

The topic of this paper is an investigation into how architecture may hold the capacity to recognize the reconciliation of man and his world; working from the premise that this *is* possible within a world view devoid of a transcendental mythos, and lacking a theological or cosmological *apriori*. Within this ‘*mythless present*’, we are faced with the paradox of modernism: man’s infinite ability for reason combined with the ultimate subjectivity of his experience. This Cartesian world of universal geometric space, inhabited by a thinking subject and material extension, has replaced qualitative place. At the core of this shift is an ambiguity between a traditional symbolic, based consciousness and a modern instrumental thinking, allowing for the illusion that the latter is a more perfect substitute for the former. As the poetical content of reality is indeterminate and vague, it is now replaced by an unambiguous and precise mathematical equivalent.

For architecture, this condition is first seen with Claude Perrault’s (1613-1688) distinction between positive and arbitrary beauty, allowing architects to become either engineers or arbiters of taste. This spirit follows Marc-Antoine Laugier (1711-1769) in his search for the origins of architecture, as he forces a rational system of building upon a mythical ‘primitive hut’ that appears to be visually similar to the classical orders. In an attempt to establish empirically ‘fixed principles’ of ‘essential elements’, he reduces the orders to structural necessity as found in ‘Divine Nature’. Jean-Nicholas-Louis Durand (1760-1834) is the first to successfully define the foundation of an architectural order without direct reference to any existing tradition. Within his *Recueil*, we see a taxonomic approach to a history of architecture, in which a collection of systematically selected buildings, are all drawn in the same way, and to the same scale. Echoing this approach to historical buildings, he devises his *mecanisme de la composition*; a method of design that organizes programmatic elements of a project onto a grid, followed by the structural system to be placed at the intersections of the lines. Once the plan has been ‘solved’ one would extrude elevations and sections based upon issues of ‘taste’, allowing buildings to look appropriate with respect to the program. The method of design for Durand, clearly becomes the theory and such, architecture is reduced to a formal game of combinations devoid of transcendental intention.

That we are still dealing with these issues is painfully apparent as we look to our cities of shopping malls and simulations. Architects cannot continue to produce designs based on the trends of fashion, sociological pluralism, structural determinism, or reductionistic functionalism, and conclude that they may account for the vagaries of lived experience. It must be recognized that the totality of experience can not be reduced to the ‘aversion to pain’ and the ‘love of well being’. Architecture must be more than convenient and economical.

Carlo Lodoli (1690-1761), an early proponent of a functional architecture, demonstrates an alternative approach to the construing of architecture. Within the frontispiece to Andrea Memmo's rendering of Lodoli's teachings, *Elementi d'Architettura Lodoliana (...ossia L'Arte del Fabricare con Solidita Scientifica e con Eleganza non Capricciosa)* we find an engraving of Lodoli framed by the motto: *'devonsi unire fabbrica e ragione e sia funzione la reppresentazione'* (building and reason must be unified, and let function be the re-presentation). This motto has been interpreted as the precursor to the modern dictum 'form follows function'. However Lodoli, trained as a rhetorician, surely understood the etymological implications of the word function. Deriving from the Latin *fungor*, 'I perform' function has been used to 'mean activity or performance in general, or the specific activity of certain things or persons, particularly the carrying out of any ritual or ceremonial action. Since the 16<sup>th</sup> c. it had been opposed to structure by the biologists' (Rykwert 1976). Despite these roots, the word 'functional' replaces 'rational' during the 1930's to describe the architecture that would become known as the International Style, and allows Sumerson, two decades later, to describe 'modern' architecture in terms of its structurally determined form as it corresponds to use, an approach not much different from Durand.

It is by looking into the 'performing' aspect of function that we may begin to realize a functional architecture that both invites and constitutes essential meaning, fulfilling a re-presentational capacity.

Father Carlo Lodoli - architect, storyteller, and generally caustic individual - was a friar at *San Francesco della Vigna* in Venice. After his training as a scholastic rhetorician and as an orator, he traveled to Rome. Upon his return to Venice, he became the Chief Censor, a position that involved him intimately within the publishing activities around the Veneto. More importantly, he also began to offer classes in architectural rhetoric to young Venetians. There, in his garden, he had collected a series of architectural fragments as examples of 'good and bad' architecture for use in his dialogues with students. Described by his faithful student, Andrea Memmo, as *'talking in images'*, his *topics* were sweeping, often ethical, ranging from the nature of truth to the nature of materials.

Lodoli's only built work consists of minor alterations to the cloisters of San Francesco della Vigna. Any publication that may have existed were confiscated upon his death by the Inquisitors of the Republic. The texts, as well as any of the seditious ideas they may have contained, were left to rot under a leaking roof in the *Piombe*. The only written work that comes to us consists of two outlines of a treatise, a translation of a controversial passage of Vitruvius' *Ten Books*, and a book of stories, all dictated to Andrea Memmo. He is often described as the Socrates of architecture, due to his irritable character, lack of written material, and his pedagogic use of apologies. As we are only left with fragments, it is necessary to 'backtell', to find the threads of Lodoli's thoughts that may still be relevant for us today.

Andrea Memmo published the *Elementi* with the intention that the treatise would recognise with the misunderstandings that other authors had produced while attempting their own version of Lodoli's thoughts. The meandering text consists of polemical discussions and Memmo's own version of Lodoli's thinking. At the end of the work, Memmo transcribed two versions of an outline for a treatise dictated to him by Lodoli. The introduction to the outlines states the intention: '*to make understandable all that [Lodoli] was planing to discuss*', '*thought out in such a way that they are enough for the clever connoisseurs*'. The outlines present to us, in true Vichian fashion, first the elements and principles necessary for the setting of a new architecture, and then the definitions and relationships among the elements composing the new theory.

Lodoli's outlines begin with an interest to study the '*histories*' of various architectural Nations with a preference for a stone architecture beginning with the Egyptian, Etruscan, and then Roman traditions. This approach echoes his teaching method in the Garden where fragments were focused upon to discover phonemic use of materials. It is important to note that his interest in historical precedent, was not focused upon the re-making of a primitive hut along Rousseau's river bank. Following the motto etched on two tablets flanking his portrait, *Ut Eruas et Destruas... Ut Plantas et Aedifices*, (to tear down and destroy, to plant and to build) a partial quote from Jeremiah, we must not copy nor forget our history, but we must learn from and build upon it. As such, within the first book, we find an exposition into the crimes and contradictions of writers and architects along the way, emphasizing the broken, and unsound.

The outlines continue, presenting the essential properties of architecture within the triad of *firmness*, *analogy*, and *commodity*, listing ornament only as an accessory. Firmness, '*the character of materials*', and commodity, the '*economy of building and its existence over time*' are both informative requirements. Analogy, the '*proportional regular correspondence between parts and whole which should arise in building*', deals with how materials come together, and is manifest in architecture at the level of the detail. The proper re-presentation of these details is understood in '*accordance to a geometrical-arithmetical-optical*', and imaginative understanding. Lodoli is approaching the construction of architecture using a literary device, analogy, to guide him in making meaningful architecture.

That analogy was essential in guiding the architect is further illuminated by the other text brought to us from Lodoli via Memmo, *Luna d'Agosto*, a collection of 56 fables used by Lodoli in lessons to his students. In one very telling story he describes the origins of the 'apologue', as a mediator between the mortal and divine realms. '*Bit by bit dispensing of that first innocence, after reigning Saturn flew from Earth, the Father of Men and of Gods desiring to return to the gentle manner of good custom, decided to incarnate a Genius, a subordinate deity, who was to be called the Apologue.*' The apologue was needed '*to heal the nauseating wounds of corruption so that they [the corrupt] will depart from my hands in health*'. However this 'subordinate diety' needed help. The apologue was given as an '*indivisible guide and companion, she*

*whom you love more than any other Genius : Analogy. She will lend you the implements with which at times you must strike, and she will be like a veil, as if to motivate laughter by these same stabs by which they will endure the sting of your remedies'.*

Lodoli realizes a collective theory of myth no longer exists, yet he refuses the futility of a nostalgic gaze to past cultures, and the non-productive opposition of scientific to mythical knowledge. Instead he chooses to understand the making of architecture, as fable, as poetic discourse in that it is realised through nothing more than what is being said, or built. For Lodoli, architectural meaning can be found within the metaphorical re-telling of non-ostensive historical and material clues to become a performing functional architecture.

This imaginative approach to making may be further illuminated by looking into Giambattista Vico, a Neapolitan philosopher of the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> c. The research into the complex relationship between Vico and Lodoli has most often focused on the printing of Vico's *Autobiography* and *New Science*. Understandably so, as this was the initial point of meeting and the ultimate focus of their demise. However, by looking into Vico's well defined, if often disregarded thesis, we find a framework of ideas that surely engaged Lodoli within his teachings on architecture.

In describing the frontispiece of the *New Science*, Vico explains to us the one principle his entire study is based upon: '*We find that the principle of these origins both of languages and of letters lies in the fact that the first gentile peoples, by a demonstrated necessity of nature, where poets who spoke in poetic characters. This discovery, which is the master key of this Science, has cost us the persistent research of almost all our literary life...*' (B34 NS). Within this principle of Poetic Wisdom, Vico describes the distinction between *imaginative universals*, and *intelligible universals*. The research into imaginative universals is seen as an outcome of a productive and poetic mind. In Italian: *ingegno*. It is characteristic of the Age of Gods and the Age of Heroes in which the faculty of *fantasia* was the rule. The search for intelligible universals, characteristic of the Age of Men, is a product of a rational but soporific mind, typified by abstract thought and logical concepts of genus and species. In French: *esprit*.

In an attempt to overcome the arid rationalism of Descartes, typical of the Age of Men, Vico proposed a mental glossary of images, a '*thesaurus of imaginative universals embodied in meaningful theoretical images*' (Fracari 1990). Vico believes '*When we wish to somehow speak of spiritual things, we must seek aid from our imagination to explain them, and like painters, form human images of them.*' *Ingegno*, therefore is productive imagining, based in image. It is important to note the imaginative universal, and not the intelligible universal, was that original mentality that ordered experience. Imagination then shall be understood as the very precondition of being, as such it allows man to recognize himself within the world. *Man is essentially poetic and not rational.*

This was approached at the level of language through the use of metaphor. Vico named metaphor as the most luminous of the four tropes that constitute the logic of Poetic Wisdom, and it is that by which identity is originally perceived. Metaphor, as the original form of the interpretive act, raises from the particular to the general through the re-presentation, in *image*. These *particulars* have the power to assume identities, and not simply similarities. As such, 'thunder' is conceived *as* Jove and not *like* Jove - through our imagination, which requires the formation of a metaphor or an image. As one of four tropes, metaphor belongs to a group of generative procedures that enables language to depart from common usage, allowing for the creation of fables. As Vico points out, every metaphor is a '*fable in brief*', and '*the fables in their origin were true and severe narrations, whence mythos, was defined as vera narratio*' (B403 NS)

In establishing a distinction between human and divine truth, Vico described divine making as sculpture and human making as a painting. The distinction here is at the level of making: the divine makes the specific forms of Nature. We as humans, through *ingegno*, can only approximate these forms. However weak this approximation may seem to divine truth, it is all we know. As such, Vico advances the principle known as *verum-factum* 'the true is the made'. Initially developed as a way to distinguish between geometry and physics, he understands; '*We demonstrate geometrical propositions because we make them, if we could demonstrate the propositions of physics, we would make them*'. Vico realizes that we can only know that which we as a culture have made. Therefore, we must look to the construction of meaning as found in traces of human institutions. We must look to this *mental glossary of images*, we have constructed, as found within our language, our histories, our architectures, and not in Nature, which we cannot know.

Metaphor then, is secured by its relation to fable (to mythos) and its reference to human institutions through our *mental glossary of images*. Fables recreate human actions, by virtue of *ingegno* or imagination, allowing for the construction, creation, and disclosure of a world. Stories have the possibility to elevate the experiential world of the human heart to the level of myth.

However, following Gianni Vattimo, we must accept our own historicity, avoiding the nostalgic gaze towards an irrecoverable past. We are living, according to Roland Barthes, in a 'civilization of the image', in which the role of the image is essentially one of parody as it no longer refers to some *original*. This can easily be seen in the newly renovated Times Square sponsored by Disney, or by simply turning on a television where one can tune into a war on CNN or the most recent *Dreamworks* film and find little or no difference in the quality or method of production. High art is no longer distinguished from consumerism. 'The image now *precedes* the reality it is supposed to represent. Reality has become a pale reflection of the image' (Kearney 1988).

In outlining a history of the imagination, Richard Kearney describes our post-modern age as *Ex-centric*. The image no longer acts as a mediation through which to worship the divine, as in a mirror reflecting Divine Providence. Nor does the image act as medium of human expression, as in a lamp projecting the 'T'ruth. But within this 'paradigm of parody', the model of the productive inventor is now replaced by *modes of expression*, as in a looking glass allowing for an infinite multiplication of image. We now we live in a mediated culture of *depthless simulacra* which amounts to an abandonment of historical reality, which described by Beaudrillard as 'irreference'. The irony of this situation is that while the image dominates our culture, the potential of the creative human imagination appears moribund to most.

Within our 'society of spectacle', what do we make of a functional architecture, based upon an *imaginal*, metaphoric construction? A possibility lies in understanding of imagination as an intentional act of consciousness, which both invites and constitutes essential meaning. Relating to Vico's *ingegno* we realize imagination as the very precondition of being, as ontological. However, this is not imagination as mental reproduction, nor is it simply a link between body and mind. A post-modern imagination may be seen as a synthesis which precedes this dualism of the sensible / intelligible.

In *Du texte et la Action*, Paul Ricouer discusses the role of image and imagination along two main axis - through the subject and the object. In terms of the object he cites the reproductive imagination within Hume's empiricist account of image, as a faded trace of perception. In terms of the subject he describes the German Romantic and Idealist accounts of the productive imagination. It is with Hermeneutics that the act of deciphering indirect meanings, enables one to acknowledges the symbolizing power of imagination at the level of language (semantic) and not at the level of the image. The semantic and not visual model of imagination makes possible a new appreciation of a creative role: if images are spoken before they are seen, they are not remains of perception, nor are they neutralisations or negations of perception. As Bachelard, reminds us 'An image is not a residue of impression, but an aura surrounding speech. The poem gives birth to the image.' For Ricouer, 'imagination comes to play in that moment when a new meaning emerges from out of the ruins of literal interpretation' (Ricouer 1986)

We must recognize the power of imagination, not simply in deriving images from our sensory experience, but the capacity for letting new worlds shape an understanding of ourselves through what has been called *semantic shock*. It is the coming together of two meanings, that produces a new meaning, leading to *creation-as-discovery*. Through the recovery of the capacity of language to create and recreate, we discover reality itself in the process of being created. Semantic innovation is essentially an ontological invention - the poetic imagination liberates the reader into a free space of possibility, suspending the reference to the immediate world of perception (both author and reader) and thereby disclosing *new ways of being in the world*. This differs from structuralism in that hermeneutics is not confined to structural

analysis of texts: nor the subjective existential analysis of author's texts - its primary concern is with the worlds which these texts open up, in front of and not behind the work.

In an essay entitled 'The Storyteller', Walter Benjamin anticipated critical implications of the narrative's demise within the technological era of impersonal information that erodes the transmission of commonly shared experience. With this end of community, our historical memory heralds in a new culture of instantaneous and fragmented sensations that soon replace the inherited wisdom of tradition. He reminds us of the essential role of the storyteller, to exchanging experiences. This event is not simply an imitation or copy, but one in which the storyteller reinvents the story each time it is told. The imaginary is a process that relates to something or someone besides or other than itself. Alongside this 'mirror play of simulacra' the imagination is recognized as a mode of discourse where *someone actually says something to somebody about something*. Though we cannot guarantee our intention, the word allows us to articulate our intention. Through narrative, we have the capacity to redescribe reality by combining elements dispersed in time and space into some kind of coherent pattern.

Further, the hermeneutic imagination is not confined to circles of interpretation, leaving us floating in a world of un-signified signifiers. By projecting new worlds, it allows for *action*. The metaphors, symbols, or narratives produced by our imagination all provide us with 'imaginative variations of the world', offering us freedom through opaque poetic discourse to conceive of the world in other ways and to allow for its transformation. It is through participation within our collective histories that architecture may lead to *recognition*, through the other to ourselves.

Therefore, we may understand imagination as *ontological*, through *ingegno*, as *epistemological* through the realization of the semantic potential to create worlds, and finally as *ethical*, as it relates to an *other*. Echoing Lodoli's teachings, architects, in the making of a 'functional' architecture, should act as storytellers, through an ethical imagination, metaphorically construing our cultural traces. Thus allowing for the discovery of meaning of myself, through the *other*. For the human subject, to come to terms with itself, one must interpret signs of the other produced by the human imagination. As such, our deep seated insertion into the 'lifeworld' may emerge, allowing for the ontological tie uniting our being to other beings and Being to be articulated.

*Allow me to end by telling a story...*

...A professor of sculpture, a worshiper of purity in drawing, after passing many years in Rome could do nothing less than model statues of highest acclaim. He rendered himself even more celebrated with several essays that reflected his refined taste. At the moment in which he could have made his great fortune, he was distracted by a most violent passion for a woman. He believed that she could serve him as the most perfect model. Unable to possess her, the artist killed her. The Sovereign, considering the singular merits of

this subject, as a fervid promoter of the arts, reflected at length the punishment to assign him for this most heinous crime. One of his Ministers thought up a truly novel sentence. The Minister reminded his majesty that he possessed an island in the West Indies, inhabited by Caramogi (grotesque and deformed men and women). To confine one (such as the sculptor) with such passion for perfection in figures would be the greatest punishment. Finding oneself in the middle of the most abominable objects would be the equivalent of death. This suggestion accepted, the sculptor was sent to his miserable destiny. Scarcely having descended from the ship and onto the island, he came upon a group of dwarfs. Some women were ornamented with a head similar to their belly and some had breasts more ample than their heads. There were hunchbacks and exorbitant bellies. If at first he was sensitive to this vision, we can imagine day after day, the ever increasing desperation to see a regular body. Being the sole man of proportion attracted the inhabitants, in particular the women. At the height of his delirium, the wife of his custodian spied the artist through the openings in the gate and found the artist even more beautiful when undressed. In this guise she fell in love with him. Possessing the keys to his door, she allowed herself into the room from the rear. First giving any sort of excuse, she declared her passion for him. Fat and constantly dripping with sweat, she smelt so bad that when she would approach, the artist would gasp for breath. She had a large nose and such an enormous mouth that three men could kiss it without disturbing each other. Her hands were longer than her arms, her feet greater than her legs, and she was completely missing a neck. The sculptor could not escape her. He could not mistreat nor accuse her without great risk to himself. Having reached his limits in this oppression of spirit, he decided to take his own life. The sculptor was fearful that by force of seeing ugly eyes, deformed physiognomies and ridiculous statures, his memory of beauty would be annulled. Oh, yes, he exclaimed, I feel the idea of beauty abandon me; these specters erase it day by day. But then, at the moment of his most intimate pain, he raised his eyes and observed the face of a young girl. Monstrous - yet, what was this? He saw the fine eyebrow of oriental taste, only slightly curved. Almost revived, the sculptor thought to himself, can I rejoice while still at the center of deformity? He quickly asked the girl to remain where she was so that he might draw that eyebrow, but of course not the eyes. After several days, glancing at yet another monster, he recognized another heel which was bony in its upper part: this he could not find more beautiful.

In the hope of forming an archetype of beauty, which he had in mind for man and woman, he had searched with passion and found gold in the dung. He could then on many occasions create from these scattered parts, which were each in itself beautiful, thus making a total and perfect harmony...