'AESTHETICS' OF AESTHETICS

Aesthetic question in architectural and urban discourses

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INTRODUCTION[1]

At any point where there is said to be a 'problem', there must in
fact exist two distinct, but fundamentally related, problems. Yet,
these two problems, in the senses used here, are not the two
variations on the same theme, but two problems of different order.
If the first one is a physical, substantive, problem; the second is to
be on the definition, conception, theory, or consistency, of that
problem. If, on the other hand, the given problem itself happens to
be one on definition, conception, or theory, then the second problem
must be one on the nature of this given problem, or on its
correspondence or adequacy to the substantive object. In fact, these
very statements, however crude and oversimplified they obviously are,
themselves define a 'problem' which this paper sets out to tackle.
That problem is by necessity, rather than by choice, the nature of
the question of 'aesthetics' in architectural and urban discourse(s).

The distinction drawn in the first paragraph can now be seen in
operation: This paper is not primarily concerned with the substantive
problem of architectural and urban aesthetics as **given**, but the
conditions and nature of the ways in which that very problem is
(mis)conceived as a problem. The justification for addressing to the
second order problem cannot be made simply and without anticipating
what the whole paper is aiming to achieve. However, it should be
stated at the beginning that by concentrating on the second order
problem, which we shall call the **epistemological** problem, we are
neither ignoring the existence of the substantive problems of buildings,
nor are wa presupposing that the second is a substitute for the first.
Obviously, there are physical objects and physical relations everywhere,
and these objects and relations have many properties of their own.
There are also psychological (alongside economic, political, etc.)
functions such as cognitive, affective and conative. These functions
are operational in knowing, feeling and willing. Psychological relations
of human beings to the world is one of many ways of relation to it.
And, all this is a legitimate area of inquiry provided that the framework,
the terms and the objects of that inquiry themselves do not
constitute certain epistemological (i.e. second order) problems .
which would then create obstacles to the progress of the inquiry.
To ignore the first would be to ignore certain material phenomena;

to ignore the second would be to condemn our inquiries, researches and discussions to closed circles, self-justifying statements and speculative fantasies. It is for this reason that it would be more *useful at the present juncture to take up a position of the inquisitor* rather than that of a reporter. We believe that it is necessary to ask a series of questions in order to be able to open up some of the closed circles, or throw doubts on certain statements made as if there were no problems.

'AESTHETIC QUESTION'

The substantive problem (as given) is the aesthetic aspects of architectural and urban form. It is likely, and possible, for some to suggest that from Plato to Prof. X and from philosophy and psychology to the history of art and architecture there have been enough inquiries and theories to enable us to tackle the specific problems of the aesthetic aspects of architectural and urban forms. Without either ignoring the 'tradition' or in fact pretending that (with our inexpert capacity) we know, or are able to evaluate it, we will proceed by asking our questions, and leave the comparative documentation of that tradition to the historians of ideas or to the encyclopedists of art. In other words, we will assume, and try to demonstrate, that the epistemological problems in the substantive question of architectural and urban aesthetics warrant an analysis of how that tradition came to dominate the fields of architecture and urbanism in the first place.

Now, in order to see what constitutes the 'aesthetic question' in architectural and urban contexts, it would be useful to see briefly what constitutes 'aesthetic question' in general. This, in return, involves an understanding of the nature of concepts used in statements on aesthetic. As to the question of what constitutes the architectural and urban aesthetics, we have to see the nature of statements in these fields – statements which we can associate with aesthetics in general. This discussion would then indicate another distinct problem.

It is here that the concept of discourse should be introduced. For what is referred to as the first and second order problems in aesthetics are all expressed in statements which do not 'fall from the sky' nor do they 'go down the drain'. They are made and received in certain frameworks, i.e. discourses. They are not always theoretical, nor are they necessarily rigorous, consistent, intelligible, etc. Yet, they all make up a unity, a field, a terrain where (from Plato to Prof. X) many people make a large variety of statements. What is common to all these statements is less their immediate subject matter than their objects. For they may be about a unique sculpture as well as about mass-produced Buddha statuettes, or about a couple of lines of a poem or movement of a symphony as well as about a wild flower, and last but not least, about the 'vision' that is assumed to be expresssed in a mass-demonstration as well as about the proportions of a building. . . . .

The question as to what it is that unites these diverse objects and phenomena has always been the main preoccupation of aesthetics and philosophy. Common denominators, hidden essences, magic numbers, spiritual meanings. . . were sought – and often found! It has been universally assumed that their common standart was something called 'beauty'. While nobody knew what it was, everybody, even the 'roughest' and "ugliest' (!) individuals , seemed to be appreciating that which is said to be 'beautiful'. Now, having already spent several thousand years trying to solve this riddle, it should not be unfair to claim that the contemporary 'man' is no more wiser or clearer in its [2] conception of these problems than those who lived centuries ago. Thus, instead of introducing just one more concept of 'beauty' or one more metaphysical, psychological or 'historical'. . .

2. I prefer using 'it' for 'man' which is not a sexually specified person, but a neutral term for human species. Elsewhere I proposed 'hir' to stand for 'his' and 'her', but 'it' as a general personal pronoun seems to be in order as in some non-Latin languages.

explanation, we would indeed be nearer to an efficient discussion on these phenomena and on our perfectly legitimate reactions towards them by shifting our attention from the substantive to the epistemological for one moment – that is, from the 'aesthetics' of buildings to the nature of statements on them. This shift can only be done by appreciating the fact that both substantive and epistemological problems are expressed, as has already been suggested, within a field which we called discourse.

AESTHETIC DISCOURSE

'Aesthetic discourse', then, is the totality of all statements(written, spoken or made in other ways) that take as their object that which is believed to be a quality, a dimension or an aspect of reality, namely, 'aesthetic quality', 'aesthetic dimension', 'aesthetic aspect'. This field of statements, this formation is not a self-conscious unity but one that is to be constituted theoretically. Therefore, as is usually done within that discourse, it is neither reducible to single theories, ideas or schools of thought, nor to historic periods, styles, or the expression of tastes or cultural preferences. Aesthetic discourse is not divisible along disciplinary or professional lines either. It is a formation which is pervasive in philosophy as much as in architectural practice, in literature as much as in politics, in religion as much as in everday life.[3] It is in this formation (or field) that the ideas on (a) aesthetics in general, and (b) architectural and urban aesthetics are conceived, expressed, discussed, operationalized, legislated, or opposed.

3. In this context I cannot discuss the question of discourse in greater detail than this. I hope what has so far been said will enable me to structure and present my arguments. I have dealt with the whole question in my Environmental Discourse, London: Question Press, 1982.

The aesthetic discourse is constituted by a set of concepts and terms ('discursive objects') which refer to certain other physical or discursive phenomena. They are bound together by one or more 'problematic(s)', that is, framework(s) of concepts. The first question then is where these concepts and terms come from, and/or how they are constituted. Although this is a discussion which would go deep into the question of aesthetics in general (with which this paper is not primarily concerned), it is necessary to point out some specific forms of concept formation in the aesthetic discourse. These specific forms have direct relevance to understanding the way architectural and urban discourses are constituted, how they have so much been influenced by the aesthetic discourse, and how the dominant modes of artistic and architectural perceptions became so much closer to each other closer in fact than respective objects would justify.

One specific form of concept formation in the aesthetic discourse is borrowing concepts and terms from other disciplines and discourses which have little or no connection with art. This operation can be called 'aesthetic transposition'.[4] For example, "coming to life" of a pictorial composition, "moving character" in a novel, a "well-balanced" musical phrase, an "organic growth" of the theme, a "tightly knit" pattern in music, drama or poetry, a "graceful" building, etc. These all seem to be metaphorical transference which is in no way a mechanism specific to aesthetics. What is specific to aesthetics is that a "metaphorical expressions has to establish its reference to something as an appearance, a manifest structure. . . Aesthetic transposition involves looking at something as if it were just itself".[5] So-called 'aesthetic appreciation' of architectural and urban forms (i.e. buildings and cities) in this manner involves seeing in them certain aesthetic qualities which are believed to be **there**: What we see is what it is, how we describe it is, how it is. . . and so on. **Appearance**, whether visible to the ordinary eye, or to the trained expert gaze, is what or where the aesthetic appreciation is aimed at. We will come back to this important question later.

4. E.SCHAPER, cf. Prelude to Aesthetics, London: G.Allen & Unwin, 1968, p. 16.

5. E.SCHAPER, Prelude to Aesthetics, London: G.Allen & Unwin, 1968, p. 19, (emphasis mine).

Here, the second related problem can be formulated: If aesthetic concepts are borrowed from non-artistic fields, and 'aestheticized', **how** and **why** is it that these concepts and forms of statements come to be used in appreciating the architectural and urban forms which,

after all, (and here we can expect disagreements and protests) are
not primarily 'artistic' objects?

All these operations take place, and some of the questions emerge,
in discources, mainly and largely in architectural and urban discourses
as well es in aesthetic discourse.

To sum up these introductory discussions, we may suggest ;
        a) that architectural and urban discourses borrow from aesthetic
          as well as other discourses, and
        b) That this borrowing takes place on definite perceptual,
          cognitive and epistemological levels.

We can now investigate in detail how these operations take place, and
what their philosophical, psychological ideological and professional bases
and effects are.

PHYSICAL OBJECTS AND AESTHETIC CONCEPTS

One of the ways in which aesthetic discourse was said to be forming
its concepts was by aesthetic transpositions. But once these concepts
are formed, how is it that the aesthetic discourse appropriates its
objects - objects which are usually called 'pieces of art', 'works of
art', 'crafts', 'architecture', 'masterpieces', 'literary works', etc.?
What precisely is it that connects the aesthetic concepts with the
physical objects themselves?

In order to answer these questions we have to introduce the concept
of 'ideological discourse'. It is a specific form of discourse which
functions primarily as the medium of expression for particular ideologies
that is, particular ways of representing the real conditions to those
involved. Now, it will be assumed, and hopefully be demonstrated, that
both the aesthetic discourse in general, and the discourse on architectura
and urban aesthetics in particular, are basically ideological discourses.
That is, their primary task is the expression of particular ways of
looking at, experiencing, responding to, and evaluating the world. It
is on this basis that we may see how aesthetic discourse is connected
to the real objects it 'talks' about.

One of the most characteristic features of ideological discourses is
that they **first** assign certain qualities to their objects, **then**
presuppose that quality as the inherent and intrinsic property of
those objects, and **then** proceed to make inquiries as to whereabout
that property has its origins, or how it can be understood, etc. The
inquiry in the last phase is usually called by the name of the property
assigned to the object in the first place. For example, while some
buildings are simply called 'buildings' some are assigned the property
of 'Architecture'.[6] Then, this 'Architectural' quality is assumed to
be the distinguishing and inherent property of those latter group of
buildings. Finally, the ages–old building profession is called upon to
design and produce those 'Architectural' buildings which finally become
the objects of 'Architectural theory', 'Architectural criticism',
'history of Architecture', 'Architectural psychology', etc. In other
words, these disciplines take upon themselves to study primarily the
'Architectural' aspects of selected buildings; and usually leave the
'non–Architectural' aspects to other professions or disciplines to deal
with.

Similarly, with the distinctions of 'literature' vs. 'ordinary writing',
or 'works of art' vs. 'ordinary artifacts', specialist disciplines
studying the 'spatial' aspects of selected products come into existence.
As the named disciplines and discourses are primarily defined by
certain problematics such as that of 'high art', 'high architecture',
'literary creation', etc, they tend to become closed circles which not
only create and articulate their own objects, they also perpetuate
their own existence as disciplines, as discourses, and as problematics.

6. cf., for example, the often quoted, but
seldom criticized quotation from N.PEVSNER
that "a bicycle shed is a building, Lincoln
Cathedral is a piece of architecture." (An
Outline of European Architecture,
Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964, p. 15). See
also B.ALLSOP who says that "Architecture
is significant building" (A Modern Theory of
Architecture, London: RKP, 1977, p. 2) A
recent report by Greater London Council's
Historic Buildings Committee reproduced once
again the astonishing lack of conceptual
clarity on this point. It refers to "building
of architectural merit", "buildings. . . of
major architectural significance", etc. (see
Building Design, n. 430, 26.1.1979, p. 1).

Yet, it is   significant that one cannot observe the same mechanism in objects studied by science. One cannot, for example, seriously suggest that certain physical or social phenomena are 'scientific' phenomena, that they possess some 'scientific' properties, and that these properties are studied by particular 'sciences'.

All these are not simple selective examples mentioned here merely to strengthen the argument. They have explicit and legitimate purposes:They want to illustrate the fact,

1. that there is a significant structural difference between scientific and non-scientific discourses as to how they designate, describe and appropriate their objects,

2. that there is a qualitative difference between what scientific and what non-scientific discourses do in terms of their functions and operations,

3. that non-scientific discourses may help us feel, appreciate, react to, or identify with certain phenomena in certain ideological frames of references, or presumed qualities, but they cannot provide the substitutes for the knowledge of those phenomena.

4. that while the objects of scientific discourses are concrete objects and the concepts of these objects, the objects of architectural, aesthetic and artistic discourses are either some presupposed and prescribed qualities (e.g. beauty, human, high,. . .) or are vague ideological notions (e.g. environmental, artistic, urban...)

THE TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Now, what is it that makes aesthetic designation so unreliable, and warranting so much criticism here? The problem starts with the nature of the term 'aesthetic' as used in the aesthetic discourses in artistic, architectural and urban practices. First of all,'aesthetic' is a semantically ubiquotous term. It functions as an adjective to qualify other, themselves qualifying terms such as 'quality', 'dimension', 'value', etc.., hence, 'aesthetic quality', 'aesthetic value', and so on. Secondly, it is invariably a 'positive' adjective. It implies 'good', 'beautiful', 'nice', and not 'bad', 'ugly',[7] etc. Yet when its conceptual content is transferred into the field of study, namely, the 'aesthetics', that field tends to adopt this positive bias, and unlike biology, physics, or sociology,. . . . it deals *only with those objects that are assumed to possess the 'aesthetic quality'*. Thus, not only as a term, but also as a discipline it constitutes a set of values, and most significantly, a positive yardstick to assess the 'aesthetic value' of certain objects.

As a dimension, 'aesthetic dimension' is assumed to make all other dimensions of an object meaningful. It overdetermines them. As with all such value systems, the arguments tend to ignore the nature and validity of the term of reference (i.e. 'aesthetic') and concentrate on whether or not certain objects are aesthetically valuable. As a yardstick, on the other hand, it is used as the basis of discriminating different objects according to some predetermined (yet, implicit) categories ('Architecture' vs 'building', 'Art' vs 'artifact'). Furthermore, as in all ideologically presumed qualities, aesthetic quality is claimed to be 'universal', that is, universally *recognisable, reproducible or, even, measurable. Histories of art and* architecture are full of such claims, tourist industry relies on it, and art and architectural education declares it as one of its objectives. All these assumptions take their support from another assumption, namely, that aesthetic quality is a property of the object, thus, it is objective. This conception is present in materialist as well as in essentialist views of aesthetic quality. While the latter insists on the innate nature of the aesthetic quality as the 'essence' of an 'aesthetic object', the former stresses the role of the human labour in "endowing objects with qualities that are not found in nature,

7. Therefore it is a contradiction in terms to define 'ugly' as an "aesthetic category denoting phenomena inimical to the beautiful.." while suggesting that " In true art the portrayal of what is aesthetically ugly is one way of asserting the ideal of beauty" (M.ROSENTHAL & P.YUDIN (Eds), A Dictionary of Philosophy, Moscow: Progress Publ, 1967, p. 405). The question of 'bad', 'ugly', 'repressive' is a constant theme in discussions on socialist realism. Brecht's concept of this approach is in fact the most significant in that he says it is not necessarily the direct, visible, object but the understanding it facilitates that may be 'progressive'.

8. A.S.VAZQUEZ, Art and Society, London: Merlin, 1973, p. 68.

with what we today call aesthetic qualities".[8] The subjectivist idea, on the other hand, that "beauty is in the eyes of the beholder" may seem to be the opposite of this objectivist position, but, in fact, in the second case the universality is retained by subjectivizing it. In other words, although the individual subject is considered to be the free agent of aesthetic judgement, the dominant ideology in society ensures the reproduction of the universalist view in the individual subject. Paradoxical though this may seem, it is one of the fundamental features of the aesthetic discourse. While allowing for subjectivism and relativism (as all un-scientific discourses do) cultural domination of the ideas of 'high art', 'universal beauty', etc. leaves the individual with a predetermined tool to appreciate designated objects... We will return to this problem a little later.

One other aspect of the aesthetic discourse is the multiplicity of its objects. Since there is no limit as to the range of objects that can be beautiful, thus there is no limit to what aesthetics can deal with. A large variety of objects, products, forms of representation, means of expression, as well as disciplines and practices are all penetrated and conditioned by the categories of the aesthetic discourse.

DOMINATION OF THE 'APPEARANCE'

Yet, the most significant and the main characteristic of the aesthetic discourse is its stress on the **appearance,** or the 'look' of objects, that is, on their **visible** aspects. This is significant as it is the principal condition of existence of most of the discursive operations that we are discussing in this paper. It is also significant as it constitutes one of the bases of the links between artistic **and** architectural and urban discourses.

9. The few exceptions are the musical, and partly, literary, objects. Even in the case of poetry aural is often less dominant than the verbal. It is also important to remember that poetry is one area where the spatial organisation of the words is as important as (or even central to) the actual semantic content of words.

The **immediate** objects of all artistic, architectural and urban practices are empirical, physical objects which our senses can react to. And, most of the artistic and nearly all of the architectural and urban objects are primarily **visual,** that is, they are **seen** and **looked** at more than heard, touched, or tasted![9] While this phenomena may seem obvious and natural, it holds the key to our analysis of the aesthetic question in these fields. It would therefore not be an oversimplification to say that however much aural and tactile responses are customarily considered as the modes of 'aesthetic appreciation', the visual has always been the dominant mode.

10. We will discuss the pertinence of this very concept in a moment.

We cannot and need not go into the biological or physiological reasons of this domination here. What is significant is that the attempt to explain the nature of so-called aesthetic appreciation by biological or physiological frameworks is like explaining wars by reference to the presumed aggressive instincts, or properly ownership by possessive instincts in man. The 'aesthetic appreciation' therefore, is based mainly on the 'appreciation'[10] of what is visible, that is, in majority of the cases, the appreciation of the surface, the **outside,** or the **exterior.** While the degree, level and angle of this dominant mode of looking at objects varies from one art form to another, and from one 'built form' to another; the mode itself is present in all of them. This mode of relating to the objects determines the way in which those objects are **perceived, received** and **cognized.** In short, the mode of perception in artistic, architectural and (most of) urban practices is **visual.**

11. The term 'overlook' is not a deliberately chosen word. 'Overlooking' or 'oversight' are two terms which clearly demonstrate the main difference between visual analysis of aesthetic theories, and the discourse analysis (that is practiced in this paper). While aesthetic ideology conveniently bases all its judgements on the manifestation, or the appearance of some human, super-human or divine 'essence', it can not 'see', 'admit' or 'analyse' its own simple facts. It overlooks them – not visually but discursively, not physically but conceptually. This is only a simple example of the fact that discursive gaze can indeed be more penetrating than many a cultured aesthetic appreciation!

So far, we have tried to identify this basic fact – a fact simple enough to be 'overlooked' by the aesthetic discourse.[11] Once we identify this simple fact we can then start seeing that the domination of visual perception could not be sustained or justified for so long without some **extra-sensual** frame works to organize the act of seeing, and to delineate certain 'ways of seeing'. These frameworks are cultural, ideological, and in some instances, political.

What was to be seen, how, from what point of view, for what purpose are all determined by certain codes of seeing. These mechanisms and conditioning cannot and should not be explained by resorting to the existence of the effects of absolute determinism or legislative enforcements. It is far more complex than that. For example, even one of the obvious cultural and ideological notions which we take for granted, namely 'beautiful', would involve more than a direct recognition of fact. All cultural units, all worldviews and all individuals somehow distinguish certain qualities as 'beautiful', 'nice', etc. What is wrong is not only that sensual appreciation is itself a subjective and relativistic act, but also that it has become one of the vehicles of imposing particular modes of appreciation upon peoples' minds and deeds. In other words, that direct psychological fact is often socially and historically determined. While this involves the questions of subjectivity vs objectivity, or that of claiming universality for specific discourses and qualities (which we have already discussed), it also involves a fresh understanding of the link between aesthetic and architectural and urban discourses. As to the effects on discourse of the domination of the appearance we will deal with that specifically in the architectural and urban contexts.

INTRUSION OF THE AESTHETIC PROBLEMATIC THROUGH APPEARANCE

The link between the aesthetic and architectural and urban discourses should be sought in two locations: One is the perception which we have already discussed briefly. The other is the problematic that is dominant in the aesthetic discourse. While both aesthetic and architectural practices share the similar mode of perception, the instrusion of the aesthetic problematic into the architectural and urban discourses is a distinct operation on its own. This intrusion is made possible mainly by the internal desire in the architectural and urban discourses to see and present 'Architecture' as 'Art'.[12] 'Ordinary' building production has never been seen by the architectural practice and its discourse as a noteworthy activity of 'aesthetic significance'. Ordinary buildings are seen neither as 'Architecture' nor as 'Artistic'. So, there has been no need in the architectural ideology to connect them to the aesthetic question.

Thus, the privileded status accorded to some buildings has always been the passport to aesthetic attention and the basis of yearning for artistic recognition.[13] As with many other simple facts conveniently overlooked by the aesthetic discourse, the lack of any criteria, or the sheer futility of search for one have also been overlooked. It never appeared to the aestheticians, or to others of similar frames of mind, that sciences had no such qualities (as has already been mentioned above) nor, did it occur to them that to call some food 'gastronomic', some texts as 'literary' or some human beings as 'humane' were all highly questionable, and sciences could not be, and are not, based on such dubious classifications and value judgements.

Yet, this persistence on a privileged class of objects as 'Artistic creation of Architecture' has not been solely due to the professional desire pointed out above. Nor can the tendency to view architectural and urban objects aesthetically be explained away by the mode of perception they share.

At the perceptual level it is possible to recognise the fact that certain historic and cultural determinations can be detected in the domination of the visual.[14] It is also possible to see that the visual domination of the perception gains further momentum by the establishment of the appearance, the outside or the external, as the prominent aspects of reality. This prominence has many

12. This desire is now being challenged by an equally hurried and questionable desire to see 'Architecture' as 'Science'. We have discussed the nature of this desire elsewhere: ('Mimarlıktaki Tartışmaların Statüsü'in M.PULTAR, (ed): Mimarlık Bilimleri Kavram ve Sorunları, Ankara: ÇMBD, 1978, p. 1–8 (with E.TEYMUR); and Knowledge of Knowledges, London: Polytechnic of the South Bank, Design Theory and Epistemology paper, 1978.).

13. cf. for example, "that architecture, as the most public and indeed inescapable of the arts, can have a high therapeutic potential –subject to certain conditions. The first condition is that the building must bear the distinctive stamp of a work of art as opposed to a work of craft. . . The second condition is that the excitement or emotion must be expressed; that is, brought up in the first place to the conscious level of the artist's own mind, clarified, and communicated to the spectator in the aesthetic language proper to the art, so that he also is sent on a voyage of discovery. It has always been difficult for architecture, as contrasted with painting or poetry, to meet these criteria of high art. . ." (W.S.GLAULDIE 'Architecture and the Human Condition', in H.OSBORNE, (ed): Aesthetics in the Modern World, London: Thames & Hudson, 1968, p. 368–9, (emphasis mine).

14. cf. MCLUHAN explains this in 'Western Man' by the development of literary tradition. He also stresses that since Renaissance Western artist perceived his 'environment' primarily in visual terms. (cf. M.MCLUHAN & Q.FIORE, The Medium is the Massage, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967, p. 41–57.)

discursive effects. **Firstly,** it tends to overshadow other equally (or more) important aspects of the same reality. **Secondly,** it sets up a new ratio between the aspects of that reality. **Thirdly,** it makes it easier to ignore, overlook or misrepresent that which is not readily visible. **Fourthly,** it creates an illusion of objectivity by seemingly stressing that 'everybody' can see what is beautiful. **Fifthly,** it is used to justify over-embellishment of appearances while neglecting the contents. **Sixthly,** it artificially sets up and defines the object of understanding as the visible aspects of objects, and not their complex nature - thus, makes their knowledge difficult. **Finally,** and this is directly relevant to the central preoccupation of this paper, prominence given to the appearance encourages empirical and experiential modes of analysis as opposed to theoretical and discursive ones. The whole paper is in fact an argument in favour of a shift of attention from debates on, and studies of, buildings (as finished objects) to the practices that produce them, **discourses** that conceptualize them, and **social relations** that inhabit them.[15] Let us now look at these effects more closely, and with particular reference to architectural and urban objects.

EFFECTS OF THE OVER-APPRECIATED APPEARANCE

Firstly, to claim (even implicitly) that it is possible to appreciate the aesthetic (as distinct from the other) qualities of a building assumes and implies the possibility of having an **analytic** mode of perception - a perception that can appreciate each and every property of physical objects by isolating them from others. Once this is assumed, it should follow that it is possible to distinguish what is 'aesthetical' from what is social (or, what is technological, what is cultural, what is financial, etc.). If this line is pursued it **may** then follow;
a) that each dimension is observable, extractable, measurable and referable **independent** of others, and
b) that the effects of each element over the others is ignorable for the present purpose of 'appreciation', (hence, (a) is possible)'.
It then boils down to the presumed possibility that Egyptian pyramids can be seen purely as geometric configurations, or, as is often claimed, as the embodiments of 'perfect forms'. What happens besides the creation of such 'perfect forms' which 'we all appreciate' (sic) is then conveniently left to the historians, sociologists or Egyptologists to be concerned with.[16]

Secondly, if 'aesthetic' is assumed to be property or dimension of the built-form which emerges at the juncture **when** all the diverse elements, factors, forces etc. are brought together (in drawing and/or in building), thus, that property or dimension must be a relational one. Yet, this relation is not one between physical parts and their properties alone. It is a relation which includes non-physical, non-building, non-spatial, ... elements which may or may not be 'visible', 'beautiful', etc. Thus, even assuming for a moment the existence of an aesthetic dimension, the fact that such a dimension is not reducible to the relations of visible physical forms makes this dimension either redundant, or dependent upon an understanding of the nature and the relations of **other** elements. Hence, the vulnerability of such a discourse to subjectivism, relativism, ideological domination and sheer ineffectiveness.

Thirdly, overemphasis on the appearance facilitates the ignorance of the non-visible or non-formal aspects of buildings and cities. The prevailing mode of perception dictates the field of interest. It sets up elaborate tools of designing and planning visible objects while often failing to comprehend, let alone transform, social, economic and cultural relations in which those visible objects are produced, distributed and used. In this way the **non-formal effects of formal design and planning, decisions** are conveniently left to take care of

15. As stressed repeatedly, this is not a call for ignoring or neglecting building studies of various sorts, but a call for realising the fact that no amount of technical/empirical studies (which we already have enough of) would answer the questions that designers and planners as well as others in society keep asking all the time. Their questions reflect not only their concern and willingness to know, but also their ignorance of the nature of these professions, the nature of their social, scientific status, and the nature of their education; but also the inherent lack of conceptual tools to remedy that ignorance. This applies to the majority of architectural and urban researches which study isolated aspects of the built phenomena without ever attempting to define the whole from which the supposedly 'significant' problems are isolated. 'Research' is today the most urgent subject matter for research in these areas. Hence, the emphasis in my work on the architectural knowledge and architectural and urban discourse rather than on roofs or foundations!

16. cf. BERTOLT BRECHT who questioned the ideological conventions around this particular example in a typically lucid and straightforward fashion :
"Who built Thebes of the seven gates? In the books you will find the names of kings.
Did the kings haul up the lumps of rock?
And Babylon, many times demolished Who raised it up so many times? In what houses
Of gold-glittering Lima did the builders live?
........"
(From 'Questions from a worker who reads'', Poems, London: Eyre Methuen, 1976, p. 252.)

17. "A building cannot teach French or manufacture high-quality typewriters." (R.ARNHEIM, : The Dynamics of Architectural Form, Berkeley: U. of California P., 1977, p. 270.)

18. T.MALDONADO, quoted in R.ARNHEIM, The Dynamics of Architectural Form, Berkeley: U. of California P., 1977, p. 271.)

19. The fact that 'human eye' can also 'see' realities which the 'animal eye' can not has meaning only in a special sense, and does not alter the limitations of purely visual perception (if there is such a 'pure' perception at all). It is no accident that while Marx in his youth wrote "The eye has become a human eye, just as its object has become a social, human object - an object made by man for man. The senses have therefore become directly in their practice theoreticians" (p. 139) and "The forming of the five senses is a labour of the entire history of the world down to the present" (p. 141 of The Economic & Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, New York: Intern. Publ, 1971); in his later works he wrote 'But all science would be superfluous if the outward appearance and the essence of things directly coincided", (Capital, vol. 3, London: Lawrence & Wishart, , 1972, p. 817). In this connection it would be highly rewarding to understand the type of 'perception' that people like Newton, Marx, Freud or Einstein had!

20. that is, non-apparent to the empiricist, a theoretical, eyes ....

21. Do we not need more John Bergers and more 'Ways of Seeing's to remind us that what we 'see', for example, in Gainsborough's 'Mr. and Mrs. Andrews' is not only the 'beautiful' English landscape providing a 'pleasant' background to Mr. and Mrs. Andrews (and their dog), and not only a couple in Nature; but two 'landowners and their proprietary attitude" to their private land at a time when the sentence for poaching was deportation, and sentence for stealing a potato was public whipping (ordered by the magistrate who would often be a landowner himself). (J.BERGER, Ways of Seeing, London/ Harmondsworth: BBC/Penguin, 1972, p. 106-8). For a rare 'artistic' exposition of Shakespeare in his historic and land-owning context, see the play Bingo, by E.BOND, London: Eyre Methuen, 1974.)

22. I have discussed the epistemological mechanisms involved in this type of perception in Environmental Discourse, London: Question Press, 1982, section on 'Ignoring and obscuring problems', p. 127-8.

themselves, that is, ignored. This attitude is based on the crude conception of the products of design practice solely as the forms and shapes of buildings, chairs, kitchen utensils, or office equipment; and the conception of the result of urban planning and design as the forms or the geometry of roads, new towns, etc. This attitude conveniently overlooks the fact that each line drawn represents and delineates decisions on economic, technological, and ideological appropriation. The lines in design and planning are more social and ideological than geometrical. Similarly, the non-geometric appropriations mentioned may not necessarily be reflected on the facade of the built objects. In fact, despite the architectural efforts to do so, even the functions of most buildings cannot be 'written' into, or 'read' from their forms, that is, from their externally visible configurations. Functions are not usually and directly visual in nature.[17] And, the merely external features often represent only an "accidental reality neither born nor developed together with the object."[18]

As the eye [19] can hardly 'see', say, the exploitative, inefficient or repressive (or, indeed, co-operative, efficient or democratic) ways in which urban patterns come into existence, or architectural forms are conceived of and built, the aesthetic attention cannot possibly be directed at such questions (not that it should, or it would). Those non-apparent[20] relations, realities and factors without which aesthetic objects could not even exist, (or, the leisure of appreciating them could not be afforded), could not and would not be the business of traditional aesthetic discourse. As a positive adjective, 'aesthetic' is not equipped with the capacity to qualify the 'ugly' realities of life-especially when the former constitutes the physical and conceptual masks over the latter. Among the abundant literature on aesthetics and history of art this very paradox hardly ever gets a mention.[21]

Coming back to the urban context, similar 'aesthetic' spectacles hand-in-hand, or, rather, in front of, the social realities of the same physical organization are everywhere to be 'seen' - and, ignored, especially when one has neither the intention nor the tools of such a seeing: Glitter in cities helping to forget the squatters, rubbish and misery in urban and rural areas of 'underdeveloped' countries; the tinted glass on luxury dwelling in Mexico intended to 'cut-off' the views of surrounding shanties more than the effects of sunlight; or billboards and neon-lights in 'free' economies advertising high life and covering up the high-rise slums behind them. . .[22]

Fourthly, the inherent immediacy of the external appearance makes it possible for the dominant ideology to claim the existence of a 'universal aesthetics'. It achieves this by further emphasizing the 'visible' aspects of the objects it produces, owns and uses. One of the many mechanisms and reasons for the sucsess of this operation is the possibilities of each (especially architectural and urban) object in the way in which it lends itself to differential appropriation. In other words, each aspect of buildings and towns is appropriated differently and from different positions. A building may be used by some from inside, and 'appreciated' by others from outside. This is true for aesthetically valued buildings, and only as far as the aesthetic discourse goes. As has already been suggested, that discourse deals only with some privileged class of objects - be they buildings, paintings, sculptures or music.

Whereas in reality there is a constant correspondence between the class natures of the patterns of ownership and those of appropriation; it is less so at the level of ideology, ideas and discourse. Instead, there are often displacements: Buildings which are built by the labour and the surplus of those who are excluded from their use are occasionally given the 'right' to appreciate them as the best examples of civilization, or of 'national heritage'. They visit, photograph, and be 'touched' by such objects without hardly 'seeing'

23. In fact, many buildings, such as 'stately' homes, are opened to the public only when their owners want to cover part of the maintenance cost by entry charges; or when they want to reduce their taxes, or, often they acquire better accommodation elsewhere. How else would a "PRIVATE PROPERTY" sign be replaced by "HISTORIC MONUMENT", or the ferocious "GUARD DOG" symbol by that of "NATIONAL TRUST"?. . .

24. There is no need here to go into the various ways and means through which tastes, habits, points of view, are formed; by education, by the media, by marketing techniques, etc. These processes of 'cultural' formation hold significant keys to the distorted conception of society, profession, democracy, etc. A popular cliche like "what people want" can only be put in its proper context when not only what is wanted by 'people', but also how it is wanted and by whom are critically analysed. Can such an analysis be done by reference to the visual perception of non-visual realities?

25. I assume it goes without saying that not all expertise, criticism, education, etc. would be of equal value, or would be desirable as they are . . . But this is another problem which we have no space here to deal with.

the exploitative social relations which made them possible – even when the visitors themselves are parties to those relations.[23] It must be said immediately that the criticism developed here does not rule out the possibility that a general, non-class and non-specialist pleasure may indeed be the effect of certain built objects on certain people. This, however, confirms, rather than contradicts, our argument that the forms have ideological effects far more stronger than they may at first appear; and the domination of visual perception is the basis, rather than the result, of these uncritical appreciation of the built objects – objects which often represent power, domination, exploitation, and anti-social consumption.

At this point, a general question arises: **How**, precisely, is it that the aesthetic problematic is shared by people of different, even opposite, interests on the same objects? The question can only be posed and discussed on the condition that ideas, perception, points of view, etc. are not seen as formed by the simple will of the individual. Such questions cannot be tackled with reference to the individual perceiver, visitor, client, user, etc. The reality is represented to the individual **within** certain ideologies which are produced and reproduced under complex social conditions. The ideas and ideologies so formed are transmitted by institutional, physical and discursive means.[24] In the process, however, several significant effects on a large number of domains are produced.

One of these effects is obviously on the conception of the 'beautiful'. The aesthetic discourse identifies and legitimizes as universal the concept of 'beauty' which is a concept far from having a universal content. Thus,

a) it **excludes** whole classes of objects from the category of 'beautiful', and from the concern of aesthetic (e.g. all 'ordinary' buildings where most people live and work),

b) this exclusion is reinforced by another, physical, exclusion of the same people from **access, control** or **use** of certain buildings,

c) conceptual and physical exclusion of 'ordinary' buildings is compounded by an exclusion from the-field of academic attention the problems of 'ordinary' people and 'ordinary buildings'. Thus, necessary expertise, criticism, education, historiography, theory, etc. are denied to these classes of people and objects.[25] While this may save them from discursive distortions (a negative advantages), any positive contributions that could be made in those areas are also precluded. Mediocre solutions, backward technology, minimum elaborations, and second rate treatment are seen to be sufficient for them. Most important of all, however, is the fact that as **undefined** problems, they are not considered as problems. Problems (however much they may exert themselves in physical terms) can be acted upon only when they are seen as problems.

These modes of exclusion in the fields of architectural and urban practices imply two major effects:
1. What is presented to be **physically** universal in fact is so often at a **discursive** level only,
2. However much the claims and counter-claims of universality are expressed within discourses, their primary conditions and reasons of existence are in fact at **non-discursive** domains and relations.

Fifthly, the prominence given to appearance in perception and discourse becomes instrumental in the **unbalanced** treatment of many aspects of the objects in question. Over-embellishment of the facade may, for example, mask under articulation of the interior. The 'beauty' of the outside may cover-up the physical and social 'ugliness' contained behind or inside it (as has already been shown above). Particular use of materials, or expenditure reserved for the exterior may be inconsistent with those accorded to the interior. In this way, 'images' of cities are formed more by reference to

what is seen (and shown) than to what they are. Sensual reactions are preferred to scientific analysis of the formations, functions, elements and relations that make up those wholes we call 'cities'. As a result, rather than scientific knowledge enriching the popular awareness, touristic perception dominates many 'academic' approaches.

KNOWLEDGE OR APPRECIATION

This brings us to the central concern of this paper, namely, to the epistemological status of the discourse on the aesthetic aspects of architectural and urban form. Such an analysis involves
- the status of the concept of 'aesthetics',
- the status of the concepts in aesthetic discourses,
- the nature of the aesthetic mechanisms (e.g. appreciation, creation, perception, cognition, etc.),
- the specific relations between the discourse on architectural and urban aesthetics and the architectural and urban practices.

We have already briefly discussed at the beginning the nature of the term 'aesthetics', and it is not the objective of this paper to enter into an extensive debate on this question. What can be added to what has already been said is that 'aesthetics' has often been assumed to accompany 'ethics' in classical philosophical tradition as the two related aspects of "man's relation to reality."[26]

It is often suggested that ethics is concerned with the 'good', logic with the 'truth', and aesthetics with the 'beauty'.[27]

What concerns us here is precisely the nature of the unity that the term 'aesthetics', its derivatives, its various interpretations and its use, constitute – a unity which we call 'aesthetic discourse'. This concern is more a result of necessity than of choice. Without understanding the nature of the discourse it is not possible to understand how that term and its conceptual contents operate in several practices so effectively.

The key to the undoing of this unity is in the question of the type of relationship to reality that aesthetic appreciation represents. Reality (or, the real) is approached, appropriated, responded or related to, in a variety of ways. We feel, sense, appreciate, know, . . . the real in the course of, and by means of, the primary appropriations, namely the production and consumption of the real. Different human activities require different conditions, different tools, different types of efforts. This is partly due to the nature of the object dealt with, and partly to other conjunctural conditions.

From these abstract and general observations we can come to our main concern, and pose a series of questions:
a) what type of appropriation does the aesthetic appreciation represent?
b) whether it is the most suitable available mode of appropriating the objects in question?
c) what does it produce as a result?

Before attempting to answer these questions, a general statement must be made regarding the context, that is, the context within which the aesthetic appropriation takes place, and is (somehow) conceived of. As our discussions so far would already have indicated, we see the context of all activities, production, discourses, ideas, etc. as a complex whole called 'social formation' (or, as commonly called, 'society'). In such a context, special parts and problems of the complex whole are dealt with by special 'practices' such as economic, political, scientific, architectural, or aesthetic, practices. These practices deal (or, assume themselves to be dealing) with their objects in different ways, by different tools, and at varying

26. cf. M.ROSENTHAL and P.YUDIN (eds), A Dictionary of Philosophy, Moscow: Progress Publ., 1967, p. 9.

27. M.H.DOĞAN, 100 Soruda Estetik, Istanbul: Gerçek yayınları, 1975, p. 8 ; or R.SAW and H.OSBORNE, 'Aesthetics as a Branch of Philosophy', in H.OSBORNE (ed), Aesthetics in the Modern World, London: Thomas & Hudson, 1968, p. 19.

degrees of effectivity. In other words, if we relate this concept to the 'modes of appropriation' already mentioned, these social practices represent, and are constituted by, different modes of appropriating the real – through production, education, construction, expression, or on land, materials, money, labour, knowledge, information, . . .

The nearest two modes of appropriation as far as artistic and architectural practices are concerned are **'appreciating'** and **'knowing'**. Both, however, are also seen as different modes of understanding reality. The aesthetic activity (or practice) is traditionally concerned with appreciating special classes of phenomena or objects which different frameworks define differently in different historic periods: the deity, the nature, the 'works of art', etc. Philosophical, mystic, theoretical and scientific practices on the other hand, have claimed from time to time to be the sole sources, producers, or purveyors of 'truth' which they alternately and confusingly called 'wisdom', 'understanding', 'knowledge', etc. The effects of these claims on our present subject–matter can be seen in the set of specific confusions regarding:
1. the claim by the aesthetic discourse to 'knowledge' and 'understanding' through the act of 'appreciation',
2. the claim by the artistic practices to the 'creation' of original objects, new visions or skilful representations,
3. the question of whether scientific practices and their methods are useful or relevant to the acts of 'creation' and 'appropriation' **as understood** by artistic practices.

Once again, these questions involve so many additional and complex issues (such as 'creation') that we have to see these questions as the locations of serious problems, and leave their detailed treatment to another occasion. As far as they concern our present analysis, however, we have to discuss some of the issues briefly.

First of all, these claims cannot be answered from a point of view which accepts their terms of reference and their 'problematics'. The very terms of 'Art', 'Knowledge', 'Creation', 'Science', 'Appreciation' are full of multiple definitions, connotations and misunderstandings. For example, although different disciplines, discourses and practices all claims to possess, produce or handle 'knowledge', they all mean different things by it. Aesthetic discourse is no exception to this. It has often been argued whether 'art' (whatever is meant by it) constitutes a form of knowledge, whether 'art' is knowledge, etc.[28]

Briefly, the problem is that the word 'knowledge' that most of these discussions employ mean (for them) 'insight', 'wisdom', 'information', 'understanding', 'know–how', 'skill', . . . often at one and the same time. Yet, these all are real but distinct phenomena, and are the objects of distinct practices. For example, sciences deal with knowledge, craft and industrial productions (especially the pre–electronic ones) operate with know–how and skill, and theoretical practice produces theories, concepts and understanding. Hence, the near futility of engaging in a debate on the three questions raised above without defining the term at the outset.

Knowledge, as undestood in this paper, is the product of a cognitive process on specific objects. This process requires the use of 'tools' such as theories, concepts, measuring instruments, experimentation, etc. Thus, the production of knowledge involves not only empirical, but also, and often predominantly, theoretical processes.[29] When communicated and distributed, knowledge becomes a material force, and contributes to the production of physical and non-physical phenomena (e.g. food, buildings, social organisations, other knowledges). In the process, however, it becomes part of the mental outfit of the people who in various ways get in contact with it. It also becomes 'power' when placed in institutional frameworks. Consequently, the

28. cf. L.A.REID, Art, Truth and Reality', in H.OSBORNE (ed), Aesthetics in the Modern World, London: Thomes & Hudson, 1968, p. 67-80.

29. The 'empirical' is not, as is often assumed, the opposite of 'theoretical', but is a different form of approaching reality. There is neither purely empirical, nor purely theoretical analysis. Categories of empirical analysis are often theoretically produced concepts, while theoretical constructs develop in the course of working on, and through the understanding of, empirical objects.

constitution of people's world outlook, their tastes, interests, the range of their selective perception, power of observation, capacity for analysis, etc. are all affected, enlarged, changed, . . . by new cognitive inputs. Thus, neither of these capacities, interests and tastes can be **pure** capacities, **pure** interests, or **pure** tastes. Similarly, there can be pure perception, **pure** appreciation, and we will argue further, no pure aesthetics. Our knowledge of the reality (i.e. social, physical, professional, ideological) is therefore bound to be at work when we **perceive, feel, appreciate, evaluate,** and react to, that reality. It is not possible to draw a line between these forms although it is possible to distinguish their mechanisms, objects and effects.

So far, we have argued against opposing the act of 'knowing' to that of 'perceiving'. Yet, it is not only the knowledge (in the sense of scientific and theoretical knowledge), but also **other modes of making sense of the reality** that affect the perception and appreciation of built objects. We will come back to the specific problems of the built reality in a moment. At a general level, people experience the world **through,** and **within** certain systems of ideas about reality as well as about themselves. These systems we call 'ideologies'. Having already used this concept several times in earlier parts of the paper, we may continue our discussion without attempting to tackle the question of 'ideology' in general.

A preliminary, if deliberately provocative, statement we can make is this: If **subjective perception** is to be taken as the primary source of evaluating built objects, then it must be accepted that that mode of perception takes place at the intersection of the respective ideological positions,[30] of the subject that is perceiving, and of the built object that is perceived.[31] If we accept that *ideologies are the particular ways of seeing, experiencing and appropriating the world,* the ideology which operates in the production of the built objects, and that which determines the individual's perception of them may represent displacements, that is, they may not always correspond and overlap with each other. They may even *belong to different social formations, different classes, different* sub-cultures, and different systems of representations. Their economic/technological determinants may also involve various displaced and uneven properties (e.g. the transfer of technology, the spread of fashions and styles, the imitation of appearances *without having the appropriate functions,* etc.). Accordingly, the **effect** of each mode of perception, each ideology and each domain inserts itself into the others as in fact they all exist in the complex unity of social existence.[32] This is because there are always **more than one ideological system** in any given social formation, and, *additionally 'the ideological' in 'the built form' and that in the* individual's perception may not necessarily be of the same order. One may be dominated by economic interest or political domination, while the other by national, local, religious, etc. motives. Each built object, types of buildings or related problems may be defined *differently by different groups. For example, so-called 'housing problem'* is not the same 'problem' for a tenant, for an architect, for a contractor or for a building worker.[33]

In the case of the ideology of the subject, it is a framework with which the 'subject' sees, experiences, lives, and reacts to his/her life and to all that s/he comes into contact with. In the case of the ideology of the built object, however, it is one that is more complex than it may first appear. It is not only the ideology that functions in the production process of the object, but also how it is **presently** situated within the ideological status-quo. This is the central epistemological problem of architectural historiography which the latter is hardly aware of. The ideology that goes into the making of the built object may be identified with respect to the

30. In this connection, the 'pleasure may be seen as the effect, 'aesthetic effect' of this intersection. (cf. N.HADJINICOLAOU, Art History and Class Struggle, London : Pluto, 1978, p. 182.) On the assumption that the 'distinguishing feature of art is that it produces aesthetic experience', and that "this definition concentrates on the effect a work of art has on the recipient", see W.TATARKIEWICZ, 'What is Art? The Problem of Definition Now', in The British Journal of Aesthetics, Vol. 11, n. 2, 1971, p. 144.

31. We are aware of the epistemological problems associated with the subject-object structure. As stressed above, this is a statement made for the expressed purpose of demostrating what is being criticized, and as such, should not be taken to be our position.
p. 11f.

32. On the specific case of literary effects in the midst of the effects of other ideological effects, see P.MACHEREY, & E.BALIBAR, 'Literature as an Ideological Form', in The Oxford Literary Review, vol. 3, n. 1, 1978, p. 11f.

33. A Turkish proverb expresses this more precisely than many a theoretical analysis: "The sheep is after its life, the butcher its meat". We have dealt with this very problem, that is, the differential conceptualization of 'housing question' in another paper: 'Konut Sorununun Kavranması Sorunu', (The Question of 'Housing Question'), in Mimarlık, vol. 16, n. 3, 1978, p. 19-22. (with E.TEYMUR).

34. Hence, not 'created','creation' and 'creativity' are the most commonly used terms in artistic discourse, and carry with them all mystifications regarding the way in which artistic works come into existence. Without going into this specific problem, I propose the term 'production' to be more appropriate for reasons implicit in the main theses of this paper.

particular mode of production in which buildings are produced.[34] The latter ideology, i.e. that of status-quo, on the other hand, can be identified by analysing the present social formation and mode of production, and the specific structure of the classes, groups and strata for whom specific buildings or cities represent ideological/economic/ political entities, functions or social relation. Yet the 'past' as far as architectural products are concerned, is nothing more than an imaginary reconstruction of (a) the social and cultural context, and (b) the assumed original of buildings when they were first built. Therefore, what in fact is done in the name of history of architecture and urbanism is the application of the present conceptions on what remains of buildings and cities in their present conditions.

In the case of contemporary criticism, on the other hand, different subjectivisms, different ideologies and different conceptions are called upon to view built objects from different angles, emphasising their different aspects, arriving at different interpretations. 'Aesthetic' point(s) of view play a major part in this chaotic state of affairs. Yet, it is quite unlikely that such a widespread subjectivism and relativism inherent in the appearance-based aesthetic perception can be transcended without transcending the aesthetic problematic itself. The limitations of architectural and urban aesthetics and that of histories based on such a framework are defined between two extremes of equal impossibility: subjectivism based on the primacy of the subject and positivist/empiricist scientism based on the primacy of isolated facts. Appearance makes both extremes possible, but cannot enable them to provide us with the knowledge of the nature of the objects in their full context and complexity.

35. Among many examples in architectural discourse to this approach two most recent arguments are in C.JENCKS, The Language of Post-Modern Architecture, London: Academy, 1977, and A.RAPOPORT, Human Aspects of Urban Form , Oxford: Pergamon, 1977, especially p. 325-333.

36. N.TEYMUR, 'Mimarlık Dilinin Mimarisi', in M.PULTAR (ed), Çevre, Yapı, Tasarım, Ankara: ÇMBD, 1979, p. 7-25.

37. It is therefore no accident that in Jencks' book already mentioned, there are only about a dozen plans while there are over two hundred photographs of exteriors.

This long detour on the ideology of the built objects as the latter is reproduced in architectural and urban historiography brings us to yet another theoretical scene, namely, to the recent attempts to analyse the built objects in linguistic terms. This approach presumes a similarity between language and the built forms, and tries to 'read' the latter as 'texts', 'sign-systems', or 'forms of communication'.[35] As this whole question of language and architecture is dealt with in other papers I will not discuss it further.[36]

What is directly relevant to our present investigation, however, is the way in which this pervasive architectural and urban analogy takes its support directly from the appearance-based perception of the built objects. They invariably take the outsides of buildings as the embodiment of linguistic metaphors, symbolic meanings or intentions. Even when they seem to be concerned with the interiors they do that only superficially or marginally, and take plans as the vehicles of reading as they do the exterior views.[37]

38. This is particularly so in specifically aesthetic approaches which, as C.Morris stressed, exhibits a one-sided emphasis on one of the semiotic dimensions only. ('Esthetics and the Theory of Signs', in J. of Unified Science, vol. 8, 1939, p. 149, mentioned and discussed in Norberg-Schulz, C., Intentions in Architecture, Oslo/London: Universitetsforlaget Allen and Unwin, 1963, p. 73)

This whole approach conceptualizes built objects as finished, isolated, well-defined, or at least, definable objects. It sees them primarily as cultural objects and designed products. In other words, the inherent complexity of these objects is reduced to the semiotic complexity of them as sign-systems. Often, even the latter is reduced to its most basic elements. That way, simplistic analogies become even more easier.[38] This shift of emphasis, shift of object, and shift of point of view, together with the inevitable shift of disciplinary framework keeps producing elaborate arguments which are generally inadequate to explain the way in which those objects are shaped, produced, distributed, used, perceived, known and represented in reality.

Now, from the domination of appearance in aesthetic discourse to the specific effects of subjective perception lie some of the basic components of architectural and urban practices. In a way, these practices are up against the realities of their own modes of

appropriation. The obvious complexity of the present analysis is due, in no small measure, to an awareness of these fundamental problems – problems the existence of which has never been adequately realised. We will therefore try to expand and end this analysis by approaching the built reality from yet another important problem area: the relationship between the perception, discourse, knowledge and the process of producing buildings.

Even at 'purely' physical level, building(s) have plans and sections as much they have elevations - each form representing different aspects of the same objects. To view, 'appreciate', classify, criticize, study, preserve, demolish, . . . buildings on the basis of their external looks alone is not only a totally incomplete, but also inappropriate, unjustifiable, and in the context of our present discussion, necessarily a–theoretical approach to a concrete phenomena.[39]

To repeat what has already been stressed earlier, there is no intention here to 'ban' (!) visual perception, or to dismiss the fact that we all 'feel', react to, like or dislike, buildings. Yet, what is at stake is the way in which buildings and cities are perceived, conceived and evaluated beyond this limited individual level. It is the contention of this paper to shift the attention from the **visual**, to the **whole**, existence of the built reality and, not only of the 'built form'. Even the term 'form' symptomizes the problem at a discursive level. While what is meant with 'built form' **may** well be the whole of buildings or cities, the unfortunate metaphor of form/content would inevitably influence the reception of the term as implying the physical/visual/external 'form'. While recent rigorous studies of the 'built form' in terms of their syntax, structure, etc. transcend the effects of the form/content metaphor and those of the domination of the external, they are still biased towards the purely physical, and do not go far enough to cover the non-physical, or non–building components of the built–form.[40] That is why the provisional terms 'built reality', and 'built object' are preferred here.

It is also here that another diversion is necessary: If the term 'built form' has so many problems, are they the problems of the same order as those found in the domination of the visual? In the terms introduced at the very beginning, are these problems 'epistemological' or 'substantive'? To use a different set of terms, while the term, its use, its references and its effects constitute a problem of **discourse**, the domination of the visual is a problem of **perception**. This distinction does not, of course, imply a seperation of these two problems.

The problem of discourse involves one that is to do with the nature of statements. Discourse is a formation, or a practice. It is the totality of all statements (verbal or otherwise) on specific, discursive, objects. It is not reducible to language, or derivable from it. The discourse involves various non–linguistic modes of expression such as graphic, visual, even mathematical.[41]

The relationship between discourse and perception lies in the fact that discourse refers to objects, phenomena and relations which we perceive, cognise, recognise, represent, talk about as well as build, produce, own, buy, sell, and live in. Yet this relationship is not only one of representation. Discourse does not simply and only convey the perceived cognized. . . built, lived in. . . objects. The relationship is a complex, **mutually determined**, one. What is perceived is done so on the background of socially transmitted and reproduced sets of discursive formations. The process of perception, on the other hand, is only **one** out of several processes that make up the cognitive function (or the process of cognition). The cognitive process and knowing should

39. To use an analogy, this is as accurate an approach to reality as, say assessing the abilities of a presidential candidate by his looks!

40. cf. for example, the work of Cambridge Centre for Environmental Studies.

41. I developed this conception of 'discourse', which is specifically applicable to visual arts, buildings and urban forms, mass media and consumer images, in Environmental Discourse, London: Question Press, 1982. The general concept of 'discourse' that is in use today owes its existence to a small group of French writers and in particular to Michel Foucault who in his numerous studies has drawn our attention not only to discourse as a linguistic/cultural/philosophical network of statements, but also its central role in the institutional appropriation of knowledge as power.

42. The mental development of man begins when he ceases to be confined to mere sensory perceiving, and starts to regard perceived reality as a given material which has to be elaborated, processed and transmitted in conformity with the demand of this understanding" (K.FIEDLER, Uber den Ursprung der Kunstlerischen Tatigkeit, 1887, p. 216, (quoted in M.PEDRO, The Manifold in Perception, Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1972, p. 112)

therefore never be reduced to sensory perception alone.[42] Without going into the field of complex and controversial views on cognition (on which the author is not an expert) it would be possible to suggest (without necessarily adhering to a single school of thought) that the close relationship between experience, language, thought, cognition and social practice makes it imperative to insist on the relationship between discourse and perception. For this purpose, however, discourse should in no way be reduced to language, and it is equally necessary to see perception in a cognitive context. The way man 'sees', 'perceives', 'conceives', 'feels', 'judges', 'remembers' and 'knows' objects is inseparably connected with, and largely dependent upon, the categories, the linguistic and symbolic structures, the concepts and the problematics that must exist within some sort of discursive fields. Thus, there is no knowledge independent of discourse which operate in the fields concerned. There is also no discourse which does not carry the signification that have cognitive and perceptual origins. On the basis of these arguments we may now go back to the initial questions, namely, (a) the nature of understanding and knowing the built objects; and (b) the domination of the visual in their (alleged) understanding and knowing within the aesthetic discourse.

In the case of architectural and urban objects, it is the 'architectural discourse' that enables, and carries with it, the elements and the conditions of understanding these objects. The architectural discourse is the field of possibilities, impossibilities, ranges and limitations of perceiving the architectural reality. Psychological responses or sociological articulations are in no way excluded from this field. In fact, they can best be observed and analysed in relation to the discourse within which they are expressed, understood, qualified, classified, distorted or ignored.[43]

43. It may be asked how something that is ignored can be part of a discourse. It is because discourses are constituted not only by the presence of statements, concepts or problems, but, also, by the absence of them.

These effects invoke a question which we must pose and briefly answer here:
If the architectural discourse is such a powerful and pervasive factor in the field of built reality, then, is it supposed to be the correct field, or the only legitimate frame of reference? The answer is, not at all. A discourse may neither be 'correct' or 'incorrect' as a whole. It contains correct/incorrect, precise/imprecise, factual/ imaginary, scientific/un-scientific . . . significations of all sorts on a specific object, or set of objects. The architectural discourse is in fact such a discourse. It is largely constituted by experiential, cultural, subjective, quasi-technical, quasi-artistic, quasi-sociological, moralistic, and invariably vague and relativistic statements primarily on an object, 'Architecture', which is not even definable.[44] It is shared by non-professional as well as professional people. It may be jargon-ridden in one instance, but poetic, metaphoric, artistic in another. It is in a discourse within which the whole range of phenomena and object(s) ('Architecture', 'Built form', 'Environment', 'Space'....) are referred to, communicated, described, taught, and conceived. . .

44. On this, cf. N.TEYMUR, 'Questioning the Terms of our Discourse: 'Architecture' and 'Development'?' (paper presented to the 13.World Congress of the UIA, Mexico, 1978), (Revised Turkish version: 'Kavramlarımıza Dikkat', Mimarlık, vol. 18, no.1, 1980, p. 10-13.)

ARCHITECTURAL DISCOURSE, ARCHITECTURAL KNOWLEDGE AND AESTHETIC DISCOURSE ON THE "BUILT REALITY"

Now, all these diversions and detailed arguments that we had to make should prompt the central question in the present context: **What is the knowledge of the 'built form' the knowledge of?** The answer inevitably lies in summarizing the above discussions:

If the architectural and urban perception is that of the visual and the apparent, if the discourse which provides the conceptual background to such a perception is primarily concerned with physical forms as they are 'seen', and if what is assumed to be the architectural knowledge is not knowledge in the scientific sense, then the 'knowledge' of the 'built form' is bound to be nothing but the (assumed)

'knowledge' of the ideologically given, visually perceived and
subjectively evaluated aspects of the built reality.

It is no accident then that it is nearly impossible to 'extract' the
theoretical and analytical knowledge of the built objects from the
dominant architectural discourse. It is also no accident that so-called
'architectural', 'urban' or 'environmental' problems are constantly
talked about with neither any definition nor procedure, let alone
solutions. What presently exists as 'architectural knowledge' is a set
of intuitive, professional, ideological and experiential information
blended with some technical and historical inputs. 'Architectural
knowledge' is more a know-how (savoir) than knowledge (connaissance),[45]
more speculative than theoretical. It involves more the exercise of
skills, execution of preferences, repetition of earlier forms, choosing
of configurations, and typification of existing buildings than a rigorous
and analytic understanding of the complex technical, social, visual, . . .
aspects of building as a concrete, social, product

45. cf. N.TEYMUR, Knowledge of
Knowledges, London: Polytechnic of the South
Bank, Design Theory & Epistemology paper,
1978. On the connaissance/savoir
distinction see M.FOUCAULT, Archaelogy
of Knowledge, London: Tavistock, 1972 ,
p. 15 n, Ch. 6, etc.

Thus, the architectural discourse and the present architectural
knowledge are readily vulnerable to the intrusions of aesthetic discourse
which may represent attractive possibilities for analogy, but they
also represent a different type of appropriating a different reality.
There is no need to repeat what we have already stressed several
times. The aesthetic/artistic mode of 'knowing', if it is at all
'knowing', is an experiential, subjective, emotional one,[46] and is
capable of apprehending only the surface of the built reality, and
occasionally its metaphorical or symbolic aspects. "Visual ideology, with
its double aspects of comprehension – misapprehension and illusion-
allusion to reality, bears no relation to the scientific knowledge of
this reality."[47] Aesthetics, if defined as the study of "knowledge
through sensations"[48] should pertain more to the objects as seen
(and, primarily as seen) than to objects which need to be known
(and, primarily known).[49]

46. cf. ". . . Fidler's view of the value of
visual art that it is knowledge by acquaintance,
or more accurately knowledge by virtue of
experiencing the formation or ordering."
(M.PADRO, The Manifold in Perception,
Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1972, p.119)

47. N.HADJINICOLAOU, Art History and
Class Struggle, London: Pluto, 1978, p. 147.

48. A.BAUMGARTEN, Aesthetica, 1750,
(quoted in A.ZIS, Foundations of Marxist
Aesthetics, Moskow: Progress, 1977, p. 11)

49. cf. "Object as seen yields distortion.
       Object as known precludes distortion"
(M.MCLUHAN and H.PARKER, Through
the Vanishing Point, New York: Harper,
1969, p. 93).

The function of knowledge that this paper calls for is not, therefore
supposed to reproduce the sensory, visual, illusory, metaphorical and
subjective reactions of individuals to the facades of (beautiful)
buildings, or cities. With due respect to (and deep interest in) the
visual arts I must admit that the understanding that the artistic
products give us is necessary, useful, and pleasing in their own ways.
They may help us to 'see' things in a way we would not be able to
without them. Yet, they are not the tools of knowledge, as, say,
scientific theories are, and are not the best mediums of interpretation
or action. They cannot, in short, provide the epistemological model
that we need in understanding urban reality.

The task it hand is therefore
a) an understanding of the nature of existing 'architectural knowledge'
as briefly described in this paper, and
b) a transformation of at least part of it so as to equip it with
the tools of understanding the building process as a whole.

Now, all these may seem to have gone too far away from the
question of aesthetics. Yet, in fact, we have just established a basis
on which we can start understanding the question itself.

First of all, it is inevitable that in the absence of a rigorous and
analytic understanding of the built reality, that reality will be
conceived of as that which is given in the existing discourse, and
in the existing modes of perception. Therefore, the object of that
discourse is seen as the real object, and in our case, as the built
reality. This displacement is a significant one. Discourses not only
represent but also misrepresent the reality. The reality defined in
certain discourses only partly corresponds to the reality as observed
and defined within scientific frameworks. This is not to say that
there is necessarily a single, essential, 'Reality' (or 'Truth' as
philosophy keeps referring to), or that it would be understood

perfectly if it were not for the effects of the architectural
discourse. What is suggested here is that we still do not have what
can be described as the **knowledge** of the built reality (as has just
been called for). Therefore, the existing 'knowledges', 'ideas',
'views', 'tastes', 'styles', . . . are all the products of ages-old
(mis)conceptions of architectural discourse and ideology.

As with all discourse, the conceptions cannot be changed at the
level of discourse alone. Conceptions and discourses themselves are
the products of social practices, and although there is no direct
causal relationship between concepts and social changes, and
although there is always bound to be some displacements, it is
not an excuse for not striving to understand concrete reality better.

SOME CONCLUSIONS

The conclusion of the arguments in this paper is that the
understanding of the built reality requires a transformation of the
present modes of perception based on the visual and the apparent.
Appearance is not the whole of the reality, and an understanding
of that reality cannot be achieved at the level of appearances alone.
It is here that the question of aesthetic aspect of the built reality
can be **dissolved**, if not solved. This dissolution does in no way
ignore the differences in visual properties, or, the differences in the
feelings that buildings invoke in people. It simply poses the question
of understanding first, and then attempts to redefine that of
aesthetics.

This is the only way to avoid the closed circle constituted by the
aesthetic discourse. Once this circle, its terms of reference and
its modes of argument are used, there can be no escape from
producing just one more argument on aesthetics. And, it is usually
through such a closed circle that we keep inheriting all the
unresolved problems of art, aesthetics (or, was it the 'science of
aesthetics'?!). . . And, as has been briefly demonstrated, this is
the mechanism by which the whole of the built reality is
constantly reduced, confused, trivialized, 'aestheticized', idealized,
distorted and, in short, made unknowable. There is therefore
nothing more urgent than saying "Thank you, we've already had
enough of arguments on how buildings and works of art effect
observers, how they look 'beautiful', and how they reflect or
symbolize this or that. It is now time to see to it that a
theoretical understanding should start transforming and dominating
(if not totally replacing) this sort of appearance – based conception
on the one hand, and the fragmented, technical piecemeal conceptions
of parts, functions and details of buildings on the other."

This may then pave the way towards giving effective answers to the
questions of
– the adequacy of aesthetic discourse and its claimed 'knowledge'
(i.e. appreciation) to the understanding of architectural and urban
phenomena,
– the adequacy of the perception of appearance to the understanding
of the non-apparent,
– the adequacy of the 'knowledge' as used by the building
practitioners (designers, builders, educators, etc.) to the task of
producing and understanding the built reality itself.

This constant and repetitive stress on understanding and knowing
reflects a comprehensive, serious and vital concern, rather than a
personal indulgence. It reflects a concern with the not-so-good
record of architectural and urban professions, their institutions,
their theoreticians and educations in understanding themselves and
their objects. So-called 'environment' cannot be handled by
academicized versions of touristic points of view on privileged
buildings, or photographic appreciations of exciting spaces. Artificial

boundaries, hastily borrowed frameworks, value-judgements, tastes
and visual preferences that dominate the architectural and urban
discourses throw not only serious doubts over what they say
(especially regarding their claim to scientificity), but also to the
very effectivity of what they do from day to day.

ESTETİĞİN ESTETİĞİ

Mimarlık ve kentsel söylemlerde estetik sorunu üzerine

ÖZET

Özellikle sanat dallarında kullanılagelen 'estetik', 'güzellik' ve
'yapıt' gibi kavramlar 'estetik söylemi' diyebileceğimiz ve belirli
dalların sınırlarını aşabilen bir söylemi oluştururlar. Kendini türlü
nedenlerle bir 'sanat' olarak görmek ve göstermek isteyen mimarlık
(ve daha az ölçüde planlama) eylemi sanat söyleminden çok
etkilenmiş durumdalar. Tüm bu söylemler 'estetik boyut',
'estetik değer' ve 'estetik nitelik' gibi tanımı ve ölçütü olmıyan
bir dizi varsayıma dayanarak insan yapısı nesneleri kendilerine göre
sınıflar, eler, ekler, yüceltir, ve bunu yaparken de uygun görmediği
nesneleri, nesne türlerini, sorun ve ilişkileri, özellikle toplumsal/
ekonomik boyutu, yok varsayabilirler.

Mimarlık ve kentsel söylemlerin nesneleri görsel yada duysal hiç bir
sanat dalıyla karşılaştırılamıyacak kadar tarih, toplum ve üretim
eylemleriyle ilişkili, karmaşık vede salt görünüşe, göze ve beğeniye
göre değerlendirilemiyecek kadar somut ve teknik nesneler. Yapı ve
kentsel sorunların salt görünen yanlarının konu yapıldığı söylemler de,
özellikle somut, bilimsel ve çözümsel yöntem ve sorunsallardan da
yararlanmıyorlarsa, spekülatif, yetersiz ve yanıltıcı olabilirler.

Yazıda 'estetik söylemi'nin dayandığı bilgikuramsal ve düşünsel
varsayımlar ele alınmakta, bu söylemin toplumsal, bilimsel ve
kurumsal ilişkilerine değinilmekte'. Ancak bu yazının özelliği estetik
sorununa 'yeni' bir tanım yada yaklaşım getirmesinden çok bu sorunun
sorunsalını çözümleyerek mimarlık ve planlama söylemlerinin
bunlardan etkilenmesinin olumsuz yanlarını belirtmesinde. Belirtilmesi
gerekli bir nokta da şu: nesnelerin 'estetik söylem'den kurtulmasını
savunmak ve görsel algının sınırlarını belirtmek ne 'güzellik' denen bir
şeye inanmama, ne de görsel algının önemsiz olduğuna inanma
anlamına gelmez. Algı ve duyularımız bilgiyle destekli ve ideolojik
kalıpların farkında olduğu sürece mimarlık ve kentsel olguların her
yönü zengin bir biçimde anlaşılabilir. Kavram, bilgi ve söylem
düzeyindeki duyarlılığımız ve çalışmalarımız böyle bir 'inanç'tan
kaynaklanıyor.

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