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PROTASIS – EPITASIS – KATASTASIS

Duration is the problem of the widely discussed *lengthiness* of contemporary architecture which is mostly built as a short-term product. Every short-term thing has got its period of appearance, its period of duration and its period of disappearance. Between durability and fleetingness lies the time of perception, the time of experience and the time of perfection.

Keywords: time, duration, fleetingness

*All the future sinks in the past –
the future is the past's sister*
James Joyce, *Ulysses*

Since the future must change into the past, we wish to see how the world of tomorrow was perceived yesterday. In this longing, I find the essence of the discussed theme of the durability and fleetingness of architecture (*appearance – development – duration – disappearance*). To endure means to exist. Duration – duration in time – duration in motionlessness means to remain in stillness permanently. It is the problem of the widely discussed *lengthiness* (*Nachhaltigkeit*) of contemporary architecture which is mostly built as a short-term product (permanent technology versus impermanent technology). Every short-term thing has got its period of appearance, its period of duration and its period of disappearance. Thus, enduring is the contradiction of passing. Passing is always the contradiction of enduring. If something endures, it does not pass; if something passes, it does not endure – it is in the process of vanishing. To pass means to depart in time, to pass means a change in time. Goethe's well-known poetic *Werden Und Vergehen* (creation and departure) belongs to the category of literary and philosophical poetics.

Fleetingness has something in common with eternal development in time. The present in the time of its duration becomes the past as well as grows into the future, so it is a building material both for the past and the future. That is why Joyce writes, *I am tomorrow, or some future day, what I establish today. I am today what I established yesterday or some previous time*. Between durability and fleetingness lies the time of perception, the time of experience and the time of perfection. Human nature, like Nature itself, does not tolerate artificial perfection and is full of genetic randomness, so it is doomed to a downfall and disappearance in the process of maturing and withering. Everything that is alive in this world is born, flourishes and dies out. We might find historical edifices in the state of death. Fortunately, we are given the possibility of *revitalization*, a kind of new enlivenment, just like in the process of *the springtime goes, the springtime comes* (the constant resurrection of nature). Within his concept of *the revival of the art of classicism*, Winckelmann invented the notion of *the eternal spring* (*L'eterna primavera*) for the continued development of the art of architecture. Passing and dying architectural styles make a false metaphor because they do not die like trees, animals or people – they remain. The

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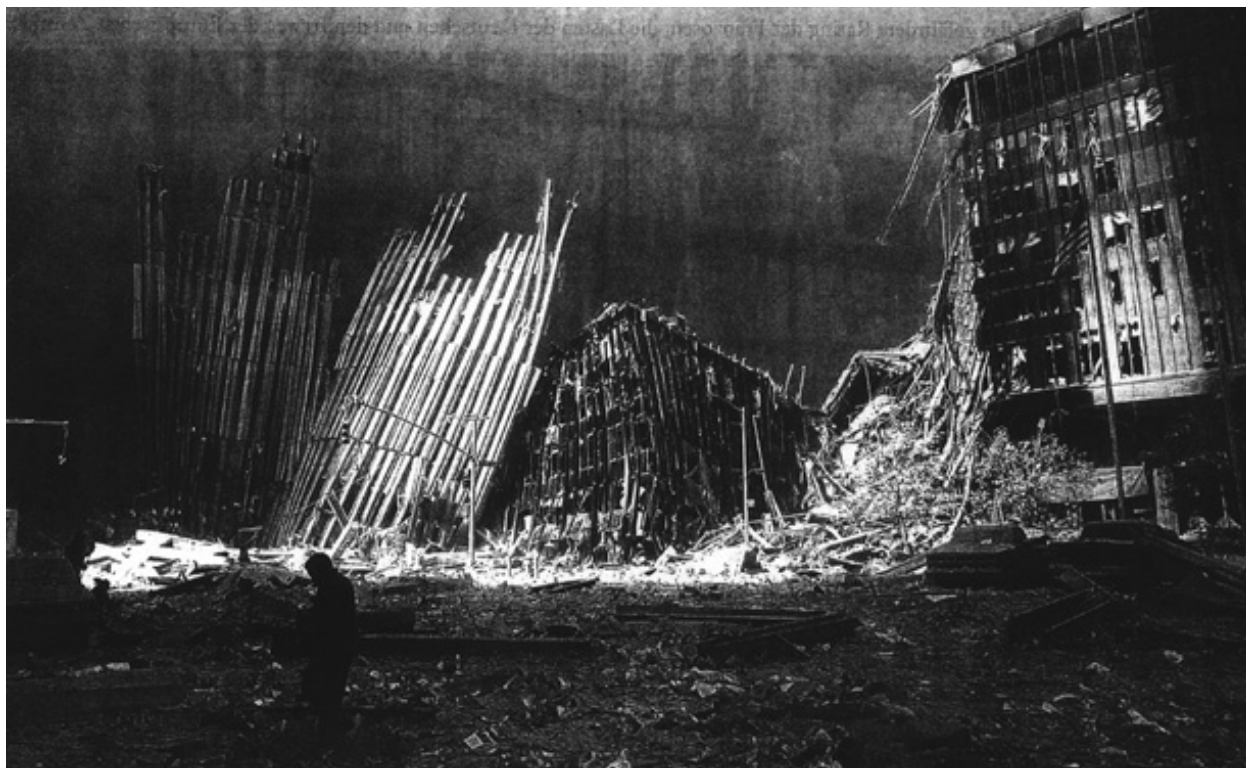
architectural styles of the bygone epochs do not die, the culture and esthetics of the styles of the past still persist in our cultural life being an active element of the perception of our cultural tradition, a living *Academy for Unfinished Things – Salve Historia and Ave Restauratoria*.

In my opinion, the theme of durability and fleetingness mainly concerns the problem of preserving and adopting monuments of architecture. Architecture without an utilitarian function does not fade away and still persists as a vital work of art if it maintains its *esthetical function* documenting its affiliation to the durable cultural value of the history of architecture.

Feelings, themes, compositions, intellectual styles, organizations of spiritual states, orthodox religious, national, social and ethical doctrines, the economic and political systems of states pass away. Architecture is there and persists or it is not there. Old age does not steal the beauty of architecture. If architecture is beautiful and permanent, it remains *petrified beauty* living in time.

It may be exemplified by the most beautiful edifice of the world, the three-thousand-year-old Roman Pantheon as a museum of the spatial hermeneutics of the dominating intellectual schemes in ancient art. *Short-term* architecture physically falls apart in the process of its duration. It is the problem of Heidegger's *Being and Time* – the philosophical element of the temporal existence of entities thrown into our world. Architecture as the *art of the beauty of space* undergoes constant functional and formal transformation. Its changeability is not synonymous to fleetingness. Living natural creations are still reborn independently of us, whereas dead creations, which depend on our decisions, fall apart and vanish off the face of the earth. Edifices whose usefulness stopped being the basis for their duration (exploited functional and economic concepts) undergo *regression*. Then it is time for the functional and esthetical exchange

of a built-up area for new utilitarian concepts. It usually happens when the economic value of a given area considerably exceeds the utilitarian value of an edifice and its possibilities of being adapted for new conditions as far as constructional systems and esthetics are concerned. This problem is evident in the centre of New York City – in Manhattan. Our retrospection – looking back – enables us to segregate the artistic and esthetic values of an edifice under regression. It is possible to *revitalize* an edifice from the architecture of the past with high artistic values by changing its utilitarian function. When we find ourselves in cities without any historical architecture and all we can see is so-called *new architecture*, we have the impression of acting in a science-fiction film. It was plain to see in the cities of *really existing socialism*. A lack of images from the past means a lack of realistic contents, whereas new contents appear as an expression of a stylized and staged illusion of a fictitious reality. Today's history of art is history without art. The vanguard art of the previous century is set against *anti-art* – the esthetics of everyday triviality and meaningless ugliness. We can observe boredom and fatigue provoked by omnipresent dilettantism which will cause a return to the academic masters of the past. *The magnetism of beauty* fascinates the masses visiting museums, churches and castles anew. The history of art returns to the bygone epochs. *Winckelmann's classicism* may serve as an example again. Illusionism, expression and suggestive abstraction were already features of the art of the past. In spite of generally used and abused contemporary art, this fatigue with the esthetics of pop-art does not seem to be the cause of changes of styles in architecture and art. Similarly to numerous works from that period, it belongs to *the lexicon of useless knowledge*. These days, we experience the feeling of pleasure delivered by architectonic forms. These forms usually originate from the architecture



of historical, past styles – the so-called *everlasting styles*. Fatigue belongs to a temporary moment of relaxation and the regulation of artistic emotions in boring situations. The regulation of emotional boredom always has something in common with a given time. According to Steve Jobs, *death is the best invention of life, it is a catalyst of changes – the old disappears in order to yield a place to the new*. The whole sense of sadness lies in the simple fact that everything in this world changes. *Durability and fleetingness* are just metaphors for changes which continuously take place in life and in the world, in nature and in things. At the beginning of the 20th century, America invented the *vertical expansion* of the world in the form of skyscrapers. Later the astronaut became the protagonist of this fantastic adventure. Sending a space shuttle to *the Museum of the Past*, NASA finished the epoch of vertical expansion and the dream of populating the universe. The founder

of the Apple company Steve Jobs appeared in this vacuum of symbolical relaxation with a new concept of vertical expansion. The Apple company together with the Macintosh computer system determined the technological development of the world in the previous decades. Steve Jobs invented the *i-cloud* where information is not recorded in a computer anymore but stored in the so-called *virtual cloud*. This *cloud* acts as the virtual centre of knowledge which sends its memory to man on earth just like the mythical god Zeus sent the lightning. Steve Jobs writes on the Apple website, *The cloud records your contents* – the cloud is your memory as a symbol of the 21st century in the fictitious centre of the world's apparent Garden of Eden. However, the cloud must not become a vertical encyclopedia of the useless knowledge of the digital world.

For: *The future is always full of hope – at the end of the future there is always the past!*

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