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The Terror End of Beauty

ABSTRACT: Notwithstanding well-known difficulties of fitting the concept of beauty to architectural form, beauty has been a mainstay when it comes to talking about classical and neoclassical buildings. The classical conception of beauty in the West is closely allied to ideas of moral goodness, imparting to classical and neoclassical architecture a positive ethical accent. This paper investigates another strand of ancient conceptions of beauty that has been impactful in architecture, archaic beauty. I argue that something like archaic beauty surreptitiously reenters twentieth-century architectural theory and practice and adapts classicism to it. That is, some forms of neoclassical architecture take a hybrid of archaic and classical beauty as their principle. This provides a worthwhile lens through which to consider German fascist architecture. The ideal of the good that fascist beauty expresses involves personal submissiveness to charismatic leadership and a deindividualized experience of awe. Fascist architecture, then, exists at the "terror end of beauty," neoclassicism at the threshold of the archaic.

KEYWORDS: architecture, beauty, classicism, fascism, neoclassicism, Nuremberg, terror

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Gods in Color is an exhibition of reproductions of Classical Greek statuary, painted according to the best indications as to how they appeared in antiquity.[1] It opened in Munich in 2003, the home base for research in Greek polychromatic art, and has travelled the world ever since.[2] The show initially proved to be controversial. That statues were painted in ancient Greece was no news, but what they looked like "in the flesh" was another matter.[3]

The Peloponnese was part of a Mediterranean-Near Eastern family of cultures that had existed for upwards of two millennia by the time that Attic Greece joined them. The sculpture and architecture that the Greeks took as models—Assyrian, Babylonian, Cretan, and Egyptian—were all richly painted and, often enough, clad in precious metals and gems. That an Attic statue might be comfortably placed in terms of its color scheme with the Ishtar Gate shouldn't have shocked anyone. Dogging the exhibition, however, was tradition. The reception of Greek art from the Renaissance on had treated the bare-stone whiteness of ancient statues and buildings as emblematic of aesthetic purity; that was a large part of what made them "Classical."[4] To paint them was, in effect, to colorize them.[5]

I.

Another way of understanding the stir that *Gods in Color* caused is that its sculpture was found *unbeautiful* and, to that extent, *unmade*, i.e., not just lacking beauty, but deprived of it. The works, that is, were no longer *Classically* beautiful.

Plato is representative of the philosophical treatment of the Classical conception of beauty. He divides beings into two main sorts: those

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[1] I use "Classical," "Neoclassical," "Archaic," and their cognates to designate aesthetic styles or historical periods in which those styles were or still are predominant. I use initial capitals in the spelling of these terms in order to distinguish them as names of styles or stylistic periods from their more everyday uses.

[2] The catalogue for the initial exhibition is available as Brinkmann and R. Wünsche (eds.), *Bunte Götter: Die Farbigkeit antiker Skulptur*, Glyptothek München, München, 2004.

[3] See, for example, G. Kramer, *Über den Styl und die Herkunft der bemahlten griechischen Throngefäße*, Nicholaische Buchhandlung, Berlin, 1837. Kramer coined the term "severe style" (*der strenge Styl*) to describe the transitional form of sculpture between the Archaic and Classical periods.

[4] When the first excavations of the Acropolis were underway the statuary came out of the ground with its color largely intact. Once the works were exposed to air, however, the color was lost due to the disintegration of the epoxy used to bind paint to stone.

[5] Colorization is a process that applies color frame-by-frame to film shot in black and white. The result is unrealistic and vulgar.

that exist in the world of sense and those that inhabit a supersensible domain. Sensible beings are subject to space and time and, crucially, to spatial and temporal alteration. It is proper to speak of the *becoming* of such beings—of their coming to exist, existing in mutability, and going out of existence.[6] Supersensible entities are not so conditioned; they are nonspatial, eternal, and immutable—in a word, divine. They "always" exist or—better put—simply *are*. There are several sorts of such entities for Plato—numbers, what he calls "forms," and souls—all three of which have roles in his account of the beautiful.[7] Take, first, mathematical objects as he conceived them—arithmetic and plane geometric entities. You can't see the number two (although you can represent it by the numeral "2"). Likewise, there are no visible figures that are circles, although figures can represent circles. The receptive conditions under which mathematical entities are present to one is a matter of pure intellection, not sensory intake. Plato conceives intellect itself as intuitive and, accordingly, as unmediated. But it is not as a practical matter immediate; coming to be in a position to have intuitive intellectual grasp is a laborious undertaking that involves paring down the effect of sense experience on mind.

On this ontological picture, it may seem problematic that the realms of the sensible and supersensible meet: forms are absolutely nonsensible and the world of sense absolutely informal. Plato holds, however, that the unchanging and the changing interact and that the result of this interaction is the *structured change* one observes in nature. Change is never completely random, and the regularity of change results from sensuous things "participating" (*metechō*) in the forms—the second sort of abstract object set out above. Only then are there concrete individuals *qua* individuals.

Beauty is a form, and the beauty of individual things originates from it.[8] Sensuous beauties are beautiful in virtue of the structure that is present in them thanks to their participation in the form. The question then becomes: what sort of structure does participation in beauty yield? Beauty, the form, is eternal and unchanging, and its presence in sensuous things is reflected in those things as their *integral harmonious regularity*. Sense objects are beautiful in case their formal structures *show through* sense in a striking way. The accent here is firmly on form. Plato holds that contemplating the beauty of sensuous things will, with time and effort,

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[6] Not all philosophers equate being and existing. Examples of those who do not are Meinong, Heidegger, and Deleuze. I cannot pursue the point here.

[7] *Phaedo* 78c–80b.

[8] See, e.g., *ibid*., 65d, 75d, 100b, *Phaedrus* 254b, *Republic* 476b.

reveal the participation between the form and its instances, thereby giving one the sense that the instances are being elevated beyond the sensuous.[9] This implicates, in turn, the third sort of supersensible entity set out above, the soul. Contemplating beauties, thereby being led from hedonic to intellectual experience, elevates one because the harmonizing part of the soul is reason. It is endemic to reason to seek out its own kind, i.e., the supersensible forms, the final truths. Because the stakes with beauty are high—the recruiting of sense to intellect—Plato is exceedingly wary of the way artists handle form. In his estimation, they tend to make works that stir up passion with little hope of its rational conversion. They injure beauty by stripping it of its transcendent vocation. He is particularly circumspect about tragic drama on this score, but his caution extends as well to other arts that were central to Greek life.[10] A slightly different, but related, dimension of the soul's importance for beauty has to do with what sort of sensuous object is ideally fitted to reveal beauty's connection to truth. Plato holds that human beauty—specifically, male human beauty—is optimal in this regard. Hegel is the modern philosopher who most clearly sees the implications of this for the plastic arts.

Let's bring the threads together, in advance of connecting them to Classical and Neoclassical ideals of architectural beauty. Beautiful things are sensuous representations of the eternal and divine form, Beauty. Their beauty is due to their formal structure, which integrates otherwise transient qualities of things into discrete, internally complex individuals: line, proportion, harmony of parts—in short, *structural figuration* along mathematical lines. Objects crafted to make perceptually vivid the interactivity of their sensuous and non-sensuous components are beautiful and will appeal to the soul in the right way, permitting it to enter the domain of the otherworldly through the gates of the worldly. The difference between beautiful and ordinary objects in this regard is that the former do not need analysis (viz. dialectic) to travel that distance. They

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[9] *Phaedo* 100d. There is debate concerning whether Plato extends his account of the forms to artifacts. The guiding idea that the forms correspond to abstract ideas, i.e., to what can be predicated without equivocation, hinges on just how abstract a properly abstract idea need be. The typical thing to say here is that no empirical object, artifact or not, would have even its essential properties unequivocally, bound as they are to manifestation in sense.

[10] Aristotle is usually taken to be more lenient on both issues, but that is an oversimplification. He is a revanchist Platonist in my book, and one might well argue that his philosophical allowance to tragedy either sells short tragedy's erotic potential, compartmentalizes its ritual punch, or both. I have not been able to shake the conviction that Aristotle is Plato *réchauffé* ever since I read Cherniss as an undergraduate, no matter how often my friends have tried to dissuade me.

do so erotically, i.e., in virtue of the inherent draw of the sensuous beyond itself. Beauty appeals to sense at the behest of reason, but the appeal is issued from within the sensuous itself. This schema—not necessarily in the precise form Plato's gave to it—dominates Renaissance visual art and architecture, as well as subsequent forays into Classicism. At issue is always the presence of otherworldly form in worldly matter. Structure, evinced in a balance between the abstract and concrete that is struck in favor of the former, is paramount. The generative formal, mathematical properties of the resulting objects are crucial.

Against this background, the apparent colorlessness of Greek sculpture and architecture was no deficiency; it was a power. For, color is the visual hallmark of transience, without apparent formal structure and, therefore, impossible to parse into increments—as this-worldly as this-worldly can be.[11] Line, contour, geometrical balance, proportionality of volumes, etc., better manifest the everlasting. Loosen them enough and the object disintegrates.

The stone that ancient sculptors chose to work did *happen* to have surface properties that lend themselves to abstraction, smooth and uniform. The unwelcome reality, however, is that the choice of specimen was aimed at ease of carving and adherence of paint.

2.

Although one may not be readily put in mind of it, given the stranglehold the Renaissance has exercised on the reception of Greek art, the Classical mind did not have a monopoly on ancient Greek conceptions of beauty. In the Archaic context, beauty is not principally due to structural character. What counted was *spectacle*, things appearing in all their vaulting materiality. Radiance, the sheer magnificence of the sight or sound of a thing was cardinal; what is beautiful is what is brightly alive, not what is immutable and at rest.[12] The matter/form dichotomy simply does not control here; if

[11] It is important not to be anachronistic. Plato did not hold that colors are merely phenomenal in the sense that they are secondary qualities dependent for their reality on being perceived. Colors are real enough, but they are transitory, not *ultimately* real. This seems true, at least, for what Plato would have considered primary colors. They have essences—see *Cratylus* 223e–224a—although it is unclear if each primary has a form or if they are phenomenal modifications of one form, Color. The point remains that on the Classical conception of beauty colors are not where you are going to hang your hat, for they come and go too readily.

[12] R. Neer, *The Emergence of the Classical Style in Greek Sculpture*, University of Chicago, Chicago, 2010 is excellent on all these points.

pertinent at all, the balance is reversed in favor of materiality. That is, the operative experience is of matter surmounting form, not the other way around. If one wanted to drive home the point with maximum force, one would say that, to the extent that the meanings of the concepts "form" and "content" depend for their determinacy on the contrast between them, in the Archaic conception of beauty neither concept played a role. In any case, this understanding of beauty much more easily accommodates positive valuation of something as lustrous and irreducibly worldly as color.[13]

The Classical pivot away from the idea that sensuousness in and of itself can be beautiful to the idea that only formal structuration fits that bill may leave the impression that there was a hard break between the Archaic and Classical conceptions of beauty. But that is not quite accurate. A borderline is real enough, but it gets established incrementally and, even when fully in place, is not impervious. Consider the word in ancient Greek adjective traditionally rendered as "beautiful": *kalos*. It is common to allow that the translation is approximate and to flag that its imperfect fit results from the separation in modernity of two forms of value that were inseparable for the Greeks: ethical and aesthetic. The typical thing to say in order to bridge the difference is that *kalos* means "noble in appearance."[14] To Greeks from the eighth to fourth centuries BCE, the idea that one and the same person or thing might be *both* beautiful *and* evil (or ugly and good) required special treatment. In the Archaic context magic usually was involved. Someone who is evil is only as a matter of illusion beautiful; consequently, given the necessary copresence of beauty and good, that being was also as a matter of illusion good. There were grey areas of course. Circe is *deinē*, but that is far from being simply evil or even, as the English translations often have it, "treacherous."[15] To shift to the Classical context and to flip terms, Plato's Socrates may be physically ugly, but he is in fact beautiful. His formal nature, his mind, is so beautiful that even dishy Alcibiades (physically the most beautiful, but morally pliant) lusts after him. One might well push the point to insist that it is *precisely* Socrates' manifest ugliness that signifies his inner beauty.

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[13] Consider the noun *kosmos*, which in Homeric Greek means "adornment" or "what is well-appointed" and only much later acquires the sense "ordered world"—etymological travel from the cosmetic to the cosmological.

[14] This proximity of ethical to aesthetic regard can be captured to a degree nowadays by thinking of physical bearing. The way one holds oneself is not just posturing concocted for public consumption; bearing manifests character or, one might say, *stature*.

[15] *Odyssey* X, 136.

So, a continuity in ancient Greek aesthetics to keep in mind is that what is (really) beautiful is (really) good and vice-versa. What changes between the Archaic and Classical periods is the specification of what makes something beautiful and, hence, makes it good: luminosity or structure. Evil beauty—*the terror end of beauty*—will have to be handled with care either way.

3.

Architecture developed in concert with painting, which in time came to establish canons of visual beauty.

Quattro- and Cinquecento painting saw rapid advances in the technique of representing three-dimensional scenes in a pictorial plane, which increased hand-in-glove with developments in optics and invention of various devices that enhance observational accuracy. What makes a picture beautiful is a result of what makes it pleasing to contemplate as a representational field, carrying the eye over and deep into the scene depicted: compositional balance, accurate rendering of spatial dimension, placement and modeling of figure, handling of represented light, etc., all of this gathered together for viewing from a single, optimal standpoint that allows the scene to unfold in full. Paintings became, in short, ways to organize and reorganize perception and, in turn, aesthetic contemplation.[16] A premium here is placed on the power to bend reality to the plane image, i.e., on how the painting achieves the reduction of this-worldly space and time to the other-than-worldly canvas—a fictional, formal space in which figures do not, in fact, have volume or move.[17]

Painting could thank architectural practice and theory for first delivering ideas of linear perspective (Brunelleschi, Alberti). Like painting of the period, Renaissance architecture existed in an atmosphere of Neo-Platonism, which placed a premium on form that not only was governed by mathematical optics but displayed that it was so governed.[18] Built and painted form both were realizations of abstract orders. In time, the two arts were crosspollinating, and there occurred a kind of synopsis.

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[16] E. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1962, esp. Lecture III. One does not have to assent to Gombrich's specific doctrine of "making and matching" in order to agree to the more general point.

[17] Technically speaking, of course, any painted surface has volume, if for no other reason than that any surface has some physical depth. But that is not the point.

[18] See P. O. Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought and the Arts*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1980, pp. 89–101.

One and the same regimen of looking governed the experience of both arts. Increasingly painting was to take a lead. By the Enlightenment painting often took the upper hand, and the results could be decisive.

Buildings will become all the more beautiful thanks to their elevation profiles, specifically, in terms of how properties like linearity, regularity, and balance strike the eye "frontally" from a relatively fixed point. Architecture cannot dictate such looking to the degree that a perspectival painting can. You can change the point of view from which you take in Raphael's *Lo spasimo*, but that cannot alter the point of view that controls the organization of the painting. Your adjustment does not make it adjust. There is a point from which you are *supposed to* view the work, which is enforced by the manner in which Raphael painted it. Architecture, except under extreme conditions that would not have occurred to anyone working then, cannot hope to control perception this way. There is a way to approximate a degree of control that perspectival painting has to organize visual experience by presenting multiple well-organized prospects from which the building might be seen, and the site of the building will take this into account.

In any case, that one is meant to move *in and around* architecture—even more that one does in pursuit of everyday, non-meditative ends—seemed increasingly to assign buildings a low station in modern philosophical taxonomies of the arts. By the end of the eighteenth century, when taxonomies of the arts become fixed in ways that lead philosophical debate, this position at the bottom or near-bottom of the register of the "fine arts" is held in place by the idea that buildings are simply too material to be formal enough to count as beautiful. Their mathematical-Platonist credentials are intact, but second (or third) to those of paintings. The presupposition here is the usual Platonist-Rationalist-Idealist one: that thought is immaterial and art all the finer to the extent that it expresses the power of thought, especially its power over material.[19]

4.

The Renaissance was Neoclassical *sensu stricto*; it was a reclamation of Classical ideas in making Classically formed objects. The most prominent

[19] Alberti's *De re aedificatoria* is often taken as representative, rightly or wrongly. Alberti's base in Vitruvius aside, he takes from Roman rhetoric the idea that humans have an innate appreciation of formal balance or symmetry (*concinnitas*). Indeed, the mind itself has such a balance, in terms of which the appreciation is taken. Beauty (*pulchritudo*) is the overall effect of quantitative and qualitative balance (see IX, v.)

home for architectural beauty continues to be later forms of Neoclassicism. But the wherewithal of beauty to drive architecture, hard-won though it may have been, can no longer be taken for granted. By the 1920s in Europe, modernism is ascendent, a movement for which beauty plays a subordinate role.[20] In response, Neoclassicism has often positioned itself as anti-modernist. Part of its brief has been to resist and rectify a perceived decline in architectural beauty.

But Neoclassicism in architecture is not one thing, nor is modernism, and the two have not always pitted themselves against one another. Through much of the nineteenth century in Europe and in its colonial and former colonial extensions, Neoclassicism was firmly in place as an international style before "International Style" became an architectural watchword.[21] The revival of Renaissance architectural principles and, through them, Greek and Roman ideals (really, the idealization of those ideals), was prestige building—the official architecture of the emerging nation state. Washington DC is thick with Neoclassical buildings, and so are Berlin, London, and Paris. But Neoclassicism's power has never been a simple reach back for glory to polish up. It has been adaptive, and one of the things to which it has adapted is modernism.

Take Berlin. Schinkel's *Altes Museum* (1820–1830) is a Neoclassical building if ever there was one. It sits on the Museumsinsel among several other structures, one of which, Messel and Hoffmann's *Pergamonmuseum* (1910–1930), houses the titular altar, the Ishtar Gate, and other imperialist booty. The century separating the construction of the

[20] It is true of course that modernist architects freely call their projects beautiful. But this is not seriously meant; with very few exceptions, "beauty" is left completely unspecified, something like "excellent."

[21] "International Style" was a term invented by modernists to foster common purpose. One can trace its birth precisely, to the architectural historian Henry-Russell Hitchcock and the architect-in-the-making Philip Johnson, who co-curated an exhibition of modern architecture at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City in 1932. This was the first architectural exhibition at MoMA and, for many in the US, their first contact with modern architecture and its theory. Hitchcock and Johnson were concerned to extract from what they took to be elemental buildings in Europe and the United States a specific aesthetic ideal. The historical ambit was focused strictly, covering a period of only eight years, from 1922–1930. Selectivity was of the first order: work of only fourteen architects was featured with just under twenty buildings represented. Among the buildings chosen were Gropius's *Bauhaus*, Mies's *Barcelona Pavilion* and *Tugendhat-Haus*, Le Corbusier's *Villa Savoye*, and Neutra's *Lovell House*. The selectivity and compressed timeframe conspire to give the impression of a pregnant present moment, a crucible time in the "now." Hitchcock and Johnson's book based on the exhibition, *The International Style*, became an *Ur*-text in the theory and practice of architectural modernism.

two museums is revealing. The Neoclassicism is still there, but the latter building is in the so-called "stripped-down" style.[22] Built to draw down on modernism's vilified ornament, this genre of building was prominent in England, Germany, and Italy.[23] It is a style of degrees; the point at which unity gives way to austerity shifts with time.[24]

German fascist architecture descends in part from stripped-down Neoclassicism. That makes perfect strategic sense, as fascism both looks to the Classical past for prestige and is also invested in modernism's obsession with futurity. That investment had preclusive and inclusive dimensions. We tend to recall more often the preclusive, given the Nazis' crusade against what they labeled "degenerate" (*entartete*) art, much of it now considered part of the modernist canon: e.g., Dix, Grosz, Kirchner, Klee, Marc, and Schwitters.[25] On the inclusive side stood most visibly Italian fascist architecture and the plastic arts in Italy more generally.[26] Mussolini personally endorsed the *Santa Maria Novella Train Station* in Florence (Gruppo Toscano, 1932–1934), perhaps the finest example of Futurist architecture in Europe. His state architect, Angiolo Mazzoni, designed its signature heating station. Giuseppe Terragni's *Casa del Fascio* in Como (1932–1936), the most fully realized example of *razionalismo*, is Vitruvian to its bones. [27] The modernist credentials of German fascist architecture are less overt, but they are there. Deny it though a Neoclassicist might like, Nazi architecture is a member of the family.[28]

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[22] See G. Kramer, *op. cit*.

[23] See A. Loos, "Ornament und Verbrechen," in *Trotzdem: 1900–1930*, Prachner, Wien, 1982, pp. 78–88.

[24] To put the point differently, from Vitruvius on architectural theorists have deployed the body-column metaphor in an elastic fashion, depending on the historically available conceptions of what counts as order and what counts as body. See the magisterial J. Rykwert, *The Dancing Column: On Order in Architecture*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1998.

[25] Even the ardent antisemite and party member Emil Nolde was not permitted to exhibit, no matter his groveling before "the authorities." For good measure, the Nazis forbade him to paint altogether.

[26] Marinetti's *Il Manifesto del Futurismo* (1909) was fully plugged into the strand of nationalism in Italy that led to fascism.

[27] On Italian fascist architecture, with an emphasis on its classicizing modernism, see S. Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini's Italy*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1997.

[28] There are other forms of fascist building, of course Heidegger preferred the farmer's hut. See A. Sharr, *Heidegger's Hut*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 2017, and M. Heidegger, "Bauen Wohnen Denken," in *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, Neske, Pfullingen, 1954, pp. 145–162. Heidegger's approach must be understood against the background of the move towards anthropological theories of the origin of building in nineteenth-century Germany. Chief among these are Gottfried Semper's lectures in Zürich, published as *Der Stil in den*

On the assumption that successful Neoclassical architecture must be Classically beautiful, an uncomfortable question arises concerning fascist architecture. If it is allowed that fascist architecture can be successful Neoclassical architecture, then part of what makes it so must be its Classical beauty.[29] What might *fascist* Classical beauty amount to?

5.

The stripped-down style nods to the elementality that modern architects were increasingly finding aspirational and, at the same time, provides a way to translate Neoclassicism into modernism. The naked volumes of the stripped-down style would have previously been held to violate tenets of Classical beauty—too assertive of mass over form. Meeting modernism halfway required making concessions both as to what can count as beautiful and as to what beauty is in the first place.

Space had been cleared for that other Greek concept of beauty, according to which beauty was surfeit materiality: Archaic beauty. German fascist architecture stakes claim to machine-age, volumetric modernism *and* engineers a double reach back to the past, moving via Classical models to the Archaic. In other words, fascist architecture in the German mode often deploys stripped-down Neoclassicism in order to rehabilitate beauty back to its Archaic origin. Here, then, are the lineages with which we are working (figure 1).

6.

We have said that for both Greek conceptions of beauty aesthetics and ethics are two sides of the same coin. This is the point at which the phrase "the terror end of beauty" finds purchase. Fascist ideals of ethical, social, and political agency are strongly allied to dispositional conceptions of what fascism takes to be the good. Fascism deploys an idealized collective conception of the will of "the people," the unity and integrity of

technischen und tektonischen Künsten, oder praktische Ästhetik, Mäander, Mittenwald, 1977. Semper was as far from a fascist as one might get, but history will have its ironies. In any case, this explicitly antimodern ideal of building and the conception of "dwelling" (Heidegger's *wohnen*) that underwrites it have their acolytes nowadays. But, aside from trailing behind its nostrums about how architecture has a socially expressive function that can call people back to their rootedness in order to combat "nihilism," there isn't much to this approach.

[29] One is free of course to deny that fascist architecture can be successful Neoclassical architecture, but one may not do so *ad hoc*.

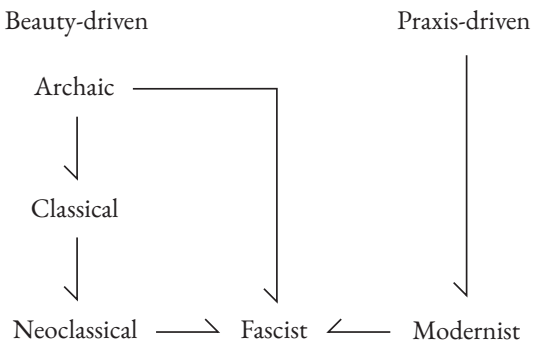
Beauty-driven
Praxis-driven
Archaic
Classical
Neoclassical
Fascist
Modernist

Figure 1.

which gain in focus by means of a leader-exemplar. And it built to suit. Mussolini, as mentioned, was keen on architectural programs. Hitler and Franco shared that enthusiasm.

Fascists across the board embraced modernized antiquity. Nazi propaganda was especially imaginative in reading back into history the future it desired for itself. It incorporated Greece and Rome into a specious pantheon of Nordic prehistory, according to which Romans were Lombards and Myceneans Proto-Germans.[30] Reaching back into a mythic past in order to reach forward into a mythic future is central to the intellectual character of fascism in Germany and cannot be decoupled from its conception of architectural beauty. Consider the *Olympiastadion* (W. March, 1934–1936), the *Flughafen Tempelhof* (E. Sagebiel, 1936–1941), and the *Haus der Kunst* (P. L. Troost, 1933–1937). The Munich museum stages itself as the most Neoclassical of the trio in terms of its handling of proportion and components. Berlin's *Tempelhof* was a harbinger of the mega-international airport that nowadays greets any air traveler to a major city; its sheer size makes its ties to a New Rome a bit less legible. The stadium falls between these extremes. Its function and designation establish the necessary Classical lineage; however, just because most stadia of this vintage look Classical, it stands out a bit less as a fascist example of Neoclassical beauty than does the *Haus der Kunst*.

More than any architect, it was the filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl who situated fascist architecture in the neighborhood of beauty. She filmed the 1936 Berlin Olympics held in the stadium for her *Olympia* (released 1938), and two years prior to that, had shot the Nuremberg Nazi Party rally for *Triumph des Willens* (released 1935).[31] Both films are innovative,

[30] There are several historical connections between the Lombards and German-speaking lands (especially Bavaria), but none of them make Romans into Lombards. The Lombards originated in lower Scandinavia in the first century BCE. Their relation to the Teutons—another favorite ethnic group of the Nazis—is uncertain. The Lombards did conquer most of the Italian peninsula in the late-sixth century CE. They held the north until the late-eighth century, when it was taken by the Franks, and held the south until the Norman conquest of it in the late-eleventh century. But none of these territories was any longer "Rome." On "nordicism" in the fascist reception of antiquity, see J. Chapoutot, *Le national-socialisme et l'Antiquité*, PUF, Paris, 2008.

[31] *Triumph* is a film of the sixth of a total ten party congresses held at the grounds over a sixteen-year period. Riefenstahl directed two other propaganda films in 1935, the short *Tag der Freiheit. Unsere Wehrmacht* and the feature-length *Der Sieg des Glaubens*. The latter presented the fifth party rally, held in 1933, and was thought for several decades to be lost. Now that one can watch it, it is clear how much *Triumph* depends on it, at several places replicating its shots.

ambitious, and canonical for film historians. Several of the shots and sequences from *Triumph* are iconic enough to be quotable in blockbuster Hollywood movies, e.g., *Star Wars*, *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Lion King*, and *Dune*. When one looks to those shots and others in the original film, there is no use in arguing that they do not contain beauty, the beauty of buildings included.[32] That is part of what makes one's negative reaction to them so uncomfortable. They repel in the attraction.

Triumph immortalized the summit of German fascist architecture, the *Reichsparteitagsgelände* park complex (figure 2), which includes two early commissions by Albert Speer, the *Ehrentribüne* and *Zeppelinhauptribüne*, both of which feature prominently in the film.[33]

The park was constructed in part on a previously built site that held deep political meaning, the *Luitpoldhain* (a deer park named after Luitpold, the Prince Regent of Bavaria), which had been chosen in the Weimar period for a memorial to German soldiers killed in the First World War. Fritz Mayer, a rising regional architect, constructed its centerpiece, the *Ehrenhalle*. Mayer had been trained in the so-called *Heimatschutzstil* ("homeland preservation style"), his first commissions being churches, modern in fittings yet distinctively Bavarian in profile. The Memorial Hall is Classical at front elevation, but many of its elements are given modern treatment—most telling, the eight columns that form its façade lack capitals and are structurally continuous with the whole of the building's front, giving the impression of cutouts or reliefs (figure 3).

No doubt Mayer planned this in order to set the building as a backdrop for the eight (four to a side) matching plinths, on which rest large cauldrons in which flames were lit in remembrance of the dead. When the Nazis took over the planning of the park, they used the solemn Classicism to lend pathos to a repurposing of the memorial, joining remembrance of the fallen at Ypres with those who "fell" at the Beer Hall Putsch. The whole became an altar for the consecration of the *Blutfahne*—an ersatz relic—purportedly the only surviving Nazi flag from the Putsch, encrusted with the blood of the dead. Flags flown at the Nuremberg rallies were all either touched to this "original" flag or touched to a flag that had touched it.

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[32] Not even Susan Sontag in her excoriation of Riefenstahl's attempts to whitewash her past could deny the beauty of her work. See "Fascinating Fascism," in *Under the Sign of Saturn*, Farrar, Straus, Giroux, New York, 1980, pp. 73–105.

[33] Speer had been apprenticed to Heinrich Tessenow, a staunch anti-Nazi, important principally for his academic work but also for helping to import ideas from the English garden city movement into Germany. The Party Grounds could not be further from Tessenow's ideals.

Figure 2. Model of *Reichsparteitagsgelände* (1928–1945), exhibited at the 1937 Paris World's Fair. Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-2008-0118-501.

Figure 3. Fritz Mayer, *Ehrenhalle im Luitpoldhain* (1928–1930). Nürnberg, Germany. Photograph by Magnus Gertkemper, 2006. Wikimedia Commons.

As one emerged from this blood rite onto the plaza that fronts the hall, one would have been met with a panoramic view opening onto the paved *Luitpoldarena*, backed on the horizon by the semi-circular *Ehrentribüne* (figure 4). The *Luitpoldarena* is expansive, measuring roughly 200 square meters, but its immensity would have paled beside that of the *Märzfeld* and its grandstand, both unbuilt, that were meant to anchor the north-south axis of the grounds at its southern end.[34]

The fulcrum of the complex was the *Zeppelinfeld* with its grandstand, completed in 1937 (figure 5).[35] Ground was broken for a *Deutsches Stadion* facing this portion of the complex, which was to have a capacity upwards of 400,000. Foundation work for this never-completed project is still there to see. The plaza has roughly the same dimensions as the *Luitpoldarena*, to which it runs parallel, across a lake to the south. The grandstand for this parade ground is modeled loosely on the Pergamon Altar and was Speer's first signature commission. The attempt to borrow cultural credibility from antiquity could not be more obvious. Recall that it was the German railway engineer and amateur archaeologist Carl Humann who excavated the Pergamon site and had its altar fragments shipped back to Berlin for reassembly. Speer was exceedingly impressed by the imperialist bravado it took to carry out the dig and commandeer the artifacts, but was moved even more by the altar itself and, especially, by the mistaken idea that it was originally a victory monument.[36]

What is true of the *Luitpoldarena* is doubly so for the *Zeppelinfeld* and its grandstand. While they pay lip service to Vitruvian Man, they were calculated to be out of human proportion, i.e., of such immensity so as to overwhelm individual responsiveness. There is no way to experience them except as encompassing a place that is meant to gather a throng. Both grandstand and plaza demand group awareness—i.e., of a group *as* a group. The special genius of Riefenstahl's film is to take that awareness as something like a premise and to extrapolate it visually from almost every conceivable angle.

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[34] The name "Märzfeld" is a tiered allusion to the *Campus Martius* in Rome and to the Frankish (i.e., First Reich's) yearly assembly of heroes, which did not, however, take place at a set locale.

[35] Contrary to what its name might be thought to indicate, the *Zeppelinfeld* was not built as a landing site for zeppelins; it was merely named after the Graf Zeppelin, who had landed a prototype of one of the craft nearby.

[36] His plans exploited Roman imperial models as well, e.g., Ruff & Ruff's *Kongreßhalle* (1934–1938, unfinished), a copy of the Colosseum. It is now the home of the Nuremberg Opera.

Figure 4. Albert Speer, *Ehrentribüne*, across the Luitpoldarena, as viewed from the Ehrenhalle. Photograph by Georg Pahl, 1934. Bundesarchiv, Bild 102–04062A.

Figure 5. Albert Speer, *Zeppelinhaupttribüne* (1934).
Photograph taken in 1938.

German fascism's embrace of mass media was full-bodied, and the architecture of the site is pendant to the goal of disseminating fascist ideology. It is no wonder that the parade grounds presented themselves as picture perfect and ready-to-be-filmed. The architecture on the whole reads like a vast movie set, all but visually mandating an experience of vistas stretched out before one. The grandstands present Party speakers from afar, deified by their distance. The amplified voices of these demigods pulsed through the crowd, as electrifying as the current that made them audible. Add to that the following spectacle. Delays in the never-completed seating at the *Zeppelinfeld* inspired Speer to augment the grandiosity of the site—with Hitler's express approval—by creating what Speer declared to be a *Lichtdom* ("cathedral of light"), positioning over 100 anti-aircraft spotlights at regular intervals atop the *Haupttribüne* and pointing them 180 degrees on axis to the vertical in order to generate columns of light (figure 6). These were intended as an ethereal promise for the future stadium but, independent of that reference, were extremely effective in getting across the main aesthetic point relative to beauty. The light beams function Classically as columns: a regular and relatively simple pattern on which to lavish sight. But that these are *light* columns, shot deep into the night sky, has a power beyond that. Light is a physical phenomenon of course, but it is conceived as one of the least material sorts: soundless, tasteless, lacking smell and feel, in short, spectral. It is not for nothing that philosophers from the Presocratics to Descartes figure light as thought. And the direction of this "structure"—the heavens—for all its cliché (or maybe because of it), could not be more evocative. This is a hymn to the Archaic (aboriginal light), which deploys terms native to the Classical (columns) in order to surmount those terms. That the skyward beams also recalled spotlights shone into the night at Hollywood premières does not alter the point.

7.

We are now in a position to appreciate in greater phenomenological detail what the experience of a self-aware participant in the rally would have been like. Begin, again, with surfacing from the *Ehrenhalle* into the courtyard of the *Luitpoldhain*, its braziers lit, squarely facing the *Bühne*. To the left is the *Große Straße* extending far into the distance to the planned *Märzfeld*, which is visible even at that distance as a vanishing point in terms of which further experience of the grounds is organized.

Figure 6. Albert Speer, *Lichtdom*, projected above the *Zeppelinhaupttribüne* (1936). Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-1982-1130-502.

The overarching experience is one of advancing horizontality, sight focused on the line described by the top of the tribunal, the sky above and beyond it. As one moves forward, the sight line rises relative to point of view and extends further to the periphery as the tribunal's length takes up more and more of the visual field. This arena is mostly enclosed—there are gates to the north and south—but the tribunal extends on the perpendicular back towards the *Hall of Honor*. The arena does not feel limiting, however, given its breadth and depth of aspect.

Symbolism is there for the taking. A participant would find the structures and site to invoke—indeed, exemplify—the mythic elements: arena-earth, brazier-fire, both set off against a theatrical presentation of air-sky. A bit outside the arena, though out of sight just now, is the Großer Dutzenteiche, the repurposed medieval reservoir that is one of the two lakes on the grounds: water. There are more subtle significations at work as well. Any line registered as a limit will cause one to discriminate what is within the area it conscribes from what lies beyond. When vision is staged up/down, as it is here, that produces a schema of below-line-within/above-line-beyond. Above-line-beyond here is sky; below-line-within are the tribunal stands. Festivities underway, they fill with party leaders. Seeing the horizon formed by the upper edge of the stands from ground level is to see it as distant and to see what is positioned near the horizon line it describes as ascendent. If what is beyond the horizon is experienced as transitional between heaven and earth, as it surely is for our participant, the remote yet eminent figures seated in the stands are experienced as upwardly approaching transcendence. They seem, that is, to move toward the condition of the memorialized "heroes" of the fascist past.

Our hypothetical reveler might also see clouds in the sky beyond, something out of which Riefenstahl's films make great deal of hay. She got her start as an actor, specializing in a genre of Weimar movies called *Bergfilme*, playing feral virgin-heroes who save villages from magical catastrophes.[37] The opening scenes of *Triumph* intercut shots ostensibly taken through the cockpit window of Hitler's plane as it descends to make its landing with aerial shots of the medieval architecture of Nuremberg. Continuity is provided by the clouds that are presented as if they are

[37] Her most famous turn as a director prior to her propaganda films was *Das blaue Licht* (1932), in which she also starred. (The script was co-authored with the great Hungarian film theorist Béla Balázs, but she removed his name from the credits when she discovered he was Jewish.) Since Siegfried Kracauer's *From Caligari to Hitler*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1947, it is common to view *Bergfilme* as proto-fascist.

what separates the empyrean from the ordinary. A symphonic version of the *Horst-Wessel-Lied* in the soundtrack, Hitler is the as-yet unseen savior come to earth, complete with cruciform shadows of his plane's wings on those clouds and buildings.[38] He and the plane are one. Overkill, but it works. This is carried through in Riefenstahl's depiction of the 1934 rally, as figure 5 shows, storm clouds dramatizing the sublimity of the *Zeppelintribüne*. Were one to advance from the *Luitpoldarena* to the *Zeppelinfeld*, intensification awaits: an even more monumental tribunal, framing an even more expansive skyline. The over-under/without-within nested dichotomy repeats.

That is all spatial, but the site also constructs a form of temporality that structures one's movement through it. Part of the conviction that Ruskin's writing about Gothic churches conveys comes from the way he imagines his way into the handwork involved in the making of their components. One can sense that his eyes see past work still alive in the look of the stone.[39] Such "tensing" of material in architecture is often implicit, but some architects build in order to draw attention to it.[40] The temporality of the Nuremberg grounds is consciously built into it, carefully curated to be legible in the ordinary experience of moving in and around its structures. The site is processional. One begins in the past, *memorializing* heroes. But to memorialize them *as heroes* is to memorialize them for their sacrifice in securing what was for them a future, one they knew in the moment of their act they were not to see. *That* future is at the same time our participant's present, a present experienced as suffusing the site, demanding as it does an ongoing act of memory. But that past-future *cum* the present—that form of presentness—is also understood as a future that reaches beyond our participant's present—indeed, it necessarily outdoes *any* present moment of memorialization. Memory of this sort is ritualized through and through, dedicated to its own renewal and, moreover, to the general project of preserving the heroic past for the future. Our celebrant projects himself as a mnemonic caretaker for future like caretakers. It is in virtue of saving past sacrifice from oblivion that he holds the present open to the future.

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[38] There is a Wagnerian tinge. Middle High German *nebel* ("mist," "cloud," "gloaming") is possibly cognate to the root of *Nibelung*, the Burgundian house that provides the protagonists for *Das Nibelungenlied*.

[39] See J. Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, Routledge, London, n.d., II. vi. 8. This idea also informs Ruskin's drawing practice, but I cannot go into that here.

[40] See D. Leatherbarrow, *On Weathering: The Life of Buildings in Time*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1993.

Now add to this already dense structure the thought that the past sacrifice that finds present expression in memorialization is embedded in an understanding of a *mythic* past. What become crucial are not the historical dates at which "the fallen" fell; it is, rather, that those dates are but placeholders for something that must recur: continual, ever-renewing sacrifice. What is powerful about the mythic past is that it has prehistory written all over it; its inscrutability is what controls. *Withdrawn* presence constitutes the power of heroes; it is what deifies them and enthralls.[41]

8.

Fascist architecture is one of several ways of bridging Neoclassicism and modernism. It is discrete from forms of functionalism that try to do the same, as well as from its main conservative rival, New Urbanism. Beauty is not a concept one finds on the surface of functionalism—which figure 1 somewhat coyly labels "praxis-oriented"—but it is important to New Urbanism, in which vernacular forms of building play central roles, more traditional aesthetic markers in tow.

Is German fascist modernism, and with it its plea for inclusion of an Archaic conception of beauty in buildings, a dead branch on the Neoclassical family tree, a chance meeting at the crossroads of stripped-down Neoclassicism, modernity, and Archaic beauty? Or is it something from which to extrapolate? No one but a fascist wants to build in a fascist *style* of course[42] If the preceding reflections have been on track, it follows that beauty, real beauty, can oppress. It can be terrible, depending on the use to which it is put. That is true of Classical beauty, of Archaic beauty, and of their hybrid. Fascist beauty is oppressive beauty, pure but not-so-simple.

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[41] Several of Hölderlin's poems treat this theme, for instance, "Dichterberuf" and "Brot und Wein." See *Sämtliche Gedichte*, vol. 1, Aula, Wiesbaden, 1970, 1, pp. 248–250, 290–295.

[42] The university at which I happen to teach, the University of Notre Dame, has recently completed a building project that would not have been, in profile, alien to Speer. This is the transformation of an (American) football stadium into a vast educational complex, accomplished by adding a massive, upward-vaulting series of external buildings to the hull of the stadium, each an austere skyscraperesque Neoclassical wing. This is in fact a double-cladding of the original Notre Dame football stadium—the "hallowed ground" on which the famed football heroes of yore achieved their storied victories—in essence an act of architectural memorializing not unlike the *Ehrenhalle*. The Notre Dame complex is, naturally, not intended to be fascist. But given the size at which it had to be built, the specious idea behind it that big-money athletics and academic distinction tread the fields of glory hand-in-hand, and the connection with Notre Dame's conservative architecture school, the result would not *look* completely out of place on the Nuremberg grounds.

That all said, the Archaic conception of beauty is not identical with fascist conceptions of the same. What are the prospects for nonfascist extrapolations from *it*? I wish to suggest that there is modern architecture that is informed by an allied conception of beauty. What I have in mind here are buildings that tap into what I have called elsewhere "deep aesthetics."[43] By that I mean the practice of making art—in this case, architecture—that engages the complete suite of human perception. Human perceptual modalities form a system of sometimes modular but sometimes interpenetrating parts. Philosophical aesthetics tends to privilege those perceptual capacities that lie closest to acquiring empirical knowledge, principally (although not exclusively) sight. But the human perceptual system also includes nonconscious bodily awareness, such as proprioception (one's sense of self-movement, urgency, posture, reflex activity, etc), and sense memory (bodily recall of prior bodily responses, especially recall via affect). Appealing to deep aesthetic responsiveness in art depends on structuring works that call upon several strata of experience at once. The means to do so will typically be varied and broad: not only construction that enlivens and extends human sensitivity to linear and volumetric form, but also that attends to sound, light, tactility, color, bodily comportment, etc. Architecture occupies a leading position here, given its ability to mobilize whole-body response.

One might say that such buildings are created with their phenomenology expressly in mind, concerned to broaden the aesthetic palette to include modes of perception other than sight. Even when sight is at issue, such work will be preoccupied with the implicit structuring of seeing through other modalities. This amounts to a denial of what some architectural theorists have called "ocularism."[44] That is a challenge issued to architecture rooted in Neoclassical beauty, bound to canons of formal regularity. What is on offer instead is a recognizably Archaic idea of beauty in sheer radiance, but one that is adjusted for greater sensitivity to the subjective effects of embodying environments and shorn of any appeal to myth.[45]

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[43] See F. Rush, *On Architecture*, Routledge, New York, 2009, esp. chap. 1.

[44] See J. Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses*, Wiley, London, 1996.

[45] I remain convinced that the signal work here is Steven Holl's *Bloch Addition to the Nelson-Adkins Museum of Art* (2007) in Kansas City. Part of its achievement is that it works with the Neoclassicism of the original museum building without sacrificing at all its own, very different, beauty.

This essay has its beginnings in a paper I gave in spring 2005 at the Université Paris-Nanterre and, in English translation, later presented at the AA School of Architecture in London. I thank Jean-Jacques Lecercle and Andrew Benjamin for invitations to speak at those venues, and I thank Paul Guyer for his invitation to contribute to this issue of the journal, which has given me an opportunity to revisit the work. The essay takes its title from that of an album by the group Harriet Tubman, The Terror End of Beauty *(Sunnyside CD-B07HQ352GV, 2018). I stress that this is adaptation, not reference. The music on that record does not concern Archaic or fascist ideas of beauty, as does this essay. The guiding idea of the record is close in spirit to Rilke's lines (*Duineser Elegien *I. 4–5): "[d]as Schöne ist nichts / als des Schrecklichen Anfang," which I take to mean that extreme beauty, i.e., that of the withdrawn and icy "dominion of angels" (*"Engel Ordnungen"*) of the poem, is the "onset of terror" in that it tokens the absolute difference between a being of true elevation and the human speaker of the poem. If pushed to the limits, beauty will yield something more primal than understanding, a call into the void.*

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