ONE HOUSE
TEXT & DRAWINGS

A GRADUATE THESIS
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INTRODUCTION

WHY ARCHITECTURE?

The Variety of Art and architecture moves the intellect to find an explanation for the phenomena as a whole. The architect is moved toward this understanding as a resolution and a formulation of his own position. The question: "why do his architecture as opposed to any other?", is a question which masks a deeper question: why do architecture at all? Thus attempting to understand variety and change in architecture is an effort to understand its value and existence, its origin and goal.

We no longer accept theories which attribute the origin of a work of art to personal expression, pleasure, or power of the will. These belong in a family of epiphenomena the likes of which Heidegger describes as wishing, willing, urge, and addiction. (B&T,1.6) Although these elements play a part they do not fully explain a work of art in itself, in its necessity for civilization, in its objectivity.

Our position holds that when a work of art comes into its own it gives us back beliefs and attitudes about reality as a whole. That is to say a work of art is culturally and cosmologically orienting. It is not something we can choose to be without. The world of art is not a luxury. In its measure it sets standards for our tending and cultivation in the world. Art and architecture are integrally bound into the promotion of existence.

This should not be interpreted as a grounding of our ideals in the realm of practicality, of what ultimately works. For such talk of an objectivity and necessity which is not subordinate to the solutions of practical problems, but defines use already from within its vision, is sometimes dismissed as myth. Our belief holds that an architectural and artistic thinking which shares the lead "in a decisive sense for our historical existence" (OWA) must involve the mythos.
M Y T H O S
C A S S I R E R  H E I D E G G E R  H E G E L

M A N Y  M E A N I N G S  surround the word myth. We are accustomed to understand myth as an illusion invented to explain a reality which is not understood. Naive peoples create myths in order to interpret an existence which is too difficult to understand on its own terms. Myth is not really true. On the other hand logic is considered irrefutable. Logic, because it supposedly rests on independent principles of objective validity, cannot be reduced to psychology. Myth seems to lack such support. Therefore inquiry into the origins of myth seems to negate the idea of its independent reality. Myth is subjective illusion. (PoSF, intr.)

However, the first characteristic needed for an involved understanding of myth entails the notion of its independent reality. Though Cassirer grounds the independence of myth in the critical philosophy of Kant (in accordance with the idealist concept of the object where the object is synthesized entirely by the subject, yet retains its own mode of reality it is not immediately necessary to adopt such a specific philosophical stance. This is so, because as Cassirer points out, the independence of myth is first touched upon when we seek the origin of our cultural forms. When we inquire into the development of science, law, ethics, language, social organization, religion, medicine, and art; what we find is their origin in the mythic forms of consciousness. Cassirer describes this movement: "everywhere in the life of the human spirit "becoming" points back to a "being" without which it cannot be understood in its particular truth and depth." (PoSF, xiv.)

What is this "being" of which Cassirer speaks? Or in other words what is the appropriate direction to take as an architect concerning beliefs about existence? What exists? In his essay on the origin of a work of art Heidegger responds to the question: the world is not the mere collection of the countable or uncountable, familiar and unfamiliar things that are just there. But neither is it a merely imagined framework added to our representation to the sum of such given things. The world, which is more fully in being than the tangible and perceptible realm in which we believe ourselves to be at home. World is never an object that stands before us and can be seen. World is the ever-nonscientific in which we are subject as long as the paths of birth and death, blessing and curse keep us transported into being.

Heidegger understands this "Being-in-the-World", not deduced from an idea of man, as Dasein. (B&T, I, 6, § 39) This is mythic thought (B&T, I, I, § 11) conceived not in contradiction to Greek logos philosophy. Understood at this level myth is considered in pari yet essentially to be uncreated.
THE SECOND CHARACTERISTIC needed for an understanding of myth is the notion of identity. To accept this we must do away entirely with the idea that myth is a form of thought used to explain another "deeper" kind of reality. According to Cassirer mythic thought does not involve itself in any way with the category of the ideal. In mythic thought there is no distinction between what is real and what is ideal. As an example Cassirer cites the behavior of primitive people with respect to their symbolic "idealism." For instance the necessity of the performance of sacred rites to insure the growth of crops shows that, "rites are so woven into the reality of action as to form an indispensable part of it." The efficacy of ritual was understood by mythical peoples to be an integral part in the coming to be of the fruits of agriculture.

Some of us who face the modern world might find such purity of heart difficult to attain. The point for us lies with the identification in mythic thought of the human spirit with the cultural forms of our civilization. No Gnostic or metaphysical forms of dualism are to be found here. In mythic thought the human spirit is one with what it performs and makes. It can only be this way since it is claimed that in the realm of myth there is no conceptual distinction made between a substance and its attributes or between a subject and predicate. Every spiritual realization is identical with material body.
Mythic

TOTALITY

A THIRD CHARACTERISTIC needed for an understanding of mythic thought is its perceptual orientation towards totality. Mythic consciousness is extreme in this view. For the mythic realm an understanding of what is total or whole is in no way an understanding of discreet parts in combination to form this whole. What is total has such characteristics that no combination of subordinate pieces would be sufficient to understand it. For mythic thought a part is the whole viewed from a different place. The eye of myth does not stop at the surfaces of things. It sees through an epistemological knowledge of reality to what, in the words of Heidegger, is "primordially and constantly whole." The part has no independent or accidental existence. It exists in conscious totality.

Furthermore the mythic perception is not a mere convention of method. That is to say mythic totality is not defined by theory. Its claim is to pretheoretical and intelligible subsistence. For the mythic thinker there is no crisis of belief in the reality of existence. In Heidegger's terms the question of a proof for the external as opposed to the internal world never arises. Existence is a structural form of value transparent to the mythic eye.
Mythic Space & Light

From the general description of mythic thought Cassirer moves to the specific. Space and light, time and number are mythic forms.

Unlike abstract and ideal concepts of space, such as the Cartesian coordinate system, the mythic form identifies position with content and value. Direction and position are given such value by the basic division in mythic thought of the sacred and the profane. The profane is an area of common accessibility. The sacred is an area cut off and raised up from the profane and protected from it. For Cassirer this is a universal tendency. Like abstract thought which finds a way to organize by rule objects in space so too does mythic space organize. Yet in mythic space perceptual qualities go along with its objects. Such is the explanation for the totemic organization of the Zuvis, "where every reality occupies its unequivocal position...to the east belongs the earth, to the west water, war and warriors belong to the north, medicine and magic belong to the south...even the structure of their city and its divisions into sections is a projection of their totemic view." (A modern example of this kind of thinking is Heidegger's "fourfold" of earth sky, mortals, and divinities.) However, the orientation is not arbitrary but reflects the mythic aspects of identity and totality. The spatial and cosmic worlds of myth are built to a model which permeates every level of existence. Furthermore it is claimed this spatial model originates in the sensuous intuition of the body: in front, behind, above, below, right and left. Thus myths ability to view the macrocosm within the microcosm.

In addition to the above the formation of mythic space originates with the recognition of day and night, light and dark. Every distinction of space is connected with this perception down to the basic division of the sacred and the profane:

"that sense of place and receptivity to impressions of light are the two most fundamental and deep seated manifestations of the human intelligence...For each inhabitant of the earth, the interchange of light and dark, day and night is the earliest impulse and ultimate end of his faculty of thought...to be in the light means to live; to see the light means to be born; to depart from the light means to die."(PoSF, IL2)
Mythic

TIME & NUMBER

TIME BRINGS fluidity to the frozen concept of myth and establishes history in consciousness as a continuous narrative. Mythic time is not composed of seconds along a line but passes through phases of value. Mythic time can be described as rhythmic, periodic, or orbital. In its passage mythic time is self related and bears resemblance to Hegel’s “genuine infinity.” In the time of seconds the same thing is constantly recurring as the description of the transformation of single events one into the other moves forward as the past disappears though never leaving the region of the finite behind.” (SOL, §194) Mythic thinking requires only the origin and goal of an endeavor. For mythic thinking origin and goal are often identified as in the Alpha and Omega of the Christians. Faulkner is thoroughly mythic when he writes: “the past isn’t dead, it isn’t ever past.” Through the eyes of myth the architecture of the past, though withdrawn, will not be perceived in a realm of conservation isolated from the present. The architecture of the past will still be heard with strong voice as holding the germ of the future. And the architect of the present will not be so much concerned with the architecture of “today” as he will be with that of tomorrow. It is wrong to think just because something is new it is ipso facto more highly present. Architecture considered mythically, gathers time.

Of all the mythic forms number seems the most distant from modern sensibility. Mythic numbers are not pure concepts. They are states or qualities. The phrase, “I’ve got your number” is a remnant of mythic thought. Although withdrawn from modern sense, mythic number retains ties to the category of the ideal in pure conceptual number. For there is a sense in which, before number, existence may be said to be understood but not conceptualized. Cassirer writes: “it is through the unity of number that the sensible world first assumes intellectual form...all phenomenal being is referred to number and expressed in it.” Both pure number and mythic number seek to conceptualize. Yet whereas pure number explains; mythic number signifies. Pure number is an element of reason, “a criteria of truth for all strictly rational knowledge.” In mythic thought number and the powers they possess remain a mystery. Number remains inaccessible to reason. (PoSF., p.143) Though not strictly proper to the realm of myth, the conceptual base in mythic number calls to mind Hegel’s Logic and the “Doctrine of Being” in particular. This is, I believe, a modern variation on the mythic nature of number as well as time, space, matter, and consciousness.

Briefly, for Hegel, nothing exists without definite character or quality: simply what is. Yet Quality implies distinction. Distinctions require each other in order to be distinguished and so do not exist independently of each other. Furthermore distinctions require an “exclusionist character” or unit. In its refracted state Hegel calls this the Many. In its unified state Hegel calls this the One or das EINS. What we have here is a concept of Being which on the side of its being Many, and in its measure, is a countable and quantitative definite thing. Its quality is enumerative in its unity. Its quality is qua what is perfected in number and “number is a thought in its complete self-externalization...a thought characterized by the externality of perception.” (SOL, §1104) One can never imagine Hegel saying with Heidegger: “World is never an object that stands before us and can be seen.” On the contrary this seems to be exactly what the world is for Hegel.
The One bedroom house was chosen for this project simply because a small building concentrates the problem of architecture. A small building forces the architect to magnify and reduce his vision. This is the world of architecture seen through a microscope. At this level maximum moments in architecture become door handles, steps, and lights. In a sense this magnification of vision stops where the body touches the building and where the general idea is re-conceived. At this level where material joins I have chosen to make plain sense...to clarify the line.

Mythic thinking plays apart, but misunderstood if taken too literally. Cassirer gives us the example of the Greek word for temple (and time) being based in the root meaning 'to cut' or "bisect." In the realm of myth this establishes the basic division between the sacred and the profane. Yet note, this move joins as much, if not more, than it separates. The handling of this line or cutting, is how a certain view of value is brought into existence with our common concerns in the ordinary and everyday world. Heidegger would prefer to say this handling or "fixing" allows for the appearing of truth. In any case the ordinary is magnified and seen anew. This is Heidegger's thesis in The Origin of a Work of Art: "standing there the building... brings to light the light of day, the breadth of the sky, the darkness of the night. Its own repose brings out the raging of the sea. It clears and illuminates that on which and in which man bases his dwelling." A mythic threshold is established. A line is drawn. And like the keeping of the seventh day cuts the week, a space is opened up for the worlding of "the naming power of the word": earth and sky, mortals and gods. For Heidegger this is what art is when it is a Work. Finally, based on a 4 cubic foot conceptual grid, this house is an initial attempt at complete enumerative quality.
EXTERIOR

FRONT ENTRANCE
A work of art, on a more specific level, can be described by the relations established internally to the work. The conceptual instrument of reversal is one such relation employed in the design of this house. Reversal distances the object from the practical purpose of house and brings it closer to what it is to be a work of art: something built from properties of its own. In addition to this and to the extent that reversal is an objective relation, the work is also distanced from the caprice of its particular human source. An "objective relation" sparks recognition of something capable of growth. Through it we are able to explore the work's development bringing in "the watchful circumspection of the intellect and the depth of the heart and its animate feelings." (LoFA.)
CENTRAL ORIENTATION

THE CENTER of the house contains two free standing walls. This space is roofed with a solid curve. The tapered openings admit daylight from the side to these walls. Thus the natural ebb and flow of light, given a partially indirect illumination by the architectural condition, establishes the primary division.
ROOM & HEARTH

The Architecture of this house tries to avoid the crowding of the imagination for purposes expressed earlier in this writing. The handling of materials contributes to this effort. I have worked for their literal presentation resisting overt efforts towards a more figural rendering. For example the front entrance canopy is presented as sheet of glass. The floor of wood is pulled back from the walls to better establish its boundary and that of the wall. So there is the wall and there is the floor. The wooden floor itself is framed into squares for its presentation. And so there is a floor.
CORNER

INTERIOR
**Epilogue**

*O*ver all that has been said here hovers the judgement of Hegel that art, "on the side of its highest vocation is a thing of the past." Under this judgement the limits of mythic thought are brought to light with respect to itself. For an incomplete mythic identification with modern cultural forms might indicate a passing of mythic thought into a critical capacity or ideal achievement. Such, I believe, is the world for Hegel. For Hegel this capacity moves to understand itself in the world. In the realm of art this is accomplished by a physical determination of rational thought as the Ideal comes to inquire scientifically what art is through the elucidation of itself in the Absolute Spirit by the forms of its logic: Being, Essence, and Concept. From the realm of art the Ideal pushes on into areas less friendly to the senses: first religion and then philosophy or logic. It moves this way only to return, with feeling, back into the realm of art. Yet in this return art is not hallowed or made sacred as it once was with the ancient Greeks. Nor does it, in Heidegger's sense, allow for the ontic happening of truth. Instead art is the world of man in the Absolute Spirit brought into physical form. This passing of art into a new age remains an undecided question for Heidegger and Cassirer. Their differences with Hegel turn upon how the logic of idealism defines the question of the nature of Being. Heidegger and the later Cassirer look toward "phenomenological horizons" to provide their foundation. For our part we are skeptical about a complete connection of mythic thought to the modern world. The modern intellect is critical and de-mythologizing. In Hegel's words: "the mind renders thought its object" and by so doing comes to theorize first in order to understand itself and the world. What attracts this mind is what appeals to its criticality. But when our criticality has achieved the clarity of line and concept of which it is capable a different mode of thinking stirs around us for the mythos and "the ultimate positive basis of the spirit and of life itself." (PoSF, p.4) Speaking about architecture from within the framework established by the authors here examined, we find our interpretation to lie in between the conceptual tectonic of *das Eins* and the existential analytic of *Dasein* of myth.
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V I T A

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The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks
the long day wanes the full moon climbs the deep
Moans sound with many voices
Come its not too late
to seek a newer
world

ALT
RETROSPECTIVE CRITIQUE

WILL THE INFINITE TIME

LOUD TIRADES on the freedom of the will are to be expected from one who keeps counsel to sheep. A King's counsel knows the power and year after year speaks incisive and disclosing words of direction and purpose.

There can be no mistake about it. In the philosophy of Hegel, the "predicates" of existence that which stands before us and can be seen, are as fully in Being as anything can get. Yet it is in the nature of existence to nullify itself or see itself as incomplete, and in so doing to "shoot out beyond itself" into free thought and the realm of the infinite or its own inward energy. Hegel says people who are too fastidious towards the finite world never achieve actuality. This is a remarkable and inherently self-contradictory belief coming from the same man who wrote: "It should be remembered that the only means by which the Essence and the inner self can be verified is their appearance in outward reality; whereas the appeal which men make to the essential life, as distinct from the material facts of existence, is generally prompted by a desire to assert their own subjectivity and to elude an absolute and objective judgement."

New wine, new wineskins; still wine.