Five Critical Horizons for Architectural Educators in an Age of Distraction

Introduction:

This essay will establish five horizons related to the education of an architect and will attempt to form a legitimate and shared vision for architectural educators. The five horizons are – teaching, history/theory/criticism, philosophy, literature, and sensibility.¹ They are prompted by the European Association for Architectural Education Prize 2003-2005 question - “How will the demands of the information society and “new knowledge” affect the demand for relevant or necessary “know how” in architectural education?” The EAAE Prize question establishes a heightened sense of urgency about how we see our present circumstance and calls for thoughtful responses. One could read the EAAE Prize question to imply that information society and architectural education may represent competing demands. This suggests the discipline of architectural education may be transformed by the pervasive global dispersion of information. At this juncture it is important to determine if there is a base of shared common knowledge and common sense² about the education of an architect. This common foundation may be at odds with the emergent conditions of contemporary “information society”. The EAAE Prize question and its implications have the capacity to instigate a vigorous debate about how we might find shared horizons in a time of great distraction. There are at the moment many competing demands of ‘interested’ claims that affect most curricula in architecture. These distractions range from the global economy, information technology, sustainability, and accountability to the politics of transparency.³
The Idea of Horizon:

The following reflections and observations about architectural education are optimistically and perhaps prematurely called *horizons*.⁴ Hans-Georg Gadamer has written that the word horizon,

“...has been used in philosophy to characterize the way in which thought is tied to its finite determinacy, and the way one’s range of vision is gradually expanded. A person who has no horizon does not see far enough and hence overvalues what is nearest to him. On the other hand, to “have a horizon” means not being limited to what is nearby but being able to see beyond it.”⁵

He adds that, “...working out the hermeneutical situation means acquiring the right horizon of inquiry for the questions evoked by the encounter with tradition.”⁶ For Gadamer our understanding is dependent on what he terms a “fusion”⁷ of the horizons of both the present and the past. Heidegger has written, “The horizon is not a wall that cuts man off, rather, the horizon is *translucent*.”⁸ It is by virtue of a horizon that we can look through to the distance and look ahead to the future. It is the luminosity of the horizon that must be recovered in our current situation. For Heidegger the illusion of stability that the horizon and its perspective schema manage to muster occurs amidst the chaos of the “onrushing and oppressing torrent”.⁹ The act of forming horizons, according to Heidegger, belongs to the essence of what it means to be human.

One of the urgent problems facing architectural educators is finding the right balance between an awareness of the extrinsic forces acting upon architectural education at a societal level in light of the intrinsic necessities of our own discipline. Given the strong presence of these external forces there is little time or space left for the cultivation of disinterested¹⁰ inquiry on architecture.
The Ethos of Disinterest:

With the accumulation of interested and tendential claims upon architectural education it is necessary to invoke the ancient idea of disinterest to counter such forces. The idea of disinterest comes from the Greek word *aurtarkia* and means self-sufficiency and that which exists for its own sake, in and of itself. In Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, *aurtarkia* was part of the dignity of our ethical life that was bounded by the ideas of happiness, friendship, the good and the excellent.

According to Meister Eckhart disinterest is not detachment suggesting a lack of interest but rather a habit of mind that places one “in virtue to contemplation”. It is a giving up of narrow self-interest. The disinterested intelligence looks at things *per se*. However the attitude of a disinterested intelligence does not cut itself off from a direct contact with the five senses. The recourse we have to our five senses is only to the extent “…to which we can guide and lead them…” with our intelligence. Disinterest frees one from the accumulated vagaries, diversions and encumbrances chance brings and permits a more selective perception of the objects of our attention. As Meister Eckhart writes, “Disinterest is best of all, for by it the soul is unified, knowledge is made pure, the heart is kindled, the spirit wakened, the desires quickened, the virtues enhanced.”

1. The Horizon of Teaching

The Pathos of Teaching:

*magic* – the pretended art of influencing the course of events, and of producing marvelous physical phenomena, by processes supposed to owe their efficacy to their power of compelling the intervention of spiritual beings, or of bringing into operation some occult controlling principle of nature, sorcery, witchcraft. (Oxford English Dictionary)
Olivio Ferrari once remarked “we never talk about the magic of teaching.” This provocative understatement seems almost unimportant until one thinks about what it contains. It is a reminder that no matter how much knowledge a teacher has, if there is not an understanding about the pathos of teaching then that knowledge will become ineffectual. It is clear that a teacher must have a philosophy, know something and believe in something. A teacher must teach what they know and act upon what they believe. It is not enough to have an idea; one must be able to teach that idea. The act of teaching depends primarily on a kind of sympathetic magic. Teaching is a power passed on from one to another. It requires a reciprocal operation of empathy between student and teacher and for architecture itself. The ‘magic of teaching’ can originate extraordinary results often through concealed methods. The effects of magic are baffling illusions. A teacher benevolently, indirectly and with a high sense of pathos ‘tricks’ a student into architecture rather than teaching architecture.

Towards an historiography of teaching:

The relatively brief history of architectural education has not been written. Nothing approaching Pevsner’s, Academies of Art Past and Present exists for architectural education. We lack a legitimate historiography on the education of architects and the didactic life of great teachers. This in itself should be cause for reflection. Without a mature historiographical tradition schools of architecture run the risk of imitating themselves in a lazy improvisation.

The tradition of a discipline is a primary way to judge the talent that comes forth from that discipline. Architectural educators have spent little time documenting their tradition. Today’s generation of students and faculty may not feel the resistance of a tradition that is barely visible. What results is talent without tradition and the termination of talent
rather than its continuation. If architectural education could have one clear goal it should be to educate and sustain the next generation of talent that has a sympathetic awareness of its origins.

Like architecture itself the approach to teaching, particularly in America, was and is dependent upon importing of ideas and the immigration of key individuals from Europe. The scene today is of course more globally infused but the principles remain intact. The first architecture degree programs in the United States appear in the mid to late 1800’s at places such as The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art (1859), Columbia (1881) and Harvard (1893). The establishment of programs in Europe begins with schools such as the Architectural Association in London (1847), the ETH in Zürich (1855) and Ecole Des Beaux-Arts in Paris (1863). Polytechnic institutes and schools forerunners of the later schools of architecture emerged in Paris (1794), Prague (1806) and Vienna (1815). This historiography, if it is at all possible to write, is complicated by the seemingly inherent isolation of each school. A school is like a student’s desk - a kind of splendid island in a sea of islands. We may find in the end that isolation is a virtue and the quality of a school is based on its ability to construct an educational specificity rooted in a particular place, group of students and faculty.

What is possible after the great and compelling experiments, some still ongoing, undertaken at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, the Architectural Association, Cranbrook Academy of Art, the Vhutemas, the Bauhaus, the Hochschule für Gestaltung at Ulm, Black Mountain College, IIT, the ETH and Cooper Union? What is possible after the Texas Rangers and the New York Five? What is possible after great teachers such as: Eliel Saarinen, Max Bill, Walter Gropius, Josef Albers, Bernhard Hoesli, Bruno Zevi, Colin Rowe, Werner Seligman, Manfredo Tafuri, John Hejduk and Olivio Ferrari?
What treatises will follow upon those of Vitruvius, Alberti, Laugier, Semper, Corbusier, Rossi and Venturi? One should also give credit for the contribution of great architects who were also great teachers such as Mies van der Rohe, Louis Kahn, Carlo Scarpa, and Herman Hertzberger. This combination of talent in the making of architecture and talent in the teaching architecture is rare. It is easy to overlook the contributions that are noted above like a laundry list of places and names. How can one find structure and give form to the history of architectural education? There is an urgent need to form this history before we lose the evidence of its existence in an act of apathetic discourtesy. Without such a history we will lack the context to make the best decisions about the directions we might choose.

2. The Horizon of History/Theory/Criticism

The triad of history/theory/criticism:

During the mid 1960’s the role of history in schools of architecture was beginning to be questioned. The debate about the best way to teach the history of architecture entered a new phase. A new category emerged, perhaps borrowed from the tradition of literary criticism and literary theory, that combined the three categories of history, theory and criticism into one now familiar phrase – history/theory/criticism. The influence of the triad of history/theory/criticism has not been adequately assessed with respect to the architectural curriculum.

Invoking this phrase was an attempt by architectural educators to better understand the interrelations between the ideas of history, theory and criticism in architecture. This triad had a clear hierarchy in which history was given a primacy followed by theory and criticism. There was within this hierarchically arranged set of subjects an understanding of their simultaneity and overlap. One could no longer look at a particular work of
architecture without taking into account an interrelated framework. There was the 
history of Ronchamp, the theory of Ronchamp and the criticism of Ronchamp. This 
served to re-contextualize history within the architecture curricula and challenge the 
when of architecture with the why and how of architecture. The movement away from 
history per se towards history/theory/criticism also spawned the proliferation of new 
elective courses in Schools of architecture and new approaches to teaching the history 
of architecture. The influence of history was expanded into the rest of the professional 
curriculum. Despite the linkages between history, theory and criticism it may be useful to 
recover their differences in a moment when their connections appear to be seamless.

History:

The existence of the discipline of history presents an ultimate challenge to the immutable 
order of knowledge. It is not surprising to learn that one of the most difficult of all 
intellectual fields is the ‘philosophy of history’. The philosophy of history attempts to find 
the boundary between the mutable and the immutable. The challenge history presents 
is, “…nothing can be truly clear in history until everything is clear.”^21 It is due to the 
existence of historical reason that life, “…takes on a measure of transparency…”^22 
Aristotle’s claim there can only be knowledge of universals placed history in a weak 
position with respect to knowledge. This position privileging the nomothetic over the 
idiographic has affected the epistemological status of history to this day.^23 History was 
not allowed its own inherent legitimacy equal to that of philosophy. Vico was the first 
philosopher to detect the force and cyclical nature of history over the individual. He saw 
the confluence of truth with the things we make played out in the cycles of eternal 
reoccurrence. History and architecture share a common idiographic foundation. It is 
because of this shared idiographic nature that history is an essential part of the 
arrestural curriculum. The laws of architecture are made each time architecture is
made and these laws are constantly re-defined based on individual, particular and unique occurrences. Architecture is idiographically nomothetic. The ‘tangled skein’ of occurrences in the form of projects both built and un-built is what we study essentially in a-posteriori fashion. As soon as a project is completed it is history. There is an urgent need to ground the teaching of architectural history within the questions emerging from philosophies of history.

**Theory:**

The place of theory in the education of an architect and for architecture has been of late called into question. An overriding and diminished form of pragmatism has taken hold. The totalizing tendency of theory has been avoided for an approach that values the particular and the specific. In the rejection of theory we may have given away aspirations towards the universal and therefore diminished the possibility of establishing a *telos* for architectural education.

Cennino Cennini in his *Il Libro Dell’Arte* explains that a theoretical attitude arose after Adam and Eve were cast out from the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve came to what Cennini terms a “theoretical” realization that they must through their own work and craft provide for their survival and sustenance. This ingenuity under pressure led Adam to begin the activity of agriculture with the spade and Eve to begin her work of spinning.

Heidegger reminds us that the modern understanding of “…theory is a constructive assumption for the purpose of integrating a fact into a larger context without contradiction…” He adds that theory in the ancient sense is, “…an essential determination of nature…” Concealed behind the modern understanding of theory is the ancient understanding of nature.
The relation of nature to knowledge is embedded in the very idea of theory. We have then inherited a two-fold notion of theory. The first is theory as our participation in the pregnant sense of nature’s own self-movement. The second is theory as the search for invariant laws of nature in terms of space and time. This essential relation is easily forgotten. There is then both the marvel, wonder and spectacle of theory and its observed rules posited as laws of nature. This double condition of theory should not be dismissed but rather embraced.

Theory is steadfast in its refusal to be applied and allows us to ‘see’ at a distance. The existence of theory prevents knowledge from being prematurely formed and applied as a kind of wallpaper. The existence of a distinct realm of theoretical knowledge as articulated by Aristotle had the virtue of allowing poetical knowledge to have its own legitimacy. Theory makes the space necessary for the praxis of making.

Theories of the Education of Architect:

There is an enduring relevance to the thoughts of Vitruvius and Alberti on the education of architects and for establishing principles of knowledge for the discipline of architecture itself. The “know how” of architectural education essentially emerges from the thought of these two individuals. Vitruvius, long before the fashion of the ‘multi-, inter- and the trans-disciplinary’ existed, was the first to understand the various forces that affect architectural education from without. His broad list of subjects with which an architect should be familiar locates the education of an architect within a wider framework of knowledge. In comparison Alberti works from within the discipline and provides a more demarcated and internally motivated program for the education of an architect. The philosopher Alfred North Whitehead said something to the affect that all philosophy is a footnote to Plato. In terms of the education of architects and architectural
theory all thoughts occur under the long shadow of Vitruvius and Alberti. This thought may seem to be an exclusive conservatism, however the hope is this prompts fresh readings of these canonical texts. One should exercise caution against a literal application of their theories and to attempt to understand the contexts and the times in which they lived. The debate between Alberti and Vitruvius forms the sky upon which we gaze. This is not to say there have not been important contributions to the sky of architectural theory since Alberti but rather that Vitruvius and Alberti set out the conditions for theoretical debate. The figure of J.N.L. Durand provides perhaps the most vigorous and far reaching critique against blind adherence to Vitruvian and Albertian principles amidst societal change.

Vitruvius placed a demand upon students of architecture to study the discipline of architecture as well as other disciplines. He thus framed a primary educational principle: the education of an architect is founded on understanding analogous regions of knowledge. According to Vitruvius an architect must know something about a number of subjects. It is somewhat curious that other professional educations such as those in medicine and law do not require some knowledge of architecture. What is it about the education of an architect in Vitruvius’s view that demands such an anterior and tangential approach? The English playwright and poet Ben Jonson, who owned copies of Vitruvius’s treatise had a sympathy for the Vitruvian approach to knowledge when he wrote- “The reason why a Poet is said, that he ought to have all knowledges, is that hee should not be ignorant of the most, especially of those hee will handle.”

According to Alberti a secure knowledge of painting and mathematics was all an architect needed to know in terms of being an educated professional. If an architect knew more that would not be held against him/her. We should remember for Alberti ‘painting’ and ‘mathematics' had a significance and merit far beyond what they may
mean to us today. One could make the argument that his notion of painting and mathematics includes and condenses all Vitruvius had to separate. For Alberti the education of an architect is dependent upon the construction of professional legitimacy.

On the one hand we have Vitruvius's expansive program of study focusing back on architecture and Alberti's more tightly formed program looking outward to the role of the architect. Vitruvius's formulation has to do with the relationship of an architect to the idea of an educated life, whereas Alberti's formulation is about the relationship of life to the idea of a professionally educated architect. There is a positive tension between these two fundamental positions and perhaps a good school of architecture should strive for reciprocity between the Vitruvian and the Albertian approaches to architectural education.

**Theories of Architecture:**

Alberti directly and explicitly criticized Vitruvius's broad educational scheme and developed a radically and self-consciously delimited professionalized field of study for the education of an architect. These differences are reflected in their theories on architecture. For Vitruvius architecture was a process of signification consisting of *taxis* (order), *diathesis* (arrangement), and *oeconomia* (eurythmy, symmetry, propriety and economy). He distinguished between the actual work (practice) and the theory of it. There were three departments of architecture: Building (public and private), Dailing and Mechanics. These were set within the triad of firmness, commodity and beauty. For Alberti architecture or the art of building beautifully consisted of lineaments (design) and *structura* (construction). Alberti allowed for both an independent and dependent relationship between these two ideas thereby forming a duality of mind and the body of the building. The building itself divides into six elements: locality, area, compartment,
The idea of ornament plays a significant role for Alberti. Ornament was not simply the application of decoration onto a form. A building in its entirety was understood to be an ornament to the city having duration and beauty.

**Criticism:**

In *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche finds the origins of tragedy through a profound act of sustained criticism. By invoking two ideas, the Apollonian and the Dionysian, he detects the heartbeat of tragedy in the coupling of dreams and intoxication. Without a critical tradition it seems very unlikely Nietzsche could have formulated the moment of the emergence of Attic tragedy. His criticism, through the brilliance of his erudition, brings the reader to an intimate confrontation with the essence of Greek tragic form. Architectural educators forgetful of their origins have no similar method to detect the nascent and eternal beginnings of the art teaching architecture. Without a consideration of beginnings the possibility of imagining the future of architectural education is foreclosed.

If literature, has literary criticism what is the comparable critical apparatus for the critique of architectural education and architecture? One could propose that Aristotle’s *Poetics* is to poetry and literature what Vitruvius’s *The Ten Books on Architecture* is to architectural education. These works should not be taken on faith and require dispassionate critiques in order for the original questions to remain alive. Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy* renewed the perennial questions contained in the *Poetics*, as did Alberti’s intelligent disagreements with Vitruvius. In the case of Vitruvius and Alberti there were over 1,500 years between their works. We should not overlook or underestimate the long *duree* of Vitruvius and Alberti. Consider the established tradition from Aristotle to Barthes within poetry and literature known as literary criticism.
The tradition of literary criticism was begun by Plato with the banishment of the poets from the Ideal City. Initially criticism was a fear of poetry or an acknowledgement of the deleterious effects of certain kinds of poetry.

There is of course a degree of censorship, selection and exclusion involved in criticism and criticism itself is not immune from criticism. However literature and poetry have not suffered but rather prospered amidst a vigorous tradition of criticism. Nevertheless architectural education and architectural pedagogy have few formal instruments for their own criticism and this fact seems to be more than an oversight. Manfredo Tafuri has written, “…criticism sets limitations upon the ambiguity of architecture.” Without the setting of limits confusion prevails and we get, “…baby-talk, mysterious silences, [and] a whirl of banalities….” For Tafuri to criticize means, “…to catch the historical scent of phenomena, put them through the sieve of strict evaluation, show their mystifications, values, contradictions, and internal dialectics and explode their entire charge of meanings.”

Where will such a critique emerge about architectural education and on what basis shall we make critical judgments? The situation is made problematic by a number of considerations. First, the period of time that formally established schools of architecture have existed in the United States and Europe is relatively brief, dating from the mid to latter half of the 1800’s to the present. Second, the history of architectural education has not been written so collectively we have only anecdotal evidence of what has been done. This lack of collective and recorded institutional memory in the architectural academy in turn provides us little perspective to speculate upon the future of architectural education. Third, most architectural educators have not had formal education about education and more specifically about the education of an architect. There are few degree programs
addressing the making of future teachers in architecture. Maybe this is a good thing in
that it is simply too direct an approach for a problem of great complexity – how best to
educate educators in architecture? Forth we simply permit the existence of a
professional degree in architecture and the profession itself to be synonymous with the
adequate development of the professoriate in architecture. Lastly we unduly rely on
external critiques by accrediting agencies.

One could take the position that the future is over\textsuperscript{50} and the brief moment of formal
architectural education has passed with all but a faint record of its existence and beliefs.
To think about the future of something that has come to an end presents an impossible
contradiction. Perhaps it would be more appropriate to look selectively at the ideas and
philosophies that have been the most influential. It seems reasonable to look to the past
and find new ways to project the historicity of the education of an architect into the
present. In this way one might be able to reconstitute a horizon for architectural
education in a manner that addresses fundamental changes in society to can gear a
contemporary approach to the times in which we live.\textsuperscript{51}

\textbf{Studio in an age of distraction:}

In the short experiment called ‘architectural education’ one has to ask– how long can the
design studio model last? This question moves to the heart of what we do. One has a
feeling of a sense of ending when thinking about the studio.\textsuperscript{52} Many forces have
intervened since this model of teaching architecture was devised and had its heyday in
the late 1960’s and early 70’s. Nevertheless we carry on today with this ‘new’ tradition in
a stubborn and unthinking mode. The design studio is understood to be the ‘center’ of an
education of an architect. Can this ‘center’ hold? How many conditions surrounding
architectural education have changed since this position was articulated? Can we find a
position today that better fits the circumstances confronting us? A studio depends on a lack of distractions.

Today the degree and means of distraction have become so extreme that the existence of the studio model comes into question. Without an almost monastic condition of autonomous disinterested reflection and search the space of a studio is rendered ineffectual. The studio is a fragile model considering how even a seemingly innocuous device such as a cell phone ringing can ruin the atmosphere of contemplation and making that a studio sustains. When the studio is invaded by distractions its sanctity is eroded and the significant effort needed to sustain its vitality is erased in a moment.

There is also what appears to be an increasing movement towards the personal and the private in the studio. With headphones and access to the Internet, students escape into their own private worlds having little sense of public obligation to sustain a discourse and an authentic working environment.

Given these forces there is a need to find fresh approaches and alternatives to the current studio model. These models will be partial and fragmentary at best but well worth the effort to conceptualize them. How can schools best inhabit the space(s) they have? If one proposed ‘eliminating’ the studio how would design be taught and how would the former studio spaces be best used?

**History in the Studio and Design in the Lecture Room:**

The waning of the studio model suggests a space of possibility in the interchange between design and history in the education of an architect. A significant part of architectural education revolves around understanding the relationships and differences
between design and history. History collects what happened and design is the inchoate individual will that tends towards novelty and provides history the examples it needs. The curriculum at the Bauhaus may mark the first time in formal education the study of history was deferred for the study of design. This attitude suggests that history can stifle creativity and has influenced the attitude of many schools of architecture towards history. At the Bauhaus the questions of history were temporarily held in abeyance until the third year of study to create a space or freedom for initial design inquiry at a basic level. This created a kind of purification through the intentional bracketing out of the questions of history and representation. The design studio became and still might be a place of will without representation.

Traditionally design is taught in a studio setting and history is taught in a lecture room. If we accept that this approach has become ineffectual how could one conceptualize a new model that is more efficacious? One could propose a reversal so history is taught in the studio and design in the lecture room. This model might encourage thinking more about how these ‘subjects’ are taught and more broadly about how space is utilized in the daily life of a school. For example larger seminar scale tables shared by a group of students may replace the typical studio desk scaled to the individual student. With individual wireless access to the Internet and cell phones students have become personal information societies unto themselves requiring little else for sustenance. In this environment there is a decline in face-to-face conversation and interchange. It may be surprising to learn the very essence of architecture, space, becomes the most significant consideration in considering the educational setting of a school. Where, in the sense of activity and location, does design happen and where does history occur in a school of architecture? This is a question about the locus of design and the locus of history and how we might think about their habitation in schools of architecture.
3. The Horizon of Philosophy:

Philosophy enables us to limit our confusion between what is mutable and what is immutable. To paraphrase Hans-Georg Gadamer, the stability of being announces itself in the relativity of perception.\textsuperscript{57} He writes that,"…immortality has really only been proven for the idea of life, for the idea of soul, not for the indestructibility of the discrete individual. This is a problem that runs through all of philosophy."\textsuperscript{58} The search involved in the determination of universals means "…philosophy wavers back and forth between the beginning in the sense of origin…and the beginning in the sense of cognition and thinking."\textsuperscript{59} Gadamer locates the beginnings of philosophy in Plato and Aristotle who then in turn provide us access to interpreting the Presocratics who came before them. Gadamer employs an historical reversal to find a philosophical order so that he does not historicize philosophy.

For Heidegger it was important to distinguish between ontic and ontological evidence. That we see a table constitutes ontic evidence. That we know a table is constitutes ontological evidence of its being.\textsuperscript{60} Heidegger writes "…philosophy has always, from time immemorial, asked the question about the ground of what is."\textsuperscript{61} In the absence of finding a ground our thought is caught in a perpetual state of unfulfilled quest and expectation.\textsuperscript{62} Ground is what one finds at the bottom\textsuperscript{63} as the original source and physis\textsuperscript{64} of thought. Following upon Aristotle, what is primary in the order of being is last in the order of knowing. Philosophy moves from the perceptible to the imperceptible, from the sensible to the non-sensible.\textsuperscript{65} For Heidegger one should not force or make such differences but should stand before the openness of what is. "Philosophy is "a thinking that breaks the paths and opens perspectives of the knowledge that sets the norms and hierarchies, of the knowledge in which and by which a people fulfills itself..."
historically and culturally, the knowledge that kindles and necessitates all inquiries and thereby threatens all values.”

As to the use of philosophy Heidegger remarks;

“It is absolutely correct and proper to say that “You can’t do anything with philosophy.” It is only wrong to suppose that this is the last word on philosophy. For the rejoinder imposes itself; granted that we cannot do anything with philosophy, might not philosophy, if we concern ourselves with it, do something with us?”

For Heidegger language plays an absolutely fundamental role in the search for philosophical ground and is the house that philosophy inhabits. The meanings of words are not simply a matter of semantics. Every word has its etymological and philosophical universe. Heidegger had a great sympathy for language in relation to philosophical thinking and for the way philosophy is engaged with the mystery of language.

One of the most prominent contemporary philosophers Alain Badiou, contrary to Heidegger, wants to tear the veil of mystery from any narrative or revelation so as to free the truth that philosophy seeks as its end. Alain Badiou is one of the few contemporary philosophers who advocate a ‘return of philosophy’. For Badiou the operation of philosophy “… tears truths from the straightjacket of sense.” He writes that the truths seized by philosophy “… exposes them to eternity.” Philosophy is in his terms a senseless but rational act of subtraction that breaks the mirror that is the surface of language. Literature operates on this surface while philosophy attempts to penetrate beneath it. For Badiou philosophy, in a kind of surgical operation reminiscent of Descartes, separates truth from sense and thought from presence.

**Reminder: the reciprocity of ethics and aesthetics**

At the core of the education of an architect are the identity of ethics and aesthetics and the priority of ethics over aesthetics. To ignore this identity and priority would be to
promulgate a vapid form of visualization. A proposition about architecture by a student or architect is ultimately a proposal about an ideal form of human conduct. Students are proposing a way of life and conducting a foundation, for both themselves and others, in the form of an architectural project.\textsuperscript{73} A ‘project’ is the necessary vehicle for such inquiry and has the virtue of poetic specificity and physicality. Here the disinterested form of aesthetic contemplation links in a remarkable way with the perennial concerns of human dignity, duty and conduct. That a project might be beautiful must be related to its ethical stance. Aesthetic considerations are grounded in primary deontological considerations. The education of an architect appropriately grounds the visible with the ethical.\textsuperscript{74}

4. The Horizon of Literature

Ezra Pound wrote that - “Literature is language charged with meaning.”\textsuperscript{75} There were three primary ways that meaning can be achieved – phanopoeia, melopoeia, and logopoeia.\textsuperscript{76} We are indebted to Pound for reminding us language projects images into the reader’s imagination and that literature has a sound and a voice. For Pound there is the need to “…recover the art of \textit{writing to be sung}.”\textsuperscript{77}

Literature is the very sense that we have of our literal relation to the inner world of our imagination. Literature is the hold that letters exert upon us.\textsuperscript{78} Each letter in an alphabet makes an elemental claim made exponentially more powerful by virtue of a certain order of letters forming words and sentences. The existence of literature testifies to the unbroken chain of literalness bringing letters into a relation with our imagination. Literature is our imagination made literal.\textsuperscript{79}

Despite the fact Plato banished the poets from the Ideal city of the Republic never has there been a more poetic and more literary philosopher. Plato exiled the poets from the
Ideal City with a certain literary style. As disinterested as philosophy is literature is interested and engaged. Literature is as J. P. Sartre termed it an “appeal to the reader.” Literature has an aim and a purpose; it allows us to construct an imaginative existence that seems literal and believable. Borges has said he “…believe[s] in Don Quixote as I believe in the character of a friend.” When Borges writes he “…tries to be loyal to the dream and not to the circumstances.”

Literature is the canon of civilizations unfolding over time and how we preserve, question and represent those canons. Literature is the canonization of an “intangible” tradition. Literary tradition is, “…the power of that network of texts which humanity has produced and still produces not for practical ends (such as records, commentaries on laws or scientific formulae, minutes of meetings or train schedules) but, rather, for its own sake, for humanity’s own enjoyment…”

Umberto Eco has written the principle lessons of literature are about fate and death. The imaginative characters of literature serve to form the ways we live our lives. He writes that, “…we are clear what we mean when we say that someone has an Oedipus complex or a Gargantuan appetite, that someone behaves quixotically, is as jealous as Othello, doubts like Hamlet, is an incurable Don Juan, or is a Scrooge.” For Eco literature provides us metaphors which become our obsessions. Eco speaks of, “…Montale’s sharp shards of bottles stuck in the wall in the dazzling sun, Gozzano’s good things of bad taste, Eliot’s fear that is shown in a handful of dust, Leopardi’s hedge, Petrarch’s clear cool waters, [and] Dante’s bestial meal…” For Eco literature helps us ask who we are, what we want, where we are going and maybe most importantly what we are not and what we do not want.
The relation between philosophy and literature:

How is architectural education possible and on what grounds does a teacher of architecture proceed? The content of architectural education primarily emerges from within the nature of architecture itself however there is the necessity to broaden and deepen this foundation for a teacher of architecture. On the one hand there is the need for a teacher to work from an epistemological and ontological framework and on the other hand there is the need to establish an imaginative, fictional dimension. The source of this depth and breadth is located at the intersection of two poles of thought – the philosophical and the literary. If the philosophical provides the capacity for disinterested inquiry the literary gives the capacity for promoting a fictive sensibility about the ‘realization of life’. To think of architecture as knowledge is to think about it dispassionately. To think of architecture as literature is to think about it passionately. The education of an architect, like a Platonic dialogue, exists in the overlap between and the simultaneity of two limits – the philosophical and the literary.

William Gass has written about both the commonality and acrimony existing between philosophy and literature. They both share an obsession with language. The philosopher is driven by an abiding respect for the true while the writer is indifferent to it. The writer follows a sensibility for sublimity. A writer “…is not asked to construct an adequate philosophy, but a philosophically adequate world…” These worlds are “only imaginatively possible one’s.”

That which we cannot conceptualize we must poeticize and that which we cannot poeticize we must conceptualize. This idea follows the thought of the Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce who categorized the architectonic of thought into either concept or intuition. Here the demonstrable clarity of logic is distinct but not unrelated to the
lyrical character of the poetic. The complex foundation of architectural education resides in the questions we have about both the considerations of architecture as logical knowledge and the truth of our poetic imagination.

5. The Horizon of Sensibility

There is at the moment within architectural education a focus on the study of material innovation and the activity of building. Related to this interest in material and activity is a growing distaste and even suspicion for the life of the intellect. One concern is that over intellectualization in architecture education will make 'eyes that do not see'. A counter concern is that a reliance on the sensual creates a mind that does not think. We have then a double condition of an over reaction against the intellect and what is viewed as an outmoded intellectualism along with an intense retreat into a form of Epicureanism. The risk is that we are forced to make false choices and become either a rational self or an empirical self with no recourse to find a unified approach. It may be too simplistic to define the conflict as that between rationalism and empiricism. It would be more productive to speak of better understanding the involvement of thinking with feeling and perceiving.

To avoid the extremes of either a sterile rationalism or overly indulgent empiricism perhaps a reliance on the idea of sensibility may provide one useful avenue to explore. There is a tendency to undervalue the role that romanticism played in constructing modern sensibilities. These sensibilities were perhaps never more profoundly or clearly expressed than in individuals such as Goethe or Balzac. Sensibility appears as an invention of the Romantic period and a final blow to any attempt for making a 'science of the beautiful'. We tend to focus on the darker side of the Enlightenment not realizing positive ideas have been projected forward such as sensibility.
Sensibility can provide a position which lies between the intellect and the senses or what C.S.Lewis defines as gumption *plus* perception. The question is – *what is sensibility and how can it be taught?* George Santayana’s, *The Sense of Beauty* provides a ground for exploring these questions. Santayana had a profound mistrust for a ‘science of the beautiful’ therefore his ideas about beauty do not attempt to explain the metaphysical depth of the inexplicable but remain at the active surface of human responsiveness to the existence of beautiful things and our deep feelings towards them. At the core of his approach is the idea that one need not didactically or historically explain what beauty is, or what feeling is, but rather take an approach that focuses on the felt qualities of things both in nature and those that we make. It is a kind of philosophy of human sentience and the values that suffuse it.

As Santayana writes, “A sunset is not criticized, it is felt and enjoyed.” The pleasure we feel in seeing a sunset he would term as ‘disinterested’ and without motive. He writes, “Every real pleasure is in one sense disinterested. It is not sought with ulterior motives, and what fills the mind is no calculation, but the image of the object or event, suffused with emotion.” Santayana wants to hold in abeyance the epistemological and ethical from our appreciative capacity. This gives us the freedom to appreciate and admire the beauty of something and take fuller responsibility for it. On this point he writes – “If we were less learned and less just, we might be more efficient. If our appreciation were less general, it might be more real, and if we trained our imagination into exclusiveness, it might attain to character.”

At the moment we seem to be educating architects towards what Santayana called an *insensibility* to sensuous beauty. Santayana termed this an indifference to primary and fundamental effects. This cultivated indifference to the sensual can have devastating
Santayana’s program for educating sensibility would be to vary the observational skills of students, expand their capacity for disinterested discrimination and thereby deepen their values. This approach would cultivate in students an *intimacy with respect to effects*. A lack of intimacy has serious consequences and creates an inability that ‘ex-communicates’ one from the experience of beauty felt. Santayana would not be against the current interest in the materialization of architecture but only that we fail to see the ‘beauty of material’ as questions of form and expression.

Ben Jonson in his, *Timber: Or, Discoveries*, makes an eloquent argument for the importance of the idea of sense for the poet. He writes that many writers perplex their readers with barbaric phrases of “meere Non-sense” and that, “…sense is…the life and soule of language, without which all words are dead”. He adds, “Sense is wrought out of experience, the knowledge of human life, and actions…”

**Conclusion:**

**Disinterest in an age of interest:**

The late Robin Evans ends his remarkable essay on the Barcelona Pavilion with a section entitled “Distraction”. Evans invoking the thought of J.P. Sartre writes not of the attraction of beauty but rather the distraction of beauty and its overwhelming disinterested sadness. According to Evans the “paradoxical” beauties and symmetries of the pavilion helped contemporaries forget the politics and violence of the time. Speaking in more general terms about the role of art he writes – “…that the distractions supplied by art have been essential to the development of our equilibrium, our humanity, our enlightenment.” On the architectural qualities of the pavilion he writes:
“By virtue of its optical properties, and its disembodied physicality, the pavilion always draws us away from consciousness of it as a thing, and draws us towards consciousness of the way we see it. Sensation, forced in the foreground, pushes consciousness into apperception. The pavilion is a perfect vehicle for what Kant calls aesthetic judgment, where consciousness of our own perception dominates all other forms of interest and intelligence. But, he insists, out of this apparently purposeless activity, we construct our own destiny…Oblivious to the tremors that beset the present, we intimate a pattern for a potential future.”

His interpretation of the Barcelona Pavilion is perhaps an apt symbol for our present moment. We are caught in the matrix of the brilliant polish, reflectivity and shimmer of the surface and breadth of things. We no longer dwell in the height or depth of things; rather we live at the poetic skin of the appearance of things - at the very topos of sensibility. We are in need of a philosophy that makes sense. Such a philosophy involves a movement or displacement from the intelligible to the sensible, and a reversal of the ancient privileging of the intelligible over the sensible. It is important to find what is intelligible in the sensible and the phenomenal. The divided line of Plato has been reoriented to what Alberti would term “…a more sensate wisdom”. The physis of architecture needs to be recovered and made part of the study of architecture. In this way we might better grasp the phenomenal horizon of architecture.

With respect to the architecture curriculum and the activity of teaching there are three primary areas that may serve to improve architectural education in light of the five horizons. We should re-introduce the study of nature as an arcadian physis and its corollary the city into the architectural curriculum. We should enable our students to get closer to the feeling of beauty and its pleasures. Finally we should renew our commitment as teachers of architecture to study the best teachers that have come before us.
There is a need to establish a strategy of active resistance for architectural education relative to the external forces that affect it.\textsuperscript{117} The primary means for developing this strategy are through the critique and reestablishment of the complex horizons of thought involved in the teaching of architecture. The final call for sensibility is an attempt to fuse the five horizons into single vision. How can we best cultivate an atmosphere of disinterested awareness about the sense of the \textit{pleasure of architecture} and instill this sympathy in a generation of students and faculty almost subsumed by the growth of and unfettered access to information?\textsuperscript{118} In the end the feeling and belief we have for what we know are the most important things to remember.

\textbf{Five Questions:}

A series of simple questions could be posed about the prosaic forces of information technology, the global economy, sustainability, accountability and transparency that are acting upon architectural education. These forces are so pervasive they have become almost invisible. One should not advocate ignoring these forces but rather to understand them more fully so we can act more efficiently. The five questions that follow may serve as a reminder of what is at stake if we merely accept them uncritically. Our answers to these questions may help us find directions in a time of confusion. Where is the \textit{knowledge} in information technology? Where is the \textit{oikos} in the global economy? Where is the \textit{sustenance} in sustainability? Where is the \textit{responsibility} in accountability? Where is the \textit{translucency} in transparency? Addressing such questions may allow us to recover the potential that resides in the way we understand what it means, despite the dangers, to engage our very contemporaneity. We need to choose our distractions well so we can answer the question – how do we find shared horizons in an age of distraction?
Afterword: the recovery of a fallen horizon

The idea of horizon is important to the constructive thought of the architect Sverre Fehn. The fall from grace of the horizon Fehn detected has important implications for both the making and teaching of architecture. When the world was understood to be flat it had an imagined end and the horizon marked this condition. When this picture gave way to the notion of the world as a globe, “…the horizon ceased to be the end of the world.”¹ The development of artificial perspective further facilitated the appropriation and loss of crucial archaic and existential dimensions of horizon. The idea of a natural horizon as a room providing safe harbor for other rooms was lost. For Fehn the essence of the idea of horizon is the roots of a tree “…as they burst through the ground into the light.”²

Endnotes:

¹ These five horizons were selected for the broad range of issues they raise and the interrelations between the individual horizons. The foundation or presupposition for these five horizons is the idea of horizon itself and the fragile ground that allows the freedom of a horizon to appear. The horizon is where our ability to find the ultimate ground ends and the threshold of our incapacities with respect to our own phenomenality begins. We may find that although the horizon itself may act as a foundation, the foundation is supported by an impenetrable transparency. Socrates’ admonition to ‘know thyself’ is an acknowledgement of the difficulty that individuals have with respect to their own self-transparency.

² Prof. Steven Thompson, personal communication, (undated).

³ These five forces have become so much a part of the contemporary scene there may be a tendency to take them for granted and to assume their ascendancy. The idea of transparency has typically been studied with respect to specific disciplines as in Rowe and Slutsky’s influential essays involving spatiality in painting and architecture. The work of Rowe and Slutsky could be characterized as the development of a specialized formal vocabulary related to the perception and cognition of various spatial conditions. Today there is a need to vigorously re-open the question of transparency as a fundamental and perhaps inaccessible ground of phenomenality across the disciplines of praxis. The phrase I have elected to use – the politics of transparency – is a way of putting words to the general problem of our lack of knowledge of transparency and our incapacities with respect to it. Here transparency is invigorated to include and subsume all forms of opacity and obscurity obliterating what had been understood as fundamental differences between the thought of Descartes and Husserl and causing a re-reading of the basic terms of engagement for such problems. Descartes’ clarity and Husserls’ obscurity may in fact share a common and to an extent inaccessible source – transparency. For the idea of transparency considered from a neurophilosophical standpoint see, Thomas Metzinger, The Self-Model Theory of Subjectivity, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2004).

⁴ The word horizon has been selected as a guiding concept for this research. It has the virtue of being relevant to both the act of vision and intellection. One cannot form a ‘perspective’ without establishing a ‘horizon’. The primary reference to the idea of horizon is through the thought of Hans-Georg Gadamer (see endnote 5) and Heidegger’s readings of Nietzsche. Gadamer credits Nietzsche and Husserl for giving the concept of horizon a philosophical dimension. Husserl detected the fundamental horizontality of the individual’s conscious encounter with the past and


9 Martin Heidegger, Nietzsche, 86.

10 The idea of disinterest can be located within the larger framework of an ethical life in which the autonomy and self-sufficiency of an individual is a crucial aspect of a good life. I refer the reader to Aristotle’s Nichomachean Ethics for the full development and relationship of these ideas.

11 Raymond Bernard Blankey, Meister Eckhart: A Modern Translation (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1941), 91. This quotation and those that follow are from the translation of Meister Eckhardt’s writing entitled “About Disinterest”.

12 Blankey, Meister Eckhart, 87.

13 Blankey, Meister Eckhart, 90.

14 Professor Olivio Ferrari taught at Virginia Tech from 1965 until his death in 1994 and was a key individual who brought national and international prominence to the architecture programs at Virginia Tech. Prof. Olivio Ferrari, personal communication (undated). This statement was said to me with a smile on Professor Ferrari’s face. It was a surprising and highly illuminating thought. It suggested to me that even if a teacher had great erudition and a strong set of beliefs the ability to convey them to a student was the most important issue of teaching. This is a question of how one teaches rather than what one teaches. Not so much as a technical discussion of pedagogic methods but rather the atmosphere a teacher must provide. A good teacher conjures an atmosphere. For a better sense of the ‘magic of teaching’ see the reminiscences of Prof. Olivio Ferrari’s former colleagues and students in, Ferrari: Portfolio, (Blacksburg, Virginia: College of Architecture and Urban Studies, March 1996) with introductory remark by Prof. Robert Dunay.

15 Olivio Ferrari, quoted in Ferrari: Portfolio.

16 Prof. William Galloway. Personal communication,(December, 2004). The idea of “tricking” a student into architecture can be attributed to Prof. William Brown (former Chair of the Graduate Program in Architecture at Virginia Tech). Prof. Brown once commented to me –’a studio is like a house for the students.’ Here again the idea of cultivating a good atmosphere is important.


18 In this regard the writings of the contemporary architect and educator Bernard Tschumi come to mind. See, Bernard Tschumi, Architecture and Disjunction (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1994).

19 For a discussion about the rise and influence of the triad ‘history/theory/criticism’ within architectural education see, The History, Theory and Criticism of Architecture, Marcus Whiffen, editor, Papers from the 1964 AIA-ACSA Teacher Seminar. Held at Cranbrook Academy of Art, 1964. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The M.I.T. Press, 1965). This little volume includes papers by major figures such as Peter Collins, Bruno Zevi, Silbyl Moholy-Nagy, Stanford Anderson and Reyner Banham. In 1966 the first editions of Robert Venturi’s, Complexity and Contradiction and Aldo Rossi’s, The Architecture of the City appeared. These texts were decidedly historical, theoretical and critical in nature. Less known but influential in the area of theory was Victor Hammer’s, A Theory of Architecture published in1952. In the late 60’s and early 70’s the formation of the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies in New York and the now defunct journal Oppasions made important contributions to establishing a theoretical and critical discourse in architecture and architectural education. In this regard one should mention the journals Via, Perspecta, Assemblage and Daidalos.
The idea of history/theory/criticism has re-contextualized many disciplines in addition to architecture particularly in the field known as literary theory. One could no longer study the history of a discipline without giving simultaneous attention to the theory and criticism of a discipline. This approach has allowed many disciplines to elaborate on the finer grains of autonomy residing within each discipline. This approach may have reached an end condition in terms of its efficacy. History has been questioned for its grand narratives, theory for its totalizing tendencies, criticism for its conservative protection of the canon. One senses a movement away from history/theory/criticism per se towards an ideology of history/theory/criticism.

José Ortega Y Gasset, *History As A System* and other Essays Toward a Philosophy of History (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1961), 221.

Ortega y Gasset, History As A System, 214.

For the distinction between nomothetic and idiographic I am indebted to Prof. Sal Choudhury for leading me to the thought of Wilhelm Windleband (1848-1915). See, Wilhelm Windeband, “History and Natural Science,” Guy Oakes, translation, *History and Theory*: February (1980): 165-85. In this rectorial address Windleband replaces the distinction between the natural sciences (*Naturwissenschaften*) and the sciences of the mind (*Geistwissenschaften*) with that between those sciences that are nomothetic and idiographic. The nomothetic is knowledge that is law abiding and the idiographic is knowledge that is particular and unique. What is invariably the case is termed nomothetic and what was once the case is termed idiographic. The nomothetic natural sciences follow laws and the idiographic historical sciences find a one time occurring structure of validity. The nomothetic establishes a theoretical abstraction and the idiographic is based on visible and intelligible perceptuality. The same subject can have idiographic and nomothetic dimensions. In architecture one begins idiographically and ends nomothetically. See, Frank Weiner, “Value + Creativity: Windleband’s Idiographic from an Architect’s perspective,” C. Calhoun Lemon Colloquium on Philosophy and Values, Clemson University, April 8-10, 1999.


One cannot teach history without philosophy. The beauty of this relationship is between mutability and immutability.


Medard Boss, *Martin Heidegger*, 199.


This is a reference that Heidegger makes to the thought of Kant in, Medard Boss, *Martin Heidegger*, 26.

Vitruvius is the key early thinker about the education of architects. Vitruvius placed educational concerns at the beginning of his treatise while Alberti located his ideas about education towards the end of his treatise. Closer to our own time the late John Hejduk’s thoughts on the education of an architect are worthy of study. Hejduk’s publications on the education of an architect are extensive. I point the reader to two works in particular, *Education of An Architect: A Point of View* (1971, reissued in 1999 by Monacelli Press) and Bart Goldhoorn, editor, *Schools of Architecture* (Netherlands: Netherlands Architecture Institute, Publishers, 1996), 8-22. This book contains the text and images from an untitled lecture delivered by John Hejduk in the autumn of 1996 at the congress of the International Union of Architects held in Barcelona, Spain.

knowledge. The relevant passage reads as follows; “Let him be educated, skilful with the pencil, instructed in geometry, know much history, have followed the philosophers with attention, understand music, have some knowledge of medicine, know the opinions of the jurists, and be acquainted with astronomy and the theory of the heavens.” (5-6).


35 This issue was raised by Prof. Alberto Perez-Gomez a jury member in the 2003-2005 EAAE Prize workshop held in Copenhagen November 25th-27th, 2004.

36 The reminder of not dismissing the importance of what has occurred in architectural theory and education since Alberti was shared with me by Prof. Alberto Perez-Gomez. Perhaps one could say that Durand is the antagonistic ‘hinge’ between Alberti and the present. See, Jean-Nicolas-Louis-Durand, Précis of the Lectures on Architecture, translated by David Britt (Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute, 2000).

37 It may be possible to legitimately claim Vitruvius invented the student of architecture and therefore the education of an architect well before the inception of formal schools of architecture. 38 Ben Jonson, “Timber: or, Discoveries,” in, C. H. Herford Percy and Evelyn Simpson, editors, Ben Jonson, Volume VIII (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1947), 620 (lines 1873 – 1876). This work by Jonson was first published in 1640. According to A. W. Johnson in his book, Ben Johnson: Poetry and Architecture (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1994), Jonson possessed two copies of Vitruvius’s Ten Books on Architecture in his personal library and actually underlined the passage where Vitruvius lists the subjects an architect should know. Clearly Jonson had a great sympathy and admiration for Vitruvius’s position on education.


42 Vitruvius , 5.

43 Vitruvius , 17.


45 Alberti, On the Art of Building in Ten Books, 8-32.


48 Tafuri, Theories and History of Architecture, 231.

49 Tafuri, Theories and History of Architecture,1.

50 Prof. Steven Thompson, personal communication (undated).


53 The late Colin Rowe who spent the better part of his career teaching at Cornell was perhaps the most articulate and influential proponent of the place of history in relation to the design. One should also mention Bruno Zevi in this context. For the extent and breadth of Rowe’s numerous writings see, Colin Rowe, As I Was Saying: Recollections and Miscellaneous Essays (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1996), 3 volumes. For a more general treatment of the subject of teaching history see, Gwendolyn Wright and Janet Parks, editors, The History of History in American Schools of Architecture 1865–1975 (New York: The Hoyne Temple Buell Center for the Study of American Architecture and Princeton Architectural Press, 1990).

54 See, Gropius, Scope of Total Architecture (New York: Collier Books, 1970), 45 and 57. Gropius makes the argument that history can self-consciously hinder or stifle design exploration in the initial stages of education.

55 One could take this idea further and claim that representation has been overtaken by simulation.
The idea of reversibility has implications beyond this particular example. One could look at the entire curriculum and reverse the order of subjects taught. For example 'basic design' one of the most subtle and esoteric of all subjects could be taught last and one could begin with more practical subjects.


In his *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Heidegger attempts to recover a sense of the original Greek meaning of the term *physis* not as the nature of modern science but the ancient awareness of *physis* as a power of emergence and endurance. This paraphrase hardly does justice to what is one of Heidegger’s real philosophical accomplishments to remind both scientists and philosophers of the complex and subtle ground of nature with respect to philosophy.


Alain Badiou, *Infinite Thought: truth and the return of philosophy*, Oliver Fedman and Justin Clemens, translators (London: Continuum, 2004), 92.

Badiou, *Infinite Thought*, 166.

Badiou, *Infinite Thought*, 166.


This idea is from a lecture delivered by Prof. David Leatherbarrow at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in the spring of 1996. In this lecture Prof. Leatherbarrow defined an architectural plan “as an ideal form of human conduct.”

Prof. Sal Choudhury, personal communication, (undated). In this view a project is a necessary pretext for larger questions about life.

Prof. Mark Schneider, personal communication (undated).


Pound, *ABC of Reading*, 37.

Pound, *ABC of Reading*, 206.

A colleague remarked to me that- ‘letters have their feet on the ground and their heads in the clouds.’ Prof. Mark Schneider, personal communication (summer 2004).

The words ‘literature’ and ‘literal’ share a common root.


Borges, 115. The idea that architecture can be understood as a *dreaming in matter* was shared with me by Vic Moose.


For the importance of philosophy in the education of an architect and architecture Kenneth Frampton has written that, "...all graduate students ought to receive some instruction in philosophy during their architectural education...it is philosophy that affords the evaluative ground on which to construct a truly public realm and discourse, without which no architecture worthy of the name can come into being." He adds that, "...architecture has more in common with philosophy than any other poetic discourse." These passages are quoted from, Kenneth Frampton, "Topaz Medallion Address at the ACSA Annual Meeting," Journal of Architectural Education 45, no. 4. (July 1992): 195 – 196. See also Ludwig Wittgenstein, Culture and Value where he aphoristically speaks of the similarity of architecture and philosophy. To paraphrase Wittgenstein he writes that, 'Architecture like philosophy is really a working on one’s self.'

For the relationship of architecture and literature, see, Via, No.8, 1986. The teaching John Hejduk was noteworthy for his reliance on a literary sensibility for the education of an architect.

The phrase ‘realization of life’ is a reference to the work and thought of the poet Rabindranath Tagore. See his Sadhana: The Realization of Life (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1915). Tagore brilliantly articulates the differences between the life-world of the West via Greece and that of the East via India. He distinguishes between the Western tendency toward acquisition and the Eastern tendency towards realization. Here the ‘desire to know’ is contrasted with the desire to be. Literature is in a unique position to gauge the tenor of the realization of life.


One of the most significant experiments in many US schools of architecture over the last decade has been the so-called "design-build" phenomenon. Much of this laudable activity that involves students directly in the act of building was the result of the remarkable and inspired work of the “Rural Studio” at Auburn University founded by the late Sam Mockbee. Through a number of built projects Mockbee was able to address fundamental social issues such as rural poverty while maintaining the highest standards of architectural form. It is important given the widespread influence of design-build projects to better understand the educational intent and impact of such projects.

I am indebted to Prof. Steven Thompson for pointing out to me the importance of sensibility in the education of an architect rather than an adherence to an aesthetic approach. Here one may compare Kant's magisterial Critique of Aesthetic Judgment with his smaller work, Observations On the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime. For the idea of sense as the paradox of direction see, Gilles Deleuze, The Logic of Sense, translated by mark Lester (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990). This was originally published in 1969 under the title, Logique du sens. For the complexities of formal aesthetics with respect to the education of an architect Prof. Hans Christian Rott has provided me with invaluable insights on many occasions.


For the idea of surface effects in relation to sense see, Deleuze, The Logic of Sense. Deleuze takes the classical category of appearance and reorients it towards what he terms a 'science of surface effects'. Sense does not exist outright but rather inheres or subsists at the surface of things. On page 22 he writes, “Sense is both expressible or the expressed of the proposition, and the attribute of the state of affairs. It turns one side towards things and the other side toward propositions.... It [sense] is exactly the boundary between propositions and things.” Sense is the “…minimum of being that befits inherences.” For Deleuze the critical task is the “production of sense”. See page 72-73.

George Santayana, The Sense of Beauty: Being the Outlines of Aesthetic Theory (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1888), 13. The original was published in 1896. I was reminded of
Heidegger’s thought, “The rose is without ‘why’ (gelassenheit) and that life can be meaningful without the ‘why’.


This position is not without its dilemmas as it separates knowledge and ethics away from questions of beauty.


I am indebted to Prof. Hans Christian Rott for pointing out the condition of alienation from the object of beauty that is prevalent in many students today. This problem of a distancing from the sense of beauty is an important task for contemporary educators to address.

Ben Jonson in his *Timber: Or, Discoveries*, 635, understands the poet to be a “maker” following the Greek definition of the word *poet*.


Ben Jonson, *Timber: or Discoveries*, 621. The idea of sense as that which captures a feeling for the fertility of natural life is reflected in the words of Hugh of St. Victor quoted by Ivan Illich, “All nature is pregnant with sense, and nothing in all the universe is sterile...” This passage is quoted from Ivan Illich, *In the Vineyard of the Text*, 123.

Ben Jonson, *Timber; Or, Discoveries*, 621.


Evans, 269.

Evans, 270.

Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 72.


*Physis* today reductively called “nature” was defined by Aristotle as,” the principle and cause of motion and rest for the things in which it is immediately present.” Aristotle extended the idea of *physis* from the realm of animate things to include inanimate things. Animate things had an active principle of movement and inanimate things had a passive principle of movement. With respect to the architectural curriculum coursework on the ancient and modern science and philosophy of nature (natural philosophy) are critical components absent from most professional programs in architecture. Here courses in “sustainability” would be more firmly grounded in the study of nature. The corollary to courses on nature would be the study of the city. For the complimentary relation of nature and city see, Joseph Grange, *The City: An Urban Cosmology* (1999) and *Nature: An Environmental Cosmology* (1997). For a “modern” view of nature, see, Alfred North Whitehead, *Concept of Nature* (1920). Finally the poets’ relation to the rural arcadian landscape perhaps has never been more finely expressed than in the ancient works of Virgil.

I am adopting Kenneth Frampton’s use of the term *resistance* as he applies it to the making and practice of architecture in relation to forming a comparable strategy for architectural education.

I am inspired by Kermode’s invocation of the idea of pleasure (via Roland Barthes) with respect to the canon of literature. Here ones see the relevance of finding pleasure amidst change within the canon of architecture. In an age of distraction we may be witness to the disappearance of pleasure. Prof. Steven Thompson reminded me of the timely importance of the idea of “canon” for architectural education.


Per Olaf Fjeld, *Sverre Fehn: The Thought of Construction*, 27. The image of the roots of a plant or tree bursting through the surface of the ground has also been invoked by the Danish architect Jorn Utzon in, *Jorn Utzon Logbook, Vol. I, The Courtyard Houses*, Mogens Prip-Buus, editor (Hellerup, Denmark: Edition Blondel, 2004),10. The spirit of this moment becomes the
inspiration, literally and figuratively for grounding the making and teaching of architecture. I refer the reader to the drawing by Professor Olivio Ferrari, appearing at the beginning of this essay, expressing these same sentiments.

Illustration credit:

The illustration that appears at the beginning of this essay is a copy of a drawing made by the late Prof. Olivio Ferrari. It is part of a series of diagrams of flowers that he made in 1966. It was originally published in Ferrari: Portfolio, (Blacksburg, Virginia: College of Architecture and Urban Studies, March 1996), 128. I would like to thank Lucy Ferrari for granting permission to use this illustration.

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