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SEEKING THE TRUTH

POSZUKUJĄC PRAWDY

Abstract

The article is not an attempt to define the Truth or Lie, but to consider their essence in the context of architectural education. In the theory of architecture, research on this issue has been present since the beginning of the 20th century, conducted by, among others, theorists such as Bahnam and Giedion. The authors' basic research methods are literature analysis and field documents in the field of education. The aim of the research is to create a framework for expanding the national didactic potential, based on foreign experience. The result of the research is the preliminary determination of positive and negative educational models in selected European countries.

Keywords: education, metaphysics, truth, lie, creativity

Streszczenie

Artykuł nie jest próbą definiowania Prawdy lub Kłamstwa, ale rozważania ich istoty, w kontekście edukacji architektonicznej. W teorii architektury badania tego zagadnienia są obecne od początku XX wieku, prowadzili je między innymi teoretycy tacy jak Bahnam czy Giedion. Podstawowymi metodami badawczymi Autorów są zastosowane analizy literaturowe oraz dokumenty kierunkowe w zakresie edukacji. Celem badań jest stworzenie ram dla rozszerzenia krajowego potencjału dydaktycznego, w oparciu o doświadczenia zagraniczne. Wynikiem badań jest wstępne określenie pozytywnych i negatywnych modeli kształcenia w wybranych krajach europejskich.

Słowa kluczowe: edukacja, metafizyka, prawda, kłamstwo, kreatywność

1. INTRODUCTION

Truth and lies – terms seemingly defined in a similar way by most people. Seemingly, because already in antiquity Sophocles's drama showed that there can be several truths ... And a lie cannot be called anything that "supposedly" indicates them. Not every truth is good, although by nature this adjective of its companions, not every lie is bad ... although accepted norms so preach. Both truth and lies can be read on other planes, hence the differences in their definition and evaluation. While in the case of exact / technical sciences it seems that the issues of these concepts are quite clear-cut, in the case of art (to which architecture undoubtedly belongs), the proverbial "stairs" begin while trying to find the truth and lies. Why? Because art is relative, which is both a disadvantage and an advantage

Due to the dualism that accompanies the above-mentioned concepts, the authors at work do not attempt to indicate, on the basis of specific examples of architectural activities, what is true and what bears lies. Instead, the article raises the issue of a phenomenon taking place somewhat earlier, before the period of the conscious creation of a given artist. After all, education largely shapes the mind, sensitivity and views of creators and recipients. It is the driving force of all progress, regardless of the areas it covers. Following the title, the authors will search for the truth in the teaching process covering artistic issues, including architectural.

2. CONTEMPORANEITY

Contemporary solutions that we observe in architecture (art) are derived from social and technical changes, inseparably connected with the national culture of a given region – religion, philosophy, economy and husbandry. An approach taken, for example, from the Middle Ages or Baroque would not be able to meet the needs and expectations of the average European of the 20th, let alone the 21st century. In the novel *Red and Black*¹ by Stendhal, there is a catchy maxim, whose message undoubtedly can also be referred to the essence of art. We are talking about the words: “The novel is a mirror strolling on a road. It reflects the azure of the sky, it’s the mud of a roadside puddle.”² Architecture is also such a mirror – it reflects life, behavior, needs, habits, and passions characteristic of a given era. The conclusion is automatic – people understand the architecture for which they are prepared, which they have been taught, which someone has presented to them and additionally explained. That is why didactics is of great importance in the development of art. Education from an early age can significantly change the perception of functional and aesthetic values, somehow directing creators in later stages of life. As Gropius writes: “Educational trends creating creative or reproductive habits play a key role in shaping people’s attitudes.”³ So, is the common practice of teaching all kinds of visual arts using only historical and critical methods of assessing specific sources appropriate? In *Full Architecture*, one of the creators of Bauhaus sums up this type of didactics with an apt statement: “In general, aesthetic connoisseurship has supplanted the creative perception of art.”⁴ This tendency usually leads students to clear conclusions. Among the few individuals who are truly fascinated by the world of historical artists, another group is made up of students who, as if overwhelmed by the enormity of the genius of the then masters, live and create in the belief that their intellectual and design work will never lead them to the higher world of culture...

They ask themselves, so why try? The complete lack of extensive self- development ambitions is often due to the way they teach in places where they undertook their education. Carrying such a belief in their internal luggage, they often do not feel the need to study works – icons, or delve into the biographies of various artists. They believe that this is a sphere reserved only for experienced art historians, besides, it is boring... – this is another reflection and thought of the average student, unfortunately largely due to the education system. “This

¹ Stendhal, *Czerwone i czarne*, MG, Warszawa 2015.

² *Ibidem*.

³ W. Gropius, *Pełnia architektury*, wydawnictwo Karakter, Kraków 2014, p. 102.

⁴ *Ibidem*.

state of consciousness results in a completely materialistic perception of reality stripped of spiritual factors and metaphysical.”⁵ The knowledge is passed on to future students, often automatically and without reflection. Of course, architectural education, education of art, must have a base derived from the history and heritage. But it cannot be its only foundation, which, moreover, does not allow new directions to rise on solid foundations. Things should be quite the opposite – the foundation should help to grow revealing modern, progressive, unconventional, creative and avant-garde currents. This attitude is illustrated by an excerpt from Adam Asnyk’s poem:

*Each epoch has its special goals in store,
And soon forgets the dreams of older days.
So, bear the torch of learning in the fore,
And join the making of new eras’ lore.
The House of the Future raise!*

*But trample not the altars of the past!
Although you shall much finer domes erect.
The holy flames upon the stones still last,
And human love lives there and guards them fast,
And them you owe respect!*⁶

The Polish poet clearly indicates the natural cyclicity that we should give in to, and not destroy or alter strongly. It combines respect for the past with a desire to create. Until such an attitude is clearly propagated among the title *Young*, subsequent generations will be shaped in a system that does not fully use the potential of both history and fresh minds. How can you demand justified boldness and courage from your pupils who follow the modern way?

3. CHANGE

It would be worthwhile to transpose current teaching methods so that they effectively illustrate current directions of progress. For the longer the period of reflection on the artistic means of past eras and artists lasts, the more doubtful it seems the possibility to create our characteristic contemporary culture, containing the TRUTH of time, which consists of both form and content.

The environment has a significant impact on the shaping and development of the perception of a young person entering the path of artistic education. According to the authors, the university should be a base that guides and shapes the culture of future generations. It should indicate activities that will be creative and constructive, not just reproductive, almost copying the past. The truth of creation, among other things, is to find your own proverbial “line,” style and sensitivity. Didactics, dealing with broadly understood art, should be based on the search for authenticity and help students in auto development, which in later periods of their

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 109.

⁶ A. Asnyk, *Do młodych* [in:] A. Asnyk, *Poezje*, Wydawnictwo C&T, Toruń 2013.

life and activity will also manifest itself in professional ethics. Thanks to this, they have the opportunity to shape their personal attitude towards the truth of creative communication. Unfortunately, this approach is not always appreciated and approved. Often, material values and shallow popularity become the leading determinant of the so-called success. The priority in artistic development should be to find your own sincere path, which will not always be easy and straightforward, but in the end its value will outweigh material, shallow and short-lived, although sometimes spectacular, benefits. The awareness of this phenomenon is not extremely original but still valid, especially in our domestic reality, which seems to often take the seemingly easier path of materialism that brings measurable profits, but devoid of timeless values shaping generations and ideas.

4. EDUCATION ABROAD

It is worth noting how similar didactic issues are solved by other European countries in the field of art and architecture. Positive activities in the field of education can be seen especially in the Scandinavian countries. Although the architecture of these regions did not show significant achievements in comparison to Europe almost until the mid-20th century, it gradually began to change from the 1960s. Certainly the approach to didactics played a significant role in this respect. Currently, Denmark, the Netherlands, Finland, Norway are considered to be leaders in creative functional, aesthetic and construction solutions. In recent decades, it is there that objects determining contemporary trends of architectural development are created. The Netherlands, among architects is sometimes called the “architectural Mecca.” This effect has a deep justification in the ways and methods of conducting art and architecture education from an early age. The European Parliament has addressed these issues by conducting and financing research into the methodology and quality of teaching in European countries.⁷ The European Commission has created the European Agenda for Culture, which since 2007 has emphasized the impact of artistic education and the development of student creativity.

The role that artistic education plays in increasing the competences of young people in the 21st century is widely appreciated in Europe [...] and the European Parliament in the 2009 Resolution on artistic studies in the European Union presented recommendations on the development of artistic education and called for better its coordination on a European scale.⁸

The mechanism of artistic education in the countries that joined the European Agenda of Culture is very simple, legible and effective in its effects. All students in primary schools are required to undergo a certain number of obligatory classes in arts subjects. It is very similar for high schools in almost all countries. However, when art classes are not compulsory, they can be selected as optional subjects. According to EAK guidelines, the number of hours allocated to arts subjects ranges from 50 to 100 per year in primary schools, while in secondary schools it is slightly lower (*part 2.3*).⁹ Schools in Europe suggest that students be definitely

⁷ *Edukacja artystyczna i kulturalna w szkołach w Europie [Arts and Cultural Education at School in Europe]*, EACEA, Fundacja Rozwoju Systemu Edukacji, Warszawa 2010.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 3.

⁹ *Ibidem*.

more connected to art and culture. One way to accomplish these tasks is to visit art galleries and museums, and to collaborate with artists (*part 3.2*).¹⁰

In contrast, the criteria for grades in artistic subjects are set by the teachers themselves based on the teaching objectives contained in the curricula or guidelines provided by the educational authorities. Such a system allows teachers to take an individual approach in determining the level of students' achievements. In many countries, Architecture is part of the compulsory arts curriculum (*part 2.2*).¹¹ To this end, various initiatives are taken to support and contribute to the development of artistic education. Since 2006, Denmark has undertaken a new project called the Danish Culture Canon, which aims to present to all citizens native art and culture and provoke a cultural debate in society.¹² The consequence of these activities is an increase in the quality and level of the resulting art (including architecture). Of course, the effects of educational activities are a long-term process, however, you can already see the positive effects of the impact of artistic teaching. We can observe significant progress in the development of architecture based on teaching methods in countries such as Slovenia, Romania, Slovakia, Estonia and Switzerland. Architecture in these countries is becoming more and more noticeable in world rankings (such as *Ofis*).¹³

At the same time, it can be seen that countries that are perceived as a cradle of trends and shaping architecture development, such as France, Italy and Spain, have lost their freshness somewhat, and are not currently the benchmark for development in modern architecture. It is worth analyzing these phenomena deeper to be able to successfully fight for the improvement of architectural education in Poland, and at the same time contribute to the improvement of the quality of the constructed objects. Of course, the proposed solutions to improve learning outcomes are not so-called binary, the final effect is influenced by many other factors, such as financing education, economic solutions, and political system. Only then we can say that our search for Truth in architecture has any sense, because without the radicalization of architectural education, further attempts to improve the current level will still be only wishful thinking of a handful of people. And the truth in architecture will once again be dominated by other "important" factors.

5. VARIETY OF TRUTH

The most important attributes of the 2018 Pritzker award winner, Balkrishna Doshi, were both creativity and attitude. The jury recognized not only the unification of purpose and structure (in architecture and urban planning) but also: "deep understanding and appreciation of the context in the widest meaning words. Designs must go beyond functionality to connect with

¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹¹ *Ibidem*; "In five countries, architecture is a compulsory teaching area – in two of them (Flemish Community of Belgium and Norway) it is a separate subject in the compulsory arts curriculum," *ibidem*, p. 28.

¹² *Ibidem*; "Creating this canon, the Danish Minister of Culture Brian Mikkelsen appointed seven committees dealing with: architecture, visual arts, designer and handicrafts, film, theater, music and literature," *ibidem*, p. 48.

¹³ Współczesna architektura Słowenii [in:] Architektura Info, https://architektura.info/wiadomosci/wydarzenia_architektoniczne/wspolczesna_architektura_slowenii/

the human spirit through poetic philosophical foundations.”¹⁴ The Hindu architect dedicated his prize to Le Corbusier with whom he had the opportunity to work in the ‘50s. “He taught me to ask questions about the identity and role of building, inspired me to look for a new language of contemporary and at the same time regional architecture”¹⁵ – he comments. In his speech he also emphasized that: “It’s a good project that turns a shelter into a home, a housing estate – into a community, and a city – in place of unlimited possibilities.”¹⁶ Its architecture is an excellent illustration of art serving people. This has undoubtedly become the major aspect of his design. In his work he combines two seemingly distant issues – the tradition of a given region with an innovative (contemporary) approach – of which he also teaches his students in India, pointing out the lack of sense in, informally speaking, showing off. Following the modernist maxim, *Less is more*¹⁷ – He says that it is better to design less, but always in relation to the context, functions and economic possibilities of a given social group. Doshi is undoubtedly looking for the truth – context, place, people. Truth, which you do not need to “decorate,” because its greatest advantage lies in honesty.

Ricardo Bofill¹⁸ in his sub-Paris projects or in the residential and service quarter in Montpellier did not have any inhibitions to design, while promoting “dummy” architecture. In his solutions he proposed huge, suspended cornices, which were in fact only enclosed modeled empty boxes that pretended to be elements of Greek and Roman architecture. Despite such means of expression in his designs, his architecture finds its supporters and sometimes also followers. According to the authors, the question should be asked whether at the stage of education shaping the awareness of the future architect, such solutions should be promoted? Should a student, who would present their solutions in similar aesthetics and trends during the execution of projects, be “praised” and whether such a “type” of architecture would be admitted at universities today? The responses of the didactics in this matter would certainly be divided. However, it can be assumed that any kind of attempt to search for “own self” is a valuable “event” in the lives of young artists. Examples of this kind are a great area to conduct ambitious, developing discussions and to draw personal conclusions. Architectural education should be based on confrontations, i.e. searching and discovering – truth and falsehood in art. However, one should not propagate, even authoritatively, specific solutions, style or manners, showing that this is the only right way. Poorly justified negation or subjecting to severe criticism of various creative activities, has a demotivating effect on young people seeking their way of life. Freedom of choice, created on the basis of analyzing reasons and effects, should be a permanent element shaping academic discourse, both among lecturers and students. The question may be asked whether the architecture of Aldo Rossi, Philip Johnson, James Stirling, Michael Graves, Wojciech Jarząbek or other world creators of postmodernism is less honest than the architecture of Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius or Alvar Aalto? Which of the current “popes” of architecture is always true in his solutions?

¹⁴ Balkrishna Doshi – The Pritzker Architectural Prize, Jury Citation 2018, <https://www.pritzkerprize.com/laureates/balkrishna-doshi>

¹⁵ Znamy zwycięzcę tegorocznej edycji Pritzker Prize 2018 [in:] PropertyDesign.pl, https://www.propertydesign.pl/dossier/132/znamy_zwyciezce_tegorocznej_edycji_pritzker_prize_2_018,17338.html

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷ C. Zimmermann, P. Goessel, *Mies van der Rohe*, Taschen, Köln 2009.

¹⁸ Album “Ricardo Bofill” – surrealistyczna architektura w detalu, <https://label-magazine.com/lifestyle/artykuly/album-ricardo-bofill-surrealistyczna-architektura-w-detalu>

Rem Koolhaas, or perhaps Sir Norman Foster? Is honesty in the organic forms of Zaha Hadid more appropriate than in the dynamic realizations of Daniel Libeskind? Can you multiply these questions almost endlessly and think about the works and achievements of contemporary architects? Do we even have the right to compile and to some extent compare with each other the above-mentioned architects? Can we search for truth and design sincerity this way, or is this a certain type of abuse?

6. INDIVIDUALISM

One of the biggest mistakes in teaching architecture is pointing and cherishing specific architects or trends, considering them infallible. Naturally, following the history of art, certain trends have always been more popular than others. The university should be a neutral place, promoting good choices among young students, but not imposing specific development paths. There are exceptions to this – that is, schools whose characteristic feature is a particular manner or style. This was often the case in art academies, for example such a famous term as “Munich school” can be used. This refers to the trends that took place in painting at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. At that time, many painters, including Polish ones, went to improve their skills to Munich. The academy and befriended drawing and painting schools in that area had a particularly distinctive style that can be seen even in the selected shades of colors. Of course, some of the young artists established there did not develop their own recognizable style, while many others, thanks to their education, found their own characteristic “Me” ... their own truth. An example would be Olga Boznańska,¹⁹ who was not admitted to the Munich Academy due to her gender, but nevertheless entered education in smaller schools based on very similar didactic principles.

7. SUMMARY

Apparently, true beauty will stand the test of time. Beauty – honest. Some artists-architects, are often assigned the role of icons, stars in the architectural sky. However, sometimes, they are not stars but only comets whose glow quickly delights observers, appearing out of nowhere. Real stars differ from comets and meteors they sometimes shine with a delicate glow invariably, over many years, decades, and usually do not need great or media coverage. It's worth summoning here characters like Stanisław Niemczyk,²⁰ Jurand Jarecki,²¹ Jerzy Gottfried or Henryk Buszko and Aleksander Franta.²² Their value not only does not pass away but strengthens over time. Every year, the architectural Nobel finds its owner in the person of an architect (or team), awarded for their entire work. The prize has been awarded since 1979. Looking at the list of laureates, their common denominator can be seen. Almost each of them was guided by his own truth – he would create a style, manner,

¹⁹ A. Kuźniak, *Boznańska. Non finito*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 2019.

²⁰ Stanisław Niemczyk – polski Gaudi. <https://www.biblioteka.ath.bielsko.pl/index.php/389-stanislaw-niemczyk-polski-gaudi.html>

²¹ I. Herok-Turska, *Jurand Jarecki – Architekt* [in:] *Twórcy Śląskiej Architektury*, Biblioteka Śląska, Katowice 2018.

²² T. Barucki, *Zielone koine = Green Horses*, Salix alba Warszawa 2015.

current or means of expression that reflected the author's sincere belief. Tadao Ando,²³ a laureate from 1995, often points out in his interviews how important role the Japanese culture plays in his work, and hence nature directly related to it. Before he began his design work, he meticulously analyzed space and the way of functioning – life, then drawing conclusions from his observations which are now finding outlet in his objects. He certainly has his inner truth, a recognizable line, which he has developed through the penetration of reality which he executes to this day. Designers of our immediate reality are not only winners of top prizes or awards. That is why education plays such an important role. In the art of shaping the awareness of the future profession there are different methods, trends and directions of action. It is very good that there is no uniform and one-way teaching method, because it gives authenticity to educational activities, and at the same time teaches independence in thinking and searching. The more such clashing structures that are looking for their own educational path already at the level of individual and basic units such as the faculties of architecture or the art academy, the more dynamic this development will be and the results obtained will bring us not only closer to seeking the truth in architecture but also to discover it and develop it further.

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²³ P. Gossel, *Ando*, Taschen, Köln 2016.

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