11
The Autonomy of Architecture

Andy Hamilton

The city of Macau's architectural highlights include the Fortezza, the bizarre façade of St Paul's Cathedral, all that was left standing after a typhoon in 1836, the Macau Officers' Club, and a number of churches. Less edifying is the egregiously bombastic Grand Lisboa Hotel and Casino (2008–09), one of the world's ugliest buildings:

(photograph by James Steintrager)

In its swaggering gigantism, and totally unvernacular and unclassical nature, the Grand Lisboa would surely inspire Roger Scruton's contempt. But is his conservative, anti-modernist analysis of the failings that lead architects to create such monstrosities a persuasive one? This chapter assesses his appeal to architecture's vernacular elements, and to its public and functional nature. It partially agrees with the data that he adduces concerning functionality and publicity, but argues that his conservative communitarian critique of modernism understates architecture's artistic conception. Architecture seems to be a hybrid with elements of high and useful art – perhaps a high art whose autonomy is qualified by functionality, publicity, and the patronage relation. It therefore qualifies the modernist claim that high art, defined in terms of artistic expression, must be autonomous art.

1 Architecture – ordinary or autonomous?

Architecture is usually regarded as a high art, but not often as an autonomous art. High art is 'Art' with a capital 'A' – as opposed to useful or mechanical art with a small 'a', essentially craft, such as building. The modernist conception of artistic autonomy provides a particular interpretation of what Oscar Kristeller termed the *modern system of the fine arts*. He argued that the system appeared only in the eighteenth century, and that it included architecture:

> In [the] broader meaning, the term 'Art' comprises above all the five major arts of painting, sculpture, architecture, music and poetry. These five constitute the irreducible nucleus of the modern system of the arts, on which all writers and thinkers seem to agree.[1]

On Kristeller's view, Plato and the Greeks did not think of poetry and drama, music, painting, sculpture and architecture as species of the same genus, practised by 'artists' in our current overarching sense of the term.[2] He argues that earlier categorisations were much looser, a fact illustrated by Cicero and Galen's association of architecture with medicine. Varchi (1503–65) declared that after the healing art, architecture was the most noble of all – a comparison that would not come readily after the advent of the modern system of the arts.[3] That system separated fine art from craft, generating a concept of high art produced by artists of genius, while leaving great scope for differences between the individual arts.

Kristeller's view underlies the modernist consensus. But even if one disagrees with his claim that the Arts – with a capital 'A', the fine or high arts – arise only in a modern system, aesthetics still needs to explore the very wide divergences between modern concepts of art and those found in antiquity, and in non-Western cultures. Kristeller's concern was with Western art, and widely differing models or systems are found in other cultures – Edo-era Japan, for instance, valued the 'the Four Accomplishments' or gentlemanly pursuits of music, games of skill, calligraphy, and painting.[4] Such cross-cultural data are more essential in addressing the question 'What is art?', than the postmodernism of Duchamp and his successors that has tended to preoccupy philosophical aestheticians.[5]

Not all writers have agreed with Kristeller, in particular about which are the fine arts. For Batteux, the eighteenth-century Beaux-Arts theorist, architecture occupied a position between the straightforwardly mechanical arts, such as engineering, which are undertaken only to satisfy our basic needs, and the fine arts of music, dance, poetry, painting, and sculpture. Like rhetoric, he held, it is a utilitarian art that achieves its goals, in part, by pleasing its audience. However, when D'Alembert included a version of Batteux's definition of fine art in the *Encyclopédie*, he removed dance and added architecture.[6]

In the twenty-first century we have no very clear system of the arts – the vogue for stipulating one did not much outlive the eighteenth century – and there is a vagueness both in our understanding of the present 'system' of the arts, and in its accompanying notion of an 'artistic conception'. However, the modernist narrative remains influential, interpreting the fine or high arts, with their associated self-conscious artistic conception, as *autonomous art forms* – roughly, as independent of each other, and as having lost any as defining practical or social function. If there has been disagreement over architecture's status within the modern system, its role within the modernist narrative is even more ambiguous, and, in recent years, its autonomy has become a topic of animated debate in architecture theory. Aldo Rossi's *L'Architettura della Città* saw this autonomy as an assertion of architecture's own 'authentic laws' – a rejection of its utilitarian legacy.[7] Hilde Heynen argued that for an architect, 'There is always an autonomous moment in the design process', where functional or constructive requirements are transcended.[8]

Scruton rejects the modernist narrative, denying both that architecture is a high art in Kristeller's sense, and the stronger claim of its autonomy. We need to relate his account to modernist notions of autonomy and artistic conception. When Scruton questions

architecture's practical and social autonomy, he interprets the latter in an unusual and interesting way. His primary focus is not the restrictions placed on artistic freedom by the patron–client relationship, but its functionality and public nature. These imply the 'relative absence from the art of building of any true artistic autonomy':

> for the most part, a builder has to fit his work into some pre-existing arrangement of unchangeable forms, being constrained at every point by influences which forbid him the luxury of a self-consciously 'artistic' aim.[9]

For Scruton, architecture's impersonal and functional qualities distinguish it from the other arts, seeming to require special attitudes for its creation and enjoyment.[10] It should be stressed that in no way does he wish to devalue the practice of architecture. Indeed he does not totally reject the ideal of artistic autonomy, but finds it essentially rhetorical; it 'must be put afresh for every generation in the language most suited to the time'.[11]

Scruton denies that architecture possesses a fully self-conscious artistic conception. For him architecture has a non-expressive, essentially public, conception – classical and un-Romantic. By *artistic conception*, he means a post-Romantic conception that tends to be critical and oppositional – the isolated artist-genius against a complacent, ignorant society. Scruton, in contrast, argues that

> in proposing an aesthetics of architecture, the least one must be proposing is an aesthetics of everyday life. One has moved away from the realm of high art towards that of common practical wisdom. And here one might begin to see just how inappropriate is our post-romantic conception of art to the description of normal aesthetic judgments of the normal man, and how obscure are all the concepts, such as the concept of expression, which have been used to elucidate it.[12]

For him, any Romantic conception seems to lead to the excesses of modernism and postmodernism, with its star performers or 'starchitects'.

According to the modernist narrative, a fully self-conscious artistic conception arises only with artistic autonomy, and we must now consider at some length what artistic autonomy involves. Autonomous arts, according to the modernist narrative, transcend both the practical utility of the useful or mechanical arts such as furniture or ceramics, and the social functions – religious, courtly, and military – which art and music

served prior to their evolution as high arts by the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The concept of autonomous art received its most intense expression in the later nineteenth-century doctrine of *art for art's sake,* which attempted to locate the artwork outside the socio-economic nexus. The claim of the autonomy of art goes beyond Kant's commitment to aesthetic autonomy – his separation of the value spheres of aesthetic, ethical, and cognitive, while re-implicating them at a deeper level. Despite a surprisingly common misapprehension, his crucial advance implied no commitment to art for art's sake. Kant regarded the fine arts as non-autonomous, and exhibiting dependent beauty, and his influence on the development of art for art's sake was indirect.

The first sense of autonomous art dates from the appearance of the modern system of the arts: it is the sense that excludes decorative art with a practical function such as ceramics, weapons, and furniture. That is, it excludes art that lacks *practical autonomy.* Whether an art form is capable of such autonomy cannot be entirely predicted, but humans would have somehow to lose the need for furniture before such artefacts could become autonomous art. Even when exhibited in a museum, their functional origins are inescapable. They may therefore be characterised as *intrinsically heteronomous art.*

A second sense of autonomy is *social autonomy.* Though the demarcation between social and practical function is not a clear one – the representational or pictorial function of painting, for instance, while serving social functions such as enhancing an aristocratic patron's prestige, is not itself social – social autonomy is particularly stressed by the modernist narrative. Other examples of social function would be eighteenth-century music for banquets or military pageants, or twentieth-century political art and mass entertainment – functionality persists after the advent of autonomy. Such art forms are *contingently heteronomous,* because they are capable of becoming autonomous. Socially autonomous art constitutes an autonomous practice whose defining function is aesthetic or artistic rather than social.

The possibility of socially autonomous art is often rejected out of hand, but this rejection may rest on a misunderstanding. By 'socially autonomous art', I mean art that has no social defining function. The *defining function* is what one needs to know in order to understand anything at all about the event or process. For instance, Bach's cantatas were originally composed for church services, whose purposes they served; one cannot understand the music without understanding this. In contrast, it would be absurd to say of modern concert performances that the music serves the social occasion of a concert; the music *is* the

social occasion. The performance has no defining social function, but rather a defining functionlessness – though of course it has many non-defining functions that, as Adorno stressed, arise in virtue of that defining functionlessness.

The aesthetic significance of social autonomy lies in how it frees artist and audience from socially conditioned taste. It generates what I term a *post-Romantic conception of art,* one that regards high or classic art as neither didactic nor pleasurable diversion; its truth is not reducible to anything as crude as a 'message', and artworks are concerned, rather, to raise possibilities for consideration. According to this conception, art is autonomous, and its audience has freedom or autonomy in interpreting it.[13]

This freedom is relative, because according to a familiar modernist dialectic, social and thus aesthetic autonomy arises from, yet is in tension with, capitalist commodification. In a period from the Renaissance to the late eighteenth-century, different art forms in turn became free of Church and aristocratic patronage, as the artist's work was commodified through entry into the capitalist marketplace. This process is found also in non-Western art, such as that of Edo-era Japan, and indeed on a smaller scale in art of many eras.[14] What is distinctive about post-eighteenth-century developments, as in the development of capitalism generally, is their scale and ubiquity.

Painting was the earliest art form to exhibit this growing autonomy. The Renaissance began to value artistic skill over materials, and saw the rise of the individual painter as artist; Vasari's narrative of art history rested on these developments. Literature followed, and Dr Johnson's riposte to Lord Chesterfield – 'Is not a patron my lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and, when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help?' – is regarded as a decisive blow against the patronage system. Instead of waiting on aristocratic whim, authors negotiated in the marketplace with booksellers and publishers.[15] Western art music followed a similar development from Haydn through Mozart to Beethoven.

Sculpture's autonomy came later, and remained partial; it is interestingly related to that of architecture. Penelope Curtis argues that because of its 'close association with the fabric of the built environment [sculpture] took much longer than painting to shake off its deep-rooted connection with a public function'.[16] A public function is a particular form of social function, where the work is created to serve the whole of society, and not just particular aristocratic or bourgeois patrons. Sculpture often had a commemorative role, especially as memorials,

where sculptors were at the service of their clients; before Rodin, even important monuments were rarely known by the names of their creators. Rosalind Krauss stresses this role when she treats sculpture as 'a historically bounded' rather than 'universal' category:

> [it] has its own internal logic ... inseparable from the logic of the monument. By virtue of this logic a sculpture is a commemorative representation. It sits in a particular place and speaks in a symbolical tongue about the meaning of use of that place. The equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius is such a monument, set in the center of the Campodoglio ...[17]

In the late nineteenth century this logic faded, she argues; there are multiple versions of Rodin's *The Gates of Hell* and *Balzac* in museums, but none on their original sites. Modernist sculpture is siteless or homeless; it has become essentially nomadic, as Brancusi's work shows. 'The sculpture depicts its own autonomy', here meaning '*autonomy from location*', a sense of autonomy which architecture clearly cannot exhibit.[18] However, sculpture can be public while at the same time being known for its maker – Anthony Gormley's *Angel of the North* in Gateshead is an icon of the Northeast, where the local community showed their acceptance of it by dressing it in a huge Newcastle United soccer shirt.

Autonomy from location is connected with the practical and social autonomy discussed earlier – it is autonomy from physical as opposed to social location. There are obvious parallels between a piece of music, composed as Bach's generally were for a particular occasion, and a statue created for a particular location. An interconnected set of phenomena therefore come under the heading of autonomous art – art that is free in different senses: from patrons, public requirements, functions, locations, and subservience to other arts.

Returning to the case of architecture, that final sense of autonomy is stressed by Scruton. Architecture seems to be both practically and socially heteronomous. For if sculpture is public by association with the built environment, its autonomy qualified as Curtis says, how could architecture become autonomous, since it *is* the 'built environment'? Its affinities with the useful arts, and the public demands on it, militate, as Scruton argues, against the claim of autonomy. Interestingly, however, as we will see, Scruton does seem to advocate the autonomy of architecture in a third sense of autonomy – *autonomy as independence from other arts* – and in particular rejects a 'sculpturalist' concept of architecture that treats it non-functionally. We return to this final sense of

autonomy in the concluding section. First we address Scruton's critique of architecture's high art status, a critique that rests on three general and connected considerations – functionality, publicity and vernacularity.

2 Architecture as a functional art

For Scruton, the truth in functionalism is that one cannot abstract from one's knowledge of a building's utility in appreciating it aesthetically. The functionality of architecture undermines the art–craft distinction, he argues:

> The utility of a building is not an accidental property; it defines the architect's endeavour. To maintain this sharp distinction between art and craft is … to ignore the reality of architecture – not because [it] is a *mixture* of art and craft (for, as Collingwood recognised, that is true of all aesthetic activity), but because architecture represents an almost indescribable *synthesis* of the two.[19]

Scruton regards architecture as aesthetic through and through.[20] His view is that treating it as a high or autonomous art implies an implausible expressionism; to regard it as an expressive activity like painting and sculpture gives its decorative aspect an unwarranted autonomy. This is what Scruton terms *sculpturalism*, and Graham in this volume calls 'walk-through sculpture'.

Scruton is therefore a kind of functionalist. But *functionalism* is a label for a range of elusive and often incompatible theories, espoused by architects and thinkers from Pugin, Viollet-le-Duc, and Louis Sullivan to the Bauhaus and Le Corbusier. One can, however, distinguish two broad tendencies: an *aesthetic* one that treats function as the ground of aesthetic understanding of architecture, and a *scientistic* one that claims to reject aesthetic understanding altogether.[21]

Scruton advocates the former, a position that may be termed *aesthetic functionalism*. Its claim is not that architecture's function is aesthetic – for instance, to produce aesthetic experience – but that in being functional, it satisfies aesthetic criteria. It is opposed to the *anti-aesthetic or scientistic functionalism* often regarded as characteristic of modernism. Scruton writes that,

> In its most influential form, functionalism purports not to deny the priority of aesthetic values in architecture so much as to provide a comprehensive theory of their nature … Aesthetic experience,

> according to some versions of the theory, is nothing more than an experience of function – not function as it is, but function as it appears.[22]

Scruton therefore synthesises the aesthetic element of anti-functionalist sculpturalism, with the functionalist element of anti-aesthetic modernism. As a conservative, he rejects scientistic rationalism – which applies theoretical reason to artistic questions – and favours unselfconscious vernacular designs that express a practical, non-theoretical rationality. Architectural problems cannot be solved as a 'scientific optimum', he argues, but only as the basis for practical activity. In positioning windows in a house, for instance, one has to consider their prospect, and issues of privacy, warmth, and light; to ignore such features is hardly rational.[23] There must be an intuitive understanding not just of the problem, but also of the solution, he holds.

But Scruton also rejects anti-functionalist sculpturalism. He regards a purely visual contemplation or touristic gaze as inadequate, since it expresses a disembodied aestheticism that divorces architecture from everyday life. We need to move around the building, he argues, touching its surfaces, hearing its distinctive echoes; to regard it as having architectural value is to want to use and not merely contemplate it. To appreciate St Peter's in Rome, with its Bernini colonnades, as architecture, one must not merely see, but feel, its awesome spaces and its colonnades' embrace.[24]

In assessing Scruton's aesthetic functionalism one should first note that he is too ready to assume that modernists will reject it in favour of *scientistic or anti-aesthetic functionalism*. The latter position originated in the French Enlightenment, when Boullée and Ledoux attempted to base building on rational principles proceeding from scientific laws. For instance, they rejected merely decorative pilasters, insisting on free-standing columns that provided genuine and visible support. The Paris church of Ste Geneviève (1755–64), renamed the Panthéon, was a model.[25]

In the twentieth century, modernists often presented functional or pseudo-functional arguments according to which 'design' is not 'a process through which aesthetic values permeate the entire conception of the architectural task, but rather a complex, quasi-scientific mode of functional experiment':[26]

> Beauty is a ... product of solving problems correctly. It is unreal as a goal. Preoccupation with aesthetics leads to arbitrary design, to

> buildings which take a certain form because the designer 'likes the way it looks'. No successful architecture can be formulated on a generalised system of aesthetics.[27]

Bauhaus director Hannes Meyer's manifesto 'Bauen' from 1928, with its formula 'function times economy', influenced post–World War II education, when departments of architecture were renamed departments of environmental design, and historical study was rejected.

However, Scruton and others have exaggerated modernism's commitment to rationalistic functionalism. Many modernists – Frank Lloyd Wright for instance, whose prairie houses, the architect claimed, draw on vernacular impulses – would accept Scruton's requirement of 'homeliness'. Le Corbusier's notorious description of a house as a 'machine for living' contrasts with his comment that 'Architecture is the masterly, correct and magnificent play of masses brought together in light'.[28] Few modernists argued for the satisfying of function to the exclusion of aesthetic values, and when they did, they referred to 'building' (*Bauen*) and not 'architecture' (*Baukunst*).[29] 'Anti-aesthetic' functionalism is in fact an aesthetic in its own right, as Venturi and Scott Brown point out:

> Functionalist architecture was more symbolic than functional. It was symbolically functional. It represented function more than resulted from function. It looked functional more than worked functionally. This was all right because architecture has always been symbolic ... [But for functionalists] aesthetic qualities, if ever mentioned, were said to derive from the easy resolution of never contradictory functional requirements ...[30]

Although Scruton exaggerates modernist rejection of it, his aesthetic functionalist view of architecture as a synthesis of art and craft is a persuasive position. His view develops Alberti's insight that the aesthetic and the constructional interpenetrate in a single universal art of building – thus aesthetic or artistic excellence is inseparable from functional considerations. When Alberti describes the joining of lines and angles as being the most important and difficult of the architect's tasks, he is referring to a problem that is at once one of construction and aesthetics.[31] On this view, there is no fundamental separation between building as craft and building as art.

I described Scruton's aesthetic functionalism as a synthesis of sculpturalism (so-called) with its functional deficit, and rationalist functionalism

with its aesthetic deficit. However, the polar opposites that Scruton seeks to undermine are not equally objectionable. Rationalist functionalism must be rejected, as it rests on the key error of assuming *the rarification of the aesthetic*; one must recognise that the aesthetic is ubiquitous and quotidian, and not the preserve of the expert or connoisseur.[32] All buildings are products of design in a broad sense, not necessarily involving written plans in advance, and design is essentially aesthetic.[33] But sculpturalism – which as we saw treats architecture as the decoration of construction – is not as objectionable as rationalist functionalism.

Therefore, although in this chapter does not defend sculpturalism – that would be misguided – it does aim to show that architecture can have an artistic conception, as sculpturalists insist, but misrepresent. Ruskin defended sculpturalism in chapter 1 of *Seven Lamps*, defining architecture as the decoration of construction – whatever is useless, unnecessary, or mere incrustation.[34] In so arguing, Ruskin and the Gothic Revivalists – who were writing only a century after the profession of architect was firmly established in Britain – made the distinction between architecture and building vivid in the popular imagination, even if they mischaracterised it. However, Ruskin's sculpturalism is not a Romantically expressive concept, and he shares Scruton's antipathy to the idea of architecture as high art. Like William Morris, he idealised the medieval era for its equal valuation of art and craft, and advocated a socially embedded, non-elitist, and non-autonomous art. He argued that 'there is no existing highest-order for art but is decorative. The best sculpture yet produced has been the decoration of a temple front – the best painting, the decoration of a room.'[35] For him, art for art's sake was anathema; to separate art from its social context and wider human concerns was to trivialise it – a view that has much in common with Scruton's.

Ruskin's conception of architecture has not been well received. Pevsner condemned his 'complete lack of feeling for the unity of architecture which made this comedy [that ornament is the principal part of architecture] possible', and denied that he was a precursor of architectural modernism, holding that William Morris, was not his interpreter, but his revolutionary critic.[36] However, Venturi and Scott Brown re-evaluated Ruskin's 'once horrifying statement ... that architecture is the decoration of construction', arguing that decoration is not the mere addition of cable moulding, but 'like the make-up on an actor's face [that raises it] to the level of a communicating object'.[37] This again points to surprising parallels between Ruskin and Scruton.

Sculpturalism can at least be regarded as a limiting category of architectural practice. Against Scruton – and Pevsner – I would argue that

although the decorated shed, walk-through sculpture, and tourist attraction are not core examples of architecture, a Wittgensteinian family resemblance conception can treat all of them as architecture of some kind. (For Vitruvius, the prototype of the classical temple was the primitive hut. Moreover, styles of architecture are sometimes mis-described as sculpturalist; Scruton is wrong to suggest that Gaudí was.[38] A baroque decorative profusion, embracing the grandly whimsical and kitsch, is an obvious hallmark of his style, but it is less often appreciated that from exploration of plant and animal structures, he created a totally original conception of spatial and structural organisation.[39] The Gothic Revival, from which Gaudí emerged, divided into 'hard' and 'soft': 'The "softs" were interested in outward appearance and style, while the "hards" expended their energy on structural analysis, engineering and experimentation – the mechanics of building. Gaudí was both.'[40]

More important, Scruton is wrong to argue that sculpturalism is the only conception that treats architecture as artistically self-expressive. One can regard architecture as high art without viewing its products in sculpturalist fashion, independent of utility and function; contrary to the modernist narrative of autonomy, functional art can express an individual artistic conception. The need to fit into a pre-existing arrangement can challenge the architect's artistry, rather than restricting it, as Scruton seems to assume. Part of the test presented to Hawksmoor at St George's Bloomsbury, and to Butterfield at All Saint's Margaret Street in London's West End, was to fit the church into a constricted site. In the Black Madonna Department Store in Prague, the first example of Czech Cubist architecture, architect Josef Gocar faced two challenges, arising from the shape of the plots of land, and from the surrounding buildings and their styles. The store was built on two trapezoid plots, which the architect used ingeniously to construct a front façade broken along the middle axis. The 'Cubist' aim, according to theoretician Pavel Janak, was 'to bring oblique surfaces into the contemporary established systems of verticals and horizontals, as a new and dynamic element'; the House is unique in that Cubist principles pervade the building, in the façade, ground plan, and interior architectural details.[41]

Practical constraints that stimulate artistic creativity are found in other arts – Liszt reducing Beethoven symphonies to solo piano, or Duke Ellington tailoring his jazz compositions to the 3-minute format of 33 rpm recordings. Indeed, modernism tends to celebrate overcoming practical constrains – with new materials, or new abilities of performers or technologies, what was once impossible is no longer so. Such practical constraints contrast with formal ones, imposed simply by the fact that

one is designing a church, writing a sonnet, or composing a mass. It would be absurd for an architect to say 'My artistic freedom is constrained by the need to orient this church east–west' or '... by the need to include an altar.' Art has always struggled, thrived, and been inspired by practical as well as formal challenges. Functional constraints are perhaps both practical and formal – a chair cannot be a chair without being able to be sat on – and here also function is not a constraint on creativity, as David Pye repeatedly urges.[42] A potter does not feel constrained by the need to make an artefact the right shape to contain liquid, no more than a poet, having decided to write a sonnet, would say, 'I feel so constrained by this 14-line structure or whatever it is.'

3 Architecture as a public art

The public role of architecture, as symbol of British resistance in World War II: St Paul's Cathedral during the Blitz in 1940 – slightly retouched, apparently, before publication in the *Daily Mail*.

Architecture is public in that its works do not allow the public a free choice whether to observe or ignore them. Ruskin changed his daily walk in Oxford in order to avoid Butterfield's Keble College, whose 'Rogue Gothic' style destroyed his pleasure in the Natural History Museum opposite.[43] And the present writer's habitual good humour

is regularly upset by the unavoidable 'Tesco vernacular' of Durham's Prince Bishop Shopping Centre, dominating the River Wear in violation of the city's UNESCO World Heritage status.

This datum is stressed by Scruton:

> Architecture ... imposes itself whatever our desires and whatever our self-image ... it takes up space: either it crushes out of existence what has gone before, or else it attempts to blend and harmonise.

But architecture is also public in a less obvious sense. Its expressive features, Scruton argues, involve 'the objective representation of style and manner, an impersonal and unspecific meaning that speaks to us as though from far away and with a public voice', perhaps conveying a 'spirit of the age'. 'Public voice', for Scruton, seems to be a consequence of physical unavoidability, and itself excludes an artistic conception. (My conclusion, in contrast, is that public voice does not exclude artistic conception.) Scruton agrees with Ruskin that architecture is the most political of the arts; it imposes a vision of humanity independent of any personal agreement on the part of those who live with it.[44]

Scruton concludes that architecture does not create its public in the way that music, literature, and painting do. These 'private arts' – he does not mention drama or sculpture – have become objects of free critical choice, forms of self-expression that can address themselves to a specific, perhaps specialised, audience – a tendency that modernism takes to an extreme. The architect, in contrast, 'may change public taste [only by addressing] the whole public and not merely ... some educated or half-educated part of it'.[45] Buildings ought not to be designed for the cognoscenti only, therefore; architecture's problems 'are far from the self-created intricacies of a Valéry or a Schoenberg' – the most challenging products of modernism – and should call upon what is widely understood, easily repeatable, and successfully combined.[46]

Scruton's insistence that architecture is an essentially public art is persuasive, and since the Renaissance has been widely accepted. (To talk of a public–private distinction before that time would be anachronistic.) The idea that architecture, given its public nature, should aspire to 'embodied courtesy', informed the Renaissance ideal of urban decorum, and underlay classical revivalism. E. L. Garbutt, architect and associate of Ruskin, pointed out that building

> encumbers a portion of the earth's surface, and encloses a portion of free atmosphere. *It has no right to do so* without making or attempting

> what compensation it may ... A building devoid of architecture displeases all who see it ... because they see and feel that it benefits its owner at their expense ... it is all for self, without appearing ... to know that there are eyes without as well as within.[47]

(Conversely, one can argue, a fine building that has established itself in public affection should be preserved.) Adorno endorses the claim, citing Adolf Loos's comment that 'while an artwork need not appeal to anyone, a house is responsible to each and everyone':

> The new 'objective' asceticism [the *Neue Sachlichkeit* movement of the 1920s] does contain therefore an element of truth; unmediated subjective expression would indeed be inadequate for architecture. Where only such expression is striven for, the result is not architecture, but filmsets ... [48]

His conclusion here seems close to Scruton's view that 'artistic expression' in architecture results in sculpturalism, though we will see later that Adorno also suggests an alternative artistic conception.

The claim of publicity requires qualification, however. All arts have private and public forms and utterances, and so they contrast with architecture partly in degree; there are public paintings, and more commonly public friezes and sculptures. The confessional lyrics of Robert Lowell or Sylvia Plath contrast with the public poetry of Samuel Johnson; and intimate expressions such as Mozart's Adagio K540 with those of his piano concertos whose utterance is more 'public'. However, none of these 'private' forms are truly so, if they are meant to be performed to or read by a public; 'intimate' is perhaps a better term.

It is true that public poetry is not public in the same sense as architecture; one does not have to confront it in going about one's daily life. The only possible rival to architecture in its public presence is music, given the ubiquity of muzak. Nor is all architecture public; much is concealed in private property. Interior design has been described as 'interior architecture', and in the eighteenth century, architects gradually expanded their remit to include limited planning of the form and disposition of private rooms.[49] Thus Summerson describes Robert Adam as an 'interior architect', whose 'domestic-monumental style' is essentially decorative – a suggestion that connects private and decorative in a way of which Scruton would approve.[50] William Kent's staircase of No. 44 Berkeley Square is 'among the finest interiors of the Renaissance in Europe ... [yet] seen only by a few persons and unknown to the world

at large'.[51] Frank Lloyd Wright and Charles Rennie Mackintosh aimed at a unified art of architecture and interior design and furnishings, in Wright's case even extending to the clothes of the house's occupants.

The datum of architecture's publicity is therefore somewhat qualified. But even if one accepts the datum, the conclusions that Scruton draws from it are questionable. The concept of urban decorum is perhaps intrinsically conservative, but he is too ready to interpret it in anti-modernist terms, espousing an *affirmative* art and culture without also allowing modernism's generally *critical* stance. Conservative anti-modernism is often a recipe for complacency and banality. If public opinion were allowed a veto on architectural construction, some of its greatest works might never have been built. On the other hand, much modernist architecture, even by the 'star architects' that Scruton loathes, is popular. He might argue that this approval is architecturally ill-informed, but people might live in and enjoy buildings that are, for the more educated, works of architecture, and become educated to regard them that way.[52]

The key objection to Scruton's position on publicity, however, is that it is possible for public art to be self-expressive. Artists can express themselves even when serving a patron or public role, just as they can when creating functional art. This is a more serious qualification of the modernist narrative of autonomy, because it questions the link between social taste and heteronomy. No edifice is more 'public' than the Clock Tower of the Palace of Westminster, known as Big Ben, yet it expresses the artistic conception of its designer. Pugin's authorship of it – and of other features of the Palace – was long concealed by the claims of the appointed architect, Charles Barry. Pugin's Gothic vision was dominant and largely untrammelled; the Palace's Gothic Revival design was selected through competition, but thereafter interference by MPs and peers was largely on cost grounds. As Rosemary Hill comments, 'The clock is pure Gothic and Barry, who still could not design a door knob in the medieval style, was entirely reliant on Pugin for the conception'.[53]

Throughout his career across the arts and crafts, Pugin idealised medieval style and aimed at structural honesty. The Clock Tower, his last work, illustrates how architecture can acquire a public role in tension with its creator's private intentions or assumptions. (Perhaps, though this was not true in Pugin's case, that conflicting public role can be deliberately and creatively crafted.) In the other arts, a work's intended meaning often contrasts with the appropriation by the public domain; in architecture, reception history often sharply contradicts the artist's

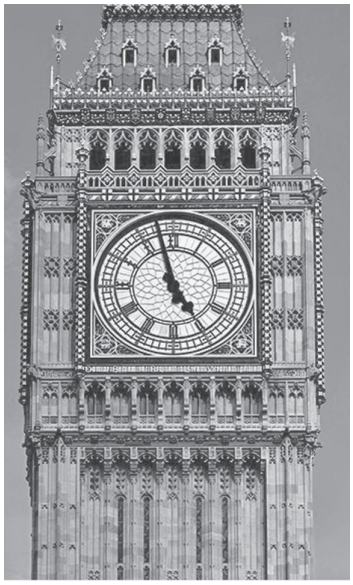
vision. In the case of the Clock Tower, ironically, Pugin's Anglo-Catholic aesthetic underlay what became a national symbol of a state that still defined itself in terms of its Protestantism.[54] Big Ben very quickly came to stand for a constructed national past, a land where the free-born had thrown off the yoke of tyranny. The monument is so iconic, its public role so dominant, that one may neglect to look beyond that, at Pugin's fancifully ornate neo-Gothic design.

While the architecture that Scruton rejects may not be affirmative, it is not likely to be critical either, however. Insofar as it is political, architecture tends to be affirmative, a celebration of its society and a manifestation of power – even in the case of cathedrals. Tyrants want to leave great buildings – Saddam Hussein's triumphal arch, and the fantasies of Hitler and Speer – that awe and, figuratively, oppress. Democracies are not immune from this urge, as the redevelopment of Ground Zero in New York shows. But modernist and postmodern architecture, if not critical, can at least be nonconformist. Big Ben might perhaps be critical in expressing an Arts and Crafts rejection of mass production, but it is not publicly critical like a protest song or a 7:84 Company theatre production.

The response that public art can be self-expressive applies also to the more obvious restriction on architecture's autonomy, its continued reliance on a patronage relation – whose undermining in the case of the other arts, so the modernist narrative claims, was crucial in allowing them to become autonomous. The cost of erecting a building, compared to producing a painting or composing and performing a piece of chamber music, means that architecture will always rely on a system of patronage. And as Palladio acknowledged, 'very often the architect must accommodate himself more to the will of those who are paying than to that which he ought to observe'; those paying the bill may have their own ideas on what ought to be observed. For instance, the future Pope Urban VIII rejected Carlo Maderna's design of an Ionic capital with a Corinthian acanthus flower.[55] There was a protracted struggle between George Gilbert Scott and Lord Palmerston over the design of the Foreign Office in Whitehall. Scott won the competition of 1856 with a Gothic design and was appointed architect, but was eventually forced to yield to the classical opposition led by Palmerston.[56]

The continued existence of a system of patronage suggests that the architect will be subject to a social more than an individual model of taste, always seeking a consensus. However, when the patron–architect relationship is harmonious, the result may be a collaborative art like

that of film. Gaudí worked in harmony with his patron, Eusebi Güell, who was passionately involved, an example that shows how, although it cannot bestow the artistic autonomy of the marketplace, the patronage relationship can promote artistic flourishing.[57]



Pugin expresses himself (Photograph by Andrzej Poloczek)

4 Architecture as a vernacular art

Concerning function and publicity, I have largely accepted the data that Scruton adduces, while contesting the conclusions that he draws from them. However, when one turns to his defence of what might be termed the *ordinariness of architecture* – the claim that it is an essentially vernacular rather than 'high' art – the data themselves should be contested. Scruton argues that one should pay more attention to the vernacular than to the masterpieces of the art, since it is through everyday practice that the most important aesthetic problems in architecture are solved.[58] For him, architecture develops as 'a process of arrangement in which [everyone participates] to the extent that he builds, decorates and arranges his rooms'. It is a 'natural extension of human activities, obeying ... no burden of an "artistic conception"'; it is contiguous with

the decorative arts, though not one of them.[59] Architects should not pretend to the status of artists, but should pursue the craft of composing well-mannered arrangements of repeatable classical elements.[60] While Pierre Boulez wanted to blow up the opera houses as bastions of conservatism, Scruton wishes to close down the architecture schools as hotbeds of modernism, and return to the classical pattern books.

Scruton has to recognise the existence of architectural genius – citing Michelangelo, Palladio, Bernini, and Frank Lloyd Wright – but attacks contemporary 'starchitects' Daniel Libeskind, Frank Gehry, Richard Rogers, Norman Foster, Zaha Hadid, Peter Eisenman, and Rem Koolhaas, for their violently un-vernacular style:

> ... a city is not the work of geniuses. It is the work of humble craftsmen ... a constantly evolving fabric, patched and repaired for our changing uses, in which order emerges by an 'invisible hand' ... In the past, geniuses did their best to harmonise with street, sky and public space – like Bernini at St Peter's Square ... The new architecture is designed to ... stand out as the work of some inspired artist who does not build for people, but sculpts space for his own expressive ends.
>
> The [starchitects'] 'works of genius' have the appearance of things other than architecture: of vegetables, vehicles, hairdryers, washing machines or backyard junk ... [They do] not fit into a street or stand happily next to other buildings. Townscapes built from such architecture resemble landfill sites.[61]

Conservatives are not the only ones to take such a communitarian stance, but Scruton's critique is radical and distinctive.

In arguing that architecture is essentially vernacular, Scruton attempts to undermine the claim of its autonomy. The vernacular is largely an anonymous product, and its creators are craftspersons, not artists. Interestingly, in light of what critics regard as his elitism, this valuing of the vernacular against high art and genius may appear democratic and anti-elitist. Scruton's concern is not with the vernacular as such, however – the peasant dwelling, conceived on survival level and part of a tradition of regional practice – but with a variety of it that he holds expresses the civility of the public sphere, viz. *classical vernacular*.

Scruton's classical vernacular is a tradition of patterns, derived from the classical order of column, base, architrave, and cornice, adapted to the uses of the ordinary builder and the life of the modern city.[62] The classical vernacular establishes a continuity between structure

and decoration, bringing to architecture 'our natural instinct to make a world in our own [human] image', imitating the proportions of the human body.[63]

An attractively humanistic spirit animates Scruton's aesthetics here – the idea that architecture's role is to create and sustain a 'common home'. For him, architecture is the 'embellishment of everyday life', whose goal is not originality or self-expression but 'harmony, good-will and order'; the classical vernacular, he suggests, is a 'timeless' style for urban living. Buildings, like people,

> acquire their nature from their participation in, and collective creation of, a public realm, against which their private spheres are defined ... Civility in architecture, as in all human life, is the art of the boundary ... of defining the place where public and private meet, and of ensuring that the line remains permeable to the commerce between them.[64]

Scruton advocates an art form on an urban scale, in the manner of treatises on urban decorum from the Renaissance onwards, subordinating the style of the individual building to the whole – an art, as we saw, that is 'public'. However, unlike models that achieve this subordination by conscious planning, Scruton envisages a process akin to the self-ordering of an ideal competitive market – the 'invisible hand'. He applies Adam Smith's metaphor to the emergence of urban order, rejecting the utopian, social revolutionary visions of Gropius, Le Corbusier, and other modernists, advocating vernacularism where they sharply separate architecture and 'mere' building.[65]

To assess Scruton's espousal of the classical vernacular we must first explore the concept of vernacular architecture. The terminology of high, popular, and vernacular art is much debated, but vernacular art is ordinarily understood to be non-autonomous and not self-consciously high art.[66] It is opposed to academic, 'high-style', or 'polite' architectural tradition. The term originally referred to language; 'vernacular' comes from the Latin *vernaculus,* and 'the vernacular' is the native language, contrasted with a lingua franca, such as Latin, understood only by an educated elite. From the mid-nineteenth century, writers began to borrow the term from linguists and refer to 'vernacular architecture', but it was used widely only with the formation in England of the Vernacular Architecture Group in 1954.[67] German has *Hausforschung* ('building custom or culture'), and French *la maison paysanne*.

However, 'vernacular' also means 'ordinary, everyday', making the concept paradoxical, because 'architecture' is a high-art term. Normally the two senses, 'native' and 'ordinary', coincide. 'Native language' implies 'ordinary language', but in architecture a native high style is possible, as we will see. Scruton intensifies the paradox through his espousal of *classical vernacular*, which he defines as a vernacular arising from classical (Greek and Roman) architecture.

Examples of vernacular architecture include Apulian trullo houses, Amish barns, Pueblo dwellings, Yemeni high-rise mud houses, Polynesian grass huts and the Italian hilltop town.[68] All of these are both 'everyday' and 'native'. Today, the term refers to everything not designed by professional architects, and where the creator is usually anonymous. Minor imperfections and improvisation are essential features; effort and event are primary and the object disposable and secondary: 'Vernacular building is unconcerned with progress and not overly committed to efficiency; it is building as group craftwork or group ceremony.'[69] Vernacular artefacts and styles evolve in response to inchoate needs and desires, unconditioned by theoretical rationality; they involve well-proven solutions to old problems.[70] Summerson characterises vernacular architecture as an area of study – the concern of the social as opposed to architectural historian – rather than a distinct category of buildings, though he also refers to buildings 'at a low level of sophistication where documentary evidence of dating is nearly always absent and which contain few, if any, features to suggest a date on stylistic grounds'.[71]

It is necessary at this point to consider an ambiguity that has been present throughout this chapter. It may be felt that insufficient care has been taken with the contrast between building and architecture a criticism that may indeed be made of Scruton himself. But the boundary between buildings that are architecture and those that are not seems necessarily vague. Buildings are artefacts, and building is an art with a small 'a' – a craft. Buildings that are architecture are not only artefacts, but artworks – 'Art' with a capital 'A'. As Ballantyne points out, vernacular architecture is 'ordinary buildings put up by ordinary people', which were not originally viewed as architecture but which, for cultural reasons, now are.[72] By a parallel process, ordinary artefacts, such as Neolithic pottery or stone axes, have become regarded as vernacular art. (Note that we do not regard artefacts as high art, unless they were regarded as special in their own society – as those from the Sutton Hoo trove, for instance, were.) Should one say 'become regarded as art', or just 'become art'? They amount to the same thing, but not for the reasons given by the institutional theory.[73]

The preceding facts are highly significant for aesthetics, and help to undermine Scruton's claim that architecture is essentially or distinctively vernacular. In contrast to the data that he presents concerning function and publicity, those concerning vernacularity are not convincing. This is because all high arts originate in vernacular activities and practices that are 'art' with a small 'a' – that is, art in the sense of 'craft'. Cave painters, traditional musicians playing on simple percussion instruments, participants in ritual precursors of drama – these are all 'vernacular' practices in the same way that arranging one's dwelling is a vernacular precursor of architecture. And the development of artistic genius in each is analogous.

In particular, Scruton's vernacularism gains no support from the relatively late arrival of the profession of architect – not significantly later than that of artist, in fact. Architecture is in no way unique among the arts in being an artisanal practice in pre-modern, – that is, before the pre-Renaissance times. The distinction between artist and craftsman made its appearance during the Renaissance, notably in the writings of Alberti, who, with other humanists, attempted to elevate painting, sculpture, and architecture by treating them as liberal arts – an early manifestation of the modern system of the arts discussed earlier.[74] But the idea of artistic genius was undeveloped; there was still an apprenticeship system, in which apprentices tried to conform to the style of their masters.

With architecture as with design, science, philosophy, and other humane concepts or practices, one can distinguish broad and narrow senses. 'Broad sense' architecture existed before the concept, and certainly before the term or profession, appeared.[75] The term appeared relatively late in English, and is absent from medieval writing and Shakespeare; it occurs in Sidney's *Arcadia* (1580) as a recondite expression for special artifice. Unusually for his time, Elizabethan scholar and mystic John Dee regarded architecture as an arrangement of forms, conceived by the architect and merely executed by the artisan.[76] In his era, the craft of building was conducted as it had been for centuries, by master craftsmen or artisans apprenticed or trained in quarry or workshop. The most important was the principal freemason, who produced and executed a 'platt' (plan) and 'uprights' (elevations), deferring to varyingly detailed instructions from his employer.[77] In the case of important buildings – those in learned, polite, or high style – we know these masons' names. The distinction between architect and builder/master mason emerged properly in Britain after 1700; only following the establishment of the Royal Academy in 1768 was architecture regarded

as a profession. (Comparable developments occurred somewhat earlier in Italy and France.)

In fact, if the transition from craft to art were a criterion, then given that this occurred much later in music than in painting and architecture, music would be more 'vernacular' than architecture. Architecture is no more vernacular in essence, therefore, than any of the other so-called high arts.

As we saw, Scruton does not totally reject the role of architectural genius, and so probably holds a weaker version of the vernacularity claim – that architecture is 'a natural extension of common human activities' whose trajectory extends to creating buildings arising from an artistic conception.[78] But he writes that 'a city is not the work of geniuses', when it would be truer to say that it is not solely so. There is a continuum between the most highly planned – Edinburgh's New Town or Haussmann's Paris, or, destructively, Mussolini's Rome or Ceausescu's Bucharest – and the most adventitious and haphazard. Edinburgh's Old Town grew unplanned up and down the hill, while the New Town was planned and 'classical'.

But the weaker vernacularity claim does not distinguish architecture from the high or fine arts; rather, it is a truism that applies across them. The claim of vernacularity confronts a dilemma, therefore. Either it is interpreted in a way that does not distinguish architecture from the other high arts, or else it has to deny the obvious historical role of artistic genius in architecture.

It might be argued that my criticisms of Scruton miss the point that he values the *classical* vernacular, which seems to have a hybrid status between everyday and polite styles. Now there clearly is a continuum between high and everyday style. Summerson, for instance, characterises 'classical vernacular' as a style of everyday architecture ascending in quality, and acquiring the classical idiom of more affluent buildings. High-style features, especially decoration, were often absorbed into vernacular traditions. Ornamental moulding does not make an English farmhouse polite; mud-walling in the service wing does not make a Palladian house vernacular.[79] In Durham, for instance, the houses in Old Elvet and the Bailey are probably vernacular, though their fronts can be dated and they were attempting to be grand.

Here we need to explore the ambiguity, mentioned earlier, that is concealed by the normal coincidence of 'native' and 'everyday'. When Summerson refers to 'the new classical vernacular' influenced by Robert Hooke's work in the Wren period, he means a developing *native high style* of country houses, churches, and other public buildings no longer

in thrall to French, Italian, or Dutch models.[80] Scruton's 'classical vernacular' is more everyday but generally non-native; Summerson's is native but closer to high style. When Scruton contrasts the localisation of architecture and the portability of other art forms, he makes no appeal to Ruskinian and Arts and Crafts advocacy of the native vernacular and local materials.[81] The Arts and Crafts movement was inspired by Philip Webb's Red House, built for William Morris, precisely because it 'broke the classical mould, embraced the vernacular, and began a revolution in domestic architecture'.[82] For Webb, commented fellow Arts and Crafts architect W. R. Lethaby, 'Architecture ... was first of all a common tradition of honest building ... naturally developed by the craftsmen engaged in the actual works. Building is a folk art.'[83] This motivation is vernacular in a different sense to Scruton's, though both stress craft in opposition to high art.

In most countries, classical vernacular is not native; it is a European, even an international style, originating in ancient Greece and Rome. (Classicism and modernism each offers an overarching account of architecture, transcending mere styles such as Art Deco or Arts and Crafts.) In late-eighteenth-century national Romantic movements, architects in Germany and Britain discovered – and invented – the indigenous vernacular, drawing on native medieval and vernacular traditions *against* the universalism of the European classical tradition. In Britain, there are many everyday styles, and the classical is not always dominant. There are classical features in Durham's small nineteenth-century town houses, for instance, but also representatives of Gothic Revival. In southern England, mock Tudor is ubiquitous across twentieth-century suburban estates; classical vernacular tends to be reserved for larger public buildings.[84] In Italy, in contrast, classicism was closer to an authentic national architecture – though there is also much Italian Gothic and other styles – and architectural nation-building looked to ancient Rome and the Renaissance.[85]

Because his primary motivation is anti-modernist, Scruton's conception of classicism is a generous one, even embracing the Baroque.[86] His view seems to be 'if it has a capital and the orders, it's classical'. He therefore includes within the classical vernacular not only the adapted classicism of banks, large town houses, and government buildings, but also the 'debased' classicism of smaller town houses, which display only classical detailing or motifs. (Perhaps he would be generous enough to include the post-1906 earthquake wooden 'cottages' of San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury, with their often kitschy employment of classical structures.) Even here, however, one could argue that internal organisation

is 'classical', with the most important rooms on the first floor, and servants' quarters in attic and basement.

Even if it does not show that architecture is essentially vernacular, Scruton is right to find significance in the existence of a classical vernacular. He could rightly argue that architecture is unique, not in being essentially vernacular, but in having a classical vernacular. All arts have a *classic* vernacular, that is, excellent examples of vernacular – in music, for instance, this could include classic folk blues (Robert Johnson, Son House) or rock and pop (The Beatles, Stevie Wonder). But no other art has a classic*al* vernacular. Only in music, among other Western art forms, does classical style seem to occupy a central position. While classical architecture looks to the period of special excellence of ancient Greece and Rome, 'classical music' refers to the first Viennese school of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. But there is no classical vernacular in music; no remotely everyday style that draws on these classics. The most one could say is that the tonal structures of Viennese classicism are adapted with ubiquity by Western popular music of the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries, where cadential formulae could perhaps be compared with classical architectural motifs.

Scruton's vernacular ideal may be illustrated by the city of Amsterdam, which has little monumental architecture – no cathedrals or skyscrapers. But the vernacular is only one ideal; Manhattan and Hong Kong offer exciting alternative visions of urban life. Despite the literary onslaught on the suburban ideal from writers such as Orwell and Lawrence, the Tudoresque vernacular of English suburbia expresses an ideal no less valid than Scruton's classical vernacular.[87] To quote one of Scruton's – and the present writer's – non-idols, Mao Zedong, one should 'let a hundred flowers bloom'.

5 Architecture as a non-autonomous art

There is much that I have agreed with in Scruton's position. His aesthetic functionalist position which denies any fundamental separation between building as craft and building as art, is plausible. Vernacularity apart, I have accepted much of the data about architecture that Scruton adduces. However, I interpret the claim that there is no fundamental separation between building as craft and building as art rather differently to him. And I question his conclusions concerning architecture's artistic conception. Neither functionality nor publicity – nor the patronage relation that Scruton does not directly focus on – implies that architecture lacks an artistic conception.

The relation between artistic conception and autonomy remains to be clarified, however. To reiterate, artists can express themselves even when serving a patron or public role, just as they can when creating functional art – a further qualification of the modernist narrative of autonomy. This chapter has distinguished different senses of autonomy, trying to show that the concept is not, as Scruton claims, 'merely rhetorical'. We have yet to consider the third sense of autonomous art, in addition to practical and social autonomy: autonomy from other arts. Paradoxically, Scruton – and Gordon Graham in the present volume – while he denies autonomy in the practical and social senses, does seem to assert autonomy from the other arts when he rejects the concepts of decorated shed, walk-through sculpture, and tourist attraction. This is autonomy in a Greenbergian purist sense: the claim that architecture should be independent of the other arts, notably sculpture, and pursue the effects characteristic of its own medium. It is perhaps ironic that Scruton advocates this purism, given his rejection of the modernist narrative – though of course he does not cite Greenberg.[88]

Only a Greenbergian purist would regard autonomy in this third sense as necessary for genuine artistic expression, a position I do not wish to endorse. Clearly this is not Scruton's view either, since his purism precisely does *not* treat architecture as high art. But if the Greenbergian purist is right that architecture has a *medium*, then even if we reject their position, we might be able to show what its artistic conception consists in. Adorno, in a rare foray into the aesthetics of architecture, makes some suggestions about what this conception involves, when he states that its media are space and purpose, and that functionality can be reconciled with artistic expression. We should pursue these suggestions a little.

As an advocate of high art, yet a pessimist concerning its real possibility, Adorno reiterates his theme that art protests against the dominance of purpose over human life. At the same time he denies that the 'purpose-free' (*zweckfrei*) and 'purposeful' (*zweckgebunden*) arts are radically opposed. In architecture, which bridges them, he writes that

> ... purpose takes over to a large extent the role of content ... The tension between form and content which makes all artistic creation possible communicates itself through purpose especially in the purpose-oriented arts ... Because architecture is in fact both autonomous and purpose-oriented, it cannot simply negate men as they are. And yet it must do precisely that if it is to remain autonomous.[89]

This is a characteristic Adornian paradox, here left undeveloped. In the art of architecture, he continues,

> A sense of space is closely connected with purposes ... The success of such a synthesis is the principal criterion for great architecture. Architecture enquires: how can a certain purpose become space; through which forms, which materials? ... Architectonic imagination is ... the ability to articulate space purposefully ... It constructs forms according to purposes.[90]

This is the beginning of an account of the medium of architecture, one with which – if it did not seem to have high art implications – Scruton might concur. Adorno does not mean 'medium' in the narrow sense of materials – tempera, oils, watercolour, and acrylic in the case of painting, and wood, stone, brick, glass, and steel in that of architecture. Rather, it is 'medium' in the broader sense of the pictorial, the sculptural, the musical, the choreographic, or the linguistic.[91] In this broader sense, arguably, the media of architecture are space and purpose.

How can 'purpose' in Adorno's sense be a medium? Perhaps because – in contrast to the merely useful arts, which lack meaning, and the other high arts, which lack functionality – architecture infuses purpose with artistic meaning. Only the highest examples of 'art' pottery and 'art' furniture, such as maki-e master Matsuda Gonroku's lacquerware cabinet with swan design, could be said to possess artistic meaning – a testament to traditional values, and their loss or corruption, at the nadir of Japanese fortunes in 1944.[92] So although architecture does not fit the autonomy/commodification model of other high arts, Adorno sees it as autonomous while purpose-oriented.

Adorno, like Scruton, offers an *aesthetic functionalist* account of architecture. Unlike him, he regards architecture as a high art that – somehow – exhibits autonomy. How would an aesthetic functionalist account that allows for an artistic conception distinguish buildings from architectural works? A building may be seen simply as an artefact designed, like any other artefact, to perform a given set of functions; in addition, it may be seen as an artwork. An artwork embodies its builder's and owner's aspirations, values and preferences, which may be seen as a function; conspicuous consumption also embodies such aspirations, but does not make consumer goods into artworks. A work, as Karol Berger argues, is 'a real embodiment of an imagined world ... of human practices and aspirations' – 'imagined' not 'fictional', since one can imagine both

real and fictional objects. Architectural works can do this, in the sense that Gaudí's masterpiece, Casa Milà (1905–10), for instance, aimed to 'petrify the spirit of Catalonia ... in stone'. Popular response, in contrast, picked up on its obvious organic qualities and Baroque extravagances, lampooning it as Noah's ark, a charnel house, a scrap-iron yard, or a garage for Zeppelins.[93] Despite their satirical intent, those responses did accord the work meaning.

Modernist autonomy – especially when it stresses the value of practical functionality – and artistic self-expression tend to go together, however. Potter Michael Cardew, for instance, aimed to

> [integrate] all pottery from soft earthenware to porcelain, towards a state of feeling where you could appreciate them all as pots ... a more or less enlightened state where the treatment of a Chinese porcelain plate or bowl speaks of clay, and of the needs, functions and expression of human users and makers in the same language as a European earthenware pitcher or a West African water pot.

He is sceptical of post-Romantic artistic conceptions:

> the illusion that an artist potter should consciously try to inject his personality into what he makes ... [implies only that] people will be able to say more about it ... Instead of enjoying things in a natural organic way, we want to be always discussing, assessing, dissecting ...[94]

Probably neither kind of response determines how much things might provoke or limit discussion, but Cardew is most likely concerned with the extent to which the artwork can be an object of self-conscious understanding – which still might not imply self-expression. It is not that he wishes to be a craftsman and not an artist; rather, he has a non- or anti-expressive conception of art, one that Scruton perhaps shares, at least concerning architecture.

That anti-expressive conception should be questioned, I believe. A communitarian treatment such as Scruton's need not deny that architecture involves an artistic conception. We have seen how his conservative vision of architecture as a common home involves 'maintaining the home we have so painstakingly built'. He neglects the artistic and social vision required to create such edifices as the great medieval cathedrals, because he regards their creation as a collective one with affinities to the 'invisible hand' of the market. However – a fact underplayed

both by the modernist narrative and by Scruton – visionary individuals can participate in the collective effort. His account therefore drives too great a wedge between earlier and modernist architecture, to the detriment of exemplary cases of the latter.

The conservative appropriation of Adam Smith's 'invisible hand' metaphor occurred only in the twentieth century and is inevitably anachronistic.[95] One might question whether unintended consequences of human action tend to promote a benevolent order, and indeed whether the phenomenon exists at all. Its application is often restricted to relatively unreflective activities such as bartering one sort of commodity for another.[96] Many other economic activities are not unreflective, though whether or not an activity is reflective is precisely what is at issue in the case of architecture. Smith would have agreed that in some ways the artisan's knowledge is superior to the architectural theorist's: 'Every individual ... can, in his local situation, judge much better than the statesman or lawgiver can do for him', he writes in the passage in *The Wealth of Nations* about the invisible hand. Hayek, developing the concept, values the individual's knowledge of the fleeting as opposed to persistent. But unlike Arts and Crafts vernacularists, Scruton does not particularly stress the local. To have conscious purposes is to be in a position to choose one's means, and thus to question the value of established institutions.[97] These things are all implied by an artistic conception, which I have argued is fully reflected in the art of architecture.

The architectural evils that Scruton addresses result not from something malign at the heart of modernism, but from a tragic conjunction of artistic, political, and economic forces, I believe. Tim Benton plausibly traces the destruction in British cities after World War II to a pre-war stylistic division of labour, when

> ... different styles had their proper place (Classical for government buildings and banks, stripped Rationalism for minor public buildings and schools, Modernism for fringe commissions such as zoos, health centres and private houses) ... modern architects [never addressed] large issues of meaning ... Confined to a subculture, they were able to exchange with their painter friends and their political allies on the left an empty rhetoric of 'hard' functionalism and grim social purpose ... After the war [they] found themselves suddenly in positions of power (rebuilding city centres, designing new towns and cathedrals) ... And the poverty of their architectural theory was rather suddenly exposed.[98]

Bohemian, socially impotent artists were thrust into positions as guardians of official public culture that they were ill-equipped to discharge.

Architecture's self-expressive conception is more muted than that of the other high arts, as Sitwell suggests:

> We shall find no Watteau, no Keats, among the architects. The genius in architecture cannot burn out in his twenties ... The years of promise must extend, of necessity, into middle age ... Long years of training and the slow processes of building are the reason for this sober trend.[99]

It has an artistic conception nonetheless. A highly self-expressive conception poses risks for a public art, in that when it goes wrong, the public good is damaged in a way that it is not with more private arts. But when it goes right – as with Frank Gehry's Bilbao Guggenheim or Walt Disney Concert Hall, or Utzon's Sydney Opera House – that good is greatly enhanced.

Although this chapter has been critical of Scruton, it has shown the vital importance of the issues that he raises. As always, he sees the larger picture that many aestheticians neglect – art's ethical, cultural, and political context. He bases his critique of modernism not on narrowly aesthetic grounds, but on a vision of architecture's cultural and social role. Even if his conservative vision can be criticised, his achievement is of immense value.[100]

Many thanks for comments to Tom Baldwin, Andrew Ballantyne, Emma Bennett, Lee Bloom, Jason Gaiger, Ted Gracyk, David Knight, Daniel Mielgo, Max Paddison, Richard Read, Roger Scruton, Roger Squires, John Skorupski, Christopher Stevens, Edward Winters, and Nick Zangwill; and the audience at the York conference on Artistic Autonomy, December 2010, organised by Owen Hulatt, and at the Architecture research seminar at Newcastle University, May 2011. Thanks also to Luke Farey for his excellent editorial work. I am especially indebted to Richard Read, who despite pressing commitments provided much needed art historical expertise.

Notes

1. P. O. Kristeller, 'The Modern System of the Arts', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 12(4), October 1951, p. 497. An interesting critique of Kristeller is found in James Porter, 'Is Art Modern? Kristeller's "Modern System of the Arts" Reconsidered', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 49(1), pp. 1–24.

2. Kristeller, 'The Modern System of the Arts', pp. 496–527; discussed in Andy Hamilton, *Aesthetics and Music* (London and New York: Continuum, 2007), ch. 1.
3. G. C. Bauer, 'Arguing Authority in Late Renaissance Architecture', *Art History* 19(3), 1996, pp. 418–33; see especially 419.
4. Christine Guth, *Art of Edo Japan: The Artist and the City 1615–1868* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), p. 11.
5. The contrast between art with a small 'a' and with a capital 'A', and the nature of art before the modern system, is addressed in Hamilton, *Aesthetics and Music*, ch. 1.
6. D. Diderot and J. d'Alembert (eds), 'Discours Préliminaire', *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des metiers,* vol. 1 (Paris: Briasson, David, Le Breton, Durand, 1751). See Ted Gracyk, 'The Sublime and the Fine Arts', in Timothy Costelloe (ed.), *The Sublime: From Antiquity to the Present* (Cambridge University Press, 2011).
7. Published in 1966, quoted in entry by K. Hays on 'Architecture and Autonomy', in Michael Kelly (ed.), *Encylopedia of Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 183.
8. H. Heynen, 'Architecture between Morality and Dwelling: Reflections on Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*', *Assemblage* 17, 1992, p. 85.
9. Roger Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Architecture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 17. (All subsequent unqualified Scruton references are to this volume.) Notice that here Scruton refers to 'builder' rather than 'architect'.
10. Ibid. pp. 17, 5.
11. Ibid. p. 127.
12. Ibid. p. 17.
13. Discussed in Andy Hamilton, 'Artistic Truth', in Anthony O'Hear (ed.), *Philosophy and the Arts*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2012).
14. Discussed in Andy Hamilton, 'Adorno and the Autonomy of Art', in Stefano Giacchetti (ed.), *Nostalgia for a Redeemed Future: Critical Theory* (Newark, DE: Delaware University Press, 2008). Concerning Edo-era Japan, Guth writes that art's commodification 'also helps to explain why great importance was attached to the issue of amateur versus professional artistic status. Like the nineteenth-century aesthetic in the West that sought to place the work of art in an ideal world outside the socio-economic realm, the amateur ideal professed to represent an alternative to the materialism pervasive in the [Edo] artistic world…in spite of [being] party to that very materialism' (Guth, *Art of Edo Japan*, p. 12).
15. See, for instance, Pat Rogers, *The Augustan Vision* (London: Methuen, 1974), p. 233.
16. P. Curtis, *Sculpture 1900–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 5.
17. Rosalind Krauss, 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field', *October* 8, 1979, p. 33.
18. The more complex 'expanded field' of postmodern sculpture, in relation to architecture, land-art, and landscape is the main topic of her influential essay.
19. Scruton, *Aesthetics of Architecture,* p. 6. This is not such a novel view, and is arguably found in Kant.

20. In this respect it is like design – as discussed in Andy Hamilton, 'The Aesthetics of Design', in *Fashion: Philosophy for Everyone* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).
21. As shown in Edward Winters, *Aesthetics and Architecture* (London: Continuum, 2007), p. 40.
22. Ibid. p. 38.
23. Ibid. p. 29.
24. Gordon Graham, present volume.
25. Soane's Bank of England (1792–1833) marked rationalism's appearance in England. The movement divided into classical and Gothic tendencies; Viollet-le-Duc was the latter's best-known exponent. See *New Grove* entry on 'Rationalism', http://www.oxfordartonline.com:80/subscriber/article/grove/art/T070843.
26. Ibid. 25.
27. Joseph Esherick, quoted Scruton, p. 25.
28. Le Corbusier, *Vers un architecture* (Paris: Flammarion, 2008, first published 1923).
29. See Tim Benton, 'The Myth of Function', in Paul Greenhalgh (ed.), *Modernism in Design* (London: Reaktion, 1990).
30. Quoted in G. Marcus, *Functionalist Design: An Ongoing History* (New York: Prestel, 1995), p. 14. Marcus subtly analyses Louis Sullivan's slogan, 'form ever follows function': that form should express function or structure, rather than being determined by it, for instance by revealing or suggesting the supporting elements of a building (pp. 12–13).
31. Leon Attista Alberti, *De Re Aedificatoria*, book 10 (Florence, 1485), published as *On the Art of Building in Ten Books* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991).
32. As argued in Hamilton, *Aesthetics and Music*, ch. 1, and Roger Scruton, *The Classical Vernacular* (Manchester: Carcarnet, 1994), pp. xvi–xvii – quoted in Winters' essay in the present volume. This rarification seems to be assumed also in N. Coldstream, *Medieval Architecture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 27.
33. Broad and narrow senses of design are characterised in Hamilton, 'The Aesthetics of Design'.
34. John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1990).
35. John Ruskin, *The Two Paths*, in *Mornings in Florence and The Two Paths* (Charleston, SC: BiblioBazaar, 2007), p. 189. His later views on the purpose of art were more didactic.
36. Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of Modern Design,* 3d edn (London: Penguin, 1960), p. 20. See also M. Brooks, Introduction to R. Daniels and G. Brandwood (eds), *Ruskin and Architecture* (Reading, PA: Spire, 2003), p. 17. Ruskin's views underwent complex development, and he also treated the aesthetic as unconscious, collective by-product of the functional.
37. Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steve Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1972), p. 109; see Brooks, in *Ruskin and Architecture,* p. 19.
38. Ibid. 7–8.
39. See R. Usher, 'Gaudí Mania', http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,216477,00.html.
40. Van Hensbergen, *Gaudí* (London: HarperCollins, 2003), p. 41.

41. *The Museum of Czech Cubism* (Prague: National Gallery in Prague, 2004), p. 59. Compare Gaudi's converted Casa Batlo, and the complete realisation of his ideas at Casa Milà. 'Cubist' is a misnomer, as it applies directly only to painting, and not to arts in three-dimensions; and indeed the term 'Cubist architecture' appeared only decades later, late in the last century.
42. For instance in David Pye, *The Nature and Aesthetics of Design* (London: A&C Black Publishers, 2000).
43. As claimed at http://www.visitoxfordandoxfordshire.com/Oxford-Keble-College/details/?dms=13&GroupId=8&venue=2910248
44. Scruton, *Aesthetics of Architecture,* pp. 14, 15.
45. Ibid. 13.
46. Ibid.
47. E. Garbett, *Rudimentary Treatise on the Principles of Design in Architecture as Deducible from Nature and Exemplified in the Works of the Greek and Gothic Architects* (London: John Weale, 1850), p. 5. Discussed in B. Hanson, *Architects and the 'Building World' from Chambers to Ruskin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). In referring to 'a building devoid of architecture', Garbett seems to echo Ruskin's definition of architecture as 'the decoration of building'.
48. Theodore W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (London: Athlone Press, 1997), pp. 6, 15.
49. By the 1790s, John Soane used drawings – whether by himself or assistants – to project the experience of interiors; see C. Saumarez Smith, *The Rise of Design: Design and Domestic Interior in Eighteenth-century England* (London: Pimlico, 2000), pp. 175–9.
50. Summerson, *Architecture in Britain 1530–1830* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 396.
51. Sacheverell Sitwell, *British Architects and Craftsmen* (London: Pan, 1960), p. 23.
52. Winters, *Aesthetics and Architecture*, pp. 102–4. His position is more nuanced, questioning the effect on architecture of modernism's 'cult of genius', and citing the public art movement of Anthony Gormley, eds Allington and Rachel Whiteread, that eschews personal expression in favour of communal celebration: 'The client for architecture must be conceived more broadly than just the funding patron… [it is] the community whose use of the building has to be considered'. Maya Ying Lin's Vietnam monument is an example that he discusses.
53. Rosemary Hill, *God's Architect: Pugin and the Building of Romantic Britain* (London: Penguin, 2007), p. 482. The final design is very like one that he had contemplated in one of his first unbuilt schemes at Scarisbrick Hall.
54. See Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707–1837,* 3rd edn (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009).
55. *I Quattro Libri Dell'Architectura*, quoted in G. C. Bauer, 'Arguing Authority in Late Renaissance Architecture', *Art History* 19(3), 1996, p. 422.
56. See B. Porter, *The Battle of the Styles: George Gilbert Scott and the FCO* (London: Continuum, 2011).
57. Gijs van Hensbergen, *Gaudi: A Biography* (HarperCollins, 2002), pp. 86, 144. At the Col.legi Teresiano, in contrast, Gaudi's relations with his church patron were strained, provoking his exasperated comment, 'Each to his own, Father Enrique. I'll build houses and you get on with preaching sermons and taking the mass' (p. 106). Compare Frank Gehry: 'I don't arrogantly

say take it or leave it ... I always work with [the client] ... they are a part of [the building] enough that they love ... it as much as I do' (John Tusa interview with Gehry, http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio3/johntusainterview/gehry_transcript.shtml, accessed 2011).

58. Scruton, 'Vernacular Architecture', *The Classical Vernacular*, p. 15.
59. And indeed, as we will see, Scruton holds that its decorative aspect should not be over-stressed.
60. As Edward Winters eloquently puts it elsewhere in this volume.
61. Roger Scruton, *The Times*, 12 April 2011. Here he does allow that 'fitting in' is a limitation on artistic genius.
62. Scruton, *The Classical Vernacular*, p. 25.
63. Ibid. 26.
64. Ibid. 18. A district of London such as North Kensington, Scruton argues, where planning was at best rudimentary, and which has few 'public spaces' in the planner's sense, is 'eminently public'. There are interesting parallels and contrasts between Scruton's views and M. Heidegger, 'Building Dwelling Thinking', in his *Poetry, Language, Thought*, Albert Hofstadter (trans.) (Harper Colophon Books: New York, 1971).
65. See, for instance, D. Willis, *The Emerald City* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999), pp. 123ff. This utopianism might be equally true of Emperor Hadrian or Pope Sixtus VI, however.
66. The issue is discussed in Andy Hamilton, 'Scruton's Philosophy of Culture: Elitism, Populism, and Classic Art', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 49(3), 2009, pp. 389–404.
67. S. Brand, *How Buildings Learn: What Happens after They're Built* (London: Phoenix, 1994), p. 132. Where there is no high style contrast, as in sub-Saharan Africa and much of Asia, one could either describe all building as 'vernacular', or deny that the term has a use.
68. Some of these are discussed in 'Vernacular Architecture and the Economics of Dwelling', in Willis, *The Emerald City*, pp. 117–47.
69. Like all vernacular products it is 'premodern', Willis argues in *The Emerald City,* p. 120.
70. Brand, *How Buildings Learn*, p. 132.
71. Summerson, *Architecture in Britain 1530–1830*, p. 101.
72. Andrew Ballantyne, *Architecture: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 31.
73. These claims are developed in Hamilton, 'Artistic Truth'; see also Charles Harrison, *An Introduction to Art* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), ch. 1, pp. 4–5.
74. 'Alberti's primary objective [was that] of raising the status of the artist to that of an intellectual, an objective that was further supported by his reference to ancient custom, when painting [he believed] was not considered merely a craft and "was given the highest honour by our ancestors"' (entry on Alberti in *The Grove Dictionary of Art,* ed. Jane Turner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
75. Hamilton, 'The Aesthetics of Design'.
76. Summerson, *Architecture in Britain 1530–1830*, ch. 3.
77. Ibid. 54.
78. As Gordon Graham writes in this volume.

79. As the *New Grove* entry on 'vernacular' comments.
80. Summerson, *Architecture in Britain 1530–1830*, pp. 253–7, discusses the contrast between Wren and his Baroque successors. Compare also K. Frampton, 'Critical Regionalism', in his *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1980).
81. Scruton, *Aesthetics of Architecture,* pp. 10–11. See M. Brooks, in *Ruskin and Architecture*, p. 14.
82. Pamela Todd, *The Arts & Crafts Companion* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2004), p. 95.
83. Quoted in Todd, *The Arts & Crafts Companion*, p. 100.
84. It is discussed in A. Ballantyne and A. Law, 'Tudoresque Vernacular and the Self-Reliant Englishman', in Peter Guillery (ed.), *Built from Below: British Architecture and the Vernacular* (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 122–44.
85. See Michelangelo Sabatino, *Pride in Modesty: Modernist Architecture and the Vernacular Tradition in Italy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010).
86. Unlike Demetri Porphyrios, whose view is superficially similar – D. Porphyrios, *Classicism is not a Style* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982).
87. See Ballantyne and Law, 'Tudoresque Vernacular and the Self-Reliant Englishman'.
88. It is not painting's flatness, but the tension between picture surface and picture plane, that Greenberg stresses in his more considered statements. But he is certainly a purist about artistic media, and holds that each should pursue its own distinctive effects, understood as historically indexed. Greenbergian purism is discussed in Jason Gaiger, *Aesthetics and Painting* (London: Continuum, 2008).
89. T. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 15.
90. Ibid. 14. Parallels have been drawn between Adorno's account and Kant's. Paul Guyer, in 'Kant and the Philosophy of Architecture', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 69(1), 2011, pp. 7–19, argues that he caused a shift in philosophical aesthetics from an essentially Vitruvian conception, according to which its goals are beauty and utility, to a cognitivist or expressivist conception, in which architecture shares with other forms of fine art the goal of expressing abstract ideas – rational ideas in a form that yields inexhaustible material for the play of the imagination. As Guyer allows, this was a later philosophical acknowledgement of changes in artistic status; the case of music is analogous.
91. See entry on 'Medium' by Andrew Harrison, in *Encylopedia of Aesthetics*.
92. Tokyo Museum exhibition of lacquerware, October 2006.
93. Karol Berger, *A Theory of Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 23–4; Hensbergen, *Gaudi*, p. 175. I would add that some artefacts cannot be interpreted as works, except perhaps as readymades which redundantly reiterate Duchamp's insight, or discovery, that anything can be art.
94. M. Cardew, *A Pioneer Potter* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 26, 37–8. His son, avantgarde composer Cornelius Cardew, had very different views on artistic creativity.
95. He used it on only three occasions, one to describe polytheists' credulity about divine intervention, and the others also arguably ironic; see Emma Rothschild, *Economic Sentiments: Adam Smith, Condorcet, and the Enlightenment* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 116ff, ch. 5.

96. Rothschild, *Economic Sentiments*, pp. 142–3; Robert Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 347–8.
97. See Rothschild, *Economic Sentiments*, p. 151, which includes the Hayek reference.
98. Benton in Greenhalgh, *Modernism in Design*, p. 52; see *Thirties: British Art and Design Before the War*, catalogue with essays by William Feaver, Tim Benton and others (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1979).
99. Sitwell, *British Architects*, p. 122.
100. Compare a wholly implausible total historicism that denies any universal concept, with a plausible historical conditioning of concepts, illustrated by Krauss's discussion.