EXPLORING IDEAS IN OUR SENSES KANT'S FACULTY OF IMAGINATION EXPLORED IN UNGERS "CITY METAPHORS"

A B S T R A C T

Senses and ideas, how do they meet? The connection of the sensory realm and pure reason is found in Immanuel Kant's philosophy, particularly in his theory of the faculty of imagination. This paper examines his ideas concerning this capacity, especially his notion of the free play. With examples of the creative processes of architects I will demonstrate that the free play between the capacity of imagination and cognition alters our perception. In that state of perception *ideas* arise from the sensory input. Oswald M. Ungers has expounded on the *idea* giving life to his creations in his publication *City Metaphors*, which is a focal reference for this paper. In the interpretation of the author *City Metaphors* can display this altered state of perception profoundly if they are connected to Kant's theories and his understanding of the imagination. The "City Metaphors" can even be seen as an exploration of the faculty of imagination entering into the realm of free play. In my conclusion I will use designs of Le Corbusier and Alvar Aalto to illustrate the potential of the faculty of imagination in the examples of concrete design processes.

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FREE PLAY

SCHEMA

TRANSCENDENTAL PHILOSOPHY

OSWALD M. UNGERS

IMMANUEL KANT

CRITIQUE OF JUDGEMENT

One of the first things you learn in an architecture school is that there is no right or wrong in a formal logical sense. No method guarantees a successful design. On the other hand, there is definitely a *feeling* in the process that an idea is good and worth following. A feeling that informs us that a design is good. Is it possible to understand and describe the foundations and directions of this particular *feeling* since we have no logical judgement at hand to comprehend decisions in the design process?

It was quite eye-opening to me to find a good explanation of the feeling I experienced in the design process by reading Kant's aesthetics. In his view we are in a *special mindset* when we experience it: the faculty of imagination (Einbildungskraft) is in free play with the faculty of understanding (Verstand). It is the faculty of imagination *feeling* ideas that go beyond conceptualising (so in play with understanding, beyond understanding) so it could be said that *we feel ideas in our senses through the faculty of imagination*.

Interestingly, Ungers' publication *City Metaphors* can be interpreted as the exploration of the faculty of imagination being in free play. In it, Ungers displays 128 city maps next to photographs of flora, fauna and common objects. Each city map resembles in shape or texture a matching photograph and for each pair he finds a term for that resemblance.

On closer inspection of Ungers' matching maps and photographs we see that the concept he found for the resemblance between the two *widens*. In this process of perception we get to something beyond the concept which is neither abstract nor non-sensual.

THE FACULTY OF IMAGINATION AFTER KANT

Firstly, I will briefly introduce some of Kant's terminology that forms the basis of his theory.

When we talk about faculties (or capacities), it is important to know that Kant is not talking about "organs". The question he poses comes from the realm of asking about *the conditions that have to be fulfilled so that understanding or experience is possible* (Bedingungen der Möglichkeit von Erkenntnis). What is necessary so that we see the world the way we do? What is necessary for us to have a common experience of an organised world and to talk about objectivity?

He comes to the conclusion that there must be something that organises the input that the senses provide to a consistent field of experience. So what do we have to rely upon to get to a consistent world, a unity in our experience, a shared experience?

Kant comes up with functions that act in our perception: time and space as the *pure forms of intuition* and *categories*, functions that form reason. One example is that the relationship between cause and effect has nothing to do with what we experience, but something we have to bring into perception to establish an objective experience.

Another capacity we need is *imagination*. It functions as the connection between reason (the categories) and the sensory input. The imagination develops *schemata*. A schema is a pattern for organising the input, but it is not a fixed pattern or an image. Kant describes the difference between a schema and an image in the following example:

“The schema by itself is no doubt a product of the imagination only, but as the synthesis of the imagination does not aim at a single intuition, but at some kind of unity alone in the determination of sensibility [Bestimmung der Sinnlichkeit], the schema ought to be distinguished from the image. Thus, if I place five points, one after the other , this is an image of the number five. If, on the contrary, I think of a number in general, whether it be five or a hundred, this thinking is rather the representation of a method of representing in one image a certain quantity (for instance a thousand) according to a certain concept, than the image itself, which, in the case of a thousand, I could hardly take in and compare with the concept. This representation of a general procedure of the imagination by which a concept receives its image, I call the schema of such concept.”¹

So the schema is a method of the imagination to form images in accordance with a certain concept. With this in mind we can go a step further in Kant’s understanding of the aesthetic experience.

In *The Critique of Judgement* Kant describes the aesthetic experience as a feeling of pleasure (Gefühl der Lust) that arises from a free play between the faculties of reason and imagination.

In the free play the imagination is not bound to a certain concept but can *float*. It is more focused on the “methodology” (or procedure) to organise in general than on the one given by the particular concept. This effects the schema that is involved as well. I would describe the schema as *being opened up*.

Kant speaks of a certain proportion of the mindset that is focused on *cognition in general*. The faculty of reason and imagination relate to each other in a proportion that is advantageous (zweckmäßig) to cognition without being limited by a particular cognition.

The faculty of imagination relates to the universality of the conceptual in general. Imagination and reason stand in a self-relation to their own process. Both arrive at a circuit in which they relate to one another and thus “determine” one another without ending this process with a particular cognition or concept. We can *feel* this proportion. It creates pleasure, through which we can perceive this principle of finality in our own powers of cognition. We feel ourselves in the cognition process, insofar as it is not based on a specific knowledge but on knowledge in general (on the general principle of our judgmental capacities). It is thus a feeling which points to the transcendental conditions of knowledge.

This cycle of the reciprocal-determining of the two capacities points in the direction of the interest of pure reason to reach the greatest possible unity with the greatest possible diversity. It points in the direction to reach the greatest possible extent of universality and, at the same time, the highest complexity or “depth” of the content or the greatest possible differentiation. The latter is focused on the greatest possible understanding of the particular and therefore can also be perceived in a detail, in a concrete, single representation.

In the aesthetic experience we dive into the specific manifestation of the individual. Also the detail has potentially infinite distinguishable features. However, the process does not try to capture all the characteristics but is looking for incisive features, which lead the powers of cognition into the proportion of finality. These features provide more material than can be understood by concepts. This multitude of possibilities is felt and evokes pleasure. It goes beyond what could be conceived in a term, for it does not refer to a single purpose, but to the principle of judgement as a whole. This perceived relationship gives rise to what Kant calls the *aesthetic idea*.

“If, now we attach to a concept a representation of the imagination belonging to its presentation, but inducing solely on its own account such a wealth of thought as would never admit of comprehension in a definite concept, and, as a consequence, giving aesthetically an unbounded expansion to the concept itself, then the imagination here displays a creative activity, and it puts the faculty of intellectual ideas (reason) into motion – a motion, at the instance of a representation, towards an extension of thought, that, while germane, no doubt, to the concept of the object, exceeds what can be laid hold of in that representation or clearly expressed.”²

EXPLORING IDEAS IN OUR SENSES - THE *OPEN* SCHEMA IN THE DESIGN PROCESS

Having explained a basis of Kant's terminology we can now look at what this means for the design process and how this understanding can shape architecture as a practice of exploring ideas in our senses. First I would like to quote Paul Geyer who speaks of a turning point in the philosophy of architecture before and after Kant.

“But there is a profound difference in the philosophy of architecture [...] before and after Kant. Given the indisputable influence of Kant's aesthetics on the next epoch of the discipline, above all the aesthetics of German idealism in the forty years following the publication of Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* in 1790, it thus seems natural to look for the shift in philosophical thinking about architecture within Kant's aesthetics. The shift is there to be found. The shift I have in mind is from an essentially Vitruvian conception of architecture, according to which its two chief goals are beauty and utility, to a cognitivist or expressivist conception of architecture, in which, like other forms of fine art, architecture is thought of as expressing and communicating abstract ideas, not just aiming for beauty and utility. [...] The decisive factor in this turn, I would suggest, is Kant's thesis that all art involves the expression of “aesthetic ideas”, that is, the expression of rational ideas in a form that yields inexhaustible material for the play of the imagination.”³

According to Geyer architecture is no longer about beauty and utility but rather about expressing and communicating ideas. When we turn to Ungers we can see a very similar view on the fundamentals of architecture. For Ungers, in line with

Fig. 1. “Backbone” in City Metaphors, © Ungers Archiv

Geyer, the idea or creative vision is a main principle for the design process. In the introduction of his *City Metaphors* he says:

“As the meaning of a whole sentence is different from the meaning of the sum of single words, so is the creative vision and ability to grasp the characteristic unity of a set of facts, and not just to analyse them as something which is put together by single parts. The consciousness that catches the reality through sensuous perception and imagination is the real creative process because it achieves a higher degree of order than the simplistic method of testing, recording, proving and controlling. [...] This imaginative process of thinking applies to all intellectual and spiritual areas of human activities though the approaches might be different in various fields. But it is always a fundamental process of conceptualizing an unrelated, diverse reality through the use of images, metaphors, analogies, models, signs, symbols and allegories.”⁴

With his matching images in “City Metaphors” Ungers wants to illustrate the importance of the creative vision developed with the help of images, metaphors, analogies, etc. His approach to visualising the creative process through the way he pairs the images can be seen as an exploration of the capacity of imagination in its free play. In the following paragraph I will examine a pair of images entitled “Backbone”. (Fig. 1)

The photo shows the skeleton of a snake with a long, round arched spine from which many elongated ribs branch off. The architectural drawing shows a draft of Tiefbauverwaltung in Berlin. We see a street, which is also round-shaped. It stretches around Berlin's centre and from it you can see other roads branching off like a snake's backbone, which is made up of many vertebrae attached to ribs. Both images carry the same title. The conceptual knowledge of the backbone is prerequisite, otherwise the immersion into the opening of the schema would not be possible. The more we know about the backbone, the more extensive is our schema.

The schema developed by our imagination fits both images, but in very different ways: in one it is literal and in the other figurative. When looking at each image, the schema gains new aspects that are transmitted to the other. However, the transfer from one image to the other opens the schema as a whole. The transmission is not literal. The opening goes beyond the conceptual definition of each one of them as if it were open between the two. In the transmission process a new structure of the schema develops. It covers more aspects than the original concept's schema, and at the same time, it can be applied to completely independent forms. It has the detail of the concrete form, and at the same time,

it becomes a principle that can also be applied to other forms which then can be seen very differently: So it has universality (as a concept) and concreteness (as an intuition) at the same time.

New possibilities arise as the imagination relates differently to the faculty of cognition. The faculty of imagination offers various procedures of how to organise the intuition. Cognition is not ending the process with a specific concept, but develops into a state of rebuilding rules.

When looking at the snake's backbone the aspects that come into the schema are directly related to its function. We transfer it to the geometrically similar shape of the road and perceive it differently than before. The details of the individual road sections (analogous to the vertebrae) and the image of the large road branching off can now be seen with more aspects. Perhaps their overall significance for the city can also be seen in a new light.

The fact that the aspect of organs and, in this case, a reptile are not to be taken literally and that we can distinguish this suggests a schema which is much wider than the schema of the snake's backbone and, at the same time, more differentiated than a concept. In the drawing we see more than we would without the photograph next to it. However, we see no snake in the drawing of Berlin's Tiefbauverwaltung.

This resulting *open* schema points to the structure of finality without a particular concept. Our mindset is in the proportion of finality. It leads the imagination into a *creative vision* of the perceived form, which incorporates much more

Fig. 2. A floorplan sketch for Notre Dame du Haut in Ronchamp

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individual aspects than a concept could hold and therefore leads to an *aesthetic idea* in Kant's terminology. The development of an open schema or aesthetic idea in the process of perception can be *felt* but not *clearly formulated*. Learning to design therefore does not mean learning a method but rather listening to, differentiating and using this feeling arising from our imagination. In doing so we develop our perception *to feel ideas in our senses*.

EXAMPLES: THE OPEN SCHEMA IN THE DESIGN PROCESS OF LE CORBUSIER, AALTO AND SCHINKEL

In conclusion I will show examples of architects in their design process and I will first look at Le Corbusier. In Niklas Maak's biography about Le Corbusier he describes his *objets à réaction poétique*: these *objets* illustrate very well the development of an aesthetic idea through this particular way of perceiving the world by opening up the schema in our imagination.

"A pebble cut off from the sea, a clinker fragment, rounded off by the lake or the river, skeletons and fossils, roots, or algae, petrified, whole shells, porcelanese, with meandering or wave lines, or seeds, pebbles, crystals, stones, woods, in short the endless variety of objects in which nature speaks to us. [...]. In this dubious origin lies what Le Corbusier calls the poetic potential of the objects: the object raises questions, provokes conjectures, delights the eye as well as irritates the thinking. The "Objets à réaction poétique" opens to the architect a new world of forms, beyond his categories of thought and thus beyond what he can invent. It is a generator that mobilises shapes that could not be imagined."⁵ (Fig. 2, 3, 4, 5)

Fig. 3. Le Corbusier is drawing a stone, © VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2018

Fig. 4-5. "Objets à réaction poétique",
© VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2018

Fig. 6. Sketch of the Essen theatre's floorplan and cut tree trunk, ©Alvar Aalto Foundation, ©Pablo Lopez

Fig. 7. Aalto's sketch of a landscape, similar to the images of his theatre, ©Alvar Aalto Foundation

Fig. 8. Views of the Essen theatre, ©Alvar Aalto Foundation

I will now turn my attention to Aalto. When Ungers talks about Alto's designs he speaks of *likeness* (Ebenbildlichkeit) in contrast to *reproduction* (Abbild) of natural objects or environments that Alto uses for inspiration. Here again we can see the imagination's open schema at work. Looking at his design of the Essen theatre, which was often compared to a tree trunk, we see that the tree trunk is not simply replicated here. Aalto sees a principle behind it, which he then differentiates and implements in various forms. This principle is more than a concept. It is more concrete, however, it is not a mere image. (Fig. 6, 7, 8)

To conclude I want to quote Karl Friedrich Schinkel that Ungers has referred a lot to in his theories. Schinkel says that architecture and art in general cannot be seen as mere closed objects, but have to evoke life through the idea that they display. This life arises in the process of perception as the imagination is in play aimed at reaching the greatest possible extent of universality and, at the same time, the highest complexity or "depth" of the content. We enter into a state of perception where we feel the idea in our senses as a never-ending movement of our imagination towards this goal.

"In architecture, as in every art, life must become visible, one must see the act of the creation of the idea, and how all images of nature is at its disposal, and how it comes forward to satisfy its will. The work of architecture does not have to stand as a closed object; the genuine true imagination, which has once entered into the stream of the idea expressed in it, must continue forever from this work and lead out into the infinite."⁶

NOTES

- 1 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (New York: Macmillan, 1896), Book II, chapter I, 114-15.
- 2 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement* (Oxford University Press, 1911), § 49, 314-15.
- 3 Paul Guyer, "Kant and the Philosophy of Architecture," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, (Winter 2011): 7.
- 4 Oswald M. Ungers, "City Metaphors," in *Architecture and Thinking*, Introduction, 3. Available at: <https://de.scribd.com/doc/312492197/OM-Ungers-City-Metaphors-Architecture-and-Thinking>.
- 5 Niklas Maak, *Der Architekt am Strand. Le Corbusier und das Geheimniss der Seeschnecke* (München: Hanser Verlag, 2010), 53. Translation of the author.
- 6 Karl Friedrich Schinkel, "Das Religiöse Gebäude," (H. IV B 10-15) in *Das Architektonische Lehrbuch*, ed. Gerd Peschken (München-Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1979), 32. Translation of the author.

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PROSTORI ZA PROMIŠLJANJE - GDE JE MESTO FILOZOFIJE?

Ludger Schwarte

Ako rezonovanje podrazumeva određenu arhitekturu (koncepta), čin rezonovanja nije nezavisan od vrlo konkretnih arhitektonskih dispozicija. U svom radu ću, za početak, dati skicu mesta, koja su projektovana kao prostori za promišljanje, zatim dekonstruisati implicitne pretpostavke odnosa sa arhitekturom, i na kraju, pokušati da pokažem kako praksa filozofije zavisi od arhitektonske postavke.

KLJUČNE REČI: FILOZOFIJA, ARHITEKTURA, PROSTOR ZA PROMIŠLJANJE

ISTRAŽIVANJE IDEJA NAŠIH ČULA ISTRAŽIVANJE KANTOVE SPOSOBNOSTI MAŠTE U UNGEROVIM “METAFORAMA GRADA”

Andrea Weigt

Čula i ideje, kako se oni susreću? Povezanost sfere čula i čistog uma se nalazi u filozofiji Imanuela Kanta, posebno u njegovoj teoriji o ljudskoj sposobnosti maštanja. Ovaj tekst analizira njegove ideje u pogledu tog svojstva, a posebno koncepta slobodne igre. Kroz primere kreativnih procesa arhitekata, pokazaću kako slobodna igra između sposobnosti mašte i spoznaje menja našu percepciju. U tom stanju percepcije, ideje nastaju iz naših čulnih inputa. Osvald Ungers (Oswald M. Ungers) je dalje obrazložio da ideja daje život njegovim kreacijama u svojoj publikaciji “Metafore grada”, koja je i glavna referenca ovog rada. Po njegovom tumačenju, “Metafore grada” mogu temeljno pokazati ovo izmenjeno stanje percepcije ukoliko je povezano sa Kantovim teorijama i njegovim shvatanjem mašte. “Metafore grada” mogu čak biti posmatrane i kao istraživanje mašte koje zadire u slobodnu igru. U svom zaključku ću koristiti projekte Le Korbizjea i Alvara Alta kako bih ilustrovala značaj mašte u datim primerima projektantskog procesa.

KLJUČNE REČI: MAŠTA, PROJEKTOVANJE, KREATIVNOST, SLOBODNA IGRA, ŠEMA, TRANSCENDENTALNA FILOZOFIJA, OSVALD UNGERS, IMANUEL KANT, KRITIKA RASUĐIVANJA

FENOMENOLOŠKI NAČINI ZA PROMIŠLJANJE ARHITEKTURE

Carla Danani

S osvrtnom na dugu i antropološku tradiciju, koja je procvetala iz fenomenološke i hermeneutičke misli, predlažem razumevanje ljudskog bića kao “telesna savest” ili “otelovljenje savesti”. Za razliku od predmeta, ljudska bića imaju vezu sa prostorom, koja je suštinska za njihovo postojanje. Moj cilj je da produbim značenje ovog “ljudskog bitisanja” s posebnim osvrtnom na pitanja izgradnje i projektovanja. Mesta nisu samo kontekst, puke pozadine gde se događaji i aktivnosti odvijaju, već ona igraju aktivnu ulogu u izgradnji odnosa, grupa, mašte i samosvesti.

KLJUČNE REČI: PROJEKAT, MESTO, VREME, TELO, PAMĆENJE, MESTO STANOVANJA, SREDINA

ŠETAČ (FLANEUR) U TORINU PERCEPCIJA PROSTORA U RADOVIMA FRIDRIHA NICEA I VALTERA BENJAMINA

Theresa Rauch

Ovaj rad će pokušati da napravi razliku između tri različite vrste prostorno-atmosferskog iskustva na osnovu teorija Hermana Šmitsa (Hermann Schmitz) i Roberta Višera (Robert Vischer). Osim toga, rad povezuje ove metode sa likom šetača (*flaneur*) u knjizi “Odlomci Valtera Benjamina” (Walter Benjamin’s Passages) kao i dnevnicima o Torinu Fridriha Ničea (Friedrich Nietzsche). Ova dva koncepta *flaneur*-a se mogu posmatrati kao konfliktna. Za Benjamina je šetnja gradom sredstvo intelektualne stimulacije, sa fokusom na impulse iz urbanog pejzaža koji se zatim