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THE TRUTH OF ARCHITECTURE AS AN EXPRESSION OF COURAGE

PRAWDA ARCHITEKTURY JAKO WYRAZ ODWAGI TWÓRCY

Abstract

In architecture, similarly to other fields of life, there is an immense and progressively increasing deficit of truth. It becomes lost in a sea of mediocrity and lies that the viewer is defenceless against. This paper discusses selected aspects of identifying signs of truth in architecture. The research procedure was based on analysing the literature, the author's own experiences as a practicing designer, and empirical studies. The primary objective of the study was to incorporate the subject matter into the current of research that focuses on the evaluation of the built environment. A matrix that can be used as a criterion of truth in architecture was produced as a result.

Keywords: architecture, truth, lies, courage

Streszczenie

W architekturze, tak jak w innych obszarach życia człowieka, występuje ogromny i wciąż postępujący deficyt prawdy. Ginie ona w natłoku przeciętności i kłamstwa, wobec których odbiorca pozostaje bezbronny. W niniejszym artykule podjęto rozważania na temat wybranych aspektów związanych z identyfikacją przejawów prawdy w architekturze. Procedura badawcza polegała na analizie literatury przedmiotu i doświadczenia własnej praktyki projektowej oraz na badaniach empirycznych. Głównym celem badawczym było włączenie zagadnienia w nurt badań koncentrujących się na wartościowaniu środowiska zbudowanego. W rezultacie stworzono macierz, która może zostać wykorzystana jako kryterium prawdy w architekturze.

Słowa kluczowe: architektura, prawda, kłamstwo, odwaga

1. INTRODUCTION

What is truth in architecture based on? Does it require courage? These questions pertain not only to architecture and the architect. Treating truth in architecture as an essential category requires a new outlook on the relationships between the built environment and nature. Man is their common denominator – the designer-architect and the viewer-user. How to verify truth that flows from architecture? What criteria to use? Should we value it, and if so, then how? Something that we hold to be true can later turn out to be a lie burying the ideals of architecture understood as the art of shaping space. And conversely – something that initially received no praise can become acknowledged as truly successful after some time. From an ethical standpoint, the truth is better than the lie, but from an evolutionary standpoint – it is not. Since the

very beginning, in order to survive, mankind has used defensive techniques that included, among others, lies. It was a mechanism created over the course of evolution. This is why we lie so often despite lying being much more intellectually demanding than telling the truth. The lie is a shameful foundation in interpersonal communication, despite creating serious problems for the liar. One must use more intellectual energy to formulate a false statement and provide it with logical arguments. Lying is a strategy of avoiding tension and conflict in the short term. It is believed that the lie is a falsehood stated in a natural manner. However, a false statement is only a cognitively erroneous judgement or logical negation. Meanwhile, the lie is intentionally misleading, premeditated for momentary self-gratification. In order to act in accordance with truth, one does not need dedication, but courage over the long term.¹

The truth of architecture is an interesting research field that is rarely explored in the literature. Civilisational conditions are conducive to the growth of demand for architecture representing the highest standards in terms of quality of life and aesthetic attractiveness and that offers a friendly social environment. Studies of truth expressed in architecture appear to be important in the process of creating good quality physical space, yet just as studies on the beauty of architecture,² they do not find their deserved recognition in the academic discipline of architecture and urban planning. This is the result of the difficulty in formulating proper research methodology in the context of the transdisciplinary character of architecture. This paper presents a narrow section of the discussion focused on attempting to identify signs of truth in architecture. The motto from Ryszard Kapuściński's *Lapidarium* shall serve as the justification for this study: "A full representation of reality does not exist. Only choice."³ The basis and inspiration for my research was provided by analysis of the literature, my own architectural practice and the technique of observation or experiencing the architectural environment. The observation of selected fragments of spatial reality is an element that allows one to verify the logic of reasoning and the truth of the judgements, assessments, opinions and conclusions one expresses about the phenomenon or issue one studies. According to the definition of science accepted by the PAN "[...] science, including exact, natural, social and economic sciences, is comprised of structured knowledge obtained via observation and experimentation, study and thinking."⁴ Of note is the fact that observation has been mentioned as the first method that leads to the enhancement of knowledge. This is welcome particularly in the case of problems with determining the notional apparatus and research methods and techniques in architecture and urban planning, as noted by Professor Zbigniew Zuziak.⁵ Observation leads to formulating research problems, their analysis and verification, as it cannot be performed while detached from reality, particularly as – in light of the subject matter discussed in this paper – the search for truth should be based on the path of logic and experience, as argued by Klemens Szaniawski.⁶

¹ Proverbs like "A lie has short legs" and "Truth and oil always come to the surface" are known.

² The subject of beauty in architecture has been discussed in: W. Kosiński, *Miasto i piękno miasta*, Wydawnictwo Politechniki Krakowskiej, Kraków 2011.

³ The author of the quote used as the motto is Pär Lagerkvist, see: R. Kapuściński, *Lapidarium IV*, Czytelnik, Warszawa 2003, p. 7.

⁴ *Kodeks etyki pracownika naukowego*, appendix to PAN resolution no. 10/2012 of 13.12.2012, Warszawa 2012, p. 4, <https://instytucja.pan.pl/index.php/kodeks-etyki-pracownika-naukowego> (access: 20.05.2020).

⁵ Z.K. Zuziak, *Naukowe oblicza urbanistyki* [in:] Gzell S. (ed.), *Architektura, urbanistyka, nauka*, PWN, Warszawa, 2018, pp. 63–108.

⁶ Klemens Szaniawski quoted by Jerzy M. Brzeziński in: J.M. Brzeziński, *Po co Akademia? O dostojności nauki*, Nauka, 2012, no. 2, https://repozytorium.amu.edu.pl/bitstream/10593/5784/1/po_co_academia.pdf (access: 20.04.2020).

The research method presented in the paper is inspired by theories of truth from philosophy and logic. A binary assessment (true–false) of contemporary architectural projects in a number of separate categories was performed. The categories in which the ex post assessment was performed were formulated in the form of affirmative sentences attributed with logical values. These judgements describe the positive aspects of a building and its relations with the surrounding urban, functional and formal structures. The primary research objective was to incorporate the matter in question into the current of research that focuses on the valuation of the built environment.

2. DEFINITION OF TRUTH AND FALSEHOOD IN PHILOSOPHY

In philosophy, and epistemology in particular, there are several theories of truth. The classical theory, also known as the correspondence theory, was formulated by Aristotle and is based on the judgement corresponding with the actual state of reality: *Veritas est adaequatio rei et intellectus*. It defines truth in an unachievable sense. Its weakness is that we can understand it in such a manner that we can compare our thoughts of reality with reality itself – two things of a different nature. One of the strengths of this definition is based on not using any criterion of truth that would constrain the manner of determining it.⁷ This is where the problem with understanding the terms “correspondence” and “reality” begins. If thoughts or judgements are to correspond to reality, then can they present a certain fragment of it or solely an object as a representation of reality? Is correspondence a comparative process if this comparison is baseless as it is not objective? When we start to compare an object with a word, or other things of a different nature? The essence of truth should primarily be based on objectivism. The question about truth can be expanded with questions about the state of our knowledge about the world. For truth can differ from knowledge if said knowledge is not complete.⁸ When we think that something is true, we often have a certain conviction about knowledge. Time dilation – a phenomenon predicted by the Special Theory of Relativity by Albert Einstein, which has been experimentally confirmed, is a perfect example of this. It turned out that the flow of time, which had been believed to be constant prior to Einstein’s discovery, can differ depending on the system of reference, i.e. the place where one measures time. The results of empirical cognition are thus uncertain and subject to revision. However, all of this does not mean that we should cease our exploration. We can search for truth via observation or reasoning, concluding or theories and judgements grounded in experience.

Two other theories of truth compete with the classical theory. The first – the coherence theory of truth – was formulated by Francis Herbert Bradley and conditions the truth of a statement on whether it is an element of a coherent whole. The harmony and coherence of an entire system are more important than the logical non-contradiction of an individual statement. It features the rational conviction that truth should not be proclaimed on the basis of singular, isolated statements, but in the context of an entire system of statements. The deciding criterion in accepting or rejecting a given statement is its coherence with previously accepted statements. It is based on the harmonious inclusion of a specific statement into an entire system of statements.

⁷ J. Antas, *O kłamstwie i kłamaniu: studium semantyczno-pragmatyczne*, Universitas, Kraków 2008, p. 91.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 103.

The pragmatic theory of truth assumes that views, ideas or beliefs are true when they are useful in practice, useful in a given frame of reference, i.e. beneficial to the one who professes them in a given situation. Scientific theories with practical applications are a good example that can be used to explain the essence of this theory, in which truth is framed in the categories of the effectiveness of action. Both of the aforementioned theories of truth – the coherence theory and the pragmatic theory – agree as to the need to use the criterion of truth, but narrow truth down to either non-contradicting or utilitarian systems. Meanwhile, new judgements and convictions that are often contradictory to the previously accepted system appear all the time.⁹ An interesting proposition of solving the dilemmas that accompany explaining the essence and interpretative pitfalls of truth was put forward by British philosopher Peter Frederick Strawson. He introduced the notion of acceptance to the theory of truth, which is based on truth not being used to state facts, but to accept previous statements. In logical terms, it is obsolete to logically value the truthfulness of statements.¹⁰

As one can see from the theories presented above, truth in an ontological and epistemological dimension is difficult to grasp, define, learn and set criteria for. In order for us to be able to reliably state what is true and what is not, we would have to know all truth there is to know in absolute terms. The theories of truth described above that were formulated by philosophy were my inspiration to search for truth in architecture.

3. THE COURAGEOUS TRUTH – THE BOLD LIE

We usually assess things in simple categories: good–bad, tasteful–kitschy, practical–extravagant. The intuitive distinction of the truth of architecture from its lie brings specific examples to mind. For instance, the truth of architecture reveals itself in Scandinavian architecture, which is often characterised by a respect for the environment, the informed use of construction materials and climate-friendly technologies, as well as an elegant aesthetic. It is actually an architecture that hides in the shadows, that does not expect praise, one that is close to mankind – giving shelter and a sense of safety, while also not severing one from the landscape. It is designed out of a love for nature, with respect for wildlife and local heritage.

Meanwhile, at the opposite end, in our own territory, we have the peculiar architecture that stretches along the main roads that connect Poland's largest cities. The first association that comes to mind when viewing this spatial mess – akin to a souvenir stand – is kitsch, but kitsch would at least be a falsehood, and here we have a case of deliberate pandering to the poorest of tastes and the laws of the free-market economy – the lie of architecture.¹¹ The lie is a means of interpersonal communication, it is a primitive strategy of avoidance used in the face of even the smallest of conflicts. It is difficult not to wonder or express outrage at the lie of architecture, if lying is a highly attractive yet short-term strategy. The imitative complexes of buildings designed as per the precepts of New Urbanism and various cases of plagiarism that draw on history garner praise from conservatists despite lacking in creativity and the courage to take risks associated with using the contemporary language of architecture.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 96.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 97.

¹¹ Polish roadside architecture located along state highway number 7 was discussed with a brilliant irony by Ziemowit Szczerek, see: Z. Szczerek, *Siódemka*, Korporacja Ha!Art, Kraków 2014.

Monofunctional suburbs with low development density and the complete dependence of their residence on cars despite being promoted as the best – modern and comfortable – urban environment during their construction, are likewise a bold lie of architecture. Here it should be stressed that truth, contrary to the lie, requires courage and a long-term assessment of reality. The lie is more profitable over the short term and requires no courage, but boldness and a greater intellectual effort than truth. If the lie is so popular in interpersonal communication, then one can hardly be surprised that it is also present in architecture and the arts for, in the words of the Irish philosopher Edmund Burke, “a true artist should put a generous deceit on the spectators [...] No work of art can be great, but as it deceives [...]”¹²

Examples of the heroic truth of architecture, which is also a manifestation of the great courage of its designers, include the Georges Pompidou Centre in Paris and the Higher Seminary of the Congregation of the Resurrection in Cracow. The first project, which achieved world fame during its inauguration, caused considerable controversy.¹³ International authority figures on culture took extreme positions in its assessment. Here, the truth and courage of architecture were expressed in the concept of exposing the building's entire technical infrastructure on the outside – it was made a fully-fledged element of the elevation. Over time, this architecture reached its value – the building became an attraction for residents and tourists and one of the hallmarks of Paris' historic centre despite formally clashing with it. The second building, or rather a composition of buildings, was built in a period of political and economic transformation that was difficult for Poland.¹⁴ Built over a period of eleven years, between 1985 and 1996, it is an uncompromising and bold manifesto of Postmodern architecture that had not been particularly well-known or appreciated in Poland at the time. It clearly demonstrates an analogy between language and architecture, as it is saturated with narratives, metaphors, symbols and signs, introducing a strong element of metaphysics. The aesthetic of the building represents an elegant and noble truth that searches for neither fame nor praise. The complex is “written” in an extraordinarily poetic language of architecture. The authors of its design, like an ingenious writer, masterfully played a game with their audience, blurring the lines between truth and fiction, as confirmed by Dariusz Kozłowski, who said: “Architecture is building fictitious things so that they can look genuine.”¹⁵ This statement leads to the interesting conclusion that the truth of architecture can reveal itself in the process and pursuit of its designer to remain faithful to their ideals, authority figures and values.

4. THE TRUTH OF ARCHITECTURE AS A PROCESS

In the search for truth, the simple criterion of aesthetics is insufficient. Musical pieces, which lack a standard metrum and melody and are dominated by dissonances and strange sounds

¹² E. Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, Dearborn 1834, in: T. Dyckhoff, *Epoka spektaklu. Perypetie architektury i miasta XXI wieku*, Karakter, Kraków 2018, p. 341.

¹³ The authors of the design were Renzo Piano, Richard Rogers and Gianfranco Franchini.

¹⁴ The authors of the design were Dariusz Kozłowski, Maria Misiągiewicz and Waław Stefański.

¹⁵ A. Suława, *Seminarium Zmartwychwstańców – ten niezwykle budynek na co dzień jest niedostępny. Zobacz, jak wygląda w środku*, Dziennik Polski, 15.09.2018, <https://dziennikpolski24.pl/seminarium-zmartwychwstancow-ten-niezwykle-budynek-na-co-dzien-jest-niedostepny-zobacz-jak-wyglada-w-srodku/ar/13492681> (access: 3.06.2020).

produced in an unconventional manner from an instrument's body, can be considered proof of this. It is a music that is difficult to listen to, but highly elaborate in its compositional layer – it is moving and conveys an intense emotional load. Its notation can be a separate graphical masterwork. It depends on the artist's genius whether they will create a difficult and universal work or one that is simply pleasant to the average audience. What is interesting, architecture is sometimes a refuge for contemporary music that is often difficult or incomprehensible. The Krzysztof Penderecki European Music Centre in Luśławice¹⁶ is a good example of this – it is full of rhythms, tasteful elegance and the smell of freshly cut larch wood and the fields of grain that extend around it. It is a place for everyone who wants to listen to a concert here. Evidently, architecture, contrary to art, is egalitarian, which is why it bears a greater responsibility for conveying truth.

The Danish architect, urbanist and poet Steen Eiler Rasmussen compared the work of an architect to that of a gardener who selects and combines appropriate plant species together. It turns out that even the most beautiful garden can fail if the plants are not selected and planted in accordance with their nature. They will not develop properly in an unsuitable environment. The author of *Experiencing architecture* also compared the architect to a theatrical director, who faces many technical and human difficulties during the creative process and is to enable a sophisticated audience to experience art at the highest level.¹⁷ Architects are sculptors – they work with the form and the massing, they are also painters, as they use colour. However, their art is applied. The architect, similarly to a sculptor, painter, gardener, director or actor, searches for truth that can emerge only in their completed work. Today, architecture is less of an object of expression of a single artist, as it used to be in the past. We are often dealing with the falsity of architecture when the architect does not reach a compromise with the structural engineer, the client, the contractor or the user, and when it is difficult to reconcile their conflicting interests into a single, integrated system. The architect's ideas and visions become transformed during design work, which is why the architect is accompanied by a feeling of powerlessness and giving into internal contradictions. The visual result of a failed compromise is an illegibility and ambiguousness of architecture.

The truth of architecture is an expression of internal and external harmony. Architecture that not only fits the context but also complements space creates additional value. This is not about complementing a spatial composition solely by faithfully mimicking an existing structure's morphology. The composition of the layout of architectural forms can be compared with a group of instrumentalists who compose a musical piece during group sessions. Each of them contributes to it their individual sound, thus producing a polyphonic harmony. That which can reveal the truth of a work of architecture is the search for a harmonious form achieved by balancing individual relations. The true character of architecture manifests itself in the process in which it is created, it does not create an individual work, typically remaining in the background. The contemporary architect must therefore be an effective organiser.¹⁸ Speaking the truth is giving testimony about the content of our beliefs on it. We bear no responsibility for truth, but we are responsible for the manner in which it is communicated.¹⁹

¹⁶ The design of the Krzysztof Penderecki European Music Centre in Luśławice was prepared by DDJM Biuro Architektoniczne.

¹⁷ S. Rasmussen, *Odczuwanie architektury*, Karakter, Kraków 2015, p. 6.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹ J. Antas, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

5. THE ARCHITECTURE OF TRUTH AS A NARRATIVE

The ability to use signs, particularly verbal signs, is a fundamental element of culture. The language is the most important system of signs, but it is not the only one. Architecture as a system of signs is also used to communicate. The Swiss-born British philosopher Alain de Botton stated that houses speak. He argued that the concept of houses that speak allows us to place the question about values we want to live by, instead of merely how we believe items should look like, at the centre of the architectural mystery.²⁰ And just as in communication using language, it is not truth that is the most important, but speaking the truth.²¹ The primary assumption of the notion of truth in architecture is acknowledging the fact that absolute truth does not exist. If we want to, we can make a section of this truth crisper, we can articulate it. Here we are aided by the Finnish architect and architecture theorist Juhani Pallasmaa, who created his own story about architecture. He discovered that architecture is actually the work of human hands, and he did not restrict this notion to the construction process alone. He coined the term “the thinking hand” that refers to the hand of the architect who creates their works primarily using hands. Hands make it easier to think, but are also of key significance in communication. The hand takes the initiative in the pursuit of the vision, so that the designer’s idea can ultimately materialise in the form of architecture. The truth of architecture is created from the thinking hand of the architect, through the laborious process of design. What is interesting, is that Pallasmaa appealed for changing the entire system of education in a world increasingly dominated by the fictitious digital environment which disregards true human senses.²²

Here, the matter is similar to literature – the narrative does not need to be chronological, exhausting all the possible threads. The German psychologist of perception Rudolf Arnheim, in his book entitled *The Dynamics of Architectural Form*, focuses on only the visual expression of architecture, comparing it with other visual arts and music. He explored what influenced its assessment and what judgements it generates. He sought answers to the questions: “Does a building display the usual unity that makes it understandable to the human eye? Does its appearance reflect the various functions, physical as well as psychological, for which it was designed? [...] Does it transmit some of the best in human intelligence and imagination?”²³ The author answered all of these questions in a literary manner, guiding the reader across the meanders of architecture and space. However, the engaging narrative is not the only notable element here, but primarily the numerous visual aspects of architecture that could serve as criteria for the search of the truth of architecture: expression and function, internal and external relationships, mobility and order or symbols expressed via the dynamics of form. The author lists certain aspects of buildings to differentiate successful from unsuccessful ones, points to the specific characteristics of architecture, based on which it is rejected or accepted. His thoughts can be treated as a basis for discussing the truth and falsehood of architecture.

Let us analyse a number of problems discussed by Arnheim and use them to pursue the truth of architecture. These are elements of the natural environment, like rocks, water, clouds, plants and animals. They are components of nature, whose visual image informs us of their functions. We intuitively know that this is a manifestation of truth. The ability to change skin

²⁰ A. de Botton, *Architektura szczęścia*, Czuły Barbarzyńca Press, Warszawa 2010, p. 74.

²¹ J. Antas, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

²² J. Pallasmaa, *Mysłqca dłoń. Egzystencjalna i ucielešniona mqdrość w architekturze*, Instytut Architektury, Kraków 2015.

²³ R. Arnheim, *Dynamika formy architektonicznej*, Oficyna, Łódź 2009, p. 7.

colour that some animal species possess is a defensive tool against predators and a method of survival, and can be interpreted as a lie.²⁴

Architecture is to suggest how to use it and this is its fundamental truth. It is to demonstrate where a building's main entrance is and how to orientate within its interior. We can deliberately hide the elevator core within the hall so that most users will opt for the stairs, but we also cannot stigmatise wheelchair-bound persons – vertical circulation should be easily accessible to them. Orientation points located in appropriate places make it easier to use a building. A well-designed building features a structural dependency between aesthetic and functional properties. The logic of the building should be clear instead of convoluted, both at the level of the entire structure and the detail.²⁵ Arnheim also claimed that it was necessary for architecture to maintain a certain order and balance. Every complex organism, including architecture as such,²⁶ akin to a human organism, features sophisticated, specialised subsystems. For each of them to function correctly, they must be governed by a central command system. In architecture, this problem demands the continuous pursuit of solutions and compromises in relationships at different levels of the process's progress – first during the design process stage, then during construction and ultimately during occupancy. Architecture synergistically combines systems from various fields of human activity and the entirety must comply to legal, economic, organisational, psychological, social and cultural requirements, and sometimes even metaphysical ones as well.

6. QUESTIONS UNENDING

In the context of the courage to speak the truth of architecture, the problem of new massings bound with existing buildings that are often historical structures appears particularly interesting. Usually, secondary horizontal or vertical extensions or infills are designed not by the author of the original building, but by a different architect, and can reinforce, highlight or decompose the initial architectural concept. They can modify it without coming into conflict or changing it for the worse. The existing architectural massing also typically features distinct details. The new form can either be a structurally justified accent or not. Sculpted ornaments and details have always been the subject of discussion in architecture. In a building, one can highlight details that are more or less technically and aesthetically justified. Statues, pedestals, plinths, oriels, attics, ornaments, louvres, pilasters – all these additions can both form an irreplaceable supplementation of space and a proposition of the secondary rendition of the main architectural theme.

Some characteristics are so essential to a structure that they cannot be modified without altering the entirety of a building. A quantitative change is possible if it does not disrupt the basic structural system, but sometimes only a small modification made at a sensitive point can foil the entire layout. Changes introduced to architecture by another's hand bring with a smaller risk than similar ones in painting or sculpture. There, even the smallest detail in form, colour or texture expresses the personal character of the artist. Architecture operates using characters

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 212.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 220.

²⁶ The term “architecture” is used increasingly often to denote the structural layout of various types of complex systems, such as digital systems architecture, software architecture, company management architecture, which are not associated with the traditional understanding of this term.

that are more general. It is definitely much safer to continue the concept of a façade designed by Michelangelo than add a new element to the sculpture of David created by him on the Florentine Piazza della Signoria. In architecture, the compromise of function and form is ever critical. The different functions of a building or its part are mutually linked by a more or less complicated system of linkages and divisions. The architect can plan them in a linear and logically linked manner or search for unobvious spatial connections, planning a building's diversity at many levels of its design. This happens when several functions need to be combined, such as a large market space, apartments and a parking lot, as in the case of the Markthal in Rotterdam.²⁷ The combination of apparently contradictory functions can result in an effect of synergy. If a building's functions had been divided and designed as independent, the uniformity of the project would have been unobtainable. Uniformity at the level of an entire project can show its joint function, but at lower levels, the differences become apparent.²⁸

The truth is based on judgements that we formulate based on experience, observations, theories, reasoning and concluding, as well as our own system of values, while high-quality architecture moves us and inspires positive emotion. Does this mean that we are dealing with an architecture of truth? Architecture attracts attention and leaves a trace in our memory, becoming a part of our biographies. It strengthens and opens up new opportunities and connects us with others. Good architecture expands one's horizons, forces us to contemplate architectural expression at every scale, and we become its inseparable part.²⁹

Additional interesting questions come to mind. Is expressing the truth of temporary architecture linked with greater creative possibilities and freedom for the designer? The architecture of temporary national pavilions for Expos or the Venice Architectural Biennale are examples of this. It appears that the ambition of the authors of this type of architecture is to convey the broadest possible content in an extravagant formula. This type of architecture suffers from greater pressure than that which is exerted on the design of traditional buildings, as these ephemeral works are exposed to international critique. Is hybrid, mobile or interactive architecture a manifestation of courage and bold visions or is "the architecture of care"³⁰ – the necessity to search for successive solutions in the face of the general disregard for threats faced by our planet? Studies on the prototypes of hybrid buildings conducted by prominent Spanish architect Iñaki Ábalos at Cornell AAP (Cornell University College of Architecture, Art, and Planning), Harvard GSD (Harvard University Graduate School of Design) and BIArch (Barcelona Institute of Architecture) demonstrate that reality is even closer to utopia. These and other questions will remain unanswered.

7. IDENTIFYING THE TRUTH OF ARCHITECTURE – THE SEARCH FOR A METHOD

A number of ideas, theories and assumptions that have been briefly characterised below inspired the author to formulate a method of identifying the truth of architecture. To define truth, one must first formulate certain criteria that can distinguish it from falsehood. Truth is a judgement

²⁷ The Markthal was designed by the famous MVRDV design firm.

²⁸ R. Arnheim, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

²⁹ S. Williams Goldhagen, *Welcome to Your World. How the Built Environment Shapes our Lives*, Harper Collins, New York 2017.

³⁰ See: J. Tronto, *Architektura troski*, *Autoportret*, 2020, no. 1 (68), pp. 2–6.

that is proven, as argued by German philosopher Franz Brentano. The foundation of truth is formed by judgements based on experience, reasoning, theories and mathematical laws. Thus, we arrive at truth not only by observation, but also by, for instance, deduction. The truth communicates only facts, i.e. it reports the states of things. Judgement about a fact that exists is compliant with said fact.³¹ The classical definition of truth formulated by Aristotle, also called the correspondence definition, is reflected in the language of logic, wherein falsehood is understood as the contradiction of the truth of statement *p*. This means that if statement *p* states something that corresponds to facts and phenomena present in the world, then *p* is a true statement, while the negation of *p* (non-*p*) is a falsehood. Conversely – if *p* is not true, then *p* is false.³² A true statement describes reality as it is (a fragment of reality at a given moment). Meanwhile, a false statement describes reality differently than indicated by its actual state. What is interesting, only a statement can be true or false, but never an object. Truth and falsehood are called the logical values of a statement, i.e. something objective, that is compliant with the actual state.³³ Understood in this manner, truth and falsehood are notions that are intuitively simple and indisputable. The statement that this is as it is, if it actually is that way, should be considered true (1), while the statement that it is not – should be considered false (0). This definition of truth and falsehood is highly idealistic. Unfortunately, this matter is much more complicated and ambiguous, similarly as in interpersonal communication.

Architecture is similar to language as a system of signs or characters from which we build words, sentences and, finally, stories. And similarly as non-fiction, it reflects reality through the prism of its creator's feelings. The language of architecture operates with a certain set of individual sentences that are logically linked and that create a greater story that is also read by the viewer. When one descriptively analyses architecture, one uses a metalanguage, for we formulate statements about a statement formulated in a lower-tier language.³⁴ In other words, we characterise a message that belongs to the language of architecture. When we assume that architecture is one of many available types of interpersonal communication, we can observe an analogy between the interpretation of architecture and the interpretation of non-fiction. We can create a certain type of narrative about architecture by selecting one of many possible threads. Ryszard Kapuściński observed third-world societies. The experience of participation had allowed him to inquisitively report events from different places of the world while also filtering his stories by the prism of his own personality. There is an analogous situation when one describes architecture. We study a design, observe and use buildings – their form and relations are studied by participating in their life. We observe and participate,³⁵ so that a narrative comprised of descriptions, analyses, criticism comparisons and conclusions can be produced. This narrative is a manifestation of our own individual image of reality, cast through the prism of our knowledge, experiences and emotions. Extracting the truth of architecture is de facto based on ex post study, as we are unable to learn the intentions, state of knowledge, emotions, intellectual capacity and design abilities of the architect. Even when we report on our own creative process, then we describe the past in a state that has already been transformed in our mind.

³¹ W. Tatarkiewicz, *Historia filozofii*, vol. 3, pp. 178–180.

³² J. Antas, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

³³ See: Z. Ziemiński, *Logika praktyczna*, PWN, Warszawa 1975, pp. 57–61.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 11–18.

³⁵ Participative observation is one of the most commonly used research techniques in architecture, see: E. Niezabitowska, *Metody i techniki badawcze w architekturze*, Wydawnictwo Politechniki Śląskiej, Gliwice 2014.

The analyses performed in this paper produced a matrix that can be used to build a story about the truth of architecture (Table 1). This layout features ten architectural projects that were set against around a dozen affirmative sentences that describe spatial situations. The author selected contemporary buildings built in the past decade and that represent a high level of artistic and architectural creation. The selected buildings, together with their accompanying public space, perform important urban functions while also being attractive and accessible not only to residents, but also to visitors from other cities. The selection of buildings does not exhaust the complete catalogue of buildings that meet the criteria presented, which is why it features the projects the author found to be the most interesting. The matter with the set of sentences is similar. Around a dozen sentences that describe the actual state in categories important for good architecture were proposed. These sentences were subjected to logical valuation, as per the actual state. They can be used to create a metalanguage of architecture, a certain type of story – a form of non-fiction. However, not all sentences in this narrative are true, which complies with the coherence theory of truth.

8. CONCLUSIONS

I would like the conclusions to the research presented in this paper to take on the form of questions. The most important of these is: what distinguishes the truth of architecture? It is surely an architecture that represents a set of positive, timeless values, such as dialogue, relations and emotions, the logic and legibility of form or the originality and creativity of the designer. Architecture has always been the result of innovative pursuits that corresponded to new conditions, styles, models of spatial organisation, functions, forms and compositions of spatial structures. It appears that in the global and technology-dominated reality of today it is difficult to still relay on the Platonic Triad – beauty, good and truth. On the other hand, man's inclination towards qualities like the safety, harmony and beauty of the environment of life is timeless.

Architecture is a form of artistic expression that forms an image of human activity. To build an individual building or a larger layout, one requires considerable material and human resources. This is why it is the architects' responsibility to create a built environment that is friendly to both humans and other forms of life. The idea of sustainable development, whose beginnings date back to the 1980s, is important today. It is a manifestation of increased awareness on how humans impact the environment. However, it focuses solely on materials and efficient technologies. Right now, we need an architecture that not only satisfies the wishes of the client or requirements concerning thermal insulation, beauty and aesthetics, but one that can be sensitive to values linked with repairing, conserving and maintaining the natural environment of our planet. The truth of architecture reveals itself in its beauty, utility, harmony, safety, sensitivity, creativity, synergy, identity, culture, stability, ecology, sustainable development or the closed loop, but most of all, it does so in the courage of those who create it.

* * *

The truth of architecture is multi-threaded and reveals itself through all the ideals that are possible for it. The architect should become a truly empathetic creator of the built environment, but this requires courage.



- III. 1. CaixaForum by Herzog & de Meuron in Madrid. Photo: author
 III. 2. Extension of the Museo Nacional Centro de arte Reina Sofia by Jean Nouvel in Madrid. Photo: author
 III. 3. Metropol Parasol by Jürgen Mayer in Porto. Photo: author



Ill. 4, 5. Casa da Música by Rem Koolhaas OMA in Porto. Photo: author
 Ill. 6. Rolex Learning Center by SANAA in Lausanne. Photo: author



III. 7. Serpentine Sackler Gallery Extension by Zaha Hadid in London. Photo: author

III. 8. Tate Modern Extension by Herzog & de Meuron in London. Photo: author

III. 9. Danish Maritime Museum by Bjarke Ingels Group in Helsingør. Photo: author

	Rolex Learning Center / SANAA / Lausanne 2010	Metropol Parasol / Jürgen Mayer / Seville 2011	Casa da Música / Rem Koolhaas OMA / Porto 2005	Polin Museum of the History of Polish Jews / Lahdelma & Mahlamäki / Warsaw / 2014	Danish Maritime Museum / Bjarke Ingels Group / Helsingør / 2013	Serpentine Sackler Gallery Extension Zaha Hadid / London / 2013	Tate Modern / Herzog & de Meuron / London 2016	Centre for the Meeting of Cultures/ Bolesław Stelmach / Lublin / 2015	CaixaForum / Herzog & de Meuron / Madrid 2008	Extension of the Museo Nacional Centro de arte Reina Sofia / Jean Nouvel / Madrid / 2005
Function										
The building's functions inspire to engaging in various types of social contact.	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
The functions of the building differentiate the existing functions of its surroundings.	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0
The function is reflected in the form.	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1
Form										
The building's formal solutions supplement the urban composition.	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1
Creative architectural solutions cause a Wow effect.	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
The building plays the role of an orientation point.	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1
The form of the building is lapidary and elegant.	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0
Relations										
Public space plays an important social function as a space for circulation and contacts.	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1
The building enhances the economic attractiveness of its surroundings.	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1
The building enhances the city's position on the international stage.	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0
The building has an educational value, shaping a sensitivity to value in society.	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
(others)	1v0	1v0	1v0	1v0	1v0	1v0	1v0	1v0	1v0	1v0

Table 1. A matrix which is an inspiration for creating a metalanguage about the truth of architecture (by Anna Martyka)

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