

Reconsidering Architectural Ethics in Favor of Diminishing Existential and Environmental Hazards*

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Abstract

Due to the occurrence of the industrial revolution in the late eighteenth century, classical societies were subjected to tremendous transformations by virtue of the development of communication systems and construction infrastructures. Accordingly, urbanization has undergone significant growth. With the great intervention of the industry and trade in human interrelations, social ties became firmly established by bureaucratic organizations and, especially, monetary issues. Beside the emergence of Taylorism and Fordism propagating the regulation of more efficiency, the instrumental-strategic rationality focused on the principle of domination-supervision conquered the communicative-argumentative rationality focused on the idea of dialogue-agreement. In Capitalism, almost all aspects of culture are determined by the economic factors derived from the ideological apparatuses of the state. This economic system, through technology, captures nature and exploits it, and through media, manipulates people's consciousness and their plans for the future. The outcome has been existential hazards, such as alienation and identity crisis, and environmental problems such as the devastation of the ecosystem. These concerns have severely influenced human's lives for decades. The turning point of the formation of modern architecture, in a sense, is rooted in the beginnings of the industrial revolution. Thinkers and activists of the mentioned movement

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saw themselves as part of an idealistic tendency and hoped to enhance the quality of life. Modernist architects tried to adapt to the 'Zeitgeist', but eventually, they came to create uniform boxes, which were suffocating, from the perspective of existence, and catastrophic, from the perspective of environment. It is here that the anarchist postmodernity, by means of the abandonment of rationalist functionalism and aesthetic purism, organized an ironic approach in mindsets, which were more democratic and less elitist. The essential discussion of the present paper is based on the relationship between future architecture with ethics, from both existential and environmental outlooks. Consequently, we contemplate on the works of architecture after the 1980s, when the emerging concepts such as deconstructivism and folding, came from philosophical theory to architectural praxis and led to exceptional alterations in creating new spaces. The origin of these concepts dates back to the years of the 1960s, when for the first time throughout the history of construction, philosophy, directly, benefited architecture in order to liberate it from identical non-places appeared as the outcome of the modernism. Ideas like phenomenological ontology and contemporary hermeneutics are amongst the most prestigious ones of those theories. Therefore, the prehistory of this paper concentrates on the modernist architecture, which has paved the way, maybe inadvertently, for augmenting the psychological and environmental predicaments of the present time.

Introduction

Architecture could be assumed as a built form or a habitable space, which beyond a purely practical building, shows aesthetic and symbolic characteristics. Since architecture is limited within the framework of the power-ideology-capital triangle, as well as the structural statics, the emancipatory experience resulting from its perception does not come into the same line in regard to other categories of arts. Architecture as a cultural symbol, in essence, is based on the ideological and hegemonic presuppositions of the society. As such, it operates in the role of an apparatus that protects the status quo and stabilizes its authority, even if this mission remains in the unconsciousness level of the active subject. First of all, architecture distributes the people's bodies in the space; in such manner what apparatus is better than this in the grip of the power?

Logic of the free market has increasingly subjugated contemporary society so that with considering only the commodity value, it has reduced everything to an object that can be bought and sold. Under the control of late capitalism, false demands are being implanted in the human minds and, therefore, the possibility of experiencing ontological and semantic freedom has been forgotten. Fulfilling these inauthentic demands brings huge profits to pockets of the rich, who have a fundamental affiliation with the constructions of power and, accordingly, intend to preserve the present politico-social situation. Meanwhile, the modern state, by suppressing the citizens' subjectivities and their pleasures, is attempting to

collapse the individuality in order to establish a kind of compulsory homology. The consequence of this condition is the alienation of the people and the decline of their creativity, as today's human is suffering from serious existential complications.

In parallel, another catastrophe is happening: the destruction of the environment. Irresistible urban sprawling, unsuitable manufacture, demolition of natural landscapes, extreme exploitation of the ecosystem, and excessive consumption of non-renewable energy sources have resulted in numerous environmental crises. The lack of awareness and enthusiasm to deal with these challenges has caused irreparable damage for the humankind. Therefore, in addition to addressing architectural aesthetic aspects, managing environmental hazards is, also, enumerated as a top priority in future buildings. The major questions of this article are as follows:

One. While confronting an artwork or an architectural building, what procedures are being operated in the human brain?

Two. What are the influences of those power interrelations exist in the underpinning stages of social phenomena and lead to the domination principle, on the future projections of human?

Three. What is the nature of architecture, and what are its facilities and tools for diminishing the psychological and environmental hazards?

Materials and Methods

Employing a Nietzschean-Foucaultian approach, in the present paper we propose a critical assessment of contemporary buildings by way of a qualitative method hinge on logical reasoning and case study techniques, in favor of providing a number of ethical solutions for the construction of tomorrow, from both existential and environmental considerations. We initiate the research by exploring the areas of the audience's mind involved in the process of perception and appreciation of an artwork, so as to cast light on the idea of imaginative experience to measure the emancipatory capacity of art and architecture using the concept of 'ostranenie'. Afterwards, we scrutinize the nature of architecture as a social actualization which is surrounded by the interrelations of power dominating the public sphere, and emphasize its politico-ethical attribute.

In the subsequent step and with the aid of argumentation, we discuss that the aesthetic value existed inherently in the architecture is able to bring some degree of freedom and, as a consequence, reduce psychological hazards. Finally, we will address the possibilities of future architecture in diminishing environmental problems through sustainability. Despite the fact that this article, at the first glance, meditates on the theoretical connections of contemporary architecture to morality and philosophy, but in the ultimate analysis, it stretches in the field of future studies and hazards science, since its target is placed on the prediction and

organization of a tomorrow that would be grasped, as much as possible, far from individual and communal difficulties.

Results and Discussion

Architecture is counted as an immense source of aesthetic experience. Philosophical horizons, scientific paradigms, cultural structures, epistemological worldviews, 'Lebenswelt's, psychological factors, and ethnic characteristics, play a significant role in the aesthetic appreciation of an artwork. If the reflection on aesthetic perception did not establish a bond with neuroscience and philosophy of mind, then it would not reach its purposes. In brief, we could say that the different types of comprehension in hemispheres, along with the special associations of the right hemisphere to the hubs of emotions, have organized the human brain as an appropriate machine for making aesthetic decisions. Maintenance of a mental image in the presence of mind is called imagination, which itself depends on perception. On the grounds that architecture is considered a visual art, the imaginative experience is an essential element in the aesthetic evaluation of buildings.

Since the eighteenth century until now, practices of a certain institution that favors the imagination are called art. In the early years of the twentieth century, Russian formalism emphasized the message or the structure of literary works. One of the most important aspects of modernist art is the concept they have developed: 'ostranenie'. In this standpoint, art initiates when we separate ourselves from the ordinary world and break the legitimate rules in order to enter an unknown sphere. Hence, the dialectic of dependence-disjunction in respect to the tradition from which a work of art emanates, constructs the nature of that production. In none of the human fabrications, the future would be free of function and obligation, but in an artwork. Besides, 'catharsis' signifies the psychological effects that some artworks have on audiences, and also, connotes politico-ethical concepts. Art, always, is the postponement of the realization of aspirations. This circumstance cannot take place beyond the current perception of freedom and the needs of today. So, the artwork is 'not-yet-liberation'; not the liberation actualized, but its experience based on the imagination.

Regeneration of the ideology-subject dialectic is organized through the ideological state apparatuses. Cultural institutions, academic centers, and construction industries have a profound cooperation with the hegemonic power dominating the society. The concealed ideological and economic dependence of any given building, to a large extent, does not allow the designer or the user to access the freedom, in thought and action. In spite of the fact that the power is rooted in all human relations, it does not, necessarily, lead to a system of domination, and leaves a little room for subject's transgression in pursuance of attaining emancipation as well as recognizing the self. In this research, we understand the architecture being the manifestation of the socio-cultural symbol

as a meaning, in the fabricated form or space, which ultimately would not be capable of eluding the hegemonic ideology of its history and geography. But, regardless of the serviceability of architecture, it has the underpinning capacity to reveal itself as a politico-ethical object with an aesthetic value, and to help humans free themselves from surveillance and suppression.

As a result of the occurrence of identity crisis in the 1960s, topics like 'plural coding' arose due to the implicit historical references, and burdened the title of primitive postmodern architecture. Designers of this duration, with emphasis on the presence of the past and the revival of the memory, strived to ignore the definite, final meaning. In this regard, nostalgic repetition of the tradition along with ironic allusions, emerged in the notion of 'radical eclecticism'. If in deconstructivism, internal contradictions are revealed by the contrast between the building and its location, folding movement exhibits insolvable complexities by means of flexible folded layers. Thus, features such as discipline breaking, irregularity, and uncertainty, have returned the emancipatory validation to architecture.

In the following, parametricism came forth as a self-referential arrangement in order to create complexity while maintaining readability. Biomorphism is another attitude which, by presupposing the concept of evolution, seeks the models realized in natural mechanisms, metaphorically. Perhaps, the most desirable and auspicious style appeared in recent decades is sustainability, insofar as some theorists consider it, not postmodernism, as the first epistemological paradigm after modernism. Today, ecological efficiency, in terms of regeneration and consolidation of the attendance to environmental issues and the optimized utilization of clean and renewable energies, has been seriously addressed in the agenda of urban planning, landscape design, and architecture.

Modernist architecture, with ideas such as fluidity, eventually, apprehended spatial positions and propelled to functional minimalism derived from machinism and engineering aesthetics. In a sense, the capitalist modernization, in order to secure wealth and correspondingly power, through ideology and bureaucracy, threw the artistic modernism down into the swamp of troubles. In the middle of the twentieth century, the segregation between form, function, and ethical, social, and political values was about to lead to a permanent melancholy. In architectural theories, however, this disintegration was understood as a creative insanity for constructing a new order based on fundamental decompositions. This point put emphasis on the role of architecture in acquiring the experience of existential salvation. It seems that the concept of ostranenie has cast an extensive shadow over contemporary architecture, as if 'all that is solid' and rigid, smokily and elusively, 'melts into air'. Unconditional freedom of form, manifestation of complexity, fragmented geometry, Deleuzian non-Platonic spaces, and structural disturbance, are the hallmarks of today's meritorious buildings, which through emancipatory and moral games, demand for bridging geometry and imagination.

Although the anarchist tendencies in architectural postmodernism, such as deconstructivism, folding, parametricism, and biomorphism, have prospered in decreasing the psychological sufferings of human being through opinions like imaginative experience and ostranenie, they did not achieve much success in terms of environmental considerations. This challenge deserves more resolution and determination from the individuals involved in the construction industry. We believe that the liberation from ideological suppression and the attainment of the self that is freed from unjustified subjective presuppositions and truculent objective mandates is an exuberant dream, which could come true, of course only slightly, by virtue of the architecture.

Conclusion

If modern architecture is viewed as a follower of abstraction, totality, and purity, then anarchist postmodern architecture by way of repudiating modernist notions, will be observed as a pursuer of concretization, fragmentary, and liberation. The argumentation of the lack of values hierarchy, which architectural postmodernism has advocated, generates a horizontal situation in which, at any moment, the displacement possibility of the master and the slave is provided. As a result, with the flexibility of the power interrelations, the domination principle departs and the state of freedom from strangulation emanates. Critical considerations of this article show that the aesthetic attribute of an architectural building is tied to a politico-ethical endpoint, and also, it could make the experience of human emancipation feasible, through the imagination which itself is not-yet-liberation. Hence, the architecture of tomorrow in this post Nietzschean age of nihilism would, maybe, be encircled by temporary, non-classical meta-principles.

On the other hand, despite the sparkles of hope that some of the postmodernist styles have streamed in response to existential predicaments, they are still ahead of a meandrous path in the angle of propounding the issues of sustainable design. Thus, in terms of morality and ethics, architecture should actualize the subjective liberalization of the society by means of the ostranenie concept, as well as drawing attention to objective realities of the environment, by means of the sustainability concept. Accordingly, the future belongs to the conglomerate of emancipatory strategies together with sustainable development, which promises to bring about less domination and more salvation.

Keywords: Existential and Environmental Hazards, Ideological Apparatuses, Culture Industry, Fragmented Form, Future Architecture.

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