kant describes as the agreeable rather than the beautiful. Las Vegas may lack "taste" in a formal sense, yet Kant's aesthetic categories may readily acknowledge the pleasure we take in its excess of bright lights and colours, its celebration of speed and excess. Furthermore, as mentioned previously, we need not share Kant's disdain for the agreeable. We may rather join Venturi and Scott Brown in validating the sense of dynamic excitement and fun that Las Vegas offers.

It is important, however, to acknowledge the distinction between those spaces – like Las Vegas – which lack formal beauty but offer agreeable pleasure, and those spaces – like an out-of-town shopping complex – which do not counter formal problems with agreeable pleasure. Las Vegas is, aesthetically, both negative and positive; the shopping complex, meanwhile, has little going for it. This is particularly important since Venturi and Scott Brown offer a *blanket* defence of all commercially-expedient, market-driven architecture and planning, and ask us to find value in spaces other than the formally beautiful. However, they do not offer sufficient discrimination within this vast categorisation: any and all commercially-driven spaces are welcomed as necessary.

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[345] *Ibid.*, p. 130.

[346] *Ibid.*, p. 80.
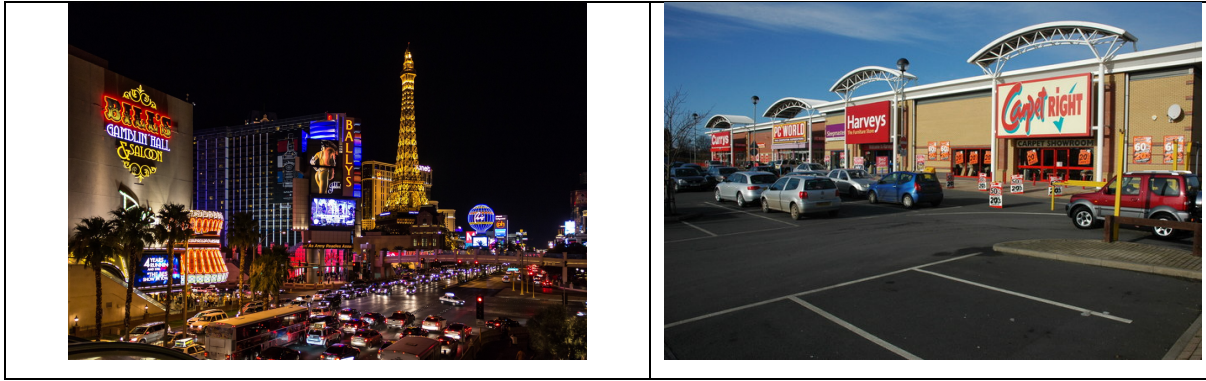
Left (figure 27) Ugly and agreeable: Las Vegas; Right (figure 28) Ugly (or perhaps plain) and non-agreeable: a British out-of-town shopping complex

We may wish, as Venturi and Scott Brown appear to, to find some way of defending the soulless shopping complex and not merely the Las Vegas strip. In doing so, however, we will not merely be defending the merits of a maligned aesthetic pleasure, of aesthetic impurity, or of cultural symbolism, but rather defending the merits of an architecture that offers no pleasure whatsoever, and little also in the way of cultural symbolism and meaning. This, we may note, is a considerably harder sell.

4. The Obstinate Disagreeable

Some experiences are unattractive or repellent not because they fail to offer purposiveness, nor because they deviate from our notion of the good (although this is often the case too), but because of a sensation that is inherently disagreeable. Ugliness, says Sibley, is distinct from what repels us. Ugliness most often does not threaten us or cause real alarm; the repellent, in contrast, is more direct and more bodily.[347] Kant, too, argues that ugliness may induce delight in art, but the same cannot be true of disgust, since if we are disgusted we cannot achieve sufficient artistic distance.[348] Finally, despite arguing for the malleability of our aesthetic

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[347] Sibley, "Some Notes on Ugliness", p. 203.

[348] Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, p. 180.

preferences, Saito acknowledges that there are *limits* to this malleability, such as the experience of unpleasant odours.[349]

At its most extreme, it is easy to find examples of such unpleasant experiences: the taste of extremely salty food; the smell of vomit; the sound of a crying baby; the feeling of itchy material on one's skin; the glare of bright lights in one's eyes. Such experiences are immediately and inherently unpleasant regardless of artistic or conceptual context.

Kant devotes more space to the agreeable than to the disagreeable. However, as the agreeable's negative counterpart, we may assume it, too, is immediate rather than conceptually mediated – although this immediacy produces an unpleasant rather than pleasant sensation. The repellent and disgusting are extremes of the disagreeable, but it is likely present in degrees. Disagreeable odours range from the mildly unpleasant to those which would induce vomiting; disagreeable sounds range from the irritating to the overwhelming and painful. Indeed, it is these mild and moderate forms we commonly encounter in everyday life: the smell of rubbish on a pavement; the intrusive sound of traffic; the intense strip-lighting of the supermarket.[350]

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[349] Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*, p. 96.

[350] There are few explicit treatments of the disagreeable. A notable exception is Jane Forsey's "This Might Be Unpleasant" which offers "the beginnings of a case for the unpleasant as an aesthetic category". Forsey's unpleasant is similarly presented as a negative counterpoint to the pleasant/agreeable, and as a category separate from the beautiful or ugly. Furthermore, for Forsey – as I suggest here – "The unpleasant is a feeling – of displeasure (and the pleasant a feeling of pleasure) – that is grounded in direct physical sensations rather than in the complex workings (or free play) of our cognitive faculties at some degree of distance". It "stems from a judgement that is interested". However, Forsey's presentation differs from the one I offer above in three key ways:

1. Forsey's displeasure expands to become both vague and broad, to include fashions, cultural styles and cultural norms, such as our variable reactions to bell bottoms and skinny jeans, shag carpets and hardwood floors (despite

Left (figure 29) The disagreeable smell of street rubbish; Right (figure 30) The disagreeable glare of strip-lighting

the fact that the difference between these trouser styles is more formal than sensual). My presentation of the disagreeable above remains – in its "pure" form – largely physical, and unmediated by concepts and cultural associations.

2. Forsey presents the disgusting as a separate category from the unpleasant whereas on my account the unpleasant/disagreeable is a continuum from the truly disgusting/monstrous to the mildly smelly, gross or unappealing.

3. Forsey's chief claim about the unpleasant/disagreeable is that it has a special aesthetic role in imaginative projection, creative problem-solving and aesthetic action. When we e.g. buy a new house with an unappealing wall colour, she suggests, we are prompted to envisage what we *do* want to replace it with, such as different paint colours, wallpapers, hung fabrics. "This "instead of" is open-ended and rife with possibility […] The unpleasant brings with it-in fact, initiates-creative action, and the unpleasant is perhaps the only form of aesthetic judgement to do so". However, it seems equally likely that a creative, action-motivating response could be prompted by the formally ugly (ungainly shelving units), an atmosphere that fails to resonate with me, or even by plainness (developers often present refurbished houses as whitewashed boxes for owners to "put their stamp on"). It is not only the disagreeable which prompts creative action. Further, it is questionable whether it is properly a value of the disagreeable itself that it may prompt an imaginative response of the various, wonderful ways in which we may rid ourselves of it.

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The disagreeable is closely tied to health, wellbeing and bodily integrity, sometimes obviously and sometimes indirectly. For example, studies consistently show that the sound of fingernails scraping a blackboard is strongly and widely disliked. By way of explanation, researchers point to the sound's similarity – in frequency, sonic texture and pitch – to the sound of a human screaming and an infant crying.[351] Similarly, aesthetic psychologists have found a near universal and cross-cultural dislike for particular shades of yellow-brown, prompting their speculation that this colour is associated with infection signals of mucus, pus and vomit.[352] As one researcher noted of the audio study: "It appears there is something very primitive kicking in".[353]

Kant's presentation of the agreeable is ambivalent regarding its universality. His main aim is to contrast the universality of beauty (and our corresponding feeling that all others must agree with our judgement) to the

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[351] See for example Sukhbinder Kumar et al, "Features versus Feelings: Dissociable Representations of the Acoustic Features and Valence of Aversive Sounds", *Journal of Neuroscience*, Vol. 32, No. 41 (October 2012), pp. 14184-14192. The report's author, Sukhbinder Kumar, says that, "This is the frequency range where our ears are most sensitive. Although there's still much debate as to why our ears are most sensitive in this range, it does include sounds of screams which we find intrinsically unpleasant" – cited in "Nasty Noises: Why We Recoil at Unpleasant Sounds" (ucl.ac.uk, 10 October 2012). Available at https://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/2012/oct/nasty-noises-why-we-recoil-unpleasant-sounds [accessed Jan 2019].

[352] Stephen Palmer, "Aesthetic Science: Human Preference for Color and Spatial Composition". Lecture delivered at "The Psychology of Aesthetics", Department of Psychology, University of California, Berkeley, 2 March, 2012. Available at https://psychology.berkeley.edu/videos/psychology-aesthetics-professors-steve-palmer-and-art-shimamura [accessed Jan 2019]. Based on research contained in Stephen E. Palmer and Karen B. Schloss, "An Ecological Valence Theory of Human Color Preference", 2010, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 107:8877–8882.

[353] Sukhbinder Kumar, cited in "Nasty Noises: Why We Recoil at Unpleasant Sounds".

contingency of the agreeable (and, for Kant therefore, the absurdity of attempting to argue that everyone else must agree with our judgement). As such, he argues that:

> To one person the color violet is gentle and lovely, to another lifeless and faded. One person loves the sound of wind instruments, another that of string instruments [...] Hence about the agreeable the following principle holds: Everyone has his own taste (of sense).[354]

Despite this, Kant continues to refer to the charms of nature and art not as though agreeable sensation is entirely random but rather as though we have some intuitive foothold on what these charms consist in. His example of a sound that might be considered agreeable is a violin.[355] His example of a colour is meadow-green.[356] That is: Kant notably does not choose the sound of fingernails scraping a blackboard or the colour of yellow-brown pus. The reason, of course, is that whilst we may conceivably disagree with one another about whether meadow-green or violet is more agreeable, or whether wind or string instruments are the more agreeable, we do not generally disagree on whether these colours and sounds are more or less agreeable than the colour yellow-brown or the sound of fingernails on a blackboard. Similarly, there may be variation in our preferences for strawberry or chocolate ice-cream, but considerably less variation in our feeling that ice-cream is more enjoyable than sour milk.

Such widespread agreements and disagreements are of little interest to Kant, however, who argues that to claim "from the fact that everyone judges a certain way it follows that he also *ought* to judge that way [...] is obviously absurd".[357] Kant's chief point is that consistencies and inconsistencies in the agreeable and disagreeable, however common, are merely due to empirical contingency. Indeed, recent studies in neuroscience suggest that, although a majority of odours are self-reported by participants in a similar

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[354] Kant, *Critique of Judgement,* p. 55.

[355] *Ibid.*, p. 70.

[356] *Ibid.*, p. 48.

[357] *Ibid.*, p. 428.

way (including pleasant and unpleasant) there is a significant difference also – up to around 30% – that may be accounted for by (contingent) differences in genetic olfactory receptors.[358] It would therefore, as Kant argues, indeed seem absurd to insist that another person must prefer odour X to odour Y, since their subjective experience may differ from our own.

Since there seems, however, to be much agreement on what is agreeable and disagreeable, it is tempting to argue that architects should promote those design features which promote the agreeable, and avoid the disagreeable. Indeed, the recent trend for wellbeing in architecture endorses this, supported by publications such as the RIBA-backed *Happy by Design: A Guide to Architecture and Mental Wellbeing*.[359] Architecture and the built environment, it is increasingly argued, should promote wellbeing by, for example, flooding buildings with natural light and green space. However, it is precisely this approach that, as mentioned in my introduction, has been accused of being not only timid and cautious but moreover "the architecture of the grinning idiot". That is, an architecture of the agreeable is grounded on hedonist foundations that, in positing happiness, pleasure or comfort as the goal of action, promotes a conception lacking in substance and depth. Indeed, responding to the President of RIBA's statement that "Contemporary buildings celebrate openness, light and free-flowing movement", the architect and academic Timothy Brittain-Catlin writes that:

> There's no historical justification for the assertion that buildings should "celebrate" any kind of openness, or indeed any kind of cheerful feeling. Erik Gunnar's Asplund's upbeat extension to the court house in Gothenburg was astonishing because it was the first major building of its type to be like this: previously court houses were designed to be heavy, stifling, possibly even depressing or puzzling. Many buildings were: some obviously so, such as mortuary chapels and grottoes.

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[358] Joel D Mainland et al, "The Missense of Smell: Functional Variability in the Human Odorant Receptor Repertoire", *Nature Neuroscience,* Vol. 17 (2014), pp. 114-120.

[359] Ben Channon, *Happy by Design: A Guide to Architecture and Mental Wellbeing* (London: RIBA, 2018).

Freemasons' lodges were intended to be enigmatic so that masons and not intruders could comprehend them.[360]

Furthermore, if *all* buildings were to promote a cheerful, agreeable mood, writes Brittain-Catlin, there would be no differentiation between spaces. We would merely move from one light and airy space to another.

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> Photo removed for copyright reasons. It showed Oak Park Health and Wellbeing Housing
>
> Available to view online here:
> https://www.penoyreprasad.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Oak-Park-courtyard-and-hub-Elderly-Living-Penoyre-Prasad-0x555-c-default.jpg
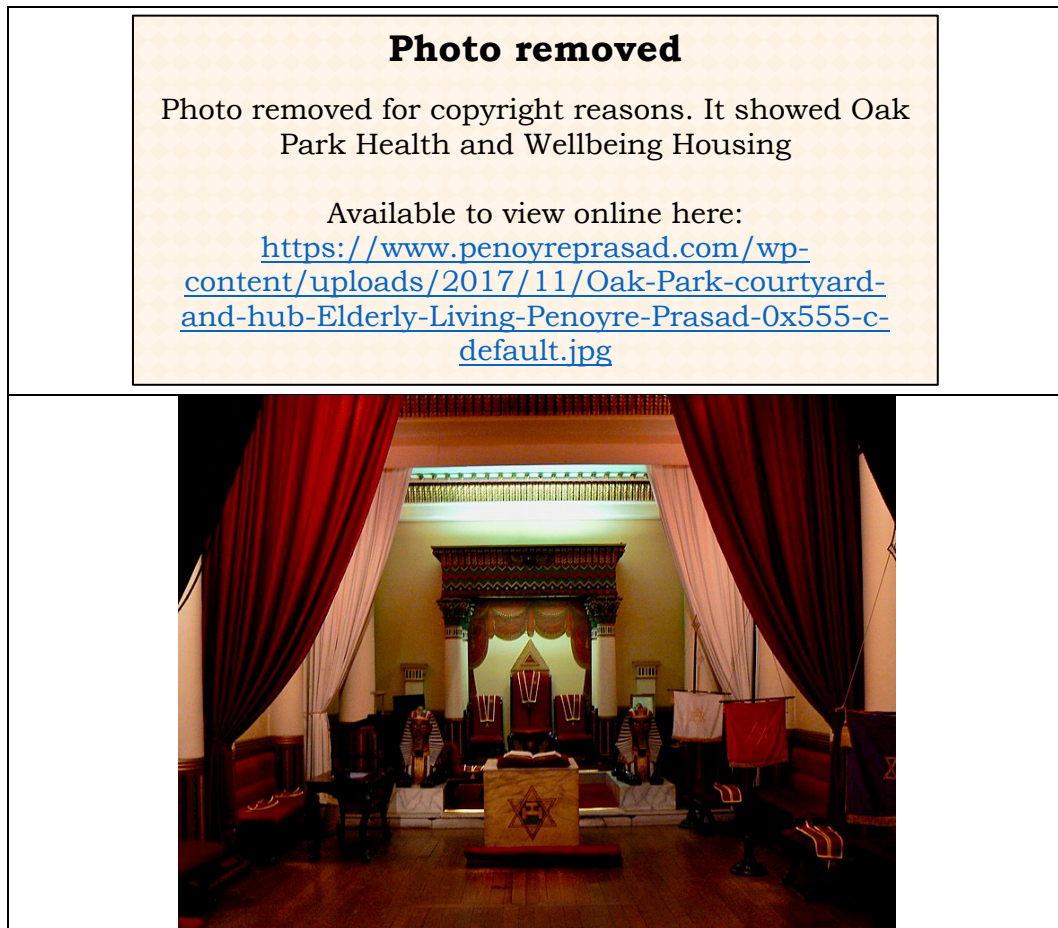
Above (figure 31) Designs for Oak Park Health and Wellbeing Housing; Below (figure 32) a masonic lodge

Whilst it may sound intuitively appealing or correct to hold that buildings should promote wellbeing, this depends on whether, in a broader sense, we consider wellbeing a primary good. For Kant:

> Only by what [man] does without concern for enjoyment, in complete freedom and independently of whatever he could also receive passively from nature, does he give his existence an absolute value, as the

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existence of a person. Happiness, with all its abundance of agreeableness, is far from being an unconditioned good.[361]

Similarly, for Nietzsche:

Well-being as you understand it — that is no goal, that seems to us an end, a state that soon makes man ridiculous and contemptible.[362]

In seeking to avoid the disagreeable in life, writes Nietzsche, we risk rounding off all corners and becoming like "Small, soft, round, unending sand!"[363] More esoterically, George Bataille warns that in wishing to avoid the disagreeable we will create "a flabby world in which nothing fearful remains and in which, subject to the ineradicable obsession of shame, [we] are reduced to eating cheese".[364] For Kant, the greater pursuit is one's free choice of moral duty; for Nietzsche, it is human excellence.[365]

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[361] Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, p. 50.

[362] Friedrich Nietzsche, cited in Brian Leiter, "Nietzsche's Moral and Political Philosophy", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2015 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.). Available at https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/nietzsche-moral-political/ [accessed Jan 2019]. Originally from Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. W. Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1966), p. 225.

[363] Friedrich Nietzsche, cited in Brian Leiter, "Nietzsche's Moral and Political Philosophy". Originally from Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale, ed. M. Clark & B. Leiter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 174.

[364] Georges Bataille, "Slaughterhouse", trans. Paul Hegarty, in Leach (ed.), *Rethinking Architecture*, p. 22.

[365] As noted by Meng-Shi Chen, whilst achieving or asserting power may sometimes be pleasurable, Nietzsche is clear that any pleasure is a side-product, not an end goal. That is, writes Nietzsche, "pleasure is only a symptom of the feeling of power attained, a consciousness of a difference (-there is no striving for pleasure: but pleasure supervenes when that which is being striven for is attained: pleasure is an accompaniment, pleasure is not the motive-)". See Nietzsche, quoted within Meng-Shi Chen, "The Seductive Allure of the Macabre: Challenging the Pleasure Principle", in Forsey and Aagaard-Mogensen (eds.), *On The Ugly*, pp. 29-43 (p. 37).

This is not to say, however, that Kant or Nietzsche would endorse the senseless pursuit of pain and suffering. The disagreeable is no more an end in itself than is the agreeable. For Nietzsche suffering is often necessary on a path to greatness – and therefore endured rather than avoided – but the suffering itself is not to be put on a pedestal and valued directly.[366] For Kant, too, disagreeable experiences – such as the unwanted intrusion of music or of strong perfumes – may constitute an infringement of our freedom and are therefore undesirable. Rather, in both cases what is valued is our ability to set standards and values for action which we choose according to our own will or reason, and which are not merely reducible to an attraction towards the agreeable and the avoidance of the disagreeable.

In most circumstances, we do not support the creation of disagreeable human environments. A home that is cold, damp and fetid with unpleasant dark or harsh lighting and painted in depressing colours has little to recommend it. As an end in itself it produces only misery. As a means to an end it hinders the goals and aspirations of its occupants. Such dismal environments are used chiefly as physical punishment, to break the will of an enemy. In most circumstances, then, our best option is to remove the disagreeable. Eradicating litter; relocating polluting factories away from residential areas; restricting noise pollution; minimum and maximum temperatures for workspaces: such goals are uncontroversial and easily accepted.

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[366] See Brian Leiter, "Nietzsche's Moral and Political Philosophy", *op. cit.*: "Nietzsche is not arguing here that [...] suffering is really *intrinsically* valuable [...]. The value of suffering, according to Nietzsche, is only extrinsic: suffering — 'great' suffering — is a prerequisite of any great human achievement".

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Figure 33. "[T]he smell of sewage is overwhelming in most of the cells": An inmate at Liberia's Monrovia Central Prison[367]

However, as suggested by the gloomy masonic lodge, in aesthetic, meaningful space we may find some use for the disagreeable.[368] We may not

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[367] Amnesty International's Tawanda Hondora, quoted in "Life Inside Liberia's Archaic Jails" (bbc.com, 21 September 2011). Available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14993991 [accessed Jan 2019]. Based on the Amnesty International Report, *Good Intentions are Not Enough: The Struggle to Reform Liberia's Prisons* (London: Amnesty International, September 2011). Available at: https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/24000/afr340012011en.pdf [accessed Jan 2019].

[368] The contemporary tendency to treat wellbeing *itself* as meaningful, however, is destined to fail, and in fact brings further suffering, since, as Nietzsche argues, any such wellbeing and normality that we achieve is temporary, and under constant threat of reverting to sickness and pain. Furthermore, notes Peter Sedgwick, our modern, medicalised conception of wellbeing – administered via the medical professions and bureaucratic institutions – is too simplistic and reductive, presented as a problem to be fixed by others, "a condition that is given rather than something that must be continually struggled over, lost and temporarily regained". We are thereby alienated from our own pain and suffering, limited in self-efficacy, reliant on medical staff to restore us to an elusive, precarious "normality" of health.

wish to *live* inside the gloomy masonic lodge, yet its atmosphere of mystery and foreboding depends upon some careful employment of the disagreeable. Whilst we may have only limited control over our physical response to the disagreeable and agreeable, we nonetheless – at least in some circumstances – have the capacity to make a more complex aesthetic judgement. The case for this, in Kant, is made in relation to the sublime.

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Part Three: The Sublime, The Ironic, And "Cultivated Aesthetics"

Kant's sublime is a sort of "cultivated" aesthetic response. Indeed, for Kant appreciation of the sublime is not a given but is rather an aesthetic appreciation that depends upon education. As such:

> [W]ithout the development of moral ideas, that which, thanks to preparatory culture, we call sublime, merely strikes the untutored man as terrifying. He will see in the evidences which the ravages of nature give of her dominion, and in the vast scale of her might, compared with which his own is diminished to insignificance, only the misery, peril, and distress that would compass the man who was thrown to its mercy.[369]

That is, for Kant the original or instinctive state of affairs is that when we encounter the sublime we recoil from it as disagreeable and as threatening to our interests. Importantly, when we learn to appreciate the sublime we do

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A Nietzschean, narrative approach, in contrast, would cease the doomed attempt to *rid ourselves* of suffering in favour of "seeking new ways of narrating and endowing [our] condition with meaning such that the sufferer's persistence in life is allowed to bear witness". See Peter Sedgwick, "Nietzsche, Illness and the Body's Quest for Narrative", *Health Care Analysis*, Vol 21, No.4 (2013), pp. 306-322 (pp 319-321).

[369] Kant, cited in Böhme, *The Aesthetics of Atmospheres*, p. 148.

not do so by suddenly considering it agreeable or good. Rather, we continue to recognize it as disagreeable and hostile, yet nonetheless learn to find appeal in its vast, inhuman scale. An appreciation of the sublime is therefore of a different order from an appreciation of the agreeable and disagreeable, and it does not seek to replace it but rather to build upon it as a form of meta-response.

The Sublime as the High Point of Man's Aesthetic Journey

In order to enjoy what we would ordinarily not enjoy we must be able to stand back and reflect upon our experience. For Kant, an aesthetic response is not our first, instinctive response, but is more learned. As noted by Böhme:

> The truly human state, humanity, is not a given for Kant, but must be brought about through education and upbringing. This education is […] the prerequisite for aesthetic experience and judgment.[370]

Indeed, Kant's critique notably presents a pen picture of Man's progression from primitive to higher aesthetic appreciation. At first, he writes, Man appreciates agreeable charms such as "colours for painting oneself […] flowers, sea shells".[371] Eventually, Man learns to appreciate "beautiful forms" – designed objects such as canoes and clothing. Still later, "when civilization has reached its height", Man rids himself entirely of concern with the agreeable and instead values sensations only to the extent that they permit universal communication.[372]

The idea of a kind of civilized progression from the agreeable to the beautiful (and beyond) is present also in Scruton's *Aesthetics of Architecture*. As mentioned in Chapter Two, Gaudi's fluid, colourful work is dismissed by Scruton for its agreeable rather than formal appeal, where:

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[370] Böhme, *The Aesthetics of Atmospheres,* p. 141.

[371] Kant, cited in Böhme, *The Aesthetics of Atmospheres*, p. 146.

[372] *Ibid.*

> [E]njoyment may perforce remain at the *primitive level* characteristic of our preference among colours, our preference for smooth against rough, for straight lines against squiggles[373] (my italics)

Gaudi's architecture, for Scruton, is the architectural equivalent of primitive Man's painting himself with charms. However, whilst Scruton uses this same work to argue against brutalism, for Kant at least the sublime represents a greater triumph of our "dominion" over this primitive aesthetic preference. "The beautiful", writes Kant, "prepares us for loving something, even nature, without interest; the sublime, for esteeming it *even against our interest*".[374] (my italics)

The aesthetics of the sublime, therefore, is a kind of will to power; the aesthetics of Nietzsche's overman. It is the response not of our animal nature, nor perhaps even of our human nature, but of what Kant refers to as "superiority over nature",[375] of "[n]ature as a might that has no dominance over us".[376] Our preference for the agreeable over the disagreeable and for the beautiful over the ugly is a reminder of our limited, human-specific view of the world and of our human prejudices – based on the one hand on our physical pleasure response, and on the other hand on our notion of the good or the purposive. An aesthetics of the sublime would transcend both of these biases by appreciating what goes against our sensual interest. In contrast, the contempt with which Kant refers to the agreeable throughout his critique illustrates the extent to which the agreeable, precisely in its appeal to our primitive selves, to those bodily impulses of pleasure and pain that we have not freely chosen, represents for Kant a threat to our rational human selves, and to our aesthetic and wider freedom.

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[373] Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Architecture*, p. 201.

[374] Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, p. 127.

[375] *Ibid.*, p. 120.

[376] *Ibid.*, p. 119.

Man's journey from pleasure to greatness: Left (figure 34) Gaudi's "agreeable" architecture; Middle (figure 35) The beauty of classical architecture; Right (figure 36) The sublimity of brutalism

In order for us to experience sublimity in brutalist architecture, however, at least two things must hold. Firstly, the building must not only withhold the agreeable but also project solidity and power, so that we may experience the built environment as "might that has no dominion over us". In most cases, then, such buildings must have a certain stature. Successful brutalist buildings also replicate humanity's dominance over nature by standing seemingly impervious to nature's own will. Such is the impression of the sculpturally striking and well-maintained Geisel Library, which has much of the "guts and attack" identified by Jonathan Meades, and which also exudes a technological and industrial dominance over its natural surroundings.

In contrast, although considered a brutalist building, the potential sublimity of the visually cluttered and poorly-maintained Cumbernauld Shopping Centre is marred by its human-scale and practical add-ons (such as garage doors and hand rails). Its jumble of mixed materials (brick in addition to concrete) undermine its sculptural force. The water damage and mildew that covers its exterior further limits its sublime appeal. Whereas Geisel Library, spaceship-like and other-worldly, imposes its solid form and seems impervious to its natural surroundings, Cumbernauld Shopping Centre is being reclaimed by the organic earth, a kind of pseudo-brutalist ruin that presents brutalist utopianism as a tragic failure of humankind's hubris. Cumbernauld Shopping Centre does not project might, guts or attack, and the impression is therefore one not of negative pleasure but of

an unmodified disagreeableness.[377] Not all buildings that aim at the harmony of classical beauty will achieve this aim. Similarly, not all buildings that aim at the negative pleasure of sublimity will achieve this aim.

Left (figure 37) The utopian sublimity of Geisel Library; Right (figure 38) The brutal-picturesque Cumbernauld Shopping Centre

Secondly, in order to experience sublimity in brutalist architecture an audience must be primed for it. For Adorno functionalism's strength and weakness was that it directed itself at an audience which had not ethically or aesthetically, as he puts it, "come of age" since "[a]rchitecture worthy of human beings thinks better of men than they actually are".[378] However, this experience of triumphing over nature is a delicate balance, perhaps even a carefully orchestrated illusion, dependent not merely on education, but rather upon material security. Indeed, by Kant's own admission, experience of the sublime requires that we are not in fact fearful of our safety and wellbeing. Our elated and temporary impression that nature has no dominion over us is therefore dependent upon the contingent fact of nature, at that moment, not asserting its dominion. The sense one may have of dominating nature when, for instance, navigating a ship successfully through a storm, will quickly evaporate just as soon as the ship springs a

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[377] It may nonetheless be possible that Cumbernauld Shopping Centre could in different circumstances lean in to its current aesthetic and be enjoyed not as a work of the sublime but rather – as many urban exploration sites are enjoyed – a modern ruin or brutal picturesque.

[378] Adorno, "Functionalism Today", p. 15.

leak.[379] Similarly, our enjoyment in the guts and attack of brutalist architecture may slip through our fingers the moment we experience a psychological or physical vulnerability that draws us not to seeking challenge but rather comfort.

The threat of the sublime must therefore be carefully stage managed to maintain our feeling of superhuman triumph rather than human vulnerability. However, the uncomfortable truth is that we are indeed surrounded by threats of nature over which we have no dominion, and our own ability to triumph over such threats or to overcome our sensual needs

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[379] A similar phenomenon is outlined by Bart Verschaffel in his "On the Aesthetic Gaze, Beauty and the Two Sources of Ugliness". The terrible, monstrous, formless and disgusting, argues Verschaffel, are not standardly aesthetic: we are consumed by a primitive, primary response. To appreciate them, Verschaffel suggests, we need some material distance, to feel protected rather than threatened. By way of example, he points to Valery's description of a vivid childhood memory of being at the seaside and, before diving into the jetty, seeing a curious, formless mass in the water – a heap of fish entrails, dumped by local fishermen. After an initial pure repulsion and disgust, Valery is gripped too by a curiosity and appreciation of form. This experience, writes Verschaffel, is "ambiguous and paradoxical". Valery writes that he was "torn between repugnance and interest, between flight and analysis". As argued by Verschaffel, "the aestheticisation is brought about by literally disabling the senses of touch, taste and smell through which the 'impure contact' is either made impossible or perfectly harmless". That is, Valery is able to indulge his curiosity and appreciation since the entrails are captured within sea water that he stands outside of. Crucially, such aestheticisation of what would otherwise be negative responses, suggests Verschaffel are "carefully controlled"; when negative aesthetics is employed in art we may even admire that "a risky enterprise has succeeded"; our appreciation of the sublime, similarly, remains "only so long as it lasts". See Bart Verschaffel, "On the Aesthetic Gaze, Beauty and the Two Sources of Ugliness", in Forsey and Aagaard-Mogenson (eds.), *On The Ugly*, pp. 3-16 (pp. 11, 14-16). Damien Hirst's notorious preserved shark (*The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living*) is similarly a "carefully controlled" artwork, offering viewers the chance to experience aesthetically what would ordinarily be terrifying.

is subject to limitations. Whilst we may enjoy the experience of spending time in Geisel Library, therefore, we will struggle to experience a similar sense of pleasure in an environment designed for what has been termed "white torture", a form of sensory deprivation reportedly used in Iranian jails. According to reports from former prisoner Amir Fakhravar:

> We didn't see any color, all of the cell was white, the floor was white, our clothes were white and also the light, 24 hours, was white. Our food, also, was white rice [...] We couldn't see any color and we couldn't hear any voices.[380]

The experience of such sensory deprivation, says Fakhravar, was even worse than the pain of his beatings, and within a short time he lost his sense of identity, and was unable even to recall his parents' faces.[381] In experiencing the extremes of white torture, we succumb to the withholding of our basic sensory needs and cannot experience superiority over them.

When Kant writes, then, that "we also regard *isolation from all society* as something sublime, if it rests on ideas that look beyond all sensible interest", this is subject to certain caveats.[382] We may play with asceticism and sublimity as an aesthetic style or pleasure, but taken to extremes our will or reason cannot triumph. In orchestrating the sublime, we are not unlike the explorer or sportsperson who obtains pleasure in "overcoming nature" by carefully choosing some challenge that is dangerous and disagreeable enough to constitute a threat to wellbeing and safety (such as an Arctic expedition) yet is not so dangerous and threatening as to involve certain death (such as an expedition into a live volcano). As such, for Bruno Latour:

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[380] Amir Fakhravar, quoted in Paula Newton, "Iranian Exile Speaks Out on Colorless 'White Torture'", *CNN*, (cnn.com, 29 October 2008). Available at http://edition.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/asiapcf/10/29/amir.fakhravar.iran.torture / [accessed Jan 2019].

[381] *Ibid.*

[382] Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, p. 136.

> Nothing much is left of the scenography of the modernist theory of action: no male hubris, no mastery, no appeal to the outside, no dream of expatriation in an outside space which would not require any life support of any sort, no nature, no grand gesture of radical departure.[383]

For Latour, in contrast, we are primitive both in the sense of being as animal as any other (non-human) animal, and also of being dependent on what he terms "life supports" – props, instruments, machines which extend our physical capabilities.[384] In the built environment, then, employment of threat, disagreeableness, asceticism and isolation must be deployed with great precision and sensitivity, mindful of audience and context. What is suitable for an army training facility, a government building, or a centre for spiritual growth will differ from what is suitable for a primary school, a pleasure park, or a centre for sufferers of PTSD.

Primitive Versus Cultivated Aesthetics

Whilst clumsily executed departures from agreeable pleasure and beautiful form may often fail, then, sensitively executed departures may succeed. That is, whilst we are never entirely free from primitive response and physical vulnerability, we are nonetheless capable of extending our aesthetic reach, albeit through careful stage-management and dependence on life supports.

We should therefore be sceptical of attempts to use Darwinian theory to argue that our aesthetic preferences are set by evolutionary biology. Geoffrey Miller argues against avant-garde taste because it seeks to "[replace] natural human tastes with artfully contrived preferences".[385] Steven Pinker meanwhile argues against the "belief that human tastes are reversible

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[383] Latour, "A Cautious Prometheus?", p. 8.

[384] *Ibid.*

[385] Geoffrey Miller, cited in Harry Francis Mallgrave, *Architecture and Embodiment* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 29. Originally from Geoffrey Miller, *The Mating Mind: How Sexual Choice Shaped the Evolution of Human Nature* (New York: Anchor Books, 2000), p. 284.

cultural preferences".[386] Such an approach misunderstands a majority of cultivated aesthetics. So, to, does Dennis Dutton in arguing that Enlightenment thinkers, including Kant, believed that aesthetic tastes were divided into the contingently cultural and the "permanent, God-given human nature that lay underneath it all". It took Darwin, he suggests, to introduce the "radically new element" that "preferences that underlie cultural values are also to some degree accidents - *products of prehistoric contingency*".[387]

In fact, Kant's critique is more than aware of the existence of a contingent and primitive aesthetic response. It is precisely this response that Kant refers to with the terms agreeable and disagreeable. As argued above, for Kant we do not experience the sublime by – as Miller and Pinker seem to suggest – "replacing" or "reversing" our primitive sensual preferences. That is, Kant does not suggest that, through some sheer force of will or slight of hand, the Geisel Library can be as agreeable as a Gaudi house. Rather, appreciation of cultivated aesthetics involves *both* a primitive initial response (some sense of the agreeable or disagreeable) but also a meta-response that may be termed conceptual, rational or wilful.

Similar criticisms have been levelled against other instances of what we might term cultivated aesthetics. As noted by Yuriko Saito, the "cultivated" Japanese aesthetic of wabi-sabi, which celebrates impermanence and imperfection, has been criticized by theorists such as Motoori Norinaga as "a

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[386] Steven Pinker, cited in Mallgrave, *Architecture and Embodiment*, p. 29. Originally from Steven Pinker, *The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature* (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), p. x. For Mallgrave himself, although Miller and Pinker may "overstate their case", it is nonetheless true that "the human brain (as a score of biologists and psychologists have since argued) is not infinitely malleable in what it takes in and regards as pleasurable" (p. 30).

[387] Denis Dutton, *The Art Instinct: Beauty, Pleasure, and Human Evolution* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 204.

fabricated aesthetic taste [...] not a truly aesthetic taste".[388] Similarly, for Sakaguchi Ango human nature is not, as for Kant, something brought about through education and civilization, but is rather "simply desiring what one desires and disliking what one dislikes. One should [...] return to the naked heart".[389] However, the fact that Ango is *imploring* us to validate and enjoy only our initial, primitive aesthetic responses merely illustrates that we are capable of not doing so. If we were wholly trapped within primitive aesthetics there would be no need to beg for a return to it. We are able to enjoy the aesthetic of wabi-sabi because our aesthetic response is complex, reflecting complexity within us. We may not be free from primitive responses, but we are not bound by them either.[390]

For Catherine Malabou, indeed, philosophy and theory itself must turn not to a conservative social Darwinism but rather to recent scientific work

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[388] Motoori Norinaga, cited in Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*, p. 197, from an original citation in Hiroshi Minami's *Psychology of the Japanese People*, trans. by Albert R. Ikoma (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), p.91.

[389] Sakaguchi Ango, cited in Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*, p. 193. From Ango's "Zoku Darakuron" (Additional Theory of Decadence), (1946), included in *Showa Bungaku Zenshu (Collection of Showa Period Literature)* (Tokyo: Shogakukan, 1987), Vol. 12, p. 247, (Saito's translation).

[390] A Nietzschean response, indeed, holds that – as described by Sedgwick – "To be human [...] means to respond to the travails of arbitrary suffering [...] by seeking meaning. We are creatures who continually seek to come to terms with the trauma of embodied existence not by allowing the conditions of life to be dictated to us, as other animals do, but by struggling with existence through responding to it interpretatively. We seek, Nietzsche holds, to master our environment by endowing it with sense [...] to be a person is to be subject to the compulsion to narrate in the face of the painful contingencies that accompany embodiment". In the Nietzschean approach, then, such a cultivated, "fabricated", cultural aesthetics – illustrated here by wabi-sabi – typifies the human need to control our narrative through meaning-making, and our inability, as cultural beings, to experience the world with a "natural" or "naked heart". See Sedgwick, pp. 316-317.

which suggests the human body is *flexible* rather than fixed. As paraphrased by Benjamin Dalton:

> Malabou's philosophy constitutes an interdisciplinary exploration of plasticity as "the style of an era" or the "motor scheme of our time"; scientific discoveries such as the neuroplasticity of the brain and epigenetics, for instance, have forced us to confront the fact that the very organic materiality of our being is not fully predetermined by our DNA but open to constant metamorphosis.[391]

Despite abundant evidence that we are adaptable, our brains and bodies capable of changing in response to our environment, Malabou suggests that "nobody wants to engage with plasticity […] Nobody likes moving grounds. Nobody likes the idea that everything is malleable. It is difficult to swallow the idea that everything can be different from what it is".[392] For an aesthetics of the built environment, however, the existence of such plasticity – and an awareness of its limits and operations – may be a central concern.

Left (figure 39) A bowl with a traditional (clean, unbroken, smooth) aesthetic; Right (figure 40) A wabi-sabi bowl

It is worth noting, however, that, in the same way that not all grey, disagreeable concrete buildings are sublime, not all chipped, damaged or crudely made pottery is wabi-sabi. As with the sublime, it is a stage-managed and carefully crafted aesthetic: a celebration of imperfection,

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[391] Benjamin Dalton, "What Should We Do with Plasticity? An Interview with Catherine Malabou", *Paragraph,* Volume 42, Issue 2 (2019), pp. 238-254 (p. 238).
[392] Catherine Malabou, quoted in *Ibid.,* p. 248.

humility, and impermanence, but not an indiscriminate celebration of all deviations from the classically beautiful and agreeable. There is a crucial difference of meaning, for example, between a chipped earthenware cup and a chipped crystal wine glass. Cultivated aesthetics may offer us one way to appreciate what we would ordinarily find ugly, crude or disagreeable, but not everything that is ugly, crude or disagreeable will be found enjoyable or will be valued.

Postmodern Irony and the Acceptance of Bad Taste

A similar complexity is present in the postmodern, ironic appreciation of kitsch. Contra Zangwill – who, as mentioned above, tries to reclaim kitsch and the garish as contributors to beauty – defenders of kitsch, such as Venturi and Scott-Brown, do not defend it as beautiful. Rather, Venturi and Scott Brown's *Learning From Las Vegas* wishes to undermine the value of good taste and of beauty itself.

For Venturi and Scott Brown, modernist architects are elitists who:

> find middle-middle-class social aspirations distasteful [...] its ornamented ranches with carriage lanterns, mansards, and antiqued brick. They recognise the symbolism, but they do not accept it.[393]

However, postmodern defence of kitsch and popular building style is based not on an attempt to defend its good taste – as, perhaps, might be attempted by the middle-middle-class for whom it is intended – but rather to argue that those initiated in design culture can learn to embrace it ironically:

> The architect becomes a jester [...] Irony may be the tool with which to confront and combine divergent values in architecture for a pluralist society and to accommodate the difference in values that arise between architects and clients [...] a sense of paradox and some irony and wit will be needed on all sides[394]

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[393] Venturi and Scott Brown, *Learning From Las Vegas*, p. 153.

[394] *Ibid.*, p. 161.

As Kant's "untutored" man finds terrifying what the educated man "thanks to preparatory culture" calls sublime, so too does the postmodernist knowingly enjoy as ironic what the enlightened man dismisses as kitsch, and the untutored man calls glamorous.

Left (figure 41) Original kitsch at Caesar's Palace, Las Vegas; Right (figure 42) Postmodern kitsch at Charles Moore's Piazza d'Italia

Such ironic response is more complex than any reductive Darwinian aesthetics allows. It concerns much more than "simply desiring what one desires and disliking what one dislikes". As noted by Kant:

> [A] gratification can be disliked by the very person who feels it (for example the joy felt by a needy but upright person at being made the heir of his loving but stingy father), or how profound grief may yet be liked by the person suffering it (as a widow's sadness over the death of her worthy husband), or how a gratification may be liked in addition (as our gratification in the sciences we pursue), or how a pain (such as hatred, envy, or a thirst for revenge) may be disliked in addition. The liking or disliking in these cases is based on reason and is the same as approval or disapproval.[395]

Whereas the modernist architect recognises the unsophisticated appeal of kitsch, and disapproves of it, the postmodern architect interrogates this educated disapproval – and disapproves of it.

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[395] Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, p. 202.

Despite their populist sensibilities, Venturi and Scott Brown are keen to point out that their own brand of kitsch architecture may still be distinguished from the commercial kitsch architecture it is inspired by. The difference, they suggest, is precisely that their own work is ironic. Whilst on first impressions it may seem indistinguishable from non-architectural commercial building, they argue, a keen eye will discover symbols and references to architectural history. The conventional, boxy windows on their Guild House, for example, are said to be "familiar; they look like, as well as are, windows, and in this respect their use is explicitly symbolic".[396] However, they write:

> Like the subject matter of Pop Art, they are commonplace elements made uncommon through distortion in shape (slight), change in scale (they are much bigger than normal double-hung windows), and change in context (double-hung windows in a perhaps high-fashion building)[397]

Of all these changes it is perhaps the last that is the most significant since, as argued by Arthur Danto, what distinguishes the works of Pop Art from the commercial objects they ape is not that, for instance, Warhol's Brillo boxes were painted rather than ready-made – since the difference was imperceptible – but rather precisely that Warhol's boxes were produced within the context of an artworld and that "in order to see it as part of the art world, one must have mastered a good deal of artistic theory as well as a considerable amount of the history of recent New York painting".[398]

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[396] Venturi and Scott Brown, *Learning From Las Vegas*, p. 91.

[397] *Ibid.*

[398] Arthur Danto, "The Artworld", p. 581.

Figure 43: "Ugly and ordinary": The postmodern irony of Guild House

Venturi and Scott Brown's decision to use conventional "ordinary" windows, as opposed to the ribbon windows preferred by modernists, to use brick instead of concrete, and to include an extravagantly large sign, were at the time architecturally provocative decisions. Unlike commercial building firms which may have used such devices simply because they have done so before, Venturi and Scott Brown – both trained in Ivy-League universities and versed in architectural history and theory – did so because of the meaning associated with them. That is, Guild House, for all its triteness of design, may argue for its place in high architecture due to its context in a "designworld".

Conclusion

The problem of ugliness is central to debates on architectural aesthetics over the last 100 years, from the *kalliphobia* of brutalism, to the "ugly and ordinary" aesthetics of postmodernism, to the humdrum dreariness of the poorly designed business park. A nuanced and productive discussion of the aesthetics of the built environment – of what is wrong, of whether it matters,

of how it can be made right – therefore cannot occur without a nuanced appreciation of negative aesthetic experience.

Too often, traditional aesthetics has failed to discuss these experiences directly, focussing its attention solely or primarily on positive experiences of the beautiful and pleasant, leaving us with an impoverished understanding of negative aesthetics. It has also paved the way for crude suggestions concerning the relationship between ugliness and value, and for sweeping, imprecise judgements which fail to discriminate between different forms of negative aesthetics. Attempts, such as those found in the work of Emily Brady, to measure aesthetic value, beauty and ugliness, and the pleasant and unpleasant, on a simple sliding scale, have similarly impeded our ability to present the complexities and tensions within negative aesthetic experience.

Similarly, the argument, found in Zangwill and Sibley, i.e. that the ugly can *by definition* never have aesthetic value, leaves us no means with which to welcome and admire the aesthetics of *Guernica*, the ghoulishness of a fairground, or the austerity of brutalism. It fails, too, to adequately recognise what Danto refers to as "internal aesthetics", and thus the way in which poetic or artistic meaning and value does not merely *exist alongside* the sensual experience of the aesthetic – in a manner that Danto refers to as "external" – but rather may itself be created by, dependent on, and indeed *unimaginable without* aesthetic form. Ugly or unpleasant aesthetic experiences, then, should not be ignored because they are supposedly without value. Rather, they must be understood contextually: what is welcomed and successful in one building, for example, may fail to resonate in another.

An engagement with Kant's aesthetic categories can aid our initial discrimination between different types of negative aesthetic experience, without requiring the adoption of Kant's own judgements on the relative value of the agreeable, beautiful and sublime, or acceding to his emphasis on the universal, objective and pure. Negative aesthetic responses, that is, may at least be due to dependent ugliness (an aesthetic form deviating from an expected norm or good; sometimes – as with the grotesque –

provocatively so), to the sensually disagreeable (loud sounds; bright lights; revolting odours), to a meaningless, incoherent chaos, or to a rigid, predictable order.

As will be argued in Part Two, in many cases such negative aesthetics is a problem to be rectified through the implementation of minimum aesthetic standards, stricter planning laws, or greater investment. However, the ugly, defective, challenging, and uncomfortable can – as argued above – sometimes be part of a more complex or cultivated aesthetic response, which relies upon rather than sweeps away our initial reaction.

The existence of such meta-responses cannot be easily denied by those, arguing from evolutionary biology, that our aesthetic response *should* remain primitive. The sublime, wabi sabi, or Venturi's ironic bad taste, may be highly valued and may constitute a deliberate, rather than accidental, part of our built environment, albeit, as argued above, subject to finely-tuned stage management, to contingent limitations of neuroplasticity, and to material conditions of possibility, the absence of which may leave our aesthetic experience undone.

Cultivated Negative Aesthetics and the Art/Life Distinction

There is, however, an important difference between Guild House and Warhol's Brillo boxes. Whilst the latter is art, the former is a work of architectural design situated not in the art gallery but in "real life": it accommodates low income housing for older people. Indeed, the oversized television antenna that topped the building – originally conceived both as a piece of deliberately anti-modernist visual junk and as a comment upon older people's supposed interest in television – was subsequently removed. The inhabitants, it is reported, disliked its (albeit gentle) mockery. Similarly, on the matter of kitsch Karsten Harries argues that:

> Certainly there are times when we may want to escape, if only
> temporarily, from the everyday reality of our lives to some Disney
> world or other. But as little as Disneyworld's does the architecture of

Las Vegas provide a model for building that addresses our needs of working and dwelling as members of a genuine community.[399]

We may appreciate ironic kitsch when away from home, it is suggested, but at home, in "real life", we do not appreciate it.

Likewise, Yuriko Saito, although not dismissing the value of cultivated aesthetics, argues that our appreciation of such aesthetics is most often enjoyed not as part of our everyday life but rather as part of a more distanced aesthetic experience. Of the pottery used in a wabi-sabi tea ceremony, she writes that what encourages such appreciation is precisely the artificiality of the tea ceremony; its formalised motions and customs:

> We are "distanced" from those objects similarly to the way in which some temporal distance is required before a structure devastated by human violence or natural catastrophe becomes an aesthetically charged ruin[400]

Of the wabi-sabi appeal of peeling paint, broken glass, and tattered fabrics, she notes that we are far more likely to appreciate this in an abandoned building than within our own home.[401]

Despite arguing on behalf of *kalliphobia* in art, Arthur Danto nonetheless suggests that such a disdain for beauty should be applied *only* to works of art, and not to life more generally, or what he terms the *Lebenswelt* or Lifeworld. We would not say that it "threatens" to be a beautiful day, he notes, or that one's daughter "threatens" to become a beautiful woman, since beauty is and has been associated with "fortune and happiness, life at its best, and a world worth living in".[402] However, for Danto, the role of beauty in life more generally is different from its role in art:

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[399] Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture,* p. 78.

[400] Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*, p. 200.

[401] *Ibid.*

[402] Danto, "Kalliphobia", p. 25.

> But beauty has [...] a role to play in human life independent of whatever role it plays in art. It would be perfectly possible [...] that we should prize beauty in the Lebenswelt and scorn its appearance in art. Its importance to us as humans explains its status as one of the fundamental values, along with truth and goodness. It would be impossible to have a truly human form of life without truth and goodness, and [...] a world without beauty would not be one we would like to live in if we had a choice.[403]

This endorsement of the more general value of beauty coheres surprisingly well with the views of Roger Scruton, who similarly argues both that beauty is a value as important as truth and goodness, and that a life without beauty would not be worth living. They differ, perhaps, only on the matter of where such beauty belongs.

A problem with Scruton's account is that, despite arguing for the importance of "appropriateness" in architecture, he does not extend this to the matter of whether beauty itself is more appropriate in some spaces than in others. Beauty, he suggests, is equally as appropriate now as it was 2000 years ago, and equally as appropriate in the city centre as in the suburbs. Its value is not augmented by time and place. Meanwhile, a problem with Danto's account is that it separates the world into only two categories: art on the one hand, and "life" on the other. In the former case, beauty is inessential and perhaps even out of place. In the latter case, it is a universal value that makes life worth living. However, as hinted at in the Karsten Harries and Yuriko Saito passages above, in architecture and the built environment the matter is not quite so simple. That is, our sense of reality – of "real life" – is not, as must be inferred from Danto, everything that is not art. Rather, it stretches from the "unreality" of the Las Vegas resort to the kitchen sink reality of our own homes. Our tolerance for cultivated aesthetics, and negative aesthetics more generally, therefore, may depend upon where in the built environment it is found.

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[403] *Ibid.*, p. 33.

Chapter Four: A Home for Beauty and Ugliness: The Art/Life Divide

[I]t takes little reflection for us to realize that a world without beauty would not be one we would like to live in.[404]

Arthur Danto, "Kalliphobia in Contemporary Art"

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After over a hundred years of non-beautiful and provocative fine art, the notion that artworks may be ugly or unaesthetic, rather than beautiful, is largely accepted. It is less accepted, however, what the role of beauty and ugliness is outside of art or in what is sometimes termed the everyday: even the most ardent admirers of the Chapman Brothers may feel that their artworks are best suited to the art gallery than to the town square or the children's playground. Danto's aforementioned explanation for this phenomenon is that there are different aesthetic rules for art and for what he terms the *Lebenswelt*. In everyday life, he suggests, we broadly welcome and value beauty whereas in the artworld we wish to permit works the freedom to be aesthetic or anaesthetic, beautiful or ugly. However, this offers no nuance of different contexts within our non-art life.

A similar lack of nuance is often present within everyday aesthetics, which has been accused of perpetuating an unnecessary binary divide between art and life. As noted by Tom Leddy, if we understand (as Dewey and Nietzsche do) the artistic impulse as developing from an outlook *already present* in everyday life, we will instead:

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[404] Danto, "Kalliphobia", p. 33.

> [See] the relationship between everyday aesthetics and art aesthetics as being dynamic and interactional. It would reject those views of everyday aesthetics which see the everyday as totally detached from art every bit as much as it would reject those who, like Danto in some moods, see art totally detached from the everyday.[405]

Within philosophical aesthetics we may have sub-disciplines which focus on art and on the everyday. However, this does not mean that any such rigid divide exists in the aesthetic world being studied.

A further complication is that "everyday" is used to refer to at least three different things:

1. What exists outside of art. This covers a vast category of all non-art, including such disparate things as designed objects, sporting life, home life, industrial space, natural space.
2. The "practical", particularly as opposed to what is meaningful or symbolic. This is the world of literalism and functionalism, of Heidegger's ready-to-hand. It may include the power plant and the motorway but may not include the church, the palace or the city hall.
3. The ordinary and commonplace: the humdrum world inhabited by most of a community most of the time. It may include the home, high street, public park and town square, but not the oil rig, the battlefield or the wilderness.

Despite this, the term "everyday" is often used vaguely and imprecisely, although some thinkers suggest a confluence between such uses. Danto, for instance, seems to suggest that our non-art life is synonymous with our non-metaphorical, practical life.

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[405] Tom Leddy, "Goodman, Danto and Everyday Aesthetics (Significantly Revised)", *Aesthetics Today* (blog), 26 April, 2018. Available at http://aestheticstoday.blogspot.com/2018/04/goodman-vs-danto-and-everyday.html [accessed Jan 2019].

This chapter will argue, alternatively, that the aesthetics of our non-art life is better understood using the same criteria Danto uses for the artworld. That is, non-art space may be a) either aesthetic or "anaesthetic" in purpose (in somewhat relative terms) and b) either meaningfully, "internally" beautiful, or meaningfully, "internally" ugly, in the way mentioned in the previous chapter. We do not expect or wish *all* of non-art space to be practical and literal, nor do we expect all of non-art space to be aesthetically symbolic or – specifically – beautiful.

Indeed, the *kalliphobia* – or at least *kalliscepticism* – that Danto identifies in art is present also in the work of many aestheticians who focus on our non-art world. Environmental aestheticians, for instance, do not simply argue for the value of beautiful natural environments. In fact, the focus of attention is more often in arguing for the value of non-beautiful or non-agreeable environments, for finding aesthetic value in mudflats as well as rolling hills. Similarly, aestheticians of sport do not merely wish to argue for the value of graceful movement and beautiful settings since:

> The danger of such an aesthetic is that it privileges a very narrow aspect of the experience of sport – for it seemingly can make little of defeat and failure; of the physical and psychological pain of competition and training; of the violence of the agon. As such, it disenfranchises sport.[406]

Similarly, as noted in Chapter One, for Adolf Loos and other writers on architecture and design, functional objects are not suitable candidates for the unthinking application of beautiful form.

It is not inconceivable, then, that for almost every aspect of our non-art life an interested aesthetician may wish to argue that, although beauty is indeed a fundamental value and makes life worth living, it will have to find a home elsewhere: we must not expect to find beauty in design, or in sport, or in nature, at work or at home, at a place of worship, on the transport system, in the art gallery, in the poem we are reading, in the garden, on the

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[406] Andrew Edgar, "The Beauty of Sport", *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*, Vol. 7, No.1 (2013), pp. 100-120 (p. 117).

television or at the community festival. For some, like Loos, this is because aesthetic quality is "external" to design. For others, such as environmental aestheticians, it is because there is value to be found in aesthetic qualities other than the beautiful. For still others, such as Andrew Edgar on sport, it is because appreciation of beauty, although valuable, is also partial, and incapable of capturing the (meaningful) struggle and pain at the heart of sport.

Banishment of beauty: Left (figure 44) The art of the Chapman Brothers;[407] Middle (figure 45) a functionalist train station; Right (figure 46) mudflats

Were we to accept and validate *kalliphobia* in all such areas of life, we would be in the – arguably absurd – position of banishing beauty from all conceivable space: the natural, artistic, functional and commercial. Importantly, however, in all such cases it is not beauty itself that is objected to but rather something more specific: the perceived threat of a broad-brush aesthetics that would endorse only a context-less application or valuation of beauty, without adequate regard for whether in any given case an aesthetic concern is warranted and, if so, whether beautiful form is always the meaningfully appropriate response.[408]

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[407] Pictured here is the Chapman Brothers' 2011 sculpture, *The Milk of Human Weakness II*, as featured on the artists' website, available here: https://jakeanddinoschapman.com/works/the-milk-of-human-weakness-ii-with-god-does-not-love-you-o-m-f-g-oil-on-canvas/ [accessed Nov 2021].

[408] Such a concern is notably present also in the work of Karsten Harries who, despite setting up his "ethical" approach in opposition to what he terms the aesthetic approach, nonetheless supports an aesthetics of what he calls ornament as opposed to decoration. The latter, for Harries, is context-less and frivolous –

This chapter examines where beauty and ugliness, positive and negative aesthetics, may belong in our non-art life.

- Part One examines the role of aesthetic meaning and expression in our non-art life, and argues that our so-called everyday life is far from devoid of imagination, artistic impulse or structural forces. The Deleuzian concept of (expressive) white walls and (authentic) black holes is introduced. I argue that place-making requires us to decide which parts of our everyday built environment will be "anaesthetic", and which parts will have a deliberately-sought "internal" (in Danto's terminology) aesthetic.

- Part Two examines the role of place-making, how different aesthetic atmospheres are used to present different meanings, social codes and expectations. In an important sense, I argue, our "everyday" space is itself constructed, formed by banishing what would threaten its atmosphere of quotidian normalcy. Whilst we may be tempted to erode such boundary-making, to embrace radical transgression, I argue that such place-making, sorting and – in Heidegger's terminology – "gathering" is integral to meaningful, habitable space.

It is sometimes said in urban planning that decision-making is less about saying "yes and no" and more about asking "where". Similarly, any discussion of beauty and ugliness in art, life and the built environment will likely make little progress if it centres solely on a simplistic debate pitting a pro-Beauty (Scrutonesque) lobby against its kalliphobic counterpart. We need not say yes or no to beauty and ugliness, but rather ask: "Where?"

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mere finery. The former, in contrast, is – what Danto calls – internally relevant to the meaning of the object, and capable of articulating what Harries terms a "communal ethos". Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, p. 48.

Part One: Black Holes and White Walls: The Practical and the Aesthetic in Non-Art Life

We may easily find examples in our built environment that seem to counter Danto's picture of aesthetics in the *Lebenswelt*. Indeed, two of Danto's own examples are of structures that stand not within the art gallery but outside of it. His chosen example of a work that has internal beauty is Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial. It is entirely appropriate, for Danto, that the memorial is a beautiful work because "The beauty of the work is internal to the healing process the memorial was designed to achieve in American life".[409] The same internal aesthetics, however, may be applied to buildings more generally. Indeed, whilst, as Danto mentions, the "verticality" of Beauvais cathedral mirrors the ascent of the soul,[410] the horizontality and humility of a Quaker meeting house is internally relevant to the building's purpose and meaning. Whereas many buildings are "externally" plain, in the Quaker meeting house aesthetic plainness assumes a spiritual meaning.

Left (figure 47) Spiritual grandeur and verticality at Beauvais Cathedral; Right (figure 48) Spiritual humility and horizontality at Wandsworth Quaker Meeting House

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[409] Danto, "Kalliphobia", p. 33.

[410] Arthur Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 193.

It may be countered, however, that memorials and places of worship constitute art rather than the everyday. Indeed, for Adolf Loos, whilst "[o]nly a very small part of architecture belongs to art", this does consist in, for Loos, "the tomb and the monument. Everything else that fulfils a function is to be excluded from the domain of art".[411] Perhaps, then, we may conclude that the memorial and the church are art-like, and are subject to the aesthetic rules of Danto's artworld, whereas a majority of the rest of our built environment – the house and the high street for instance – are part of the *Lebenswelt*. Later in this chapter I will argue that the everyday itself is a construction. Firstly, however, we must challenge the idea that our more humdrum, so-called everyday life is of a fundamentally different order to the artworld and is incapable of incorporating imagination, metaphor or aesthetic symbolism.

Figure 49: Internal beauty: Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial

Metaphor, Meaning and Imagination in Non-Art Life

The notion that the world may be split into physical reality and artistic fiction may stem in part from the imitation theory of art. On this view, art represents the world. What is outside of art is what art represents, i.e.

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[411] Adolf Loos, "Architecture".

reality. Arthur Danto does much in his work to debunk this theory as it relates to art, and to replace it with a theory that permits art to focus rather on expression, message or composition, or any number of things – with the final word on whether something constitutes art being the extent to which that work grows out from, responds to, and is embedded within the history and culture of the "artworld".

Danto's theory nonetheless depends on making a distinction between art and life as a distinction between the literal and the metaphorical. Outside of the gallery, he suggests, Warhol's Brillo boxes are merely what they literally are: pasteboard boxes. Within the gallery, however, we are party to what Danto refers to, in the title of one of his works, as "the transfiguration of the commonplace". That is, within the context of the artworld, and following the explication of Warhol himself, the boxes are transformed into artworks and may be interpreted as metaphorically representing abstract concepts such as some comment on consumerism or art theory.[412] Outside of the artworld they are subject to a literal "is". The pasteboard Brillo box *literally* is a pasteboard Brillo box. Within the artworld and the gallery, the box benefits from what Danto describes as an *artistic* is. The Brillo box becomes subject to artistic interpretation.[413]

However, despite referring to this as "the is of artistic identification", Danto nonetheless allows that such a move is present not only in art.[414] That something literally is one thing but, imaginatively, may also be another is present too in metaphorical language. As such, for Danto "metaphors are minor works of art".[415] Furthermore, being tone deaf to such imaginative or artistic metaphor, to persist in seeing Warhol's boxes merely as pasteboard boxes rather than to interpret them within the context of the artworld, is to be "like a child who sees sticks as sticks".[416] To a more imaginative child, we

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[412] Danto, "The Artworld", p. 581.

[413] *Ibid.*, p. 577.

[414] *Ibid.*

[415] Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace,* p. 189.

[416] *Ibid.*, p. 128.

may infer, a stick is never just a stick: it is a sword, a snake, or a pen. In his *Aesthetics of Architecture* Roger Scruton refers to this same phenomenon as "imaginative perception".[417] Looked at literally, he suggests, a cloud is a cloud. However, to the imaginative observer, the cloud can also be a face.[418] Such a move is crucial in our interpretation of architecture, argues Scruton, for instance in our ability to see a Gothic church as a "celestial city".[419] For Danto, meanwhile, it may be appropriate to consider the "verticality" of the Gothic cathedral at Beauvais as a metaphor for the ascent of the soul.

The "artistic is", or imaginative perception, is therefore not in fact confined to institutionalised art, even if it might most often be found there. It is present in some form every time a child pretends that a stick is a sword, every time we use a metaphor, and every time a designed object such as a chair seems to mean more to us than just being an object to sit upon. Many figures of speech, such as metonymy, despite having been subject to greater analysis in textual form, are present also in visual symbols and physical objects. That is: it is not only the word "crown" that symbolises the wider institution of the monarchy but also the physical crown itself which is presented to the future monarch at coronation. Furthermore, we do not require either institutionalised art or even established cultural tropes in order to view our everyday physical world symbolically. A person fallen on hard times, for instance, is capable – unmediated – of interpreting their empty refrigerator as a symbol of wider poverty.

This is not, of course, to argue that there is no meaningful difference between creative and practical outlook or creative and practical objects. It is merely to observe, with Adorno, that there is "no chemically pure purposefulness set up as the opposite of the purpose-free aesthetic".[420] As argued in Chapter One, it is a mistake to assume a rigid divide between art and function, or to suggest that our imaginative or symbolic capacities are

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[417] Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Architecture*, p. 68.

[418] *Ibid.*, p. 71.

[419] *Ibid.*, p. 79.

[420] Adorno, "Functionalism Today", p. 8.

engaged solely in art, with our non-art life dominated by an unimaginative, literal, and practical outlook and engagement with unimaginative, literal, practical objects.

If this were the case, our aesthetic response in non-art life would be highly compromised. Indeed, Danto's *Lebenswelt* seems to include a) a functional, literal, non-aesthetic outlook with b) an occasional appreciation of contextless beauty. What is missing here is an outlook in non-art life that is neither wholly functional nor wholly literal: an aesthetic attitude coloured by context and concepts.

As argued by Frederick Johannes Potgieter, it does an injustice to everyday life to see it as some amorphous mass of the personal and practical. The institutional, cultural and historical contexts that Danto observes in the artworld, writes Potgieter, are also present in the non-art world:

> [T]hose who argue that everyday aesthetic life is exclusively about private and subjective experiences do not adequately account for the fact that everyday aesthetic life is for a significant part imbedded in institutional and educational matrixes.[421]

Potgeieter has in mind such things as hobby groups, community festivals and craft guilds. We do not encounter all non-art objects and events from an "unframed", subjective standpoint, he suggests. Rather, our non-art life itself breaks down further into a complex of contexts and language games.

Whilst I may sometimes see a tree as fuel, as a good specimen for its kind, or as a free beauty, at still other times I may see it within the context of a community garden project. Within the context of such a project – its location, its aims, its scope – we may see the tree as part of a wider aesthetic outlook and consider its appropriateness for a given aesthetic or atmosphere: topiary may be too formal for a romantic garden; a weeping

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[421] Frederick Johannes Potgieter, "An Educational Perspective and a Poststructural Position on Everyday Aesthetics and the Creation of Meaning", *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, Vol. 51, No. 3 (Fall 2017), pp. 72-90 (p. 86).

willow too romantic for a formal one. Such decision-making is not always based on personal whim or knee-jerk preference for the beautiful. Similarly, whilst the environments visited by urban explorers do not constitute fine art, and the explorers themselves are not artists, urban exploration has developed community codes and expectations, the most often cited being "take nothing but photographs, leave nothing but footprints", and photographs are shared and appreciated among members of the community. The practice of urban exploration has history, codes and contexts. As argued in Chapter Two, we rarely – even in so-called everyday life – find ourselves outside of any context and structure for our aesthetic expectations.

Black Holes, White Walls, and the Anaesthetic

Non-art life, and the built environment, includes many different contexts, with different expectations for aesthetics. Power plants are built primarily with function in mind, public artworks are primarily aesthetic and symbolic, and many human-made objects fall somewhere in between. We do not expect all areas of our built environment to have equal concern with aesthetic symbolism. It depends upon where such structures are located, how often the public is in contact with them, and whether the building is a place of work. Debates around the aesthetic quality of the built environment are implicitly more concerned with the quality of town centres, landmark buildings, and residential areas than with industrial sites.

Furthermore, in the same way that, for Danto, we may feel it is missing the point to discuss the aesthetics of Duchamp's urinal as though it were internally meaningful to the artwork itself, it may be misguided to discuss the choice of concrete as a building material for a power plant, or discuss the futuristic, geometric form of a gas holder as though such qualities were chosen for their symbolism, meaning or aesthetics as opposed to for their function. We would be misunderstanding both the intentions of the designer and the nature of the object.

This is not to suggest that functional buildings, or those buildings for which we have little to no aesthetic standards, cannot be appreciated aesthetically. Just as Duchamp's urinal may be incidentally beautiful, so too may some functional buildings – they may also be incidentally ugly, however, since, as argued in Chapter One, functional beauty is not a guaranteed outcome in the creation of a functional object. One initial task, then, in any attempt to discuss the aesthetics of the built environment, is to identify which buildings or areas we consider should have a concern with their "internal" aesthetics, and which need not.[422] This, however, is not a straightforward task, and is liable to change across time periods and across cultures.

The idea that the functional objects of our everyday life should also be aesthetically expressive has been met with suspicion, notably by functionalists such as Loos, and by those who would split the world into the functional and the artistic and would attempt to police these boundaries. In "Interiors in the Rotunda", for example, Loos distinguishes between the organic and unconscious style that may develop in a home as a result of its occupants' living there, and an imposed, external or fashionable design that its occupants may introduce in order to express a certain aesthetic or lifestyle:

> I did not, thank god, grow up in such a "stylish" apartment. Every piece of furniture, every object, every thing had a story to tell, the story of our family. Our home was never finished, it developed with us, and we with it. It was certainly without "style"; that is, it had no alien, no old "style". But it did have a style, the style of its occupants, the style of our family.[423]

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[422] The other way that an object or building may have "external" aesthetics is if it e.g. applies beauty irrespective of the meaning or purpose of the object. It is this approach that, as outlined above, has been so criticised in many areas of philosophical aesthetics.

[423] Adolf Loos cited in David Leatherbarrow, "Sharing Sense: Or, How Ethics Might be the Subject Matter of Architectural Aesthetics", *Architecture Philosophy*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2014), pp. 9-23. Originally from Adolf Loos, "Interiors in the Rotunda", in *Spoken into the Void* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1982), pp. 22-27.

Loos' apartment is presented as authentic as opposed to phony. In contrast, in his tale of "The Poor Little Rich Man", his protagonist is chastised by his architect for wearing slippers: "But Mr Architect", protests the man, "Have you forgotten? You designed these slippers yourself!"; "Certainly!", the architect replies, "But for the bedroom! With these impossible pieces of colour you are destroying the entire atmosphere".[424]

The same idea of authenticity is present in Heidegger's description of a Black Forest hut, the form of which is dictated by practicality rather than symbolism: it is placed on a hill to protect it from wind; it has a shingle roof to protect it from snow.[425] As with Loos' apartment, it has no imposed style. Andrew Ballantyne, too, compares the authentic, practical workers cottage described in John Clare's "The Woodman", to the rustic folly cottage famously produced for the entertainment of Marie Antoinette which is "very clearly part of a world of signification, and is in play as a sign from its outset".[426] Borrowing the terminology of Deleuze and Guattari, Ballantyne writes that John Clare's cottage is a "black hole" – a space of authentic, unselfconscious but somewhat inaccessible being – whereas Marie Antoinette's cottage is a "white wall" – that is, it is concerned not with inner authenticity but rather with outward expression.[427] White walls, then, are

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[424] Adolf Loos, "The Poor Little Rich Man", in Jen Jack Gieseking and William Mangold (eds.), *The People, Place, and Space Reader* (New York and London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 97-99 (p. 98). Although Loos' story may indeed sound absurd, it is reported that the architect Frank Lloyd Wright insisted on such total control of his domestic design, going so far as to design the home's napkin rings and even ladies' dresses. Functional storage space, meanwhile, was often conspicuously lacking. See the documentary *Frank Lloyd Wright*, directed by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick (USA: PBS, 1998).

[425] Martin Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking", in Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, pp. 141-160 (p. 157).

[426] Ballantyne, *Deleuze and Guattari for Architects*, p. 73.

[427] *Ibid.*

inherently untrustworthy, since they may project an image that is unfaithful to what they "truly" are.

Both tendencies, however, may be present within just one building. Externally, Ballantyne notes, we may make a distinction between those parts of a building (usually the façade) which are primarily "white wall" and those parts of the building (usually the back) which are primarily "black hole".[428] The looming, copper-coloured façade of the Wales Millennium Centre in Cardiff, for instance, is clearly more concerned with formal expression than are the boxy office structures which comprise its side and back section. Similarly, until recently it was common for homes to be organised around a front parlour or "best" room, shown to visitors or used on special occasions, and a more informal and practical back room, used day-to-day. The unselfconsciousness of Heidegger's hut or Loos' apartment would apply chiefly to the back room. The front room, in contrast, would be presented for visitors, "almost amounting to a sacred place which contrasts sharply with the more profane use of the remainder of the accommodation".[429] The parlour was "not the focus of family life but the ideal, which proclaimed to the world through its lace curtained window and revealed objects (then, as now, a plant in a china pot) the cult of respectability".[430]

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[428] *Ibid.*, p. 74.

[429] Julienne Hanson and Bill Hillier, "Two Domestic 'Space Codes' Compared", in Julienne Hanson, *Decoding Homes and Houses* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 109-134 (p. 119).

[430] John Burnett, *A Social History of Housing*, quoted within Hanson, *Decoding Homes and Houses*, p. 120.

Left (figure 50) The "white wall" of the WMC's façade; Right (figure 51) The "black hole" of the WMC's rear

Whether something constitutes a black hole or white wall needn't also, says Ballantyne, be dictated by any characteristic of the object itself. There may even be no discernible physical difference between the hut of John Clare's workman and that of Marie Antoinette. It depends, he writes, and again using terminology from Deleuze and Guattari, what "machine" or "assemblage" the object is a part of,[431] much in the way that – as Danto argues – when Warhol places Brillo boxes within an art gallery they gain art status through their presence in a wider art context (or "machine", "assemblage") whereas when a shelf stacker places them in a stockroom they are mere commercial stock due to their presence in a wider non-art, commercial assemblage.[432] Similarly, therefore, we may note that mechanical typewriters, originally used for practical purposes, have increasingly become used non-functionally as decorative items, symbols of twentieth century literariness. The typewriter in use during the 1940s on a

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[431] "There is nothing fixed about the architecture in relation to the building. It depends upon which machine it has been assembled into. The woodman-cottage is the centre of a world, where folk tales are told beside the fire. The *cottage orné* is visited for pleasure, or for contemplative isolation, a place for trysts and for books. So if Clare's woodman moved out and Marie Antoinette moved in, it would be used in different ways, a different machine would be constituted, and it would produce different affects", Ballantyne, *Deleuze and Guattari for Architects*, p. 43.

[432] Danto, "The Artworld", p. 581.

journalist's desk serves a different (and far less symbolic) function than the typewriter used as a centrepiece on a twenty first century wedding table.

Left (figure 52) Typewriter as equipment – George Orwell at work; Right (figure 53) Typewriter as "white wall" – wedding centrepiece

It is precisely this tendency of much design to be concerned with outward expression that has been criticized not only by Loos but also by theorists such as Hal Foster, who writes that "design seems to advance a new kind of narcissism, one that is all image and no interiority".[433] That is, designed objects are white walls. Furthermore, as noted by Deleuze and Guattari, Gernot Böhme, and members of the Frankfurt School, we increasingly interact with objects and spaces that are more accurately described as designed and expressive – white walls – than we do with straightforward equipment. For Böhme:

> The economy of developed industrial nations is dependent on the production of luxury articles. When basic needs are satisfied and production for war declines, the maintenance of production levels and, indeed, any growth at all, depends on the demand for luxuries and on their artificial – i.e. fashionable – or technological obsolescence. This leads to the dominance of the appearance value of products, of aesthetics over practicality.[434]

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[433] Hal Foster, *Design and Crime (And Other Diatribes)* (London and New York: Verso, 2002), p. 5.

[434] Böhme, *The Aesthetics of Atmospheres*, pp. 388-389.

It is notable that most houses no longer have a separation between back room and parlour: the living room is both the living space and the space of expression. Our domestic space therefore becomes, in the words of Walter Benjamin, a space of "phantasmagorias".[435] The modern citizen, writes Benjamin, "required of the interior that it should maintain him in his illusions".[436]

The archetypal sites of the everyday, therefore, i.e. the home and the high street, are not necessarily characterized by non-expressive equipment and "black holes". Indeed, for Benjamin the shopping arcades of early twentieth-century Paris were best understood not as sites of authenticity or as functional, commercial space but rather as dreamlike and utopian.[437] For Jean Baudrillard, this trend continues through the design of the shopping mall:

> Adorned with fountains, artificial trees, pavilions and benches, it is wholly exempt from changes of season or bad weather: an exceptional system of climate control, requiring 13 kilometres of air-conditioning ducts, makes for perpetual springtime.[438]

We attend the mall, Baudrillard argues, not as a functional exercise, to buy goods, but rather to experience an "ambience".[439] Furthermore, "We are at the point where consumption is laying hold to the whole of life [...] where the 'environment' is total": cafes, shops, sports centres, and even churches may be housed in one aesthetically-managed complex.[440]

In affluent societies concerned with consumer design, that is, we see a proliferation of objects and spaces from which we expect some concern with

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[435] Walter Benjamin, "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century", trans. Edmund Jephcott, in Leach (ed.), *Rethinking Architecture*, pp. 33-43 (p. 36).

[436] *Ibid.*

[437] *Ibid.*, p. 34.

[438] Jean Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures* (London: SAGE Publications, 2017), p. 47.

[439] *Ibid.*, p. 48.

[440] *Ibid.*, p. 46.

aesthetic meaning, the creation of a certain atmosphere. That we do so was anticipated by Kant who, as noted in the previous chapter, argued that "when civilization has reached its height" Man becomes increasingly concerned with the extent to which aesthetic qualities and sensations permit universal communication. Thus, we become concerned with internal aesthetics, with signifying, with white walls. For Baudrillard, famously, our everyday space has become so concerned with symbolisms and representations that it is no more real than Disneyland itself. Rather, "Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, when in fact all of Los Angeles and the America surrounding it are no longer real, but of the order of the hyperreal and of simulation."

Aesthetic Symbolism and Functional Objects

Importantly, however, the primarily functional parts of our built environment can also become aesthetic and symbolic. As argued by Adorno:

> [O]ne must accept that there is a factor of expression in every object. Any special relegation of this factor to art alone would be an over-simplification. It cannot be separated from objects of use. […] Hence all obsolete objects of use eventually become an expression, a collective picture of the epoch. There is barely a practical form which, along with its appropriateness for use, would not therefore also be a symbol […]. By means of the mimetic impulse, the living being equates himself with objects in his surroundings. This occurs long before artists initiate conscious imitation. What begins as symbol becomes ornament, and finally appears superfluous.[441]

Attempts made by functionalists such as Loos to rid practical objects of aesthetic expression are therefore, suggests Adorno, not only misguided but also bound to fail.

In his *Languages of Art*, Nelson Goodman makes a distinction between what metaphorically expresses and what literally exemplifies. What literally exemplifies is of the same order as what it refers to: a man – presumably a

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[441] Adorno, "Functionalism Today", p. 10.

particularly masculine one – may exemplify being a man. To express, says Goodman, the expressive object must be of a different order. A painting may express sadness, but cannot literally exemplify it, because it is not possible for a painting, as opposed to a person, to be literally sad. As such:

> Architects, for instance, like to speak of some buildings as expressing their functions. But however effectively a glue factory may typify glue-making, it exemplifies being a glue factory literally rather than metaphorically. A building may express fluidity or frivolity or fervor; but to express being a glue factory it would have to be something else, say a toothpick plant.[442]

A similar distinction exists, therefore, between a plainly formed, concrete factory, and a plainly formed, concrete brutalist housing block. The former is literally industrial, whereas the latter is metaphorically industrial. It is not literally an industrial building, but rather a domestic one.

Crucially, however, the factory is not merely literally industrial but *also* expresses the industrial. It has come to express what it literally is: it is a symbol. Similarly, the humble workers cottage that is referenced by Heidegger, Clare and Ballantyne has become somewhat of an architectural trope. The cottage described in Clare's "The Woodman" is (in the world of the poem) literally agricultural, working class, modest. However, it also exemplifies these qualities: it is a symbol of simple, working life. Indeed, the symbolism of the workers cottage was likely established prior to Marie Antoinette's adoption of it, and the mechanical typewriter developed its romantic associations with twentieth-century literary life before it was adopted (for that reason) by wedding designers. Thus, to reiterate Adorno's words above: what begins as symbol becomes ornament, and finally appears superfluous. Black holes have a habit of becoming white walls.

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[442] Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art,* pp. 90-91.

Left (figure 54) Farm building in use as black hole, Victorian England; Middle (figure 55) A folly cottage of Marie Antoinette's, Versailles; Right (figure 56) Heidegger's own hut in the Black Forest (also arguably enjoyed by the philosopher for its Romantic, expressive qualities)

In one sense, the starkness of the modern factory and the crudeness of the rural hut are "external" to the buildings' meaning: they are not the result of deliberate metaphorical expression. However, the concrete of the factory symbolises industry to us – and all that entails – and is not merely experienced formally. Similarly, the decaying and overgrown post-industrial sites popular with urban explorers were not designed for any particular effect, indeed were not designed at all in their current guise, but have rather emerged through economic changes and neglect. Nonetheless, their aesthetic appeal is intimately related to their poetic, symbolic meaning: the decay, dirt, rust and darkness, relates to a deeply symbolic, post-industrial picturesque.

Some structures, then, regardless of whether they have been designed or not, have a poetic-aesthetic value. Poetic, because of what they symbolise for us; aesthetic because, as argued earlier by Gernot Böhme, we do not understand such symbols by coldly and cognitively "reading" them but rather by feeling them. As noted earlier, for Böhme:

> The noble, majestic quality of a material, its elegance or old-fashionedness are sensed. But this does not mean merely that the material is able to point to or signal the noble, the majestic, the elegant, or the old-fashioned; rather, it seems to radiate them. They must in some way be connected to, anchored in, its material qualities.

This is why it is sometimes difficult to distinguish clearly between the synesthetic and social character of a material.[443]

For this reason, in such circumstances it makes little sense to argue for any firm delineation between our poetic, formal or material response to a building. As experienced, they are entwined.

For Bachelard, it may be noted, aesthetics conceived of as beauty was a disturbance to a poetics of space:

> [a] phenomenologist who wants to experience the images of the function of inhabiting must not be subject to the charms of external beauty. For generally, beauty exteriorizes and disturbs intimate meditation"[444]

However, Bachelard goes on to argue that, looked at intimately, even the humblest dwelling has beauty. This beauty, however, is symbolic and poetic rather than formal and visual. As such, he points to the following quotation from George Sand: "What is more beautiful than a road? [...] It is the symbol and the image of an active, varied life". The road is beautiful not because of its formal beauty but because of what it represents. It has the beauty of a poetic image. However, what Bachelard objects to here is *external* beauty. That is, beauty that is unconnected to or dissonant with symbolic or poetic meaning. Indeed, the poetic beauty of a road is intimately connected to the specifics of its materiality and form, both of which will themselves affect its symbolism, and from which its symbolism will, as Böhme terms it, *radiate*. A winding, cobbled country road enclosed by hedging creates an entirely different symbolism and atmosphere from a straight, wide, expansive concrete highway. In an aesthetics of atmosphere, aesthetics and poetics are one.

Jane Forsey is sceptical of such poetic-aesthetic fusion. The proper aesthetics of a mayfly, she suggests, will be dictated according to its

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443 Böhme, *The Aesthetics of Atmospheres*, p. 397.

444 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon, 1969) p. 107.

dependent beauty and its fitness for purpose. The fact that the mayfly's wings are fragile and that it lives only for a day are defects and cannot be judged beautiful. To appreciate the mayfly as a metaphor for fragility detracts, she claims, from the quotidian, and makes the encounter more like art.[445] This is a curious criticism, however, since Forsey's own view – as mentioned earlier – decisively externalises our approach to designed and everyday objects, encouraging a kind of detached judgement we rarely employ in everyday life. Furthermore, as argued above, it is a misrepresentation of everyday, non-art life to suggest that we do not view objects poetically.

A more sympathetic approach to poetic-aesthetic fusion is found in Saito who, despite being an aesthetician of the everyday, acknowledges on several occasions that we do indeed engage with objects in this way. For Saito:

> the aesthetic experience of an aged object is derived from the associated thoughts and images concerning the object's origin, its historical development, its longevity, and events and activities that brought about changes.[446]

Saito similarly notes cherry trees' expression of ephemerality, and cites Yoshida Kenko's rhetorical question: "are we to look at … the cherry blossoms with our eyes alone?"[447]

Nonetheless, Saito's explanation above fails to capture the *fusion* of poetic-aesthetic experiences. We are given the impression that we see an object, and it prompts associated thoughts. This is notably different from Böhme's presentation of symbolism and association *radiating* from an object. For Scruton, indeed, the theory of association of ideas must be rejected precisely for this reason, for the suggestion that objects are merely prompts to thought. Rather, "In *aesthetic* attention, thought, perception and

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[445] Forsey, p. 158.

[446] Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*, p. 181.

[447] Yoshida Kenko, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 180.

feeling are inseparable; being focussed on a common object, they live and die together".[448] It is a single process: "conceptual, perceptual and affective at once".[449] This fusion of concept and percept is captured too in Heidegger's notion of world and earth, which together combine into a meaningful artwork. Earth without world is self-secluding, mute, resistant to our comprehension: a slab of clay, a stone, a physical object unaffected by associations or human meaning. Artworks permeate the earth with "world", with human meaning. The earth is therefore "set forth".

For Forsey, designed objects are essentially "mute".[450] For Böhme, in contrast, nothing is mute: the physicality of our rooms, clothes, houses and streets is permeated with associations that we experience not as disconnected thoughts but rather feel and experience as they radiate from the earth in which they are fused.

Whilst we may wish to make a distinction, then, between which parts of our built environment require aesthetic value and symbolism (residential areas, civic centres) and those that may not (oil rigs, incineration facilities) this is not to say that the latter are mute. They may, rather, be permeated with poetic associations which may radiate from their physical materiality. Neither does it mean they will be ugly or disagreeable. It is merely to say that in such instances the aesthetic qualities are less intentional. In such sites we may get meaningful or pleasing aesthetic form, but then again we may not (merely being functional, we noted earlier, is no guarantee of "functional beauty"). If we wish to ensure and control the aesthetics of the built environment, then, we will need to invoke conscious design.

This is not to say that all design projects succeed in imbuing their structures with the associations they aim to express. Indeed, speaking of the ill-fated London Millennium Dome in 2000, Conservative MP Peter Ainsworth reminded his colleagues that:

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[448] Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Architecture*, p. 132.

[449] *Ibid.*

[450] Forsey, p. 66.

> The original vision for the dome was noble and thoughtful: a symbol of Britain on the cusp of the new millennium, a celebration of our past [...] It was a chance to take stock of ourselves as a nation and to glimpse the future with the help of the best of our creative talent and cutting-edge technology, but the dome is not a symbol of Britain. It is a symbol of a trite, self-regarding and bossy Government[451]

The Dome, as Ainsworth argues, became a source of national embarrassment, in large part because of its mismanagement and its cost. However, this mismanagement of cost was reflected in its material form. As noted by the architect Richard Rogers, the total spend for the Dome was £789m and yet only 7% of this figure was spent on the building itself which Rogers describes as having "the same price per square metre as a supermarket shed".[452] Furthermore, rather than expressing a clear vision, writes Rowan Moore, "The hole in the dome's heart, the place where a big idea should have been, became a void into which competing interests – political, commercial, cultural, individual – rushed in".[453] Buildings, that is, as argued in Chapter Five, may exemplify the values of their design origins.

Internal Aesthetics and Worldview

As argued above, it is not merely cathedrals, memorials and artworks that display what Danto calls "internal" aesthetics. Rather, the same is true of many designed items of our everyday world. For Scruton even our cutlery

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[451] Peter Ainsworth MP in HC Deb (21 Feb 2000) vol. 344, col. 1310. Available at https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2000-02-21/debates/0c1f03a1-e32b-47b1-bed2-e0e5ef1341b7/CommonsChamber [accessed 10 Aug 2021].

[452] Richard Rogers, quoted in Oliver Wainwright, "How We Made the Millennium Dome", *The Guardian* (theguardian.com, 17 March 2015). Available at https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2015/mar/17/how-we-made-the-millennium-dome-richard-rogers [accessed 10 Aug 2021].

[453] Rowan Moore, "The Millennium Dome 20 Years On", *The Guardian* (theguardian.com, 1 Dec 2019). Available at https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2019/dec/01/millennium-dome-20-years-on-new-labour [accessed 10 Aug 2021].

may harbour aesthetic meaning, and betray allegiance to a particular lifestyle. Much can be gleaned, he suggests, in comparing a modern, slick Swedish designed fork to a traditional fork "proportioned like a column, with base and capital, and with a frieze of prongs" which "partakes of a language rich in implications".[454] The modern fork, he argues, presents functionality as an aesthetic and symbolic ideal since, in fact, the longer prongs and the collar of the traditional fork make it easier to use. As such:

> The two forks bear the insignia of contrasting life-styles – the pursuit of uncluttered function (not as a fact but as a symbol) and the leisured movement which despite its superficial contempt for function arrives rather more naturally at its aim. In choosing between the forms on aesthetic grounds one will also declare allegiance to one or other style of life.[455]

For Scruton, aesthetic value and aesthetic preference in everyday designed objects, including vernacular buildings, clothing, and household items, is intimately bound with our allegiance to moral values and wider lifestyle.

It is often argued, particularly by leftist thinkers, that the appeal of designed objects is their association with the aspirational elite. The design of the middle-class interior, argued Bloch, is influenced by "the fashion-determining class and, not least, by the petty bourgeoisie's imitation of the taste of the ruling class".[456] Much as Heidegger's peasant is reassured of her world when she catches sight of her working shoes, the designer shoes of the consumer citizen, on this view, reassure her of her participation in the lifestyle to which she aspires. It would be simplistic, however, to assume that designed objects merely offer a blanket dream of social mobility. Rather, there is more than one dream on offer and, as Scruton's forks attest, choosing between designed items often involves choosing between lifestyles

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[454] Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Architecture*, p. 222.

[455] *Ibid.*

[456] Ernst Bloch, "Formative Education, Engineering Form, Ornament", trans. Jane Newman and John Smith, in Leach (ed.), *Rethinking Architecture*, pp. 43-50 (p. 43).

and values: "Through the aesthetic understanding our future aims become vivid to us before we are able to formulate them as policies or plans".[457]

Indeed, as noted by Böhme, it is a mistake to consider all design purchases reductively as merely the purchasing of status or a mindless compulsion to buy – such an interpretation is presented by Parsons who, despite previously acknowledging the symbolic and cultural role that design has for us, ends *The Philosophy of Design* by attempting a distinction between "genuine needs" such as electricity and water, and "false needs" that he associates with many design objects we buy "just to have it" or to "gratify a want".[458]

For Böhme, in contrast, aesthetic value is distinct from exchange value and use value: designed objects are not merely paraded as proof of wealth, status, or social class:

> The value of commodities, unless it is its utility for the performance of some life-world tasks, in no way has to consist exclusively in the representation of exchange value. Rather, they are used precisely in their scenic function, as components of a style, as elements for the production of atmospheres. Therefore, one could speak of a scenic value of commodities – alongside use and exchange value, or as a subform of use value – put positively, of their aesthetic value; put critically, of their illusory value. Commodities like that have always existed, as accessories or objects for the beautification of life. Characteristic of our time is that there are hardly any commodities left that do not also have a scenic value; that this value can outweigh the other kinds of value; and, finally, that the only value an object has for us can, under certain conditions, consist of its scenic function [...] *However, until the legitimate need of humans to produce certain atmospheres through the design of their surroundings and to stage themselves is acknowledged, criticism comes too early. The atmospheric is part of life and staging serves its intensification*[459]

Rather than – as Parsons does – rejecting expression, Böhme argues for greater awareness of how atmospheres are created and how they may manipulate us. Young people, therefore, may "learn to understand the

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[457] Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Architecture*, p. 31.

[458] Parsons, *The Philosophy of Design*, p. 136.

[459] Böhme, *Atmospheric Architectures*, pp. 33-34.

function of generators, acquiring a dynamic relationship with the atmospheres they live in. Above all, however, they will be in a position to critique the production of atmospheres and the resulting manipulation as well".[460]

A Choice of Aspiration

In the previous chapter we saw Venturi and Scott Brown arguing that modernists object to a certain kitsch design precisely because they find the "middle-middle-class social aspirations", manifested through carriage lanterns, mansards, and antiqued brick, "distasteful". They do not buy into the dreamworld that has been sought. A similar (somewhat kitsch) dream remains on offer today with many historically-inspired housing developments. Redrow developers, for instance, advertise their arts and crafts "Heritage Collection" by presenting an aspirational lifestyle of homely "English charm". Houses in the collection are named after middle-class southern English towns: The Oxford, The Cambridge, The Henley.[461] The homes offer their buyers a dream of aspirational, upper-middle class southern English everyday. As argued by Scruton, in making the decision to buy such a home we may not be overtly aware of why we have chosen it or precisely in what way its symbolism has appealed to us. Rather, much as Böhme argues above about our capacity to sense and feel aesthetic meaning, we are merely drawn to a particular atmosphere.

This dream, however, is not shared by everyone. As we have seen with Scruton's discussion of modern versus traditional cutlery, certain less traditional groups aspire not to classical traditionalism but to the ideals of mid-century modernism. This group may also – via an affordably priced Ercol-inspired dinner table – obtain a ticket to a different upper-middle class dream world which signals modern cultural sophistication as opposed to conservative traditionalism. The crucial point here, however, is that in all

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[460] *Ibid.*, p. 34.

[461] See https://www.redrow.co.uk/heritage-collection [accessed Jan 2019].

such cases we must understand the aesthetics of these buildings and objects with reference to their meaning and symbolism. That is, such designed objects have "internal" aesthetics.

Left (figure 57) Aspirational traditionalism at Redrow; Right (figure 58) Aspirational Mid-Century Modernism at Habitat

Indeed, despite his reductive presentation of our attraction to expressive designed objects, Parsons nonetheless admits elsewhere that, "The choice involved in buying a house [...] goes far beyond considerations of function or status; it is a choice that reflects the kinds of values that help shape our lives. Buying a house is, in other words, a 'ritual process' by which we give meaning and structure to the world, in the same way that religious ceremonies in other cultures studied by anthropologists serve to give meaning and structure to their ways of life".[462]

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[462] Parsons, *The Philosophy of Design,* p. 72.

Part Two: Place-Making, Aesthetics and the Construction of the Everyday

The Construction of the Everyday

Most of our built environment is not art, yet neither is it "everyday". Whilst Danto implies that our non-art life is synonymous with the *Lebenswelt*, our usual idea of the everyday is much narrower. The crematorium, theme park, and cathedral – and indeed more recently the Covid-19 test centre – are non-art spaces, but they are not "everyday spaces" (for most of us at least) in the same way that our familiar home, school and local shop are paradigmatically quotidian.

Many spaces in the built environment offer a deliberate counterpoint to our so-called everyday experience, offering a sense of unbridled collective energy (the sports stadium), sumptuous glamour (the traditional theatre), transcendent spirituality (the place of worship), or otherworldly fiction (the theme park) – all of which might be lacking in our everyday space of home and high street. Of theatre-goers, Karsten Harries writes that:

> The sumptuous elegance that now surrounds them, so different from their everyday environment, shapes their thoughts, their character, even the way they speak and their bearing [...] before the spectators sit down in their seats and the performance begins, they are also actors[463]

It is not only the play then which, as art, is opposed to our notion of the everyday, but also the atmosphere of the theatre experience itself. Hence, the deliberate creation of spaces that oppose themselves to one another – which designate different atmospheres and ways of life – is integral to the task of architecture.

A similar ordering exists in our demarcation of time. As Dewey notes, we make sense of the relentless and abstract passing of time by

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[463] Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, p. 315.

experiencing it as "the rhythm of waking and sleeping, hungering and satiety, work and rest",[464] thus, "[t]ime ceases to be either the endless and uniform flow or the succession of instantaneous points which some philosophers have asserted it to be".[465] Such inter-subjective experience of time is subsequently formalised, as we organise our time into the everyday and what is special or different. This is present even within the standard work week itself since, as noted by Eviatar Zerubavel in his history of the seven day week, the days of the working week are most often treated as interchangeable and ordinary, whereas the Sabbath day is "marked" by the wearing of more formal clothes and the eating of different food.[466] Similarly, whilst carnival days may take place in what is normally our everyday town space, such festivities, when occurring, are a deliberate counterpoint to the everyday. Indeed, for Lefebvre, "Buildings are to monuments as everyday life is to festival".[467]

Crucially, however, the everyday to which carnivals are opposed is no realer or more natural than the carnivals themselves. For Bakhtin, the medieval carnival was "a second world and a second life outside

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[464] Dewey, *Art as Experience,* p. 148.

[465] *Ibid.*, p. 23.

[466] Eviatar Zerubavel, *The Seven Day Circle: The History and Meaning of the Week* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 119. "There is no basic difference between a Jew's Sabbath caftan, a Christian's 'Sunday best' attire, and a white-collar worker's weekend 'workclothes' (e.g., blue jeans) [...] All are manifestations of the symbolic use of clothing for substantiating conceptual contrasts between abstract categories such as the sacred and profane, work and leisure, public and private, and so on. The difference between the way we look on Monday and on Sunday is significantly greater than the difference between the way we look on Monday and on Tuesday. That, of course, is also true of the food we eat, the material we read, and even the people with whom we socialize. Ordinary 'weekdays' are usually 'marked' much less distinctively than 'peak days', so that, physiognomically speaking, they are often quite interchangeable".

[467] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space,* p. 223.

officialdom".[468] That is, the carnival opposes itself not to some neutral reality but rather to those constructed hierarchies and social codes which prevail in everyday life, and which are temporarily upended and transgressed. Similarly, whilst the everyday experiences of ordering food, attending PTA meetings and interacting with work colleagues may constitute part of the everyday, such experiences are informed by social codes that render them no more real and natural than those experiences of carnivals and night life which upend and challenge such codes.

Everyday space emerges from the deliberate exclusion of the threatening. As noted by Georges Bataille, the slaughterhouse is deliberately placed on the edges of town, "cursed and quarantined like a boat carrying cholera" due to what he considers "an unhealthy need for cleanliness, for a bilious small-mindedness and for boredom".[469] We "vegetate", he says, as far as possible from the slaughterhouse, "in an amorphous world, where there is no longer anything terrible".[470] For Bataille it is no accident that the slaughterhouse and the crematorium are situated away from our homes and commercial centres: our contemporary vision of a more sanitised everyday life does not permit their inclusion.

Left (figure 59) Festal space: the sumptuous glamour of Paris' Palais Garnier Theatre; Middle (figure 60) "cursed and quarantined" – a slaughterhouse; Right (figure 61) ordinary everyday space of the high street

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[468] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. by Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 6.

[469] Bataille, "Slaughterhouse", p. 22.

[470] *Ibid.*

Such decisions of inclusion and exclusion, however, form the very basis of our creation of meaningful space. Place-making, for Heidegger, involves just such a "gathering" together of related things. For Nelson Goodman, also:

> Much but by no means all worldmaking consists of taking apart and putting together [...] Motley entities cutting across each other in complicated patterns may belong to the same world[471]

That is, place-making and world-making involves making decisions about inclusion and exclusion from a given space, about what belongs and what does not. As such, Lefebvre notes that:

> Activity in space is restricted by that space; space "decides" what activity may occur, but even this "decision" has limits placed upon it. Space lays down the law because it implies a certain order - and hence also a certain disorder (just as what may be seen defines what is obscene).[472]

In creating everyday space we include such buildings as the bank and the school, and such activities as the charity cycle ride, but we do not include such buildings as the slaughterhouse or the crematorium, nor activities such as public sex acts.

Furthermore, we do not need instruction on what is permitted and disallowed from any given space since, as Lefebvre says above, the obscene is defined by what is seen. We observe what is present and absent from a given room, building or street, identify an atmosphere and pattern. As such, and as noted earlier by Gernot Böhme, such assemblages (as they are called in the terminology of Deleuze and Guattari) are not merely, or even primarily, understood by the intellect but are rather perceived immediately, and are aesthetic:

> [F]rom the very start, one [...] sees things in an arrangement, things which exist in relationship to one another and one sees situations [...] One enters a flat and is overwhelmed by the philistine atmosphere. One

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[471] Nelson Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking,* pp. 7-8.

[472] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space,* p. 143.

enters a church and has the feeling of being shrouded in a holy gloom. One catches sight of the sea and is swept off into the distance. It is only against this background or in this atmosphere that one can distinguish the details.[473]

Most of us therefore upon entering the Palais Garnier immediately perceive its stately splendour and do not need a sign informing us that ball games are not permitted or that formal wear is expected for viewing performances. Rather, as Harries writes, the elegant atmosphere of the theatre "shapes [the patrons'] thoughts, their character, even the way they speak and their bearing".

Such place-making and gathering occurs not merely with individual buildings but with entire regions or districts. As noted by Barthes in his "Semiology and the Urban", cities have strong and neutral elements – what linguists call marked and unmarked elements. The centre of a city, he suggests, is a space dominated by younger people, "where subversive forces, forces of rupture, ludic forces act and meet".[474] The city centre is:

> [T]he privileged place where the other is and where we ourselves are other, as the place where we play the other. In contrast, all that is not the centre is precisely that which is not ludic space, everything which is not otherness: family, residence, identity.[475]

The city centre, that is, is somewhat carnivalesque. We may say and do things there that we would not say and do in the buttoned-up suburbs.

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[473] Böhme, *The Aesthetics of Atmospheres*, p. 204.

[474] Roland Barthes, "Semiology and the Urban", in Leach (ed.), *Rethinking Architecture*, pp. 166-172 (p. 171).

[475] *Ibid.*

Left (figure 62) Festal atmosphere in London's Chinatown, city centre; Right (figure 63) Domestic space in suburban Ealing

Within a city or town we may have a higher or lower tolerance for certain negative aesthetics or cultivated aesthetics depending on where in the city we happen to be. Indeed, for Bakhtin carnivals are intimately related with the grotesque, which is associated with "degradation, that is, the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract".[476] The most obvious place that we may deliberately seek joy in the grotesque and the carnivalesque is at a carnival ground or funfair. However, more diluted forms may be found in the "ludic space" of city centres, and indeed some entire cities, such as Las Vegas, are billed as spaces of poor taste, populism, and excess.

If we object to some negative aesthetics in our everyday built environment it may not be because, as Danto suggests, in our non-art life and outside of the artworld, we have a simple preference for beauty and positive aesthetics. It may rather be because of *where* in the built environment it has been found. We are at our most conservative, perhaps, regarding our preference for what we might term the constructed everyday: the world of order and etiquette that characterises our home life. However, we are considerably less conservative in our aesthetic preferences outside of this domain. We may not wish to paint our own house in garish colours and festoon it with flashing lights and kitsch historical references, but we may nonetheless enjoy such an aesthetic in Las Vegas or at a funfair; we may not wish to let our own house fall into disrepair and neglect, but we may enjoy

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[476] Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, p. 19.

such a wabi-sabi aesthetic during urban exploration; finally, it may be consistent to admire a severe, sublime architectural aesthetic in some out-of-town industrial site and yet to reject such industrial-inspired architecture closer to home. Meanwhile, if our spaces of everyday home life constitute our most conservative spaces, this is not by accident but by design.

Visiting Transgression; Transgressing Borders

Provocative artworks, such as those created by the Chapman Brothers, are often described as transgressive. This is, in some sense, correct since they explore the grotesque and obscene. However, crucially, we experience this artwork not in our homes, the country park or the supermarket, but rather within the art gallery.

As noted by Steven Connor, much recent art and theory has questioned the dominance of an aesthetics – somewhat like Scruton's – that privileges only the disinterested or beautiful:

> The arbitrariness of this criterion is disclosed from the work of Nietzsche onwards, which begins to persuade many people that qualities of energy and intensity are much more interesting and valuable than qualities of marmoreal repose (the Dionysian over the Apollonian). A certain strain of dominant, but uninspected postmodernist aesthetics has tried hard to sweep away beauty and form in favour of the values of ugliness, deformity, or melancholy dissolution in various sorts of process, event or action.[477]

This Dionysian aesthetics, like the carnivalesque, is transgressive in the sense that it upends our norms of balance and restraint: it includes what the everyday excludes.

In another sense, however, such artworks and experiences are not transgressive. That is, if the art gallery has become – as with Las Vegas and

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[477] Steven Connor, "What if There Were No Such Thing as the Aesthetic?", seminar paper delivered at the University of London, 3 March 1999, subsequently published as blog post on stevenconnor.com. Available at http://www.stevenconnor.com/aes/ [accessed Jan 2019].

the carnival ground – a space of *permitted* or even *expected* excess and grotesquery, the presence of the obscene in the space of permitted obscenity does not transgress in the same way as the presence of the obscene in the cleansed purity of the constructed everyday. Swedish street artist Carolina Falkholt has twice painted enormous, erect penises on the side of domestic apartment buildings: once in New York, and again in Stockholm. Although permission had been granted for street art to appear on the properties, the works were met with immediate outrage and were removed within days. In the art gallery, however, whilst many works court controversy, their presence in a museum space ensures that freedom of expression prevails. In this sense, then, such controversial art has been "quarantined" as Bataille puts it. The Chapman Brothers' gallery-based work might be "about" transgression and obscenity, but may not itself be transgressive.

The transgression of the obscene into non-permitted space is significantly more disturbing, as illustrated by the film-maker David Lynch. In his "Soiling Suburbia: Lynch, Solondz and the Power of Dirt", Jason Bainbridge applies Mary Douglas' definition of dirt as "matter out of place", something, for Bainbridge, "inappropriate in a given context", to cinematic portrayals of the American suburbs.[478] The work of David Lynch, he notes, undermines the quiet, homely domesticity of the suburbs by allowing it to be permeated by what the suburban atmosphere has sought to exclude, namely extreme violence and sex.[479] It is not enough, in Lynch's work, for his protagonists to encounter the obscene in quarantined spaces, in seedy nightclubs and brothels, or even in *Twin Peaks'* mysterious Black Lodge. Rather, the obscene must transgress into everyday suburban space. The rotting, severed ear discovered by Jeffrey Beaumont at the beginning of *Blue*

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[478] Jason Bainbridge, "Soiling Suburbia: Lynch, Solondz and the Power of Dirt", *M/C Journal,* Vol. 9, No. 5 (2006). Available at http://journal.media-culture.org.au/0610/11-bainbridge.php [accessed Jan 2019].

[479] *Ibid.*

Velvet, for instance, is found not in a space of grotesquery or threat, but rather in a green meadow, in daytime, surrounded by birdsong.[480]

Photo removed

Photo removed for copyright reasons. It showed Jeffrey Beaumont discovering a severed ear in David Lynch's *Blue Velvet*.

Available to view online by clicking below:
https://tinyurl.com/2ma8u854

Full URL in image references.
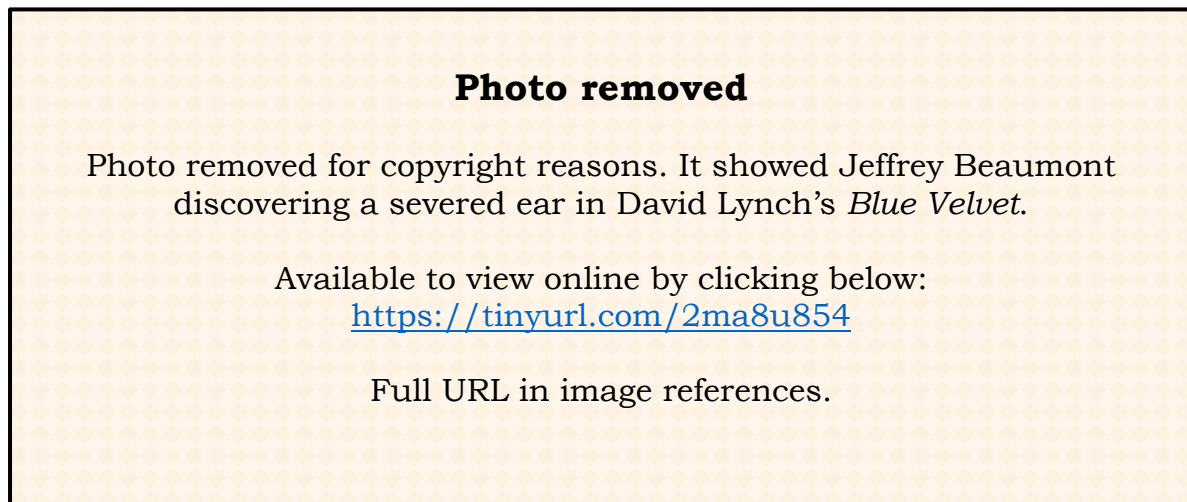
Figure 64: "Matter out of place": Jeffrey Beaumont discovers a severed ear in David Lynch's *Blue Velvet*[481]

By splitting our built environment – and indeed our time, our relationships, and our life in general – into ordered and refined on the one hand, and disordered and excessive on the other, we control where obscenity is located, police our boundaries, and maintain the purity and safety of the everyday. True transgression, true disorder, would mean eradicating this boundary, allowing the grotesque to break free from its home in carnival, and to arrive at our everyday doorstep.

All transgression of *all* boundaries, however, would lead to complete disorder. Ballantyne identifies such a state within Deleuze and Guattari:

> Chaos in the Deleuze and Guattari world is a body without organs, the schizophrenic body, the plane of immanence, *where things are forming and being taken apart as fast as they form. Emergent order is held at bay, and never emerges.*[482] (my italics)

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[480] *Blue Velvet*, then, is about transgression. Arguably, however, the film itself does not transgress.

[481] *Blue Velvet* (De Laurentiis Entertainment Group, 1986), directed by David Lynch

[482] Ballantyne, *Deleuze and Guattari for Architects*, p. 50.

The value of this state, claim Deleuze and Guattari, is that it allows us to see other possibilities: the places and boundaries we have established are recognised as artificial rather than natural or inevitable. However, such total eradication of boundaries destroys our attempts at world-making, and indeed destroys the notion of transgression itself. Without boundaries, there is nothing to transgress. All order, all gathering is corroded into a formally-volatile soup. Deleuze and Guattari refer to this state as "deterritorialisation": we are alienated from all (previous ideas of) literal and metaphorical space. For Deleuze and Guattari the deterritorialised state is associated with madness: we require order to make sense of our world. This need for order is part of our deeper need for a grounding of home, argues Bachelard, since:

> In the life of a man, the house thrusts aside contingencies, its councils of continuity are unceasing. Without it, man would be a dispersed being. It maintains him through the storms of the heavens and through those of life.[483]

Similarly, as argued by Karsten Harries, without the ability to demarcate place from place, region from region, "we would be disorientated, could not consider certain things out of place".[484] A hairbrush would be equally likely found in a tool box as in a toiletry bag; a government building would equally likely be in the red light district as in the civic centre – if, indeed, such orderly things as toiletry bags and civic centres existed in such a state, which they would not.

Most of the time, notes Ballantyne, this "nomadic" state described by Deleuze and Guattari is a temporary one:

> To be always in between territorializations in this way [...] will have practical drawbacks when one has to deal with other people, so it becomes useful to be able to "visit" one sort of common sense or

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483 Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, p. 7.

484 Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, p. 156.

another, and to "speak like everyone else" as occasion demands, before wandering away.[485]

Ballantyne here assumes that each territory we visit is a site of "common sense". However, as argued above, this is not the case. We may move from the comfortable, "common sense" world of home to the transgressive space of the carnivalesque. The latter challenges common sense but has more form and meaning than the formless chaos of the nomadic "in between". Indeed, transgressions are possible not merely through Lynchian "ludic space" imposing itself in suburbia. Erotic space itself is formed through permissions and exclusions, and can itself be punctured by unerotic homeliness: a stray woollen sock; a framed photograph of grandmother. The carnivalesque and grotesque retain a sense of order, namely an order concerned with challenging everyday codes of acceptability. A man's body with a fish's head is grotesque; a man's body with a giant shoe for a head is absurd and disordered, but not grotesque. True, Deleuzian chaos may sometimes, by chance, result in the grotesque, but in most cases would result in formless, disparate assemblages.

In short, then, whilst we may enjoy controlled transgression in the form of the grotesque and carnivalesque, we should not be too eager to eradicate place-making, world-making, and region-making itself, without which we are radically dispersed and disordered.[486]

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[485] Ballantyne, *Deleuze and Guattari for Architects*, p. 39.

[486] Deleuze, indeed, did not himself lead a literally nomadic life, but rather a conservative one, including a long marriage, two children, academic service, and only rare travel outside of Paris. See Daniel Smith and John Protevi, "Gilles Deleuze", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.). Available at https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2020/entries/deleuze [accessed 17 Sept 2021].

Placemaking and Reality

The urge to resist such place-making, gathering and boundary-forming stems, perhaps, from the knowledge that when we are within any such created space, we are in danger of mistaking this created space for reality as such, or at least as more real than the territories and spaces we have left behind.

This tendency is well-captured in Edith Wharton's *Age of Innocence*. On entering his soon-to-be-lover's living room for the first time, Newland Archer, a young New Yorker loyal to the city's buttoned-up society codes, is overcome by its style, which has by "the skilful use of a few properties, been transformed into something intimate, 'foreign,' subtly suggestive of old romantic scenes and sentiments".[487] When the Countess Olenska asks for his advice on negotiating New York society:

> It was on the tip of his tongue to reply: "Don't be seen driving about the streets with Beaufort—" but he was being too deeply drawn into the atmosphere of the room, which was her atmosphere, and to give advice of that sort would have been like telling some one who was bargaining for attar-of-roses in Samarkand that one should always be provided with arctics for a New York winter. New York seemed much farther off than Samarkand [...] Viewed thus, as through the wrong end of a telescope, [New York] looked disconcertingly small and distant; but then from Samarkand it would.[488]

That is, the romantic, permissive atmosphere of the Countess Olenska's room feels to Archer not only *different* from New York society but also more real, substantial and immediate.

For Glenn Parsons, the best response to this phenomenon is to cleanse expression from non-art life; to restrict expression to the arts, where illusion is more clearly signposted:

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[487] Edith Wharton, *The Age of Innocence* (Saint-Petersburg: Palmyra Classics, 2017), p. 59.

[488] *Ibid.*, p. 64.

[W]hen the film starts we know that we are in the realm of illusion, and when it ends we know that we are to return to reality. The illusions of expressive Design, on the other hand, permeate our daily lives insofar as Design objects are always around us [...] [W]e do not really consider their truth or falsity at all, but simply absorb and, unconsciously, embrace them. The result is an intermingling of these illusions with our beliefs about reality. The arts, by hiving the fictional off from the rest of life, avoid this confusion.[489]

There are several problems with this approach, however. Firstly, as suggested by Adorno, functional objects will still express *something*, even if it is merely the functionalist ideology itself: we cannot create an object that is, as Forsey terms it, "mute". Secondly, as argued by Böhme, rather than attempt a (doomed) project to cleanse spaces of expression, we must "learn to [...] critique the production of atmospheres and the resulting manipulation as well". Naïve manipulation can be replaced by critical self-awareness.[490]

If we are unable to access any raw, unmediated reality, if spaces must express *something*, we may nonetheless feel that our built environments should reflect a fair picture of what we consider reality to be. In particular, we are often suspicious of environments which whitewash what is difficult or challenging in life. *The Telegraph*, for instance, writes of Bath that:

Some cities, like some people, are too beautiful, and Bath is a classic case. The streets are so uniformly salubrious that you feel you must be on your best behaviour [...] there is a touch of the Georgian theme park about the city centre, with sensibly shod ladies taking tea after a hard afternoon antique-shopping.[491]

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[489] Parsons, *The Philosophy of Design*, p. 83.

[490] This, indeed, is the wider project of Rorty's pragmatist relativism – discussed further in Part Two – in which we are to give up Parsons' notions of neutral reality and objective truth to instead develop an ironic attitude and critical awareness of the way in which we move between what Deleuze refers to territorialisations, and Rorty refers to as final vocabularies.

[491] Max Davidson, "City Spotlight: Sheep on the Crescent, Jam on the Scones and Georgian Everywhere - Max Davidson Salutes a Bathing Beauty", *The Daily Telegraph*, 17 June 2006. Available at

After too long spent in Bath, we may conjecture, things such as poverty, conflict and mental illness may, as with Archer's New York above, begin to seem small and distant, as though viewed from an inverted telescope.

Similarly, for Lefebvre beautiful monuments often have the effect of replacing the reality of mortality and death with a reassuring, but false, appearance of permanence:

> The most beautiful monuments are imposing in their durability [...] Monumentality transcends death, and hence also what is sometimes called the "death instinct". [...] the lineaments of atemporality overwhelm anxiety, even - and indeed above all - in funerary monuments [...] It replaces a brutal reality with a materially realized appearance [...] Monumental imperishability bears the stamp of the will to power.[492]

Confronted with the imposing solidity of the monument we find it harder to believe in, and be worried by, the truth of mortality and decay. It is for this reason that the Japanese aesthetic of wabi-sabi, with its celebration of impermanence, ephemerality and imperfection is praised not merely as aesthetic but also as ethical. Unlike monumental beauty, wabi-sabi does not deny decay and mortality, but rather promotes acceptance. A similar, ethical and religious, aesthetic exists in the form of Christian Memento Mori. The living corpses of the sixteenth-century sculptor Ligier Richier, for instance, portray in detail the gruesome decay of death.

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https://infoweb.newsbank.com/resources/doc/nb/news/1125F1E8E1FB95C0?p=AWNB [accessed Jan 2019]

[492] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space,* p. 221.
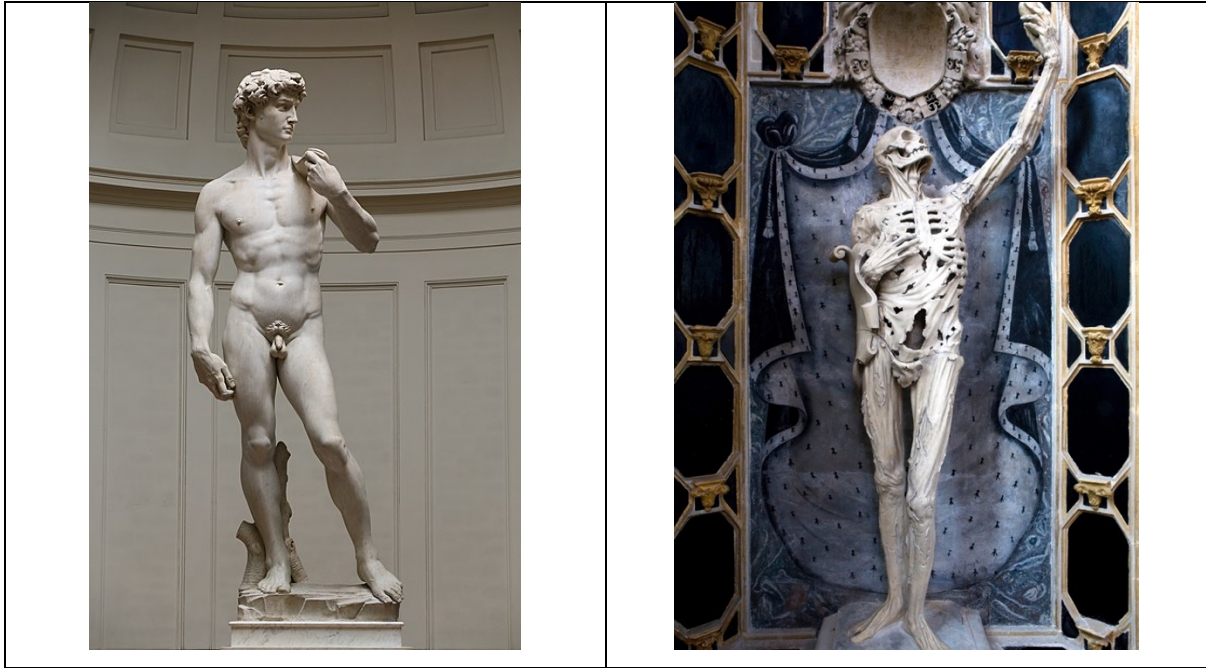
**Left (figure 65) Sculptural monumentality: Michelangelo's *David*;[493]
Right (figure 66) Memento mori: Ligier Richier's *Transi de René de
Chalon*[494]**

Wabi-sabi, then, aims to capture something about our world and reality in
general. Similarly, as described below by Deleuze and Guattari:

> [A]t the end of [Mahler's] *The Song of the Earth* two motifs coexist, one
> melodic, evoking the assemblages of the bird, the other rhythmic,
> evoking the deep breathing of the earth, eternally. Mahler says that
> the singing of the birds, the colour of the flowers, and the fragrance of
> the forest are not enough to make Nature, that the god Dionysus and
> the great Pan are needed.[495]

The Song of the Earth, then, as a work, an atmosphere, a world, does not
attempt merely to capture one element of reality or nature. It is not an

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[493] Michelangelo, *David*, marble, created approx. 1501-1504, Galleria
dell'Accademia, Florence.

[494] Ligier Richier, skeleton section from *Transi de René de Chalon*, limestone,
completed approx. 1544-1557, Church of Saint-Étienne, Bar-le-Duc.

[495] Deleuze and Guattari, cited in Ballantyne, *Deleuze and Guattari for Architects*, p.
53. Originally from Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and
Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota University
Press, 1987), p. 339. Translation modified by Ballantyne.

attempt, for instance, to capture a lark ascending. Rather, *The Song of the Earth* offers a vision of reality and nature as a whole. In doing so, it sets its sights not on a small corner of the Earth but, as the title suggests, the Earth as a whole – a view as from the Heavens, a Gods-eye view. Its presentation of beauty and ugliness, positive and negative aesthetics, is chosen to reflect this.

Importantly, however, not all artworks attempt to do this. Many poems, paintings, dramas and musical compositions take as their focus not the world as a whole, but a portion of it. This may, as with Vaughan Williams' *The Lark Ascending*, be something positive, vibrant and beautiful. But it may also, as with the work of Dieter Roth mentioned earlier, present what is frustrating, discordant or ugly. Picasso's *Guernica* would be a quite different work if it depicted not only the claustrophobic horror of the Spanish Civil War but also the simultaneous existence – in Bath perhaps – of peace, harmony and beauty. Finally, Expressionist works such as Edvard Munch's *Melancholy* and *The Scream*, aim to capture a particular human mood and feeling, not Nature, Reality, or even human life as a whole.
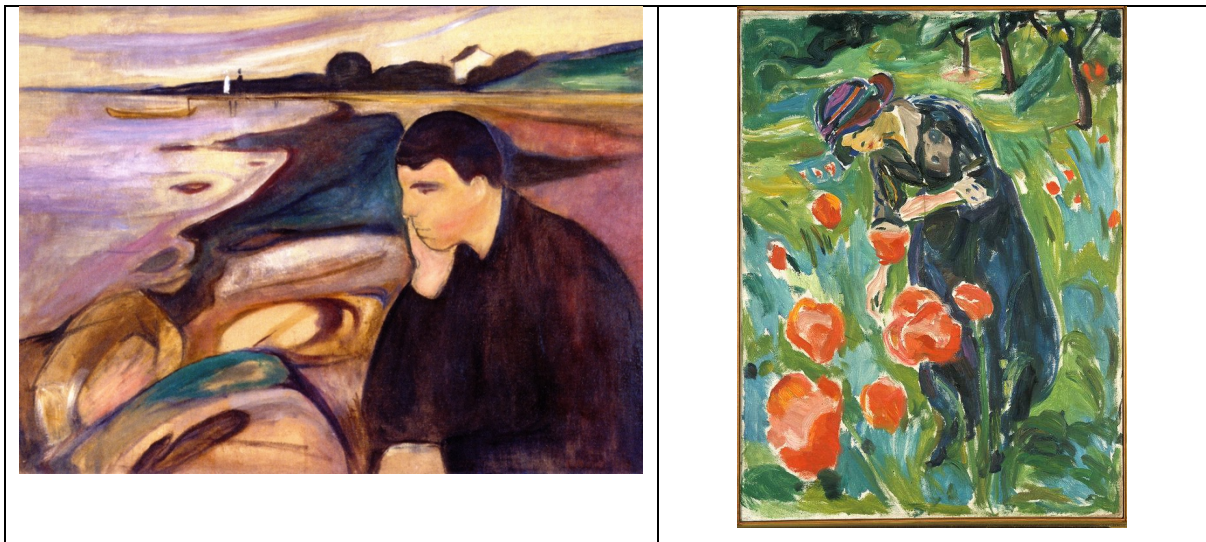
Left (figure 67) Munch's *Melancholy*;[496] Right (figure 68) Munch's *Woman With Poppies*[497]

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[496] Munch, *Melancholy, op. cit.*

[497] Edvard Munch, *Woman With Poppies*, oil on canvas, 1918-1919, Munch Museum, Oslo

An art world featuring only Gods-eye depictions of nature as a whole would be repetitive and homogenous. It would also fail to capture individual human experience. Human happiness is not always bitter-sweet: sometimes it is purely joyful. Difficult, challenging, or degrading life experiences do not always come with a silver lining: sometimes they are purely miserable, and for some an entire life may be so. For Motoori Norinaga, the problem with wabi-sabi's "wish for wind on the flowers and a cloud over the moon" is that it "does not accord with human feelings". I have argued previously against such criticisms of cultivated aesthetics, and such attempts to restrict aesthetic appreciation to what is "natural" or immediately instinctive. What we may note here, however, is that whilst there may be a wabi-sabi aesthetic pleasure in wind-distorted flowers or a cloud-obscured moon, not every human experience corresponds to the wabi-sabi aesthetic. Sometimes a face, flower or landscape strikes us in the moment as pure, uncompromised beauty; ugliness and evil recede down the inverted telescope; life is felt as purposive, and chaos is held at bay. This feeling or aesthetic may not capture reality or nature as a whole, and in diminishing ugliness, pain and discord it may be incapable of doing so, but it captures the reality of one person, in one place, at one time.

Positive and Negative Aesthetics in the Built Environment

Rather than expecting each building or structure to constitute a complete (and representative) world, we may rather allow that each building is placed within a wider context. As noted by Harries, regions are nestled within other regions: the room within the house, the house in the neighbourhood, the neighbourhood in the city. For Ballantyne too (interpreting Deleuze and Guattari):

> If I am in the town, then it is my environment, but the town itself is between other towns, which make its environment. Any "thing" can be

described as an environment if we think of it at an appropriate scale.[498]

Just as each building may not seek to accurately represent Nature as a whole, neither may whole districts, cities or even countries.

The size of the environment from which we may desire aesthetic variety will vary, depending on the scope of our lived space. As noted by Dolores Hayden in her essay, "What Would a Non-Sexist City Be Like?", the city planning, common in the US, of building vast, sedate suburban areas far away from the dynamism of the city centre was something that worked for men, but not for women:

> The male worker would return from his day in the factory or office to a private domestic environment, secluded from the tense world of work in an industrial city characterized by environmental pollution, social degradation, and personal alienation. He would enter a serene dwelling whose physical and emotional maintenance would be the duty of his wife.[499]

For working men, the suburban home was a counterpoint to the sensory overload of the city. For women, however, there was no urban counterpoint to suburbia's gentle agreeableness, which led to immense boredom and unfulfillment.

Similarly, however, as suggested by Harries above, few of us would wish to spend all our time in the centre of Las Vegas, or in Disneyland. Indeed, in her *Aesthetics of the Familiar*, Yuriko Saito writes that:

> [I]f one is always experiencing everything as unfamiliar, such as a perpetual traveler by choice, or an unfortunate person who is forced to uproot herself constantly, one's stability and attachment to some sense of "home" will be damaged. Many of us experience a sense of

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[498] Ballantyne, *Deleuze and Guattari for Architects*, p. 81.

[499] Dolores Hayden, "What Would a Non-Sexist City Be Like? Speculations on Housing, Urban Design, and Human Work", *Signs,* Vol. 5, No. 3, Supplement. Women and the American City (Spring, 1980), pp. S170-S187 (p. S172).

relief when coming home after a vacation or a journey, even if it was full of excitement.[500]

We do not always wish to be over-stimulated, to experience the unfamiliar, to be morally or artistically challenged. The dwelling place, for most of us, is a space of protection from the unfamiliar and challenging, a world of deliberately-fashioned comfort and reassurance.

It is therefore not necessary to argue that "qualities of energy and intensity are much more interesting and valuable than qualities of marmoreal repose", or indeed to argue the reverse. What we may wish for, rather, is access to a diversity of aesthetic spaces, energies, atmospheres and symbolisms. Andrew Ballantyne, despite arguing for the value of Deleuze and Guattari's deterritorialisation, writes that:

> Most of us, most of the time, want to feel secure in the territory that we know and welcome as our own, putting us in the position of the hefted sheep or the twittering birds. But at the important moments in our lives, the moments when we are most fully alive, we must pay attention to the deep resonance that the earth asserts everywhere, through all territories, or the disorienting freedoms that keep us moving through new unstable spaces that open up new possibilities, however incomprehensible and unproductive they might seem when we are operating in the world of common sense. At those moments, the voice of everyday reason can sound so oppressive and limiting[501]

A built environment worth living in will offer us the chance to access spaces of both gentle serenity and of excitement; buildings of classic dependent beauty, and those which interrogate our established norms of the good or correct; places that are easy and agreeable, and those which are difficult and sublime.

For some of us, such variety is restricted to what is in walking distance. For others, it may encompass too what is reasonably accessible by car, or even by air. As argued by Danto, "[I]t takes little reflection for us to

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[500] Yuriko Saito, *Aesthetics of the Familiar: Everyday Life and World-Making* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 30.

[501] Ballantyne, *Deleuze and Guattari for Architects*, p. 60.

realize that a world without beauty would not be one we would like to live in*". Those with the means to escape areas of deprivation, ugliness and austerity may therefore find more (temporary) appeal in such negative aesthetics than those for whom such environments constitute their entire world. In the same way, however, the anodyne comfort of the American suburbs and the too-perfect beauty of central Bath can also be felt as stifling, false or limiting for those – particularly the young – who cannot access what Ballantyne refers to above as "disorienting freedoms that [...] open up new possibilities".

Conclusions to Chapter Four and Part One

Conclusion to Chapter Four

An aesthetics of the built environment has little to gain from the firm, yet under-developed, art/life distinction present in Danto, in which non-art life is variously presumed to be prosaically functional, lacking in imaginative perception or meaning-making, or a perennially suitable location for abstract beautification. Rather, the "internal" aesthetics that Danto finds in art – in which aesthetic form responds to and creates a sense of meaning – may be present too in non-art space, which itself is significantly more complex and varied than is often suggested by Danto, or even by everyday-aestheticians such as Saito.

It will not do, that is, to presume that our life outside of art is synonymous with everyday life understood as the humdrum or anodyne. As discussed above, non-art life may include the home and high street; but it may also contain the "quarantined" slaughterhouse and cemetery, "unreal" Disney theme parks, active warzones, red light districts and Victoriana tea rooms. In such wildly different spaces, our aesthetic expectations and experiences – and our tolerance for negative or "cultivated" aesthetic experiences – will differ hugely, particularly with regard to the question as to whether any particular aesthetic expression is necessary and, if so, what kind. Any discussion of the aesthetics of the built environment, together

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with any planning regulations or urban design plans, cannot proceed without such an appreciation of varied space.

It is a mistake too, as suggested by Baudrillard, to assume that our humdrum everyday space represents some truer or naïve reality when, as argued above, this atmosphere of normality is itself created by a gathering of inclusion and exclusion, a discriminatory meaning-making, which accepts the comforting and rejects the challenging, and which – taken to extremes, such as in "salubrious" Bath or the American suburbs – creates the very air of mannered fiction it purportedly contrasts with.

Parsons' attempt to, in his terms, "hive off" the fictional, metaphorical and expressive away from designed objects into the realm of art – in order to "avoid confusion" – similarly presumes the existence of a firm Reality or Truth, the representation of which will either inevitably shine through in the absence of deliberate meaning-making, or else must be sympathetically presented as the appropriate aesthetic form for everyday life. In the former case, however – as argued by Adorno – even objects made primarily with function in mind can attain culturally expressive power. In the latter case, moreover, as will be argued in Part Two, we lack any such grasp of objective truth and reality on which to model our everyday space.

Rather than attempting to banish expression from designed spaces, or attempting to create any one space which represents reality in its completeness, then, we may a) follow Böhme in "learn[ing] to […] critique the production of atmospheres and the resulting manipulation as well", thereby replacing naïve manipulation with critical awareness and b) attempt to explore, create, and provide a *variety* of aesthetic spaces and atmospheres which can be moved through, experienced and compared. This may happen at the level of the district or town, of the street, the house, or even within the same room.[502]

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[502] In doing so we would be, in a physical, bodily sense, involved in an act of criticism which – in the words of Rorty, and as will be discussed further in Part Two – "is a matter of looking on this picture and on that, not of comparing both pictures with the original".

As argued above, our feelings about beauty, ugliness, wellbeing, and disagreeableness will vary according to where in the built environment they are found, our own cultural and political sympathies, and – influenced by physiological and material conditions – our shifting tolerance for comfort and challenge. We do not benefit from an aesthetic debate which merely pitches a false choice between classical beauty and brutal sublimity, as though either is best understood as a one-size-fits-all, "external" (in Danto's sense) aesthetic coating for our entire built environment.

Conclusion to Part One

As outlined in the Introduction to this thesis, whilst there is widespread agreement among those with an interest in architecture that our existing built environment is failing us, public discussion on the matter has nonetheless been divisive, polarising and narrow: the beautiful vs the challenging; the functional vs. the decorative; the modern vs. the traditional. Indeed, whilst Scruton's *Aesthetics of Architecture* is ostensibly a philosophical examination of the architectural, it is moreover a book-length rhetorical promotion of the beautiful, the decorative, and the traditional, a continuation of an us-and-them disagreement with progressives that perpetuates the binary arguments described by Charles Holland as a "tedious hangover from the 1980s". This reductive and narrow approach has stunted rather than enriched our understanding of the aesthetics of the built environment.

Our philosophical aesthetics has furthermore grown from a focus on art rather than design, bringing with it approaches and assumptions about the role of beauty, judgement, the "lower" senses, and the importance of universal experience which are less relevant and useful for a design aesthetics. The tendency – seen, for example, in Heidegger – to rigidly separate the artistic and the functional has similarly failed to address those objects which are both.

Whilst Saito's everyday aesthetics moves beyond many of the problems mentioned above, its aim to promote environmental values skews its aesthetic approach, turning aesthetics itself into a tool, i.e. a mere means

to the pursuit of environmental ends. Meanwhile, in the environmental functionalism of Carlson and Parsons, the ecological metaphor as applied to the built environment has the unwelcome effect of demonising creatives and of romanticising creative and regulatory inaction in the name of organic, "natural" growth. Böhme's aesthetics of atmospheres, in contrast, offers a fresh approach for understanding, criticising, and describing the aesthetics of our built environment which is unburdened by inappropriate assumptions from the philosophy of art, or by prior – and primary – commitments to environmental ethics. It accommodates the existence of designed objects, of multi-sensory experience, and of our feelings and intuitions. Describing atmosphere as a *relationship* between us and our environment, it furthermore need not locate atmospheric qualities solely in subject or object.

An aesthetics of atmosphere, with its accompanying notion of the "generators" of atmosphere, is broad and inclusive enough to accommodate a variety of aesthetic terms and experiences, not merely the beautiful. We may, as Böhme's own example shows, question and critique the generation of "melancholy" atmospheres. We may furthermore, as Scruton's atmosphere-esque description of "oatmeal feelings" suggests, reach for less familiar terms to describe the felt atmosphere we wish to discuss.[503] An aesthetics of atmospheres thereby greatly enriches our capacity to describe, understand and discuss the huge variety of built environments we find ourselves in. It endows our critical language with a specificity that undoes the simple binary divide of beauty and ugliness. This, in turn, allows us to acknowledge that different spaces and different buildings may require wildly (or subtly) different aesthetic atmospheres.

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[503] Indeed, since Scruton's term here is itself metaphorical – relying on perceived relationships between oatmeal as a food, the abstract value of simplicity, and their visual or tactile representation in designed objects – we may conjecture that more idiosyncratic metaphorical language may be employed in an aesthetics of atmosphere as a means by which to grasp or describe felt space, even further enriching our aesthetic language of the built environment.

Improving the aesthetics of the built environment, then, is not to be understood merely as a blanket application of beautiful forms. Böhme's holistic, less formal, conception of aesthetics furthermore permits aesthetic problems and solutions in the built environment to be found not merely in formal architectural composition but rather also in soundscapes, odours, human and other animals, plants, landscaping, street furniture and more, constituting a true aesthetics of *place*. In such place-making we may select or reject elements ("generators") of an overall atmosphere in a process of meaning-making.[504]

The use of the term *"atmosphere"* is nonetheless described by Böhme as "frequent" yet "rather embarrassed" because it might be taken to suggest degrees of ambiguity of vagueness. As such, a stumbling block for an aesthetics of atmosphere, or indeed *any aesthetics*, may be our hesitancy to employ aesthetic terms and ideas in public discussions where we have come to expect a language of objectivity and quantification. It is to the question of how we measure aesthetic value and how we justify its public value that Part Two will now turn.

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[504] However, as argued above – and as will be argued for in subsequent chapters – this need not commit us to the suggestion that any one of these places can or does have a greater claim to some neutral Truth or Reality.

Part Two

Justifying Aesthetic Value in the Built Environment

Chapter Five: Emergent Mediocrity

Let me tell you one thing. In this world we are living in, 98 percent of everything that is built and designed today is pure shit. There's no sense of design, no respect for humanity or for anything else. They are damn buildings and that's it. Once in a while, however, there's a small group of people who does something special [...] I work with clients who respect the art of architecture.[505]

Frank Gehry

More so than for other arts, and more so than at other times, it is necessary these days to justify the value of aesthetics in the built environment. That architecture and aesthetics have value is rarely denied, but there is less consensus over how we may justify this value, and how it compares with other values. To return to Holmes Rolston lll, "aesthetic values are often thought to be high level but low priority: jobs first, scenery second".

In a 2014 panel discussion following the publishing of the Farrell Review on architecture and the built environment, Peter Bishop, Professor of Urban Design at the Bartlett School of Architecture, spoke of a paradox: that despite the UK being home to a great many world-class architectural schools and practices, if we stand at any street corner and turn around 360 degrees,

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[505] Frank Gehry, in Alissa Walker, "Frank Gehry Says Architecture Today Is 'Pure Shit'".

we are unlikely to find anything that is not "mediocre".[506] Despite an abundance of architectural talent, this skill does not manifest itself in our new building developments, which in many or most instances are not of high aesthetic quality. Indeed, this is precisely the problem that the Farrell Review was tasked with addressing.

It may be tempting to lay the problem at the foot of the architectural profession. This is largely – albeit implicitly – the view of Alain de Botton, who uses his *The Architecture of Happiness* to argue against the idea that mediocre building is due to structural, political or financial issues. This chapter, however, will argue that:

- The quality of our built environment largely results from contemporary commercial and political structures.
- Aesthetics must be justified as an end in itself, not as a means to an end for wellbeing or economic returns.
- So-called value engineering must be implemented with aesthetic sensitivity: *all* tangible and visible substitutions to a design affect its overall atmosphere.
- Value engineering nonetheless exposes and reflects the values of corporate and government clients.
- The issue of aesthetic quality in the built environment is inherently political.

The Agency and Passion of the Architect

In his *The Architecture of Happiness* Alain de Botton argues against the idea that mediocre building is due to structural, political or financial issues. "There was certainly no predetermined reason for parts of London to turn

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[506] Peter Bishop, speaking at New London Architecture's panel discussion following the launch of the Farrell Review of Architecture. Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5lX-Ck8zZWQ [accessed Feb 2021].

out as ugly as they have", he writes.[507] Rather, he suggests, contemporary architects lack the vision of their forebears – such as Bath architect John Wood the Elder – while we the public are lacking in sufficient taste and "prone to falling into a series of illogical assumptions which hold us back from being more demanding of architects".[508]

The illogical assumption de Botton refers to is that good or bad architecture is "preordained" rather than "contingent". We lack the imagination to conceive that things could have been different from how they are, he argues, and assume that ugly developments could not have been fine ones.[509]

To support this argument de Botton refers to Wren's plans for the rebuilding of London after the Great Fire. Whilst Charles ll was impressed by the "beauty and intelligence" of Wren's scheme, he writes, since he was:

> lacking absolute power, he had to defer to the City Council, which was dominated by merchants anxious over their tax revenues and the difficulty of reconciling their competing property rights.[510]

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[507] Alain de Botton, *The Architecture of Happiness* (New York: Pantheon, 2014), p. 246.

[508] *Ibid.*, p. 248.

[509] De Botton elsewhere writes that bad architecture is "only a mistake"; "a blunder". We have suffered "missed opportunities" because we did not believe in "*the ever-present possibility* of moulding circumstances for the better" (my italics). The architectural quality of Bath is attributed by de Botton solely to the self-belief of its architects: "each of these men was fired by the prospect of bringing a legendary city into being [...] and in this ambition found the confidence to *overcome the unnumerable practical challenges* involved in turning green fields into attractive streets" (my italics). For de Botton, that is, passion and confidence is presented not merely as a necessary condition for architectural success, but even as a sufficient one, that can and will overcome any practical, economic or political challenges. See de Botton, pp. 245-7.

[510] *Ibid.*, p. 246

The plan was killed off therefore in the interests of the merchants who "happily condemned the capital to three centuries and more of inferiority".[511]

De Botton is unclear, however, about how this counterfactual world of superior architecture differs from our own imperfect one. For the reader to be struck by the surmountable contingencies of his Wren example the merchants' decision should seemingly be due to some trifle, such as a petty feud, or to an act of God, such as the sudden death of the project's chief promoter. Better still, the relevant contingencies should correspond to de Botton's remedies to our problem: the passion of the architect and the taste of the public. Even by de Botton's own account, however, London's built environment results from the monarchy's limitations of power and the merchants' profit-seeking and risk aversion. That is, due to historical transfer of power from the monarchy to the merchants.

Contingent Impossibilities

The mere fact of contingency does not mean that it was possible for our ugly buildings to have been otherwise than they are, however. We may distinguish, rather, between what is contingently impossible and what is necessarily impossible:

> Something may be held to be contingently impossible, if its actualisation is foreclosed in the present condition by fundamental obstacles that define our horizon of possibilities. In contrast, something is necessarily impossible if it cannot be actualised even in the absence of all obstacles or […] if it is internally barred from full self-actualisation. Thus, a contingent impossibility retains its potentiality to be, whose actualisation is dependent on the removal of contingent obstacles, while a necessary impossibility is a priori impotential.[512]

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[511] *Ibid.*

[512] Sergei Prozorov, *Foucault, Freedom and Sovereignty* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 125.

Understanding and overcoming contingent impossibilities, therefore, requires more from us than a mere call to arms or an insistence on the power of individual agency: we must understand why such a possibility is barred from actualisation and what are its (albeit contingent) obstacles. As argued by Manuel DeLanda, "While logically necessary relations may be investigated by thought alone, contingently obligatory ones *involve a consideration of empirical questions*" (my emphasis).[513]

In *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf famously identifies two obstacles that stand in the way of women's ability to write: the financial freedom of wealth and the intellectual freedom of privacy. In order to write fiction or poetry, she argues, "it is necessary to have five hundred a year and a room with a lock on the door":[514]

> Intellectual freedom depends upon material things. Poetry depends upon intellectual freedom. And women have always been poor [...] Women, then, have not had a dog's chance of writing poetry.[515]

For Woolf, then, women must not merely be encouraged to write but rather *enabled* to write. If these conditions are not met, if women are financially dependent on their husbands and deprived of the space to develop their own thoughts, then we cannot expect them to write. For a woman to have written the works of Shakespeare in the age of Shakespeare would have been "impossible, completely and entirely".[516]

De Botton ends his *The Architecture of Happiness* by arguing for an aesthetic revolution in the built environment based on little more than passion, resilience, and inspiration from "[a] few buildings and a book".[517]

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[513] Manuel DeLanda, *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity* (New York and London: Continuum, 2006), p. 11.

[514] Virginia Woolf, "A Room of One's Own", in *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas* (London: Vintage, 2001), pp. 1-98 (p. 90).

[515] *Ibid.*, p. 93.

[516] *Ibid.*, p. 38.

[517] De Botton, *The Architecture of Happiness*, p. 254.

The chief obstacles he identifies are those which are more easily overcome and which are within the boundaries of individual agency – specifically the agency of architects and aesthetes. Things can be otherwise than they are, he seems to suggest, if we merely believe they can be otherwise than they are: the obstacles are all our own.

The architect, however, cannot be considered in isolation, much as Woolf's potential writer cannot be considered in isolation. We cannot blame the architect for failing to produce quality architecture any more than we can blame Woolf's potential writer for failing to write the works of Shakespeare. Indeed, if we enquire more closely at the origins of our mediocre architecture, we will find de Botton's architect severely compromised.

The Demotion of the Architect

In 2019 Place Alliance carried out an audit of 142 housing developments in England: it found that the design quality of three quarters was either poor or mediocre.[518] We might conclude, following de Botton, that we must be "more demanding of architects". However, only 6% of homes in the UK are currently designed by independent architectural firms.[519]

On larger scale developments, meanwhile, it is not uncommon for projects to significantly diverge from the original architectural plans. As detailed by Robert Croydon in his "Patronage, Power and Probity", this was one reason for the failure of what was supposed to be Cardiff's answer to the

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[518] *A Housing Design Audit for England: Findings and Recommendations* (London: Place Alliance and CPRE, 2020). Available at

http://placealliance.org.uk/research/national-housing-audit/ [accessed 13 Feb 2021].

[519] See Neal Morris, "Finding Ways to Design for the Public Good", ed. RIBA Practice team (RIBA – architecture.com, 21 June 2018). Available at

https://www.architecture.com/knowledge-and-resources/knowledge-landing-page/finding-ways-to-design-for-the-public-good [accessed 13 Feb 2021].

Champs-Elysees – what is now Lloyd George Avenue and Callaghan Square. The project funder, the Cardiff Bay Development Corporation, in pursuit of something "grand" and "ceremonial", enlisted high profile architect David Mackay, of Martorell-Bohigas-Mackay. Mr Mackay was lauded on his appointment as "the Barcelona-based designer of boulevards for the Spanish city's Olympic village".[520] However, the project was executed by Norwest Holst as a PFI venture. Mr Mackay "was not retained and his proposed designs were much diluted".[521] Widely considered a failed opportunity, the finished development was described by the critic Owen Hatherley as "a 'boulevard' of shocking banality".[522]

Figure 69: "A 'boulevard' of shocking banality": Cardiff's Lloyd George Avenue

More recently, the new HMS Cambria building in Cardiff Bay, originally designed by Chetwoods Architects, has been completed by construction firm Morgan Sindall. The original designs describe an £11m "state of the art" building:

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[520] Cardiff Bay Development Corporation, quoted in Croydon, p. 173.

[521] Croydon, p. 191.

[522] Owen Hatherley, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 157.

> An innovative approach to the design of the building was required to create a strong image that reflects the "brand" of the Royal Navy. The Royal Navy is a powerful entity with a proud heritage that demands a strong identity to project into the future. It is a unique combination of land, air and sea capabilities merged into a single flexible and dynamic force. The design of the building looks to capture this essence.[523]

Several years later, the project is described by Morgan Sindall more prosaically. It is "fit-for-purpose"; "a significant improvement to the Royal Navy's infrastructure".[524] Upon completion the Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association Chief Executive Colonel Nick Beard praised Morgan Sindall for providing the building "on time and on budget".[525] However, as indicated in the pictures below, in its journey from conception to completion, almost all architectural influence has disappeared.[526]

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[523] Chetwoods Architects project summary. Available at

https://www.chetwoods.com/projects/hms-cambria/ [accessed 13 Feb 2021].

[524] Morgan Sindall press release, "Topping Out at £8 million HMS Cambria Site" (morgansindallconstruction.com, 19 Sept 2019). Available at

https://www.morgansindallconstruction.com/news/topping-out-at-8-million-hms-cambria-site/ [accessed 13 Feb 2021].

[525] Colonel Nick Beard, quoted in Royal Navy press release "Cardiff Welcomes Welsh Maritime Reservists at HMS Cambria" (royalnavy.mod.uk, 31 July 2020). Available at https://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/news-and-latest-activity/news/2020/july/31/200731-cardiff-welcomes-welsh-maritime-reservists-at-hms-cambria [accessed 13 Feb 2021].

[526] I am grateful to the Twitter account @gomedia91 (17 May 2020) for bringing this example to my attention. Available at

https://twitter.com/gomedia91/status/1262095643784499200 [accessed 13 Feb 2021].
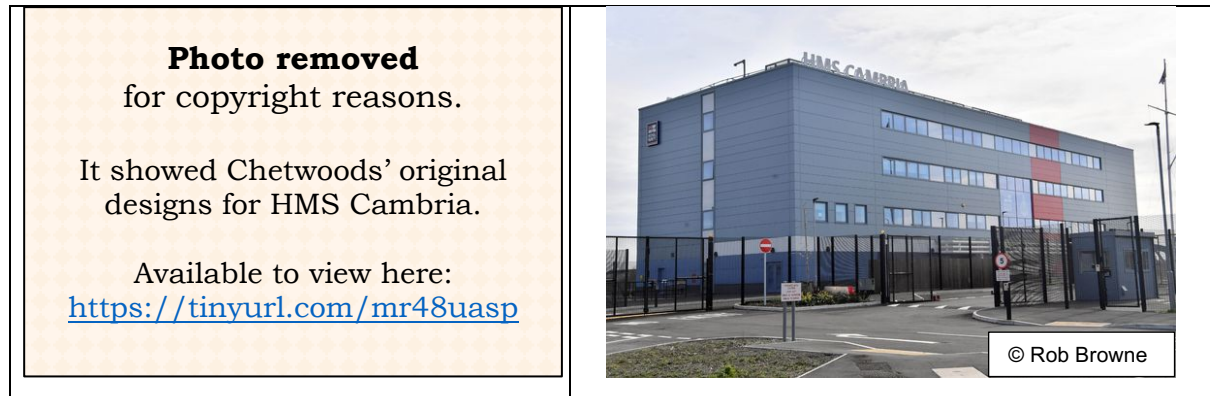
"Fit-For-Purpose": Left (figure 70) Original architectural designs by Chetwood. Right (figure 71) Finished building provided by Morgan Sindall.

To understand the banality of Lloyd George Avenue and HMS Cambria, therefore, we must look beyond the contribution of the original architectural firms and turn instead to the clients, patrons and developers who employ them.

Clients and Patrons: Profit Versus Prestige

> "[N]o architectural idiom can survive without the armature of patronage".[527] Jonathan Meades

When we speak of iconic architecture, particularly historic architecture, we may forget that the castles, palaces, theatres, stately homes and churches that fill our coffee table books with impressive works were funded through very different systems, and motivated by very different concerns, than those of our contemporary newbuilds. That is, these traditional works were almost exclusively built through historic patronage.

Churches were built through the patronage of the church; palaces and castles through the patronage of the monarchy; stately homes through the patronage of the aristocracy. The motivation to build may have been to garner prestige and cultural capital, to indulge a personal interest in the arts, or to offer something of value to the community. Crucially, however, these were not primarily business investments.

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[527] Jonathan Meades, quoted in Croydon, p. 8.

This, argues Robert Croydon, is one of the crucial differences between patrons and clients. Whilst the two terms are often used interchangeably, he writes, there are important differences. Chief among them is that clients are motivated primarily, or perhaps entirely, by financial and utilitarian concerns, whereas patrons are focussed on "[bringing] into being that which had not, and would not, have been created as a response to 'market signals'".[528] Other differences identified by Croydon are that patrons are more likely to exercise aesthetic discernment, are accountable only to themselves, and are more likely to collaborate with a self-selected architect through mutual collaboration rather than to dominate an architect employed to "carry out" contractual obligations. In contrast to church and monarchy, a paradigm case of a client is a speculative, profit-orientated property developer.

Left (figure 72) Architecture of the patron: the Taj Mahal; Right (figure 73) Architecture of the client: a business park, Cardiff

State as Patron: The Problem of Accountability

Following the decline of church, monarchy and aristocracy, traditional patrons are much reduced, and a majority of power in our liberal, capitalist democracy rests rather with the private sector (Croydon's "clients") and with the state. The state, however, argues Croydon, does not have the freedoms

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[528] Croydon, p. 39.

of historic patrons. Specifically, state bureaucracies are expected to be impartial, accountable, and fair, whereas:

> The exercise of power by many of those described as patrons historically has seldom evidenced a commitment to equality, impartiality or any disassociation from social status and party-political interest. In that respect patronage has been the antithesis of the Weberian concept of bureaucracy.[529]

Whilst a state bureaucracy may in theory, then, be able to address market failure in the private sector in order to fund quality architecture, in practice spending decisions by public bodies are heavily scrutinised and subject to questioning. For public bodies, any concession to the value of aesthetics, any decision which serves primarily to increase aesthetic rather than functional or economic value, must be explicitly *justified*.

This matters in particular, notes Croydon, because of what he terms the "schools and hospitals argument" which is so often levelled against quality architecture commissioned through public funds.[530] The award-winning, Richard Rogers-designed Senedd building in Cardiff Bay, for example, was dismissed by the leader of the opposition as "an incredible waste of money" and very nearly not built.[531] Presented as "discretionary" rather than "essential" spending, opponents to the Senedd argued that "finite economic resources be better invested in hospitals and schools".[532] Such were the concerns over probity and accountability that one early proposition was locating the new debating chamber in a commercial business park, an idea rejected in the strongest terms by the Royal Society of Architects in Wales, who argued that:

> It would be highly inappropriate for [...] the premier public building in Wales, to be provided as a part of a commercial development [...] It is hard to conceive of the House of Commons, the Capital in

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[529] *Ibid.*, p. 80.

[530] *Ibid.*, p. 311.

[531] Nick Bourne, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 268.

[532] Croydon, p. 273.

Washington, DC, the French National assembly or the Dutch Parliament in The Hague as an adjunct to an insurance office.[533]

That the business park unit was under consideration, however, demonstrates the extent to which the state and other public bodies have difficulty justifying spending on aesthetic quality in the built environment in a way that historic patrons did not.

Figure 74: Richard Rogers' Welsh Parliament/Senedd: The "premier public building in Wales" or "an incredible waste of money"

Perhaps due to its political and symbolic importance, the Senedd was finally built. However, many other publicly-funded buildings with lesser claims on political and cultural importance do not make it to fruition with a comparable quality of design. As noted by Croydon, "In addressing the greatest need through the deployment of finite resources there has been a

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[533] Richard Parnaby, "Submission of the Royal Society of Architects in Wales to the Secretary of State", in *Ibid.*, p. 254.

tendency to favour the utilitarian and quantity over quality".[534] Aesthetic value is considered discretionary, even unnecessary.

Justifying Aesthetic Value in the Built Environment

In her 2015 paper, "An Optional Extra: Valuing Architecture at the Brompton Boilers", Mhairi McVicar describes this approach to the aesthetics of the built environment as "the culmination of 300 years of the disembodiment and abstraction of measure applied to concepts of value",[535] and that as such "The justification of architectural value has [become] the key defining problem for the architectural profession".[536] The problem, argues McVicars, is that our utilitarian, "economically-minded" culture requires architects, and supporters of quality architecture, to justify architectural value in precisely the same quantifiable way that we would justify the value of a bag of wheat. That is, in Heideggerian terms, we are approaching the question of architectural value through a worldview, mindset or value system of *enframing*, which takes for granted that the world is to be understood through measurement and quantification.[537]

It has therefore become common to justify good design primarily on the basis of its more easily measurable benefits. A 2002 report by CABE entitled "The Value of Good Design" begins by stating that:

> A well-designed hospital will help patients get better more quickly, a well-designed school will improve the educational achievements of its

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[534] Croydon, p. 312.

[535] McVicar, p. 157.

[536] *Ibid.*, p. 158.

[537] Heidegger's notion of enframing is set out in his "The Question Concerning Technology". It describes the tendency to treat natural and other objects as entities which can be ordered rationally, bent to human will, controlled, measured and understood reductively. Notably, for Heidegger, this tendency also blocks us from alternative ways of engaging with the world, in particular ways which are more poetic.

pupils, a well-designed department store will have a direct impact on stock turnover and a well-designed neighbourhood will benefit from lower crime and higher house values. Good design is not just about the aesthetic improvement of our environment – it is as much about improved quality of life, equality of opportunity and economic growth.[538]

Where mention is made of aesthetics in such reports it is often to demonstrate its measurable instrumental value. A RIBA report, for instance, argues for local authorities and government to improve the attractiveness of the built environment in order to "save lives and money":

> Safety and aesthetics are more important to residents than more direct routes to destinations or an increase in the number of streets and parks. If we want people to walk more, it is a matter of the quality, not the quantity, of routes. We believe there are six actions which would make a real difference to safer and more attractive cities, and help to save the NHS £675 million each year.[539]

Whilst respondents to the survey might conceivably treat aesthetic value as an end in itself (something that would draw them out of their houses to experience it), the report itself encourages us to value aesthetics instrumentally: we want people to walk more; we want them to be fitter; we want to make cost savings for the NHS.

Such reports, written for the attention of the government, respond to the "schools and hospitals" argument *within* the terms of enframing: if you can't beat 'em, join 'em. The problem with justifying quality architecture and aesthetics instrumentally, however, is that if some other spending option saves *more* lives or *more* money then our utilitarian argument has left us

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[538] *The Value of Good Design: How Buildings and Spaces Create Economic and Social Value* (London: CABE, 2002). Available at https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/resources/report/value-good-design [accessed 17 Feb 2021].

[539] Executive summary for *RIBA City Health Check: How Design Can Save Lives and Money* (London: RIBA, 2013). Available at https://www.architecture.com/knowledge-and-resources/resources-landing-page/city-health-check [accessed 17 Feb 2021].

with no means with which to continue to support aesthetics. £100,000 invested in hospital defibrillators or gym equipment may give us better health returns; £100,000 invested in aluminium stores may give us a better financial return.

In order to support and justify the value of aesthetics in the built environment it is therefore necessary to treat aesthetic value as a final rather than instrumental value: we must justify its importance directly rather than as a means to some other end. Such justifications of public spending are frequently made with reference to cost-benefit analysis and similar tools of quantification which themselves are problematic – I will address these in more detail in Chapter Seven.

The Private Sector and Value Engineering

In the private sector too aesthetic value is often treated as an instrumental value – valued insofar as it generates a reliable return on investment – with similarly negative effects for the quality of the built environment.

The blame for poor architectural quality in commercial building is often directed at value engineering (VE), a process that originated during WW2 with a purchasing agent for General Electric named Lawrence D. Miles. Unable to reliably source requested materials due to shortages, Miles was nonetheless "always able to satisfy the need with substitutes that satisfied the requirement, the function".[540] Function, he concluded, was key, by whatever materials and means would achieve it – for the lowest cost. Indeed, manuals of value engineering define value as "The lowest cost to provide a function". The function itself, the theory stipulates, must furthermore be defined using just two words: a verb and a noun. The

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[540] Richard Park, *Value Engineering: A Plan for Invention* (London and New York: Taylor and Francis, 1999), p. 74.

function of a light bulb, for instance, is defined by one manual as to "illuminate space".[541]

In theory, then, value engineering is a benign tool to make cost savings and increase efficiency whilst withstanding no loss of necessary function. If I need to illuminate x metres of space and bulb (a) can achieve this for £2 whereas bulb (b) can achieve this for £4 then – all things being equal – I have reason to choose option (a). Indeed, identifying and eliminating unnecessary expense is a worthy task for both private and public developments, protecting against profligacy, corruption and mismanagement.

In practice, however, value engineering has become associated with little more than reductive cost cutting. In her panel response to the Farrell Review the architect Alison Brooks singled out value engineering for criticism, questioning how the property and construction industries could attribute values to qualities such as light, beauty, character and space which are "outside of standard methods of measure". We all know, she claimed, that what determines design quality in the built environment is "the bottom line".[542]

It is worth noting, however, that in the pure theory of VE this need not be the case. Indeed, the problem of measure is addressed in one guide of value engineering in the following terms:

> It is also important that the function be measurable in some unit term such as weight, cost, volume, time, space, etc. This is necessary in order to establish a value for the function […] *In some cases, the measure may be satisfaction, desire, or some other abstract measure that will require more subjective analysis but can still be measured by comparative techniques* [my emphasis].[543]

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[541] Del L. Younker, *Value Engineering: Analysis and Methodology* (New York and Basel: Marcel Dekker, 2003), p. 3.

[542] Alison Brooks, speaking at New London Architecture's panel discussion following the launch of the Farrell Review of Architecture, *op cit.*

[543] Park, p. 79.

Examples given for architecture include the following in the table below:[544]

Verb	Noun	Unit
Create	Environment	Humidity
Control	Noise	Decibels
Prevent	Vibration	CPS
Attract	Attention	Opinion
Distribute	Material	Time
Convert	Energy	Cost

Importantly then, whilst value engineering may often in practice be little more than cost-cutting, in theory it allows for a function to be measured comparatively through more abstract measures – we do not need to reduce all functions into the commensurable and quantifiable. If a team collectively decide following exploratory value engineering that Option A, despite being cheaper, is of lesser aesthetic quality than Option B, then value has not been retained despite cost-cutting and Option A need not be preferred.

Aesthetics as "Secondary Function"

Despite this, there are elements of the value engineering approach which would seem to disadvantage the aesthetic. The first is that the process of value engineering begins by identifying a basic "primary" functional value, which is considered the raison d'etre of the building – e.g. "treat patients", "screen films" – before considering "secondary", "optional" functions. These secondary functions are then commonly divided into those which are required, such as meeting building regulations, and those which are not required. Aesthetics is often considered an optional, unnecessary secondary function; it *begins* the VE process defined as inessential and secondary.

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[544] See Park, pp. 305-316.

This is particularly inappropriate for those designed objects, such as thrones and evening dresses, for which, as argued by Eco, expressive function is *more* important than "original" utility function. Indeed, some objects are defined almost entirely by aesthetic or symbolic value and have no obvious "original" function: crowns, for instance, or mayoral livery collars. Even if we identified a basic non-aesthetic function for these objects, such as "designate monarch", it seems absurd to suggest that the function of a crown might conceivably be carried out by a name badge or lanyard.

In Goodman's terms, the name badge denotes but does not express. It denotes "monarch" but, whereas the crown is regal, impressive, glittering, imposing, dignifying, the name badge is perfunctory, utilitarian, flimsy, corporate. The crown does not merely denote the monarch but rather is able to *express* the prestige of the monarchy. Any reasonable substitution for a traditional crown would need, in order to capture its function, to retain its expressive function.

This may cause no problem for value engineering so long as we may regard its expressive, aesthetic function as basic rather than secondary. Despite often describing aesthetics as a secondary function, VE describes basic functions as that which "cannot be compromised":

> To identify a basic function, if you remove that function, the item will cease to exist. But in case of a secondary function even if you eliminate that function the item will continue to exist.[545]

If we argue that a crown without expressive capacity is no longer a crown, we may therefore secure its aesthetic function as basic and primary rather than optional.

In building there is, with rare exceptions such as follies, always a non-aesthetic function to attend to: schools must shelter and educate pupils; hospitals must treat patients; cinemas must screen films. However, as the Senedd example illustrates, a simplified and reductive process of

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[545] Anil Kumar Mukhopadhyaya, *Value Engineering Mastermind: From Concept to Value Engineering Certification* (New Delhi: SAGE, 2009), p. 43.

foregrounding non-aesthetic, non-symbolic functions and positioning the aesthetic and symbolic as secondary, optional, up for grabs, may yield results which most of us would find counter-intuitive and which push the limits of brief-fulfilment: homes made from unfinished industrial materials; public parks without greenery; a parliament in a business park.

Parts and Wholes

However, identifying objects which would "cease to exist", or are unthinkable, without their expressive component promotes a rigid dividing line between art and function of the type discussed in Chapter One. Such a divide furthermore encourages the production of "decorated sheds" – a functional building composed of whichever materials in whatever shape was easiest to engineer, with an aesthetic or symbolic "add on", the function of which is to decorate the – usually uninspiring – result. Decorated sheds are perhaps best understood as engineered buildings adorned with agreeable decoration. They are not, then, what Flusser refers to – in describing design – as that in which "art and technique [...] *combine forces* to smooth the way to a new culture" (my emphasis).

For architecture to function as architecture, and not merely as functional engineering, it is necessary for the designer to attend to the building's expressive, symbolic, sensual aspects – to its aesthetics. For Lewis Mumford, as noted in Chapter One:

> On the one side there is the engineering side of building: a matter of calculating loads and stresses, of making joints watertight and roofs rainproof, of setting down foundations so solidly that the building that stands on them will not crack or sink. But on the other side there is the whole sphere of expression [...] feeling more courtly when he enters a palace, more pious when he enters a church.

In Böhme's terminology, the architect is attending to the building's aesthetic *atmosphere.*

As argued in Chapter One, whilst we may agree with Mumford that, e.g., inner drainage is a matter of engineering rather than expression, many

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if not most expressive components of a building, specifically of those buildings referred by Venturi as sculptural "ducks" rather than decorated sheds, are also functional. That is – the expressive atmosphere of the building is created not merely by the overall shape and size of the building but rather from the functional parts which make up the whole: doors, walls, lighting systems, flooring. A VE system that works piecemeal through not only the "black hole" of hidden engineering components – the aesthetics of which, as Danto would put it, are external to the work – but also those components and details which form the "white wall" of the building's expressive, "internal" aesthetics, is a system which could, piece by piece, chip away at the created whole, the intended, expressive atmosphere, until what remains is either incoherent or expressive of a unified, yet aesthetically inappropriate, whole.

This is not to suggest that substitutions may never be made to an architectural design. It is rather to argue that such substitutions may entirely alter an architectural atmosphere unless made with aesthetic sensitivity. VE theory's suggestion that (optional) aesthetic function may be captured by such verb/noun phrases as "look good"[546] or "provide beauty"[547] is too crude. An architectural element may be replaced by a part which is equally attractive and yet which conveys an entirely different mood, or which skews the balance of composition. The replaced part must be equally, as Scruton would term it, "appropriate" to the whole. We may, perhaps, replace such phrases with a pairing such as "create atmosphere", or "express style", but in doing so it would be necessary to understand that this part – a door, a ceiling fan, some brise soleil – is part of a whole, parts which collectively contribute to an atmosphere, albeit some parts more-so than others. By acknowledging, with each forward-facing design component,

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[546] See Bernie Roseke, "What is Value Engineering?" (projectengineer.net, 28 Feb 2020). Available at https://www.projectengineer.net/what-is-value-engineering/ [accessed 17 Feb 2021].

[547] See Barry Kent Loveless, "Value Engineering in the Construction Process" (MSc Thesis, Georgia Institute of Technology, Georgia, 1986), p. 8.

its contribution to the aesthetic whole, we may create an object which has aesthetic coherence in and of itself and does not require decorative add-ons whose function is to "look good" or "provide beauty" or otherwise attempt to distract attention from the majority of the object's physicality.

Moreover, every forward-facing design component is *necessarily* a contributor to the overall aesthetic atmosphere, regardless of whether we assign it this function or not. We may attempt to argue, for instance, that it is not the "function" of our brise soleil to contribute aesthetically to the building, that its function is merely to shield direct sunlight and control internal temperature, but any component of this size will necessarily make an enormous formal and material aesthetic statement. Omitting to include aesthetic function to the brise soleil on a VE chart will not change the enormity of its aesthetic impact. Since proprietary, purely-functional brise soleil panels are redolent of prison bars or of roadside crash barriers, it would be absurd to use such panels in domestic or aspirational architecture and expect that its aesthetic contribution can be neutralised or overcome by the inclusion of some other object whose job it is to "provide beauty". Indeed, it is for this reason that brise soleil has, in quality architecture, been used to provide sculptural form and atmosphere in addition to carrying out its role of shielding sunlight.

"Reduce heat gain": Left (figure 75) Functional brise soleil; Right (figure 76) Sculptural brise soleil

An Excess of Value

As mentioned above, despite favouring the easily measurable, value engineering does in theory allow for some functions to be compared with more subjective or inter-subjective judgement. However, crucially, for value engineering the goal is most often not to secure a substitution that offers the same functionality in some global sense, but rather to secure a substitution that offers the specific functionality required by the project: no more, no less. We measure the function of the object in order to identify whether it meets a certain threshold. We therefore need to know in advance what measurement or standard we are looking for.

It is not necessary, then, for value engineering to offer replacement products which are of the *same* standard, only objects that are of the *required* standard. We do not need a lightbulb capable of lighting 40sqm of space if it is placed in a room of 20sqm. According to one VE guide, the process usually proceeds by "Eliminating or modifying elements not essential to required functions".[548] Specifically:

> The owner is responsible for defining the quality level of a project. The designer is responsible for producing a design that meets those expectations or requirements. Most of the time, owners tend to define only the lower limit of those expectations. Designers often exceed those minimums, believing that better quality always equals better value, but this isn't always the better approach. Better quality usually comes at an increased cost and is not usually on a linear relationship with value. It's possible that a one-level increase in quality could come at a two- to three-level increase in cost. This is why the owner must establish what constitutes value.[549]

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[548] Steve Howard, "The Good and the Bad of Value Engineering" (healthcaredesignmagazine.com, 30 June 2005). Available at https://healthcaredesignmagazine.com/architecture/good-and-bad-value-engineering/?blocked=true [accessed 17 Feb 2021].

[549] *Ibid.*

That is: the value engineering process does not aim at producing a substitution that is of the same quality as that specified by the designer. It aims to identify those parts of the building that may, under the original designs, be offering an *excess* of aesthetic value. The owner, rather than being presented with a cheaper design of the same aesthetic quality, is encouraged through the value engineering process to question more explicitly the level of aesthetic quality *required*. Crude revisions of architectural design plans can therefore be justified on the basis that the original design plans were offering poor value for money by offering an excess of aesthetic quality which was surplus to requirements. Perhaps, for example, the client does not "need" the aesthetic value of the wooden, bespoke, sculptural brise soleil, but rather has more minimal aesthetic needs that could be satisfied by proprietary metal panels. Again, therefore, value engineering encourages the client to interrogate, to question and to *justify* the value placed on aesthetics.[550]

House Lessans: Aesthetic Value Engineering

"A tight budget", says de Botton, "[never] condemned a building to ugliness".[551] Indeed, the winner of last year's RIBA House of the Year, House Lessans, was praised by RIBA President Alan Jones for demonstrating that,

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[550] Such decision-making about excess value is not in itself problematic. As argued in Chapter Four, a large part of aesthetic planning in the built environment is deciding which spaces we wish to be aesthetic (city centres, residential areas) and which we do not (unmanned industrial sites, remote solar farms). It is not unreasonable, we may suggest, for the VE process to recommend the use of concrete paving slabs as an alternative for costly Welsh slate in an unmanned industrial development. The problem, rather, is that VE itself exposes the values and purposes of its clients, who themselves may not regard aesthetics, as a final value, in high esteem, even for those central and residential spaces that we may feel deserve higher aesthetic standards.

[551] De Botton, p. 250.

"life enhancing architecture does not have to cost the earth".[552] The house has apparently been "so exhaustively designed that it competes aesthetically and spatially with homes twice the price".[553] House Lessans has won its award *because* it has been value engineered. Savings have been made on brickwork: cheap bricks have been used, but made to look more expensive through flushed mortar detailing and paintwork; savings were made on facilities and fixtures: there is only one bathroom; savings were also made on windows: the house uses large fixed windows to give the light and appearance of costly bifold doors.[554]

Value engineering, notes one account, despite being associated with cost cutting is capable of achieving more than this. Specifically:

- Providing more building scope for the same budget.
- Providing the same building scope for a reduced budget.
- Providing less building scope for an even more reduced budget.[555]

House Lessans ruthlessly value engineers its project by trying to secure the maximum aesthetic value for a given budget whilst still offering enough functionality for family life. It achieves this primarily by a) accepting non-aesthetic trade-offs, such as smaller bedrooms and fewer bathrooms (it has only one) and b) identifying the cheapest way of securing a high aesthetic standard, such as using well-finished cheaper bricks instead of un-finished costly bricks. In order to do this satisfactorily the owners also needed to

[552] Quoted in "Dream Home on a Budget - UK's Best New House Revealed", *RIBA* (architecture.com, 13 Nov 2019). Available at https://www.architecture.com/knowledge-and-resources/knowledge-landing-page/dream-home-on-a-budget-uks-best-new-house-revealed [accessed 17 Feb 2021].

[553] Isabelle Priest, "Modest Family Home House Lessans in Co Down is House of the Year 2019", *The RIBA Journal* (ribaj.com, 13 Nov 2019). Available at https://www.ribaj.com/buildings/regional-awards-2019-northern-ireland-house-mcgonigle-mcgrath-architects-house-lessans [accessed 17 Feb 2021].

[554] See *Ibid.*

[555] Howard, *op cit.*

spend their budget on securing an architect with sufficient vision and taste to make substitutions and choices which retained the integrity of the whole building. House Lessans' value engineering therefore involves identifying non-aesthetic functions which may be compromised in order to secure greater aesthetic value and on identifying aesthetic options which offer the greatest aesthetic value per pound spent.

Left (figure 77) House Lessans; Right (figure 78) Commercial housing

By contrast, contemporary commercial housing developments typically seek to, in the words of one architectural firm, "Maximise the development potential by squeezing in as many units as possible into a plot of land".[556] Cost savings are made by using standardised, historical style references (regardless of location) whereas:

> Maximising the flow of natural light through orientation, a relationship with the landscape, privacy and community interaction are not priorities. Behind "fake" facades the ceiling heights are of the minimum standard set out in the Local Plan, doors and other internal finishes are of an acceptable quality (just about) and kitchens/bathrooms are typically standardised.[557]

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[556] Douglas and King Architects, "Time to Turn the Tide on Noddy Houses" (douglasandking.com). Available at

https://www.douglasandking.com/blog_/noddy-houses-2/ [accessed 17 Feb 2021].

[557] *Ibid.*

In the words of one young participant in CABE's report on beauty in the built environment, "With a lot of modern housing it seems to me someone has just said, 'what can we get for the money we have', and how can we make a profit".[558]

Whilst both the architects of House Lessans and a commercial house builder may use value engineering, then, they do so in different ways. House Lessans aims to secure the maximum aesthetic value within a tight budget, treating aesthetic value as a final value. It is not primarily interested in maximising profit through the house's resale value. The commercial house builder aims to secure the largest financial return for their investment, treating aesthetic value as either of instrumental economic value – something which can serve to generate a financial return – or else perhaps as a regulatory requirement.

A commercial house builder, given the site and budget of House Lessans, would therefore be more likely to a) maximise its development potential by building as many housing units as possible with as little outdoor space as possible: House Lessans would have become The Lessans' Apartments; b) use a standard, nonspecific historically-inspired design rather than employ an architect, thus saving architects' fees and avoiding the financial risks associated with new rather than "tried and tested" design; c) avoid spending on any "excess aesthetic value" which would not generate a satisfactory financial return *compared to other non-aesthetic spending*. It aims not to be aspirational or "life enhancing" but rather to be "acceptable (just about)".[559]

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[558] *People and Places: Public Attitudes to Beauty* (London: Ipsos MORI for CABE, Nov 2010), p. 47. Available at

https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/resources/report/people-and-places-public-attitudes-beauty [accessed 17 Feb 2021]

[559] To take one further example from House Lessans: whilst the architect has saved the client money by providing fixed windows rather than bifold doors, it remains the case that the size of the windows in House Lessans is very likely – from the point of view of a commercial building firm – aesthetically excessive when compared with the "acceptable" offerings of newbuild estates. The money spent on House

Conclusion

The Emergence of Mediocrity

Whilst it may be true then that a tight budget does not condemn a building to ugliness, the cause of many buildings' ugliness or mediocrity is not simply due to, as suggested by de Botton, "a lack of inspiration". Neither is it purely due to the VE process – which mostly serves to expose and reflect the values of its clients. Rather, such buildings emerge from their creative conditions and the values of those who commission them, exposing, in the case of much commercial architecture, a client's single-minded pursuit of profit, and in the case of much publicly-funded architecture, the values of the sitting government or the value-vacuum of a bureaucracy.

De Botton's emphasis on the power of architects themselves to change and improve our built environment is misguided. Similarly, Carlson and Parsons' suspicious treatment of designers (outlined in Chapter One) presents a naïve picture of the usual power that designers have to shape the world around us independently from external sources of power and wealth. A study of the aesthetics of the built environment, and design more generally, will therefore make little progress if it focusses solely on architects and designers without proper consideration of the political and regulatory systems in which they work, and the wider designworld of which they are a part, including the role of clients, end-users, local authorities, design quangos, and central government. As will be discussed further in Chapter Eight, for example, the material and form of architecture is often directly – and crudely – shaped by taxation policy and profit-generation.

Lessans' "life enhancing" windows may have yielded a greater financial return if spent on square footage on this or another development. That is, for the commercial housebuilder it is not enough that the eventual buyer of the house may be willing to pay for the combined cost of materials, labour and logistics involved in securing larger windows: a cost-neutral aesthetic option is inferior to a profit-generating square footage option.

Whilst commonly blamed for reductive cost-cutting, Value Engineering processes themselves need not lead to the stripping away of aesthetic value. As argued above, a type of value engineering is inevitably also a part of architect-led projects such as House Lessans, where costly elements chosen in part for their aesthetic contribution must nonetheless earn their place and be considered value for money. In our own consumer lives such choices are also familiar: we may not always buy the coat, the kitchen worktop, or even the house that we find most aesthetically-pleasing, if our first choice is twice as costly as our second, but is preferred only slightly to our next-best.[560]

For individual consumer choices, we may make such decisions on value relatively intuitively (and where we fail to do so, as will be discussed in Chapter Seven, we may find ourselves with little rational, objective support for the "right" answer). In the built environment, however, decisions on value are taken by bodies which are subjected to more public, or shareholder, scrutiny, leading to Mhairi McVicar's description of "The justification of architectural value [as] the key defining problem for the architectural profession". The ability, or rather inability, to justify and compare aesthetic value with other values is therefore central to the problem of poor aesthetics in the built environment. This matter will be discussed in more detail in Chapters Seven and Eight.

Market Response as Revealed Preference

One option, when confronted with the above, is to avoid the conclusion that free markets and a minimal state cannot provide us with the aesthetic environment we deserve by arguing that the built environment emerging from free markets simply *is* the environment we deserve and which best reflects our preferences. An argument of this sort is made explicitly by Venturi and Scott Brown in their *Learning from Las Vegas,* and is implied in Carlson and Parsons. I have argued against this approach in Chapter One

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[560] Similarly, we may at times decide that – as encouraged by VE – a certain space or object is offering more aesthetic value than deemed necessary: for unbelievers in reincarnation, ornate tombs replete with decorative artwork and crafted objects are unlikely to be considered worthwhile accompaniments for the dead.

and Chapter Three: whilst a loosely regulated, "organic" built environment may sometimes produce the agreeable excitement of Las Vegas or the variety and vibrancy of Manchester, a good deal of what emerges is "ugly and ordinary".

Those who nonetheless support a lack of intervention in the aesthetics of the built environment usually argue one of two things (or both – which can result in some contradiction). The first argument is that architecture is *better* served through lack of regulation, and is hampered by unnecessary intervention. For Venturi and Scott Brown:

> There is no good record of commissions on aesthetics producing good architecture [...] Commissions produce mediocrity and a deadened urb. What will happen to the Strip when the tastemakers take over?[561]

As noted in Chapter Three, *Learning from Las Vegas* is in large part a defence of the agreeable, the exciting, the vibrant: of an aesthetics which, whilst crassly "denotative" rather than expressively "tasteful", is nonetheless worthy of defence.

Elsewhere, however, the book defends not only neo-liberal successes but also, seemingly, its failures:

> [A]rt commissioners who have learned what is right promote a deadening mediocrity by rejecting the "good" and the "bad" and the new they do not recognise, all of which, in combination and in the end, make the city.[562]

That is, intervention is to be avoided not merely to ensure the flourishing of the (tasteless) agreeable and the shock of the new, but also to ensure the flourishing of the ugly and *disagreeable* – that which cannot, on aesthetic terms, be readily defended.

Even here, however, the disagreeable is arguably being defended on aesthetic grounds – as a contributor to the aesthetic whole of the city which

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[561] Venturi and Scott Brown, p. 82.

[562] *Ibid.*

– despite Venturi's dismissal of the expressive – is expressive of vitality, and which encompasses variety. The intervention of the "tastemakers", in contrast, is presented as deadening and homogenous. As argued in Chapter Four, however, following Ballantyne, "Any 'thing' can be described as an environment if we think of it at an appropriate scale", and whilst a city as a whole may be described as aesthetically vibrant, vital or varied, this may be of little consolation to residents of poorer neighbourhoods whose daily environment consists not of the city as an aesthetic whole but rather of their homogenously disagreeable corner of it. Indeed, *Learning from Las Vegas* specifically presents its aesthetic as the aesthetic of the car rather than of the pedestrian or of public transport yet fails to acknowledge that poorer residents who do not own motor vehicles are barred from this experience.

Intervention, Utopianism and the Left

In the end, then, there is limited scope to defend the more egregiously ugly and disagreeable architecture of the free market other than on non-aesthetic grounds. There will be instances where such environments are neither more exciting nor more vibrant and varied than that which is produced through intervention. Venturi and Scott Brown claim that they do not wish to involve themselves in the "moral" facts of commercialism, and shrug off the criticism that they are "Nixonites" – defenders of a neo-liberal regime.[563] They aim, they claim, to merely offer a fresh eye, to be "tolerant" rather than prejudiced. Elsewhere, however, they argue that, "Developers build for markets rather than for Man *and probably do less harm than authoritarian architects would do if they had the developers' power*" (my italics) and that:[564]

> Although architects have not wished to recognise it, most
> architectural problems are of the expedient type [...] the architect's

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[563] Venturi and Scott Brown, p. 153.

[564] *Ibid.*, p. 155.

concern should belong not with what ought to be but with what is - and with how to help improve it now.[565]

However, despite their suggestion that the book does not offer moral judgement, such claims simply *are* the expression of a particular political viewpoint. As argued by Richard Rorty:

> As long as our country has a politically active Right and a politically active Left, this argument will continue. It is at the heart of the nation's political life, but the Left is responsible for keeping it going. For the Right never thinks that anything much needs to be changed: it thinks the country is basically in good shape, and may well have been in better shape in the past. It sees the Left's struggle for social justice as mere troublemaking, as utopian foolishness. The Left, by definition, is the party of hope.[566] It insists that our nation remains unachieved.[567]

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[565] *Ibid.*, p. 129.

[566] It is worth noting here that this utopian Left is identified by Rorty with the "old" Left, or what he variously terms the "reformist Left" or the "Deweyan, pragmatic, participatory Left" – a movement which focusses on concrete political changes within liberal democracies which would improve the lives of the working classes and marginalised groups. This he contrasts what he terms the "cultural Left" or "Foucaldian Left", which is characterised by "principled, theorized, philosophical hopelessness", a retreat into theory and abstract ideas, and a belief that change worth having cannot or should not be sought from within "the system". The cultural left, argues Rorty, has been a disaster for effecting progressive change, is "useless to leftist politics". "I have two suggestions about how to effect this transition" away from cultural Leftism, writes Rorty, "The first is that the Left should put a moratorium on theory. It should try to kick its philosophy habit. The second is that the Left should try to mobilize what remains of our pride in being Americans. It should ask the public to consider how the country of Lincoln and Whitman might be achieved". See Rorty, *Achieving Our Country: Leftist Thought in Twentieth-Century America* (London and Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), pp. 37-38, 41, 91-92.

[567] Richard Rorty, *Achieving Our Country,* p. 14.

Any architectural aesthetics which proceeds by discouraging utopianism and limiting intervention in markets (even in those instances when the markets produce neighbourhoods that are devoid of any aesthetic appeal – tasteful, tasteless, or otherwise) is an architectural aesthetics ultimately grounded in the values of the Right.[568]

A second claim of this chapter, then, is that we cannot offer an apolitical defence of aesthetics in the built environment. Indeed, as noted by Croydon:

> [S]upport for aspirational development which requires public funding is much less likely to emerge from the opposite polarities of political ideology that can be accommodated in a democratic polity. On the one hand the neoliberal position would hold that the market will respond to demand and provide the qualities that are required. At the other extreme the socialist view might be that the needs of the many should outweigh the design aspirations of the few.[569]

Any intervention in the aesthetics of the built environment is therefore entangled in related, non-aesthetic political values. We may add to the above those on the more traditional Right, such as Roger Scruton, who are less interested in defending the contingencies of unfettered markets than they are motivated by a sympathy with the more robust, eternal and "objective" values of our aristocratic past.[570]

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[568] It is also important here to make a distinction between regulation and control of (the creative freedoms of) architects and regulation and control of (the profit-making freedoms of) corporations.

[569] Croydon, p. 312.

[570] What goes almost entirely unacknowledged by Scruton, however, in either his *Aesthetics of Architecture* or in his co-written paper *Building Better, Building Beautiful*, are the current social and political impediments to recreating the buildings he admires. That is, he has little to say in response to the kind of critique found in Croydon – that classical and gothic architecture was largely the product of patronage. Indeed, the closest equivalent we may find today to the buildings admired by Scruton may be found in Poundbury, a project instigated and controlled by the Prince of Wales on land owned by the Duchy of Cornwall.

That a defence of aesthetic value in the built environment cannot be made without reference to political sympathies is important for two reasons. The first is that acknowledging these sympathies, and giving up the idea of an apolitical, objective defence of aesthetics in the built environment rids us of the compulsion to present such support within the quantifiable, "objective" terms of enframing mentioned earlier – terms within which aesthetic value cannot be readily defended. The second is that, once acknowledged, we may proceed rather by offering a defence which has the more specific, and modest, aim of justifying the value of architectural aesthetics in a manner consistent with a given political theory.

For many on the Right, however, government interventions in support of aesthetics and the arts are nonetheless anti-democratic, illiberal and unjustifiable. It is not merely a matter of different political preference, it is suggested, but rather that such interventions can be proven to be economically or rationally illegitimate. It is to the political-economic arguments against such intervention that the next chapter now turns.

Chapter Six: The Politics of Aesthetic Value in the Built Environment

The neo-liberals defend their program with the argument that the competitive free market improves efficiency. A new question now arises: Is efficiency a value which one should pursue unconditionally?[571]

Wilfried Ver Eecke, *An Anthology Regarding Merit Goods*

In his 1987 article on the funding of the arts, the American philosopher Noël Carroll questions whether state funding of the arts can be justified. In doing so, Carroll leans heavily on the notion of the "legitimate" exercise of state power. By "state", he writes, he is referring to something particular. It is not a "Marxian utopia where we all fish in the morning and write art criticism in the afternoon", since in such a state, he suggests somewhat sardonically, there would be no scarcity of resources, no difference of opinion, and no need for either arts funding or even a state apparatus.[572] Neither is it a totalitarian state, which by definition does not publicly justify its actions. Rather:

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[571] Wilfried Ver Eecke, *An Anthology Regarding Merit Goods: The Unfinished Ethical Revolution in Economic Theory* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2007), p. 337.

[572] Noël Carroll, "Can Government Funding of the Arts Be Justified Theoretically?", *The Journal of Aesthetic Education,* Vol. 21, No. 1 (Spring, 1987), pp. 21-35 (p. 23).

> [O]ur question is addressed to pluralistic, democratic states which
> have fundamental commitments to protecting their citizens from
> harm- both foreign and domestic-and to securing the welfare of those
> within their boundaries, i.e., to providing some manner of generally
> economic assistance to individuals in need, where such needs are
> connected to the individuals' capacity to maintain a livelihood. Such
> states are also committed to the protection of the civic institutions
> upon which democracy rests.[573]

After considering a number of possible defences, Carroll concludes that state funding should be avoided.[574]

The free-market economist Alan Peacock concurs. For Peacock, "The basic principle is that of Adam Smith that the sole object of production is consumption. The consumer's interest is paramount and the consumer is the best judge of his own interests".[575] Government intervention in the arts, he argues, is motivated by:

> [S]cepticism by governments about the ability of consumers to choose
> for themselves the cultural services that they wish to enjoy and
> therefore the strong influence of producer interests on government
> policy exploiting the argument that peer group assessment is the sole
> guarantee of quality.[576]

For Peacock, as for Venturi and Scott Brown, arts committees are authoritarian and paternalistic, and should be treated with suspicion.

However, as noted by Wilfried Ver Eecke:

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[573] *Ibid.*

[574] *Ibid.* p. 21. Carroll's reasoning here is not strictly that there are no reasonable defences of arts funding. Rather, it is that whilst there may be some limited legitimate cases we should avoid funding such cases so as not to distort or skew the art world by only, for example, funding that art which is beautifully uplifting or morally edifying.

[575] Alan Peacock, "The Arts and Economic Policy", in Victor A. Ginsburgh and David Throsby (eds), *Handbook of the Economics of Art and Culture, Volume 1* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2006), pp. 1123-1140 (p. 1130).

[576] *Ibid.*, p. 1124.

The neo-liberals defend their program with the argument that the competitive free market improves efficiency. A new question now arises: *Is efficiency a value which one should pursue unconditionally?*[577]

For John Maynard Keynes, the answer was no. Whilst capitalism may be the most efficient means of material distribution:

[I]n itself it is in many ways extremely objectionable. Our problem is to work out a social organization which shall be as efficient as possible without offending our notions of a satisfactory way of life.[578]

Keynes, indeed, was an enthusiastic supporter of state interventions in UK cultural life, and a key founder and promoter of the UK's Arts Council. For Keynes, such state interventions still require justification and explanation. However, crucially in Keynes' view we may *temper* our support for the neo-liberal values of efficiency and sovereignty where these values threaten others necessary for "a satisfactory way of life".

The nature of such justification, for Keynes, is furthermore a matter of political rhetoric rather than of economic proof. For Deirdre N. McCloskey:

Keynes is one of a long if thin line of economic sophists as against the massed phalanx of economic Platonists. Most economists have been Platonists. The Platonists believe that Truth is out there on the blackboard somewhere [...] They carry on seeking the one immutable Truth for the ages, and scorn the practical sophist like Maynard Keynes making arguments for the day [...] The sophists believe with Keynes that truth, small "t", (to which Keynes was much attached), is always contingent, always arguable, always the result of a particular set of assumptions being true for now, not forever. General theories, Keynes said, are useless - this from the writer of one - unless they are applied"[579]

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[577] Ver Eecke, p. 337.

[578] John Maynard Keynes writing in his "The End of Laissez-Faire", quoted in James Heilbrun, "Keynes and the Economics of the Arts", *Journal of Cultural Economics*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (December, 1984), pp. 37-49 (p. 42).

[579] Deirdre N. McCloskey, "Keynes Was a Sophist, and a Good Thing, Too", *Eastern Economic Journal* Vol. 22, No. 2 (Spring, 1996), pp. 231-234 (p. 233).

In contrast, Carroll's discussion of arts funding assumes there is a *fact of the matter* about whether or not the state has obligations and responsibilities to provide cultural value.[580] As such, after dismissing his straw man depiction of "Marxian utopias", Carroll pays little attention to the political differences of Left and Right which affect our response to his question. For Carroll, the answer can be obtained through a knowledge of and commitment to liberal democracy, and the application of reason.

As suggested at the end of the last chapter, however, it is not merely Leftist interventionism and utopianism which may be considered "political". Economic theories need not preclude political actions aimed at tempering the excesses of markets, and political theories which advocate small-state capitalism are no more politically neutral for having prioritised (or even fetishised) the economic values of efficiency and individual freedom over and above competing political values. Indeed, the American utopia Rorty associates with Whitman and Dewey operates by "substituting social justice for individual freedom as our country's principal goal".[581]

This chapter will set out two ways in which we may justify interventions to improve the aesthetics of the built environment, *within* the framework of liberal democracy.

- Part One outlines architecture's association with public goods and market failure which may – even by the lights of liberal economics – require an economic remedy.
- Part Two examines the idea of minimum standards, and the scope for liberal economics and politics to endorse certain (minimal) measures of welfare.

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[580] He briefly notes that should the state have responsibility to promote goods over and above its responsibility to prevent harms that, "it is not obvious that this is best conceived of as part of its welfare responsibility. Perhaps it is rather an obligation to beneficence. *Whether the state has such an obligation is an important question which we cannot answer now"*. [my italics]. Carroll, "Can Government Funding of the Arts Be Justified Theoretically?", p. 26.

[581] Rorty, *Achieving Our Country*, p. 101.

In both cases, however, only a minimum of intervention is required or justified to be consistent with liberal economics.

- Part Three therefore examines in more detail the relationship between standards in the built environment and the *distribution* of that which is valuable. That is, it addresses the subject of equality.

Ensuring access to quality built space, this chapter argues, cannot be achieved through non-political, economically-justified adjustments. Rather, it requires a Keynesian interventionism, a respect for aesthetics as a final value, and a Leftist willingness to, as Rorty writes, substitute social justice for individual freedom as our country's principal goal.

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Part One: Public, Club and Merit Goods

Aesthetic interventions in the built environment may be considered more or less controversial depending on whether they pertain to what economists call "public goods" (less controversial) or to "merit goods" (more controversial). For Wilfried Ver Eecke it is the very definition of a merit good rather than a public good that the latter conforms to the will of the people whereas the former disregards it:

> Public goods are political economic goods which the government provides *with the intention of respecting the wishes of consumers*. The consumers *need help* because public goods have *technical* (factual) characteristics that make it *difficult* for individuals to acquire them in an optimal way. Merit goods, on the other hand, are political economic

goods which the government provides by a method or at a level which *dis*regards the wishes of consumers.[582]

Public goods can be justified with *economic* reasons whereas merit goods seem to require *political* reasons. "Indeed", writes Ver Eecke, "there can be only two reasons why a good might be non-private: a factual constraint or a value judgement".[583]

The Built Environment as Public Good: Intervention to Avoid Market Failure

Factual constraints, writes Ver Eecke, are associated with non-rivalness in consumption and impossibility of exclusion. If we cannot stop people using a good, and it can be enjoyed freely without depletion, then the free-market cannot profit from it. Market failure will occur, and government intervention may be justified. Public goods, then, are goods from which – for structural reasons – the market cannot profit. One of our two *less controversial* ways to justify state intervention in the aesthetics of the built environment is therefore to justify it as a mere economic corrective.

In their paper "Distinctively Different: A New Approach to Valuing Architectural Amenities", Gabriel M. Ahlfeldt and Nancy Holman argue that:

> Architectural beauty can be considered a local public good – no one can be excluded from the utility derived from looking at an appealing building, nor does the architecture deteriorate as more people enjoy the view. These characteristics have straightforward implications for the social efficiency of private investment decisions. *If there is a positive non-marketed architectural externality, investments into architectural quality will be suboptimal if left to free markets.* As with most local public goods and spatial externalities it is therefore easy to

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[582] Ver Eecke, p. 331. Note that merit goods, for Ver Eecke, do not necessarily go contrary to the wishes of the public; they merely are produced because of a centralised value judgement rather than as a direct response to public wishes.

[583] *Ibid.*

rationalise planning policies that correct for a market failure (my italics).[584]

Using "distinctiveness" as a neater and more measurable substitute for the quantification of architectural quality, they estimate "a capitalisation effect of about 6.6% (£16k) associated with a one standard deviation increase in our index of distinctive design".[585] Put more simply, houses near attractive architecture cost more money.

This market failure may offer some explanation for the poor quality of much of our built environment. The public may care a great deal about the aesthetic quality of a given high street but if all of its buildings are privately owned by absentee landlords then public opinion holds no sway. The landlord may have no incentive to improve the building's façade since any positive feeling experienced by those pedestrians who enjoy it will not be translated into *payment.* Since we cannot stop the passers-by experiencing the façade of the building, and since it does not deplete in any way according to how many passers-by take it in, the owners of the building cannot charge people to experience it.[586]

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[584] Gabriel M. Ahlfeldt and Nancy Holman, "Distinctively Different: A New Approach to Valuing Architectural Amenities", *The Economic Journal*, Volume 128, Issue 608 (February 2018), pp. 1-33 (p. 1).

[585] *Ibid.*, p.3.

[586] Landlords may have other reasons to improve aesthetics, such as ensuring minimum standards to secure a tenancy and financial return. However, this will still underestimate the total social value of the building, since the feelings of the passers-by are not monetised.

Positive and negative externalities: Left (figure 79) central Edinburgh; Right (figure 80) central Swansea

Some government interventions may therefore be justified to correct this market failure. The public may be willing to – in theory – pay for aesthetic improvement, but they will require government help through, for example, tax incentives for better design quality.

The Built Environment as Club Good: Exclusion and Inequality

Whilst Ahlfeldt and Holman above refer to architecture and the built environment as a local public good, there is nonetheless a sense in which we can be "excluded from the utility derived from looking at an appealing building". If a non-depleting, shared good is nonetheless exclusionary – available only to privileged members rather than to all citizens – then it is known by economists as a "club good".[587] A private golf course that is made available only to paid-up members offers one such example.

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[587] The division between public, merit and even private goods is not always a clear one, however. Economists disagree over their similarities and differences and, moreover, many real-world goods do not appear to be strictly one type of good or the other. As noted by Ver Eecke even a loaf of bread is not a purely private good since a certain amount of government interference has ensured that it comes complete with its nutritional labelling and that it has not been bulked out with

As noted by the legal scholar Sarah Schindler, however, the built environment itself may be exclusionary, "characterized by man-made physical features that make it difficult for certain individuals – often poor people and people of color – to access certain places".[588] Schindler cites one of the most egregious examples: Robert Moses' bridge across the Northern State Parkway, built intentionally low to prevent buses – used by the poor and most people of colour – from gaining access to Jones Beach, Long Island.

Figure 81: Robert Moses' bridge on the Northern State Parkway

Similar examples can be found in the UK. In Oxfordshire in 1934 the so-called Cutteslowe Walls were constructed between Wentworth Street (a wealthy street) and Aldrich Road (a council estate) to exclude poorer residents: the wall was topped with spikes to prevent people climbing over. After public outcry it was eventually demolished. The street returned to media attention in 2018, however, when the council provided a new, smooth

sawdust: "That I now have bread without sawdust or bread with content labels printed on the package is not the result of market forces mediating the wishes of consumers and producers". Ver Eecke, p. 340.

[588] Sarah Schindler, "Architectural Exclusion: Discrimination and Segregation Through Physical Design of the Built Environment", *The Yale Law Journal*, Vol. 124, No. 6 (APRIL 2015), pp. 1934-2024 (p. 1934).

road surface on Wentworth Street which symbolically stopped on the boundary of the old spiked wall.[589] More recently, attention has turned to "poor doors", the practice by which high-end developers – compelled by planning regulations to include affordable housing – split their buildings into two parts, with two separate entrances, excluding poorer residents from luxury spaces and facilities.[590]

Figure 82: Section from the Cutteslowe Walls, Oxfordshire

Some restrictions may be more subtle. As noted by Lawrence Lessig:

> That a highway divides two neighbourhoods limits the extent to which the neighbourhoods integrate. That a town has a square, easily accessible with a diversity of shops, increases the integration of residents in that town [...] These constraints function in a way that shapes behaviour. In this way, they too regulate[591]

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[589] See Yohannes Lowe, "1930s Class War Reignited in Oxfordshire as Council Only Paves 'Rich' End of Road", *The Daily Telegraph* (telegraph.co.uk, 6 Sept 2018). Available at https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/09/06/1930s-class-war-reignated-oxfordshire-council-paves-rich-end/ [accessed 17 Feb 2021].

[590] See Hilary Osborne, "Poor Doors: The Segregation of London's Inner-City Flat Dwellers", *The Guardian* (theguardian.com, 25 July 2014). Available at https://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/jul/25/poor-doors-segregation-london-flats [accessed 17 Feb 2021].

[591] Lawrence Lessig, quoted in Schindler, p. 1947.

We may add to this the restrictions created simply through differing house prices. As Lynsey Hanley notes in her work on British council housing, such council estates are "a physical reminder that we live in a society that divides people up according to how much money they have to spend on shelter".[592][593]

Any discussion of aesthetic value in the built environment – improvements needed; quality required, etc. – is therefore intimately connected to issues of distributive justice and social welfare. The rich are able to access quality environments through the purchase of private goods and club goods. Indeed, the very rich can operate as patrons, bringing into being ambitious projects. Unlike many of the private projects of the past, however, which have since fallen into public ownership or to the National Trust (itself, with its fee-paying membership structure, being unmistakably a middle-class club service) most such private projects of today are on private land being enjoyed privately. Indeed, when surveying past winners of the RIBA House of the Year, or browsing the aspirational pages of prestigious architectural publications, we may question whether any such design crisis exists: for the rich, there *is* no crisis.

Poorer residents, in contrast, are at the mercy of market signals, market failure and public spending. Whilst Peacock cites Adam Smith's endorsement of consumer sovereignty, we may refer also to Smith's admission (included in Ver Eecke's discussion of merit goods) that, "Civil government, so far as it is instituted for the security of property, is in reality instituted for the defence of the rich against the poor, or of those who have some property against those who have none at all".[594]

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[592] Lynsey Hanley, *Estates: An Intimate History* (London: Granta, 2007), p. 5.

[593] Even if I were to live in an adjoining estate to a wealthy area, however – with no spiked wall restricting my access – I may still rarely enter if I cannot afford its goods and services, or if I detect the subtle social signals that my "face doesn't fit". In order to really, and practically, gain access to a wealthy neighbourhood I need the funds to join the club and live there.

[594] Adam Smith, quoted in Ver Eecke, p. 432.

Left (figure 83) Club good, the National Trust's Stourhead; Right (figure 84) Public good, Bute Park in central Cardiff

City-centre urban spaces that are accessible to most city residents regardless of wealth, sex, and disability may be inclusive enough to be considered local public goods, particularly, according to Ver Eecke's definition, if such public goods have the support of tax-paying residents and have been constructed due to logistical, factual constraints. Meanwhile, the quieter and less accessible parklands and residential streets of the wealthy suburbs may be closer to the definition of club goods – particularly if their seclusion has been secured through deliberate exclusion of the poor. Social housing and council estates, in contrast, may better be categorised as a third, more controversial, type: as *merit goods*.

The Built Environment as Merit Good: Paternalism, Value Judgements, and Redistribution

Rather than being a response to factual constraints, merit goods occur when, writes Ver Eecke:

> a value judgement is passed which stipulates that the free market does not ensure a level of consumption which is desirable according to that judgement.[595]

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[595] Ver Eecke, p. 332.

Healthcare and education, for instance, may in theory be left solely to a free-market, but a free-market does not guarantee universal coverage. Perhaps, as suggested by Musgrave, free-market consumers may prioritise a second car or refrigerator over educating their children. Moreover, we may argue, employers may exploit their workers by paying them too little to afford quality healthcare and education: a perfectly functioning free market may operate with poorly educated workers operating in poor health. In the UK, since the end of WW2, a value judgement is therefore made that citizens' health and education are too valuable to be left to the vagaries of the free market: universal healthcare and education is offered as a merit good.

This may seem uncontroversial, yet there are at least two complications. The first is that, as Musgrave notes, merit goods such as social housing – as opposed to public goods – provide a public service whilst *also* redistributing wealth. As noted by Ver Eecke:

> Together with many contemporary economists [Musgrave] considers this a non-economic problem, i.e. a problem that cannot properly be addressed by economic methods of analysis.[596]

That is, redistribution of wealth concerns not merely economic efficiency but rather political and moral judgements: we may tax the rich heavily and provide beautiful, palatial housing for the poor, or tax less and provide only a minimum of warmth and safety. Economic theory alone cannot endorse either option. Merit goods, therefore, are commonly thought to be a bothersome political-economic hybrid.

Secondly, in supplying social housing from tax proceeds rather than merely handing the tax proceeds straightforwardly from rich to poor – for the poor to spend as they will – the merit good of social housing places restrictions:

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[596] *Ibid.*, p. 329.

> This kind of redistribution thus does not respect the sovereignty of the consumer's wishes (in this case the wishes of the poor, the ones receiving subsidies).[597]

This conditional giving is referred to by Musgrave as the "tyranny of giving": money is redistributed from rich to poor, but with strings attached.[598] In such redistribution it is not necessarily the preferences of the poor that are taken into account so much as the feelings of the rich. Indeed, as noted by Paul Burrows, merit good policies encounter less resistance among the rich than direct cash payments, precisely for this reason.[599][600]

Merit Goods and the Conditions of Possibility for the Free Market

Ver Eecke – arguing against the views of Charles McLure, who believed that merit goods could not be justified by economic theory – nonetheless attempts to offer such an economic justification for *some* merit goods. In doing so, however, he reveals the extent to which such economic arguments do not gain validity through popular support but rather through their association with the necessities of the free market. That is: certain merit goods can be justified just to the extent that the free market *itself* is justified.

"The first thing that Western citizens as economic actors wish is a free market",[601] writes Ver Eecke, and yet:

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[597] *Ibid.*, p. 330.

[598] *Ibid.*, p. 36.

[599] See Ver Eecke, p. 281.

[600] The poor may in turn, however, benefit from the fact that, according to the operation of an "intersubjective utility interdependence", they may receive more redistributed funds in the form of merit goods than they could receive in direct transfers – if the rich prefer merit good distribution to direct payment and if the state pragmatically decides to tax the rich according to their willingness to pay. See Ver Eecke, p. 36.

[601] *Ibid.*, p. 334.

> A free market cannot exist as a factual arrangement if certain
> conditions are not fulfilled. Adam Smith thought about this intensively
> in part V of his *Wealth of Nations*. As conditions for the possibility of
> the free market Adam Smith names: (i) National defence; (ii) a legal
> system which protects property, enforces contracts, and is executed
> by judges and politicians; (iii) bridges, roads, etc., to enhance
> commerce[602]

For Ver Eecke, therefore, such systems – particularly national defence and the legal system – should better be described not as public goods but rather as merit goods, since they are instituted by free market economies as a precondition for the functioning of the free market and not because they have been demanded or wished for by its citizens. If citizens no longer desired them, the government cannot take them away.

Such systems may nonetheless be justified says Ver Eecke, with appeal to Kantian reasoning, solely as what must be accepted by the public as *the conditions of possibility* for satisfying their consumer desires within the free market. That is, their existence can be justified even if consumers do not want them, because they are the means to the end that *is* wanted. Indeed, for Ver Eecke only merit goods which conform to such a pattern of means-end reasoning may be justified.

A similar argument is put forward by Noël Carroll regarding legitimate forms of welfare:

> When someone, through no fault of his or her own, loses the means to
> a livelihood, the state upholds a system of property distribution that
> restrains that person from walking onto a local farm and taking
> whatever she and her family need to live. Since the state thus
> contributes to the cause of that person's need, it has a responsibility
> to her.[603]

That is, for Carroll unemployment benefit constitutes legitimate welfare because of its indirect association with private property rights and the free

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[602] *Ibid.*

[603] Carroll, "Government Funding of the Arts", p. 23.

market. The rich benefit from a system which prevents the poor from accessing their legal property; the poor, who own no such property, are given minimal welfare by the state as compensation (or perhaps, rather, as a disincentive to bother the rich).

Legitimacy in this case therefore, as with Ver Eecke, refers specifically to these "conditions of possibility" for the free market. Whilst in theory the state could impose property rights whilst *not* compensating the unemployed, such a decision may similarly be debarred if it – as is likely – brought about chaos, looting or revolution. If civil government is indeed instituted "for the defence of the rich against the poor" then the rich have reason to create the orderliness needed for free trade: and no more than this. Thus, referring to the Housing, Town Planning &c Act of 1919, Waldorf Astor, parliamentary secretary of the Local Government Board, suggested that, "The money we are going to spend on housing is an insurance against Bolshevism and revolution."[604]

Substandard, unattractive, poorly located social housing may therefore be understood as the physical representation of a welfare system instituted according to the needs of the rich, the property owners, and the free market. Such minimal welfare offerings *serve* the efficiency of the free market, disincentivising the poor from taking the risks associated with stealing and social unrest. In the same manner in which the value engineering process tasks building owners with questioning and justifying the level of aesthetic value required – in order to ensure efficiency, to prevent "wasteful" excessiveness – so, too, does much of our social housing appear value engineered in a way that lays bare the reasons for its existence: the level of housing quality required is just that standard that ensures the continued existence of a stable and (relatively) peaceable labour force.

The level of housing quality *does not* refer to Keynes' notion of what is necessary for "a satisfactory way of life", nor is it intended to. Keynes, in contrast, promoted not only the establishment of a preservation commission

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[604] Waldorf Astor, quoted in Peter Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow: An Intellectual History of Urban Planning and Design Since 1880* (Oxford: Wiley, 2014), p. 73.

for buildings and land, but also the regeneration of urban slums into new neighbourhoods. However:

> He was not suggesting merely that more council housing be provided. Rather, these new districts should include every sort of amenity - parks, squares, fountains, theaters, schools, and galleries - calling for the finest contributions of England's architects and artists.[605]

Such a proposal goes above and beyond what is needed for the functioning of a free market. It depends, rather, on a belief in the value of aesthetics and the arts, and in the value of redistributive social justice, a belief which cannot be justified with recourse to economic modelling.

Merit Goods, Property Markets, and the Privilege of the Rich Over the Poor

There are strong arguments, however, against redistributing tax money as direct payments to the less wealthy rather than spending it on social housing. That is, in competitive, globally-accessible, rising property markets such as those in the UK, such payments increase competition and inflate prices rather than increase supply of affordable homes. The UK already has a documented problem with land banking (owners sitting on land that could be built on, enjoying value increases whilst making no outlays) and – particularly in London – the purchasing of homes by absent investors who enjoy value increases whilst neither living at nor renting the property: in 2019 there were almost 25,000 such vacant homes in London.[606]

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[605] Heilbrun, p. 43-44.

[606] See the Mayor of London press release "Almost 25,000 Homes Lying Empty Across Capital", based on figures from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (london.gov.uk, 16 Jan 2020). Available at https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/assembly/tom-copley/almost-25000-homes-lying-empty-across-capital#:~:text=Almost%2025%2C000%20homes%20in%20London,to%20rely%20on%20temporary%20accommodation. [accessed 17 Feb 2021].

There are other problems. The house building industry has convincingly been described as an "oligopoly", lacking in effective competition and dominated by a small handful of developers.[607] Secondly, there is little political will to take any action which will see house prices fall. Whilst raising interest rates would decrease investors' interests in buy-to-let (one in five homes in the UK is owned by a landlord), and decrease competition in the market, the Bank of England calculates that over time, a 1% rise in real interest rates from their present level would push real house prices down by nearly 20%.[608] Such a move would, of course, be hugely unpopular with those who already own property. "Imagine what would happen", writes the *Financial Times*, "if a government reduced house prices by 20 per cent; that party would be obliterated in the time it took to organise a snap election".[609]

The housing market, then, works "for the defence of the rich against the poor, or of those who have some property against those who have none at all". 40% of young people in the UK cannot afford to buy one of the cheapest homes in their area despite a 10% deposit.[610] A young person

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[607] See for example Bryce Elder, "Are UK Housebuilders Really on Solid Foundations?", *The Financial Times* (ft.com, 27 June 2020). Available at https://www.ft.com/content/d44f99e1-6435-4150-81b1-c6847289adb3 [accessed 17 Feb 2021].

[608] David Miles and Victoria Monro, "Bank of England Staff Working Paper No. 837". Extrapolated by Paul Johnson, "It Will Take More Than Building Homes to Solve the Housing Crisis", *The Times* (thetimes.co.uk, 20 Jan 2020). Available (without paywall) from the Institute for Fiscal Studies at https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/14678 [accessed 17 Feb 2021].

[609] Nathan Brooker, "Why Solving the UK Housing Crisis Requires More Than New Homes", *The Financial Times* (ft.com, 16 Nov 2017). Available at https://www.ft.com/content/f3143c7e-c56b-11e7-a1d2-6786f39ef675 [accessed 17 Feb 2021].

[610] Jonathan Cribb and Polly Simpson, "Barriers to Homeownership for Young Adults", Institute for Fiscal Studies press release based on data from *IFS Green*

living in LA will be 73 before they can buy their own home and avoid paying exorbitant rents.[611] A young person in London may wait until they are 89 before saving enough for a deposit.[612] Indeed, writes a commentator for *The Atlantic,* "it is an ironic twist that residential property, which once served as the bedrock for American capitalism, has become the most obvious sign for young people that something is deeply wrong with the markets".[613] The free market does nothing to prevent land-banking, buy-to-let second home ownership, or the inflation of housing prices beyond local wages through investment by the global rich. Handing money to the poor will not ensure they are adequately housed, since it does nothing to encourage developers to build more homes. Indeed, any commodity that is necessary to our continued (comfortable) existence may arguably be liable to exploitation.

Importantly, however, the unaffordability of the property market, the lack of competition among suppliers and fierce competition among buyers, also directly impacts aesthetic quality in housing. If 40% of young people cannot afford to buy even the cheapest houses in their area then there is no incentive for newbuild developers to offer houses that are aesthetically appealing, particularly at the bottom end of the market where competition is fierce and so many buyers are priced out.

There is furthermore a localised monopoly of choice whenever a large housebuilder is the exclusive builder in a large development: buyers may need to live in a particular location for family, school or work reasons, in order to avoid long commutes or to access housing that is affordable for

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Budget 2018 (ifs.org.uk, 8 Oct 2018). Available at https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/13475 [accessed 17 Feb 2021].

[611] Alexis C. Madrigal, "Why Housing Policy Feels Like Generational Warfare", *The Atlantic* (theatlantic.com, 13 June 2019). Available at https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2019/06/why-millennials-cant-afford-buy-house/591532/ [accessed 18 Feb 2021].

[612] Nathan Brooker, "Why Solving the UK Housing Crisis Requires More Than New Homes", *op. cit.*

[613] See Alexis C. Madrigal, "Why Housing Policy Feels Like Generational Warfare", *op. cit.*

them. If all houses in that area are provided by the same housebuilder there is, again, no incentive for that house builder to raise the standard of their output or to tempt consumers away from other options.

The economic notion of "revealed preference" therefore tells us very little about the aesthetic preferences of those buyers who are struggling to buy a house, as little perhaps as we may discover about the taste preferences of persons by starving them for three days and then offering them a choice of two meals: I may choose one meal over the other, but it is perfectly possible that I like the taste of *neither*. Just as food marries together a basic need with a matter of taste, so does shelter.

That there is a crisis of aesthetic quality in the built environment, and not a crisis of aesthetic quality in other areas of design, is directly related to the economic situation outlined above. That there is a wealth of aesthetic choice and quality in, say, mobile phone covers, reflects the fact that there is a great deal of supplier competition and that such goods are generally both affordable and inessential (and therefore not readily open to exploitation). Property, however, is subject to very different market forces and is less affected by consumers' aesthetic preferences. Consumers' aesthetic preferences would likely only be better taken into account should the market tip in favour of new buyers and should there be significantly greater competition between house builders, perhaps builders even offering consumers the opportunity to choose for themselves a house design from a range of architect-approved design plans.[614]

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[614] In recent years the creation of the WikiHouse project – an open-source programme for housing design – points the way to how differently housing could be produced. WikiHouse allows designs to be worked on in an open, iterative way. For Indy Johar, a co-founder of WikiHouse, democracy of building in the built environment involves democratising the knowledge and the means of production, and shifting focus away from passive consumption towards active creation. By bypassing the oligopoly of the major house-building firms, hopes Johar, we may give greater control to consumers and help make good design accessible for "the 99%". The success of such projects is, however, dependent upon changes within our existing systems and regulations: it is currently very difficult to obtain a

Part Two: Minimum Standards

Welfare Standards and Human Needs

Since poor aesthetics in the built environment primarily affects those on low incomes – and since a pure redistribution of wealth is ill-equipped to replace merit goods and regulation – the issue is inherently connected with minimum standards.

As noted above, however, there is disagreement here. For the Right, the state may intervene to ensure that its poorest citizens do not perish. On the Left, however, whilst not explicitly endorsing a socialist agenda, there is an echo of Richard Rorty's left-wing utopianism in Yuriko Saito's argument that:

> Any good society, in addition to ensuring justice, freedom, equality, and welfare [...] must nurture these moral virtues through creation of humane environments and artefacts made with care in order to provide a good life to its citizens.[615]

For Yrjö Sepänmaa, "An aesthetic welfare state should offer a beautiful living environment and a rich cultural and art life".[616] For Saito and Sepänmaa, the built environment for the less wealthy should presumably include Keynes' parks, squares and fountains.

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mortgage for an open-source house. See Indy Johar, "Democratizing Cities", speech delivered at The Conference, Malmo, Sweden, 2016. Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ct7lABwvyp4 [accessed 19 Aug 2021].

[615] Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*, p. 8.

[616] Yrjö Sepänmaa, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 239.

Left (figure 85) High quality space: parks, squares and fountains in London's Holland Park; Right (figure 86) Low quality space: Penrhys Estate, Rhondda Valley

Welfare, Pain and the Disagreeable

A relatively uncontroversial, if limited and modest, route into obtaining improved aesthetics in the built environment is to focus on pain and discomfort – what was earlier termed the disagreeable. Unpleasant smells of rubbish, obtrusive traffic noise, perhaps even certain colourscapes (monotonous, grey drabness or jarring, clashing garishness) – these may be argued against on the grounds that such experiences are – due to the contingent facts of our human makeup – painful or distressing to endure. Due to the near universal experience of this discomfort, such interventions seem to respect the "public good" and to refrain from imposing value judgements. For Richard Rorty, "all we share with all other humans is the same thing we share with all other animals - the ability to feel pain".[617]

This, then, is our second uncontroversial justification for aesthetic interventions. Many liberal democracies have laws and regulations regarding rubbish disposal, manufacturing odours, and sound pollution. Colour is more controversial: in 2017 a court battle took place after a homeowner in Kensington painted her house in "garish" red and white candy stripes; neighbours argued the paint-job was dazzling and distracting and had been

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[617] Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, p. 177.

done to spite them due to an ongoing planning dispute.[618] They argued, under section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act, that the homeowner should be forced to repaint her property as it was causing "harm" to the surrounding area.[619] The homeowner, ultimately, prevailed. Whether motivated by spite or by eccentricity, the judge concluded, the homeowner had the right to paint the house as she pleased. If the notice was upheld, he noted, it would "give an LPA power to cause buildings to be removed, altered or repainted because the LPA (and magistrates or crown court on appeal) dislikes the appearance thus created, on grounds that relate only to aesthetics […] when there is no suggestion that there is any want of maintenance or repair in the land".[620]

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[618] Press Association, "Court Rules Woman Can Keep her Red and White Striped Townhouse", *The Guardian* (theguardian.com, 24 April 2017). Available at https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/apr/24/red-white-striped-house-zipporah-lisle-mainwaring [accessed 18 Feb 2021].

[619] Section 215 states that: Power to require proper maintenance of land.

(1) If it appears to the local planning authority that the amenity of a part of their area, or of an adjoining area, is adversely affected by the condition of land in their area, they may serve on the owner and occupier of the land a notice under this section.

(2) The notice shall require such steps for remedying the condition of the land as may be specified in the notice to be taken within such period as may be so specified.

[620] See Press Association article from *The Guardian, op cit.* On the liberal view, however, if it could be demonstrated that such aesthetics universally caused pain or discomfort then there would arguably be a strengthened case for its restriction.
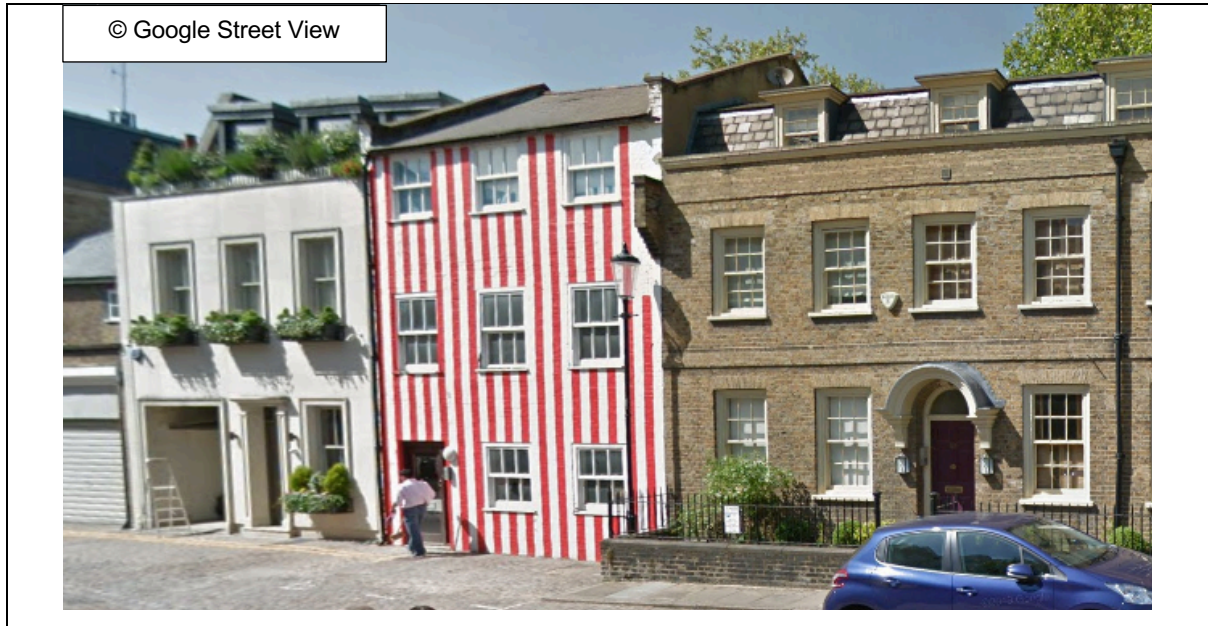
Figure 87: Aesthetic freedom: The candy stripe house, Kensington

Much lobbying in favour of improved aesthetics in the built environment is therefore founded on health and wellbeing, such as the "maintenance or repair" mentioned above. Such data is more easily presented in quantitative rather than qualitative form and relates to the easiest permitted route to intervention in a liberal state: the pain and discomfort of the human body. Such intervention avoids the charge of paternalism and is presented merely as basic compassion and respect. If your freedom of expression causes me pain, distress or illness, there may be reason to curb it. Despite generally arguing against state intervention in the arts, Noël Carroll allows that justified intervention in such circumstances is "not implausible" on the grounds that "it implements the state's obligations in regard to the health of its citizens".[621]

Defining minimum standards

For Noël Carroll, references to "aesthetic welfare" are nonetheless misleading:

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[621] Carroll, "Government Funding of the Arts", p. 27.

it is merely a homonymous term that, though sounding like the concept employed in the discussion of the state's welfare responsibilities, is actually quite separate.[622]

Genuine welfare, he suggests, refers merely to "assistance to individuals in need of the basic goods that comprise a livelihood".[623] Whilst lacking a complete theory of needs, writes Carroll, we can nonetheless meaningfully question whether lack of access to the arts will bring us literal harm, since to suggest that someone needs something "is to say that if she lacks it, she will suffer injury, sickness, madness, hunger, or avoidable death".[624]

On this basis, we may assume, Carroll's liberal democracy, even if it takes the disagreeable into account, will be satisfied that minimum welfare has been provided once our built environment – however depressing, isolating, noisy, smelly and unattractive – has warded off the worst excesses of madness and avoidable death. That is, even to the extent that Carroll's liberal democracy is concerned with the physical contingencies of wellbeing and of the disagreeable and agreeable, it sets a very low bar indeed.

For Marx, in contrast, there was a meaningful distinction between what he called man's natural needs and necessary needs:

> His natural needs, such as food, clothing, fuel, and housing, vary according to the climatic and other physical conditions of his country. On the other hand, *the number and extent of his so-called necessary needs, as also the modes of satisfying them, are themselves the product of historical development, and depend therefore to a great· extent on the degree of civilisation of a country, more particularly on the conditions under which, and consequently on the habits and degree of comfort in which, the class of free labourers has been formed.* In contradistinction therefore to the case of other commodities, there enters into the determination of the value of labour power a historical and moral element. (my italics)[625]

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[622] Carroll, "Government Funding of the Arts", p. 25.

[623] *Ibid.*, p. 24.

[624] *Ibid.*

[625] Karl Marx, quoted in Agnes Heller, *The Theory of Need in Marx* (London and New York: Verso, 2018), p. 30.

Whilst Marx's notion of natural needs may correspond to what Carroll has in mind regarding the proper boundaries of "welfare", Marx's necessary needs may refer also to that which, whilst not in itself strictly needed for survival, nonetheless is considered necessary by a society as a basic standard for "the class of free labourers". The inhabitants of households without washing machines and refrigerators, for example, will not literally die or come to harm, but they will need to spend a much greater proportion of their time in domestic drudgery and be more disconnected from society. They are, for most in the UK, considered a basic necessity.

Similarly, the UK Government has recently invested billions of pounds to expand the UK's broadband capabilities, particularly focussing on rural areas. The scheme:

> [T]argets areas where the cost of building new gigabit broadband infrastructure, which often requires digging trenches to lay full fibre cables to people's doorsteps, is likely to be too high for commercial operators to cover alone.[626]

Inhabitants of rural communities will not die or become ill if deprived of superfast broadband. Broadband access, however, is now considered by society – for contingent "historical and moral" reasons – a basic need for a fully-developed life.

If we focus solely on the most reductive and basic of Marx's natural needs in pursuit of welfare then our welfare system may intuitively strike us as very mean. If we allow that welfare might involve anything beyond the bare minimum necessary for survival, however, then even physical welfare requires a value judgement. In the case of housing, for example, how overcrowded is *too* overcrowded? How depressing is *too* depressing? Many of our most vulnerable immigrant workers and asylum seekers are alive,

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[626] UK Government press release, "Big Broadband Boost for Scotland" (gov.uk, 23 Oct 2020). Available at https://www.gov.uk/government/news/big-broadband-boost-for-scotland [accessed 18 Feb 2021].

productive, and in reasonably good health, but nonetheless live in modern slums.

Figures 88 and 89: Experiments in minimum standards. Living conditions at Penally asylum seeker camp, established by the UK government in a disued military barracks in Pembrokeshire, Wales. Inhabitants lived 6-8 in a room, shared two washing machines for 200 men, and had no entertainment. After public outcry the camp has now been closed.[627]

Just as Ver Eecke acknowledges that the matter of wealth redistribution is a political rather than economic matter, we may argue also that minimal standards of welfare, wellbeing, or flourishing is a political matter, requiring a value judgement.[628] Carroll's insistence that legitimate state intervention

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[627] See Laura Clements, "The Unacceptable Conditions Inside the Dilapidated Army Barracks Being Used to House Asylum Seekers Which They Call a Prison", *Wales Online* (walesonline.co.uk, 12 Nov 2020). Available at https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/unacceptable-conditions-inside-dilapidated-army-19261601 [accessed 11 August 2021].

[628] Parsons too attempts an objective theory of need, going beyond minimum survival criteria, based on whether or not the object sought has objective value: The person who wants education wants something of value, argues Parsons, but the person who wants a third convertible cannot say that without it "good will fail to come to exist" because "there is little value or worth in a collection of red convertibles" even if it's "*seen by* some as having value", even if it has economic value and "the collector may want such a collection very intensely, and even think that his happiness and fulfilment depend upon it. But this does not make his want

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refs only to an absolute minimal standard of ensuring non-death is merely an expression of standard thinking on the American Right. Other countries, in different political environments, think otherwise.

Feasibility of Establishing Minimum Standards: The "Country House Clause"

It may be argued that any attempt to introduce minimum aesthetic standards – beyond minimal welfare – into planning regulation is unworkable since assessments of aesthetic value are too subjective. In at least one part of English planning law, however, there are already minimum aesthetic design standards: a stipulation known as "Paragraph 79", described by one planning agency as follows:

> "Paragraph 79" […] of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) […] allows new isolated homes to be built in the countryside. Contrary to the general policies of restraint for building new dwellings in the countryside, the NPPF allows new dwellings to be built in the countryside where they are of exceptional quality of design. *The policy is a response to the reality that, despite the drive to improve the design quality of new housing generally, new housing continues to be very ordinary, homogenous and with very poor environmental considerations* (my italics)[629]

Specifically it states that:

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into a need, since thinking that something is valuable does not make it so". However, many things widely considered to have a high value, such as original Renaissance paintings, would not commonly be considered basic needs. Similarly, many things widely considered to have little value, such as a child's leaf collection, can be intensely valued by an individual child and are not easily dismissed as valueless wants. Parsons himself furthermore suggests that expression is something we want but do not need, implying that expression is not valuable – an intuitively unwelcome conclusion. See Parsons, *The Philosophy of Design*, p. 138.

[629] Rob Hughes, "What is 'Para 79'?", Hughes Planning (hughesplanning.co.uk). Available at https://www.hughesplanning.co.uk/para-55-houses-explained [accessed 18 Feb 2021].

planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless certain circumstances can be met. The most relevant of the "circumstances" to architectural design is the point: e) the design is of exceptional quality, in that it: is truly outstanding or innovative, reflecting the highest standards in architecture, and would help to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas; and would significantly enhance its immediate setting, and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.[630]

Paragraph 79, sometimes called the "Countryside House" Clause "remains one of the few items of planning law that explicitly demands exceptional architectural standards".[631]

For Rob Hughes, principal partner at Hughes Planning, "it is quite a nicely worded policy and is working well. In cases where proposals are not good enough, then the schemes aren't getting through".[632] In most instances, local authorities consult a design review panel for advice. For James Burrell, director at Burrell & Mistry: "People think design is subjective [but] [p]eople who understand the difference between good and bad design are in a good position to judge what is exceptional".[633]

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[630] See Studio Bark (studiobark.co.uk, July 2020). Available at https://studiobark.co.uk/paragraph-79-paragraph-55/ [accessed 18 Feb 2021].

[631] Colin Marrs, "Why Do so Few Paragraph 55 Homes Win Planning?", *The Architects' Journal* (architectsjournal.co.uk, 18 July 2018). Available at https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/why-do-so-few-paragraph-55-homes-win-planning [accessed 18 Feb 2021].

[632] Rob Hughes, quoted in *Ibid*.

[633] James Burrell, quoted in *Ibid*.

Stylistic varieties of "exceptional" architecture: Left (figure 90) Projected plans for the (approved) paragraph 79 house Woodlands Lodge. Right (figure 91) Palladian Chineway Farm (built in the 20th century)[634]

There is, therefore, no reason why in principle such standards could not be rolled out more widely. Words such as "exceptional" and "significantly enhance" have more modest corollaries in terms such as "high quality" and "enhance". At a minimum, regulations could stipulate that developments must not aesthetically spoil, mar or impair the existing environment. Whilst it is true that such decisions cannot be made automatically, mechanically, or quantitatively, the same is true of many decisions underpinned by legal frameworks which must decide on what is "reasonable", etc:

> Such standards are a very common and a very important part of lawmaking technique. A negligence standard may require "reasonable care"; a constitution may define a procedural right as a right to "due process", or a contract may require the delivery of goods in "satisfactory condition". Those abstract terms are very different from the vague descriptive terms that philosophers of logic use to illustrate their arguments about the sorites paradox ("heap", "thin", "bald", "red"…). It misses the point, you might think, to say that abstract

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[634] Examples taken from James Fisher, "The Exceptional Houses Being Built in Idyllic Countryside Sports, Thanks to the Foresight of Paragraph 79", *Country Life* (countrylife.co.uk, 25 May 2020). Available at

https://www.countrylife.co.uk/property/the-exceptional-houses-being-built-in-idyllic-countryside-spots-thanks-to-the-foresight-of-paragraph-79-215618

[accessed 19 Aug 2021].

standards do not draw sharp lines, because they are not designed to draw lines at all. By using an abstract standard, the lawmaker requires the people who must apply the law to construct a theory of the standard (of care, or of process, or of condition), which will draw any line that is needed. Ronald Dworkin has claimed that abstract expressions are not vague at all—that they have a different semantics from that of vague words like "heap". (Dworkin, 1986b, 17)[635]

We do not dismiss attempts to secure minimum standards for workplace conduct or driver safety on the basis that legislating such behaviour necessitates the use of abstract terms, intersubjective agreement or expert witness. In the aesthetics of the built environment, then, design experts could flesh out what is meant by this standard, with reference to, for instance, quality and durability of materials, appropriateness of scale, sympathy of style, and with reference to best (and worst) practice, with the flexibility to "zone" standards in different areas. Crucially, as with Paragraph 79, no blanket endorsement of preferred styles – modern, traditional, or otherwise – is needed, or even appropriate.

Stewardship, Private Property, and Red Tape

Notwithstanding the fate of the candy-striped house there is, furthermore, a precedent in the UK for individual liberty and property ownership rights to be overturned: not all buildings are treated equally. The British system of listing buildings (actually, its entire heritage regulation framework) limits property owners' freedoms. I may buy and own a listed building but be unable to change sash windows for PVC, build a boxy porch extension, or paint it in candy stripes. Similarly, I may own agricultural land but face restrictions on its use, such as whether I can build a house on it.

Property ownership, note the legal scholars William N. R. Lucy and Catherine Mitchell, is subject to major regulatory controls: government may

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[635] Timothy Endicott, "Law and Language", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.). Available at https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/law-language/ [accessed 18 Feb 2021].

purchase private land against the owners' will; public utility companies can access land against the owners' will; tenants can deprive a landlord of his freehold against his wishes.[636] Indeed, for Lucy and Mitchell, these curbs on property freedoms in land ownership are extreme enough to suggest that it is not properly described as ownership at all; the concept of "stewardship", they suggest, is more accurate and "should therefore displace [it] in our everyday, philosophical and legal language".[637]

Whichever word we use we may allow this: land and buildings are *already* subject to many restrictions not applying to other so-called private goods. We cannot simply argue against aesthetic regulations, or indeed any other regulations, on the basis that they curb property freedoms: the value of such freedoms – like the value of untarnished natural space in the Country House Clause – is always subject to revision, proportionate to the value of what is gained by overriding it.

Part Three: Equality, Greatness, and Distribution of the Good

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[636] These include the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Civil Aviation Act 1982, Airports Authority Act 1975, Leasehold Reform Act 1967, Landlord and Tenant Act 1987, Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act 1993. See William N. R. Lucy and Catherine Mitchell, "Replacing Private Property: The Case for Stewardship", *The Cambridge Law Journal*, Vol. 55, No. 3 (Nov., 1996), pp. 566-600 (pp. 571-572).

[637] "[A]n abstract account of stewardship maintains that the holder, or steward, has some control and rights over the resource, but that control must in the main be exercised for the benefit of specific others". See Lucy and Mitchell, pp. 566-567 and 584.

Jante, *Lagom*, and The Problem of Mediocrity

For Saito and Sepänmaa, as mentioned earlier, the state's role is not merely to ensure that its citizens do not perish, but rather to offer a high level of care, since "[c]are, respect, sensitivity and consideration toward the other [...] should be the moral foundation of a good society, as well as a good life".[638] This is essentially an argument in favour of the Swedish model of welfare and design. As noted by Kevin M. Murphy in his *Swedish Design: An Ethnography*:

> Alongside an expectation that the Swedish political system is organized to "care" for its citizens, designed things in Sweden—especially those bearing simple and minimal forms—are expected to "care" for their users in ways that align with, if only unevenly, political and cultural values of social responsibility that hold long-standing purchase in Swedish society.[639]

In contrast to the UK, and particularly to the US, which have more modest welfare offerings, the Swedish state aims to "provide the individual with a more or less high level of well-being in everyday life".[640] Swedish citizens, writes Murphy, have largely internalised the view that the collective is responsible for the wellbeing of the individual, and themselves form "a welfare society".[641]

The Swedish model, like the model endorsed by Saito, also implies equality as control of *maximum* limits, however. In promoting what Finnish architect Juhani Pallasmaa refers to as "an architecture of humility" – rejecting, in particular, the cult of superstar architects – Saito echoes the Swedish concept of *Jante* which, as outlined by Murphy:

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[638] *Ibid.*, p. 240.

[639] Kevin M. Murphy, *Swedish Design: An Ethnography* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2015) pp. 1-2.

[640] *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

[641] *Ibid.*, p. 24.

> [W]as coined by Norwegian author Aksel Sandemose, who, in one of his novels, drew up a tongue-in-cheek list of ten inviolable laws, all of which more or less amount to "Don't think you're better than anyone else". This maxim has resonated well enough in Sweden to have become a nationally recognized cultural trait.[642]

Jante, or the imperative to "avoid boastfulness and project humility" writes Murphy, pervades Swedish life.[643] The mission statement slogan of the government-mandated design commission Svensk Form – "Bättre liv genom god design" (Better life through good design) – has a notable modesty of intent, as does Ikea founder Ingvar Kamprad's stated aim: "To create a better everyday life for the many".[644] It even, writes Murphy, has led to "an almost universal resistance among designers in Sweden to self-promotion [which] prevents them from pitching their designs to potential paying clients".[645]

The Swedish concept of *lagom,* of "just enough", is similarly restrained: "not doing what is unnecessary or superfluous, focusing on what is absolutely essential, knowing when to stop".[646] "Perhaps the biggest culture shock I had on moving to Sweden", writes the British journalist Richard Orange, "was being invited to a [...] wedding lunch, and finding that it was just the bride, the groom, the parents and a tiny group of friends at a very ordinary pub".[647] There was, he writes, "no fanfare, no fuss – and to my mind, nothing I would call a celebration".[648] To British eyes, that is, the flatness, restraint and modesty of *lagom,* what Orange refers to rather

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[642] *Ibid.*, p. 221.

[643] *Ibid.*

[644] Ingvar Kamprad quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 197.

[645] Murphy, p. 221.

[646] Richard Orange, "Calm Down Trendspotters – 'Lagom' is Not the New Hygge", *The Guardian* (theguardian.com, 6 Feb 2017). Available at https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/feb/06/lagom-sweden-hygge-lifestyle-trends [accessed 18 Feb 2021].

[647] *Ibid.*

[648] *Ibid.*

abrasively as, "my adopted country's suffocating doctrine of Lutheran self-denial", may not present as either appealing or appropriate: "You may as well celebrate middle-of-the-road, low expectations, or conforming to the norm".[649]

The very compassion and humility that Saito and Pallasmaa view as moral – even as self-evidently moral – is for others a promotion of mediocrity. For Hume, indeed, humility is a "monkish" pseudo-virtue which threatens to "stupefy the understanding and harden the heart, obscure the fancy and sour the temper".[650] Similarly, Mill writes that:

> No government by a democracy or a numerous aristocracy [...] ever did or could rise above mediocrity, except in so far as the sovereign Many have let themselves be guided (which in their best times they always have done) by the counsels and influence of a more highly gifted and instructed One or Few. [...] The honour and glory of the average man is that he is capable of following that initiative; that he can respond internally to wise and noble things, and be led to them with his eyes open. (*Liberty*, XVIII: 269)[651]

For Mill, liberal democracy should not lead to a flattened egalitarianism, or Tall Poppy Syndrome. Rather, diversity and ambition are to be celebrated: "Christian self-denial" and "The despotism of custom" are rather "the standing hindrance to human advancement, [...] to that disposition to aim

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[649] It is worth noting that, despite this rhetoric, Orange writes that such extremes of moderation and restriction have been challenged by Sweden's art world, and are an increasingly inaccurate depiction of Swedish culture.

[650] David Hume *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* sec. IX, quoted in Nicolas Bommarito, "Modesty and Humility", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.). Available at https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/modesty-humility/ [accessed 18 Feb 2021].

[651] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, XVIII: 269) quoted in Christopher Macleod, "John Stuart Mill", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.). Available at https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/mill/ [accessed 18 Feb 2021].

at something better than customary, [...] the spirit of liberty, or that of progress or improvement".[652]

Distribution of the Good

As noted by Thomas Hurka, then, even if theorists and voters could agree on what constitutes an objective good, there is no consensus on how goods in society should be distributed.[653] The same goods could be distributed according to a flat, egalitarian principle, favouring equality, or else according to a so-called maximax principle, which would distribute goods more unevenly to create peaks of superlative excellence. Whilst many utilitarian models favour the former, Hurka notes, other thinkers have preferred the latter:

> Nietzsche is again the prime example, saying humanity "must work continually at the production of individual great men", so we should live "for the good of the rarest and most valuable exemplars, and not for the good of the majority" (1997, 161–62); it's a "basic error to place the goal in the herd and not in single individuals"[654]

Such maximax views may not, says Hurka, be plausible for the good of moral virtue, yet the good of moral virtue is one that Nietzsche, at least, did not recognise.

Nietzsche's views on Christian "herd morality" and inequality are well known, yet even Mill, as mentioned above, "believes that the great danger of mass-society is self-repression and conformism, leading to the sapping of human energy and creativity".[655] Similarly, for de Tocqueville, the threat of orderly liberal democracies such as America is that they are characterised

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[652] Mill, *Liberty*, XVIII: 272, quoted in Macleod, *op. cit.*

[653] Thomas Hurka, "Objective Goods", in Matthew D. Adler and Marc Fleurbaey (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Well-being and Public Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 379-402 (pp 386-391).

[654] *Ibid.*, p. 389.

[655] MacLeod, *op. cit.*

by being, "moderate in all things except a taste for well-being, and mediocre; a spirit that by itself never produces anything but a government without either virtues or greatness".[656]

Beyond Aesthetic Welfare: Greatness, Quality and the Avant-Garde

Peter Bishop's complaint, in the beginning of the last chapter, was not that most British towns are ugly (a term more commonly used by conservatives to criticise brutalism) but rather that they are "mediocre". For Venturi, mediocrity is the threat posed by the "taste-makers". For Mill, Nietzsche and de Tocqueville, it is the threat posed by democratic tendencies towards mass culture. What unites them, however, is a fear that unregulated free markets, over-zealous aesthetic committees or populist democracies (respectively) might promote mediocrity and hamper the emergence of greatness.

The threat of Saito and Sepänmaa's Swedish-style aesthetic welfare state is that, whilst it makes provision for minimum aesthetic standards, it does not make provision for excellence. Indeed, greatness and excellence may be viewed with suspicion as a threat to equality. As noted by Croydon, on the socialist side of the political spectrum lies the concern that "the needs of the many should outweigh the design aspirations of the few". Indeed, it is likely that a majority of great works of architecture were financed and built under conditions of inequality.

State interventions in the market, therefore, must contend not only with minimum standards (welfare) but also with what Croydon terms "aspirational architecture" – the architecture of excellence and greatness. We must decide on minimum standards, but also on maximum standards. A state that makes provisions only for the former risks creating a pleasant mediocrity. A state that makes provisions only for the latter risks creating

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[656] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Souvenirs*, quoted in Paul Franco, "Tocqueville and Nietzsche on the Problem of Human Greatness in Democracy", *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 76, No. 3 (SUMMER 2014), pp. 439-467 (p. 443).

an aesthetic underclass. As noted by Hurka, the functionings referred to by capability indexes – commonly used in development economics – focus on "basic capabilities" rather than on:

> [H]igher goods such as scientific research, artistic creation, or athletic achievement [which] makes sense in a view concerned to equalize people's capabilities given limited resources or to ensure everyone a basic minimum of them [...] But it means the proposed lists of good functionings don't give a complete objective theory of the good, any more than a subjective one would that mentioned only mild pleasure but not ecstasy. For completeness the lists would have to be extended upward.[657]

In practice, such a concern with higher and aspirational goods can be readily found in most liberal democracies: state support is available for elite sport, for the university sector and – despite Peacock's reservations – for the arts.

Aristocracy Within Democracy

In "Democracy Tempered by Aristocracy: Rethinking an Old Idea", Conservative philosopher Andreas Kinneging discusses "an argument that has ancient roots, but is nowadays largely forgotten, namely that democracy, to be viable and stable, stands in need of aristocratic checks".[658] This includes not only, writes Kinneging, institutional checks such as an Upper House in Parliament and a professional judiciary, but also "an aristocratic ethos in the rulership or leadership" – an ethos focussed on virtues, final values and ends, rather than merely on commercialism, management and expediency.[659]

On closer inspection, support for a form of aristocracy in democracy is surprisingly widespread. Mill's earlier remarks plead for cultivation of and

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[657] Hurka, p. 397.

[658] Andreas Kinneging, "Democracy Tempered by Aristocracy: Rethinking an Old Idea", *Politeja* No. 45 (2016), pp. 5-26 (p. 5).

[659] *Ibid.*

respect for an educated elite, a sentiment echoed in Leo Strauss' argument that:

> Liberal education is the necessary endeavour to found an aristocracy within democratic mass society. Liberal education reminds those members of a mass democracy who have ears to hear, of human greatness.[660]

It is more widespread still if we include support not merely for traditional aristocratic ideals and institutions but also – as is the subject of Croydon's work – for the state's potential to assume the role that has been left by the decline of the aristocracy. That is: the role of promoting, creating or embodying values and goods which are neglected by populism and the commercial markets.

Nietzsche, writes Paul Franco, does indeed believe in the potential for aristocratic greatness within democracy, and yet, he writes,

> [I]t is a strangely remote, hermetic, and glacial idea of greatness that Nietzsche offers us, resting on a tremendous gulf between the mediocre many and the aristocratic few.[661]

It is possible, however, to retain Nietzsche's concern with the emergence of greatness and the testing and furtherance of human potential without positing such a necessary gulf between masses and elite, by insisting that any such "aristocracy in democracy", or any such concern with progress, greatness and human excellence, should be more closely engaged with the masses who have, albeit sometimes only indirectly, helped to create it.

As noted by Hurka, our intuitions about equality furthermore alter according to the good at hand. For virtue and happiness, he suggests, we tend to favour equality. Even for Nietzsche the mediocrity of the masses was

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[660] Leo Strauss, "What is Liberal Education?" quoted in Timothy Fuller, "The Complementarity of Political Philosophy and Liberal Education in the Thought of Leo Strauss" in *The Cambridge Companion to Leo Strauss,* ed. Steven B. Smith (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 241-262 (p. 256).

[661] Franco, *op. cit.,* p. 467.

not, it seems, intended as a punishment or a sentence to unhappiness since, he proposed:

> For the mediocre it is happiness to be mediocre [...] It would be quite unworthy of a more profound mind to see an objection in mediocrity as such. It is even the *prime* requirement for the existence of exceptions; a high culture is conditional upon it.[662]

That is, Nietzsche's emphasis on the aristocratic few is not intended to create an indulged or pampered elite. Quite the opposite: for Nietzsche it is the elites who may suffer on their way to greatness whereas the "consolidated mediocrity" is ideally "strong and healthy".[663]

On the other hand, writes Hurka, "maximax-style principles like Nietzsche's are at least understandable for nonmoral objective goods such as knowledge and achievement".[664] Given the choice of a small gain in musical achievement of someone who is not musically accomplished, or a slightly larger gain in that of "a musical genius", it does not, writes Hurka, seem right to prefer the former. There are countless examples in modern liberal democracies of policies which favour a maximax rather than egalitarian model precisely for this reason. Given limited resources, many state interventions in science, sport and the arts are concentrated on furthering the success and achievement of those who are already accomplished in their field, rather than on making small improvements for the generalist masses.

Concern with the welfare, wellbeing and basic needs of the masses is, then, consistent with a concern with human greatness or with the creation of peaks of excellence. Following Thomas Nagel's argument that advances in mathematics or astronomy are worth making "even if few people come to understand them", Hurka notes that:

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[662] Nietzsche, quoted in Franco, p. 466.

[663] *Ibid.*

[664] Hurka, p. 389.

A similar view can be taken about achievement, where we can care most that someone has climbed Everest, run a four-minute mile, or flown to the moon, and much less if others do. The first achievement makes it something the human race as a whole has done, and that can have primary importance. The first-time view may not be the only one we take; we may also care about the spread of knowledge and achievement and about the total good in people's lives. But it can be part, and a distinctive one, of a complete objective theory.[665]

What is worth noting here, then, is that certain achievements may be accessible to and valued by the masses, and offer a source of pride; that excellence and greatness need not be of the "hermetic" and "glacial" type described by Nietzsche but may rather be more fully integrated by making the products of human greatness accessible to all rather than to an elite few, both in a literal, physical sense (e.g. free access to museums) and via a concern with mass, liberal education that provides the masses with the tools to recognise and appreciate certain goods (training to appreciate the museums' contents). For Strauss it is a sign of a "good" democracy to engage in such a goal: a "bad" democracy rests content with "the corroding effects of mass culture"[666] and with "vulgar pleasure-seeking".[667] A "good" democracy, therefore, may offer a liberal education in design that allows citizens to best appreciate aspirational architecture, and may also ensure that aspirational architecture is freely available as a local, accessible public good rather than being tucked away in the form of private and club goods.

Conclusion

Discussions of aesthetic value in the built environment are, then, intimately connected with value judgements about not only the value of aesthetics itself, but the value of equality, social justice, individual freedom, health and wellbeing, and happiness. Access to quality built space is rarely an issue for the wealthy and connected, who may experience it through both private

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[665] Hurka, p. 390.

[666] Strauss, quoted in Fuller, p. 256.

[667] Fuller (paraphrase of Strauss' view), p. 256.

goods (beautiful and/or architecturally sophisticated homes) and through club goods (golf courses, holiday resorts, members' clubs). Furthermore, our existing aesthetic regulations concerning the built environment primarily assist the rich. It is the wealthy who are more likely to live in the listed buildings and historic towns which benefit from more rigorous planning restrictions. It is, furthermore, the rich who are more likely to commission and inhabit impressive green-belt homes through the "country house clause". Those living in post-war and post-industrial areas, and those buying homes on brownfield developments, do not enjoy the same aesthetic regulatory protections and loopholes, and are more likely to live in environments we would describe as depressing, bland, scruffy, drab or even ugly.

As argued above, the existence of regulatory protections for historic and "country house clause" homes demonstrate that aesthetic regulations for the built environment are possible and workable since they are already in use. The country house clause is described above in pragmatic rather than Platonic terms as "quite a *nicely worded* policy [that] is *working well*" (my italics). That is, as will be argued in the following chapters, we do not need absolute foundations or universal, "objective" agreement to improve the aesthetics of the built environment. Ordinary, "mid-level" regulatory frameworks – created and refined through dialogue and debate – may do the job for post-war, post-industrial, and brownfield sites that they currently do for historic and green-belt areas.

The small-state liberalism of the Right, in its efforts to maximise liberty and restrict state intervention, may endorse an extremely minimal intervention to, for example, restrict extreme sound pollution, mend perilous landscaping, or to avoid, as Carroll puts it, "injury, sickness, madness, hunger, or avoidable death". However, as argued above, these requirements are extremely meagre, leaving huge scope for the creation of low quality, depressing, over-crowded and unattractive developments.

Furthermore, whilst a motivating reason for such meagreness is the avoidance of state-sanctioned value judgements (the state intervenes to stop "avoidable harm and death" and no more) the point at which the state

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declares its work done in the libertarian state must still be arbitrarily drawn. That is, unless death is invoked as an absolute, the state must still decide upon how much illness, injury or misery it is willing to accept, or indeed how badly designed, cramped, dangerous, inhospitable and unattractive our built environment can be. Since such decisions must be made, there is nothing *less* political or *more* objective and legitimate about meagre offerings and interventions than about the more generous offerings endorsed by Keynes, Saito and Sepänmaa. The Right, then, *cannot* avoid making value judgements about what the state considers acceptable levels of wellbeing.

Our approach to the aesthetics of the built environment also requires us to adopt a position on the importance not merely of minimum standards, but also of excellence, greatness, or human advancement. Iconic works of architecture such as the Taj Mahal, the Sydney Opera House, and Frank Lloyd-Wright's Falling Water superlatively exceed any likely minimal requirement for architectural quality and concern themselves less with equality and welfare than with exploring and advancing the range of architectural aesthetics and human creativity. As argued above, if iconic works of architecture are publicly accessible, they need not constitute Nietzsche's "strangely remote, hermetic, and glacial idea of greatness". However, maximax distributions of goods and services – including public investment in universities, elite sports, and iconic architecture – nonetheless require investment that could be spent elsewhere: their existence, for those on the Left with a commitment to the values of social justice and equality, can therefore be problematic.

Policy decisions, such as those involved in the funding and regulation of aesthetics in the built environment, hence ask us to balance or weigh values of aesthetics, liberty and equality against one another to form a valid decision. How we go about preferring, and justifying, such value judgements will be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter Seven: Values Without Foundations

[S]ometimes the only bottom line is the simple fact that one precious and irreplaceable thing is gained while another precious and irreplaceable thing is lost.[668]

David Schmidtz, "Value in Nature"

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"The justification of architectural value", argued Mhairi McVicar earlier, "has [become] the key defining problem for the architectural profession". Following the end of Croydon's age of patronage, and at least since the mid-1850s, the architectural profession has operated rather in what McVicar describes as "an economically minded context", together with, as Croydon notes, increasing governmental concerns to demonstrate probity. Taken together, the architectural profession is under immense pressure to "quantify the deeply qualitative value of its contribution", in an effort to make its value commensurable with other values; to allow us to publicly and financially *demonstrate* that our investment is justified.

Architectural contribution is liable, also, to be compared with *other uses* of public funds, the so-called opportunity cost of choosing to invest in or regulate aesthetic quality in the built environment. The schools and

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[668] David Schmidtz, "Value in Nature", in Iwao Hirose and Jonas Olson (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Value Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 381-398 (p. 393).

hospitals argument, mentioned earlier by Croydon, aims at invalidating investment in aesthetics by comparing its value to other, more "worthy" options. That is, aesthetic value in the built environment is perennially compared with other values and other goods, and so must continually argue for its comparable worth. Finally, as outlined in the previous chapter, attempts to regulate aesthetic value in the built environment are argued against by those on the Right who vigorously promote the value of liberty and freedom, whereas those on the Left argue for those architectural interventions which promote the value of equality.

Attempts to argue for the improvement of aesthetics in the built environment are therefore intimately bound up with the commensurability, comparability, and objectivity of values more generally. This chapter will argue that:

- Aesthetic and other values cannot be made commensurable with one another. We have no common units that allow us to compare, in a quantifiable sense, the health benefits of a swimming pool project with the aesthetic value of a public sculpture. Tools such as cost-benefit analysis are therefore limited in the guidance they can offer to public policy.

- Ruth Chang may be correct to argue that *incommensurability* of values does not preclude rational *comparability* of values. The chapter will therefore examine Edna Ullman-Margalit and Sidney Morgenbesser's theory of picking, choosing, and opting, and Ruth Chang's concept of "plumping", in order to question the limits of rational, justified choice, and Chang's hopes to retain rational decision-making.

- Ultimately, however, contrary to suggestions by Scruton and Chang, I argue that many important decisions, including matters of investment in the aesthetics of the built environment, cannot be justified merely with reason. Rather, as argued by Richard Rorty, our value differences are relative to different cultural and linguistic outlooks, what he terms "final vocabularies".

Part One: Incommensurability and Cost Benefit Analysis

The (In)commensurability of Values

Local authorities and national governments, to demonstrate probity and accountability, are often motivated to justify decision-making through modelling practices such as cost-benefit analysis, which rely upon a form of expected utility theory. Public money has been spent on this and not that, it is suggested, because the number crunching has demonstrated the superiority of the former option over the latter, in a way that is objective, rational or universally applicable. The philosophical basis for any such commensurability of values, however, is vanishingly thin. For Ruth Chang:

> The importance of the incommensurability of values lies primarily in axiology, not in the philosophy of practical reason. If values are incommensurable, then values cannot be represented by cardinally significant real numbers. There is no cardinal unit—such as dollars—in terms of which we can measure pleasure and scientific achievement. Any hope of being able to mathematically model values on the reals, as we might model quantities of mass or length, must be abandoned. And so certain crude ethical theories, such as traditional forms of utilitarianism that presuppose values can be cardinally represented by utiles, must also be rejected. *But since no plausible ethical theory essentially relies on the commensurability of values, the importance of value incommensurability is limited* (my italics).[669]

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[669] Ruth Chang, "Value Incomparability and Incommensurability", in Hirose and Olson (eds), *op. cit,* pp. 205-224 (p. 206).

For Chang, expected utility theory and modelling practices such as cost-benefit analysis are too simplistic, and have no convincing account of how differing abstract values – freedom, pleasure, knowledge, aesthetics – can be broken down into a "common currency". As such, Chang moves on to the more "fruitful" question of incomparability in choices for practical reasoning.

It is worth first pausing, however, to acknowledge the significance of incommensurability for the justification of aesthetic value in the built environment. If two values, for example liberty and aesthetic value, are incommensurable, then government bureaucracies cannot trade off these values using quantitative supporting evidence. Neither can Venturi and Peacock point to some quantitative support to show that the trade-off between liberty and aesthetic value in Planning Option 1 generates x number of liberty-and-aesthetic value-commensurate utiles whereas Planning Option 2 generates y number of liberty-and-aesthetic value-commensurate utiles. As such, it cannot offer an argument in support of light-touch aesthetic regulation as opposed to more interventionist aesthetic regulation in a way that refers to cast-iron cardinal units rather than, perhaps implicitly (for Venturi) or more explicitly (for Peacock), with reference to more polemical arguments or to acknowledged political and economic foundations. The same, indeed, applies to arguments in favour of equality over liberty put forward by those with sympathies to the Left, such as Saito.

This is true even if we can make more specific comparisons between two options, some of which may be easily quantifiable (Option 1 will generate 600 homes; Option 2 will generate 400) and some of which may not be (Option 1 may grant more corporate freedom; Option 2 may be more attractive). That is: Option 1 and Option 2 may be *comparable* according to a range of criteria, or according to what Chang refers to as "covering considerations",[670] but the deeper values referred to in such comparisons (freedom, aesthetics) remain incommensurable: we cannot reduce them into a common currency that allows us to say of Option 1 that it has x amount of

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[670] *Ibid.*, p. 208.

such currency and of Option 2 that it has *y* amount. Even if we succeed, then, in making what Chang refers to as an "all-things-considered" judgement, this judgement will not be supported with reference to such a currency.[671]

Crucially, this means that cost-benefit analysis, value engineering, and similar comparative and evaluative models cannot compare options according to some neutral, objective, value-commensurate criteria, since there is no commonly accepted, global currency for reducing values into utiles that can be added, subtracted, and quantifiably compared. As argued by Chang, they are at best "crude heuristics for rational choice".[672]

The "Look" of Objectivity: Turning Qualitative Values into Quantitative

For David Schmidtz, cost-benefit analysis can nonetheless be a useful tool in aiding comparisons between choices. We cannot throw our hands up and

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[671] This incommensurability of values is relevant, too, to the value engineering process outlined above. Value engineering is at its clearest and simplest when comparing what is objective, quantifiable, specific and commensurate. VE stresses the importance of making clear our measuring criteria for each function precisely because doing so ensures that we are able to make comparisons between choices that may be judged according to a common scale of measurement: inches, pounds, watts. However, when trade-offs between functions must be made, or we need to ascertain our minimum or ideal requirement for each function, the VE process turns not to some model of commensurable values but rather to the complex needs and values of the client: "the owner must establish what constitutes value".

[672] Chang, "Value Incomparability and Incommensurability", p. 208. The same is true of models such as the capability indexes developed by Amartya Sen and other social justice theorists, many of which, as noted by Thomas Hurka, are agnostic in themselves about the capabilities or values with which the indexes are populated. That is, much in the same way as it is up to a client to decide on value during the VE process, it is up to particular agencies, countries or bureaucracies to decide what is valuable for a capability index or cost-benefit analysis, decisions which may therefore be culturally or ideologically relative.

declare that everything is priceless, he writes, since any money spent on one option has the opportunity cost of not being spent on other options, and sometimes difficult decisions need to be made. If we want to conserve Atlantic green turtles, writes Schmidtz, we will want to know how much our different options will cost, how many turtles can be saved under different options, and other such comparisons of quantifiable facts.[673]

Despite this defence, Schmidtz concedes that cost-benefit analysis is limited. We can compare things which *are* quantifiable, he suggests, such as the number of turtles saved, or which *do* refer to real world economic facts, such as equipment costs. However, this differs from ascribing cardinal numbers to non-consumer goods, such as putting a dollar figure on a turtle's value to reflect its *objective* rather than *market* value:

> [T]here often is no point in trying to convert a qualitative balancing into something that *looks* like a precise quantitative calculation and thus *looks* scientific but in fact remains the same qualitative balancing, only now its qualitative nature is disguised by the attaching of made-up numbers [...]. We can make up numbers when assessing the value of a public library we could build on land that otherwise will remain a public park. Maybe the numbers will mean something, maybe not. More often, even when we can accurately predict a policy's true costs and benefits, there need not be any bottom line from which we simply read off what to do. *When competing values cannot be reduced to a common measure without distortion, that makes it harder to know the bottom line* [...] sometimes the only bottom line is the simple fact that one precious and irreplaceable thing is gained while another precious and irreplaceable thing is lost. None of that suggests any problem with the bare idea of taking costs and benefits into account. It means only that we should not assume too much about what kind of bottom line we can expect to see.[674]

Indeed, most public parks are valued on local authority records at just £1: no attempt is made to find a "made-up number" which reflects its value to

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[673] David Schmidtz, "Value in Nature", p. 393.

[674] *Ibid.*, p. 392.

the community or to suggest that its economic worth (should it be put up for sale as a development plot) reflects its current community value.[675]

The same applies to Hurka's attempts to quantify objective value. To have implications for public policy, writes Hurka, an objective theory must aggregate goods to show that one situation is better than another. It is difficult to do so, he concedes, and yet our "intuition" may allow us to say:

> [N]ot only that knowing all the laws of the universe is better than knowing the number of blades of grass on a lawn, but also that it's much better and even more than a hundred times better. We can likewise say that knowing the laws is more than a hundred times better than the pleasure of eating a chocolate, and that a decade of ecstasy is more than a hundred times better than knowing the number of blades on a lawn. Given rough ratio-scale judgments like these, a theory can then aggregate them to arrive at equally rough judgments of the overall good in a life or a society.[676]

Hurka's account here suggests that the values of knowledge and pleasure can be quantified and aggregated, and attempts to render knowledge and pleasure *commensurable* with one another – commensurable according, it seems, to some quantifiable and discrete units of "overall good in a life or a society": Option 1 offers us *x* number of good-life units; Option 2 offers us *y*. We are back, it seems, with Chang's "crude heuristics for rational choice".

As argued by Richard Arneson, trying to quantify what is valuable to us is tempting but, ultimately, unfruitful: "For guidance, we would like to make quantitative comparative assessment of lives. Ideally one wants a standard that given any combination of possible accomplishments [...] determines the overall value of the combination. We lack such a standard.

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[675] *Making the Invisible Visible: The Real Value of Park Assets* (London: CABE, 2009), p. 4. Available at: https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/asset/document/*the-real-value-of-park-assets.pdf [accessed 18 Feb 2021]

[676] Hurka, p. 386.

We make rough qualitative assessments, and there is widespread agreement about extreme cases, but that is all".[677]

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Part Two: Picking, Choosing, Opting, Plumping

For Ruth Chang it is *comparability* rather than commensurability that is deserving of philosophical attention. We may give up on the crudeness of commensurability, she suggests, and yet:

> If incomparability is widespread, then what we do in most choice situations falls outside the scope of practical reason. This in turn has upshots for our understanding of paradigmatic human agency: instead of being Enlightenment creatures who act according to the dictates of reason, we lead our lives without the guidance of reason.[678]

That is, if our choices are incomparable then we may find ourselves unable to justify one choice over the other. In the built environment, it would mean that not only do we have no reductive quantifiable evidence for our public policy decisions, but we have no rational justification *at all*.

As we saw above, incommensurability does not preclude us from comparing spending options according to a range of criteria or "covering considerations". Indeed, value engineering is entirely predicated on such comparability. Furthermore, we regularly use such comparisons to, for example, choose the mobile phone package with the largest data limit, or to drive to the supermarket that is 2 miles, rather than 50 miles, from our current location. Not all choice situations are as straightforward, however.

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[677] Richard Arneson, "Does Fairness Require a Multidimensional Approach?" in Adler and Fleurbaey (eds.), *op.cit.*, pp. 588-614 (p. 611).

[678] Chang, "Value Incomparability and Incommensurability", p. 206.

To better understand such differences, Chang points to the distinctions made by Edna Ullman-Margalit and Sidney Morgenbesser between picking, choosing, and opting.[679]

Choosing, for Morgenbesser and Ullmann-Margalit, represents our usual idea of informed, rational choice: it assesses what matters to us and compares our options according to these criteria. If I need a lunch that will keep me full until dinner time then perhaps I *choose* a burger and fries over a soup. If I need a house that is less than a two-hour train journey from London then I may *choose* to live in Bristol rather than in Edinburgh. Choosing however, suggest Morgenbesser and Ullmann-Margalit, does not adequately describe those situations in which we feel there is nothing to choose between our options, that they both (or all) will equally do. We do not *choose* this or that seemingly identical can of branded soup on the supermarket shelf they suggest: if there are five cans of Heinz tomato soup on the shelf I reach out my hand and I *pick* one.[680] In the case of housing we may resort to picking one of two identical new builds located side by side.

For Ullmann-Margalit and Morgenbesser, we pick either when two things are equally, similarly, good, or else when they are incomparable.[681] Chang, in contrast, argues that the latter case of incomparability is meaningfully different to that of the former case and requires its own, separate term: "plumping". For Chang, when we *pick* something arbitrarily this is nonetheless within the bounds of practical reason. That is, it is rationally intuitive that if two things are equally good it does not matter

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[679] *Ibid.*, p. 217.

[680] Sidney Morgenbesser and Edna Ullmann-Margalit, "Picking and Choosing", *Social Research* Vol. 44, No. 4, Rationality, Choice, and Morality (WINTER 1977), pp. 757-785 (p. 761).

[681] It should be noted that Ullmann-Margalit uses the word "incommensurable" rather than "incomparable", yet her use of the term is closer to what has previously been identified by Chang as "incomparable" – that is, a failure of comparability rather than the specific problem of lacking common currency. See Edna Ullmann-Margalit, "Big Decisions: Opting, Converting, Drifting", *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplements*, Volume 58: Political Philosophy, May 2006, pp. 157 – 172 (p. 171).

which we pick. When we *plump* for something arbitrarily, however, this is not within the bounds of practical reason, she suggests. We are making an arbitrary choice not because we consider the options equally good; rather, we are resorting to arbitrary choice as we have failed in any such comparative assessment.[682]

Plumping, then, is similar to – yet broader than – what Ullmann-Margalit terms "opting". We "opt" rather than choose, Ullmann-Margalit argues, in major, fork-in-the-road life choices which are irreversible, likely to transform our character and values, and for which the untaken path "casts a lingering shadow".[683] Ullmann-Margalit has in mind here decisions such as "whether to marry, to migrate, or to leave the corporate world in order to become an artist".[684] Opting is further contrasted with drifting, in which major life choices take place in increments, often with a passive denial of agency,[685] and also to conversion, in which we make a major life decision without any such indecisive wrangling, having *already* undergone a considerable and sudden change in our values.[686]

When making big decisions, notes Ullmann-Margalit, our usual decision-making methods seem to fail us. Furthermore, she writes, we are liable to be struck by the feeling that such decisions *cannot* be made through rational means, cost-benefit analysis or decisional balance sheets but rather "one ought to be guided by one's instincts, to go 'by one's gut'".[687] Whilst Charles Darwin, it is reported, wrote a cursory "pros and cons" list before deciding to marry his wife (pros: "a nice soft wife on a sofa", "someone to take care of house"; cons: "cannot read in the evenings", "loss of time"), and even wrote his decision beneath it ("Marry, Marry, Marry QED."), as noted by Steven Johnson we have no evidence of how these arguments were

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[682] Chang, "Value Incomparability and Incommensurability", pp. 218-219.

[683] Ullmann-Margalit, "Big Decisions", p. 158.

[684] *Ibid.*

[685] *Ibid.*, p. 169.

[686] *Ibid.*, p. 161.

[687] *Ibid.*, p. 165

weighed and compared against one another to arrive at an overall decision.[688] That is, the pros and cons list may have served a role of identifying and clarifying what is at stake, but it gives no indication of what binding or foundational "covering consideration" – if any – was used to make the final decision, leaving open the possibility that Darwin made his final decision not rationally but rather by "following his gut".

In the built environment, similarly, major infrastructure projects can be compared according to a range of criteria, their pros and cons laid bare. However, there remains no obvious means of making a rational final decision between a green energy project, an urban regeneration scheme, and a new community theatre.

The Foundation of Values

Karsten Harries' *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, in its pursuit of "a way of life valid for our period", is consumed with the same existential problem identified by Ullmann-Margalit. That is, it is concerned with right action in the face of a crisis of value. The problem we face when agonising over our opting decisions, writes Ullmann-Margalit, is that the rationality of our choice depends upon the rationality of our foundations: and our deepest foundations cannot be justified. There are no reasons, that is, when through deduction we come to "the very end of the chain of reasons".[689] When we justify choice X with reference to reason A, which is justified by B, which is justified by C, and so on, we will eventually arrive at our foundational beliefs and values.[690]

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[688] Steven Johnson, *Far Sighted: How We Make the Decisions that Matter Most*, quoted within Joshua Rothman, "The Art of Decision-Making", *The New Yorker* (newyorker.com, 14 Jan 2019). Available at https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/01/21/the-art-of-decision-making [accessed 18 Feb 2021].

[689] Ullmann-Margalit, "Big Decisions", p. 171.

[690] *Ibid.*

The matter of Darwin's lessened time to read in the evenings might boil down to the value of knowledge or self-improvement; the matter of a "nice soft wife" might boil down to the value of companionship or sensual comfort. In the built environment, we have seen, our decisions boil down to the value of liberty, sovereignty, equality and aesthetics. We may refer back to the value systems of small-state, non-interventionist neo-liberalism or to the more intervention-friendly policy of Keynesianism. But then we must justify these theories themselves.

As outlined by Ullmann-Margolit:

> If reasons are forever from within a system or a framework (Wittgenstein: from within a "language game"), the choice of the framework itself cannot be justified by appeal to reasons.
>
> You cannot justify deduction, because there is no way to do it non-deductively. The choice to be moral cannot be justified by appeal to moral reasons. These fundamental choices, then, cannot really be choices[691]

Ullmann-Margolit's sentiments here echo too the "radical perspectivism" found in thinkers such as Max Weber who, as described by Stephen Kalberg, held,

> the conviction that values are not demonstrable by the methods of science […] but remain in the contemporary era the only domain in which the autonomous individual confronts his "own demons". That even the most precise "technically correct" rationalization within, for example, the economic sphere, cannot be said to be legitimate and "valid" […] Nor can science, on the other hand, prove the values of the Buddhist monk or those of the Sermon on the Mount to be "superior" to any other value configuration[692]

Referring to a particular decision or viewpoint as "irrational", in Weber's view, is often simply a way of registering that it doesn't cohere with your

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[691] *Ibid.*

[692] Stephen Kalberg, *Max Weber's Comparative-Historical Sociology Today: Major Themes, Mode of Causal Analysis, and Applications* (New York and London: Routledge, 2016), p. 23.

own value postulates: "Something is never 'irrational' in itself but only from a particular 'rational' *vantage point*".[693] Such "value constellations" – themselves gleaned from irrational and contingent sources of history, geography, politics – act as what Kalberg refers to as "internally consistent world views to which individuals may orient their patterned action in all spheres of life".[694] To the neo-liberal, intervention to improve the aesthetics of the built environment may be irrational; to the Keynesian the absence of intervention may be so.

Part Three: Objectivity vs Sophistry. Scruton and Rorty

Rational Argument and Value Foundations

It is worth noting, before putting the matter aside, that an entirely different position is put forward by Scruton in his *Aesthetics of Architecture.* That is, for Scruton it is characteristic of values – as opposed to mere preferences – that they "have a kind of authority in practical reasoning [...] we feel called upon to justify them with reasons when necessary".[695] They are, he writes, "the outcome of thought and education, and can be supported, overthrown, or modified by reasoned argument".[696]

That architecture should express our values is a core concern of Scruton's. An over-emphasis on animal needs, such as "fresh air, health, exercise, food", neglects what Scruton describes as our "higher", rational

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[693] Max Weber, quoted in Kalberg, p. 22.

[694] Kalberg, p. 36.

[695] Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Architecture*, p. 29.

[696] *Ibid.*

nature.[697] Human flourishing, he writes, is dependent upon pursuing not merely our basic animal needs but also our *values*. The architectural expression of these values, for Scruton, is similarly rational: "we must not make the experience of expression so primitive that it seems incapable of rational justification. On the contrary, as soon as we speak of expression the concept of justification seems immediately to take root".[698]

However, on closer inspection Scruton himself fails to offer any such rational defence of his own values as set out in *The Aesthetics of Architecture*. His description of a room expressing an "oatmeal" feeling, for example – as outlined above in Chapter Two – states that:

> I justify this attribution of an oatmeal character by describing not just the fleeting impression of a room, but also the correspondence of textures, colours, forms. I may attempt to articulate a certain underlying moral idea (an idea of healthy simplicity, of unassuming cleanliness) which might show itself in everything, from the grain of the floorboards and the texture of the bedspread, to the colours, subject-matter, framing and position of a picture on the wall. *It is no mere whim to make these judgements* [my italics][699]

Importantly, however, this is not a reasoned justification of the oatmeal aesthetic itself, nor of "healthy simplicity", a minimal lifestyle, or of so-called slow living. Rather, it is a reasoned defence of the *applicability* of the term "oatmeal feeling" to a given object or scenario, an attempt to analyse what Böhme terms a particular "atmosphere".

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[697] *Ibid.*, p.28.

[698] *Ibid.*, p.182.

[699] *Ibid.*, p. 183.

Photo removed Photo removed for copyright reasons. It showed an image of an "oatmeal feeling" bedroom. Available to view online here: https://tinyurl.com/mtmww246 Full URL in image references.	**Photo removed** Photo removed for copyright reasons. It showed an image of an "oatmeal feeling" kitchen. Available to view online here: https://tinyurl.com/y9k45pwr Full URL in image references.

Figures 92 and 93: Oatmeal feelings: "an idea of healthy simplicity, of unassuming cleanliness"

On the matter of how we may justify moral and aesthetic values, or may argue for their objectivity – that is, justify *why* we have chosen an oatmeal aesthetic and why we believe in the importance of healthy simplicity – Scruton's account is less clear cut. With reference to Kant, he speaks to the possibility of "standards without truth", an "elementary standard of consistency", or "those realms of thought that are not in any ordinary sense 'scientific'".[700] He suggests that:

> [T]he ability to recognize right actions partly stems from an ability to recognize good men - to recognize moral virtue in action, to recognize that a particular action expresses dispositions that one should emulate or praise, dispositions towards which one "warms" in the manner uniquely characteristic of moral beings.[701]

Whilst I may argue with reasoned, "rooted" justification why a particular room embodies an "oatmeal feeling", why a particular novel is macabre, why

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[700] *Ibid.*, p. 218.

[701] *Ibid.*, p. 219.

the Las Vegas strip is exciting, even on Scruton's account I appear to be on less firm ground on the matter of rationally justifying my values themselves.

Scruton as Value Relativist

Thus, despite vehemently opposing relativist views, such as those of Richard Rorty, Scruton's account is in some ways not as different as one may assume. Whilst Scruton's writing is littered with approving references to rationality, reason, objectivity and truth, as we see in the extract above, it contains the suggestion that practical reason is not reducible to theoretical means-end reasoning, that it concerns feeling rather than belief, that we adopt the values of those whose conduct we "warm to".

There is also, it seems, an acknowledgement of perspectivism in Scruton's description of expression in a designed object as "an end in itself, *a value through which we perceive the world*" (my italics).[702] There is seemingly also a nod to cultural constructivism and even relativism in his suggestion that:

> The embodiment of moral truth in architectural form is an achievement, to be won afresh by the builder in the varied circumstances of day to day, working always with one eye on necessity, and with *one eye on the visual tradition from which his aesthetic sense derives*.[703] (my italics).

Elsewhere, Scruton suggests that whilst we are, as Rorty would say, born into a particular final vocabulary,[704] it is a mark of our personal freedom

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[702] *Ibid.*, p. 30.

[703] *Ibid.*, p. 232.

[704] See *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, p. 73: "All human beings carry about a set of words which they employ to justify their actions, their beliefs, and their lives [..] It is 'final' in the sense that if doubt is cast on the worth of these words, their user has no noncircular argumentative recourse [...] A small part of a final vocabulary is made up of thin, flexible, and ubiquitous terms such as 'true,' 'good,' 'right,' and 'beautiful.' The larger part contains thicker, more rigid, and more

and self-actualisation to exercise discernment in the values we adopt: "[I]n so far as there is a coherent ideal of human freedom, an ideal of something other than the mere loss of self in the pursuit of this or that desire", he writes, "it consists in the responsibility which a man may assume for his own self-realization, for the adoption in himself of those desires and aims to which he ascribes enduring value".[705] We should not then be, for Scruton, what Ballantyne terms a "hefted sheep", but rather attain freedom through critical self-actualisation. We are not merely repositories of values but rather have a role in choosing and shaping our values. Importantly, however, this description is not of a man rationally discovering values but rather of a man *bestowing* values.

We may further, it seems for Scruton, be exposed to a range of value systems and lifestyles which we may or may not "warm to". In choosing between modern and classical forms, he writes:

> [O]ne will also declare allegiance to one or other style of life; the true critical judgement must therefore involve the kind of comparison of life-style that I have been making. It is absurd to think that there could be an education of the aesthetic sense in these things which was not also an education of practical reason - that did not attempt to give some account, however sketchy, of satisfactions which are not simply matters of visual choice.[706]

Our design choices, then, reflect our allegiance to a particular lifestyle or value system: they are a reflection of the "club" to which we belong, in this case that of unfussy (Leftish) modernism or of traditional Conservativism.

At its most edifying, suggests Scruton, we cannot identify the end to which we are drawn, since – unlike the reductive, means-to-end processes of value engineering – this end may be something of which we are only dimly aware. Our pursuit of what expresses our end is an *immanent exercise* in furthering our awareness of it. Scruton therefore speaks of "the

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parochial terms, for example, 'Christ,' 'England,' 'professional standards,' [...] The more parochial terms do most of the work".

[705] *Ibid.*, p.226.

[706] *Ibid.*, p. 222.

appropriateness of one's action to purposes which it may not yet be possible to define"; that "the particular end of a course of conduct may not be given in advance of our engaging in it: it may have to be discovered, as it were, as we go along".[707] Whilst Scruton correctly notes that "animal" needs are most often easier to calculate and measure, the same is not true for value, which is:

> characterized not by its strength but by its depth, by the extent to which it brings order to experience. It is difficult to see how such a thing could be measured, or set against competing preferences as a single factor in some composite "design problem".[708]

That is, self-creation for Scruton is not a straightforward joining of a pre-existing club but may involve an esoteric process of feeling our way, following our nose, and judging to what extent values bring order to our experience.

"The Return of the Sophist" and the Old Language of Reason

Despite the above, Scruton is adamant that his theory is not an endorsement of relativism but rather one of Truth. In a 1997 article for *The Times* entitled "The Return of the Sophist", Scruton provides an impassioned argument against what he terms modern day "gurus", including Richard Rorty, Derrida, and Lyotard, accusing them of turning their backs on true philosophy and deliberately bewildering their audience for their own financial gain.[709]

The contrast Scruton constructs between true philosophers and his so-called sophists employs, ironically, highly rhetorical hyperbole and *ad*

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[707] *Ibid.*, p. 29.

[708] *Ibid.*

[709] Roger Scruton, "The Return of the Sophist", *The Times* (London, 11 August 1997). Reprinted in *Practical Philosophy*, 1.1, June 1998. Available at http://www.practical-philosophy.org.uk/journal/pdf/1-1%2006%20Scruton%20-%20Sophist.pdf [accessed 19 Feb 2021].

hominem arguments.[710] The original sophists were "a threat to the very soul of Athens"; their modern equivalents who are "back with a vengeance" mislead us with "cunning fallacies"; they are "fortune tellers" who are "all the more to be feared, in that they come disguised as philosophers" yet wish to exploit the bewildered by "squeezing their purse". They do not wish to help us but rather aim to "[prey] on human confusion". The true philosopher, in contrast:

> [helps] us to be what we are—free and rational beings, who lack nothing that is required to understand our condition [...]. For, in this time of helpless relativism and subjectivity, philosophy alone has stood against the tide, reminding us that those crucial distinctions on which life depends - between true and false, good and evil, right and wrong—are objective and binding.[711]

Scruton's article seeks to skewer its opponents not through soberly engaging with their relativism and attempting to discredit it, but rather through a sort of combative, rhetorical flagellation.

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[710] Although itself an *ad hominem* argument directed, this time, at Scruton himself, it is relevant to note that Scruton's suggestion that Rorty, Derrida and others are motivated by financial interests as they "make their profits through the university system" is particularly hypocritical – even nonsensical – since the claim is made in a newspaper article for which Scruton would have received a fee, and for which he had a greater incentive to write rhetorically. Indeed, Scruton himself was numerous times involved in media scandals, including revelations, following a leaked email, that he was receiving over £4,500 a month from a Japanese tobacco company – and requesting a £1000 top-up fee – in order to "place an article every two months in one or other of the WSJ [Wall Street Journal], the Times, the Telegraph, the Spectator, the Financial Times, the Economist, the Independent or the New Statesman". See Kevin Maguire and Julian Border, "Scruton in Media Plot to Push the Sale of Cigarettes", *The Guardian* (London, 24 January 2002). Available at https://www.theguardian.com/media/2002/jan/24/advertising.tobaccoadvertising [accessed 19 Feb 2021].

[711] *Ibid.*

The *Times* piece shares with *The Aesthetics of Architecture* an emotive defence of what Scruton considers as – perhaps even self-evidently – indispensable: Truth, Goodness, Rightness, Objectivity, Foundations. That is, Scruton's writing is couched within what Rorty terms the "old vocabulary":

> Those who speak the old language and have no wish to change, those who regard it as a hallmark of rationality or morality to speak just that language, will regard as altogether irrational the appeal of the new metaphors – the new language game which the radicals, the youth, or the avant-garde are playing. The popularity of the new ways of speaking will be viewed as a matter of "fashion" or "the need to rebel" or "decadence". The question of why people speak this way will be treated as beneath the level of conversation - a matter to be turned over to psychologists or, if necessary, the police. Conversely, from the point of view of those who are trying to use the new language, to literalize the new metaphors, those who cling to the old language will be viewed as irrational - as victims of passion, prejudice, superstition, the dead hand of the past, and so on.[712]

For Scruton, as suggested in the *Times* piece above, it is the timeless *vocabulary* of reason and rationality which is held in high esteem, even when no such evidence is provided for the existence of non-relative objective values, and even where such terms are used imprecisely.

Scruton, indeed, uses the terms rationality and objectivity in at least three different ways. Firstly, to distinguish between our "higher" cognition of meaning-making, and our "lower" sensual experience. Our architectural experience, he argues, depends on moral feelings and "an objective world of values beyond the pursuit of limited desires".[713] That human beings have such meaning-making capacity is not denied, however, by thinkers such as Rorty. The very argument that we are embedded in a final vocabulary or within a language game is an acknowledgement that our lives do not constitute an assortment of unrelated sensual experiences but rather are

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[712] Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, p. 48.

[713] Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Architecture*, p. 228.

shaped by concepts and values that, as Scruton says, "bring order to experience".

Secondly, Scruton uses the vocabulary of rationality to refer to the importance of giving *reasons,* in the manner outlined above regarding "oatmeal" feelings. "It is no mere whim", he writes, to make such judgements.[714] Taste, we are told, involves giving reasons: it is not a mere *preference* for this wine over the other. Again, however, it is not Rorty's contention that we are unable to give reasons for our judgements. On the contrary, it is that we are *adept* at such reasoning:

> The philosophers on either side can be counted on to support these opposing invocations of the reason-cause distinction by developing a moral psychology, or an epistemology, or a philosophy of language, which will put those on the other side in a bad light.[715]

For Rorty, we (including Scruton, therefore) are *all* sophists. Rorty's "ironist" does not reject Platonic Truth and Goodness in whimsical pursuit of other ends. Rather, Rorty's ironist argues that, for all the traditional talk philosophers have of Truth and Objective Good, they do not have any better access to culturally unmediated Truths and Objective Goods than does anybody else – "true philosopher" or not.

Thirdly, Scruton associates irrationality and relativism with "the superstition that any style, or any lack of it, will equally do".[716] Again, however, this is not Rorty's position. Rorty is not committed to the idea that all value systems, political theories, architectural styles or final vocabularies "will equally do". Indeed, as suggested by Chang above, to make such a claim would involve making a rational value judgement: a judgement that our options are equally satisfactory and it does not matter which we "pick". Rorty's contention, rather, is that:

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[714] *Ibid.,* p. 183.

[715] Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, p. 48.

[716] Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Architecture*, p. 235.

> For us ironists, nothing can serve as a criticism of a final vocabulary save another such vocabulary; there is no answer to a redescription save a re-re-redescription. Since there is nothing beyond vocabularies which serves as a criterion of choice between them, *criticism is a matter of looking on this picture and on that, not of comparing both pictures with the original.*(my italics)[717]

That is, for Rorty, there is no such thing as a "presuppositionless critical reflection, conducted in no particular language and outside of any particular historical context".[718] We cannot appeal to a Gods-eye view of our situation to find the Platonic Truth, located somehow outside of my final vocabulary and of yours.

"One consequence of this hodgepodge of rationality concepts", argues Gregory Wheeler, "is a pliancy in the attribution of irrationality that resembles Victorian methods for diagnosing the vapors. The time may have come to retire talk of rationality altogether".[719] If we discard Scruton's fevered references to rationality, irrationality and objectivity, however, there is little that proves a rational or universal basis for our values. His own support for the classical tradition rests on it being "all that building contains by way of decency, serenity and restraint".[720] However, he cannot and does not offer any non-rhetorical, rational basis for the values of "serenity and restraint" over Jonathan Meades' paean to "guts and attack". Those who disagree with his classical and conservative values, and with the vocabulary of traditional rationality, are rather – as Rorty suggests – merely treated as beneath the level of conversation, dismissed with *ad hominem* arguments, pathologised as perverse or corrupt.

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[717] Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, p. 80.

[718] *Ibid.*, p. 54.

[719] Gregory Wheeler, "Bounded Rationality", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.). Available at https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/bounded-rationality/ [accessed 11 August 2021].

[720] Scruton*, The Aesthetics of Architecture*, p. 235.

Ironically, however, if we overlook Scruton's vocabulary of "rationality" and "objectivity", the substance of *The Aesthetics of Architecture*, in large part, is coherent with a Rortian position. For example, following a detailed defence of the importance of building facades, Scruton suggests that a building without a façade is a building without a face, without expression, without life: "*So, at least, it might be argued*" (my italics).[721] He hopes, he writes, that his argument in favour of facades shows that the question "has lost some of its air of 'subjectivity'", is "accessible to rational thought", that such questions "may avail themselves of thought and perceptions which all rational beings might be brought to share".[722] Elsewhere, Scruton invites his reader to "deduce, from our reflections some suitable apologetic for his favourite style".[723]

Under Rorty's relativism, we may give coherent and consistent reasons for our views; these views may often be part of a wider value system shared by others; we may have more complex, meaning-making abilities than other animals; we may even prefer some options over others. However, for Rorty there is no shared common ground, and no Platonic ideal with which differing viewpoints can be compared. It is a hermeneutics rather than an epistemology:

> Epistemology sees the hope of agreement as a token of the existence of common ground which, perhaps unbeknown to the speakers, unites them in a common rationality. For hermeneutics, to be rational is to be willing to refrain from epistemology-from thinking that there is a special set of terms in which all contributions to the conversation should be put [...] For hermeneutics, inquiry is routine conversation. Epistemology views the participants as united in what Oakeshott calls an universitas -a group united by mutual interests in achieving a common end. Hermeneutics views them as united in what he calls a societas-persons whose paths through life have fallen together, united

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[721] *Ibid.*, p. 234.

[722] *Ibid.*

[723] Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Architecture*, p. 235.

by civility rather than by a common goal, much less by a common ground.[724]

In Scruton's account, there are two spheres: confused, incoherent individual desires and impulses, on the one hand, and rational, *universal* human values, on the other. In Rorty's account, in contrast:

> We should learn to brush aside questions like "How do you know that freedom is the chief goal of social organization?" in the same way as we brush aside questions like "How do you know that Jones is worthy of your friendship?" or "How do you know that Yeats is an important poet, Hegel an important philosopher, and Galileo an important scientist?" We should see allegiance to social institutions as no more matters for justification by reference to familiar, commonly accepted premises - but also as no more arbitrary - than choices of friends or heroes.[725]

Scruton's reasons and rationality seem confined to explaining the reasoning *within* his own final vocabulary rather than *between* final vocabularies; to presenting a constellation of conservative and classical ideas, how it all "hangs together". However, should we ask, "How do you know that serenity and restraint constitute 'all that is good in architecture'?" Scruton's account has little to offer save for rhetoric, insult and reasons which fall short of the very foundations it craves.

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[724] Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and The Mirror of Nature* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 318.

[725] Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, p. 54.

Part Four: Bounded Decision-Making

The Middle Ground: Subjective and Objective Rationality

For Ullmann-Margolit and Rorty, whilst we may feel ungrounded by this lack of foundation to our values, we are not forever condemned to a paralysis of indecision. For Ullman-Margolit:

> Classical Newtonian physics holds good and valid for middle-sized objects, but not for the phenomena of the very little, micro, sub-atomic level or the very large, macro, outer-space level [...] Similarly, *I suggest that we might think of the theory of decisionmaking as relating to middle-sized, ordinary decisions, and to them only.* (my italics).[726]

Similarly, for Rorty:

> [W]e should stop talking in a quasi-metaphysical style about the "task of the writer" or "what ultimately matters", or the "highest emotion"; *stop working at the level of abstraction populated by such pallid ghosts as "human life", "art", and "morality"; and stay in a middle range. We should stick to questions about what works for particular purposes* (my italics).[727]

The distinction made here resembles Horkheimer's distinction between subjective and objective rationality. The former concerns the rationality of the means to our ends ("what works for particular purposes"), where these ends are taken to be self-interested preferences. In contrast, notes Horkheimer:

> When the idea of reason was conceived, it was intended to achieve more than a mere regulation of the relation between means and ends:

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[726] Ullmann-Margolit, "Big Decisions", p. 157.

[727] Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, p. 148.

it was regarded as the instrument for understanding the ends, for *determining them*[728]

Objective rationality – the rationality Horkheimer identifies with Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, and which is lauded by Scruton – invites discussion on the rationality of the ends we seek.

For Hume, in contrast, there are only two ways in which a preference or passion could be considered unreasonable: first, if it is "founded on the supposition of the existence of objects, which really do not exist" and second, "When in exerting any passion in action, we chuse means insufficient for the design'd end, and deceive ourselves in our judgment of causes and effects".[729] Both considerations – the latter explicitly, the former implicitly – relate solely to the matter of whether it is rationally possible to achieve this end and, "Where a passion is neither founded on false suppositions, nor chuses means insufficient for the end, the understanding can neither justify nor condemn it".[730]

That is, for Hume, it may be irrational for me to insist on buying my childhood home if this home has been demolished; irrational, too – if I cannot afford to pay for it – to believe that I may obtain the house through "cosmic ordering" or "positive visualisation". However, my preference to buy my small, poorly-located, "objectively" ugly childhood home rather than a large, well-located, attractive – but sentimentally unvalued – house, is not an end that can be subjected to rational judgement or dismissed as irrational. Similarly, if through a value engineering process a client decides that they wish to spend the majority of their building and landscaping

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[728] Max Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2004), p. 6.

[729] David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888), p. 416.

[730] *Ibid.*

budget on a Jeff Koons balloon dog, the decision, for Hume, may be surprising but not irrational.[731]

Photo removed

Photo removed for copyright reasons. It showed Jeff Koons' orange balloon dog in a garden setting.

Available to view online by clicking below:
https://i.ytimg.com/vi/dYahe1-isH4/maxresdefault.jpg
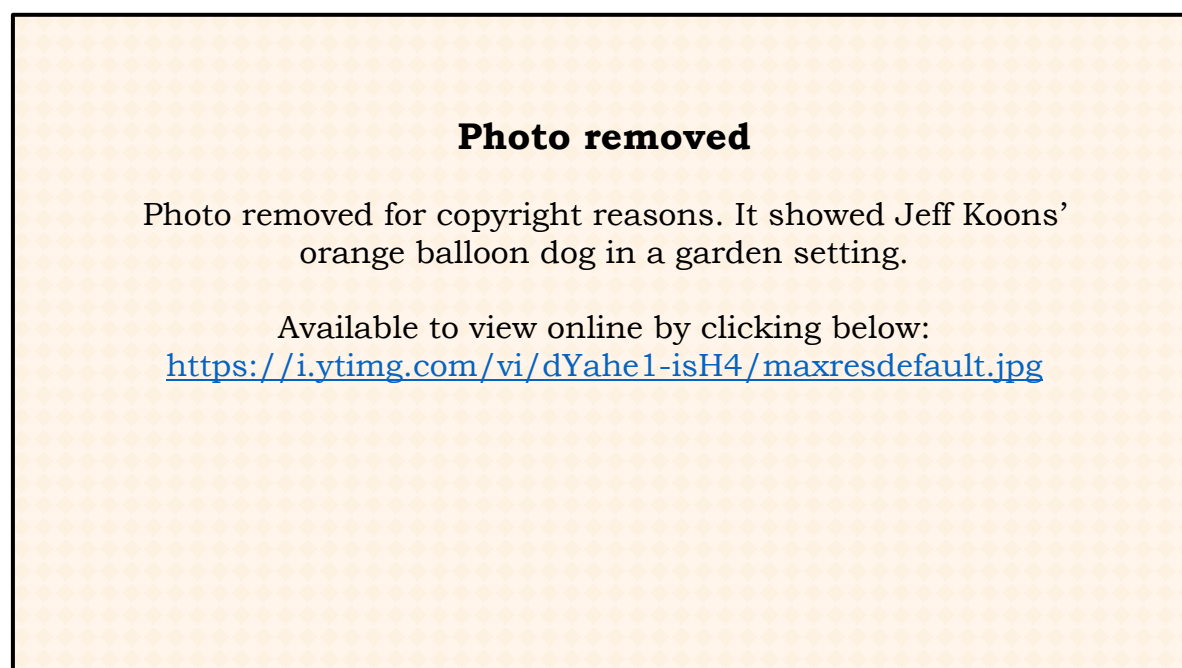
Figure 94: Costly, but not irrational, garden sculpture: Jeff Koons' Orange Balloon Dog (Sold in 2013 for $58.4m).[732]

Horkheimer criticises subjective reason for advocating a decision-making process based on utility, usefulness, and self-interest, but as the examples above indicate, a focus on means to ends rather than the ends themselves

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[731] It is worth noting that this assessment of rationality may vary depending on our final ends. If I want to buy my childhood home because I think that sentiment and nostalgia will give me lifelong purpose and meaning, we may, in a Humean sense, argue that my means are insufficient to meet my ends.

[732] Jeff Koons, *Balloon Dog (Orange),* mirror-polished stainless steel with transparent colour coating, 1994-2000, private collection. See also Daisy Wyatt, "Jeff Koons' Balloon Dog sells for Record $58m Along with Francis Bacon's Freud Portraits", *The Independent* (independent.co.uk, 13 Nov 2013). Available at https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/news/jeff-koons-balloon-dog-sells-for-record-58m-along-with-francis-bacon-s-freud-portraits-8936712.html [accessed Nov 2021].

does not in itself dictate that the ends sought will be practical, reductive or even self-interested. Indeed, to refer to Hume's own, oft cited, examples:

> Tis not contrary to reason to prefer the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my finger. Tis not contrary to reason for me to chuse my total ruin, to prevent the least uneasiness of an Indian or person wholly unknown to me.`Tis as little contrary to reason to prefer even my own acknowledge'd lesser good to my greater, and have a more ardent affection for the former than the latter. A trivial good may, from certain circumstances, produce a desire superior to what arises from the greatest and most valuable enjoyment; nor is there any thing more extraordinary in this, than in mechanics to see one pound weight raise up a hundred by the advantage of its situation.[733]

That is, whilst subjective reason is often coupled with increasing material self interest, it is compatible too with "monkish" self-denial and wanton material destruction.

The important point, however, is this: a lack of foundations for our final values does not mean we are all at sea, in a hopeless quandary where all choices are equally good and equally bad. Rather, for those uncontroversial, middle-ground decisions, our so-called rational choice works fine, much in the way that decisions about light bulbs and concrete mixtures work fine within the models of value engineering. Subjective rationality, the rationality of the "middle ground" will – most of the time – allow me to choose my lunch, my mobile phone, my lawn mower, my next library book. My end is accepted; I concern myself with the means, I "stick to questions about what works for particular purposes".

Covering Considerations and the Choice of What Matters

Despite Chang's quest to salvage rational decision-making, her theory also settles upon a version of subjective rather than objective rationality, allowing that abstract values cannot be straightforwardly compared. To compare abstract values such as beauty and knowledge, argues Chang, we

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[733] *Ibid.*

would need to compare all their instantiations across all possible worlds. Even if this were possible, she suggests, this is not what interests us. What we care about, she argues, is not *abstract* comparisons of *abstract* values in *possible* worlds unlike our own but rather *concrete* instantiations of these values in *our own world.*

The abstract values of happiness and gustatory pleasure may be incomparable, suggests Chang, but we can compare particulars: the happiness of achieving a lifelong goal versus the gustatory pleasure of a lukewarm cup of coffee. These instantiations, she writes, can be compared with reference to a "covering consideration" such as which contributes most to individual wellbeing in at least one possible world, i.e. our own.[734]

Even if such comparisons were effective, however, they are limited in their justificatory power, or as reasons for action, since the covering consideration itself has not been awarded value. Nietzsche at least, we have seen, believed that pursuit of wellbeing "makes man ridiculous and contemptible".

Furthermore, selecting the covering consideration itself is fraught with difficulty. We may seek a concrete comparison between American liberty and Swedish equality but would need an acceptable and relevant covering condition to satisfy both sides and refer to "what matters":

> Practical reason guarantees that once what matters in a choice is determined, the alternatives will be bearers of what matters in the choice between them, in that choice situation.[735]

Chang acknowledges, however, that "what matters" may not be given or objective: our situations are subject to interpretation. I may consider myself in a situation where what matters is making progress on a modest philosophical issue, she writes, but perhaps my situation should be that I am working to combat world hunger, and what matters is alleviating suffering. We can paint the picture different ways:

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[734] Chang, "Value Incomparability and Incommensurability", p. 211.

[735] *Ibid.*, p. 216.

> Given the extant circumstances of the universe, we have, in some sense, a "choice" as to which situation we "find ourselves in". Exactly how this "choice" proceeds is something I set aside here.[736]

Nonetheless, Chang argues that rational decision-making is dependent upon us first setting the parameters of our "situation" and deciding "which values *should* matter". As such:

> [N]ormative relations among values are always relativized to a "closed system", that is, to "what matters most" in the situation in which they are related.[737]

Chang's model of rational deliberation in value judgements therefore proceeds through subjective rather than objective reason. It concerns the "relation between means and ends" rather than being "the instrument for understanding the ends, for *determining them".*

To take an example from the built environment, I may consider myself to be in a situation in which I am choosing materials for a new driveway for my house, where what matters is the durability of the material, its aesthetic appeal, the cost, etc. An environmental campaigner may suggest that the sustainability and carbon footprint of the material also matters. An anti-consumerist campaigner may argue that my decision to resurface my driveway is driven by false-consciousness – no such need exists. I may therefore find myself in the position not merely of justifying my choice of driveway but rather of justifying why I need a new driveway at all: why I have considered myself to be in the selection situation that I have created for myself. In doing so, however, I am likely to fall back upon frameworks, values and language games which are themselves unsupported.

Moreover, whilst Chang insists that incomparability always involves reference to a covering consideration, there is an intuitive sense in which,

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[736] Chang, "All Things Considered", *Philosophical Perspectives* Vol. 18, Ethics (2004), pp. 1-22 (p. 13).

[737] *Ibid.*, p. 11.

when we complain that we cannot compare Sweden's model of equality to America's model of liberty, we are not complaining that we have – somewhat implausibly – mutually come to an agreement about which *third* value best represents "the chief goal of social organisation" and yet remain frustrated that Swedish equality and American freedom are incomparable with reference to it. Rather, it is here simply the case that should a Swedish politician claim that equality is the chief goal and "what matters", and an American that "freedom" is the chief goal and what matters, a "closed system" of the type described by Chang cannot be created.

When *Others* Choose What Situation We're In

Despite offering some paradigm cases of choosing and picking, Ullmann-Margolit and Morgenbesser conclude that whether or not we pick or choose is context-dependent. It may depend, they argue, on factors such as our own character (and our approach to perfectionism and risk-taking) and on how the situation is presented to us.[738] They argue, "one of the major aims of commercial advertising is that of preventing people from mere haphazard picking". The active ingredients in many toiletries and cosmetics are often identical, they note, yet branding creates less tangible differences between products which are presented as "relevant to our own desires".[739]

Such preconceived choice situations are present also in political rhetoric and media reporting. In his account of the early planning for the Wales Millennium Stadium and national opera house (now the Wales Millennium Centre), for example, Robert Croydon notes that Welsh local

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[738] We may resort to picking, they suggest, in situations we would normally think it appropriate to "choose": if we whittle down our choice of a spouse, a child's name, or a new house such that we are "either practically indifferent between them or else downright incapable of weighing the relevant differences between them against each other" then we may, they suggest, reasonably resort to picking. Ullmann-Margolit and Morgenbesser, p. 778.

[739] *Ibid.*, p. 782-3.

media consistently presented the two projects as in competition with one another, with BBC Wales' news programme, *Wales Today*, even conducting a telephone poll encouraging the public to vote for one project or the other. This was, Croydon writes, nonetheless a "false choice": there was no reason that both projects could not have secured the funding they sought; it was not a zero-sum game.[740]

The press also published many letters from "irate readers" arguing that lottery money should not be spent on opera houses but rather on hospitals and education. Such arguments were not, notes Croydon, similarly levelled against funding the sports stadium. The schools and hospitals argument, then, is one that is deployed inconsistently to ensure that "architectural aspiration is weighed against wider social need", following a "predictable and familiar pattern in arguments about arts funding".[741]

On the topic of abortion, Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez recently wrote that:

> When politicians use faith as an excuse to pass and uphold laws that seize control of people's bodies but not guarantee them healthcare, feed the poor, shelter the homeless, or welcome the stranger, you have to wonder if it's really about faith at all.[742]

Similarly, the whataboutery of the schools and hospitals argument is inconsistently deployed: never far away in discussion of arts funding, but rarely invoked against sports funding, agricultural subsidies, arms funding, corporate tax breaks, or many other of the potential candidates for raising further funds for education and hospitals.

It is particularly important to reformulate the choice situation since the "false choice" between arts funding and health funding does not reflect any political position: for the Right, public health funding would ideally be low and public arts funding minimal or non-existent; for the Left, public

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[740] Croydon, pp. 223-4.

[741] *Ibid.*

[742] Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Twitter post, 13 October 2020. Available at https://twitter.com/AOC [accessed 19 Feb 2021].

health funding would be higher, and arts funding, and other "non-essentials" may also be funded in an effort to achieve what Keynes describes as "a satisfactory way of life". There is no mainstream theory which openly argues for the funding of what Carroll terms "beneficence" at the expense of core welfare, and yet Carroll's argument suggests this to be the case: "Some might argue that the state has such obligations, but only after it has discharged all of its welfare obligations - no money for paintings until all the needy are assisted. Personally, I find this viewpoint compelling in our present circumstances".[743]

That the US has state funding for the arts even whilst it has many people with inadequate healthcare provision does not reflect a particular theory of political justification, however, but rather reflects the machinations of Realpolitik. The Left supports funded programmes aimed at raising living standards, yet such measures are often hugely costly and/or – as with Obamacare – politically sensitive. Depending on which party controls the presidency and parliaments, and for how long, certain policies may be politically viable, what William James might call a "live option", and certain policies may be dead in the water. Public funding interventions in the arts and aesthetics are often more readily available precisely because they represent small budget expenditures. In short: in the US it is easier for the Left to secure agreement for minimal arts funding than to secure agreement for a national health service. In such circumstances, "no money for paintings until all the needy are assisted", makes little sense.

Support for improving the aesthetics of the built environment must therefore be made not within the framing that has been created by its detractors – which demands that aesthetic value and "beneficence" be justified in reductive terms and be unnecessarily compared with core public services – but rather from within a sympathetic framing which has room for such values. As argued in Chapter Five, attempting to justify aesthetic value in the built environment from within conventional framings of public debate most often concedes too much at the outset in accepting the foundations on

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[743] Carroll, "Government Funding of the Arts", p. 26.

which the choice situation has been framed: small-state capitalism, classical economics, reductive enframing, and the populism of Weber's "bad democracy".

Conclusion

The language and processes of bureaucracy privilege arguments presented in quantitative and objective terms. This may work well for mid-level decision-making, where our aims are taken for granted or previously agreed upon and our choices are, as Chang puts it, "relativized to a 'closed system'". In such a system, we can "choose" in Ullmann-Margolit's sense, which building development is no more than x metres high, or which is the closest to being carbon neutral. Whilst less quantitative, our mid-level decision-making can similarly make use of regulatory aims and expectations, such as those mentioned in the country house clause ("exceptional quality"; "significantly enhance its immediate setting").

Scruton's rhetorical presentation of Rortian relativism suggests that, in rejecting the idea of absolute foundations for our values, we are unable or unwilling to string chains of reasons together, to set and meet targets, or even to "declare allegiance" to a particular way of life. The relativist, for Scruton, merely throws darts at a board before deciding what to do, and shrugs her shoulders when asked what her values are. However, as argued above, Rorty's view allows that we make sense of our experience through adopting values (or "final vocabularies") that bring order to our experience; it allows that we are able to give reasons for our actions;[744] and it is comfortable with the use of subjective reasoning for mid-level decision-making where we concentrate on "what works for particular purposes".

A problem for discussions of architectural improvement, however, is the suggestion that a) individual aims and targets can be made commensurable to deliver an objective overall outcome and/or that b) the

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[744] There would, however, for Rorty be no external *foundation* shoring up the Truth of such reasons, even if our reasoning may fit together neatly within a more complex theory or point of view

values implicated in our mid-level decision-making can rest on absolute, language-independent foundations. As argued by Chang, though, there is no convincing account of our ability to reduce discrete values into a common currency of commensurable values (limiting the scope of procedures such as cost-benefit analysis). Presented with the option of two building developments, each of which has a variety of pros and cons, we have no means of translating, for example, economic, environmental and aesthetic benefits, into dollar-carbon-beauty-commensurate utiles. This cannot, then, be the means by which we make our planning decisions or by which we attempt to support the value of architectural aesthetics.

Similarly, Scruton offers no non-rhetorical, "objectively rational" support – in Horkheimer's sense – for his own conservative value foundations. Rather, Scruton writes in terms that Rorty himself would not object to: of "*declar[ing] allegiance* to one or other style of life";[745] of encountering "dispositions *towards which one 'warms'*"; of "value[s] *through which* we perceive the world"; "the visual tradition *from which* his aesthetic sense derives"; "desires and aims to which he *ascribes* enduring value". Scruton's conceptions of Rationality, Truth and Objectivity are best understood then, as Rorty argues, as part of a traditional vocabulary which skewers the claims of relativism with a shifting notion of rationality without offering access to the "objective and binding" absolutes it defends.

We may use the means-end reasoning outlined above to identify, for example, which roofing material best suits a building's climate – a decision made in a closed system where we have already decided "what matters", and indeed may have the means to measure it. However, faced with the question of *how we know* that architectural aesthetics is important, of *why* we should improve the aesthetics of deprived neighbourhoods, why we should spend public money on aspirational architecture instead of schools and hospitals, how we can justify curbing freedoms by prohibiting certain building

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[745] Rorty too uses the term "allegiance" to describe our relationship to social institutions.

modifications – all of which are part of public debate on architectural aesthetics – our means-end reasoning and mid-level decision-making will struggle to produce a *non-relative* response. So too will we struggle to explain why it is irrational, rather than simply unappealing, for someone to reject the value of Sepänmaa's "beautiful living environment and a rich cultural and art life" or Keynes' "parks, squares, fountains, theaters, schools, and galleries".

As argued in the previous chapter, then, we are back with the division between Right and Left: regulatory interventions, direct public funding, and the establishment of arms-length design bodies are coherent with the ideals of the Left, somewhat coherent with One-Nation Conservativism, and not at all coherent with the doctrines of the neo-liberal Right. Any attempt to justify measures to improve the aesthetics of the built environment "by presuppositionless critical reflection, conducted in no particular language and outside of any particular historical context" – or political context – is a non-starter. It is to the matter of how architectural aesthetics is impacted by an absence of value foundations, and a pluralism of public values, that the final chapter now turns.

Chapter Eight: Architectural Policy for a Dream Country

[Y]ou cannot urge national political renewal on the basis of descriptions of fact. You have to describe the country in terms of what you passionately hope it will become, as well as in terms of what you know it to be now. You have to be loyal to a dream country.[746]

Richard Rorty, *Achieving Our Country*

Scruton's theory has a key attraction: if value is objective and universal we have theoretical hope of universal objective agreement. For Scruton, "Values indicate what is worthwhile, not just for me, here, now, but for *anyone*" (my italics).[747] Such commonality would allow governments to create policies accepted by all, using value judgements as appropriate for one citizen as for the next. For Scruton, "everyone has reason to acquire" an appreciation of aesthetics and it is "inconceivable" to lack an aesthetic impulse.[748] Classical architecture, meanwhile, is *objectively* rather than subjectively "the perfect representative of all that is good in building".[749]

However, as noted by Carroll, "In pluralist societies-such as we envision modern democracies to be-that which constitutes human good over and above welfare goods is essentially contested".[750] For the liberal Richard

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[746] Rorty, *Achieving Our Country*, p. 101.

[747] Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Architecture*, p. 226.

[748] *Ibid.*, p. 220.

[749] Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Architecture*, p. 235.

[750] Carroll, "Government Funding of the Arts", p. 26.

Rorty aesthetics is *not* equally valuable to everyone. A writer such as Nabokov considers aesthetic experience "the highest form of consciousness", he notes, while Orwell is motivated by social reform:

> [Aesthetic bliss] was certainly what it behooved people like Nabokov to strive for, but [...] other people with other gifts - people whose brains are not wired up to produce [aesthetic] tingles, but who are, for example, good at producing shudders of moral indignation - might reasonably strive for their own form of perfection.[751]

Under pluralist liberalism what is worthwhile for me, here, now, may just be that: it may not be good for *everyone.*

This final chapter asks how we may proceed once value pluralism is accepted, when we have given up the pursuit of non-political, purely rational foundations for improving aesthetics in the built environment. Firstly, it considers (and rejects) Noël Carroll's argument that value pluralism compels governments to avoid interventions in matters of higher-level flourishing. Such interventions, I argue, can be justified democratically. Secondly, it considers (and rejects) the Tiebout Model, a market-based solution to value pluralism which encourages pockets of like-minded people to cluster in like-minded economic communities. Aside from being practically unworkable, I argue, the model encourages political and cultural polarisation. Engaging with alternative perspectives is key for Rortian relativism, supported in the previous chapter. For Rorty, whilst there is no Platonic Truth, we may consider options side by side, expand our points of reference. Thirdly, then, I explore how a Rortian relativism can challenge systemic causes of failed architecture. The value of aesthetics is not here rationally "proven" but rather promoted within a vision of ideal society. Finally, I argue that design itself is a means by which we explore and experiment with value systems, and actualise them in material form.

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[751] Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, p. 151.

Part One: Noël Carroll, Scorched Earth, and Legitimacy Through Democracy

Carroll's Scorched Earth Public Goods Policy

For Carroll, a government cannot offer equal support to countless ideas of the good life, so should offer *none at all*:

> Suppose skateboard racers wanted a national stadium. Does that seem to be something for which the state should pay by levying taxes on the rest of us? Obviously, even wilder examples could be concocted- hopscotch stadia, a coliseum for Bocci Ball, a national gallery of toothpick sculpture. The advancement of the leisure professions may just not be an area the state should enter at all.[752]

Carroll's is a scorched earth approach to public value echoing the distrust of "merit" goods discussed in Chapter Six. Any good not valued by *everybody* is considered an intrusion of value judgements into the pluralism of the liberal state.[753]

Carroll's argument here is deceptively radical and theoretically purist. In practical terms, most liberal states do provide higher-level public goods over and above basic welfare. The problem of pluralism is dealt with primarily by offering core public goods which are *broad* and *flexible*. Public libraries are not specialised but rather cater for a range of ages, interests

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[752] Carroll, "Government Funding of the Arts", p. 31.

[753] "If the state, given conditions of scarce resources, promotes some goods rather than others, it is unjustifiably favoring the proponents of one good over the proponents of a rival good who may, in fact, deny that the good so favored is a good at all". Carroll, "Government Funding of the Arts", p. 26.

and education levels; public parks can be used by the young and old, by skateboarders, bike-riders, and hopscotch enthusiasts; community centres host children's soft play and bridge clubs. On a larger scale, sports stadia are used for pop concerts; opera houses for children's shows; and a majority of publicly-funded galleries and theatres offer outreach and education.

Carroll's approach, however, would require the closure or any and all such public facilities which cannot command *universal* use and admiration. If we do not *all* wish to use the tennis courts and do not *all* wish to admire the rose garden, then tennis courts and rose gardens should be removed from public parks. Indeed, if we do not *all* wish to visit the public park then the park itself may be, for Carroll, unjustified. Carroll's, then, is a bonfire of beneficences. We cut off our noses to spite our faces and leave the matter of personal flourishing solely to the vagaries of the free market.

Carroll's *reductio ad absurdum* furthermore suggests that we have no sensible means of discriminating between competing demands for public funding: regular public libraries are to be treated the same as libraries devoted solely to Harry Potter books. In practice, however, states, local authorities, and charitable trusts have a range of criteria for such discrimination. It is for this reason that we do not have hopscotch stadia and toothpick galleries. Such criteria, however, operate within Rorty's pragmatic "middle-ground", using subjective reasoning to ascertain what works for particular purposes such as "increasing adult literacy", "preserving our built heritage", "maintaining a world-class football team". Carroll's examples strike us as absurd since they sit outside of any graspable means of justification.

In the end, there is no obvious reason – beyond a commitment to simplicity or purity – to prefer Carroll's stripped back offering to a messier, contested, yet broadly functioning system of public funding. Public funding for arts, sports, and other interests supports the liberal ideal of what Mill termed "experiments in living",[754] and von Humboldt's assertion – in a passage used as an epigraph by Mill – that social organisation aims at "the

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[754] John Stuart Mill, quoted in Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, And Solidarity*, p. 45.

absolute and essential importance of human development in its richest diversity".[755] Small state capitalism, in contrast, would withhold investment in human development, denying (primarily poor) people of resources which would otherwise contribute to self-realisation.

Private and Public Values

For Rorty, in contrast:

> I want to replace this with a story of increasing willingness to live with plurality and to stop asking for universal validity. I want to see freely arrived at agreement as agreement on how to accomplish common purposes (e.g., prediction and control of the behavior of atoms or people, equalizing life-chances, decreasing cruelty), but I want to see these common purposes against the background of an increasing sense of the radical diversity of private purposes, of the radically poetic character of individual lives, and of the merely poetic foundations of the "we-consciousness" which lies behind our social institutions.[756]

For Rorty, then, we have private purposes and we have common purposes.

Importantly, however, our common purposes are not simply a populist tally of majority opinion on this or that matter. Rather, the common values of Rorty's liberal are those which refer to a vision of our country's values, which may or may not be those currently holding sway or underpinning our institutions. They refer to the (potentially unrealised) self-realisation of a country, "what you passionately hope it will become".

Rorty's separation here between private and public values allows him to make the familiar liberal argument that certain visions of private perfection and personal value should remain private. Religions, sub-cultures and "private obsessions" are, for Rorty, matters for private life. "We liberals", as Rorty would say, do not wish to see a country's public funding and regulation policies dictated by the idiosyncrasies of a despot's personal value

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[755] Wilhelm von Humboldt, quoted in Rorty, *Achieving Our Country*, p. 23.

[756] Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, p. 67.

system, or architectural policies based on the preferred styles of a monarch: such an approach treats a whole country as a vanity project.

Rorty's notion of a private/public value split may help us in our response to Carroll. That is, there is no inconsistency in accepting plurality and diversity whilst also believing in the promotion of "equalizing life chances", where such an equality refers to the sort of beneficence and flourishing of which Carroll is so suspicious. In addition to our own idiosyncratic or sub-cultural hopes and dreams, we may hold also a public, political vision of the country to which we belong: this public vision may include the value of equalising citizens' capacity for self-realisation, or it may involve the value of radical negative freedom and non-intervention.

Classical free-market economic theory focuses on our private hopes and dreams rather than our hopes and dreams for our country. However, there is no contradiction in my pursuing my own self-realisation, and holding dear my own "aesthetic bliss", while also holding dear a vision of a country in which there is equality of opportunity for all. I am not compelled to deny others their sports facilities simply because these facilities are unnecessary for my own private perfection. I do not need to obstinately refuse public interventions in the aesthetics of the built environment simply because I, personally, am little affected by the quality of my environment, or because – perhaps more likely – I have the funds to buy myself a pleasant one. Similarly, I do not need to *personally* value all publicly funded buildings, or enjoy all publicly funded books in order to support their existence. I may value them, rather, as part of a public commitment to supporting equality of self-realisation, or artistic experimentation, or diversity of lifestyle.

Small state, libertarian politics, however, which argues for maximising market freedom and minimising state intervention may indeed take into account public values. These values may be presented as natural, necessary, or objective, and yet – since no objective foundations are or can be offered to demonstrate why non-intervention in matters of social justice is always preferable to intervention – non-intervention still constitutes an "unjustified" foundational belief, a particular vision of what should be, for

Americans, "our country's principal goal": in this case individual freedom rather than, for Rorty, social justice.

An important facet of public justification in liberal political theories is that, whilst the public deserves reasons – rather than whims – when coercive regulations are implemented, we do not all require the *same* reasons for endorsement. The public justification principle itself states that:

> A coercive law *L* is justified in a public *P* if and only if each member *i* of *P* has sufficient reason(s) R_i to endorse *L*.[757]

And yet, writes Kevin Vallier:

> The generality of the principle, which permits individuals 1 and 2, for example, to have different reasons to endorse *L*, means that, on some accounts, it is not the reasons which are public, in the sense of shared among all members of *P*.[758]

Any theory of justification which limits itself to private concerns and values, and ignores public concerns and values, will under-estimate the extent to which people may freely and happily endorse certain measures which – whilst not reflecting or furthering their own personal values – nonetheless reflect and further their public values.

Carroll's implication, above, that it would be unreasonable for "the rest of us" to help pay for a national skateboard stadium relies in part, as argued above, upon a straw man argument. It asks us to imagine our world as it is, and probes our intuition as to whether it seems reasonable for our taxes to be spent on such a project. Our intuition will likely tell us that it's not: skateboarding contests do not require the vast space of a stadium ground; it is primarily a participatory rather than a spectator sport; even

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[757] Kevin Vallier, "Public Justification", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.). Available at https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/justification-public/ [accessed 19 Feb 2021].

[758] *Ibid.*

should such a need arise, there are already general-use sports stadia which could be used.

The argument also relies, however, upon the suggestion that it is unreasonable for taxpayers ever to pay for goods and services which do not benefit them *personally* – regardless of how well they may benefit others, contribute to human development and flourishing, or increase equality of opportunity. Why should *we* pay for *his/her* flourishing? Carroll asks us. The existence of the Left and of socialist democracies such as Sweden, however, demonstrates that many taxpayers are happy to support measures that contribute to actualising a utopian vision of public value. Such public values are not solely present in the purist "Marxian utopias" Carroll mentions in his introduction, but are present also in many mainstream, centrist theories of what Rorty terms the reformist Left.

The legitimacy of government interventions to improve the built environment, therefore, need not depend solely on individual valuing of aesthetics. It is not necessary for all citizens to recognise and support aesthetic value to the same degree or in the same manner. More specifically, we do not need to justify each publicly-funded building by arguing that its appeal and value are universally applicable either in general terms of stylistic influence or in more specific terms regarding the idiosyncrasies of the work itself. Indeed, to do so would risk populism and mediocrity.

Populism, Direct Democracy and Public Justification Theory

Citizens may have a variety of reasons for supporting public improvements to the built environment. They include:

- Self interest: if I value aesthetics and will benefit from any improvements
- So-called "option value": if I do not currently access/appreciate aesthetic value in the built environment but would like the option of doing so in the future

- What Peacock refers to as "inter-dependent utility functions, so that individual satisfaction may be derived from the fact that others, notably their children or friends, may enjoy cultural events".[759]
- Rorty's related notion of public value: supporting measures that contribute to equality of opportunity and the self-realisation of others in my country.

Whilst Carroll allows that arts funding gains legitimacy if a majority of people *directly* support it, he does not consider the possibility that a population may *implicitly* endorse it through voting for a political party which stands for equality of opportunity, high levels of beneficent welfare, and the promotion of diverse lifestyles and interests. Our democracy, that is, is not direct democracy. A government does not (or should not) make decisions merely by consulting YouGov polls.

Indeed, public justification theory dismisses populism on the grounds of practicality and desirability since populist views "take citizens as they are [...] irrespective of their epistemic pockmarks", existing beliefs and flawed reasoning.[760] Public justification theorists rather *radically idealise* a population to "rid them of inconsistencies and ignorance". Measures are not justified if they are supported by an imperfect, actual population but rather are justified if this population were hypothetically granted perfect reasoning and information.[761]

Legitimacy for aesthetic intervention in the built environment, then, may depend not on whether we will literally perish without it (we will not), nor on whether an entire population has a single idea of private flourishing. Rather, it depends on the broader public values for which the public have voted, and whether or not such interventions are coherent with these values.

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[759] Peacock, p. 1133.

[760] Christopher J. Eberle, quoted in Vallier, *op. cit.*

[761] Vallier, *op. cit.*

If the electorate votes for a Third Way left-wing party such as New Labour, therefore, the government may claim a mandate to establish the sorts of edifying and improving arms-length bodies promoted by Keynes. If the electorate votes for a small-state Thatcherite Conservative party the government similarly may claim a mandate to *abolish* such arms-length bodies. Indeed, this is precisely the trajectory of the UK's aforementioned Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) which was established in 1999 under Tony Blair's New Labour government and abolished in 2010 under David Cameron's Conservative government.

As such, the "sophistry" of Keynes and the "rhetoric" of Rorty are precisely aimed at winning support from the electorate, at presenting a value framework which has broad appeal since, "only a rhetoric of commonality can forge a winning majority in national elections".[762] Rorty's agenda gains political legitimacy through being voted for by a winning majority, not by being proven with reference to a Platonic Truth.

Whilst the terms "state" and "government" are sometimes used interchangeably, their roles, and legitimacy, differ.[763] Thus, for Habermas the legitimacy of actions undertaken by state bureaucracies stems precisely from their connection to the democratically elected. As summarised by Max Cherem:

> The thought is that the political community should "program" and direct the institutions of the administrative complex, not the other way around (BFN 356). If the state or other powerful actors reverse this flow by simply positing new laws or rules and either demanding compliance or inducing it in some other way, then this exercise of

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[762] Rorty, *Achieving Our Country*, p. 101.

[763] "[S]tates are juridical entities of the international legal system; governments are the exclusive legally coercive organizations for making and enforcing certain group decisions. Arguably, ambiguity regarding the referents of these terms has hindered the development of state theory and even made it unclear what the 'theory of the state' is supposed to explain". Edward Heath Robinson, "The Distinction Between State and Government", *Geography Compass*, Volume 7, Issue 8 (August, 2013), pp. 556-566 (p. 556).

non-communicative administrative-bureaucratic power would be neither legitimate nor stable.[764]

Bureaucratic procedures gain legitimacy to the extent that they are programmed by and coherent with the values of the elected government. Rather than expecting national or local authority planning departments, then, to make "neutral", value-less decisions, we may allow that the political community may direct planning policies. As argued by Susan and Norman Fainstein, "While the planner himself may not be a political figure, an enacted urban plan constitutes the substance of a political decision. In Lasswell's terms (1958:13), it determines who gets what".[765]

Pluralism of values in a liberal democracy therefore does not require scorched earth public goods policies and a minimal state. Legitimacy for interventions to improve the aesthetic quality of our built environment may be justified according to the values of the government for whom the public has voted. The fact that some citizens may be more attuned to aesthetic experiences than others does not discredit such interventions. Neither should the fact that a suite of public goods is likely to remain a work in progress, subject to revision and debate, and forever incomplete. Rather, we may present a vision of two societies: one with welfare-only intervention and one with added-value public goods – a vision of the Right and a vision of the Left – and put the vision up for public vote.

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764 Max Cherem, "Jürgen Habermas", *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy.* Available at https://iep.utm.edu/habermas/ [accessed 19 Feb 2021].

765 Susan and Norman Fainstein, "City Planning and Political Values", *Urban Affairs Review*, 6 (3) (March 1971), pp. 341-361 (p. 341).

Part Two: The Tiebout Model: An Economic Solution to Pluralism

A different solution to the problem of pluralism was put forward by Charles Tiebout in his 1956 paper "A Pure Theory of Local Expenditures", summarised as follows:

> that, in economic situations where it is optimal to have many jurisdictions offering competing packages of public goods, the movement of consumers to jurisdictions where their wants are best satisfied and competition between jurisdictions for residents will lead to near-optimal, "market-like" outcomes. A jurisdiction (or club) is a group of individuals who collectively provide public goods for themselves exclusively (the public goods are local). Tiebout also suggested that individuals would sort into taste-homogeneous jurisdictions[766].

That is, the Tiebout Model sees different local authorities competing to offer different packages of public goods. Individuals self-sort into their preferred communities, depending on their attitudes towards tax and spend, to culture and sport, to public healthcare, and the quality of the built environment.

A version of Tiebout's model exists in what Bill Bishop calls the United States' "Big Sort": "a post-materialist Tiebout migration based on these non-economic goods, as people have sought out places that best fit their ways of life, their values, and their politics".[767] People who move to Portland, he notes, want good public transportation, cycling lanes, and access to a progressive and young cultural life whereas "[p]eople who don't give a hoot about those things migrate to Phoenix".[768]

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[766] Myrna H. Wooders, "Multijurisdictional Economies, the Tiebout Hypothesis, and Sorting", *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA* Vol. 96, September 1999, pp. 10585–10587 (p. 10585).

[767] Bill Bishop, *The Big Sort: Why the Clustering of Life-Minded America Is Tearing Us Apart* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2008), p. 199.

[768] *Ibid.*, p. 201.

The result, he notes, is increasing homogenisation, a homogenisation to which Bishop himself contributed: he and his wife selected their neighbourhood in Austin, Texas by scouring the streets drawing smiley faces on a map when a place "felt comfortable, seemed right" – we might say, in Scruton's phrasing, a place "to which one warms". They did not consciously move to a community of Democrats, writes Bishop, but they did:

> We bought a house on one of those smiley-face streets, a shady neighbourhood of dog walkers, Jane Jacobs-approved front porches, bright paint, bowling-ball yard art, and YOU KEEP BELIEVING; WE'LL KEEP EVOLVING bumper stickers.[769]

In the 2000 election, he notes, his district voted George W. Bush a mere third, behind both Al Gore and Ralph Nader.
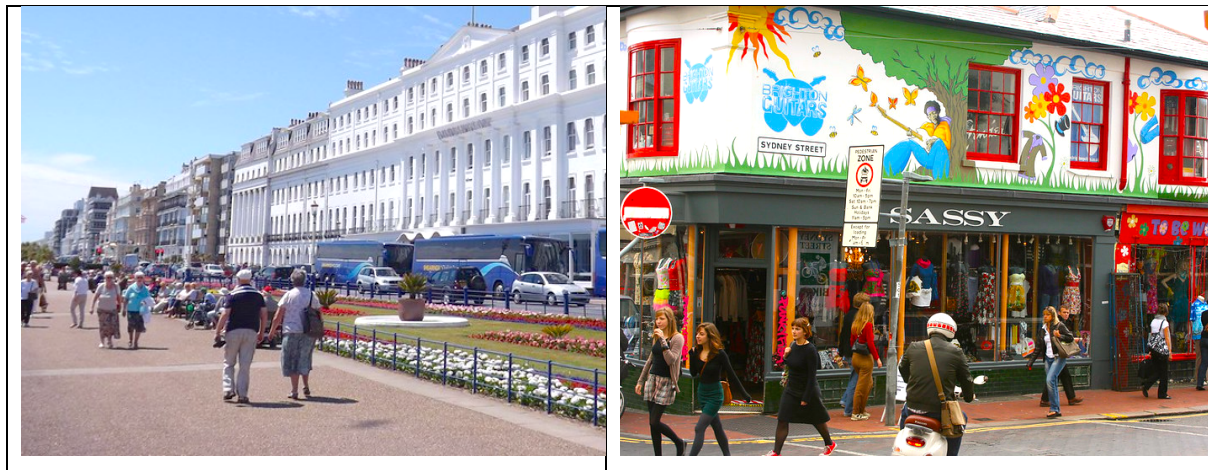
The Big Sort in England. Left (figure 95) Eastbourne seafront in Sussex. The average age in Eastbourne is 71 (the highest in England). It is represented by the Conservative Party. Right (figure 96) The North Laine in Brighton, 24 miles from Eastbourne. Brighton is regularly voted the "hippest" city in England. It is represented by the Green Party.

The Big Sort described by Bishop, however, falls far short of the pure Tiebout model. As argued by Nick Shaxson, despite being popular with liberal economists and politicians, "[a] clash with the real world leaves the

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[769] *Ibid.*, p. 1.

Tiebout model in tatters" due to its unrealistic presumptions.[770] Among the most serious are that citizens will, as Shaxson writes, "flit back and forth costlessly between different jurisdictions"; there is no commuting; "no poaching of skilled workers educated at other taxpayers' expense"; "[p]ublic goods, such as clean air and water, don't spill over into other jurisdictions".[771] Furthermore, such community-shopping is usually only for the wealthy.[772]

As a means of resolving value disagreements, then, the Tiebout Model is limited. In its pure form, it is unworkable. In its lighter form, discussed by Bishop, communities may cluster according to shared values but they cannot raise taxes, cannot create and manage public goods, cannot regulate the quality of commercial developments.

Homogenous Aggregates and Territorialisation

There is a further consideration regarding the Tiebout Model and Bishop's Big Sort: they are polarising. Specifically, they create what DeLanda terms an "aggregate"; a group of people with a similar final vocabulary and similar ideas of the good life.

Collectiveness is different. If you and I both decide to visit the Taj Mahal tomorrow, write David P. Schweikard and Hans Bernhard Schmid, this does not mean we intend to go together:

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[770] Nick Shaxson, "Tax Competitiveness: Was Charles Tiebout Joking?" *Tax Justice Network* (taxjustice.net, 23 April 2015). Available at https://www.taxjustice.net/2015/04/23/tax-competitiveness-was-charles-tiebout-joking/ [accessed 19 Feb 2021].

[771] *Ibid.*

[772] We may also add that capitalist economic communities do not merely come together as a collection of like-minded individuals but rather require a broad range of professions and services: an "arty" community still requires fire fighters, labourers and accountants.

> [T]he difference between a distribution of individual intentions and a collective intention lies not merely in a structure of mutual belief or common knowledge. Even if knowledge about our plan is mutual and open between us, my intention and your intention may still be purely individual.
>
> Distributions (summations, aggregates) of individual intentions do not make for collective intentions, even if combined with common knowledge, or mutual belief.[773]

Should a citizen of Portland say that "we Portlandlers value our public transport" or "we Portlanders support our arts and heritage institutions", therefore, the "we" here may arguably refer to an aggregate of like-minded individuals rather than a collective. The Big Sort, that is, develops a diversity of internally-homogenous communities. This may not be a problem. Indeed, each sorted community may constitute an "experiment in living". Furthermore, there is little intuitively problematic with the idea that diverse ideas of the good life or diverse stylistic preferences may be efficiently dealt with at least in part through such self-sorting aggregation.

However, as noted by Rorty, such self-sorting can limit our exposure to different points of view. Multiculturalism, he writes, promotes:

> a morality of live-and-let-live, a politics of side-by-side development in which members of distinct cultures preserve and protect their own culture against the incursions of other cultures.[774]

Far better, he writes, to follow Whitman and Hegel in the promotion of:

> competition and argument between alternative forms of human life — a poetic agon, in which jarring dialectical discords would be resolved

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[773] David P. Schweikard and Hans Bernhard Schmid, "Collective Intentionality", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.). Available at https://plato.stanford.edu/cgi-bin/encyclopedia/archinfo.cgi?entry=collective-intentionality [accessed 19 Feb 2021].

[774] Rorty, *Achieving Our Country*, p. 24.

in previously unheard harmonies [...] everybody gets played off against everybody else.[775]

In practice, however, as noted by Bishop, Americans' choice over how and where they live, and whom they associate with, "has had the perverse effect of decreasing contrary political discussion".[776]

This is particularly problematic since the Tiebout Model assumes a perennial first-generation of self-sorters whereas, as noted by DeLanda, "most assemblages are composed of parts that come into existence after the whole has emerged".[777] That is, whilst many adults self-select to live in Brighton or Poundbury, any mature town includes also those who were born and raised there. Parents may move according to their own choice of values (vegan, feminist liberals; traditional, royalist conservatives). However, for the next generation of inhabitants these values are a final vocabulary gleaned from what DeLanda calls "downward causality" since "*once an assemblage is in place it immediately starts acting as a source of limitations and opportunities for its components*" (my italics).[778]

Hence, any built environment which brings together people with homogenous values, and provides only those public goods and architectural styles which have (historically) appealed to that community, is a built environment that is territorialising. For DeLanda:

> Habit itself constitutes the main form of territorialisation, that is, the process that gives a subject its defining boundaries and maintains those boundaries through time [...]
>
> A process of deterritorialisation, on the other hand, would be any process that takes the subject back to the state it had prior to the creation of fixed associations between ideas[779]

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[775] *Ibid.*

[776] Bishop, *The Big Sort*, p. 287.

[777] Manuel DeLanda, *Assemblage Theory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), p. 20.

[778] *Ibid.*, p. 21.

[779] *Ibid.*, p. 27.

A built environment which is less homogenous in its values, public goods, and architectural styles, exerts less downward causality and encourages greater familiarity with alternative tastes and values.

<center>⬦</center>

Part Three: Rorty: Perspectivism, Value Creation and Systemic Change

Perspectival Seeing

Competition between values is crucial for perspectivist theories which reject the notion of an objective Gods-eye view.[780] For Nietzsche, indeed:

> There is only a perspectival seeing, only a perspectival "knowing"; and the more affects we allow to speak about a matter, the more eyes, different eyes, we know how to bring to bear on one and the same matter, that much more complete will our "concept" of this matter, our "objectivity", be. (GM III, 12)[781]

Similarly, as we saw earlier, for Rorty:

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[780] This competition occurs at all levels: from the competing values which struggle unresolved within the individual, to competition between differing communities and nation states. For Nietzsche – and Deleuze – we are each of us a plurality, "a battleground of competing drives". See Leslie Paul Thiele on Nietzsche in *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of the Soul* (New Jersey: Princeton, 1990), p. 58, and Ballantyne on Deleuze and Guattari ("The 'individual' here is explicitly seen as multiple and political") in Ballantyne, p. 78.

[781] Nietzsche, quoted in R. Lanier Anderson, "Friedrich Nietzsche", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.). Available at https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/nietzsche/ [accessed 19 Feb 2021].

> *[C]riticism is a matter of looking on this picture and on that, not of comparing both pictures with the original.* Nothing can serve as a criticism of a person save another person, or of a culture save an alternative culture

Territorialisation of homogenous, sealed, inward-looking values prevents these values being challenged and impoverishes our decision-making.

For Chang, perspectivism is a threat:

> Unless values from fundamentally distinct points of view can be put on the same normative page, there can be no rational resolution of conflicts between them.[782]

That our decision-making between this and that foundational value system may not be resolvable by recourse to Platonic objective reason does not mean, however, that there are not better and worse ways to select our values. For Nietzsche and Rorty, we improve our selection by increasing our familiarity with alternative options. Since there is no Platonic ideal, "our doubts about our own characters or our own culture can be resolved or assuaged only by enlarging our acquaintance".[783] For Rorty, we shall see later, this is most easily achieved through wide reading.

Scruton, in contrast, echoes Kant's suggestion that:

> Among all our abilities and talents, taste is precisely what stands most in need of examples regarding what has enjoyed the longest-lasting approval in the course of cultural progress, in order that it will not become uncouth again and relapse into the crudeness of its first attempts; and taste needs this because its judgment cannot be determined by concepts and precepts.[784]

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[782] Ruth Chang, "Putting Together Morality and Wellbeing", in Peter Baumann and Monika Betzler (eds.), *Practical Conflicts: New Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 115-158 (p. 119).

[783] Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, p. 80.

[784] Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, p. 147.

That is, for Kant and Scruton, objectivity is served best not by broadening our knowledge of different styles and perspectives, but by turning to the past. Crucially, too, for Kant the use of prior exemplars should not imply "*a posteriori* sources of taste". It is, he suggests, merely a way of avoiding "blunders": taste is *a priori* and universal, yet we benefit from a tradition which clearly demonstrates this to us.[785]

For Scruton and Kant, Western values are universal values, so Western classical architecture is universal taste; to reject this is a sign perversity or irrationality. The universalist does not require the insight and comparison of other perspectives, "more eyes, different eyes", since for them the choice is *a priori.*

Burkean Prejudice and the Value of Tradition

Scruton, we saw earlier, insists in his *Aesthetics of Architecture* that values have an "authority in practical reasoning [...] we feel called upon to justify them with reasons when necessary". They are, he writes, "the outcome of thought and education, and can be supported, overthrown, or modified by reasoned argument". In his "Why I Became a Conservative", however, he offers a different explanation, influenced by Burke's defence of prejudice:

> [B]y which he meant the set of beliefs and ideas that arise instinctively in social beings, and which reflect the root experiences of social life [...] Burke brought home to me that our most necessary beliefs may be both unjustified and unjustifiable from our own perspective, and that the attempt to justify them will lead merely to their loss. Replacing them with the abstract rational systems of the philosophers, we may think ourselves more rational and better equipped for life in the modern world. But in fact we are less well equipped, and our new beliefs are far less justified, for the very reason that they are justified by ourselves. The real justification for a prejudice is the one which justifies it *as* a prejudice, rather than as a rational conclusion of an argument. In other words it is a justification that cannot be conducted from our own perspective, but only from outside, as it were, as an

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[785] Kant, *Ibid.*, p. 146.

anthropologist might justify the customs and rituals of an alien tribe.[786]

For Scruton, here, values are not rationally justified in the normal sense but rather are *inevitable* and *instinctual*; it is hubris to overthrow them.[787]

"The role of a conservative thinker," Scruton argued, "is to reassure the people that their prejudices are true".[788] Scruton, however, offers little concrete reassurance of truth, and little in the way of a coherent "people". In fact, if Scruton's Western Christian conservative's prejudices are true, and those of Eastern Islamic conservatives are true, this can only be understood as a truth of cultural relativism – the very relativism that Scruton has elsewhere dismissed as corrupted sophistry.

Despite using a *vocabulary* of objectivity and truth, Scruton's values, and his dismissal of modernism and Leftism, represents little more than a personal allegiance to the territorialising boundaries of tradition (*any* tradition) against reform and revolution:

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[786] Roger Scruton, "Why I Became a Conservative", *The New Criterion*, Volume 21 Number 6 (Feb 2003). Available at https://newcriterion.com/issues/2003/2/why-i-became-a-conservative [accessed 19 Feb 2021].

[787] This view, which seems to deny moral progress, contrasts with that of Rorty. For Rorty, "The view I am offering says that there is such a thing as moral progress, and that this progress is indeed in the direction of greater human solidarity. But that solidarity is not thought of as recognition of a core self, the human essence, in all human beings. Rather, it is thought of as the ability to see more and more traditional differences (of tribe, religion, race, customs, and the like) as unimportant when compared with similarities with respect to pain and humiliation - the ability to think of people wildly different from ourselves as included in the range of 'us'." It similarly implies a limitation or essentialism. See Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, p. 192.

[788] As reported by Daniel Hannan in "'A Perfect Knight': Remembering Roger Scruton", *The Spectator* (spectator.co.uk, 18 Jan 2020). Available at https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/-a-perfect-knight-remembering-roger-scruton [accessed 19 Feb 2021].

[T]he aesthetics of modernism, with its denial of the past, its vandalization of the landscape and townscape, and its attempt to purge the world of history, was also a denial of community, home, and settlement.[789]

That is, echoing Rorty's description cited earlier, Scruton's conservative "thinks the country is basically in good shape, and may well have been in better shape in the past. It sees the Left's struggle for social justice as mere troublemaking, as utopian foolishness. The Left, by definition, is the party of hope. *It insists that our nation remains unachieved*" (my italics).

Deterritorialisation and Value Creation

Whereas Scruton's conservativism digs its heels into traditional values, for Nietzsche, Deleuze and Rorty, we should be in the business not of ossifying, protecting and "territorialising" our existing value systems, but rather of creating new values and ways of life.

To do so, argues Deleuze, we must focus on creation rather than judgement:

No-one develops through judgement [...] judgement presupposes criteria (higher values), criteria that pre-exist for all time (to the infinity of time), so that it can neither apprehend what is new in an existing being, not even sense the creation of a mode of existence [...] such a mode is created vitally [...] Judgement prevents the emergence of any new mode of existence [...] Herein, perhaps, lies the secret: to bring into existence and not to judge. If it is so disgusting to judge it is not because everything is of equal value, but on the contrary because what has value can be made or distinguished only by defying judgement[790]

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[789] Scruton, "Why I Became a Conservative", *op. cit.*

[790] Gilles Deleuze, quoted in Anne Bottomley and Nathan Moore, "On New Model Jurisprudence: The Scholar/Critic as (Cosmic) Artisan", *Routledge Handbook of Law and Theory,* ed. Andreas Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), pp. 497-520 (p. 498).

Indeed, as noted by Chang, judgement requires a stable concept to serve as a "covering consideration": we compare things according to which is *bigger,* more *innovative,* more *civilised.* Judgement, then, in employing concepts already at our disposal, is inherently conservative.[791]

In practical terms, as argued earlier, we may be unlikely to reject common sense and conservative judgement entirely. For Nietzsche, we saw, such value creation and self-realisation is the preserve of the cultural elite, but not the solid, herd-like masses. Rorty is less dismissive of the masses, yet suggests that the ideal liberal society would not see the general public in a perpetual crisis of values. Rather, they would be:

> commonsensically nominalist and historicist. So they would see themselves as contingent through and through, without feeling any particular doubts about the contingencies they happened to be.[792]

For Rorty, it is the job of intellectuals to adopt a thorough-going ironic and dubious stance to the values in which they have been socialised; it is the job of "strong poets" and artists to fashion a vision of novel values.

Such a division of labour between territorialised judgement, chaotic deterritorialization, and the creation of new values, may occur even within the individual. As noted by Ballantyne in Chapter Four, there are practical drawbacks to eschewing common sense: "it becomes useful to be able to 'visit' one sort of common sense or another, and to 'speak like everyone else' as occasion demands". For example, Ballantyne notes, Hume was able to

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[791] A similar criticism of judgement is made, we saw earlier, by Gernot Böhme in distinguishing his aesthetic approach from the "old aesthetics" which he describes as "a judgmental aesthetics, that is, it is concerned not so much with experience, especially sensuous experience [...] as with judgments, discussion, conversation". So too for Kevin Melchionne we must shift our focus away from judgement – and, for Melchionne, towards choice – since "In our aesthetic lives, we are more than just umpires". See Kevin Melchionne, "Aesthetic Choice", *British Journal of Aesthetics*, Volume 57 (2017), Number 3, pages 283-298. Available at https://www.academia.edu/27654139/Aesthetic_Choice [accessed 12 Aug 2021].

[792] Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, p, 87.

shake off the "melancholy [...] delirium" of philosophising by turning instead to a merry game of backgammon with friends:

> Hume saw the need to move between the two realms [...] deliberately adopting a philosophical persona, and no less deliberately setting it aside when he is better served by another.[793]

Similarly, radical artists and designers, and utopian politicians, may cast off this identity at times in order to, for example, file a tax return.

Such a divide may occur too in our institutions: some tasked with questioning the status quo, others with upholding it. The job of the judiciary, competition panels, and planning officers is to judge – not to create – aided by mid-level concepts, concrete guidelines, best practice examples. Legitimacy for these institutions depends upon their connection to the democratically elected government, which in turn gains its legitimacy through the existence of what Habermas terms a free and dynamic lifeworld and "public sphere", where values may be questioned, debated, torn apart, and rebuilt, ready to be formalised by government policy and legislation. That is, as argued earlier, it is *not* the appropriate role of bureaucratic institutions to question and create their own values but rather it is to apply the value judgements of the democratic government. In our public servants, then, we may wish for someone who, from 9-5 at least, is merely "commonsensically nominalist and historicist", concerned with fulfilling the requirements of "mid-level" concerns. The role of artists, designers and philosophers, in contrast, may involve a willingness to – from 9-5 at least – more deeply acknowledge the contingency of one's final vocabulary; a willingness to experiment and create rather than judge.

The Leftwing utopianism endorsed by Rorty requires, for most of us, little more radical than a belief that things could be different and an (albeit foundationless) commitment to social justice. For Rorty, following Whitman, America is not stifled by immoveable prejudice and tradition but rather is

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[793] Ballantyne, p. 12.

"both self-creating poet and self-created poem", capable of creating the taste by which it will be judged:

> our essence is our existence, and our existence is in the future [...] We redefine God as our future selves.[794]

Rorty's utopia is the utopia of Whitman and Dewey: we "[substitute] social justice for individual freedom as our country's principal goal".

An Emergent Built Environment: The "Deep Code"

For de Botton, too, we saw in Chapter Five, our built environment will be turned around if we believe that things can be otherwise than they are. However, I argued, de Botton's outlook is too simplistic and apolitical, relying on undirected gusto and enthusiasm. What we need, I suggested, is a better understanding of the "contingent impossibilities" that hinder the emergence of quality architecture; a better understanding of social and economic structures, political ideals and professional regulations.

It is this framework that constitutes what the architect and campaigner Indy Johar refers to as a "deep code": "pieces of code that are the source materials for the world around us".[795] When we think about architecture, Johar argues, we tend to focus on images, particularly images of completed buildings. To better understand and change our architecture, Johar suggests, we need to focus on what is less visual: the systems and regulations from which our environment emerges.[796] The focus is less on the

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[794] Rorty, *Achieving Our Country*, p. 29.

[795] Indy Johar, quoted in conversation with Tomas Björkman, *Emerge* (whatisemerging.com, undated). Available at https://www.whatisemerging.com/profiles/indy-johar [accessed 19 Aug 2021].

[796] Johar's design agency, Dark Matter is devoted precisely to interrogating and changing these regulations, largely with a view to creating an outcome which is more democratic, collaborative, and egalitarian. See https://darkmatterlabs.org/ [accessed 19 Aug 2021].

final article but rather on becoming and on process, on the "structural frames that have been perceived to become natural, which are not natural. They exist as a result of the last 400 years of thinking and have become deeply buried into our society".[797]

As Johar notes, these frameworks and codes could look very different today, particularly with new technologies: projects could be created by agile groups which assemble, collaborate, and disperse with fluidity; co-operative projects could be organised and invested in globally online; projects could be crowd-sourced; consumers could choose WikiHouses and be more actively involved in house creation.[798]

Johar's approach echoes a Deleuzian focus on process over object. Indeed, for Jamie Brassett and Betti Marenko in *Deleuze and Design*:

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[797] See Johar, in conversation with Björkman. Like de Botton, Johar believes that things can be otherwise than they are in our built environment. However, whereas de Botton makes the counter-factual suggestion that our substandard built environment *of the past* could have been otherwise than it was, Johar sees this architecture and the systems from which it emerged as "a fundamental pathway to this moment. Going through individualisation creates the capacity for interdependence".

[798] Similarly, if modestly, the UK Government's most recent changes in "Planning for the Future" include plans to bring more of the planning process online: "We are moving away from notices on lampposts to an interactive and accessible map-based online system – placing planning at the fingertips of people. The planning process will be brought into the 21st century. Communities will be reconnected to a planning process that is supposed to serve them, with residents more engaged over what happens in their areas". See Robert Jenrick MP, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, "Forward", in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (August 2020), *Planning for the Future* (White Paper), p. 8. Available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/958420/MHCLG-Planning-Consultation.pdf [accessed 12 August 2021].

If, as we state repeatedly, design is not a thing but a process, the question will therefore be not what design is, but rather how its process can be thought, articulated and practised [offering] myriad more ways of expressing the opportunities in which future, present (and past) are created[799]

A focus on regulations and codes can, admits Johar, be boring. We would like a pithy "silver bullet" policy or a glossy image. Instead we have reams of regulatory policies, economic frameworks and social networks. Nonetheless, argues Johar, changing the outcome requires changing the process from which it has emerged. We need, he suggests, a "boring revolution".[800]

An Aesthetics of Regulation

In his *Languages of Art,* Nelson Goodman focusses not merely on the aesthetic status of paintings and sculptures, but also on the status of sketches, scores and scripts. In the built environment more widely, we may argue, it is not merely finished buildings that should receive aesthetic attention and judgement, but also the government white papers, zoning laws and institutional systems from which they emerge. We have noted two examples already: the "white architecture" of London's skyline outlined in Chapter Three, and the contrasting architectures of historic patrons, corporate clients and accountable public bodies described in Chapter Five. I will note a further three.

The first is the impact of tax policy, in particular the UK window tax which, when suddenly tripled by William Pitt in 1797, prompted an almost immediate response: houseowners bricked up their windows; buyers of new-

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[799] Jamie Brassett and Betti Marenko, "Introduction", in Brassett and Marenko (eds.), *Deleuze and Design* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), pp. 1-30 (p. 12).

[800] Indy Johar, "The Need for a Boring Revolution", speech delivered at The Conference, Malmo, Sweden, 2018. Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zhaw3Uqe1_c [accessed 19 Aug 2021].

builds requested fewer in design. "A […] fundamental error", writes the economist Tim Harford, "is the idea that architecture doesn't respond to tax incentives".[801] The so-called "camelback" houses of New Orleans are similarly skewed by tax policy, notes Harford: "one storey high at the front (the part of the home that's taxable) but with two storeys at the back — a tax-efficient architectural style".[802]

Left (figure 97) Bricked windows; Centre (figure 98) Camelback house; Right (figure 99) The Walkie Talkie

The second is the impact of profit-seeking. Of the "Walkie Talkie" in London, the critic Oliver Wainwright writes:

> It looms thuggishly over its low-rise neighbours like a broad-shouldered banker in a cheap pinstriped suit. And it gets fatter as it rises, to make bigger floors at the more lucrative upper levels, forming a literal diagram of greed.[803]

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[801] Tim Harford, "The Window Tax — an Open and Shut Case", *Financial Times Magazine* (ft.com, 4 Dec 2015). Available at https://www.ft.com/content/5e9f029e-987d-11e5-95c7-d47aa298f769 [accessed 19 Feb 2021].

[802] *Ibid.*

[803] Oliver Wainwright, "Carbuncle Cup: Walkie Talkie Wins Worst Building of the Year", *The Guardian* (theguardian.com, 25 Sept 2015). Available at https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/architecture-design-blog/2015/sep/02/walkie-talkie-london-wins-carbuncle-cup-worst-building-of-year [accessed 19 Feb 2021].

The bloated upper levels are due to economics rather than aesthetics – it won Building Design magazine's Carbuncle Cup – or even function: the mirrored curvature of the building cast searing rays of heat onto the streets below which cracked tiles, set doormats alight and melted cars.[804] The Walkie Talkie – before being retrofitted with sun shades – created a literal fire of negative externalities for those who walked beneath it.

The third is that of regulatory frameworks and guidance. Of the 1961 "Parker Morris" standards of minimum room size, Julia Park writes that:

> If not aspirational, then certainly "decent", the "Parker Morris" standards are probably still the best–known space standards in England; perhaps even internationally. They were widely lauded and held for two decades before being abolished in 1980 by Margaret Thatcher, who considered them an unnecessary barrier to development.[805]

New homes in the UK are now on average 32% smaller than they were in the 1970s.[806]

Aesthetics as a Product of Wider Social Policy

Some impacts, however, are more political and diffuse. As argued in Chapter Six, the housing shortage in the UK – which could in theory be avoided – skews the balance of supply and demand. Since 40% of young people cannot buy the cheapest homes in their area, housing is a sellers' market with little

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[804] *Ibid.*

[805] Julia Park, "One Hundred Years of Housing Space Standards" (houseingspacestandards.co.uk, Jan 2017). Available at http://housingspacestandards.co.uk/ [accessed 19 Feb 2021].

[806] Research conducted by LABC Warranty, reported in Patrick Collinson, "UK Living Rooms Have Shrunk by a Third, Survey Finds", *The Guardian* (theguardian.com, 8 April 2018). Available at https://www.theguardian.com/business/2018/apr/08/uk-living-rooms-have-shrunk-by-a-third-survey-finds [accessed 20 Feb 2021].

incentive to tempt buyers through aesthetics. There is a reasonable chance, however, that government actions aimed at disincentivising second home-ownership and foreign investment, and at decreasing the power of the housing oligopoly, would itself have an aesthetic impact. Buyers would need to be better courted, not with the promise of rental yields – which appeal rather to remote landlords – but rather with the promise of *aesthetics as an end in itself*, of design as an expression of self-realisation.[807]

In his defence of the US' controversial National Endowment of the Arts, the arts critic Ben Davis writes that, despite having offered his defence of the NEA:

> The NEA is not even my preferred arts policy. My preferred "arts policy" actually looks just like good social policy. It looks like robustly funding public education, including arts programs for all students […] a housing program and an end to turning cities into luxury playgrounds for concentrated wealth. Having a cheap place to work and an affordable place to live are what make art scenes thrive […] It would look like a robust social safety net, to provide the kinds of defenses against extreme precariousness that make it easier to sustain a creative practice if you don't happen to be born into a fortune.[808]

Similarly, good architectural policy may resemble (a certain political view of) good social and economic policy: design education, affordable housing, the breaking up of uncompetitive oligopolies, reduced inequality.

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[807] Indeed, the enthusiasm most of us show in selecting and buying most other designed objects which are *not* subject to such strong market distortions – and the market's response to this enthusiasm – further suggests that housing's poor aesthetic and design quality is more a result of market distortions than of a widespread uninterest in aesthetics and design. More specifically, the popularity of Ikea's affordable, functional interior design items suggests that housing design lags behind other design areas in reflecting the public's stylistic preferences.

[808] Ben Davis, "10 Practical Reasons Why We Need to Fund—and Defend—the National Endowment for the Arts" (artnet.com, 4 March 2020). Available at https://news.artnet.com/art-world/10-practical-reasons-need-fund-defend-national-endowment-arts-1789539 [accessed 20 Feb 2021].

The aesthetics of the built environment is affected also by the creation and dissolution of public bodies such as the aforementioned CABE. Indeed, in May 2020 there were renewed calls in England from bodies such as Place Alliance and the Academy of Urbanism for a new design quality unit to drive up standards. According to one design site "Cabe was arguably exactly the body which is being called for today".[809]

As a body of design experts disrupting what otherwise emerges from a market-friendly economy such a body corresponds to the "aristocracy in democracy" mentioned in Chapter Six and to Strauss' edifying "good democracy". That is, what emerges from unregulated, populist markets is tempered by those with design expertise. Moreover, CABE – and the body called for by Place Alliance and others – aimed also to educate and engage with the public and with the design, build and planning professions. "No less than a national educational process is required", argues Place Alliance, and "[o]nly the Government – via a Design Quality Unit – has the authority to bring this off". A similar education and engagement aim is present in so-called "urban rooms". To better democratise urban planning, it is argued by urban rooms' promoters:

> [T]here also needs to be a physical space where everyone can reflect on how a city has evolved, understand what sort of a place it is now and debate how it should develop in the future. [Urban rooms are] an important building block in making a city vision "real" for the people who live there.[810]

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[809] Elizabeth Hopkirk, "Government Urged to Set Up Design Quality Unit for England", *Building Design*, (bdonline.co.uk, 27 May 2020). Available at https://www.bdonline.co.uk/news/government-urged-to-set-up-design-quality-unit-for-england/5106182.article [accessed 19 Aug 2021].

[810] Tim Dixon and Lorraine Farrelly, "Urban Rooms: Where People Get to Design Their City's Future", in *The Conversation* (theconversation.com, 18 Jan 2019). Available at https://theconversation.com/urban-rooms-where-people-get-to-design-their-citys-future-109077 [accessed 12 August 2021].

Urban rooms are versatile spaces that can act as exhibition halls, community centres, and learning space.

Figure 100: Shanghai Urban Room

The establishment of a CABE-esque design quality unit, and a package of country-wide urban rooms, would contribute to what Habermas terms the public sphere. As summarised by Max Cherem:

> The political institutions of the formal public sphere are arranged so as to be porous to the inputs of the informal public sphere, to further refine and focus public opinion, and to make decisions. [...] In a well-functioning democratic regime there will be structural "sluices" or "floodgates" embedded in the institutions of the administrative state (legislature, judiciary, and so forth) so that the circulatory flow of power proceeds in the right direction, from the periphery to the center.[811]

Such design bodies, then, would create a bridge between citizens and decision-makers, encouraging and facilitating the public debate needed to generate democratic legitimacy.

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[811] Cherem, "Jürgen Habermaas", *op. cit.*

England vs Wales; Conservative vs Labour

In August 2020 the Government announced proposals for a new design body. However, early signs suggest a different remit from CABE. The body will primarily "support the delivery of provably locally-popular design codes" and subsequently "help authorities make effective use of design guidance and codes":

> Our reformed system places a higher regard on quality, design and local vernacular than ever before, and draws inspiration from the idea of design codes and pattern books that built Bath, Belgravia and Bournville. Our guiding principle will be as Clough Williams-Ellis said to cherish the past, adorn the present and build for the future.[812]

The changes similarly include a new permitted development proposal termed a "fast track for beauty",[813] which would see proposals in certain areas being waved through should they conform to the pattern book codes, which are described elsewhere in the paper as "binding".[814]

The paper's references to beauty and the beautiful (beauty is referred to 52 times in the document; architects are mentioned once), and its focus on making planning "more visual" and "provably locally-popular" show the influence of the Scruton-managed Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission to which it responds.[815]

However, despite the frequent references to beauty, the changes will further deregulate and mechanise the planning process. To quicken and simplify the process for developers, the public will be consulted on the initial general codes but lose their current right to be consulted on particular applications.[816] The proposals have been described as a "dilution" of

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[812] Robert Jenrick MP, "Forward", *Planning for the Future*, p. 8.

[813] *Planning for the Future*, p. 22.

[814] *Ibid.*, p. 13.

[815] *Ibid.*, p. 49.

[816] For the design practice HTA, "A key concern here is that once it is established as a basis for development, opposition against proposals which are designed in

democratic process;[817] "authoritarian"; [818] "a developers' charter".[819] The proposals furthermore prioritise developers' wishes for certainty and simplicity (a tick-box list from a pattern-book) and do little to protect the creative freedoms of architects. Indeed, it is for this reason that the Design Council prefers the more discursive, iterative – but slower and less prescriptive – process of design review.

Finally, as noted by the Design Council, the proposals primarily focus on visual style at the expense of air quality, natural light, or access to green space. Indeed, RIBA president Alan Jones has pointed to the inconsistencies between the proposed design unit's remit of driving up aesthetic standards even whilst permitted development allows the conversion of offices and shops into housing "without adequate space or light".[820] Indeed, the

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compliance with it will be stifled". See HTA, "Planning for the Future - Response to White Paper", *HTA* (hta.co.uk, 10 Aug 2020). Available at

https://www.hta.co.uk/news-description/planning-future-response-white-paper [accessed 12 Aug 2021].

[817] Hugh Ellis, Director of Policy at the Town and Country Planning Association, quoted in Ben Quinn, Jessica Elgot and Oliver Wainwright, "England's Planning Changes Will Create 'Generation of Slums'" in *The Guardian* (theguardian.com, 5 Aug 2020). Available at

https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2020/aug/05/englands-planning-reforms-will-create-generation-of-slums [accessed 12 Aug 2021].

[818] Friends of the Earth, "Planning for the Future – Friends of the Earth Response to the White Paper", Friends of the Earth (friendsoftheearth.uk, 12 Nov 2020). Available at https://policy.friendsoftheearth.uk/consultations/planning-future-friends-earth-response-white-paper [accessed 12 Aug 2021].

[819] Mike Amesbury MP, Shadow Housing and Planning Minister, quoted in "Developer's Charter Will See Communities Side-Lined – Mike Amesbury", Labour (labour.org.uk, 5 Aug 2020). Available at https://labour.org.uk/press/developers-charter-will-see-communities-side-lined-mike-amesbury/ [accessed 12 Aug 2021].

[820] Alan Jones, quoted in RIBA press release, "RIBA Reacts to New Government Design Body", *RIBA* (architecture.com, 22 Sept 2020). Available https://www.architecture.com/knowledge-and-resources/knowledge-landing-page/riba-reacts-to-new-government-design-body [accessed 12 August 2021].

proposal's narrow, Scrutonian aesthetics indicates a lack of joined-up thinking and ignores the fact that even classical architecture is irreparably altered by other atmospheric generators, and other bodily senses. Böhme's "aesthetics of atmospheres", I have argued, is more comprehensive, and superior, for this reason. Indeed, Buckinghamshire Council has cautioned that the new planning policy "must ensure that it is about creating *places* and not just *individual buildings*" (my italics).[821][822]

In contrast, in its July 2020 *Building Better Places* paper (the title of which recalls the modesty of Swedish design culture) the Labour-run Welsh Government makes no explicit references to architectural beauty, describing *place-making* as "our core value in the work we take forward".[823] The paper

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[821] Buckinghamshire Council, Consultation Response to Planning for the Future (Buckinghamshire-gov-uk, 29 Oct 2020). Available at https://buckinghamshire-gov-uk.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Buckinghamshire_Council_response_to_Planning_for_the_Future_consultation.pdf [accessed 12 Aug 2021].

[822] The Design Council also argues for "recommendations on how beauty can be achieved through procurement": "on how beauty gets lost during the lifecycle of procurement. This directly relates to the term 'value engineering', which in itself should not erode quality – but design better processes during the build. However, the term has been used to suggest cash savings and erosion of design quality. Key recommendations in the report, highlighted the need to review procurement frameworks and to strengthen the ability of planners and clients to challenge developers who erode design intent through cash savings". This link between aesthetic outcome and procurement practices echoes Johar's call for a "boring revolution". There is no set image, no pattern book, merely an amendment to Johar's "deep code" which should yield better aesthetic results (in the broader definition of aesthetics). See the Design Council consultation response to *Planning for the Future*. Available at https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/asset/document/Design%20Council%20-%20Planning%20for%20the%20Future%20White%20Paper%20Response%20-%20October%202020%20%281%29.pdf [accessed 12 August 2021].

[823] Julie James MS, Minister for Housing and Local Government, "Forward", in *Building Better Places,* Welsh Government Planning Paper, July 2020, p. 2.

contains no plans for de-regulation of planning; the Government recently launched a so-called Placemaking Charter in collaboration with the Design Commission for Wales.

Whether this commitment to place-making progresses from words to action remains to be seen. However, the vision and intention at least contrasts with the UK Government. For UK Housing Secretary Robert Jenrick, government must cut "red-tape": "[o]ur complex planning system has been a barrier to building the homes people need".[824][825] The Welsh Government paper foregrounds rather the extent to which the Welsh Government is willing to step in: "We will use all our powers to reject poor development proposals".[826] It is hard to imagine a Conservative government unapologetically using the language of centralised intervention.

Available at https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-07/building-better-places-the-planning-system-delivering-resilient-and-brighter-futures.pdf [accessed 12 Aug 2021].

[824] Robert Jenrick, quoted in Matt Honeycombe-Foster, "Robert Jenrick Vows to 'Cut Red Tape' With Major Planning Shake-Up", *Politics Home* (politicshome.com, 6 Aug 2020). Available at https://www.politicshome.com/news/article/robert-jenrick-vows-to-cut-red-tape-with-major-planning-shakeup-but-labour-brand-it-a-developers-charter-amid-social-housing-warning [accessed 12 Aug 2021].

[825] Indeed, for RIBA president Alan Jones, "The housing crisis isn't just about numbers, and deregulation won't solve it […] If the government is serious about addressing the dominant position of large housebuilders and the lack of quality social housing, the secretary of state needs to make changes to the tax system, look at why land approved for development lies untouched for years, and give local authorities power and resource to promote and safeguard quality". See Alan Jones, quoted in RIBA Press Release, "Deregulation Won't Solve the Housing Crisis", *RIBA* (architecture.com, 6 Aug 2020). Available at https://www.architecture.com/knowledge-and-resources/knowledge-landing-page/deregulation-wont-solve-the-housing-crisis-riba-criticises-jenricks-planning-reforms [accessed 12 Aug 2021].

[826] *Building Better Places,* p. 3.

This language demonstrates the Welsh Government's theoretical roots. In his so-called "Clear Red Water" speech former leader Rhodri Morgan noted that:

> The actions of the Welsh Assembly Government clearly owe more to the traditions of Titmus, Tawney, Beveridge and Bevan than those of Hayek and Friedman [...]
>
> [M]y intention, ever since becoming First Minister, and looking ahead, is to lead a Government of social justice, in which *everything we do* makes a maximum contribution to that end (my italics).[827]

Morgan's intention here was not merely to highlight his differences with the Conservatives, but also – chiefly – Welsh Labour's differences with Tony Blair's "Third Way" centrism:

> Approaches which prioritise choice over equality of outcome rest, in the end, upon a market approach to public services, in which individual economic actors pursue their own best interests with little regard for wider considerations.[828]

Welsh Labour, Morgan argued, did not aim at equality of opportunity but rather at equality of outcome. Welsh Labour, then, shares many values with the Swedish model of social welfare: collectivism rather than individualism, equality of outcome rather than equality of opportunity.

In contrast, Blair's New Labour employed the language of choice and excellence. Tessa Jowell's Blairite paper "Government and the Value of Culture" argues that "excellence has to be at the heart of cultural subsidy" to create:

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[827] Rhodri Morgan, "Clear Red Water", speech delivered at the National Centre for Public Policy, Swansea University, 2002. Text available at https://www.sochealth.co.uk/the-socialist-health-association/sha-country-and-branch-organisation/sha-wales/clear-red-water/ [accessed 12 Aug 2021].

[828] *Ibid.*

a culture that is of the highest standard it can possibly be [...] a bottom up realisation of possibility and potential [...][829]

[W]e want to make sure we are supplying access to the best. Access to the substandard [...] will not inspire or raise levels of aspiration.[830]

Whereas Morgan identifies Welsh Labour solidly with the tradition of "Beveridge and Bevan", Jowell argues for an addition to Beveridge's so-called "five giants of poverty": "it is time to slay a sixth giant – the poverty of aspiration".[831] For Third Way Leftism, that is, governments must focus not merely on raising minimum standards but also on maximax distributions of value, on aspirational greatness.

To recall Croydon's argument discussed in Chapter Five:

[S]upport for aspirational development which requires public funding is much less likely to emerge from the opposite polarities of political ideology that can be accommodated in a democratic polity. On the one hand the neoliberal position would hold that the market will respond to demand and provide the qualities that are required. At the other extreme the socialist view might be that the needs of the many should outweigh the design aspirations of the few.[832]

Each party above claims to value architecture and the built environment. How that is manifested, however, varies greatly according to the other values at work, particularly attitudes towards corporate freedom, individual liberty, equality, collectivism, and "greatness".[833]

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[829] Tessa Jowell, "Government and the Value of Culture", pp. 8-9. Available at https://shiftyparadigms.files.wordpress.com/2015/08/tessa_jowell.pdf [accessed 12 Aug 2021].

[830] *Ibid.*, p. 16.

[831] *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

[832] Croydon, p. 312.

[833] In practice New Labour supported many aims and initiatives which promoted the raising of minimum living standards, such as Sure Start, and Welsh Labour has promoted many aims and initiatives aimed at aspirational achievement and excellence, such as its recent announcement of £22m redevelopment funding for Theatr Clwyd in Mold, north-east Wales, which was awarded by the Government in

The artistic and cultural policies of the UK Conservatives, of New Labour, and of Welsh Labour, provide three different visions for the countries they serve, embedded in different final vocabularies, with different theoretical ancestries. We can compare them side-by-side, can compare them according to a range of "mid-level" covering considerations such as which is more business friendly, which is simpler. However, we cannot compare the value foundations themselves. As noted above, planning policy reflects "who gets what": there is no agreed upon non-political foundation for determining such a problem.

Plumping Revisited

That there is no agreed-upon way to compare value systems does not mean that our choice of cultural policy or political party requires arbitrary picking. As Rorty argued above:

> We should see allegiance to social institutions as no more matters for justification by reference to familiar, commonly accepted premises - *but also as no more arbitrary* - than choices of friends or heroes. Such choices are not made by reference to criteria. They cannot be preceded by presuppositionless critical reflection, conducted in no particular language and outside of any particular historical context. (my italics).

Indeed, when "plumping" – as Chang would term it – for an architectural policy we have at least two things at our disposal: side-by-side comparison, and our passional intuition.

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recognition of the Theatre's "international and national reputation for excellence". Their difference of approach is therefore one of degree. See Jack Harrison, "Theatr Clwyd gets £22m funding ahead of redevelopment", *The National* (thenational.com, 17 March 2022). Available at https://www.thenational.wales/news/19999486.theatr-clwyd-gets-22m-funding-ahead-redevelopment/ [accessed 19 March 2022].

Passionate Choice: The Inertia of Reason and Principles

It is a curiously bloodless depiction of human beings which assumes that, when we run out of mid-level "rational" reasons for justified choice, we have nothing else by which to be guided. For William James:

> Our passional nature not only lawfully may, but must, decide an option between propositions, whenever it is a genuine option that cannot by its nature be decided on intellectual grounds[834]

If we are disinclined to support this, James argues, that may be because:

> The freedom to "believe what we will" you apply to the case of some patent superstition; and the faith you think of is the faith defined by the schoolboy when he said, "Faith is when you believe something that you know ain't true."[835]

In contrast, he writes, such belief covers only undismissed, "living options", *all palatable and credible to the chooser*, but which cannot be resolved intellectually, when we are – as Ullmann-Margolit and Morgenbesser put it – at the end of the chain of reasons. Similarly, for Hume we must not speak as though reasons and passions are *at odds with* one another. Rather, argues Hume, our passions and desires most often change in response to new information, errors, and reasons. Endorsing the deciding power of passions, intuitions or feelings when we have run out of rational reasons is therefore not the same thing as an endorsement of the passions *in contrast to* or *in opposition to* reasons.

Moreover, reason-giving – even if it were possible to offer grounded reasons for action – threatens to remain inert, lacking the attraction and repulsion of the passions. Thus, for Hume, "reason alone can never be a motive to any action of the will", can "never produce any action, or give rise

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[834] William James, "The Will To Believe", in *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (US: Duke Classics, 2012) pp. 31-32.

[835] *Ibid.*, p. 52.

to volition". For Rorty, too, "moral principles are terrific in Ethics 101, but not as spurs to political action":[836]

> [Y]ou cannot urge national political renewal on the basis of descriptions of fact. You have to describe the country in terms of what you passionately hope it will become, as well as in terms of what you know it to be now.[837]

We need, that is, what Rorty would consider – in a narrative sense – a "story" or what we might consider – in a more aesthetic sense – a vision.

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Part Four: Value Exploration and the Philosophy of Design

Rorty's cultural analysis is a literary one, littered with "strong poets" and avant garde writers. It may be no surprise, then, that for Rorty the best route to "enlarging our acquaintance" of value systems is through reading:

> [I]ronists spend more of their time placing books than placing real live people. Ironists are afraid that they will get stuck in the vocabulary in which they were brought up if they only know the people in their own neighborhood, so they try to get acquainted with strange people (Alcibiades, Julien Sorel), strange families (the Karamazovs, the Casaubons), and strange communities (the Teutonic Knights, the Nuer, the mandarins of the Sung).[838]

Rorty, however, is a philosopher and literary professor. Others, we may suggest, whose minds are not "wired up" to appreciate such literature, may

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[836] Richard Rorty, quoted in *Against Bosses, Against Oligarchies* (Interview of Rorty by Derek Nystrom and Kent Puckett) (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2002), p. 17.

[837] Rorty, *Achieving Our Country*, p. 101.

[838] Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, p. 80.

enlarge their acquaintance through travel, journalism, language-learning, cinema: any activity in which we encounter values and ideas different from our own.

Importantly, *design itself* is a means through which we "try on" different values. As described by Scruton, our choice of clothing and interior design is intimately, and complexly, connected to our life values:

> The aims which might actually be offered for the purchase of a denim suit are not, then, the full reason for its acquisition. They must remain subordinate to something else, which is not so much an aim in itself as a sense of the accommodation of the suit to all present and future aims, whatever they chance to be. And the possession of that sense involves the acquisition of values. The suit seems fitted to a certain style of life, and the aims of that style of life are not given in advance (how could they be?) but discovered by the agent as he engages in it. *Nevertheless, he is able to know - as an intuitive certainty rather than a specific formula - that a particular object will be suitable to those aims, even before he is able to say what they are. In other words, he may form an opinion of the appropriateness of a particular dress in advance of any purpose for which he may wear it,* and that opinion of appropriateness may properly take precedence over any partial or temporary aim. Indeed, it could be said of the man who approaches the purchase of clothes with this sense of what is appropriate that *he tries to understand the aims which guide him - understand, that is, in advance of any apprehension of what they might concretely amount to, and before they can enter into his deliberations in any other way.* (My italics)[839]

That is, through encounters with designed objects we come to understand and concretise abstract values which were previously obscure or out of grasp.

Design: Concretising Values

Despite Scruton's emphasis on reason-giving and rationality – outlined in Chapter Seven – his account here resembles Böhme's insistence that, "The noble, majestic quality of a material, its elegance or old-fashionedness are

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[839] Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Architecture*, p. 30.

sensed [...] it seems to radiate them. They must in some way be connected to, anchored in, its material qualities" (my italics). For Scruton, indeed, "we understand a building only if [...] it occupies a place in which we can *feel* its relation to the workings of the moral life" (my italics). In design, then, we *feel* and *sense* abstract moral values which are "rooted" or "anchored" in designed objects. In Heidegger's terminology, this is the relation between world and earth.

Crucially, designed objects do not merely "represent" these values – as though they exist, in some realist sense, "out there" – but rather animate and enliven what would otherwise lack vision and form. For Nabokov, indeed:

> "[G]oodness" is something that is irrationally concrete. From the commonsensical point of view the "goodness", say, of some food is just as abstract as its "badness", both being qualities that cannot be perceived by sane judgement as tangible and complete objects. But when we perform that necessary mental twist which is like learning to swim or to make a ball break, we realize that *"goodness" is something round and creamy, and beautifully flushed, something in a clean apron with warm bare arms that have nursed and comforted us* (my italics)[840]

Similarly, of Scruton's "oatmeal" room, we may describe "healthy simplicity" as a folded bedspread in a sparse, swept room. Our abstract values, that is, are implicated in our aesthetic and poetic life, embodied, and manipulated, by objects of design.

Design Iteration

In *Art as Experience* John Dewey describes aesthetic creation proceeding from the oscillation of action and reflection: the painter makes a mark, stands back, perceives or feels its effect, and acts again. As with Scruton's dresser, Dewey's artist employs an imminent process to move imperceptibly towards their self-expression. As such, for Dewey:

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[840] Nabokov, quoted in Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, p. 155.

> When an author puts on paper ideas that are already clearly
> conceived and consistently ordered, the real work has been previously
> done.[841]

Similarly, Scruton points to Wittgenstein's description of how we may settle upon the right form for a door, by making the frame higher, lower, etc. feeling its effect upon us, and making alterations.[842] For Wittgenstein:

> Perhaps the most important thing in connection with aesthetics is
> what may be called aesthetic reactions, e.g. discontent, disgust,
> discomfort. The expression of discontent says: "Make it higher […] too
> low! […] do something to this". (LC, II.10)

Wittgenstein calls this "directed discomfort".[843] Similarly, Scruton's dresser tries an outfit on for size, feels whether it draws him in, repels him, leaves him cold, or whether it expresses something "towards which one 'warms' in the manner uniquely characteristic of moral beings".

Put a different way, the design process is *iterative*, and part of this iterative process involves feeling ourselves moved, repelled, or unmoved by designed objects. Whilst, as Böhme notes, design professionals are

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[841] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, p. 51.

[842] Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Architecture*, p. 185. Scruton uses this Wittgenstein example in support of his view of the objectivity of aesthetics and design. However, the basic here idea – the notion that design work is iterative and reliant on our felt reactions – need not suggest objectivity per se. Rather, it is consistent too with a Rortian approach, one which would allow that some of what feels "right" to me during such design processes will resonate with others, and some of it will not, but the former is neither more valuable nor less contingent. Rather, as will be noted later, "it is the difference between idiosyncrasies which just happen to catch on with other people", and those which do not.

[843] Wittgenstein, quoted in Clinton Peter Verdonschot, "*That* They Point Is All There Is to It: Wittgenstein's Romanticist Aesthetics", *Estetika: The European Journal of Aesthetics,* Volume: 58 (1):72–88. Available at https://estetikajournal.org/articles/10.33134/eeja.222/ [accessed 23 Aug 2021].

particularly adept at understanding the nuance of how particular "generators" affect an expressive atmosphere – and can make appropriate changes – a similar process is at play whenever we select an outfit or room décor: we may not know in advance the end that we seek; may not get it right first time; may be using the design process itself to explore, understand, and concretise our values.[844]

Unnamed Values

The iterative, imminent process outlined above sees designed objects not merely expressing a pre-conceived value or idea, but rather creating new ideas, value concepts and atmospheres, for which we have no name.

For Chang, when we intuit that we have successfully resolved an "all-things-considered" judgement – in which many values are at play – this is because some wider value encompasses the smaller values which make it up. This remains the case, even if no such *named* value exists. A nameless value still has organising power, however:

> [N]ameless values have content beyond a mere collection of the relations among their component values, and it is in virtue of this content that its component values are normatively related as they are.[845]

Why values come together in this way is "a deep axiological mystery, but the fact that they sometimes do is not subject to doubt".[846]

By way of metaphor, Chang suggests that the unified, comprehensive value is like a jigsaw puzzle, with the other values as parts. However, these parts are connected together not in virtue of the fact that they are all red, or

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[844] This stands in contrast to Saito's promotion of green design, mentioned earlier, which would turn design and designed objects precisely into a tool, tasked with the promotion of a pre-existing, single-issue idea of environmental value.

[845] Chang, "All Things Considered", p. 18.

[846] *Ibid.*

that they fit some regular honeycomb pattern, but rather because they create a "picture".[847]

This does not mean, however, that for Chang all disparate and conflicting value bundles can be cohered within a meaningful wider value concept: in some situations, there is no more comprehensive value to unify the parts, and an all-things-considered judgement is not possible:

> Suppose I put you in a room with a corkscrew, a quadratic equation, and plate of sea urchin sushi. Your task, I go on to explain, is to judge which item is all-things-considered best, where the values that matter to the judgment are the utility of the corkscrew, the mathematical beauty of the equation, and the taste of the sushi. You would not even know where to begin your deliberations. This is because there is no more comprehensive consideration that includes the values at stake. If you then say to me, "The equation is best because its abstract beauty is ten times more important than the particular taste of sea urchin sushi or the particular efficiency of the corkscrew", you will have created a Frankenstein imposter.[848]

Chang's Frankenstein imposters are – to continue her metaphor – jigsaw pieces from different puzzles, crudely jammed together, creating no meaningful whole. Chang's comprehensive values thereby resemble Deleuze and DeLanda's assemblages: totalities of parts which give rise to an emergent whole, in contrast to DeLanda's aggregates, in which "the components merely coexist without generating a new entity".

Chang's unnamed comprehensive values, however, are presented as static and ahistorical, *graspable through other words or descriptions*:

> Lest their missing moniker suggest that they are a philosopher's fantasy, consider (dis) values, such as "sexually harassing" or "tubular", "rad" and "phat" which were not long ago nameless and yet were referred to in everyday conversation by expressions such as "behaving like a first-class jerk" and "wicked, man", before we gave them their names. The namelessness of a value is an accidental product of our naming practice[849]

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[847] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

[848] *Ibid.*, p. 19.

[849] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

Similarly, Chang writes, "I believe that once we begin to focus our attention on such more comprehensive values, we will be in the same position with regard to these nameless values as we are today with regard to what were once nameless values".[850]

For Chang, the concept of sexual harassment, which brings together "sexual exploitation, lack of respect, sexual domination, condescension, chauvinism, and so on" was, in the 1950s, nameless ("sexual harassment did not then have a name") yet – she suggests – was *still available* as an unnamed covering consideration in all-things-considered judgements.[851] For Chang, unnamed comprehensive values are out there, graspable through alternative description, available as a means of judgement, waiting to be uncovered by intrepid philosophers, explicitly acknowledged, and Christened with their names. The notion that we have access to such comprehensive values in the absence of a concept is problematic, however. Behaving like a first class jerk, for example, is far broader than our concept of sexual harassment.

Chang's philosophy remains a theory of judgement: the discovery of parent concepts to serve as "covering considerations" in all-things-considered judgements. For Deleuze and Guattari, in contrast – as described by Ronald Bogue – "[p]hilosophy and the arts [...] share the common goal of creating possibilities of life": philosophy via concepts, the arts via sensations.[852] In the arts, rather than discovering some ready-made comprehensive value, "the *composés* of various affects and percepts are composed in new configurations".[853] In Böhme's terminology, then,

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[850] *Ibid.*, p. 20.

[851] *Ibid.*, p. 19.

[852] Ronald Bogue, "The Art of the Possible", *Revue internationale de philosophie*, vol. 241, no. 3, 2007, pp. 273-286 (p. 280).

[853] *Ibid.*, p. 281.

generators (as parts) can be composed into new atmospheric wholes. These wholes may speak to us aesthetically of new possibilities, new values.[854]

For Deleuze, Nietzsche and Rorty, such assemblages and values are *created*. This remains the case even if some groupings succeed in creating something worthwhile and coherent, and others remain, as Chang puts it, "Frankenstein's imposters". That some groupings of concepts or sensations take flight and others do not does not mean that we have access to those which do prior to being confronted with them. For Rorty, then:

> The generic task of the ironist is the one Coleridge recommended to the great and original poet: to create the taste by which he will be judged. But the judge the ironist has in mind is himself. He wants to be able to sum up his life in his own terms.[855]

Similarly, the architectural work may create the taste by which it is judged. As argued by Heidegger:

> As a world opens itself, it submits to the decision of an historical humanity the question of victory and defeat, blessing and curse, mastery and slavery. *The dawning world brings out what is as yet undecided and measureless, and thus discloses the hidden necessity of measure and decisiveness* (my italics)[856]

The world opened and created by the architectural work stands boldly in its specificity, having offered up a particular way of being, a particular vision. The beings who are confronted with the work can turn towards it or away from it, but now have, gleaned from the amorphous mass of possibilities, a

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[854] The complexity and density of architectural objects ensures, too, that rather than constituting Eco's "dull striving of mass" they are closer to Goodman's description, included in my introduction, that aesthetics, "far from being mysterious and vague, is explicitly defined; and it arises out of, and sustains, the unsatisfiable demand for absolute precision".

[855] Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, p. 97.

[856] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art", p. 61.

stake in the sand, a picture to be compared with other pictures. This, the work may suggest, is one answer to the question of our existence.[857]

Opting for Architecture

Of the artistic, iterative process outlined earlier by Dewey, he nonetheless writes that:

> This retracing is not readily accomplished in the case of architecture - which is perhaps one reason why there are so many ugly buildings. Architects are obliged to complete their idea before its translation into a complete object of perception takes place. Inability to build up to simultaneously the idea and its objective embodiment imposes a handicap.[858]

A fully realised building, that is, cannot be scrunched into a ball and thrown in the waste paper basket, cannot be demolished and begun afresh. An

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[857] Importantly, Heidegger clarifies here that his description of such world-making refers particularly to great art and not to art in general. The well-received creation of a new world is the successful wing of the avant garde, which necessarily also involves failure. There are questions to be asked too, then, concerning the proper role and place of the avant garde. The artist Ernesto Pujol, for example, has criticised what he terms "The cult of creative failure", arguing that entitled, young (mostly white, mostly wealthy) creatives have for too long been awarded creative opportunities with a high risk of creative failure which impact the wellbeing of the poor: "Entitlement to creative failure is part of America's exceptionalist fantasy about its undeniable right to abundance and waste, even when this includes people. But the world's poor cannot afford to fail. Far beyond the art world, in the real world, failure is the privilege of the rich. […] But when artists are entrusted with the well-being of communities, ethically speaking, they cannot afford to fail them. Real failure is not a project option". Ernesto Pujol, "The Cult of Creative Failure", *The Brooklyn Rail* (brooklynrail.org, Oct 2017). Available at https://brooklynrail.org/2017/10/art/The-Cult-of-Creative-Failure [accessed 17 Sept 2021].

[858] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, pp. 51-52.

architect with doubts about window size, roof shape, or materials cannot solve the matter by physically realising the building before her, in all its possible varieties, to feel and sense which works best. Since Dewey wrote his *Art as Experience* technological aids have greatly improved architects' ability to visualise finished buildings: computer aided images of buildings can be indistinguishable from photographs. It remains, however, what Lefebvre described as (here, writing of paper rather than computer aided plans) "a visual space, a space reduced to blueprints, to mere images".[859] It does not allow a full-bodied, fully sensed, built-to-scale, in-context encounter.

Design choices for architecture and the built environment therefore most often constitute what Ullmann-Margolit and Morgenbesser referred to in Chapter Seven as "opting" situations. They are both non-trivial and difficult to change: the design equivalent of choosing between a financial career and the priesthood. For Scruton, there is no great problem here – such a risk merely demonstrates the importance of using tradition as a guide rather than attempting the unknown. For those who wish to challenge, interrogate, and create new possibilities, however, the stakes in architecture may nonetheless seem too high. There are, however, at least three aids.

The first is the experience and memory of other buildings. We may not be able to walk around our own, fully-realised design plans, but architects may experience other buildings of countless different sizes, materials, colours. These memories may act like the tactile, full-bodied "haptic" memories described within Pallasmaa's *The Eyes of the Skin.* For Pallasmaa (himself an architect as well as a theorist):

> We have an innate capacity for remembering and imagining places. Perception, memory and imagination are in constant interaction; the domain of presence fuses into images of memory and fantasy [...][860]

> [D]uring the design process, the architect gradually internalises the landscape, the entire context, and the functional requirements as well as his/her conceived building: movement, balance and scale are felt

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[859] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space,* p. 361.

[860] Pallasmaa, p. 72.

unconsciously through the body [...] As the work interacts with the body of the observer, the experience mirrors the bodily sensations of the maker. Consequently, architecture is communication from the body of the architect directly to the body of the person who encounters the work, perhaps centuries later.[861]

A designer will not be shocked, when encountering her finished building, to find that marble is cold, velvet is soft, large forms are humbling, light colours may be blinding, that hidden nooks arouse curiosity. "The body", writes Pallasmaa, "knows and remembers".

Secondly, we may choose an architecture that is flexible and adaptable. For Lefebvre, spaces can be "*fixed, semi-fixed, moveable* or *vacant* [...] the West might do well to take lessons from the East, with its great open spaces, and its low and easily moveable furniture".[862] For Eco, meanwhile, *"the architect should be designing for variable primary functions and open secondary functions"; "*open in the sense that they may be determined by unforeseeable future codes".[863] Rather than reject or undermine the ephemeral, we may embrace it.

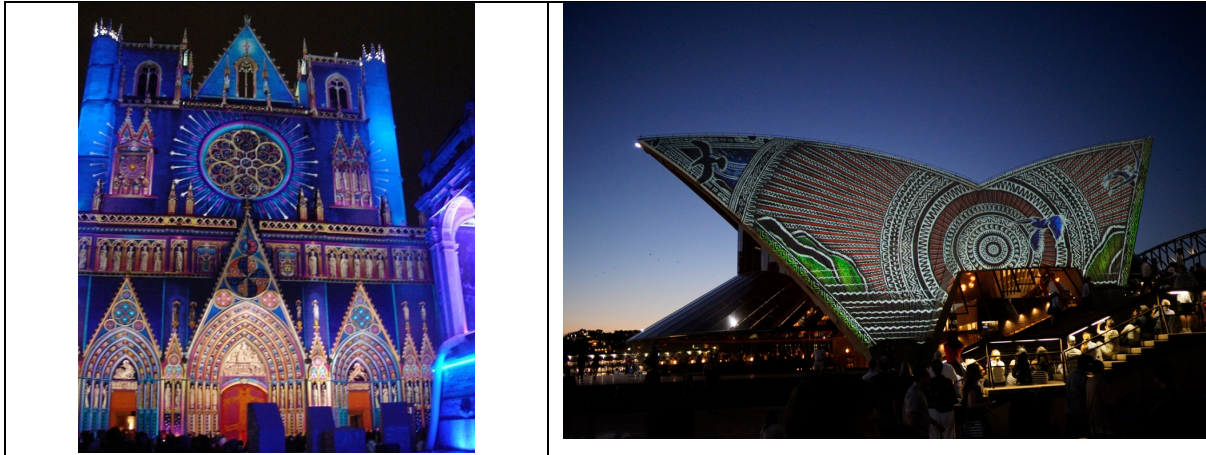
Figure 101: MVRDV's installation (W)ego: The Future City is Flexible in Eindhoven, The Netherlands, 2017.

[861] *Ibid.*, p. 71.

[862] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 363.

[863] Eco, "Function and Sign", p. 190.

Figures 102 and 103: Projection mapping – projecting ephemeral light images onto buildings or other objects – has been described as having "a critical role in the evolution of public art".[864]

A third way to mitigate "opting" situations is described by Ullmann-Margolit:

> [A] way of resolving an opting situation is by consciously attempting to neutralize two of the characteristics that make it an instance of opting, namely, that it is a point of discontinuity in one's life, and that it involves a point of no return.[865]

We may then, she writes, reduce opting situations into smaller, more manageable decisions. Before deciding to marry a man, she writes, we may choose to live with him, "so that you can get a foretaste of your future life—and of your future self—as his wife".[866]

Similarly, when "opting" in architecture – for a particular form, style, atmosphere – we may reduce the risks by positioning architecture within the wider philosophy of design. Whilst architectural projects are costly and not easily changed, the same is not true of other designed objects which range from the trivial to the non-trivial, the cheap to the costly. Trivial and affordable designed objects such as neck ties, handbags and cushions

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[864] Adrienne Day, paraphrasing Ethan Vogt, in Adrienne Day, "When Skyscrapers are your Screen", *The New York Times* (nytimes.com, 25 Jan 2012). Available at https://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/29/arts/design/video-mapping-artists-use-light-as-a-medium.html [accessed Nov 2021].

[865] Ullmann-Margalit, "Big Decisions: Opting, Converting, Drifting", p. 169.

[866] *Ibid.*

permit more low-stakes experimentation, and can be easily and cheaply changed, exchanged or modified. Rather than find ourselves paralysed by the gravity of an opting decision we may take action, plump for or pick a trivial option, and get a foretaste of the lifestyle and values it embodies. Before buying a functionalist house we may try some functionalist cutlery.

Figures 104-106: Socialism; conservativism; militarism: the values expressed by hats

In contrast to Oscar Wilde's pronouncement, noted in Chapter One, that fashion is "a form of ugliness so absolutely unbearable that we have to alter it every six months", we may offer a defence. Fashion may rather be a necessary churn through which, with stakes significantly lowered, we experiment with different values and lifestyles. Clothing, product and interior design has a different tempo from architecture, echoing Deleuze and Guattari's description of chaos:

> Chaos is defined not so much by its disorder as by the infinite speed with which every form taking shape in it vanishes. It is a void that is not a nothingness but a virtual, containing all possible particles and drawing out all possible forms, which spring up only to disappear immediately, without consistency or reference, without consequence. Chaos is an infinite speed of birth and disappearance.[867]

Even ugly, failed or unwanted fashion – enjoying a mere 15 minutes in the sun before collapsing back into nothingness – may nonetheless serve a

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[867] Deleuze and Guattari, quoted in Ballantyne, *Deleuze and Guattari for Architects*, p. 50.

purpose: an experiment in living that informs our opting decisions, not by cost-benefit analysis or a tally of commensurable values, but rather through lived experience, giving us a foretaste of a world we may wish to inhabit. To fully inhabit that world, however, we turn to architecture.[868]

World-Making and Shared Values

Whereas clothing and product design respond to the values of the individual, to contend with the values embodied in architecture is to contend with the existence, or lack of, collective values. I may sit at home in my denim suit, with my functional cutlery, reading the literature that most appeals to me. However, individual, idiosyncratic values may not help us decide the proper form of architecture and the built environment intended for collective rather than individual use. For universalists like Scruton, there is little problem. We all can and should endorse the appeal of traditional aesthetics. For pluralists, however, there is a problem.

Rorty's commitment to individualism, to private literary pursuits, renders his argument less immediately useful to the world of architecture. For Rorty, our best response to pluralism is to separate our private and public values: the pursuit of "private perfection" – the project of self-creation espoused by Nietzsche and others – is necessarily different from the pursuit of social justice, and as such:

> The closest we will come to joining these two quests is to see the aim of a just and free society as letting its citizens be as privatistic, "irrationalist," and aestheticist as they please so long as they do it on their own time - causing no harm to others and using no resources needed by those less advantaged".[869]

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[868] This process should not serve as an endorsement of fast fashion or waste but merely a recognition that some designed objects will involve smaller risks and shorter lifecycles than will others.

[869] Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, p. xiv.

The state itself, however, as noted previously, focusses more strictly on minimising cruelty and pain and, for a government of the reformist Left, to furthering the public values of social justice and equality of opportunity.

This strict divide between public and private life, public and private values, has been criticised by Nancy Fraser as individualist and masculinist, characterised by "oedipal revolts of genius sons against genius fathers".[870] Of Rorty's narrative of strong poets and aesthetes, she writes: "[It] cast that activity as an oedipal agon in which a son struggles to overcome 'the anxiety of influence', to outstrip his poetic predecessors or cultural fathers, so as in effect to father himself [...] *there was no place in Rorty's essays of the 1980s for linguistic innovation that is collective as opposed to individual*" (my italics).[871]

Rorty's individualism is largely a response to – in Deleuze's terminology – the territorialising effects that groups may have on the individual: the "downward causality" referred to earlier by DeLanda ("once an assemblage is in place it immediately starts acting as a source of limitations and opportunities for its components"). In contrast, self-realisation for Rorty calls on us to explore and inhabit different final vocabularies to the one we were born into:

> Often we just put the communities behind us. Going to college, growing up, or getting away from home, should leave people free to say: I used to be a Vietnamese-American, or a Baptist, but now I'm past all that. They don't have to say this, but I don't see why they should be expected to have any particular loyalty to such groups [...] I would just like them to be free to make up their own lives, in a good Nietzschean manner.[872]

Rorty is keen therefore to distinguish between a collective based on a shared passion (Rorty terms this our "blind impress), and a collective based on a

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[870] Nancy Fraser, "From Irony to Prophecy to Politics: A Reply to Richard Rorty", in *Feminist Interpretations of Richard Rorty,* ed. Marianne Janack (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), pp. 47-54 (p. 50).

[871] *Ibid.*, p. 49.

[872] Rorty, *Against Bosses, Against Oligarchies*, p. 23.

"politics of difference" along racial or religious lines: "The blind impress is your unconscious. Group identity is what your parents tell you about".[873]

Rorty later clarified his earlier writings, noting that such a private/public split runs on a spectrum from those with little public life (hermits) to those with "minimal inner life" whose happiness "consists entirely of being the soccer coach, or being the pater familias, or being chair of the Rotary Club".[874] For Rorty, then, there is no expectation for individuals to self-create:

> An ideal Jamesian democracy would have a place for all the vibrant self-creating activities that anybody would ever want to engage in, *but would not insist that anybody be self-creative if they don't feel like it* (my italics).[875]

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[873] *Ibid.* Rorty makes frequent reference to the notion of a "blind impress" in his *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, "those particular contingencies which make each of us 'I' rather than a copy or replica of somebody else". The term is taken from the end of a Philip Larkin poem, "Continuing to Live". Extract below (Larkin, "Continuing to Live", reproduced in Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, p, 23).

And once you have walked the length of your mind, what
You command is as clear as a lading-list
Anything else must not, for you, be thought
  To exist.
And what's the profit? Only that, in time
We half-identify the blind impress
All our behavings bear, may trace it home.
  But to confess,
On that green evening when our death begins,
Just what it was, is hardly satisfying,
Since it applied only to one man once,
  And that one dying.

[874] *Ibid.*, p. 61.

[875] *Ibid.*, p. 63.

Indeed, as noted earlier, for Rorty democracy may in fact be all the better for a wider public who are aware of their contingency yet – unlike Rorty's intellectuals and strong poets – do not have radical doubts about "the contingencies they happened to be".

Existential Doubts vs Political Ideals

That shared values exist on a relatively small scale is, however, rarely subject to doubt. Smaller traditional communities can still be found exerting "downward causality". Larger urban hubs can be found with vibrant aggregates of those with shared values and passions. As such, an architect may have little problem designing synagogues, children's play parks, Google HQ offices, luxury Parisian hotels, projects in which users have enough internal homogeneity to employ aesthetic values which reflect their shared values.

For Karsten Harries, such limited shared values are not enough: "Churches today cater only to *subcommunities*; no longer do they have the power to establish the ethos of the *entire* community to which we belong" (my italics).[876] When Harries argues, then, that "to live a meaningful life, to dwell in this sense we must recognise ourselves as part of a larger ongoing community", it is not enough for this community to consist of our church, our local soccer club, the LGBTQ ballroom scene or the Doctor Who fan club.[877] Rather, it must refer to "those central aspects of our life that maintain and give meaning to existence", where those central aspects are *widely shared.*[878]

The Rortian response here is twofold. The first is to repudiate the idea that our personal passions and values cannot offer meaning to our lives:

> Anything from the sound of a word through the color of a leaf to the
> feel of a piece of skin can, as Freud showed us, serve to dramatize and

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[876] Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture,* p. 289.

[877] *Ibid.*, p. 363.

[878] *Ibid.*, p. 365.

crystallize a human being's sense of self-identity. For any such thing can play the role in an individual life which philosophers have thought could, or at least should, be played only by things which were universal, common to us all [...] Any seemingly random constellation of such things can set the tone of a life. Any such constellation can set up an unconditional commandment to whose service a life may be devoted - a commandment no less unconditional because it may be intelligible to, at most, only one person.[879]

That is, we do not need our values and passions to be affirmed as universal. We do not need the church, or a replacement for the church, to give meaning to our lives, to complete us. Indeed, as noted earlier by Rorty, for some hermetic individuals little shared meaning – at a local, national, or human level – is required at all.

For those extroverts with, as Rorty puts it, "minimal inner life", who thrive with others, there is similarly no reason why the "places where individuals come together and affirm themselves as members of the community" must be homogenous in values. Church congregations may harbour multiple political views; local football teams may harbour multiple religious views. Furthermore, where broad, shared interests and values do exist, they may consist of nothing more profound and spiritual than the popular appeal of *The Great British Bake-off*. The shared values Harries seeks, however, are (pseudo)-religious and metaphysical nature; they aim "to reoccupy the place once held by sacred architecture".[880]

For Harries, "genuine dwelling requires an affirmation of ourselves as fallen [...] such a leave-taking from God for the sake of a genuinely human community is the foundation of any genuinely human dwelling".[881] Furthermore, "the order architecture in its highest sense should help establish must have its measure in and be an interpretation of an order than is glimpsed rather than created – in this sense a transcendent order".[882] What Harries expects, then, is a leave-taking from God and a

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[879] Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, p. 37.

[880] Harries, p. 365.

[881] *Ibid.*, pp. 364-5.

[882] *Ibid.*, p. 364.

commitment to human dwelling. This dwelling, however, is "glimpsed rather than created". In that sense, then, Harries remains committed to the universal, to a shared human essence or common sense.

The second Rortian response to Harries' problem, then, is his endorsement of Dewey and Whitman's suggestion that, as Rorty puts it, "the way to think about the significance of the human adventure is to look forward rather than upward".[883] That is, for Rorty our commonality is created rather than glimpsed; dreamed rather than discovered. To the extent that humans, as a species or type, share a commonality, for Rorty this commonality is thin: "Simply by being human we do not have a common bond. For all we share with all other humans is the same thing we share with all other animals - the ability to feel pain".[884]

Despite Rorty's individualism he remains committed to solidarity. This solidarity, however, is pragmatic. It is, for Rorty, focussed on national patriotism since "only a rhetoric of commonality can forge a winning majority in national elections.[885]

For Rorty, then, we do not need to flounder in existential crisis. Moreover, we should not – as Harries suggests – offer up our visions and values tentatively, sheepishly acknowledging that our proposal "lacks authority" and merely constitutes "precarious conjectures".[886] We do not

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[883] Rorty, *Achieving Our Country*, p. 19.

[884] Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, p. 177.

[885] Rorty, *Achieving Our Country*, p. 101. Engaging with solidarity at the national level, he argues, is necessary even for "those who, like myself, hope that the United States of America will someday yield up sovereignty to what Tennyson called 'the Parliament of Man, the Federation of the World'". Furthermore, the liberal appeal to "human solidarity" has "emerged as a powerful piece of rhetoric. I have no wish to diminish its power, but only to disengage it from what has often been thought of as its 'philosophical presuppositions'". Any such global parliament is anyway dependent on the efforts of the national states, notes Rorty, and "in the meantime, we should not let the abstractly described best be the enemy of the better". See Rorty, *Achieving Our Country*, p. 105.

[886] Harries, p. 364.

expect our values to be universal and therefore do not apologise for them not being so:

> The difference between genius and fantasy is not the difference between impresses which lock on to something universal, some antecedent reality out there in the world or deep within the self, and those which do not. Rather, it is the difference between idiosyncrasies which just happen to catch on with other people – happen because of the contingencies of some historical situation, some particular need which a given community happens to have at a given time [...] progress results from the accidental coincidence of a private obsession with a public need.[887]

Dewey, writes Rorty, "wanted Americans to share a civic religion that substituted utopian striving for claims to theological knowledge".[888] This civic religion is "centered around taking advantage of traditional pride in American citizenship by substituting social justice for individual freedom as our country's principal goal".[889]

This civic religion is a dream, boldly asserted and not a reality, weakly asserted:

> Those who hope to persuade a nation to exert itself need to remind their country of what it can take pride in as well as what it should be ashamed of. They must tell inspiring stories about episodes and figures in the nation's past—episodes and figures to which the country should remain true. Nations rely on artists and intellectuals to create images of, and to tell stories about, the national past. Competition for political leadership is in part a competition between differing stories about a nation's self-identity, and between differing symbols of its greatness.[890]

The vision of America as a country devoted to social justice is a dream rather than a description of fact, a vision of the Left to do battle against a vision of the Right.

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[887] Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, p. 37.

[888] Rorty, *Achieving Our Country*, p. 38.

[889] *Ibid.*, p. 101.

[890] *Ibid.*, pp.3-4.

Architecture and objects of design are part of this process of world-making, telling stories about the nation's past, or setting forth utopian visions for the future. As described by Pallasmaa, architecture "create[s] embodied and lived existential metaphors that concretise and structure our being in the world": "Architecture reflects, materializes and eternalizes ideas and images of ideal life [...] architecture is engaged with fundamental existential questions [...] Our domicile becomes integrated with our self identity; it becomes part of our own body and being".

Left (figure 107) The Old War Office, Whitehall; Middle (figure 108) The Wales Millennium Centre, Cardiff; Right (figure 109) The Senedd, Cardiff

The new national buildings of Wales, those which – as Croydon noted – caused such controversy in their creation, tell a particular story. Despite the popularity of classical architecture for monumental buildings, neither was built in the classical style seen in London's Whitehall. Indeed, a Welsh Parliament building in the classical orders, or a brutalist national opera house, would tell a different story about Wales. In being built as they were – the Senedd's gentle, organic modernity; the Wales Millennium Centre's bilingual literariness and allusions to Welsh landscape and industry – they set forth a particular vision of a fledgling Welsh democracy. The architecture is performative, in Austin's sense of the phrase, or at least aims to be: presenting an image of civic religion for a democracy less than ten years old; a vision of what is passionately hoped to become.[891]

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[891] For Austin, utterances of "I promise to…", "I apologise for…" and similar are performative: *doing* what they say, not *describing* what they say. To speak it is to do it, to actualise it. See JL Austin, *How To Do Things With Words* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1975).

"Works of art", writes Melchionne, "imply their own goals and values".[892] That is, architecture is both product of a civic religion, and a means for its promotion. When we reach "the end of reasons", when our pragmatic, mid-level disagreements run through fundamental fault lines, such reasoning will eventually necessitate simply the promotion of this ideal: a vision of a "dream country" in which our aesthetic environment is valued, supported and nurtured; a vision that is put up for consideration among those other utopian visions which may succeed or fail in "catching on". Each well-made building promotes this value, is self-justifying, and contributes to the opening-up of a world: the dream country becomes actual.

Conclusion to Chapter Eight and Part Two

To argue for improved aesthetics in the built environment we do not need to adopt a Scrutonian argument that *everyone* has an aesthetic impulse or that *everyone* must appreciate the value of beautiful architecture. We may allow that some of us may have more aesthetic sensibility than others, and furthermore that there are different ideas about what constitutes the good. Accepting this more pluralistic standpoint need not lead to cynicism, existential malaise, or an insistence in the sole legitimacy of a small state. Carroll's suggestion that value pluralism requires a meagre and basic provision of public goods to guarantee legitimacy arrives at an unnecessarily austere outcome, which would require not only a lack of public investment in aesthetics and the arts, but also of all sport, significant portions of the higher education and heritage sectors, as well as public parks and libraries. Such cutbacks, suggests Carroll, may be theoretically required to ensure no group unfairly profits more than another.

Rortian relativism, however, is pragmatic. It is happy to make use of mid-level aims, targets and regulations to achieve particular ends without at the same time worrying whether these aims rest on objectively verifiable foundations which will stand for good. With such a position, we are able to

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[892] Melchionne, *op cit.*

posit public policy goals such as "all residents of inner city districts should have access to green space within a 15 minute walk"; or "vacant commercial properties which diminish the appearance of residential areas should be subject to compulsory purchase orders after a period of 12 months". Legitimacy for Rorty comes not through evidencing objective foundations for such policies, nor by arriving at a radical libertarianism which endorses only interventions required to avoid citizens' madness and avoidable death. Rather, it is arrived at democratically and politically. A story or vision is presented to us, in competition with differing visions (for Rorty, most notably, social justice versus radical freedom; utopianism versus traditionalism) and is voted upon in democratic elections.

Our approach to the provision and regulation of aesthetic value in the built environment is, as argued in Chapter Six, *politically implicated,* and therefore subject to implied legitimacy depending upon political outcomes: upon whether the electorate voted, for example, for the aesthetic welfare of Saito's Scandinavian-style socialist state; for Venturi's laissez-faire, "ugly and ordinary" aesthetics of "expediency"; or for Scruton's commitment to classical, conservative politics, and classical, conservative architecture. Under such an approach, we do not need to justify our views by first, in Chang's words, putting all ideas on the "same normative page" and then demonstrating why our own point best constitutes the Truth. Rather, to reiterate, for Rorty:

> *[C]riticism is a matter of looking on this picture and on that, not of comparing both pictures with the original.* Nothing can serve as a criticism of a person save another person, or of a culture save an alternative culture.[893]

The polarisation of the Tiebout model is therefore – whilst, to an extent, a neat solution to pluralism – a threat to our ability to compare and challenge our political, cultural, and aesthetic views, notwithstanding the fact that it is, as argued above, also practically unworkable.

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[893] Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity,* p. 80.

Whereas Rorty focusses more readily on expanding our literary acquaintances, our encounters with designed objects and spaces also form part of the way in which we familiarise ourselves with new perspectives, and come to better refine our values. As noted above, it is Scruton who – for all his talk of rationality and reason-giving – best articulates this process, of the way in which, through encountering designed objects, a person "is able to know – as an intuitive certainty rather than a specific formula – that a particular object will be suitable to [his] aims, even before he is able to say what they are"; and how, by doing so, he "tries to understand the aims which guide him [...] before they can enter into his deliberations in any other way". Architecture, built space, and designed objects more generally, are able to achieve this because, far from being mute, they are carriers of infinitely varied, precise meanings. Meaning is, in Scruton's words, "rooted", in Böhme's words, "anchored" into material objects. Such material objects "radiate" meanings which are "permeated" through them. Through an iterative process of Wittgenstein's "directed discomfort" or, in contrast, by identifying objects "to which one warms", we may involve ourselves in a journey of gathering – in Heidegger's sense – that is, of keeping and of discarding, and of thereby, as Pallasmaa writes, "concretis[ing] and structur[ing] our being in the world". Such work, as argued above, does not require the discovery of universal truths, but rather – as Rorty argues – may proceed just as well through the pursuit of individual passions and through constructed "civic religions" aimed at presenting utopian visions of national values and identity. For Rorty, we saw:

> Nations rely on artists and intellectuals to create images of, and to tell stories about, the national past. Competition for political leadership is in part a competition between differing stories about a nation's self-identity, and between differing symbols of its greatness.[894]

Architecture and design are also part of this process and – as noted above regarding the new national monuments in Cardiff – are part of the way in

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[894] Rorty, *Achieving Our Country*, pp. 3-4.

which the values and meaning of nationhood are "concretised and structured".

In contrast, fact-stating and reason-giving are, as Rorty argues, "terrific in Ethics 101, but not as spurs to political action".[895] They are, as Hume noted earlier, inert, in themselves unable to motivate the will. Despite this, the language of public life and public institutions remains in thrall to the language of quantifiable evidencing, an economically-minded approach referred to by McVicar as "the culmination of 300 years of the disembodiment and abstraction of measure applied to concepts of value" – of what Heidegger refers to as Enframing.[896]

Attempts to justify the value of aesthetics in such reductive terms are, as argued in Chapter Seven, bound to fail. However, a continued expectation that public values *should* be expressed in these terms means that aesthetic value must either be excluded from the list of what matters or else appear in distorted form, as a means to an end for health and wealth. Any suggestion that public values must be justified by reason-giving, fact-giving, or quantification thereby perpetuates the marginalisation of aesthetic value in the built environment. Those who wish to advocate its value, therefore, would do better in rejecting the terms of the argument, the expectation that its worth must be stated in particular terms, within a particular – and unsympathetic – language game, final vocabulary or "closed system".

Rorty's rhetorical utopianism asks us to swear allegiance to an unachieved vision of what our country can become. It is, nonetheless, a *political* and *pragmatic* utopianism. It is distinct from de Botton's naïve, apolitical utopianism, outlined in Chapter Five, which admits of no unsurmountable social and political obstacles that would obstruct an enthusiastic architect from achieving her vision. Rorty, in contrast, advocates a reformist Leftism that would focus on practical social change. It is, then, better equipped to undertake Johar's "boring revolution" of *aesthetic* change through *regulatory* change.

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[895] Richard Rorty, quoted in *Against Bosses, Against Oligarchies*, p. 17.
[896] McVicar, p. 157.

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An absence of value foundations need not lead us to bouts of existential confusion, therefore, nor to randomly "picking" our personal and public values. Rorty's relativism is neither a perverse rebellion nor a recipe for unworkable chaos: it is merely an acknowledgement that, in defending our values there are limits to our ability to publicly "justify" them. The expectation that aesthetic value must be evidenced and justified in objective terms has not, and cannot, be met.

A Rortian approach would change the terms of debate and allow the promotion of aesthetic value, and indeed the better *distribution* of aesthetic value in the built environment, as a competing vision or story of national identity, "between differing symbols of its greatness", in terms which speak to action.

Conclusion

The Research Problem

In the Introduction to this thesis I noted that, whilst there is widespread agreement that our built environment is failing us, our habitual debate concerning aesthetics in the built environment is impeded by the use of narrow framings of the problem: more debates about the superiority of modern vs traditional architecture, more accusations of aesthetic spending being "a waste of money", followed by attempts to defend its worth reductively as a contributor to wealth and health. Since in a capitalist economy, and a liberal democratic state, the justification for spending on, or regulation of, aesthetics in the built environment calls for continual discussion of aesthetic value, these crude debates fail to capture the nuance and richness of the issues at hand. Furthermore, philosophical texts have most often either neglected the aesthetics of the built environment, or else have applied prior theories from adjacent topics and consequently gleaned distorted results. A key aim of this thesis has therefore been to address the matter afresh, to evaluate the use of existing and possible approaches rather than to come armed to apply any from the outset.

The matter of how we may justify aesthetic value in the built environment calls for both a greater understanding of architectural aesthetics itself – the focus of Part One – and also an understanding of how aesthetic value compares with other values with which it competes in private and public decision-making – the focus of Part Two. Without first questioning the nature of architectural aesthetics we may be tempted to reach merely for familiar aesthetic concepts of beauty, art and form. The aim

of Part One has been to demonstrate that an aesthetics of the built environment requires a different focus of attention, in particular a greater appreciation of the nature of design aesthetics, of aesthetic atmospheres, of negative aesthetics.

Our previous aesthetic approaches, I have argued in Part One, are often problematic when applied to the built environment. Too often they use outdated dichotomies between art and function; or they focus too keenly on the role of universal objective judgement; or enlist aesthetics as a tool in service of environmental ethics; or neglect a proper appreciation of negative aesthetic experience; and they are ill-equipped to deal with an aesthetics which appears in so-called "real life".

The Uses of an Aesthetics of Atmosphere

Böhme's aesthetics of atmospheres, I have argued, does not share these problems. Böhme's theory is comfortable with designed objects which are both functional and aesthetic; it contextualises the Kantian focus on universal judgement as a product of the Enlightenment *Zeitgeist*; it acknowledges the key role that designed objects and spaces have in "staging" life, whilst arguing for critical appraisal rather than for (as found in Parsons) the vilification of designers and the design process.

In focusing on a complete, felt experience, an aesthetics of atmospheres furthermore allows for a more holistic and convincing account of aesthetic experience, in contrast with a Scrutonian or Kantian demarcation of what must lie within and outside of our attention to ensure purity of judgement. It is, therefore, better suited to an aesthetics of the built environment, where our aesthetic attention is only rarely engaged in such rarefied acts of judgement. Böhme's theory furthermore moves away from a sole concern with beauty, opening the door to aesthetic concern with the atmospheres we more often experience – and have a need to understand – in contemporary space: the melancholy, the drab, the sterile.

The Benefits of a Pragmatic Relativism

In Part One I have argued also for a form of relativism in the application of architectural aesthetics. The aesthetic outcome we seek for a space is relative to where in the built environment it is found and to our own political and cultural commitments. In Part Two I have continued this theme of relativism in an attempt to argue against the reductive terms in which the value of aesthetics in the built environment is commonly discussed. That is, we cannot expect firm answers, presented as objective or quantifiable facts, in matters regarding the desirable distribution of aesthetic quality in the built environment. Our answers, rather, will be relative not only to the locations and functions of the building, but also to our broader political, cultural and aesthetic sympathies.

Rorty's relativism allows us to leave behind the expectation that aesthetic value must be universal. It allows us to talk in "normal" language without worrying about being on the same normative page. It encourages curiosity about other points of view and encourages both a romantic approach to "achieving our country" whilst asserting the continued practicality of making mid-level decisions that work for particular purposes.

Both Parts One and Two have sought to critique, and move beyond, our habitual ways of discussing the built environment, and so find more expansive ways to understand our present and desired aesthetic space and aesthetic decision-making. Considered in tandem, Böhme's aesthetics of atmospheres and Rorty's romantic, pragmatic relativism, allow us to critique our unsuccessful space and to suggest concrete changes, whilst avoiding the tendency to present our findings as universally true and demonstrating that a lack of absolute, universal foundation for our values is not the same as promoting a chaotic free-for-all in matters of public policy. They allow us to get on with feeling and describing our felt experience of aesthetic failures in our built space, to argue with passion about the importance of aesthetic change and to implement practical changes.

Such changes, aimed at better finding "what works for particular purposes", may involve a designer's own awareness of which "generator" – in

Böhme's terminology – is spoiling, or would intensify, an intended aesthetic atmosphere. As argued in Chapter Two, we may find that problems and improvements are not of the traditional, formally architectural kind – on which Scruton focuses – but rather may relate to materials, soundscapes, incidental objects, odours, and the presence or absence of other humans. Narrow arguments about classical columns vs minimal design can be widened to include a broader appreciation of how aesthetic generators affect the atmospheres of our built environment. So too, however, may our focus on "what works for particular purposes" involve wider changes to the planning and regulation systems, or even political systems, which contribute to poor aesthetic outcomes. That is, as argued in Part Two, designers do not work with contextless freedom but rather within regulatory and financial frameworks which may impact hugely on the buildings we see around us. What may work for improving the aesthetics of the built environment may include not just a finely tuned appreciation of atmospheric generators, but rather may also include a broader understanding of how economic and regulatory factors impact quality. This may include something as specific as an aesthetic planning regulation, but it may also include changes to buy-to-let tax incentives, or to the conditions for obtaining mortgages for self-build homes. This, indeed, is the knowledge required for Indy Johar's "boring revolution": aesthetic change through regulatory and economic change.

Aesthetic Value, Without Foundations

Whilst pragmatic relativism and an aesthetics of atmosphere conjoin to allow us to appreciate and improve the aesthetics of our built environment, there will be no satisfying, objective answer to questions concerning why our values are worthy of realisation. Our aesthetic debates cannot withstand the common demand that we should explain and evidence the value of aesthetics, of social justice, or of architectural excellence. This thesis has argued that we should cease validating the sense of such evidence demands: they cannot serve the promotion of aesthetics, social justice, or cultural excellence.

Our values, like – as suggested by Rorty – our friends and our heroes, are held closely, and not arbitrarily, yet are subject to the expansion of our familiarity with different points of view and styles of life. So accepted – and as implied even by Scruton – aesthetics itself becomes a means by which we explore and encounter values, cultures, and lifestyles other than our own, and a domain in which new meanings can be generated. Aesthetics is rarely "mere beauty" free of concepts. Our built spaces, rather, are replete with meaning, sensitive to the adjustment of generators from which they emerge. Rather than resist or commandeer the power of aesthetic expression, we may rather embrace its capacity to offer infinitely-flexible metaphorical meaning.

Implications for Future Study

The scope of this thesis has been broad, covering several matters of concern in aesthetics and in wider value theory. This broad scope has grown from the complexity of the topic itself, and from the number of still under-explored questions within its purview. Whilst I have endeavoured to discuss a good many of these questions in the thesis, there are several areas which would benefit from further research. I have outlined three below.

(1) The extent to which an aesthetics of atmosphere is culturally relative

Since atmosphere is a relation between subject and object, we may presume that changes to atmosphere may occur not only with changes to the object (for example, removing, adding, or altering items in a given space) but also with changes to the experiencing subject. This may occur through having new experiences or through seeing elements/generators of the scene in different contexts. We are all familiar with how the experience of internal and external space can change over time: what felt like a "luxury" interior in the 1970s will not be felt as such in the 1990s. Böhme alludes to this when he writes of the "semantics of materials" which is "based partly in their origin, partly in the privileged access of particular strata of society to certain

materials, but partly also in sheer convention, whether fashion or ideology".[897] This results in a certain degree of semantic slippage, such as the aesthetic effect of concrete, "which in the first half of our Century was invested with positive, almost messianic significance, and in the meantime has degenerated into a popular metaphor for vices such as contempt for humanity, narrow-mindedness, and heartlessness".[898] So too, we may conjecture, that the same space may present differently to different cultures across not only time, but also space.

(2) The nature and limits of aesthetic plasticity

Present throughout this thesis' exploration of architectural aesthetics has been the unresolved problem of the nature and limits of aesthetic plasticity. Böhme's example of concrete (discussed above) offers one such commonplace example of our changeable perception of built space. Few thinkers argue for any absolute rigidity in our aesthetic response to unchanged objects, even whilst some – as argued in Chapter Three – attempt to argue that what I called cultivated aesthetics is, whilst possible, somehow invalid or unnatural. Kant writes of how study of best practice will change our aesthetic response to what we previously admired; Saito, as has been argued, oscillates between arguing that new-found ethical information inevitably does change our aesthetic perception of implicated objects, or else that we must self-consciously *apply* this knowledge to the appearance of implicated objects.

On the other side, as argued in Chapter Three, many objects and experiences are much more resistant to changed perception, such as our common disgust when encountering vomit or high-pitched screeching. An increased awareness of the limits of aesthetic plasticity would better inform the extent to which changed attitudes to unappreciated built space are more effectively achieved through altering the space, or through altering our associations with it.

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[897] Böhme, *The Aesthetics of Atmospheres*, p. 145

[898] *Ibid.*, p. 146.

(3) Aesthetics of regulation

As argued above, the aesthetics of the built environment is affected hugely by regulatory and economic factors. Such measures can be specific and prescriptive, or may rely upon phrases such as "high quality" or "historically sympathetic". I have furthermore pointed to the way in which aesthetics is already part of our regulatory structures, as evidenced through the country house clause, and through numerous limitations to the alterations of listed historic buildings. However, there is wide scope for a greater understanding of how aesthetics is affected by, and may be improved by, changes to planning regulations and attention to economic factors such as the balance of supply and demand, and lack of supplier competition, in the housing market. These structures constitute the environment from which our built environment emerges and within which our designers are constrained to operate. They may therefore, I suggested, be studied as aesthetically-relevant entities in their own right, as a form of score or script.

In enquiring about the topics above, the aesthetics of the built environment grows and deepens its sphere of interest, moves beyond the tired debates of the past, and begins a process of understanding and promoting aesthetic value without the distraction of evidencing it with absolute foundations. We may tune in the atmospheres in which we live, and so work towards the realisation of the values we warm to, and the society we wish to achieve.

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Figure 56 (p. 188) of Heidegger's hut. Photo by Muesse, "Martin Heidegger Hütte über Rütte, Todtnauberg; Heidegger's mountain hut". Available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2804235 [accessed 16th October 2022]. Modifications: slightly cropped. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0. To view a copy of this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en. Replaces very similar photo of Heidegger's hut from original thesis.

Figure 57 (p. 196) of Redrow home. Photo by Mark Stevenson, "Redrow development in Horsforth". Available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Redrow_development_in_Horsforth.jpg [accessed 16th October 2022]. Modifications: slightly cropped. Licensed under CC BY 2.0. To view a copy of this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/deed.en. Photo replaces similar photo of a Redrow home in original thesis.

Figure 58 (p. 196) of Habitat store. Photo by Lionel Allorge, "Habitat home furnishing shop in Vélizy-Villacoublay, France". Available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Magasin_Habitat_%C3%A0_V%C3%A9lizy-Villacoublay_le_23_avril_2017_-_07.jpg [accessed 16th October 2022]. Modifications: slightly cropped. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0. To view a copy of this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en. Replaces similar illustrative image of aspirational mid-century design (this time, from John Lewis) in original thesis.

Figure 59 (p. 199) of Palais Garnier. Photo by scarletgreen, "Grand staircase of the Garnier Opera House, Paris". Available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Grand_escalier_de_l%27op%C3%A9ra_Garnier.jpg [accessed 16th October 2022]. Modifications:

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Figure 60 (p. 199) of a slaughterhouse. Photo by BlackRiv, [Untitled: Beef, Cow, Slaughterhouse]. Available at https://pixabay.com/photos/beef-cow-slaughterhouse-1884301/ [accessed 16th October 2022]. Modifications: slightly cropped. Free to use under Pixabay license. Replaces very similar slaughterhouse image from original thesis.

Figure 61 (p. 199) of high street. Photo by 12019, [Untitled: St Ives, England]. Available at https://pixabay.com/photos/st-ives-england-great-britain-town-168281/ [accessed 16th October 2022]. No modifications made. Free to use under Pixabay license. Replaces similar picture of high street in original thesis.

Figure 62 (p. 202) of Chinatown, London. Photo by Oliver Spalt, "London: Chinatown with Chinese New Year decoration". Available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chinatown_london.jpg [accessed 16th October 2022]. No modifications made. Licensed under CC BY 2.0. To view a copy of this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/deed.en. Photo unchanged from original thesis.

Figure 63 (p. 202) of suburban Ealing. Photo by Derek Harper, "Houses on Woodville Road, Ealing". Available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Houses_on_Woodville_Road,_Ealing_-_geograph.org.uk_-_2865575.jpg [accessed 16th October 2022]. No modifications made. Licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0. To view a copy of this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/deed.en. Replaces similar photo of Ealing in original thesis.

Figure 64 (p. 205) of Jeffrey Beaumont discovering a severed ear in David Lynch's *Blue Velvet.* Photo removed for copyright reasons. It is available to view at https://everettcollection.com/#/image/388168/160671/CfDJ8Aosonq9daBDrku3oAO8fkXU7YW_zSQG_n4CYgdfuwPLxRTp65lapcOG17IsQccCqwLFmwfa7xV_HWG0mRQXb7toDhQahhcH8R4Hg4tMBts3innzkgH_ZquUdgwTZ2sGog?query=blue%20velvet%20ear [accessed 23rd October 2022].

Figure 65 (p. 211) of Michelangelo's *David.* Photo by Jörg Bittner Unna, "The Statue of David, completed by Michelangelo in 1504". Available at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:%27David%27_by_Michelangelo_Fir_JBU005_denoised.jpg [accessed 16th October 2022]. No modifications made. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0. To view a copy of this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en. Replaces almost identical photo from original thesis.

Figure 66 (p. 211) of Ligier Richier's *Transi de René de Chalon.* Photo by Weglinde, "Ligier Richier work in Bar-le-Duc". Available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ligier_Richier_Transi_2.jpg [accessed 16th October 2022]. No modifications made. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0. To view a copy of this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en. Photo unchanged from original thesis.

Figure 67 (p. 212). Faithful reproduction of Edvard Munch, *Melancholy*, oil on canvas, 1891, private collection. Available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Edvard_Munch_-_Melancholy_(1894).jpg [accessed 16th October 2022]. The official position taken by the Wikimedia Foundation is that "faithful reproductions of two-dimensional public domain works of art are public domain". Source/photographer: The Athenaeum. Photo unchanged from original thesis.

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Chapter Five

Figure 69 (p. 228) of Lloyd George Avenue, Cardiff. Photo by John Lord, "Lloyd George Avenue, Cardiff, Wales". Available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lloyd_George_Avenue.jpg [accessed 16th October 2022]. No modifications made. Licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0. To view a copy of this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/deed.en. Photo unchanged from original thesis.

Figure 70 (p. 230) of Chetwoods' design for HMS Cambria. Image removed for copyright reasons. Available to view online at https://www.chetwoods.com/projects/hms-cambria/ [accessed 16th October 2022].

Figure 71 (p. 230) of HMS Cambria. Photo by Rob Browne for Wales Online. Available at https://i2-prod.walesonline.co.uk/incoming/article20208750.ece/ALTERNATES

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Figure 73 (p. 231) of a business park, Cardiff. Screenshot taken from Google Street View. Permitted under Google's usage policy. To view a copy of this policy, visit https://www.google.com/intl/en-GB_ALL/permissions/geoguidelines/#:~:text=Street%20View%20imagery%20can%20only,URL%20provided%20on%20Google%20Maps. Replaces very similar photo of a Cardiff business park in original thesis.

Figure 74 (p. 233) of Senedd building. Photo copyrighted to the Senedd Commission and features on the official website of the Welsh Parliament. Available at https://senedd.wales/visit/our-estate [accessed 18th October 2022]. Modifications: slightly cropped. Copyright holder has confirmed the image is free to use subject to their terms of use. To view the terms of use, visit https://senedd.wales/commission/access-to-information/copyright/. Photo unchanged from original thesis.

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Figure 76 (p. 242) of sculptural brise soleil. Photo by Peter Bennetts, "Brise Soleil House: Studio Workshop". Available at https://www.archdaily.com/901125/brise-soleil-house-studio-workshop/5b8843b8f197cca2e20001fd-brise-soleil-house-studio-workshop-photo?next_project=no [accessed 18th October 2022]. Reproduced with permission of the photographer. Photo unchanged from original thesis.

Figure 77 (p. 246) of House Lessans. Photo by Aidan McGrath, "House Lessans". Available at https://www.housebeautiful.com/uk/lifestyle/property/a29808142/grand-designs-house-of-the-year-2019-riba-house-lessans/ [accessed

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Figure 78 (p. 246) of commercial housing. Photo by Sludge G, "Bedford housing estate, Putnoe". Available at https://www.flickr.com/photos/sludgeulper/9055702904/ [accessed 18th October 2022]. Modifications: slightly cropped at bottom. Licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0. To view a copy of this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/. Photo replaces similar photo of commercial housing from original thesis.

Chapter Six

Figure 79 (p. 262) of central Edinburgh. Photo by Madeleine Kohler, "Colorful Victoria Street in Edinburgh". Available at https://unsplash.com/photos/90Qn643Pq9c [accessed 18th October 2022]. Free to use under Unsplash license. Photo replaces similar image of central Edinburgh from original thesis.

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Figure 81 (p. 263) of Northern State Parkway bridge. Photo by Doug Kerr, "Northern State Parkway - New York". Available at https://www.flickr.com/photos/dougtone/6819457917/in/photostream/ [accessed 19th October 2022]. Modifications: slightly cropped. Licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0. To view a copy of this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/. Photo replaces similar (but much older) image of Robert Moses' bridge from the original thesis.

Figure 82 (p. 264) of Cutteslowe Walls. Archive photograph from Picture Oxon, Oxfordshire County Council, "Cutteslowe Walls, between Wolsey and Carlton Roads, before demolition, 3.1959". Available at https://pictureoxon.com/frontend.php?keywords=Ref_No_increment; EQUALS;POX0108730&pos=16&action=zoom&id=108730 [accessed 24th October 2022]. Reference POX0108730. Free to use for non-commercial research. Photo unchanged from original thesis.

Figure 83 (p. 266) of Stourhead. Photo by Mark Whittaker, "Autumn at Stourhead". Available at https://www.flickr.com/photos/127150425@N07/37216845044 [accessed 19th October 2022]. Modifications: cropped from left and

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Figure 85 (p. 276) of Holland Park. Photo by David Hawgood, "Formal garden in Holland Park Irises, fountain, and a gardener". Available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Formal_garden_in_Holland_Park_-_geograph.org.uk_-_809066.jpg [accessed 19th October 2022]. Modifications: slightly cropped at bottom. Licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0. To view a copy of this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/deed.en. Photo replaces similar image of Holland Park from original thesis.

Figure 86 (p. 276) of Penrhys Estate. Photo by Gayle Marsh for Wales Online. Available at https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/local-news/gallery/abandoned-buildings-boarded-up-flats-23634945 [accessed 19th October 2022]. Modifications: slightly cropped. Reproduced with permission from the copyright holder. Replaces similar image of Penrhys from original thesis.

Figure 87 (p. 278) of candy stripe house. Screenshot taken from May 2015 Google Street View (taken from Ansdell Street of South End). Permitted under Google's usage policy. To view a copy of this policy, visit https://www.google.com/intl/en-GB_ALL/permissions/geoguidelines/#:~:text=Street%20View%20imagery%20can%20only,URL%20provided%20on%20Google%20Maps. Replaces similar photo of candy striped house from original thesis.

Figures 88 and 89 (p. 281) of Penally Camp. Photos included within the HM Inspectorate of Prisons' report *An inspection of contingency asylum accommodation: HMIP report on Penally Camp and Napier Barracks (November 2020 - March 2021)* (London: HMIP, 2021). Available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1005065/An_inspection_of_contingency_asylum_accommodation_HMIP_report_on_Penally_Camp_and_Napier_Barracks.pdf [accessed 19th October 2022]. Licensed under Open Government Licence v3.0. To view a copy of this license, visit http://nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3/. Photos unchanged from original thesis.

Figure 90 (p. 284) of Woodlands Lodge. Original photo removed for copyright reasons. It is available to view online here:

https://keyassets.timeincuk.net/inspirewp/live/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2020/05/Woodlands-Lodge_-Cirencester_-Knight-Fr_392685192_695211852-e1589987096998-920x584.jpg [accessed 23rd October 2022].

Figure 91 (p. 285) of Chineway Farm. Original photo removed for copyright reasons. It is available to view online here: https://keyassets.timeincuk.net/inspirewp/live/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2020/05/Chineway-Farm_-Sidbury_-Devon-EXT-MAIN_392685141_695211852-920x614.jpg [accessed 23rd October].

Chapter Seven

Figure 92 (p. 312) of an "oatmeal feeling" bedroom. Original photo removed for copyright reasons. It is available to view online here: https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/166773992438662283/ [accessed 23rd October 2022].

Figure 93 (p. 312) of an "oatmeal feeling" kitchen. Original photo removed for copyright reasons. It is available to view online here: https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/313985405269035706/ [accessed 23rd October 2022].

Figure 94 (p. 324) of Jeff Koons' balloon dog. Original photo has been removed for copyright reasons. It is available to view online here: https://i.ytimg.com/vi/dYahe1-isH4/maxresdefault.jpg [accessed 23rd October 2022].

Chapter Eight

Figure 95 (p. 346) of Eastbourne seafront. Photo by Shearings Holidays, "Shearings coaches outside the Burlington Hotel, Eastbourne". Available at https://www.flickr.com/photos/113734426@N07/14408624169 [accessed 19th October 2022]. Modifications: slightly cropped; colour saturation increased. Licensed under CC BY 2.0. To view a copy of this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/. Photo replaces similar image of Eastbourne seafront in original thesis.

Figure 96 (p. 346) of Brighton North Laine. Photo by The Academy of Urbanism, "North Laine The Great Place Award 2009". Available at https://www.flickr.com/photos/academyofurbanism/14596916372/ [accessed 19th October 2022]. Modifications: slightly cropped; colour

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Figure 97 (p. 360) of window tax house. Photo by Whilesteps, "Window Tax". Available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Window_Tax.jpg [accessed 19th October 2022]. Modifications: slightly cropped. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0. To view a copy of this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en. Photo unchanged from original thesis.

Figure 98 (p. 360) of camelback house. Photo by Infrogmation, "New Orleans: Camelback shotgun house, garage, Uptown". Available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:UptownShotgunCamelbackGarage.jpg [accessed 20th October 2022]. Modifications: slightly cropped. Licensed under CC BY 2.5. To view a copy of this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.5/deed.en. Photo replaces very similar image from original thesis.

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Figure 100 (p. 364) of Shanghai Urban Room. Photo by Ekrem Canli, "City model of Shanghai in the Urban Planning Museum of Shanghai (China)". Available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Urban_planning_museum_Shanghai.jpg [accessed 20th October 2022]. No modifications made. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0. To view a copy of this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en. Photo replaces very similar image of Shanghai Urban Room from original thesis.

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Figure 102 (p. 384) of projection mapping on church. Photo by Gonedelyon, "Cathédrale St Jean illuminée par P.Warrener, Lyon". Available at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cath._St_Jean_(2).JPG [accessed 21st October 2022]. Modifications: slightly cropped. Licensed under

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Figure 103 (p. 384) of projection mapping on Sydney Opera House. Photo by Stanley Cheung, "Sydney Opera House, Sydney NSW, Australia". Available at https://unsplash.com/photos/sJ064KhsMok [accessed 21st October 2022]. Free to use under Unsplash license. Replaces similar image of projection mapping from original thesis.

Figure 104 (p. 385) of socialist (worker's) hat. Photo by Édouard Hue, "Casquette bleu marine, en feutre et polyamide". Available at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Casquette_marine.jpg [accessed 21st October 2022]. Modifications: slightly cropped. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0. To view a copy of this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en. Photo replaces very similar image of worker's hat from original thesis.

Figure 105 (p. 385) of conservative flat cap. Photo by ozz13x, "Flat Cap: Village at War Weekend 2012, Stoke Bruerne, Northamptonshire". Available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flat_Cap_(8037037050).jpg [accessed 21st October 2022]. Modifications: white electronic pen used to isolate cap from wearer. Licensed under CC BY 2.0. To view a copy of this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/deed.en. Replaces very similar image of flat cap from original thesis.

Figure 106 (p. 385) of military beret. Photo by McChizzle, "U.S. Air Force Pararescue Beret and Flash". Available at https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:USAF_Pararescue_Beret.jpg [accessed 21st October 2022]. No modifications made. Permission statement of Wikipedia: "This image or file is a work of a U.S. Air Force Airman or employee, taken or made as part of that person's official duties. As a work of the U.S. federal government, the image or file is in the public domain in the United States". Photo replaces very similar image of military beret from original thesis.

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https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cardiff_,_Wales_Millennium_Centre_-_geograph.org.uk_-_3914949.jpg [accessed 16th October 2022]. Modifications: slightly cropped from all sides. Licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0. To view this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/deed.en. Replaces very similar photo of the WMC from original thesis.

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