**Architecture not conceptual but Ideational**

Deleuze, in *Difference & Repetition*[1], opposes *Idea* to *concept*, and outlines an idea of the Idea in terms of a complex interweaving of what he terms differen*t*iation and differen*c*iation – two words separated by an unhearable consonant.  It is by this interweaving of differentiation and differenciation that the work comes to exist.  How does this relate to architecture, and how does Idea contrast with concept?  What would be the difference between an *Ideational* architecture and a conceptual architecture?

By *concept* we mean that of which Laugier[2] for instance classically speaks when he begins his essay with a chapter entitled  "General Principles of Architecture":

> It is the same in architecture as in all other arts: its principles are founded on simple nature, and nature's process clearly indicates it rules…. Such is the course of simple nature; by imitating the natural process, art was born.  All the splendours of architecture ever conceived have been modelled on the little rustic hut[3]

We take Laugier as exemplary of the conceptual notion of architecture, but the structure of thought implied and used here is common to all those who would apply the following strategy, either implicitly or explicitly:
- the notion of "general principles of architecture" or an initial "generating idea"
- the notion of "a central concept at the core of an architectural project"
- the idea that architecture (or any work) might "express" or illustrate a more "fundamental" philosophy, thought, concept or feeling
- more generally, the notion that there is a "founding" concept or thing (such as "nature") from which architecture would be derived or would derive itself

In other words, the classical notion of architecture which we will here questioned via Deleuze is essentially a notion that stays within a metaphysical philosophy of *representation*.  Within such a philosophy architecture's task would be to represent some pre-existing thought or thing (concept, society, life…).  Given that Deleuze spent his entire work countering representational thought, it is no surprise that he be cited in the countering of this classical means of structuring architecture.   This countering will oppose the thought of architecture as that of static "firm principles" determining the architect's judgement; it will oppose the concept of architecture which exists within the realm of *representation*; it will oppose a concept of architecture subsumed to the concept from which it derives; and it will oppose the thought that thought is, finally, merely *expressed* in the work.

We might have attempted the opposition by means of the by now familiar move of deconstruction.  This move would have addressed the issue of *foundations* in Laugier and would have asked immediately: by what right can Laugier claim that architecture is *founded* on "simple nature", since the notion of foundation is dependent both on something like architecture - ie a construction which has a foundation – and furthermore on the *artificial* notion of a footing, since we do not claim that a tree or some other such supposed "natural thing" has a "foundation".  Laugier's argument is therefore doubly weak; he wishes to establish architecture by means of a notion which derives from architecture itself (thus leading to a vicious logical circle) and therefore carries out no

[1] Gilles Deleuze, *Difference & Repetition*, trans Paul Patton (London: The Athlone Press, 1994)

[2] Marc-Antoine Laugier, *An Essay on Architecture*, trans W & A Herrmann (Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, 1977)

[3] pp. 11-12.

such foundation; and the specific notion he uses – "nature" as that which pre-exists the artificial – is also undermined by the artificiality of the notion of foundation. But Laugier is not alone here: the supposed metaphorical use of architectural terms runs as we know through all philosophy and thought and undoes any attempt to derive architecture from philosophy. It would also be possible to show that any classical or representational thought about architecture suffers the same limitation; it will leave itself open to being deconstructed.

Indeed it is no co-incidence that those representational structures that Deleuze critiques will be open to a Derridian deconstruction; both thinkers made it their task to question foundational thought by means of a differential one, and it would perhaps suffice here to note that Derrida, in his 1968 essay *Differánce* uses the same strategy of a neologism ("*differánce*") which can only be distinguished from the word "*difference*" in writing, just as Deleuze utilises the difference between two "differen*t/c*iations" (one spelt with a *t*, one with a *c*) which can also only be perceived by writing. Derrida, in his appreciation of Deleuze written after the latter's death, claimed indeed that no-one was closer to him.

It is therefore ironic that in the case of both deconstruction and the thought of Gilles Deleuze we find baleful attempts on the part of architects and architectural theorists to "apply" their thought to architecture, to build the form of which these thoughts will supposedly provide the theoretical justification. Any attempt to represent a thought or a philosophy in something like architecture is, we would argue, naïve; it is doubly naïve in this instance because both of these thinkers were specifically and endlessly overturning the representational structure within which this attempt is made. Thus architecture, thought outside the classical bind, can never be the translation of an apparently formal aspect of philosophy (the fold, for instance) into the form of architecture.

We would not, however, return the question simply to one of metaphoricity. It is not the case that we can say that Laugier's notion of a "foundation" is simply the metaphorical usage of a word *properly* belonging to the realm of architecture. Nor, to generalise, it is the case that when philosophy uses terms from architecture – as when Kant famously has it that the treatise must be set out according to an architectonic plan[4] - this is simply a metaphorical usage. To posit architecture as simply pre-existing philosophy and providing a series of metaphorical terms taken from the "proper" and "natural" realm of architecture is to be as naïve as Laugier is in doing the opposite; and it is again to remain within an representational mode of thought.

Deleuze, in opposing the *Idea* to the concept and showing how a process of differenc/tation occurs in the creation of a work, provides a clue as to how to think other than within this representational mode – a mode within which the notion of the metaphor gains it strength. The Idea, for Deleuze, operates within a field which is riven from the outset by difference rather than identity. The overcoming of representation is the assertion that it is difference which is primary, not identity. Classical philosophy asserts that it is identity which comes first, and from identity differences are then derived. For Deleuze, this does not take sufficiently seriously the post-Nietzschian situation, for in retaining the privilege of identity we unknowingly fail to take seriously the cry of the madman announcing the death of god – that is, the death of identity which, in the end, is only justified by something like the godhead. Difference, Deleuze states, is primary; difference is that from which identity is derived. This is the profound meaning of Nietzsche's eternal return of the same. This movement is not the return of a pre-existing identity, a pre-existent "sameness"; rather, the genitive "of" is taken in the other sense and indicates that it is eternal return, ie eternal difference, which allows the same to come to exist. Again we see here a clear affiliation with Derrida's though, which operates as a constant questioning of foundations, origins and identities in the

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[4] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1933), p. 33.

name of "differánce", ie in the name of a primary and abyssal difference prior to any identity.

Within the field of original difference, the Deleuzian *Idea* operates as an anti-classical, anti-representational, anti-expressionist and genetic (anti-static) movement. It is this by virtue of its status not as *arché* (principle) but as *differentialising problem*. As is said of art in Ozenfant/Jeanneret's Purism manifesto, architecture as Idea raises space to the level of *mathesis*, and it does this as a genesis, as a development of the Idea by virtue of the process of differen*t*iation (of the Idea as problem) and differen*c*iation (of the actualisation of this). This genetic movement of differentiation and differenciation can be summarised thus:

- the *Idea* is acknowledged to be not a concept (ie something identical in itself derived from Ideas after the fact) but rather something having a problematic nature such that the supposed "solution" to the problem does not disappear but stays in play. As Deleuze says, "true problems are *ideas*, not disappearing with their solutions"[5]. Thus, in the creative act that is architecture, we can say that an Idea is set up, ie that a problem is posed in such a manner that it remains problematic, it remains open. This is the moment of differentiation (spelt with a *t*)

- at the same time, this Idea, in setting up a movement of problem-solution which stays *as* movement and does not resolve into the stasis of the solution, becomes *actualised* in the process of differenciation (spelt with *c*). That is, in terms of architecture, the posed and retained problem will come to be actualised in a work where the differential movement of the problem is maintained and respected

We can say that in the case of architecture (as with other works) this genesis is a creative "triple genesis" of qualities, space and time, and concepts, to use the terminology Deleuze applies to another field[6]. The qualities which arise when architecture is actualised at the same time that the Idea is posed also allows space and time to realise themselves in this particular work in a particular way; and the concept occurs as part of this movement, as a derived reality that can subsequently, if we wish, be abstracted from the work and from the Idea.

Thus we can see that architecture, as such a creative movement, does not *follow* concepts but rather *generates* them. A truly conceptual architecture does not begin, but ends, with the concept. This notion of architecture is an inherently non-conceptual one. It is non-conceptual because it does not operate by positing a pre-defined conceptual ground which then comes to be represented in the work of architecture. This conceptual ground would act to close the work in subordinating it to the identical – that is, to the concept as something identified, identifiable and predefined. The work should instead remain open in its respect of its primary difference, a primary movement and a primary resonance. Such a work would be inherently *Ideational*. Again, we emphasis that the "concept" can be derived from this Ideational movement, but only in a later act of analysis. Thus the Ideational work of architecture is, we could say, more *conceptual* than conceptual architecture strictly defined. It hyperbolises the concept, makes it larger, more grand, more open and more rich than the one which derives from a static, pre-defined or essentially analytic tradition. And not only does the movement of the Ideational work occur during the activity of the supposed creators in the sense that the idea of it only ever comes to exist through the movement of its creation; but this Ideational movement extends into the creative response of those who come after that moment of creation, who indeed have been given space by means of it, who come to inhabit it.

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[5] Deleuze, p. 168
[6] p. 173

In short, Ideational architecture operates on us "by posing the question of its own difference"[7] and *maintaining* the movement of that question within a primary differential field.  The Idea of this architecture only ever exists in and through its so-called "concrete" realisation, even though it is at the same time that which allows such realisation to occur.  This is why we can say that the classic representational structure of thought about architecture can and must be overturned, it we are to affirm a truly creative and open work of architecture.  This overturning occurs in the very act of creation, and does so by refusing the concept, that is refusing a pre-defined ground or foundation which architecture could display, represent, or express.  The concept is a reduction; it can be derived after the fact of architecture.  This means, as with all reductions, that architecture (that from which it is reduced) cannot be reduced to *it*, cannot be derived from it.  This would be to move in precisely the wrong direction.

But we would be mistaken here if we try to understand these workings within a conventional, object-like notion of the ontology of architecture.  The operation of differen**t**iation in posing the problem of architecture's "own difference", and the operation of differen**c**iation in actualising this problem within qualities, space and time, and concepts, occurs not within an objective field but within an ontology of the event.  This thought of the different/ciating work only works if we allow that architecture is not essentially material, substantial, spatial or objective (these being derived reductions of it) but rather *eventful*. Deleuze, in a beautiful rendering in section 15 of *Logic of Sense*[8], relates how the battle of war is the essential event:

> ….the battle is not an example of an event among others, but rather the Event in its essence…. because it is actualised in diverse manners at once, and because each participant may grasp it at a different level of actualisation within its variable present….. (And) it is above all because the battle *hovers over* its own field, neutral in relation to the victor and the vanquished, the coward and the brave; because of this, it is all the more terrible.  Never present but always yet to come and already passed, the battle is graspable only by the will of anonymity which it itself inspires.[9]

Architecture is such a thing; never present, always yet to come and already passed, actualised in diverse manners at once, and grasped by each participant in a different manner, at a different level of actualisation.  Architecture, in short, is the battle, the *agon* within which the Idea comes to be.


Tim Gough
May 2008

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[7] p. 195.
[8] Gilles Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, trans M Lester (NY: Columbia University Press, 1990).
[9] P. 100.