By way of an Introduction: These pages contain individual chapters from my 1990 book, Postmodern Sophistications. I have obtained the rights to the essays am making them available separately. The entire text of the book is also available on Research Gate.

The underlying aim of this collection of essays was to question the opposition between the Sophists and Plato. That classic dispute has been the model for many discussions of tensions within our society:: on the one hand you have the clever manipulative salesmen who care nothing about truth. On the other hand the rigorous scientific investigation that never quite makes contact with politics. Rootless nihilism vs. naturally grounded values. Anarchy vs. Rules.

In this book I developed a pragmatic middleground, using themes from Heidegger and Dewey; in later writings I rely more on Hegel. But the point remains the same: don't listen to the Straussians and others who try to force on our politics or art or philosophy a simple opposition between truth-loving traditionalists (Socrates) and flaky relativistic postmoderns (the Sophists). It was not so simple in Greece and it's not so simple today.

Part of the book deals with postmodern critiques of rational knowledge, with Lyotard and Habermas on center stage. Their opposition between postmodern and modern views remains relevant, although post-1990 developments in deconstruction and critical theory have widened and deepened the debate. The points made in these essays remain useful, if not complete.

The second part of the book deals with architecture. The word postmodern has gone out of fashion in architecture. But the earlier use of the term for an attempt to bring substantive content into formal modernity retains important.

My conclusions about postmodern architecture's failute to escape modern distance from history also remain true, as does my argument that that proclaimed modern distance from history is itself an illusion, that we are more embedded in history than the moderns wanted to think, although that embodiment is not as total and restrictive as we have imagined true of our ancestors.

If you find any of these ideas useful, true, provocative, let me know. If you
find them absurd or useless airy nothings, I'd still be delighted to learn
from your reactions.
David Kolb, January 2018
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This chapter argues that postmodern architecture's supposed reintroduction of history into pure modern architecture remains a form of modern distance from history, not a true historical grounding.

Chapter 8. Modern Architecture From Pillar to Post

The boldness of the best modern architects continues to inspire us even as we disagree. But, in appropriate mythic fashion, as the modern architects took over the schools and devoured their nineteenth-century parents, they assured their own eventual overthrow. Their large claims eventually generated equally sweeping counter-claims. For many, the great liberation proposed in the modern manifestos became the tyranny we must escape; for others, the pronouncements of the masters became the clichés of an aging father whose limitations have become all too obvious.

In this chapter I start with a conventional portrayal of the differences between modern and postmodern architecture. Then I argue that despite these differences they are deeply alike. That conclusion is often accepted today; my particular strategy will be to support it with a description of modernization drawn from the social sciences and philosophy. I examine how postmodernism and its modernist parents share a purified and distanced role for subjectivity, which distorts architecture's relation with history whether that relation be affirmed or denied.

The cluster of related trends in architecture that we call "the modern movement" was more varied than it declared itself to be. It was important for the modern revolution that its leaders be seen as standing together rejecting a narrow past. And now there is a narrow "modern architecture" to oppose. The debased versions of the International Style that fill our cities cannot be adequate emblems for the works of the modernist masters, or for the national and vernacular and compromise attempts that built so much of what

surrounds us.

Tafuri and Dal Co's careful but unorthodox survey of this century's architecture shows that there were many different movements and levels of movements, not all going in the same direction, and while all had to respond to this century's developments in technology, politics, and the real estate market, they did not all share a common set of responses to these conditions. (Cf. Tafuri 1986, and the contrasting stages of modernism discussed in Klotz 1988.)

Nonetheless, if we are going to talk about postmodernism, we need to recall the polemical picture of modernism. On the side of theory, most commentators take as canonically modern the international organization CIAM and its manifestos, the Bauhaus ideals as expressed by Gropius, Le Corbusier's *Towards a New Architecture*, and Giedion's historical accounts.

According to these documents, modern architecture liberated us by freeing us from the dead weight of traditional styles. This freedom came at the price of new restrictions: historical references were forbidden, and decoration was a crime. These restrictions were to open up possibilities that had been denied by the tyranny of the historical styles. Architecture could now progress according to its own free aesthetic impulses, and because of the unity of life, this would solve questions of function as well. Architecture shared with other modernist movements the break from tradition, but while architectural modernism stressed certain aspects of artistic modernism, it de-emphasized others. With the avant-garde, it strove to begin art anew with pure forms. But those forms were to be rational and controlled.

Given the enthusiasm of some of its founders for technology, and architecture's perennial need to make friends with those in power, architectural modernism tied itself to those very rationalizing tendencies that were being opposed in avant-garde literature and painting.

Habermas is only half right when he says that the modern movement "originate[d] from the avant-garde spirit; it is the equivalent to the avant-garde painting, music, and literature of our century" (1985a, 319). The modern movement did seek, with the avant-garde, the death of the old and the birth of something purely new. But it also sought "the rationalization of human life . . . the integration of each and every human habit, pattern of behavior, desire, or way of thinking into human life as a consistent, non-contradictory whole. The carnevalesque as a realm completely lacking in restraint, as the other that

remained non-other, becomes impossible" (Schulte-Sasse, 1986a, 35-36).

While they proclaimed a revolution against nineteenth century historicizing, the founders of the modern movement agreed with the nineteenth century that the architect must try to express the spirit of the age. There was a new age with a new spirit marked by technology and unlimited possibilities.

A new self-consciousness had arrived. A modern building "must be true to itself, logically transparent and virginal of lies or trivialities, as befits a direct affirmation of our contemporary world of mechanization and rapid transit."

It must represent "not the personal whims of a handful of architects avid for innovation at all cost, but simply the inevitable logical product of the intellectual, social, and technical conditions of our age."

It must be devoid of reference to historical styles. "A breach has been made with the past, which allows us to envisage a new aspect of architecture corresponding to the technical civilization of the age we live in; the morphology of dead style has been destroyed; and we are returning to honesty of thought and feeling."

That honesty should be embodied "not in stylistic imitation or ornamental frippery, but in those simple and sharply modelled designs in which every part merges naturally into the comprehensive volume of the whole."

Modern architecture was not to be a new style but what architecture became when it was stripped of styles and became pure functional form, "the discovery of the ideal type of building."

All the quotations above are from Gropius's description of the Bauhaus educational program (reprinted in Gropius 1965). Habermas (1985a, 325) points out that Gropius is here at one with William Morris in the desire to remove the split between system and lifeworld, but his functionalism remains suspended uneasily between perfecting the user's or the economic system's desired functions. Brolin (1976) and Portoghesi (1983) offer criticisms of the breach with history, and Herdeg (1983) discusses its effects on the students Gropius taught at Harvard.

Le Corbusier wrote similarly to Gropius, but for him, "architecture has another meaning and other ends to pursue than showing construction and responding to needs (and by needs I mean utility, comfort, and practical arrangement). Architecture is the art above all others which achieves a state of platonic grandeur, mathematical order, speculation, the perception of the harmony which lies in emotional relationships" (Le

Corbusier 1931, 110). But this too leads away from history.

Postmodern Architecture

The great modern architects thought we were growing into a unified technological world that would express itself in an architecture that would be direct and honest with its forms. Most postmodern architects claim the dramatic simple forms of modern architecture are passé, and we cannot recapture the straightforward spirit in which they were to be built. We postmoderns see how codes and cultures multiply and transgress, and we are not at home in any of them. When we build we must express the spirit of our age by manifesting the limits of any vocabulary through some ironic twist or mixture of different idioms.

The phrase *postmodern architecture* now has too many uses, but it still has some value. In general it connotes the end of the modern ideal of pure form, and the removal of the modernist barriers to historical reference. In the popular press the word seems most often applied to designer tall buildings that have historical ornament and some gestures toward the local context. For smaller buildings the word often connotes a certain vocabulary of arches, curved windows, smooth but blocky shapes with historical appliqué, and the like.

There is a postmodern ironic historicism in the buildings of Charles Moore and Robert Stern and Ricardo Bofill. There is a deconstructive architecture in recent projects of Peter Eisenmann and Bernard Tschumi. There is the postmodernism of images and simulacra; a shopping mall might capture this, though the most appropriate architecture for this vision of our world would be a simple cube whose surfaces, inside and out, provided screens for projections that would change the building into any and every style.

Charles Jencks, who helped popularize the term in architecture, urged applying *postmodern* to buildings, such as many designed by Charles Moore, that use historical forms and ornament without belonging to any one definite historical style, and have a self-consciously ironic or playful tone. Jencks calls this *double coding*, where a building speaks in a local vernacular but also makes ironic commentary upon its own language. In more recent writings Jencks seeks to appropriate the term especially for buildings that rework the classical and neo-classical vocabularies (cf. Jencks 1987, esp. 352). Jencks's proposed meanings for the term apply to those buildings that have received the most press, such as Moore's Piazza d'Italia, Michael Graves's Portland and Humana buildings, and some recent works of James Stirling.

A somewhat wider meaning was given the term by Paolo Portoghesi, who defines as postmodern any building that breaks the modern prohibition against historical reference, whether with ironic self-commentary or with vernacular earnestness. A still wider sense would include all of the above as well as buildings that break other modern prohibitions. A building with applied decoration that was neither ironic nor historical would still be postmodern by this wide criterion.

> Whenever present-day architecture observes other laws in addition to functional aptness and maximum simplicity of basic forms, whenever it moves away from abstraction and tends toward representational objectivization, I call it postmodern. (Klotz 1988, 4)«IP»

Attempting to gather the variety together into some kind of unity, Klotz (1988, 421) suggests ten defining characteristics of postmodernism: regionalism (instead of internationalism), fictional representation (instead of geometric abstraction), emphasis on building an illusion (instead of functionalism), multiplicity of meanings (instead of the single machine metaphor), poetry (instead of utopianism), improvisation, spontaneity, and incompleteness (instead of finished perfection), memory and irony (instead of banishing history), historical and regional relativity (instead of autonomously valid form), variation of vocabulary and style (instead of one dominant style), aesthetic distance (instead of identifying architecture with life). In a similar attempt,

Jencks (1987, 330-350) describes what he takes as the emergent rules of postmodern classicism: disharmonious harmony and the difficult whole, pluralism and radical eclecticism, a concern for the urban fabric, anthropomorphic forms, the use of suggested recollections ("the reversible historical continuum"), a return from abstraction to content, double coding and irony ("the most prevalent aspect of Post-Modernism"), multivalence, the reinterpretation of tradition that displaces former conventions, new rhetorical figures, and a signified return to an absent center. Notice that these lists themselves have a certain quality of dissemination; the closer they are examined the less unified they become.

This broad sense could also include deconstructivist architecture, which I prefer to distinguish from postmodern ironic historicism.

Most of what I say in this chapter is aimed at the "standard" postmodernism described by Jencks and Portoghesi. My concern is with the re-entry of history into architecture, whether this is in a revivalist or ironic manner. I am not claiming that this is

the important feature of current architecture, but whatever the fate of the current styles that receive the label *postmodern*, the modernist prejudice against history will no longer dominate design. As in the earlier chapters, I will be questioning theories that view our relation to history as either simple inhabitation or as detached criticism and ironic manipulation.

The Modern World: Weber

It is important to situate modern architecture and its aftermath within the wider process of modernization in society. That process reached a culmination in the last hundred years. Modernization's central achievement was the creation of relatively free (because formal and abstract) social processes inhabited by relatively free-floating individuals. Modern people are less attached to the naturally or culturally determined details of their identity than were people in more traditional societies, who identified more closely with their social roles and values. While it can be debated whether this detachment is as widespread as is claimed, modernity has brought the ideal of the detached individual, capable of judging his or her life and taking charge of its content by beginning anew.

Early in our century Max Weber studied the process of modernization from many perspectives, and his influence continues today. For Weber, modernity brings a rationalized world. In one area after another tradition gives way to modes of living based on disciplined efficiency and calculation. Substantive rationality is replaced by formal rationality. In traditional societies certain social patterns, values, and ends are taken as substantial poles fixed in the nature of things.

Rational action in a traditional society consists in working consistently and efficiently according to those patterns to achieve those goals. Planning and choice are guided--and limited--by substantial social content contained in fixed values and ways of life. As societies modernize, the substantiality evaporates and rationality demands only that people maximize the fit of their means to their ends, whatever those ends may be. New possibilities are opened when substantive restrictions fall away. The process by which this happens is complex, but the result is a greater freedom of choice and a greater number of differentiated ways of dealing with the world and with our experience.

The effect of modernization is to increase our available possibilities, and among those we choose as we can best maximize our goals.

The modern spirit of maximization is at work, for example, in Gropius's arguments

about the ideal size of a residence block. The entire argument depends on finding forms that maximize a complex combination of variables (population per unit area, but also the ideal amounts of light, air, and so on). Among other conclusions, Gropius declares that height restrictions on city buildings are "irrational" (Gropius 1965, 107). His argument makes use of he takes to be sufficiently abstract natural goals so that no cultural specificity need be given to the investigation of density or light requirements. The results should be valid at all times and places.

Modern functional thought makes a break with history. Pre-modern tradition is seen as limiting human possibilities. Now, nothing is to be accepted or ruled out just because it has always been so. The widest possible field of possibilities is open for our judgment. Modern architects saw themselves as sweeping like a storm through received ways of designing, building, and living; the new architects judged the worth of the old ways according to new universal criteria, and opened up the field of choice.

Such willingness to judge traditional modes of life demands a new style of human selfhood, more flexible, self-critical, and internally disciplined than before, able to stand at a distance from what was previously taken as fixed. Weber traces the development of this new modern self and the social relations and institutions that it demands. The new self is a process of choice and control, a process without any particular substantive content. Accidents of birth, class, social role, none of these define what the self is or may become. Modern people must fashion their own lives, choosing patterns and values amid myriad possibilities, without any substantial reasons for the choice. There may be functional, instrumental reasons, but these refer to further ends that are themselves chosen, or at least reviewed, by the self. Modern self-consciousness shows a process that can be described quite formally, without reference to social content. The social sciences depend on and promote this new self-consciousness. Their "methodological individualism" is for Weber a reflection of the true nature of selfhood, now stripped of the encrustations by which traditional society restricted freedom.

Weber sees this as the product of many related historical changes. Once it is achieved there is no way to bring back some privileged content that can guide or limit the process of choice. The separation of form and content cannot be undone; to return to a traditional mentality would involve either play acting or a loss of self-awareness, perhaps through religious conversion, which Weber called "the intellectual sacrifice."

If we cannot go back, neither can we advance beyond modern self-awareness,

which is final because it has stripped-down our identity as far as possible. Once we live in a society that has uncovered the pure form of our selfhood there seems nowhere else to go.

For Weber the structure of our social institutions can be judged only in terms of the goals the institutions serve, and not by received values or standards. Form should follow function. This allows institutions of unparalleled efficiency that liberate humanity from many of our historic scourges. Since these institutions can no longer be defined by the old historical limitations, the purified efficient building forms of modern architecture might be their appropriate palaces.

But Weber might agree with those who criticize modern architecture for delivering a message of indifferent power and impersonal bureaucracy. Weber worries that modernity will betray the liberation it promises, leading beyond liberation to a bureaucratically administered uniformity. Efficient administration encourages uniformity, and the inner discipline required to sustain modern selfhood tends to repress the variety which that selfhood could make possible. Weber expects a gray society, rational but stifling, disturbed from time to time by bursts of charismatic novelty that give way once again to rationalized routine.

He offers little hope of relief; there is no content for life that can be insulated from the corrosive effects of efficiency and instrumental reason. The best he thinks we can do is to linger privately in warm humane pockets of culture and historical memory that escape, for a time, the spreading uniformity. This private realm is the modern space for art. We might see Weber's prescription acted out by a postmodern architecture that plays with historical references for ironic domestic enclaves, while decorating the surfaces of the bureaucratic control towers.

The Modern World: Hegel

Could there be a way of thinking that was true to the essence of modernity yet denied Weber's pessimistic vision? Could we show that the primacy of instrumental reason and the loss of social content are not the whole story? This would mean showing that analyses such as Weber's, which see modernity in terms of a separation of the form of the social process from its particular content, are not the last word about the modern condition. This is what Hegel tried to do in the 1820's.

Hegel is a loyal partisan of modernity, believing that the changes of the last few centuries represent the culmination of history. Nonetheless he criticizes many features of

the society of his day. There are two phases to his discussion of modern society, corresponding to two social forms, civil society and the state. Civil society is Hegel's term for the social relations that arise when traditional roles and values no longer define what it means to be an individual. With the growth of self-reflection and inner division come new forms of selfhood demanding that all the content of life be mediated through the insights and decisions of self-sufficient individuals. Such modern selves can exist only through social relations that are free of any fixed substantial content. Hegel sees such patterns of interaction coming into being through the Reformation, the growth of the free market, and other modernizing trends. The process is not accidental; it expresses a necessary sequence derived from the logical principles that structure any complex historical totality.

The modern self is not identified with any particular historical mode of being. In civil society no tradition dictates how one should live; modern selves can use what Hegel (like Weber) calls "formal rationality" in the choice of goals and means. Civil society separates the formal process of choice from the particularities of content. This results in a vast increase in our possibilities, for example in the idealized free market where the forms of contract and exchange are clearly defined, but contracts can have any content, with no traditional (and only a few procedural) restrictions. Hegel analyzes the market and its supporting institutions and argues that these enact an essential human liberation.

But they also contain deep problems. Civil society has in itself no particular goal, only the expansion of its system of exchange and satisfaction. Hegel sees a whole catalog of economic and social harms stemming from the unrestricted growth of commodity exchange and the endless multiplication of needs characteristic of civil society. In addition there are cultural problems. Within civil society's abstracted way of life traditional ways and values can at best be considered as hobbies. The modern self cannot be defined by them. If civil society were the whole of human community then shared human identity would be reduced to the lowest denominator of needs, and would be dominated by capricious fashion and artificial needs.

There are some profound differences from Weber concerning just how Hegel connects the self with social relations, but so far his general picture seems remarkably like Weber's. Yet Hegel would not accept Weber's pessimism. He argues that the structures characteristic of civil society (the separation of the universal form of interaction from the particular content) can operate only if inserted into a larger context. Civil society describes itself using categories that it thinks are ultimate but which are not. They can only be

thought, and the reality they describe can only exist, in a larger context described in more dialectical categories.

Hegel analyzes the overarching movement of spirit in history through stages where the whole is formed by an immediate fusion of form and content (traditional society), where the whole is dominated by an acknowledged separation of form and content (civil society), and finally where the whole is articulated into a process that has its own form for content (the fully developed modern state). Concretely this means that civil society is not the last word in social relations. It actually exists as the economic side of a more comprehensive social whole, the state, which holds civil society's expansion in check and corrects many of its bad effects.

In the state individual and social whole come together in more complex mutual dependencies than would be found in civil society alone. Hegel is often accused of subordinating the individual to the whole, and the particular institutions he describes do have that effect, but such was not his intent. He was trying to find a way to realize individual freedom without moving backward to a traditional fusion of form and content, but also without affirming as ultimate the splits found in civil society. This did necessitate a different concept of individuality from that characteristic of the liberal thought that glorifies civil society, but Hegel is far from reducing the individual to a mere expression of the state's glorious wholeness.

Hegel studied the categories of being and thought, and described the necessary motions and interdependencies needed for any self-sufficient whole to exist, in society or in nature. He then attempted to translate those descriptions into institutions whose principles he could discern already coming to birth in his contemporary world.

Thus Hegel provided his own notion of the postmodern, or rather of the perfected modern. He tried to do what Weber would deem impossible: to join modern freedom to some privileged social content. The efficient operations of instrumental reason and the endless possibilities opened by modernity were to be restricted by certain social structures that could be affirmed as rational in and of themselves. These structures were derived from the properties of any rationally comprehensible society. They were not purely procedural; they included concrete historical content. On the most basic level that content would be the particular spirit of the nation, for instance, the Frenchness of the French. But within the state were many sub-communities (mostly stemming from the division of labor) each with its own associated roles and ways of life.

Hegel's task was to show how the purely rational categories and the historical content come together. He did this by assigning the various sub-communities and national spirits to different stages in the self-reflection of spirit. Because that structure of spirit's self-development can be independently known apart from society and politics, the historical content of modern life becomes rationally justified. This allows the modern individual to feel at home both as a reasoning modern self and as a person with a particular historical tradition, which can be seen to have its place in the development of the self-transparent universal process.

It is this process of rational justification that makes Hegel's way of uniting form and content different from the more Kantian way Habermas unites the process of self-criticism with contingent historical content. I have quietly passed over the complexities introduced by Hegel's doctrine of necessary yet contingent historical content, just as I passed over his intricate relations between the logical and the historical sequences in his system.

Like Weber, Hegel emphasizes that modernity brings a new self-consciousness that changes our relation to history. Unlike Weber, Hegel allows a relation to tradition that goes beyond instrumental calculations of efficiency, though the traditional content stays within a self-awareness dominated by modern freedom.

For Hegel art traditionally embodied the vision and ideals that were the core of a people's identity. Traditional artists expressed the deepest principles and values of their age. But art can no longer express directly what it means to live in our world. To dwell at home in the modern world we must comprehend how the oppositions and splits that threaten the unity of modern life are in fact reconciled and contained. This requires a knowledge of the process by which spirit achieves its unity through opposition and contradiction. Such knowledge cannot be expressed by images or by traditional concepts; it demands the dialectical method, whose motions cannot be revealed except in its own terms. So art, which by Hegel's definition embodies its insights in matter or images, can no longer contain our most developed self-awareness. Besides, modern distance and self-reflection have touched the artist, who is now too self-aware for straightforward identification with the objects and values portrayed. This results in an art that lacks the heroic side of classical art, and that portrays ordinary objects, exhibiting in them the artist's own technique or ironic humor.

While his discussion of architecture does not go beyond the Gothic (which was then being revived), Hegel's description of the painters of his time might be applied to the

postmodern architect today:

> No content, no form, is any longer immediately identical with the
> inwardness, the nature, the unconscious substantial essence of the
> artist . . . . The artist's attitude to his topic is on the whole much the same
> as the dramatist's who brings on the scene and delineates different
> characters who are strangers to him. The artist does still put his genius into
> them, he weaves his web out of his own resources but only out of what is
> purely universal or quite accidental there, whereas its more detailed
> individualization is not his. For this purpose he needs his supply of
> pictures, modes of configuration, earlier forms of art which, taken in
> themselves, are indifferent to him and only become important if they seem
> to him to be those most suitable for precisely this or that material.
> Moreover . . . the topic comes to the artist from the outside; he works to a
> commission . . . . However much he puts his heart into the given topic,
> that topic yet always remains to him a material which is not in itself
> directly the substance of his own consciousness. (Hegel 1975, 605-6)

For Hegel there is a stage beyond this subjective art. That final stage he calls
"objective humor," which does not show off the subjective facility of the author so much as
the play inherent in the subject matter. Speaking of Goethe's *West-östliche Divan*, Hegel
says:

> Here love is transferred wholly into the imagination, its movement,
> happiness, and bliss. In general, in similar productions of this kind we
> have before us no subjective longing, no being in love, no desire, but a
> pure delight in the topics, an inexhaustible self-yielding of imagination, a
> harmless play, a freedom in toying alike with rhyme and ingenious
> meters--and with all this a depth of feeling and cheerfulness of the
> inwardly self-moving heart which through the serenity of the outward
> shape lift the soul high above all painful entanglements in the restrictions
> of the real world (Hegel 1975, 610-611).

For Hegel there is no longer any subject matter that art can take perfectly seriously.
The difference between Hegel and ironic or deconstructive postmodernism is that for

Hegel there remains something else that still is "the substance" of the artist's consciousness and can be regarded with "an inherently affirmative interest."

Hegel opposes such affirmative interest to the ironical mode he finds in that romanticism which is "a variety which does not come into a unity, so that every character destroys itself as a character. By irony this is regarded as the real height of art, on the assumption that the spectator must not be gripped by an inherently affirmative interest, but has to stand above it, as irony itself is away above everything" (Hegel 1975, 243). In a later chapter I examine varieties of modern and postmodern irony.

The motion of spirit, described in logical terms, lies at the heart of consciousness and is known as such. It is taken quite seriously in religion and philosophy. For the postmodern who refuses to admit that core (or refuses to make it self-transparent as Hegel does), the artist's activity becomes more empty and ironic than Hegel envisioned. But, lacking Hegel's substance, does this irony only return us to the distanced selfhood Hegel is trying to overcome?

The Modern World: Heidegger

Is it possible to share the goal of moderating Weber's complete separation of the self from all particular content and yet avoid Hegel's completely reconciled whole? Doing so would demand new ways of thinking about the issues on which Hegel differed from Weber: the nature of identity, the relation of the self to history, the place of reason, and so on. Martin Heidegger sought these new ways.

Where Hegel is upbeat about modernity, Heidegger is gloomy. But he does not recommend escape. Heidegger describes our world in two related ways, in terms of subjectivity and in terms of technology. In his first view he sees an ever increasing emphasis on the individual self as the foundation of truth and value. Descartes and Nietzsche exemplify this trend. Our contemporary technical, scientific, and artistic world is structured around the self as the center affirming its own being through control of all other beings. Modern freedom is the self-assertion of a will that dominates through knowledge and power in order to secure its own empty self-certainty.

Heidegger challenges this modern view of the self and develops a rival description that emphasizes the temporality of experience, an account in which the pure unified modern self appears as derivative rather than foundational. He does not deny the modern experience of the self and its world but he asserts that this is only one way self and world may be revealed. There is a deeper level, described with the tensions and dispersions

characteristic of our temporalized existence, which makes possible but is more basic than the modern view.

Later, Heidegger somewhat changes his description of modernity and its overcoming. The description in terms of subjectivity is now seen as too "metaphysical." In the new description (in terms of technology and *das Gestell*) the contemporary world has no center. The will to order and form affects us all but is not rooted in individual selves, who now are seen as themselves subject to the demand that they be available for ordering. Rather than being material for the will of the self, other things stand as the reserve available for a general call to order and control.

In these new terms we will be freed from modernity, to the extent we can be, when we realize that the conditions that make possible the call to modern control are not themselves describable in its terms. This frees us from thinking and acting as if the modern mode were the only or the ultimate way to be. In this Heidegger rejects the ultimacy of the terms in which Weber analyzes our situation. But the realization Heidegger talks about, the "thinking" it enables, does not provide any new way to be. There is nothing in Heidegger parallel to Hegel's prescriptions for a perfected modernity.

Heidegger sometimes sounds as if some conversion on our part, some change of attitude or concepts, might enable us to escape the rule of modern ordering and technology. His essays "The Thing" and "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," among others, have been taken as describing a way to dwell at home in a unified world of places whose deep meaning is articulated and supported in appropriate buildings and artifacts. In this interpretation modern life is seen as having covered over a primal world of human dwelling, which if we but change ourselves somehow we can rediscover or rebuild.

But this reading is misleading; according to Heidegger all we can do is think through our relation to our present world while waiting the coming of new revelations of beings and world. There is nothing we can do on our own to overcome modernity; if there were, that very action would only replay modern control. We can, however, acknowledge our helplessness. Paradoxically, in doing so we will partially escape the modern definition of our selves.

This is possible because of the un-centered universal demand for ordering and control that claims us in the modern world. There is no highest being we can cite as the source of our predicament. Thinking in the proper manner we can come to realize that the way beings stand revealed does not itself stem from any of the beings that surround us; it is

prior, defining us and how things come to presence with us. If we realize how the basic meaning things are revealed as having does not depend on our subjective doings, we will begin to realize how the modern definitions of human life are not the whole story. They are part of one historical fate; there could be others, and the "event" by which those fates are delivered is not itself something that can be described in modern terms of a relation between subjects and objects. That event is not a being to be charted, planned or manipulated (as in Weber), nor is it an inner motion we can be at one with (as in Hegel, whose grand reconciliation Heidegger sees as one more manifestation of the modern principles of subjectivity and order).

Modern subjectivity is not the source of its own meaning, and the modern call to order is not the last word. The seemingly endless possibilities opened in the modern world are themselves qualitatively limited, though not by any subjective act of ours. Experiencing this does not start a new age, though it does urge us to delve into our historical tradition. While this will not suggest any particular privileged content for our lives, it does free us to live with a self-understanding that is different from the modern definition of us as wills, workers, consumers, and manipulated manipulators available for ordering.

Heidegger criticized the modern world while clinging to the landscape of a provincial Germany that he knew was being destroyed even as he wrote. There is an ambiguity about his essays on art and architecture that encourages the romantic hope that we might pierce the technological skin of our world and discover a rich dwelling still available to us.

In several later chapters I discuss this hope for a recovery of our sense of place. But officially Heidegger, like Hegel, believes that in the modern world art has lost whatever power it once had. It has been reduced to the business of supplying stimuli on demand, and machines for living. Unlike Hegel, Heidegger hints that perhaps the power of art might be restored, though not by our creating some new style. Art today cannot renew the barren modern landscape, but it can still awaken in us the sense of the withdrawn happening by which we are destined to live in the modern world. Once awakened, that sense changes our relation to our world. The change, however, is not an escape. It remains an ambivalent mixture of complicity and understanding.

The Postmodern World

If the cosmic pillar of early shrines speaks of the centered fixity attributed to traditional society, modernity finds its emblem in the functional pilotis of Le Corbusier,

and postmodernity in the oversized columns of Bofill and the invisible hitching posts in the parking lots of Los Vegas.

While in architecture the term *postmodern* has had its vogue and is beginning to fracture, in philosophy the phrase *postmodern thought* has been increasingly used to describe movements that have been influenced by Nietzsche and Heidegger. I mentioned in an earlier chapter the "metaphysics" that these movements attack; modern architecture, with its rational forms and technological purism, is seen as one more expression of the metaphysical search for unity, pure presence, and firm grounds.

Among the movements loosely labelled postmodern, deconstructive thought is the closest to Heidegger. It refuses to proclaim a postmodern era, for that would be to fall into the modern pattern of seeking continual novelty. Rather, we come to experience the limits and the self-undermining of modernity, without being able to escape into a new age. As I stated earlier, deconstruction seems to me sufficiently different that despite current usage it should not be classed with those movements which proclaim a new age.

Going on from what Heidegger says concerning the finitude of any revelation of the being of things, deconstruction sees a permanent tension between the modern claim to unity and its own self-limitation within a dispersion that escapes such unification, while making it possible. Showing this tension and self-transgression within the very texts and claims of the tradition, the deconstructive thinker helps undermine modern claims to control, order, and transparent rationality. But it does not replace them. Rather it attempts to locate them within a space that they do not dominate. This has the effect of critique, though not one that proceeds from rival first principles.

Deconstruction concerns our manner of dwelling and does not itself provide any substantial meaning for a new home. There is no home in which we can dwell as we desire. Instead of inventing new styles, we maneuver the pieces of the old to express and undermine their unities. Gianni Vattimo (1988) discusses the kind of changes that might be expected from this process. In architecture this can lead to the deliberately frustrated centerings and self-references in Peter Eisenman's House X, or to the divergences from unified form and the traditional goals of building in the projects of Bernard Tschumi. I will argue later that such works have a crucial though marginal role to play in the postmodern city.

The most self-proclaimed postmodern thought is identified with Lyotard, who at times speaks confidently of a new age (although he is more circumspect than many of his

followers). As we saw in an earlier chapter, for Lyotard, our age is losing the total meanings characteristic of both tradition and modernity. The central self is a myth, and its pure rationality gives way to a diversity of language games and practices that are irreducible to each other. Amid this plurality we should play our games lightly and ironically, inventing new rules as we go. No one game can define us and there is no pure meta-game above them all. Innovation is possible, and we need, for our liberation, constantly to invent new moves, new language games, new ways of being. We are caught within the infinite displacement of images (or of signifiers, simulacra, surfaces, intensities, and so on) and we should swim buoyantly in that flow rather than seeking firm ground.

Lyotard's postmodernity is an explicit extension of the avant-garde modernism that insisted on continual novelty, at the expense of that modernism that urged rationality and control. This is the reverse of the modern architects' preference for rationality over avant-garde experimentation. For Lyotard the rational society is the terror we must battle. In its concrete form that terror is the impersonal flow of international capital and its technology of control. Lyotard does not see this in orthodox marxist terms, which still accept one grand story that aligns all history. Lyotard does not reject technology, which he sees as potentially liberating. Computer technology played a central role in the exhibition of our postmodern sensibility that Lyotard organized in Paris. Lyotard's vision of a fragmented yet technologically connected postmodern world resembles that of Jean Beaudrillard, who is hardly so optimistic about our chances for creative innovation, because for him the play of simulacra washes out the differences (between language games) that Lyotard wants to promote.

To express and support this new age postmodern architecture needs a proliferation of styles, and new games played with the old pieces. While Lyotard's thought can be taken as calling for more novelty than deconstructive thought, both have been used to justify an architecture that uses historical reference ironically. For the most part, however, postmodern ironic historicism does not need Lyotard and Heidegger; its theories speak the language of semiotics and structuralism.

No version of postmodern thought gives comfort to those who want to continue the modern quest for pure significant form. E. M. Farrelly, whose call for a "new spirit" in architecture combines modernist and romantic demands for totality into a demand that Habermas might well approve, castigates the standard postmodern architects as "pasticheurs . . . toytown tarter-uppers . . . an aesthetic of least resistance" (1986, 79).p

Hegel's description of the painter who has no substantive identity with the content of his art seems appropriate for these architects. Now the question returns: if there is no deep dwelling to be rediscovered and integrated into our building, if we are to be deconstructive or to invent new moves and games, if, in Hegel's terms, there is no substance of our consciousness, then have we escaped the distanced modern selfhood described by Weber and Hegel? Or is postmodernism just modern subjectivism with a stylish costume?

Irony and the Suspended Architect

We might have expected that when the modern prohibition against historical references weakened, architects would relax into the older traditions, or begin new ones, and get on with building readable structures that fit our world. Vernacular and "invisible" architecture could be approved again. Give architecture back to the people!

Such slogans have been heard, but they have not set the trend. We see distanced subjects playing with history, double coding, irony, applied decoration, complexity and contradiction. This is different from modernist planners banishing history, but the distance remains. No one seems to be simply rejoining history. Why don't we find architects being praised in the media for devoting themselves to non-ironic development of traditional motifs?

> While postmodernists acknowledge history, many seem compelled to torture it until an "original" contribution to artistic Progress has been made. . . . A tangible burden of guilt still weighs on those who would deal with the past un-self-consciously, without coyness or irony. To regain fluency in the traditional language of design--and to make the product of such a collaboration with past centuries accessible to a broad cross-section of society . . . requires a redefinition of the very heart of artistic creativity. (Brolin 1985, 292, 309-310)

What are we to make of this? Is it just a passing condition soon to change once a residual modernist sensibility wears off? Or is it a matter of media bias and marketing strategies, to last as long as ironic buildings can charge higher rents? (cf. Blake 1984). Or is it because the architects are trained to play elitist games and can't settle down with the people? (cf. Wolfe 1981). Or are the architects the victims of bad philosophy turned into dogma? (cf. Brolin 1976 and 1985) Or is it perhaps because our world itself is multiply coded, ironic, complex and contradictory, and there is no solid vernacular for our

architects to follow? It is the last alternative that links architectural practice to postmodern theory in philosophy and criticism. I partly agree with this diagnosis, though in a later chapter I stress the difference between claiming that we must express the unified spirit of our plural age, and claiming that there is no unified spirit of our age that we must express. For now, we need to look at the self-consciousness implicit in the ironic imperative.

Buildings that play ironic games lead a risky life. Suppose that a building has been carefully designed with ironic references to past styles. As time goes on and the building is used, do the ironic references and undertones survive? Or are they smoothed out as the building takes on its own immediate identity?

Still, it can be argued that if postmodern irony is not always perceived by the average user, it continues to be evident to the informed professional. Jencks canonized this division with his notion of double coding.

> One must start by defining a basic opposition in coding between the inhabitant and the professional, perhaps taking as one departure point Basil Bernstein's fundamental distinction between 'restricted' and 'elaborated' codes. . . . a popular, traditional one which like spoken language is slow-changing, full of cliché's and rooted in family life, and secondly a modern one full of neologisms and responding to quick changes in technology, art and fashion as well as the avant-garde of architecture. (Jencks 1977, 129-130)

Jencks has broadened his notion of double coding in his latest treatment of postmodernity, where it is no longer restricted to the popular/professional doublet, but has expanded to embrace almost any method that leads to multiple reference. Cf. Jencks 1987, 279, 282, 340. »

Notice that Jencks has here almost reproduced the division between traditional and modern consciousness that furnished the basis for the story of modernity told by Weber and others. Tradition operates within a limited field of possibilities, while many more possibilities are opened by the special self-consciousness of the modern professional. Jencks differs from the modern story in that he allows the postmodern artist no pure language or formally neutral point of view. But the fast-moving professional code holds a position above local tradition just as the modern architect's rationality placed him above history.

The concepts Jencks uses in his argument for double coding are basically modern.

This can be seen in his argument why we cannot ever return to a single level of coding.

> There is an unbridgeable gap between the elite and popular codes, the
> professional and traditional values, the modern and vernacular language,
> and since there is no way to abolish this gap without a drastic curtailment
> in possibilities, a totalitarian maneuver, it seems desirable that architects
> recognize the schizophrenia and code their buildings on two levels. (1977,
> 130)

A return to one-level coding, such as was urged by Brolin in the quotation above, is impossible because the double coding *allows more possibilities*. This argument resembles Weber's: the special professional self-consciousness keeps us different from premodern methods of building and increases our freedom.

Some who talk about postmodern architecture speak as if with the modernist barriers down we can roam freely through the past, taking historical allusions and forms from where we will for our double coding or ironic enjoyment. The fall of the modernist prohibition against historical reference coincides with a new world where history is available but we are not restricted by the pre-modern traditions. We, in our self-consciousness, can use all of history as our material.

> Architecture can now recycle in new syntactic contexts traditional forms,
> taken from anywhere. The world now emerging is searching freely in
> memory, because it knows how to find its own "difference" in the
> removed repetition and utilization of the entire past . . . . History is the
> "material" of logical and constructive operations, whose only purpose is
> that of joining the real and the imaginary through communication
> mechanisms whose effectiveness can be verified. (Portoghesi 1983, 13,
> 26, 31)

> Why, if one can afford to live in different ages and cultures, restrict oneself
> to the present, the locale? Eclecticism is the natural evolution of a culture
> with choice. (Jencks 1977, 127)

We recognize here the Nietzschean will to power that appropriates the already formed and revalues it into a new meaning. This attitude gets results: Venturi puts a temple in the garden; Isozaki puts the Campidoglio at Tsukuba; Krier wants to put a ziggurat at La Villette. The architects seem to roam freely. And they are creatively changing their historical originals for the new context: the temple is a decorated shed; the Japanese

Campidoglio conspicuously lacks a heroic central focus; the ziggurat would be a hotel.

We are told that we can do this because we hold historical content within a new self-consciousness. Unlike our literal-minded ancestors and eclectic nineteenth century grandparents (not to mention our narrow modern parents) we understand the nature of coding and the semiotics of architecture, and in that awareness can use all of history as material for play. Our eclecticism is different; in Jencks' terms it is "radical" rather than "weak" because we can choose styles based on a developed semiotic theory.

Expressing his modernism more directly, Jencks now worries that we lack a substantive cosmological vision to give unity to our historical borrowings. Cf. Jencks 1987, 291, 300, 315, 352.

All this sounds suspiciously similar to the earlier quotations from Gropius implying that the modern style was not a style at all but a free creation based on logic and technology, which one arrived at by abandoning styles and following the strict logic of function. For the postmodern theorists quoted above history provides a space for free movement. Of course they are not saying that we should follow a strict logic of function. But they are saying that the postmodern architect stands toward history differently because of a special self-consciousness. But that is what the modern movement claimed. Moderns and postmoderns disagree about historical reference, but is that significant? No style, all styles, what's the difference?

Polemics against modern architecture attacked as naive the modern belief that its forms would fit the new industrial world everywhere. This missionary and colonizing attitude is said to have reduced architecture to a few mute words about power and efficiency. Postmodern architecture is supposed to respect local semiotic codes and taste cultures. Architects and theorists speak of the need to adopt (and adapt) the language of the community and its unavoidable cultural archetypes. The free play of imagination is to be tempered by the need to communicate, to make a legible architecture that fits its context, to be, in Venturi's words, "expert in current conventions."

This seems to leave the architect curiously suspended, dipping into "their" context for a particular commission. Once the architect understands the client's vocabulary and codes, the building can use conventional elements for legibility, with "high art" supplying the twists and ironies that delight other architects.

This chameleon facility with local codes, this ability to understand the native tribe and its language while remaining above it all, doesn't it sound suspiciously like Weber's

social scientist, who dwells nowhere, even in his modern home?

The modern architect disdained historical codes, believing our civilization had advanced to a universal pure language of form. The postmodern architect sees through all historical codes, believing our civilization has advanced to a vision of ironic plurality. Is the postmodern architect just another distant modern self who happens to have other goals for the exercise of instrumental rationality?

If we would escape the modern, we must avoid the temptation of saying that after the complete barrier between the architect and history we now have a complete freedom with history. To flip from no access to total access is to stay within the modern. Perhaps we need to envision more carefully what would be truly beyond the modern: the switch from "all or none" to "some."

The really non-modern idea would be that the architect's inhabitation of the world does not involve the modern ideal of total freedom and flexibility, even in its postmodern guises.[begin note] It does no good to say that the architect is always hampered by background and recalcitrant circumstances from reaching an ideal of openness and flexibility. This, too, stays within the modern picture which postulates a pure freedom restricted by contingent limitations.[end note] We have to understand differential availability. Not every local code is can be entered into. We are not modern detached subjects, and yet we do live in a self-consciously multiple world. Trying to understand this will be the burden of the subsequent chapters.

If we try to think through just how the architect's own activity is located and finite, we may find that we can have styles and contents of our own, yet with awareness and practices that do not reduce either to traditional fixity or to modern distance. We may find our historical dwelling, one that is not unified, but one for which we care in a way that is neither rational administration nor ironic play.