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FORMALISM AROUND 1800: A GRUDGING CONCESSION TO AESTHETIC SENSIBILITY

ABSTRACT
This paper compares the outwardly similar structural formalisms of Marc-Antoine Laugier and Arthur Schopenhauer (who uses many of Laugier's examples). Laugier purports to base his aesthetics on an historical argument from the "primitive hut"; but his preferences are really based on aversion to structurally and programmatically non-functional elements. His preferences show disregard for purely aesthetic considerations, such as pleasing proportions. Schopenhauer's formalism is based on his cognitivist approach to aesthetics, according to which architecture is above all supposed to demonstrate relations between load and support, but in spite of this shows greater sensitivity to sensory beauty.

KEYWORDS
architecture, Marc-Antoine Laugier, Arthur Schopenhauer, aesthetics, "primitive hut"

1. Introduction

Formalist theories of beauty emerge in aesthetic theory during the eighteenth century, where by formalism I mean the theory that spatial and/or temporal form in a natural object or a work of human art is that which triggers the pleasure that leads us to call the object beautiful, and thus that which properly constitutes the beauty of the object. An oft-quoted statement of formalism is found in the "Third Moment" of the "Analytic of the Beautiful" in Immanuel Kant's 1790 *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, where Kant states that:

> In painting and sculpture, indeed in all the visual [*bildenden*] arts, in architecture and horticulture insofar as they are fine arts, the drawing is what is essential, in which what constitutes the ground of all arrangements for taste is now what gratifies in sensation but merely what pleases through its form. [...] All form of the objects of the senses (of the outer as well as, mediately, the inner), is either shape or play: in the latter case, either play of shapes (in space, mime and dance), or mere play of sensations (in time). The charm of colors or of the agreeable tones of instruments can be added, but drawing in the former and composition in the latter constitute the proper object of the pure judgment of taste. (KU, AA 05: 225)

But Kant was not the first to express such formalism. Half a century earlier, the Scots-Irish philosopher Francis Hutcheson, who was an important influence

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on Kant, especially in aesthetics, had attributed our pleasure in the "Absolute or Original Beauty" "perceiv'd from Works of Nature, artificial Forms, Figures" and even "Theorems" to "Figures [...] in which there is Uniformity amidst Variety," indeed, "to speak in the Mathematical Style, [...] in a compound Ratio of Uniformity and Variety: so that where the Uniformity of Bodies is equal, the Beauty is as the Variety; and where the Variety is equal, the Beauty is as the Uniformity." (Hutcheson 2008: 17, 28–9) In the case of animals, a pleasing ratio of uniformity amidst variety may consist in "a certain Proportion of the various Parts to each other, which still pleases the Sense of Spectators, tho they cannot calculate it with the Accuracy of a Statuary," (Hutcheson 2008: 33) and

> As to the Works of Art, were we to run thro the various artificial Contrivances or Structures, we should constantly find the Foundation of the Beauty which appears in them, to be some kind of Uniformity, or Unity of Proportion among the Parts, and of each Part to the whole. As there is a vast Diversity of Proportions possible, and different Kinds of Uniformity, so there is room enough for the Diversity of Fancys observable in Architecture, Gardening, and such like Arts in different Nations; they all may have Uniformity, tho the parts in one may differ from those in another. (Hutcheson 2008: 41)

Now, Hutcheson does not *explain* why unity amidst variety or proportion among parts and whole should be the source of our pleasure in beauty, or in his view the pleasure in the perceiver that literally constitutes the beauty that is improperly attributed to the object (Hutcheson 2008: 27); he is content with the empirical observation of a connection between pleasure and proportion that "would probably hold true for the most part, and might be confirm'd by the Judgment of Children in the simpler Figures," (Hutcheson 2008: 30) or the "Experience" that "all Men are better pleas'd with Uniformity in the simpler Instances than the contrary, even when there is no Advantage observ'd attending to it." (Hutcheson 2008: 63) Kant does attempt an explanation, namely that the perception of suitable forms triggers a "free play" of imagination and understanding, which pleases because it feels to us as if the ordinary goal of cognition, namely the union of the "manifold" or diversity of inputs or information presented to us, is being achieved, surprisingly, without the means that ordinarily guarantees this achievement, namely the application of a determinate concept of an object to this manifold.[1] An important point about Hutcheson's observation and Kant's explanation is that neither turns on claims about the nature or goal of any particular form or medium of art; both are claims about the psychology of the human response to forms or proportions, although Hutcheson would have been content with the (anachronistic) designation of his observations as claims within empirical psychology while Kant would have insisted (in my view implausibly) that his theory was part of "transcendental" psychology.

1 See Kant, *Critique*, Introductions, sections VI-VIII (KU, AA 055:187–91); §9 (KU,05:217–19); General Remark following §22, (KU, AA 05:240–1); and §35 (KU, AA 05:286–7). For commentary, see Guyer 1997: 60–105, and Guyer 2005.

A second point to notice about these forms of formalism is that neither pretends to be a *complete* account of our pleasure in works of art. Both include architecture among the arts in which form pleases us, but neither claims that form is the only thing that pleases. Kant in particular recognizes, in time-honored tradition, that works of architecture, "such as a church, a palace, an arsenal, or a garden-house," have different intended functions, and that our overall pleasure (or displeasure) in such a work is a complex response to both its form and function, or to a relation between them that may be that of compatibility or perhaps something more intimate (KU, AA05: 229–31). Further, Kant argues in his actual theory of fine art that all such art has intellectual *meaning*, or expresses what he calls an "aesthetic idea," (KU, AA05: 313–19) and in his most extensive comment about architecture, where "a certain use of the artistic object is the main thing," or "the appropriateness of the product to a certain use is essential," he also insists that architecture must satisfy the condition of expressing an aesthetic idea as well – although he is not explicit about what sorts of content the aesthetic ideas expressed by architecture might have (KU, AA05: 322). Even so, both Hutcheson and Kant recognize that a work of architecture can please us in a variety of ways, and although both hold that pleasing form is a *necessary* condition of our pleasure in a work of architecture neither attempts to restrict or reduce our pleasure in architecture to pleasure in form alone.

The two theorists upon whom I want to focus here do exactly that, however, or at least try to do so. These are Marc-Antoine Laugier (1713–1769) and Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860), the first of whom published his *Essay on Architecture* in 1753 and the second of whom addressed architecture in the first edition of his magnum opus *The World as Will and Representation* in 1819 and then expanded upon his treatment in the second edition of the work in 1844. Their approaches to architecture thus straddle the turn from the eighteenth to the nineteenth centuries. It may not be common to link these two figures, although Schopenhauer's examples suggest that he was familiar with Laugier; but whether or not he was, a comparison of them may be interesting. I will argue that Laugier is not very clear about the real reason for his advocacy of formalism, but that his actual reason for it is above all functionalist, and that he then excludes all departures from functionalism for the sake of other potential pleasures in architecture, including the pleasure of pleasing forms and proportions. Schopenhauer has a different reason for his version of architectural formalism, one that is not connected to function, indeed it radically forswears considerations of function in genuine architectural pleasure, but is more closely connected although not identical to the intellectualist or cognitivist element that Kant had brought out with his theory of aesthetic ideas. But even though this does not sit entirely easily with his theory, Schopenhauer makes more of a concession to the sheer pleasure of sensibility in form or proportion than does Laugier, and thus leaves more room for a less rigid approach to architectural pleasure than does his predecessor. Or so I will argue is the lesson of this comparison.

2. Laugier

Laugier's essay on architecture was published just seven years after Charles Batteux's *The Fine Arts Reduced to a Single Principle* (1746). Batteux's single principle was that beautiful art should imitate nature, although in fact he meant *la belle nature*, that is, not particular objects in nature as we actually find them, but idealized nature, which is more a product of human imagination guided by our experience of nature than mere reproduction of what we experience. Batteux's paradigm for the arts was poetry, but he meant his thesis to apply to all the arts. He touches upon architecture only briefly, but meant his thesis to apply to this case as well. However, he applied the thesis to architecture in a surprising way. First, like any Vitruvian, he considered architecture a "useful art," and said that "In the useful arts, the decoration takes a useful turn; everything must seem to serve our needs." In other words, all other aspects of architecture must be compatible with, indeed subservient to, the work's properly serving its intended function. Thus we "demand [...] a beauty that is actually useful." That part of Batteux's view is not surprising. What is surprising is his next statement, namely that "There are, however, occasions when . . . architecture may take flight. This is when heroes are to be celebrated and temples built. Then it is the responsibility" of architecture "to imitate the greatness of their subject and excite admiration." (Batteux 2015: 23) It is not the appearance of objects in nature, such as a canopy of leafy branches, that is to be imitated, but something that cannot be seen at all, such as greatness, which is to be "imitated" by recreating the mood such greatness triggers, our emotional response to greatness, by different means. A monument or temple does not imitate the appearance of a hero or god (even if the latter is thought of as having an appearance, as in primitive thought); emotions of admiration, or "grandeur, majesty, and elegance," are produced by the very different means of powerful columns, lofty ceilings, and so on.

Laugier's adoption of Batteux's approach is complicated. He begins by seeming to take the thesis that art must imitate nature more literally than did Batteux himself, at least if we count early humans, their raw materials, and their first efforts as pretty much part of nature: Laugier's thesis is that the essential elements of architecture are those already found in the "primitive hut," the conjectural earliest form of human building, and that any departure from the use of those earliest elements of building is a mistake that compromises architectural beauty. This seems to commit what philosophers call the "genetic fallacy," that is, assuming that the original meaning or function of something must always remain its meaning or function; in our wisdom, we know that to be a fallacy from biology itself, for we know that evolution is constantly adapting structures that originally evolved for one purpose to different purposes in later organisms struggling to reproduce in different circumstances. Likewise, there are numerous cases in which it would be an error to insist that the current meaning of a word is determined by its meaning at some earlier period – just think about the English word "bank." However, Laugier's criticisms of various

departures from the structural logic of the primitive hut are not really motivated by his original historical argument, but by his abhorrence of the merely decorative use of architectural elements without a proper function, that is, without reference to their proper *current* function, not necessarily their original function. This comes closer to Batteux's actual position about architecture, namely that decoration must be subservient to utility. But then Laugier fails to follow Batteux on the further point that our pleasure in architecture can "take flight" and derive from more than mere utility. However, it is not just the further layer of emotional import attaching to such ideas as heroism and divinity that Laugier neglects, but also the possibility that we have aesthetic preferences for forms and proportions that may have to be balanced with our demands for utility and the appearance of utility. Or to put it another way, Laugier's version of formalism privileges the forms that serve structural and programmatic functionality over forms that might be found by experience to be aesthetically pleasing instead of arguing that these two kinds of form have to be balanced for maximally pleasing work.

Laugier's allegiance to the general thesis that art should imitate nature is immediately evident: the first sentence of his first chapter is "It is the same in architecture as in all other arts: its principles are founded on simple nature, and nature's process clearly indicates [art's] rules." (Laugier 1977: 11) His next sentence clearly indicates that he regards early man as part of nature: "Let us look at man in his primitive state without any aid or guidance other than his natural instincts."[2] Then, following the hoary precedent of Vitruvius (Vitruvius Pollio 1914: 38–9), he imagines that early humans, having discovered the limitations of the completely unimproved shelters that might be offered by forests and caves, and wanting to make shelters that would protect them without burying them, figure out how to erect four sturdy fallen branches, lay four other branches across these naturally formed posts as equally natural beams, then used some more branches to erect two adjoining rows of rafters across which they could lay "leaves so closely packed that neither sun nor rain can penetrate," and finally figured out to dress the sides of their hut to get further security from cold and heat (and perhaps prying eyes as well, Laugier 1977: 11–2). Thus primitive humans, from natural needs and natural materials, invented columns, beams, and pitched roofs that yielded triangular pediments by the inexorable laws of Euclidean geometry (not yet formulated by them, of course). Laugier's thesis is then that it is only by continuing to use these elements for their original functions, and even when replacing wood with stone preserving the original appearance of the wooden members, that beauty in architecture can be achieved. As he puts it,

> Such is the course of simple nature; by imitating the natural process, art was born. All the splendors of architecture ever conceived have been modeled on the little rustic hut I have just described. It is by approaching the simplicity

2 I will not attempt to update the gendered language of the eighteenth century.

> of this first model that fundamental mistakes are avoided and true perfection is achieved. [...] From now on it is easy to distinguish between the parts which are essential to the composition of an architectural Order and those which have been introduced by necessity or have been added by caprice. The parts that are essential are the cause of beauty, the parts introduced by necessity cause every license, the parts added by caprice cause every fault. (Laugier 1977: 12)

The essential parts are the columns, beams, and pediments; the parts introduced by necessity are such things as walls and windows for different climates; and the parts introduced by caprice are any other decorations. The first are the source of beauty; the second always put beauty at risk; and the third always compromise beauty.

This seems like a straightforward example of the genetic fallacy: because early humans had and needed only posts, beams, and roof-members, the beauty of our buildings too can derive only from those elements, even if we have replaced wood with stone, and everything else risks or actually compromises beauty. "Any device – even if approved by great men – which is either contrary to nature or cannot be convincingly explained is a bad device and must be proscribed." (Laugier 1977: 21) There is no possibility of adaptation or addition to what was originally necessary for a primitive hut to remain erect and to perform its function of sheltering. However, an examination of several examples of Laugier's criticisms of subsequent architectural innovations that have departed from the primitive model suggests that he is not really objecting to the departure from history as such but to the current disfunctionality of such innovations, that is to the fact that they are necessary neither to the function of a building as shelter nor to helping the building maintain its functionality by keeping it erect. In Vitruvian terms, we could say that he is objecting to anything that is not necessary for *utilitas* or *firmitas*, making no room for any independent sources of *venustas*.

One example is Laugier's objection to doubled pediments on the same facade or to pediments added along the long dimension of a pitched roof. The purpose of a pitched roof is to shed rain, pediments are the consequence of constructing a pitched roof with a single ridge to shed rain, and any other use of a pediment can only compromise the beauty of a building. Thus he claims that it is a "fault" "to erect the pediment on the long side of a roof," as was done in "the design for the peristyle of the Louvre," for "Since the pediment represents the gable of a roof, it must be placed so as to conform to the thing it represents," a strict application of the principle of imitation. Likewise it is a fault "to make pediments that are not triangular," for since a roof that is intended to shed rain must always "end in a more or less acute angle," so "the pediment which is its representation must strictly imitate this shape." And it is also a fault "to pile pediments on top of each other," as at St. Gervais, for since a pediment always implies a roof, and it would be absurd to pile a second roof on top of a first, and "It is even worse when the pediment is placed under the entablature" when the roof must be above the entablature, this practice is "absurd." (Laugier 1977: 26–7) The problems here are not that the proscribed

practices fail to imitate the practices of the ancients, but that they neither have nor represent any *current* function. A pediment placed on the long side of a roof is not nor does not represent a roof that is necessary to shed rain (if anything, the additional valleys created increase the probability of leaks); a second pediment placed beneath the pediment belonging to the actual roof of a building is not part of a second roof necessary to shed rain. What Laugier objects to is not the departure from history but the departure from function.

The same is true in his criticisms of recent deployments of columns. He starts his discussions of columns with several principles. The first, that "The column must be strictly perpendicular, because, being intended to support the whole load, perfect verticality gives it its greatest strength," insists on strict structural functionality. A second, that "The column must be freestanding so that its origin and purpose are expressed in a natural way," insists that both origin and function must be clearly expressed by the architectural element. The remaining principles, that "The column must be round because nature makes nothing square," "The column must be tapered from bottom to top in imitation of nature where this diminution is found in all plants," and "The column must rest directly on the floor as the posts of the rustic hut rest directly on the ground," assert that later buildings must imitate the natural materials and methods of the primitive original builders. (Laugier 1977: 14) Keeping to these "simple and natural" principles is "the only road to beauty." (Laugier 1977: 19) Now, some of Laugier's objections to later practices depend only on these principles; thus that even where walls are necessary columns should not be engaged but must be freestanding assumes that they must always express their original function and character of just holding up the entablature and roof (Laugier 1977: 15), and "Pilasters are only a poor representation of columns." (Laugier 1977: 16) But other objections are that later innovations have no necessary function, for example "The pilaster is a frivolous ornament" that does not do any work, especially when it is "even married to a column" that does. (Laugier 1977: 17) Likewise, it is absurd to raise columns on pedestals rather than resting them directly on the ground because the columns are the legs of the building, holding up the torso and the rest, and one pair of legs does not need to stand on another in order to do its job. (Laugier 1977: 20) Again, the problem is not really that the primitive hut did not have pilasters as well as columns or columns on pedestals; the problem is rather that pilasters do not have a structural function in the way that columns do, and it is not necessary to place columns on pedestals in order for them to hold up the parts of the building that rest upon them.

In all of these criticisms, Laugier seems simply to ignore that our pleasure in a building may depend upon aesthetic considerations as well as functional ones, in both the senses, structural and programmatic, of function. Thus, he seems simply not to consider that adding a properly proportioned pediment to the long side of a roof might be a pleasing way to break up what would otherwise be monotonous and boring, a way to give the eye a place to rest or a diversion as it traverses the long stretch of roof, which is presumably necessitated

by the length of the building, itself necessitated by its program. And he seems simply not to consider that placing columns on pedestals might be necessary to preserve the proportions of the column, that is, the ratio between its diameter and its height, which have been proven to be pleasing over time. The case of columns is complicated: perhaps the favored proportions of the order of columns to be used could have been preserved without pedestals if the entablature of the building had been lowered, but then the functionality of the building, the desired height of the interior floors, might have been compromised; or perhaps the desired height of the floors could have been preserved if a different order of columns with its different ratio of height to diameter had been used, but that might not have been consistent with the desired mood to be created by the edifice. The point is that Laugier seems to be overlooking all of these perfectly plausible aesthetic considerations with his rigid insistence on the imitation and expression of the original character and function of these structural components.

Perhaps this criticism is too strong. Sometimes Laugier does criticize practice on aesthetic grounds, that is, simply on grounds of whether we like the way something looks, whether as a matter of nature or of nurture. Thus he objects not only that pedestals beneath columns are structurally unnecessary but also that "Nothing makes a building look more heavy and clumsy than these huge angular masses which serve as substructures to the columns," as at the Hôtel Soubise, (Laugier 1977: 20) and he objects to a second pediment not only that it is structurally unnecessary but also "that the pediment cuts into the balustrade," which is "awkward" and "a miserable way of joining them." (Laugier 1977: 26) What is miserable here seems not to be that the pediment cutting into it will make the balustrade structurally unsound, which Laugier does not suggest, but simply that it looks awkward. (What is the function of the balustrade in the first place? to prevent roofers from sliding off the roof? or is that there as a nice-looking way of finishing the facade and making the transition to the roof?) However, although Laugier does appeal to these purely aesthetic considerations, he does not admit that he is doing so. That is why I call his concession to aesthetic rather than historical and functional considerations grudging, at best.

The grudging character of Laugier's concession to aesthetic considerations, or to put it more politely perhaps his severe subordination of such considerations to his favored ones, can be confirmed by looking at his unacknowledged revision of the Vitruvian triad. At least one way of understanding Vitruvius's insistence that buildings (at least public buildings) must be built with "due reference" to *firmitas*, *utilitas*, and *venustas* or beauty is that the factors of structural function, programmatic function, and purely aesthetic considerations can all play a role in our pleasure or satisfaction in a building and need to be balanced with one another. (Vitruvius Pollio 1914: 17) But Laugier replaces the third of these requirements, the aesthetic requirement of beauty for its own sake although compatible with the satisfaction of the other two: although without any explicit reference to Vitruvius, Laugier states that "One

must build with solidity, for convenience, and according to *bienséance*." (Laugier 1977: 68) "Solidity" is obviously Vitruvius's *firmitas*, and under this rubric Laugier discusses "choice of materials and [their] efficient use." (Laugier 1977: 69) as of course Virtuvius does at length; "convenience" is obviously *utilitas*, and under this heading Laugier discusses "the situation, the planning, and the internal communications" or disposition of rooms, entrances, stairs, and so on in a building. (Laugier 1977: 81) But Laugier silently replaces Vitruvius's requirement of *venustas* with his own requirement of *bienséance*, which the translators leave untranslated but which could be translated with the term "good sense" which David Hume would use a few years later (Hume 1987[1757]), and which Laugier defines thus:

> *Bienséance* demands that a building is neither more nor less magnificent than is appropriate to its purpose, that is to say that the decoration of buildings should not be arbitrary, but must always be in relation to the rank and quality of those who live in them and conform to the objective envisaged. (Laugier 1977: 90)

This requirement of appropriateness between the appearance of a building and the station of those who are to inhabit it or the functions to be housed in it is a descendent of the concept of *dignitas* that Alberti added to the Vitruvian triad (Alberti 1988: 35), and can actually be considered part of the "convenience" of the building, that is, its suitability to its intended function. It is not the same as *venustas* or beauty. The only place where that seems to appear within Laugier's version of the triad is in the passing remark in his discussion of solidity that "The great secret of true perfection of the art consists in joining solidity to *délicatesse*," (Laugier 1977: 75) and here he is referring specifically to the desirability of limiting the thickness of walls as much as is compatible with their necessary strength in Gothic architecture. The "art" to which he is referring is the art of Gothic architecture, not architecture in general. Thus this remark does not seem to be a general recognition of the equal importance of *venustas* to that of *firmitas* and *utilitas*, and even if the remark were intended generally it would still place aesthetic considerations in a very subordinate position beneath the structural and programmatic functions that Laugier favors on his historical or pseudo-historical grounds.

3. Schopenhauer

Let us now jump ahead some decades and look at another formalist, although one who arrives at his formalism on quite different grounds from Laugier. Schopenhauer's post-Kantian intellectual world is an altogether different one from Laugier's, and his idiosyncratic approach to aesthetics adds to that distance and dictates a novel approach to architecture in particular. The most obvious difference is that Schopenhauer rejects utility as a goal of genuine architecture altogether, thus departing radically from the Vitruvian paradigm that Laugier had merely modified. A brief review of Schopenhauer's general

philosophy and aesthetics will show why he dismisses any concern with utility on the part of genuine architecture and thus why his formalism must take a very different form from Laugier's, which as we saw was based more on an assumption of the primacy of utility in architecture than on his stated thesis that successful architecture must imitate its own historical genesis.

For our purposes, the most relevant of Schopenhauer's underlying philosophical assumptions is that both the human will and reality in general are irrational, in particular that human beings are doomed to unhappiness because of the nature of human desire: either our desires go unsatisfied, in which case of course we are unhappy, or they are satisfied, but we quickly become bored with their satisfaction and come up with new desires, which are either satisfied or not, in which case . . . *ad infinitum*. For Schopenhauer, there are only two ways out of this fate: either the *ascetic* attitude, in which, aided by the metaphysical realization that our individuality and all its concerns are just mere appearance, we rise above all desire and its dissatisfaction, or the *aesthetic* attitude, in which, aided by the contemplation of beauty, we leave the realm of desire and its dissatisfaction aside at least temporarily. Turning to the details of aesthetic disengagement from desire, Schopenhauer proposes that the experience of beauty consists in the contemplation of essential forms of appearance, which he calls Platonic Ideas, rather than the particulars of experience: since desire is always the desire of an individual in particular circumstances for something particular, contemplation of Platonic Ideas or universals is supposed to release us, at least for a while, from concern for our desires and their satisfaction. In the experience of beauty "We *lose* ourselves entirely in [the] object [...] we forget our individuality, our will, and continue to exist only as pure subject, as clear mirror of the object," and if the object has "passed out of all relation to something outside it, and the subject has passed out of all relation to the will," the locus of desire, then "what is thus known is no longer the individual thing as such, but the *Idea* [...] at the same time the person who is involved in this perception is no longer an individual, for in such perception the individual has lost himself; he is *pure* will-less, painless, timeless, *subject of* knowledge." (Schopenhauer 1958: 178–9[1]) Unlike the ascetic attitude, this aesthetic state of release is not enduring: "willing, desire, the recollection of our own personal aims, always tears us anew from peaceful contemplation"; but it is renewable: "yet again and again the next beautiful environment, in which pure, will-less knowledge presents itself to us, entices us away from willing." (Schopenhauer 1958: 250[1]) In the case of artistic rather than natural beauty, the essential forms are wrested from the particularity of ordinary appearance by the exceptional cognitive power of the artist and also by the strength of will of the artist to rise, paradoxically, above the ordinary concerns of will – this is Schopenhauer's reinterpretation of the eighteenth-century conception of genius (Schopenhauer 1958: 185–6[1]) – and the rest of us can benefit from the contemplation of the Platonic Idea presented by the artist.

Schopenhauer's theory of aesthetic experience as merely a release from the pain of desire is an innovation in the history of aesthetics, for heretofore

the experience of beauty had always been described as a positive pleasure, not merely relief from antecedent pain – even the conception of pleasure in beauty as disinterested proposed by Hutcheson and Kant still posits a positive feeling of pleasure.[3] Or at least Schopenhauer's avowed theory of aesthetic pleasure as only relief from pain is an innovation. In fact, Schopenhauer recognizes that aesthetic pleasure can take two forms: "the source of aesthetic enjoyment will lie sometimes rather in the apprehension of the known ideas, sometimes rather in the bliss and peace of mind of pure knowledge free from all willing, and thus from all individuality that results therefrom." (Schopenhauer 1958: 212[1]) Thus Schopenhauer does allow positive pleasure in knowing as well as the relief from pain that knowing is supposed to allow. This positive pleasure in knowing will play a role in Schopenhauer's account of our pleasure in architecture. Further, we will see that Schopenhauer pays enough attention to the way buildings *look* to us to leave room for an element of sensory pleasure in architecture, something as we saw that Laugier almost entirely left out of his account.

Schopenhauer's account of architecture immediately follows the section just quoted in which he recognizes the twofold nature of aesthetic pleasure. It begins with a further metaphysical premise, namely that the underlying reality of all objects that appear to us, ourselves included, which he calls will in analogy with the human will, appears at different levels of "objectification," ranging from the elementary force of gravity to animal and human behavior. At each level of objectification there are essential forms that can be captured in different Platonic Ideas, with the negative and positive effects already described. Schopenhauer classifies the different arts on the basis of the different levels of objectification the Platonic ideas of which they present. Architecture is the most basic of the arts because it presents Platonic Ideas of two of the most fundamental and universal forces of nature, namely gravity, along with cohesion and rigidity, and light (while tragedy and music are the highest of the arts for him because they present Platonic Ideas of the highest objectifications of the will in appearance, namely the human will in the case of tragedy and the will as such in music). If we consider architecture as a fine art then we must consider it "apart from its provision for useful purposes," for in the latter capacity "it serves the will and not pure knowledge, and thus is no longer art in our sense," for in serving the will it can ultimately always produce only pain, not pleasure. (Think about trying to keep your roof repaired!) This is where Schopenhauer simply dismisses utility from the Vitruvian triad. Instead, as a fine art we can assign architecture "no purpose other than that of bringing to clearer perceptiveness some of those Ideas that are the lowest grade of the will's objectivity"; "Such Ideas are gravity, cohesion, rigidity, hardness, those universal qualities of stone, those first, simplest, and dullest visibilities of the will, the fundamental bass-notes of nature; and along with these light, which

3 The idea of a negative pleasure, that is, of pleasure merely as relief from pain, is introduced by Edmund Burke, but only in his characterization of pleasure in the sublime, not in the beautiful; see Burke 2015: 31–2.

is in many respects their opposite." (Schopenhauer 1958: 214[1]) The point of architecture as an art and of every aspect of a structure is to make the nature of these basic forces and phenomena of nature apparent to us, so that by contemplation of them we may enjoy the twofold pleasure of relief from the pains of our own individual wills but also of knowing for its own sake. Properly speaking, Schopenhauer claims, "the conflict between gravity and rigidity is the sole aesthetic material of architecture," and the purest expression of this conflict is the structure of column and entablature, the weight of the entablature pressing down on the column expressing the nature of gravity and the column resisting that weight expressing the nature of rigidity. Everything else in a building, particularly any concession to mere utility, risks distraction from this goal of achieving pleasure through cognition. Thus Schopenhauer writes:

> Therefore the beauty of a building is certainly to be found in the evident and obvious suitability of every part, not to the outward arbitrary purpose of man (to this extent the work belongs to practical architecture), but directly to the stability of the whole. The position, size, and form of every part must have so necessary a relation to this stability that if it were possible to remove some part, the whole would inevitably collapse. For only by each part bearing as much as it conveniently can, and each being supported exactly where it ought to be and to exactly the necessary extent, does this play of opposites, this conflict between rigidity and gravity, that constitutes the life of the stone and the manifestations of its will, unfold itself in the most complete visibility. (Schopenhauer 1958: 215[1])

Thus Schopenhauer arrives at a formalism similar to Laugier's, but on an entirely different ground: whereas the earlier writer had argued explicitly from history and implicitly from an assumption about our pleasure in utility, Schopenhauer dismisses all consideration of utility from the pure aesthetics of architecture and instead celebrates what he takes to be the benefits of cognition of the purely structural function of the most elementary parts of building.

Indeed, Schopenhauer uses Laugier's examples of objectionable elements – he does not cite Laugier (or any other authority) but the examples strongly suggest that he knew the work of his predecessor. But the basis of his criticism is very different. He says that "The column is the simplest form of support, determined merely by the purpose or intention" – structural purpose, that is – while "The twisted column is tasteless; the four-corned pillar is in fact less simple than the round column, though it happens to be more easily made."[4] But the reason is not that the primitive hut used only naturally grown, neither twisted nor square but round trunks as columns; it is rather the premise that "it is absolutely necessary for an understanding and aesthetic enjoyment

4 Schopenhauer repeats his rejection of twisted columns and four corned pillars in the second edition addendum (Schopenhauer 1958: 412-13[2]). At p. 414 he explicitly rejects Vitruvius's account of the primitive origins of architecture, which had been adopted by Laugier. This makes it even harder to believe that he was not borrowing from Laugier.

of a work of architecture to have direct knowledge through perception of its matter as regards its weight, rigidity, and cohesion." Schopenhauer's cognitivist approach also leads to an insistence upon truthfulness that can remind one of Ruskin's "lamp of truth" in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, published just five years after Schopenhauer's second edition, although surely without knowledge of it: Schopenhauer states that our pleasure in a work of architecture "would be greatly diminished by the disclosure that the building material was pumice-stone, for then it would strike us as a kind of sham building," as would a wooden building disguised to look like stone. (Schopenhauer 1958: 215[1]) From Schopenhauer's metaphysical point of view,of course, all of this – stone, gravity, rigidity – is mere appearance, not underlying reality; nevertheless, he insists upon truthfulness to appearance. He does not say why sham is inconsistent with the presentation of a Platonic Idea, but he assumes that it is.

Schopenhauer's dismissal of any other kind of functionality than pure structural function is even more evident in the further chapter on architecture that he included in the second edition of his work. Here he writes:

> In Italy even the simplest and plainest buildings make an aesthetic impression, but in Germany they do not; this is due mainly to the fact that in Italy the roofs are very flat. A high roof is neither support nor load, for its two halves mutually support each other, but the whole has no weight corresponding to its extension. It therefore presents to the eye an extended mass; this is wholly foreign to the aesthetic end, serves a merely useful purpose, and consequently disturbs the aesthetic, the theme of which is always support and load alone. (Schopenhauer 1958: 412[2])

It is not that Schopenhauer does not know that peaked roofs serve to shed rain and snow, and may even look to us like they serve that function, or serve it well; it is rather that this functionality can never bring us even moderately enduring relief from pain (again, think about the inevitable leaks), and only by focusing us on the essential character of the elementary forces of gravity and cohesion, or load and support, can architecture as a fine art bring us its proper pleasure. Indeed, to take the argument a step further than Schopenhauer actually does, but which twentieth-century modernism would, in practice even if without benefit of adequate theory, we might as well build with flat roofs even in northern climes, because we are never going to get much satisfaction from merely shedding rain after all. But we can get the insight and enjoyment of insight from flat roofs that Schopenhauer promises.

At the outset of his discussion, Schopenhauer had also mentioned light as a fundamental objectification of the will, or force of nature as it appears to us, and this would seem to imply that works of architecture – at least some if not all – should also reveal the essence or Platonic Idea of light, contemplation of which could please us in its own right as well as releasing us from obsession with our own individual desires. But this is not exactly what he does with the theme of light. He does say that "architecture is destined to reveal not only gravity and rigidity, but at the same time the nature of light, which is their very

opposite." But he actually begins with a more fundamental and a more plausible point. He writes:

> Now architectural works have a quite special relation to light; in full sunshine with the blue sky as a background they gain a twofold beauty; and by moonlight they again reveal quite a different effect. Therefore when a fine work of architecture is erected, special consideration is always given to the effects of light [...] The reason for all this is to be found principally in the fact that only a bright strong illumination makes all the parts and their relations clearly visible. (Schopenhauer 1958: 216[1])

The proper use of light in architecture is to more fully reveal the structural logic of load and support, not to present an independent Idea of light itself. However, when Schopenhauer says that in full sunshine against a bright blue sky architectural works gain a *twofold* beauty, he seems to be assuming that there is some form of beauty in architecture beyond the presentation of the Platonic Idea of load and support. Since he does not say that this is the presentation of the Platonic Idea of light, maybe it is just sensory pleasure itself, perhaps the warm glow of Sicilian sandstone in the temples at Agrigento.

Perhaps Schopenhauer walks such a suggestion back when he continues the passage just quoted thus:

> Hence this pleasure will consist preeminently in the fact that, at the sight of [a favorably illuminated] building, the beholder is emancipated from the kind of knowledge possessed by the individual, which serves the will and follows the principle of sufficient reason, and is raised to that of the pure, will-free subject of knowing. Thus it will consist in pure contemplation itself, freedom from all the suffering of will and of individuality. (Schopenhauer 1958: 216[1])

Or perhaps by using the term "preeminently" he means not to entirely walk back the previous suggestion; maybe he wants to argue that negative pleasure as release from pain is the primary pleasure of architecture, as of any other art, but that there is also room for a positive, purely sensory pleasure in some appearances, such as the warm glow of sunlight on stone, that is independent of all that.

Schopenhauer does not return to the subject of light in the additional discussion of architecture in the second edition of *The World as Will and Representation*, but he makes a few more comments that suggest that he does recognize a positive, sensory pleasure in the experience of architecture. Further discussing his thesis that the gravity and rigidity of stone entablatures and columns are "the proper aesthetic material of architecture," he says that "such material requires large masses, in order to become visible, and indeed to be capable of being felt. As was shown [...] in the case of columns, the forms in architecture are primarily determined by the immediate structural purpose of each part." But then he continues, "insofar as this leaves anything undetermined, the law of the most perfect perceptibility, hence of the easiest comprehensibility, comes in. [...] This comprehensibility, however, always results

from the greatest regularity in the forms and the rationality of their proportions." (Schopenhauer 1958: 414–5[2]) Again he seems to be making two separable points here: the primary pleasure of the experience of architecture is the negative pleasure that comes from the comprehension of the Platonic Ideas of gravity and rigidity, clearly presented; but there is a second pleasure, perhaps secondary but real nonetheless, in perception as such, in this case in the perception of pleasing proportions. This impression is heightened a page later when he speaks of the potential *grace* of a work of architecture, demonstrated in a "good antique style of architecture in every part, whether pillar, column, arch, entablature, or door, window, staircase, or balcony, attain[ing] its end in the simplest and most direct way." (Schopenhauer 1958: 415[2]) Here Schopenhauer seems to be going beyond necessary conditions for comprehending the Platonic Ideas of gravity and rigidity through the clear structure of entablature and column, and allowing that there are further perceptible qualities of works, such as grace, that are pleasing in their own right.

4. Conclusion

We have now seen two different theories that conclude with a similar emphasis upon structurally functional form as the essential element in architectural beauty. Laugier started from his historical argument, but really seemed to be assuming that we are pleased with the appearance of functionality and displeased with whatever does not contribute directly to that appearance. Schopenhauer, by contrast, argued from his distinctive theory of the cognition of universals as the source of relief from the pain of ordinary existence that architecture should clearly reveal the fundamental forces of nature that are at work in it. We have also seen that while Laugier only tacitly allowed for an element of sheer sensory pleasure in architecture, Schopenhauer comes closer to explicitly acknowledging pure pleasure in perception, even though it complicates his theory to do so.

What lesson should we draw from all this? I always favor a pluralistic approach to aesthetics, so my own preference is to exclude none of the accounts of pleasure mentioned from a legitimate role in our experience of architecture: we can enjoy the history of its own building or building more generally that we might be able to read in a building; we can enjoy the appearance that the elements of a building are well-suited to their structural functions, as indeed we can enjoy the appearance of the building as a whole as well-suited to its programmatic function or functions; we can enjoy other knowledge that we might gain from the experience of a building, whether it is scientific or metaphysical knowledge as Schopenhauer supposes, or any other kind of knowledge; and we can enjoy sheerly perceptual pleasures, such as the glow of stone in sunlight, grace in the design of individual features of a building and in their harmonious combination, and so on. Why limit ourselves to any one of these in the name of a theory?

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Pol Gajer

Formalizam oko 1800: škrti ustupak estetskoj senzibilnosti

Apstrakt

Ovaj članak poredi naizgled sličan strukturalni formalizam Mark-Antoan Ložijea i Artura Šopenhauera (koji je koristio mnoge Ložijeove primere). Ložije zasniva svoju estetiku na istorijskom argumentu polazeći od „primitivne kolibe", ali njegove preferenciju su ipak zasnovane na averziji prema strukturalno i programski nefunkcionalnim elementima. One otkrivaju nehaj za razmatranja koja su čisto estetska, kao što su to proporcije koje izazivaju zadovoljstvo. Šopenhauerov formalizam zasniva se na njegovom kognitivističkom pristupu estetici prema kome bi arhitektura, pre svega, trebalo da demonstrira odnos između opterećenja i oslonca, ali uprkos tome pokazuje veću osetljivost za čulnu lepotu.

Ključne reči: arhitektura, Mark-Antoan Ložije, Artur Šopenhauer, estetika, „primitivna koliba"