



Kenosis Creativity Architecture

by

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Except as noted, the photographs contained herein are the work of Mr Justin Emery, taken during the on-site investigations outlined in Appendix One.

Abstract

Theology and philosophy establish that *kenosis*, or self-emptying, reveals the ontology of creativity. But, until now, architecture – a primal expression of human creativity – has not been correlated with kenosis, nor has either been thought of as informing or taking the measure of the other. This dissertation moves toward rectifying that lack. It opens-up interdisciplinary thinking about kenosis to reveal the subject's manifold foundations: its locus classicus in Christian scriptures, its antecedents in antiquity, its medieval and modern development, and its emergence in most major faith traditions. Such foundations enable a further opening-up of kenotic thought – for the first time, through architecture. Accordingly, the situations of eight, widely recognised architectural projects are re-examined, this time focusing on their kenotic claims and the kenosis they manifest. Located in North America, Europe, the Middle East, and East Asia – where several are affected by the kenotic dimensions of various world religions – these projects include works by Louis Kahn, I.M. Pei, Tadao Ando, Daniel Libeskind, and Peter Eisenman. Though newly revealing, this examination often mirrors the kenosis it seeks – holding the originating questions open, and opening-up still others. In fact, this thinking about *kenosis through architecture* ultimately turns, and opens-up a unique thinking about *architecture through kenosis* – extending to architecture's very being. Kenotic emptiness asks of architecture's fullness, of the barriers to architecture's own kenosis. And it asks how such a kenosis might influence an increasingly secularised, globalised, and environmentalised – indeed, aestheticised – world. Questions of kenosis, creativity, and architecture are explored in the interest of elevating humanity's thinking about the aesthetisation of culture; a critical pursuit, worthy to be critically considered, since such thinking affects virtually everyone and everything.

Acknowledgements

I have always appreciated and enjoyed school, particularly at the tertiary level. In fact, it might be said that, for me, the past forty-plus years of architectural practice have merely been a sabbatical from academe since, during all of those years, I have known a profound longing to return – to once again ‘learn’. Of course, to practice is to constantly learn, but, for the most part, it is to learn practically, amidst established protocols that presume thinking and primarily value doing. I longed to shift the emphasis – at least for a while – from doing to thinking, which is no less doing, because thinking about creativity – not least, creativity in architecture – is ultimately a practical pursuit. So, in 2011, when I found it possible to return to academe and think about creativity, I did so eagerly. Most fortuitous was that the opportunity arose not long after relocating from mainland Australia to the island state of Tasmania, very near to the University of Tasmania and its School of Architecture and Design. I am grateful to all of those at the university who assisted me in capitalising on the opportunity and making it even more rewarding than I expected.

First, I wish to thank my primary supervisor, Professor Stephen Loo, formerly Head of the School of Architecture and Design, and now Director of the university’s Creative Exchange Institute. His steadfast support and encouragement, offered during a demanding time in his own career, has been essential to my work. I recall, in particular, his ability to maintain a professional demeanour when, at our first meeting, he mentioned a then-unfamiliar name – that of Martin Heidegger – and I ignorantly asked him to spell it. I am especially grateful to Professor Loo for introducing me to Jeff Malpas, philosopher and Distinguished Professor at the University of Tasmania. Almost one year into my project, at the conclusion of what I thought would be a one-time consultation, Professor Malpas offered to become part of my supervisory team. He thus gifted me in a way that changed and elevated the course of my studies. (Given his expertise in all things Heideggerian, I was grateful that, by then, I had come to know the esteemed philosopher’s name and its spelling.) As co-supervisor, Professor Malpas introduced me to the world of philosophy, opened-up my thinking, and constantly encouraged my own kenosis, as I researched and applied concepts of kenosis to creativity and architecture. Together, both supervisors challenged and critiqued my work, and were – to my benefit – always willing to tell me when I strayed. As much as school, I have always appreciated teachers and mentors, particularly those willing to ‘push’.

In a variety of ways, others at the University of Tasmania also facilitated my work. As then Graduate Research Coordinator for the School of Architecture and Design, Dr Stuart King not only championed my application for university admission and scholarship

but also offered essential advice and supervision as I began my work. And, while serving as a tutor in his class, I learned more from him than my students did from me. My exposure to the university, however, began at a meeting with the then-soon-retiring Head of School, Professor Roger Fay. His attentiveness, encouragement, and insight left me without any doubt that I had found the right place to learn and think. No less appreciated is the support of the school's current Graduate Research Coordinator, Dr Steven Fleming, and all of those at the university's Graduate Research Office. Special mention goes to a most helpful and efficient staff at the university library, and to Ms Wendy Roberts, who helpfully and efficiently proof-read my manuscript, searching for those details that had escaped me.

Outside academe – indeed, outside architecture and philosophy – I have been supported by many from the realms of theology and liturgy; disciplines embedded in kenosis. They know who they are, and I am grateful to each. Three, however, must be named for their special parts in this endeavour, which, even if manifested only as felt presence, were crucially inspirational. I first discussed notions of “assertion versus submission in architecture” with a respected client and friend, Rev John Cunningham of Melbourne, who urged me to pursue those thoughts. And, in the eighteen years since my emigration to Australia, I have enjoyed the unwavering friendship and tutelage of Rev Dr Patrick Negri SSS, who not only supported my application for admission and scholarship but, during my candidacy, also provided invaluable guidance, read key portions of my work, and offered critical comment. Even from as far away as Chicago, I have been cheered by long-time friend and mentor Rev Dr Arthur A.R. Nelson. Clients, too, have been sources of great inspiration, much of which manifests in this work. Indeed, many clients have become friends – but, amongst those in Australia, two stand out: Mr Patrick Donnellan OAM, who also supported my application and did much to bolster my confidence, and Rev Kevin McIntosh, who was one of my first antipodean clients, became one of my most frequent repeat clients, and remains both friend and valued liturgical converser.

This dissertation is not the only tangible product of my current academic experience. During the course of my candidacy, pursuant to the research and writing undertaken, I have been privileged to present two papers at international conferences,¹ and to see three papers published; two appearing in peer-reviewed academic journals,²

¹ R.S. Lindstrom, "Revisiting Kahn: A Theological Case for Kenotic Design" (paper presented at the 29th Annual Conference of the Society of Architectural Historians Australia and New Zealand: *Fabulation: Myth, Nature, Heritage*, Launceston, 2012); and R.S. Lindstrom, "Sustainability by Design: Kenosis as a Framework for Environmental, Cultural and Social Dialogue" (paper presented at the Ninth International Conference on Environmental, Cultural, Economic, and Social Sustainability, Hiroshima, Japan, 24 January 2013).

² R.S. Lindstrom, "Revisiting Kahn: A Theological Case for Kenotic Design," in *Fabulation: Myth, Nature, Heritage, The 29th Annual Conference of the Society of Architectural Historians Australia and New Zealand*,

and another in a specialised professional journal.³ Thus many concepts included in this discourse – particularly in Chapters 3 and 7 – represent the elaboration of ideas first explored in these previous works. It is also the case that, three decades before the current experience, I had already been attracted to the subject of creativity as I pursued research made possible by the Francis J. Plym Traveling Fellowship in Architecture, a post-graduate award presented by the School of Architecture, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. That early endeavour culminated in the publication of my book, *Creativity and Contradiction*.⁴ Although, at the time, I would have had no knowledge of kenosis, I can see now that kenosis was very much embedded in the architectural examples – especially their ‘contradictions’ – that were then the subjects of my (less-developed) exploration and writing.

Connecting past with present, it is especially poignant that during these three and one-half years in which I have gained new and valued mentors, I have lost all but one of those who most significantly shaped my thinking when I was last in academe. Those ‘giants’ from the University of Illinois are Professors Emeriti Jack S. Baker FAIA (1920-2013), Walter H. Lewis FAIA (1928-2013), Alexander Notaras (1921-2011), and Daniel J. Perrino (1921-2012). By their many gifts to me, each ‘lives’ in this dissertation. So does one other, Professor Emeritus A. Richard Williams FAIA, who marked his 100th year in 2014 and, as much as ever, continues to think critically about architecture – and the world. I continue to be buoyed by his example.

I am also indebted to family and other close friends for untold gestures of encouragement. To friends in the US, including Bradford Newquist, Peter Zelenko, Timothy O’Neil, and Judy Dioszegi, and to those in Australia, particularly Anda Kenne, I say thank you for the gift of genuine and certain support. Despite the tyranny of distance and infrequent visits, I am strengthened by the ‘presence’ of my mother Elizabeth and brother Roger, both in Illinois. I am similarly strengthened by my extended family in Australia – the Emerys – particularly by its matriarch, Hélène, who has not only offered constant encouragement but has read the early drafts of every chapter, remarkably (and, no doubt, prejudicially) without a critical word. It is her son, Justin, however – my best friend and life partner – who is most responsible for enabling my work on this project. For that, and many other reasons he already knows, I dedicate this dissertation to him with the deepest gratitude and love.

ed. S. King, A. Chatterjee, and S. Loo (Launceston: SAHANZ, 2012); and R.S. Lindstrom, "Sustainability by Design: Kenosis as a Framework for Environmental, Cultural and Social Dialogue," *The International Journal of Sustainability Policy and Practice* 9, no. 1 (2014).

³ R.S. Lindstrom, "Creating Church: Kenosis as Protocol," *Faith & Form: The Interfaith Journal on Religion, Art and Architecture* XLVI, no. 3 (2013).

⁴ R.S. Lindstrom, *Creativity and Contradiction: European Churches Since 1970* (Washington, DC: American Institute of Architects Press, 1988).

Part One – Foundations

Introduction: Awaiting Kenosis

“Why do we have to change *anything*?” Shouted with seeming impertinence from the back of the room, this question came just as the meeting was called to order, and it spontaneously attracted approving applause from many of those present. Nearly 140 people had gathered at a church hall in rural Australia to consider a subject considered before: the possibility of undertaking an architectural project to renew the parish’s nearly century-old church building. This time, however, the parish had been told that things would be different. Uncharacteristic of customary architectural practice, this was to be the beginning of a process that presumed no building project. Instead, it invited the entire parish to participate, if they wished, in creatively discerning its situation and asking of that situation whether architecture was a response it called for – with either the negative or affirmative seen as equally legitimate. In a very real sense, it was a process open to its own collapse. It was called a ‘process’, but, more precisely, it was an event of engagement. Its only strategy was openness, a characteristic that saw the first plenary session begin with what had the potential to close it down. The shouted question had been aggressively asserted. But what was the assertion? Those who did not applaud may have heard a closed question, an answer in the guise of a question, intended to pre-empt listening and suppress dialogue; a kind of emptying-out without an opening-up. Indeed, it may well have been an assertion of resistance. Yet the question could equally have been heard as a challenge to purported but, as yet, untested and unproven openness. It could have been a reaction to previous processes that proved strategic and manipulative. As such, it may have been an emptying-out of barriers – anything from frustration, exhaustion, and fear, to closed-mindedness or fundamentalism – one that might enable the gradual opening-up to an event that gradually proved open. In any case, this event of openness needed to remain open to questions of its openness and challenges to its sufficiency. No less so, the event needed to challenge the self-sufficiency of its questioners. Only then could there be engagement and mutual exchange; something more than debate. Rather than rushing to resolve the question, it could be left to stand as part of the situation, the event itself being a working-out of the situation, including all that it comprised.¹

¹ A more complete narrative of this event – which eventually proceeds in mutual openness – is found in R.S. Lindstrom, “Country Know How,” *The Summit: Journal of the Office for Worship, Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne* 27, no. 4 (2000): 13-16.

Coincidentally, and not without irony, it was only four weeks earlier that this Catholic parish had joined the rest of Christendom in marking the pinnacle of the church calendar: the celebration of the mystery of Easter, or what theologians refer to as the *paschal mystery*.² I mention irony because Easter comprises the events of the Christian myth that present an extreme call to open-up, to change almost *everything*, to turn world views upside-down. These are events that have changed religious discourse, if not also that of philosophy and architecture, since the time of their promulgation. They are events without whose stories there would be no Christianity, and without which the West and, to varying degrees, the world would be much different. Their interpretation and re-interpretation have changed and continue to change Christianity and all that is influenced thereby. The celebration of the paschal mystery is a celebration of change – change effected by the mysteries of radical selflessness, openness, and relationality on the part of the divine, and by the call of humanity to the same. In the immediate aftermath of such celebration, this parish found itself engaged in an event that opened-up many of the same ‘mysteries’ with far less abstraction; that is, in very human, practical, and experiential terms. How might that affect their approach to and consideration of change, particularly when applied to the created and creative environment – the architecture – that accommodates their celebration of such mysteries? What is it in the concept of Christianity’s paschal mystery, as well as in the myths of many other faith traditions and cultures, which may advantage the emergence of creative thinking and response, not least through architecture? Answers – though likely of the sort that keep the questions open and maintain their mysteries – lie deeper than any religious doctrines. Yet religion proves a useful threshold at which to open-up to the questions.

GENESIS

It is at the intersection of religion and architecture that this project finds its genesis (though not long resting there). The proposition that there could be no other starting point is one requiring brief – and reluctant – autobiographical explication. Although I would avow a strong sense of spirituality, I do not consider myself ‘religious’ and have never been religiously-affiliated. I do not subscribe to theism or to atheism, the latter no less a belief system than the former. Nor am I attracted to agnosticism, since ‘knowing’ of a deity’s existence has not only proven impossible but also largely inessential. Regarding religion, I am without ‘-ism’; content to leave its questions open. Still, I have always been fascinated by the subject, primarily in terms of anthropology, sociology, and architecture –

² Although the term ‘paschal mystery’ is less frequently deployed in the more Evangelical and Pentecostal denominations of Protestant Christianity, it nonetheless describes the same events celebrated throughout Christianity under the banner of Easter; particularly the passion, death, and resurrection of the Christian messiah, Jesus Christ, but also including the events of his birth and life.

to which I now add philosophy. Religion and I have shared a long, symbiotic but contentious relationship, frequently marked by coincidence, irony, and paradox. At the age of first memory, I became acquainted with religion, or, more precisely, it was then that attempts were made to effect my indoctrination, as a religiously zealous grandmother unilaterally escorted me to the First (Swedish) Evangelical Free Church, where the term ‘free’ bore no relationship whatsoever to theology.³ Yet, serendipitously and ironically, it was exactly this unwanted experience that provided a pre-adolescent introduction to architecture, long before I could foresee the consequences. During my Sunday school tenure, the church’s Neo-Classical building underwent a major architectural extension, in the only appropriate style of the day, that of ‘Modernism’, and I was very much aware of its happening. Inexplicably, my interest in the project, this first sighting of the intersection of religion and architecture, was more than passing curiosity. It lay deeper and remained dormant for most of a decade. Eventually, the modernised church building – its architectural influence only beginning to stir – would be the site of my ‘Confirmation’, an event offering my grandmother the illusion of a dream fulfilled but providing me with a coming-of-age that sanctioned rebellion and a departure from the church.

Then, owing to an especially progressive seventh-grade Industrial Arts teacher,⁴ I was introduced to architecture as a potential vocation; an introduction that ignited my emergent interest and, once again, saw religion and architecture intersect, albeit divergently. I enthusiastically fled religion and bounded toward architecture, not yet understanding its underlying potential for ‘religiosity’ – within the discipline and without. Coincidentally, I pursued an architectural education in the waning days of Modernism, perhaps the most ‘religious’ of architecture’s many movements, as evidenced by the zeal of its proponents and its propensity to espouse universal truths. Architecture was on the cusp of Post-Modernism, which, particularly in America, proved to be an often awkward form of Historicism. And, as I approached graduation, Post-Modernism was already being overshadowed by talk (though very little practice) of Deconstructivism. I was perhaps most influenced, however, by a teacher and mentor who never spoke of ‘style’ or ‘movement’. Instead, he taught that “the seed of the solution is in the problem” and championed architecture as “one of the performing arts,” something dynamic, emotional,

³ In Scandinavia, the term ‘free church’ refers to a church that is not part of the official ‘state church’, and therefore ‘free’ of the tax that is imposed to support the state church. When migrants brought their ‘free church’ to the USA, they retained the term in its name. The denomination is, in fact, of very conservative theology; and was more so in the years I describe.

⁴ I refer to Mr Orville O. Brown, then Head of the Industrial Arts Department at Thomas Jefferson Junior High School, Rockford, IL (USA), who, during the mid- to late-1960s, introduced Grade 7 to 9 students not only to architecture but also to civil engineering, structural engineering, and computer-controlled machinery, the latter only just being developed with the use of early punch-tape computers. He faced frequent criticism from high school teachers – those who would subsequently receive his students in the upper grade levels – for ‘straying’ from a then-customary industrial arts curriculum that focused on repetitive exercises in the elementary drafting of what Brown called “mutilated blocks.” Such critics saw his pedagogy as too advanced.

and of no fixed identity, something “that changes.”⁵ Under that influence, I began to wonder – when, for example, looking at the work of architects such as Richard Meier – how it could be that obviously differing circumstances affecting the design of a house in Connecticut and an art museum in Atlanta, GA (and two decades later, a church in Rome), could be calling for such deliberately similar architectural responses, at least in terms of formal expression. What forces could be at work in such cases – exemplified by many architects, in many places, and in many so-called styles – that seemingly sanction the denial of or resistance to a situation’s entirety? What is it that might, instead, make room for and focus attention on the entire situation?

As such questions were germinating, irony was to strike a third time. During graduate school and immediately following, I found myself in the employ of a generalist architectural firm that was establishing a specialisation in ecclesiastical design. Initially successful in avoiding such projects, I was eventually coerced into one and gradually became compelled by the quarry of history, symbolism, and human pursuit that spirituality presents to architecture – if architects are willing to do the hard work of excavation and extraction, work made particularly difficult by spirituality’s aversion to calculative description and insistence on maintaining mystery. Thus it was the church that introduced me to architecture and, then, architecture that ‘saved’ me from the church and, now, architecture that turned me back into the church’s midst, albeit largely in a professional capacity. Again, I found myself at the intersection of architecture and religion, where I had begun. What has followed is a career involving the design of buildings of almost every typology but with a focus on faith-based architecture. Christian projects (Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox) led to ecumenical projects, which, in turn, led to interfaith projects encompassing the world’s major religions. I can only surmise that my passion for such diverse engagements was born and nurtured in the space made for it by my childhood and early-adolescent experience, which was in fact a kind of ‘emptying’ through which, as Meister Eckhart famously describes it, “God ... rid me of God.”⁶ Not surprisingly, however, a career situated so close to religion periodically presented a sense of obligation to ‘join in’ and ‘belong to’ some particular tradition. But I was never able to act on such sentiments, never able to honestly accept the proposed creeds or engage in the suspension of thinking so often asked of those who would

⁵ J.S. Baker, “Thoughts,” in *Space, Movement, and Light: The Architecture of Jack Sherman Baker, FAIA*, ed. P.J. Armstrong and J.S. Poss (Champaign, IL: School of Architecture, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1997), 10-11.

⁶ This notion and quotation is found in Eckhart’s “Sermon 52”. There, he distinguishes between a hidden God (what God is, or will be) and a manifest God (what humanity constructs to be God). Eckhart’s ‘prayer’ is quoted as, “I pray God to rid me of God,” in J.D. Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger’s Thought* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1986), xviii. Alternatively, it is translated as “... I pray to God that he may make me free of ‘God’,” in J. Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Selections from His Essential Writings*, ed. E. Griffin, trans. E. Colledge and B. McGinn, First ed., HarperCollins Spiritual Classics (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2005), 91.

(instead) 'believe'. A Chicago theologian and clergyman – a client who became a close friend, and whose thinking is anything but suspended – suggested that my 'emptiness' would be filled not at one 'table' but at many⁷; a suggestion that proved assuaging, as well as patently correct in terms of spiritual and disciplinary pursuits. In many ways, his prophecy is realised by this project.

Having never joined or belonged, and therefore having never been baptised, it is again ironic that I would become intrigued by the Christian concept of the paschal mystery, and its direct extension to baptism, as a kind of 'dying' that paradoxically leads to a fuller experience of life; and how – at least conceptually – that resonates with my own experience in the creative act of architectural design. It is out of such interest that this project arose; initially envisaged to focus on the manner in which the concept of the paschal mystery might inform the creative process and, through it, architecture. But the paschal mystery is a complex theological topic, many layers of which are superfluous to its capacity to inform human creativity. In fact, it is primarily one layer – actually, the core of the paschal mystery – which proves most relevant to this discourse. Just as there would be no Christianity without the paschal mystery, there would be no paschal mystery without its claim of divine 'self-emptying', or *kenosis* – an emptying-out that is also an opening-up and, as will be seen, much more. Kenosis can be seen as the ontology of the paschal mystery, and thereby also that of the Christian faith that has been constructed around it. The paradox, of course, is that Christianity's institutional forms have – to varying degrees – been so successful in presenting the antithesis of kenosis, insofar as they resist opening-up; that is, they resist their own kenosis. It is also the case that the doctrines of the church do not hold the origins of kenosis. Indeed, although Christianity is fundamentally kenotic, kenosis is not fundamentally Christian. The concept is much older and deeper than that, traceable to the earliest philosophers in both Western and Eastern cultures, arising in some form across most faith traditions, and the subject of interdisciplinary discussion across time. In common to all such discourse, however, is the ultimate connection of kenosis to creativity, whether seen as divine or as cosmic, evolutionary, and human.

THESIS

On the foundations of that connection – kenosis to creativity – this project develops its central proposition that humanity's approach to and execution of creative opportunity can be valuably informed by that which kenosis reveals. In this proposition, I suggest that the understanding of kenosis can be extended from the realm of theologians and

⁷ I refer to Rev Dr Arthur A.R. Nelson, prominent figure in the Evangelical Covenant Church of America, former member of the faculty and administration at North Park University and Theological Seminary (Chicago), and, during various tenures, senior pastor at churches in four states.

philosophers to that of others who also create an increasingly secularised, globalised, and environmentalised – indeed, aestheticised – world. Such creators and their pursuits are, of course, manifold, with no single discipline fully representative of all creativity. Nonetheless, I further suggest that the proposed extension of kenotic understanding can be profitably advanced by using architecture as exemplar. Integrating discovery and design, art and science, calculation and meditation, but being none of those alone, architecture is a fundamental and traditional expression of human creativity – arguably amongst the most primal outside reproduction – one capable of transcendent *imagination* but constantly susceptible to banal (even violent) *fancy*.⁸ Owing to such promising vulnerability – but also raising a question as to what it is about vulnerability that is promising – architecture offers a worthy vantage point from which to await the approach of kenosis. Thus far, however, my proposition fails to suggest why or how human creativity, via architecture, is advantaged by an understanding of kenosis. Why await it?

I proceed to argue that an understanding of kenosis offers architecture, and thereby human creativity, another – perhaps clearer – understanding of itself, its actuality and potentiality. Therein lies the capacity to elevate the contributions that architecture and all of its creators make to the aesthetisation of culture. Kenosis is not abstract. It is fundamental to human being and, in turn, to human creativity and, therefore, to architecture. It opens up questions of each, or, more precisely, it *is* the opening-up of such questions, and, as that, it inherently resists closure. It asks of architecture the nature of its very being. It sustains the question and refuses simple response. In fact, this question that kenosis opens-up is one that asks not for answers but for kenosis as response, and it is such response that holds transformative potential. Much as philosopher Jacques Derrida proposes a kenosis of language in order to speak anew of God,⁹ I suggest a similar kenosis – specifically, a kenosis of architectural language – so as to think and speak in new ways about architecture and creativity, ways that include kenosis, itself, as an essential concept to be spoken about. Indeed, to speak of kenosis is already to speak of the creativity and, therefore, the creativity of architecture, which it always embeds.

⁸ Samuel Coleridge famously distinguishes between *imagination* (in primary and secondary states) and *fancy*. “The primary Imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception ... The secondary Imagination I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will ... It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate ... It is essentially vital.” In contrast, “Fancy ... has no other counters to play with, but fixities and definites ... a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and space.” See S.T. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* (Auckland: The Floating Press, (1817) 2009), 236-237.

⁹ Derrida suggests that such a kenosis of language “frees [it] from all authority, all narrative, all dogma, all belief – and at the limit from all faith.” See J. Derrida, “Post-Scriptum,” in *Derrida and Negative Theology*, ed. H. Coward and T. Foshay (Albany: SUNY, 1992), 311-312.

ANALYSIS

As this dissertation commences, it is tempting to invoke notions of an ‘investigation’ or ‘examination’, with measurable goals, objectives, and strategies that expose the subject, test the proposition, and draw conclusions; in other words, to outline a definitive, analytical methodology. But the very nature of kenosis resists such an approach. Kenosis is neither quantifiable nor calculable, and might be seen, by some, to run contrary to conventional logic (often unilinear). In fact, not only does kenosis *not* operate contrary to logic, it can be seen to offer a more profound – and richly multilinear – basis for thinking. Kenosis is an opening-up that precludes any conclusive shutting-down. It struggles against being strategically corralled, because it ultimately *is* a struggle. While it is common to think of a researcher approaching and apprehending – even ‘mastering’ – a topic (on the researcher’s terms), kenosis turns that around, suggesting instead that the researcher make-ready or make-room for the topic’s approach and appearance (on the topic’s terms). Like all objective research, that concerning kenosis demands openness, but, thereafter, it less often leads to finite discoveries and more often to the “gates of Mystery.”¹⁰ Kenosis questions – even undermines – some of the common conceptions of methodology and, true to its nature, leaves the question open. It encourages a lighter grip on strategy, if not a counterintuitive letting-go of it; what might be called a ‘kenotic methodology’. Despite such challenges, there is no suggestion that all methodology is futile in the face of kenosis, or that kenosis renders unconcealment impossible. Indeed, kenosis is unconcealing, and unconcealment is kenotic. Nor is there any suggestion that kenotic mysteriousness dooms any unconcealment of kenosis to incoherence or incommunicability. A ‘kenotic methodology’ merely calls for a sufficiently emptied and malleable outlook – though not one ungrounded – with which to invite, await, and engage an experience of kenosis: its struggle, between-ness, and incompleteness, as well as its opportunity.

Thinking About Kenosis

Accordingly, in Part One, I endeavour to establish the foundations of a kenotic outlook. This chapter has already revealed some of the dissertation’s foundations – its genesis and thesis – and shown both to be kenotic in their own right. Now, as another foundational aspect of the project is exposed – its approach, or methodology – that, too, can be seen to be given by kenosis. Although the pursuit of the project and its thesis is personal, it is not merely subjective. It is qualitative, phenomenological, and

¹⁰ I use a phrase, here, that Michael Benedikt uses to describe a place where he believes architect Louis Kahn was “happy to stand.” This notion is discussed further in Chapter 3, drawing on M. Benedikt, “Shiva, Luria, Kahn,” in *The Religious Imagination in Modern and Contemporary Architecture: A Reader*, ed. R. Hejduk and J. Williamson (New York and London: Routledge, 2011), 34.

hermeneutical. It is something like that which Klaus Krippendorff, in *Content Analysis*, describes as an “interactive-hermeneutic” approach; one involving “a close reading of relatively small amounts of textual matter and the rearticulation of given texts into new narratives,” as well as an acknowledgement of “working within hermeneutic circles in which [the analyst’s] own socially or culturally conditioned understandings constitutively participate.”¹¹ It is a kind of interpretive process (systematic, but neither unilinear nor determinate), which effects a *thinking about kenosis* and, consequently, prioritises interpretations that derive from the meditative rather than the calculative. Indeed, the pursuit is kenotic, and the research, thinking, and writing that comprise this dissertation are, in many ways, events of kenosis. It follows, then, that a reading of the dissertation may be equally kenotic.

A ‘kenotic methodology’ – one of emptying and opening-up – commences its deployment in Chapter 2, where the foundations of kenosis, itself, are critically examined; foundations that cross disciplines, cultures, faith traditions, and epochs. Such crossings are evidence that this project, which serendipitously (and somewhat naively) appeared to begin at the *intersection* of religion and architecture, has, in the course of its pursuit, come to be grounded at a much more complex *nexus*; one that encompasses matters of philosophy, theology, phenomenology and science, transcendence and immanence, divinity and humanity, East and West, antiquity and modernity – and always creativity. Chapter 2 opens-up a thinking about kenosis through the analysis, correlation, and presentation of kenotic principles from foundational sources; sources that include the orthodox, mystical, and radical. It does so by drawing on several (but, clearly, not all) major theologians, philosophers, and interdisciplinary thinkers, whose work can be seen as contributing to kenotic thinking. Often, however, kenosis is not the explicit subject of such thinker’s thinking; a fact requiring that the actual subjects be examined through a kenotic lens and explicated accordingly, in order to reveal kenotic value and contribute to this discourse. Indeed, the critically-synthesised, synoptic view of kenosis presented in Chapter 2 is, itself, a contribution to kenotic thinking, previously unavailable in such form.

I begin at the so-called *locus classicus* of kenosis – a short but weighty passage of Christian scripture by the apostle Paul – and do so, in part, by examining and comparing the work of theologians such as Hans Urs von Balthasar, François-Xavier Durrwell, and Jürgen Moltmann, as well as Anne Hunt, Martha Frederiks, and Ian Barbour. Revealed is much more than the merely classical aspects of this centrepiece in Christian thought. But attention then turns to essential antecedents from antiquity –

¹¹ K. Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*, Third ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2013), 22-23. Krippendorff defines text (above the level of sentences) as “*discourse*,” and includes in such text, or discourse, “all kinds of verbal, pictorial, symbolic, and communication data.”

notions of space and place, as well as matrix, medium, and agent – not only seen in Pythagorean and Atomist concepts and, then, in the thinking of Plato and Aristotle, but also in early Judaic theology. Modern philosophers Max Jammer and Edward Casey offer insight into the genealogy and relevance of such thinking, which aids in my effort to locate the kenotic dimensions thereof. While such antecedents prefigure and return to the kenotic claim of Christianity, they also point beyond to medieval thinking, elements of which, I suggest, advance the discussion of kenosis. Contributions are found in the work of Thomas Aquinas (and analyses by Timothy Pawl and Leo Elders), but are especially pertinent in Meister Eckhart's thinking about *Gelassenheit* (including interpretations by John Caputo) and in Rabbi Luria's doctrine of *zimzum* (with explications by Gershom Scholem). Then, juxtaposed with Early Modernity's renewed debate about space and place – most famously that between Gottfried Leibniz and Isaac Newton – I explore theology's necessary engagement with philosophy and science, an engagement that appears increasingly framed by kenotic thinking, even if not named as such.

My search for the underpinnings of kenotic thought continues in Late Modernity, where theology – particularly Christian but also Judaic – takes up a broader view of kenosis and hence creation, as a means to better align itself with evolving (and evolutionary) scientific 'truths'. At least in part, such movement is prompted by philosophy. Each in their own ways, Georg Hegel, Friedrich Nietzsche, Alfred North Whitehead, and Hans Jonas posit thinking that sees concepts of the divine move decidedly – and, I propose, kenotically – toward secularisation. The philosophy of hermeneutics, espoused by Hans-Georg Gadamer and others, closely relates to and expands kenotic thinking, as does the extensive and diverse work of Martin Heidegger. The latter's thinking is used throughout the dissertation, but, in Chapter 2, I highlight Heidegger's re-opening – and shifting – of the Eckhartian notion of *Gelassenheit*, or releasement, and I examine the nuances that Charles Guignon adds to the topic. I also look to other Continental philosophers, those such as Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida, who explicitly discuss kenosis and endeavour to name many of its attributes and manifestations in human experience (though not in architecture). Importantly, throughout the development of kenotic thinking in Western philosophy, there can be seen Eastern parallels, corollaries, and analogies – not uncommonly preceding or prefiguring Western thought. The works, for example, of Chinese philosopher and poet Laotse, as well as that of Japanese philosophers Kitaro Nishida, Keiji Nishitani, and Masao Abe, offer ample evidence. Hence, I explore enough of Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, and also Islam, to establish that kenotic notions pervade all of those traditions, even if sometimes revealed ambiguously or in ways peculiar to each. The resulting interfaith conversation is significant in an increasingly globalised and secularised world. I conclude Chapter 2 by

examining a more contemporary and radicalised philosophy of kenosis, one notably posited by Gianni Vattimo as part of his ‘weak thinking’, which unequivocally names secularisation (and, with it, globalisation) as kenosis; a very real and contemporary phenomenon. It is largely owing to such a view – as well as that of other contemporary philosophers, including John Caputo – that kenosis is most fully opened-up, preparing the way for it to be seen manifested in creativity; indeed, in architecture.

Despite clear linkages to creativity and creation, the kenotic nexus is absent any explicit invocation of kenosis in architecture. In fact, that absence may cause some readers to see Chapter 2 as unrelated or unnecessary to the discussion, perhaps too much outside the discipline of architecture. But kenosis cannot be heard in conversation with architecture unless it is first heard and understood in itself. The purpose of Chapter 2 is such a hearing and understanding, which, once established, reveals that in the conspicuous absence of architecture from kenotic discourse – precisely in that ‘emptiness’ – the primary opportunities and contributions of this project lie.

Thinking About Kenosis Through Architecture

Part Two – Chapters 3 to 6 – addresses that absence and invites kenosis to manifest in architecture, to appear instantiated and concretised. It expands a thinking about kenosis to *a thinking about kenosis through architecture*. Even as kenosis informs architecture, architecture also informs kenosis by demonstrating that kenosis can be spatially manifested; an unsurprising phenomenon, since, as revealed in Chapter 2, kenosis is first grounded in concepts of space and place. This part of the dissertation makes-room for kenosis (and its antitheses) to be unconcealed in eight specific architectural ‘situations’ (not merely buildings, but ‘places’ in the philosophical sense), selected primarily for what appear to be their kenotic claims – though none explicitly invokes kenosis. Such claims are made either by those who conceived the projects or by those who have critiqued them, or by both. Each chapter offers a new kenotic view of one or more of these projects and, consequently, a new view of kenosis as well. Indeed, each chapter makes its own contribution to the topics of architecture and kenosis – and each could, perhaps, be read independently – but it is in the consideration of these chapters, together, that the fullest view of kenosis can be seen in architecture.

Like kenosis, the selected situations cross boundaries, including those of culture, typology, design philosophy, style, and time. They evidence the instantiation of kenosis in attitude, execution, or materialisation, or in all three, and manifest in examples that are seen to represent Modernism, Postmodern Historicism, Environmentalism, Regionalism, and Neo-Modernism, as well as Critical- and Non-Modernism. The primary works are those of architects Louis Kahn, I.M. Pei, Tadao Ando, Daniel Libeskind, and Peter

Eisenman, but also included are projects by Michael Graves and Norman Foster. Located in the USA, Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, the contexts of these projects and their architects are geographically diverse. Several are influenced by one or more faith traditions: Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, or Hinduism, all of which include kenotic thinking (as Chapter 2 shows). Although these selections are well-known and generally large in scale – some ‘monumental’ – neither attribute produces greater or lesser instantiations of kenosis. As discussed later, the most modest – perhaps vernacular – work can be equally revealing of kenosis.¹² Indeed, all of the selected situations are useful and worthy to this dissertation, but they by no means exhaust kenotic manifestations in architecture, nor are they necessarily superior to countless other selections that might have been made. Kenosis, whether by presence or absence, whether by embrace or rejection, is evidenced in every situation.

The opening-up of each situation involves, as well, an opening-up to each. Research centres on a fine grade reading of the situations, not only by way of what Krippendorff calls text, or discourse – verbal, pictorial, and symbolic data – but also through personal visits to observe, record, and critique actual experiences of each, in light of historic and current circumstances. Expanding on Krippendorff, the approach can be seen to align, broadly, with the notions of “interpretive-historical research,” described by Linda Groat and David Wang in *Architectural Research Methods*. Remembering that kenosis tends to resist the calculative, strategic, and tactical, such an approach can nonetheless survey various types of evidence, including the “determinative, contextual, inferential, and recollective”; and, in addition to the “use of extant documents,” such an approach can employ other tactics, including “on-site familiarity” and “visual inspection” and “comparison with conditions elsewhere,” though primarily as means of opening-up to what kenosis might reveal.¹³ In some instances, my exploration of selected situations includes aspects of the biographic – that of architects or other situational participants – as inferential or recollective evidence, which, through reasoned analysis, provides a way of understanding an individual whose attitude or approach (either kenotic or not)

¹² This notion echoes one made by Martin Heidegger when he relates and discusses a story reported by Aristotle, concerning Heraclitus. Therein, some strangers who visit Heraclitus do so expecting to find the thinker in “circumstances that, contrary to the ordinary round of human life, everywhere bear traces of the exceptional and rare and so of the exciting.” But, to their dismay, the strangers find him “by a stove,” in an “altogether everyday place” that “betrays the entire poverty of his life.” From his modest place, Heraclitus “invites them to come in with the words, ‘Here too the gods come to presence.’” See M. Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” in *Pathways*, ed. W. McNeill (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, (1949) 1998), 169-170.

¹³ L. Groat and D. Wang, *Architectural Research Methods* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2002), 135-171. At page 136, the authors specifically define interpretive-historical research as “investigations into [past] social-physical phenomena within complex contexts, with a view toward explaining those phenomena in narrative form and in a holistic fashion.” My research intent is not dissimilar, except that I seek to include, amongst historically-past phenomena, the exploration of current – or, rather, immediately-past – phenomena.

significantly influenced a particular situation's outcome.¹⁴ Likewise, architectural assessments occasionally include aspects of the descriptive, as determinative, contextual, or, also, inferential evidence. I do not use the descriptive to pictorialise. Rather, I see it as a means to explore – again, through reasoned analysis – particular aspects of kenotic instantiation, the understanding of which is somehow enhanced by such description. Just as kenosis gives this project its 'methodology', kenosis also gives the dissertation various 'voices', as needed to open-up the diversity that is kenosis.

Similarly, kenosis suggests the avenues of research by which it might be approached and by which its revelations might be invited. Such avenues emerge in the theological and philosophical grounding of kenosis (outlined in Chapter 2), as well as in the architectural grounding of any given situation. Indeed, each of the selected situations is approached, not by the application of standardised assessment criteria (the purpose not actually being comparison), but in ways that the situation, itself, is calling for. Consequently, my readings of these selected situations draw – to various extents and in various combinations – on the evidence provided by kenotic thinking and its thinkers, by architects, clients, and the other 'creators' involved in a situation's realisation, as well as by architectural thinkers, whose reading of the situation, though not through a kenotic lens, is nonetheless helpful to a new, purposefully kenotic reading. There is no preconceived or strategic notion to 'use' particular thinkers to extract the kenosis in particular situations. In a sense, the particular situations call on particular thinkers and thinking, those that foster an unconcealment of the situations' kenotic concealments. That – as Heidegger will be seen to suggest, and as will be further discussed – requires attentiveness not to the act of unconcealing but to the act of respecting the concealment. What I have referred to as a 'kenotic methodology' enables exactly that, and, pursuant to such an approach, the situations do reveal differing degrees and aspects of kenotic instantiation. Some convincingly and extensively reveal kenosis, though never perfectly or completely. Others reveal instantiations that initially appear kenotic but, on closer reading, prove less so; while still others present the converse. And some situations reveal the unawareness or ignoring of kenosis, if not the outright resistance thereto. Even the latter revelations, however, are a kind of emptying that make them part of this discourse.

Various thinkers and thinking from Chapter 2 are seen again in Chapters 3 to 6. Still other philosophers are introduced in connection with specific architectural situations,

¹⁴ As an example of "inferential evidence," Groat and Wang cite a biographical photograph of Frederick Robie, riding in an early and then-very-modern automobile – the Robie Cycle Car – as a means to "understand the man" who, in 1908-10, would have Frank Lloyd Wright design a house for him and his family to include "integrated ventilation systems, an attached garage, and structural steel cantilevers." See *ibid.*, 157 (fig 6.10).

their thinking discussed in the detail called for by each exposition. For example, the work of philosopher Andrew Benjamin, especially his exploration of hope and cosmopolitanism and his application of such thought to the Jewish Museum Berlin and the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe, is essential to the unconcealment – in Chapter 6 – of what I see as kenotic (and apparently non-kenotic) instantiations in those two situations. Equally important to the same pursuit is the work of two other scholars: James Young, professor of English and Judaic studies, who writes with first-hand knowledge of both projects, and philosophy professor Renée van Riessen, whose interpretation of Levinasian kenosis likewise benefits my readings of these Berlin projects. A kenotic reading of The Church of the Light, in Japan, is similarly aided, not only by reprising Nishida, Nishitani, and Abe, but also by introducing aspects of the thinking of theologian/professor Jeannine Hill Fletcher and philosopher/professor Steve Odin, especially as seen in their work on religious diversity and interfaith relations, respectively. These and still others – including philosophers Georg Simmel, Walter Benjamin, Anthony Vidler, David Krell, and Bruce Benson, as well as sociologist Thomas Gieryn – add specific insight to the kenotic readings of various architectural situations.

Since, like many who have theorised about architecture, I regularly refer to Heideggerian concepts,¹⁵ I am inevitably attracted to the work of philosopher Jeff Malpas, whose development of ‘topology’ and ‘thinking of place’ invaluablely strengthens the connection of Heidegger to place and, hence, to architecture – and, so, is important to several of the architectural situations I discuss. Indeed, as Chapters 3 to 6 focus on architecture as a vehicle for exploring kenosis, I am additionally drawn to a further company of diverse but specifically architectural thinkers – critics, theorists, historians, educators, and practitioners – amongst them, Stanley Allen, Ali Alraouf, Jin Baek, Ralf Brand, Deborah Barnstone, Michael Benedikt, Joseph Burton, Kenneth Frampton, Paul Goldberger, Sarah Goldhagen, Simon Guy, Jack Hartray, Charles Jencks, Philip Jodidio, John Lobell, Steven Moore, Christian Norberg-Schulz, Juhani Pallasmaa, Vincent Scully, Paolo Soleri, and Robert Venturi. Regardless of discipline, however, I ask of each thinker’s thinking not so much what has already been told of their subjects but, rather, what such thinking might unconceal about the concept of kenosis, and how it might open-

¹⁵ Although I draw most heavily on the work of Martin Heidegger, I do so not to repeat a search for ‘Heidegger’s thinking on architecture’. That search is famously and usefully undertaken by Christian Norberg-Schulz. But, as Norberg-Schulz admits, “Heidegger did not leave us any text on architecture.” Norberg-Schulz thus searches for and extrapolates the ‘architecture’ in Heidegger’s philosophy, which he finds primarily insofar as architecture is seen in ‘place’ or ‘topology’; a farmhouse, temple, and bridge being the most explicitly architectural objects of Heidegger’s thinking. See C. Norberg-Schulz, “Heidegger’s Thinking on Architecture,” in *Architecture: Meaning and Place* (New York: Electa/Rizzoli, 1988), 39-48. As I explain later in this paragraph, my endeavour is not to find architectural thinking in Heidegger’s philosophy, but to find Heidegger’s philosophical thinking – particularly that which somehow elucidates kenosis – manifested in architecture.

up – or assist one in opening-up to – the unconcealment of kenosis in architecture; that which is largely untold. It is the same that I ask of each situation.

Thinking About Architecture Through Kenosis

Finally, with the foundations of kenosis exposed, with kenosis shown to be manifestable in architecture, and still with an open and malleable outlook, Part Three – Chapters 7 and 8 – turns to *a thinking about architecture through kenosis*. Roles reverse, and kenosis now becomes a vehicle for exploring architecture. Amplified is that by which kenosis can inform architecture and, by extension, creativity in general. Just as Parts One and Two deal primarily with the (past and present) actualities of kenosis and kenosis in architecture, Part Three turns to potentialities. How might architecture look, viewed through a kenotic lens? How might architecture look – or what might it *be* – amidst its own kenosis; its own emptying?

Many of the major thinkers, upon whom I draw in earlier parts of the dissertation, are reprised in Chapter 7, almost as an ensemble at the performance's climax. There was, however, no such calculated intent. It is merely what happened; perhaps a phenomenon of writing about kenosis and doing so kenotically, rather than strategically. Heidegger and Vattimo continue to figure prominently, even as others – including writer and design critic Deyan Sudjic and architectural historian/theorist Alberto Pérez-Gómez – are introduced to open-up and augment particular aspects of my thesis. Ultimately, all such thinkers assist in doing what needs to be done: an asking of the culminating questions and, then, a listening (with all senses) for response. Chapter 7 asks of architecture's 'fullness', of the barriers to its own kenosis, its '-ists' and '-isms'. It also asks of the horizons beyond such barriers. It explores an emptying of architecture and what that might say about architecture's 'creators', their creativity, their relationality, their participation in creating, and, ultimately, their humanity. It also explores the nature of the creations that might emanate from an 'emptied' architecture, and asks whether the emptying of architecture signifies its end, or at least its end-ings. Amidst such questions – and tentative but informative answers – Chapter 8 finally frames the struggle and inescapable paradox of kenosis, as seen through architecture and human creativity. It posits that grace, the impermanent achievement of what a given situation, in its entirety, is calling for (what some call beauty and some credit to a god), actually lies in the *dis-grace* of kenosis. Such is that which one cannot strive for, or presume to attain, but which ongoingly proposes to proceed – albeit in a complex, multilinear, indeterminate, and contingent manner – toward a more grace-filled world. And, true to its kenotic origins, this proposition opens and sustains still more questions – perhaps the world's most important.

2 Kenosis: A Synoptic View

Insofar as kenosis resists any notion of its 'conquer' or 'seizure', an understanding of the emptying and opening-up that *is* kenosis requires an emptying and opening-up *of* kenosis, which, in turn, requires an emptying and opening-up *to* kenosis. This chapter invites and facilitates all three happenings. For the opened-up reader, it reveals kenosis synoptically, but sufficiently, so as to establish its foundations. Without such revelation, there would be little potential for the extension of kenosis to architecture, for the viewing of architecture through a kenotic lens, or for architecture to be informed thereby. Indeed, the central thesis of this discourse requires exactly such extending, viewing, and informing. Although there is almost nothing of architecture in this chapter, kenosis nonetheless appears on multifarious paths and reveals its inextricable embedment in creation and creative events; those that may be seen as acts of the divine or the cosmos and evolution, as well as those that are clearly acts of humanity. Also uncovered is the genealogy of kenosis from antiquity to its revival and expansion in modernity, and to its radicalisation in postmodernity. This chapter introduces and connects the major thinkers and thinking that ground the subsequent, unfolding discourse. As they emerge in this initial opening-up *to* kenosis, they promote the ongoing opening-up *of* kenosis.

LOCUS CLASSICUS

The oft-made claim that Christian theology is the *locus classicus* of kenosis is not entirely unjustifiable, though, as will become apparent, it is neither the origin nor the culmination of kenosis and kenotic thought.¹ Nonetheless, since it was via the Christian doctrine of the paschal mystery that I came to this project and was introduced to kenosis (the doctrine's essence), there is an element of poetic merit in viewing kenotic genealogy with reference to its classical place in Christianity. Such a viewing position requires a looking back to Plato and before, as well as a looking forward to the present day, not so much in search of a chronological history, but a thematic one. Thus the Christian notion of kenosis can be seen as arising from that which preceded it, as well as that to which subsequent thought reacts, either by expanding or challenging it. The fact that so much of Christian theology originally draws on Platonic and Aristotelian thought, and, furthermore, that the most contemporary and radicalised interpretations of kenosis relate

¹ A brief, but useful introduction to 'kenosis', from a theological perspective, is provided in J. Haught, "Kenosis," in *Encyclopedia of Science and Religion*, ed. J.W.V. van Huyssteen (New York: Macmillian Reference USA, 2003), 500-502.

themselves to Christianity, makes the choice to view kenosis from this vantage point all the more fitting. For purposes of this discourse, however, it is important to primarily consider what the Christian narrative proposes about kenosis, as a *concept*, and largely avoid the skirmishes it stirs within theology. Even in a lengthy and comprehensive treatise on the paschal mystery, noted theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905-1988) states that “the doctrine of Kenosis is so difficult from the viewpoints of exegesis, the history of tradition and of dogma that here we can only touch upon it, and deal with it just so far as it is unavoidable for our theme.”² As if to corroborate Balthasar’s view, theologian Jürgen Moltmann (1926-) acknowledges not only “the many individual exegetical problems” associated with kenosis but also “the theological ones.”³ Although such difficulties and problems are amply debated in theological circles,⁴ they are essentially unresolvable and, here, largely superfluous. I therefore echo Balthasar’s caveat and limit my exploration, focusing on those aspects of the Christian concept of kenosis that usefully inform a secular reading of kenosis and human creativity, particularly as it might later be applied to architecture.

That which constitutes Christianity as a pivot point of kenotic thought is the fundamentally distinguishing claim of a manifested messiah, the divine in human form, their Christ. (This discussion, however, is indifferent to the factuality of such a claim, since the concept, alone, is sufficiently pivotal.) Although prefigured in Hebrew prophesy (as seen later in this chapter), the appearance of a messiah is claimed to have eventuated only in the Christian narrative, where it is seen through the complex salvific concept called the paschal mystery, referring foremost to the humiliating but paradoxically life-promising death of a messiah who somehow possesses two natures, divine and human (another topic of debate, flowing from kenosis). The paschal mystery courses its way throughout the Christian scriptures but takes on a unique dimension in the [ca.] 60 CE letter from the apostle Paul to a fledgling Christian community in Philippi (Greece).⁵ In that letter, which appears in the Christian scriptures as ‘Philippians’, Paul discusses the merits of “imitating Christ’s humility” (Phil 2). Most of that discussion centres on a recitation of what is regarded as an early Christian hymn (Phil 2:5-11), now often referred

² H.U. von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, trans. A. Nichols, English ed. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, (1970) 2005), 23.

³ J. Moltmann, "God's Kenosis in the Creation and Consummation of the World," in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, ed. J.C. Polkinghorne (Grand Rapids, MI and Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans, 2001), 138.

⁴ In addition to their own extensive works, both Balthasar and Moltmann direct readers of the above cited references to other sources in which the noted difficulties and problems of kenosis are pursued. An example of such difficulties is briefly discussed at note 11.

⁵ The HarperCollins Study Bible (NRSV) indicates that Paul’s letter to the Philippians was written sometime between 54 and 62 CE. See H.W. Attridge and W.A. Meeks, eds., *The HarperCollins Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2006), 1908.

to as the ‘Kenosis Hymn’.⁶ Therein, an already-existing Word, or *Logos*, is portrayed as being “in the form of God” but not inclined to “regard equality with God as something to be exploited.”⁷ Instead, this Christ who would be named Jesus, “being born in human likeness,” is said to have “emptied himself” (the original Greek text employs the term *ekenosen*⁸), thereby “taking the form of a slave.” Then, “being found in human form, he humbled himself” – a kind of earthly extension of his emptying – and, in obedience to God, willingly suffered crucifixion, all purportedly for humanity’s salvation. Thus the act of ‘self-emptying’ is known by the noun *kenosis* and, in this narrative, is that which effects particular kinds of servitude and humiliation. Paradoxically, however, it also culminates in the “exaltation” of the self-emptied one. This presentation of *kenosis* suggests a threefold event. In addition to the *kenosis* itself, there is that which precedes it and that which succeeds it. Each aspect of the event importantly characterises the conceptual nature of *kenosis* and warrants elucidation.

Preceding the Kenosis

Prior to his retelling of the hymn, Paul initiates the kenotic theme in his own words. He asks that the Philippians “do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit ...” (Phil 2:3). Thus, even before the term *kenosis* is deployed, before the notion of self-emptying is invoked,

⁶ Theologians speculate that this hymn may have been used, originally, in connection with baptismal events wherein, according to Christian tradition, catechumens enter the paschal mystery by ‘dying with Christ’ in what is effectively their own act of *kenosis*; a reciprocation of Christ’s. Paul’s retelling of the hymn, as it appears in Philippians 2:5-11 (NRSV), is as follows:

⁵Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,
⁶who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
⁷but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
⁸he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death -
even death on a cross.
⁹Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name
¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend
in heaven and on earth and under the earth
¹¹and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Theologian, Hans Urs von Balthasar, suggests that this is a “rounded off” version of the hymn and that, for emphasis, Paul added a line, “even death on a cross,” as the conclusion of verse 8. See von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*: 23.

⁷ The New Revised Standard Version uses the term ‘exploited’ and translates it, literally, to mean “‘seized’, as in a robbery.” In lieu of ‘exploited’, other biblical translations use terms such as ‘grasped’ (English Standard Version, International Standard Version, American Standard Version) or ‘clung to’ (New Living Translation) or ‘used to his own advantage’ (New International Version).

⁸ Other word forms, derived from the root verb *kenōō* (to empty, or empty out), are used elsewhere in the Christian scriptures to mean ‘empty’, ‘emptied’, or ‘void’, but not in direct reference to a divine emptying.

there is a call to abandon self-interest. Then, the early phrases of the hymn reinforce that call as they announce the “regard,” or attitude, with which the still-divine and not yet incarnate Christ is said to approach his kenotic event.⁹ He seemingly recognises that “equality with God” is an impediment to self-emptying, as well as a contradiction to his forthcoming earthly situation. Therefore he chooses not to exploit, grasp at, or cling to the advantage of his divinity. He volitionally distances himself from the privilege of position and lets-go of aspirations to glory or power. Paul’s preamble and the hymn’s initial stanzas thus reveal a kind of prerequisite to kenosis; namely, that it not be approached strategically, especially as a pursuit of privilege. The kenotic paradox, of course, is that this renunciation of power is precisely what produces power, perhaps even a greater power, that of powerlessness. That, however, is a subject to be discussed, later, in connection with events succeeding the kenosis.

The Kenosis

Paul’s preamble goes on to invoke kenosis, itself. After his call for abandonment of self-interest, he writes to the Philippians that they should each “look ... to the interests of others”¹⁰ in order that they might “be of the same mind” (and also have “the same love,” from verse 2) “that was in Christ” (Phil 2:4-5). It is in such a mind-set and out of such love that – according to the continuing hymn – Christ underwent his kenotic event, the self-emptying by which he could *be* human,¹¹ and thereby *be* consummately relational with humanity and attentive to their shared situation. By virtue of his human-ness, he could open-up and make-room for others, even “to the point of death” on their behalf. Christ’s kenosis, then, is his Passion. Thus the term ‘self-emptying’ comes to be equated with notions such as self-contraction, self-withdrawal, self-surrender, self-humbling, self-

⁹ Balthasar confirms the legitimacy of reading the Kenosis Hymn to mean “that the subject who thus ‘empties’ himself by taking the form of a servant is not the already incarnate Christ, but he who abides beyond this world, being in the form of God.” See von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*: 23-24.

¹⁰ Notes to the New Standard Revised Version indicate that ‘others’ (in the original text) can be literally translated to mean ‘one another’ and, thereby, see Paul suggesting that the Philippian Christians “show humility toward one another, not necessarily toward people in general.” Such a suggestion, however, appears inconsistent with the model of Christ’s earthly behaviour, and antithetical to kenosis. As such, it points to one of the ‘problems’ associated with the theological interpretation of this text.

¹¹ It is the exact nature and implications of this ‘self-emptying’ that has stirred so much theological attention and debate. Indeed, the origins of kenotic theology are traced primarily to seventeenth century Lutheran theologians who suggested that only the ‘attributes’ of divinity had been emptied, not divinity itself. Even then, those in Gießen proposed that the emptying was truly a ‘renunciation’, while those at Tübingen advocated that the kenosis had actually been *krypsis*, a ‘concealment’ or ‘hiding’ of divine attributes. Then, in the nineteenth century, other Lutheran theologians, including Thomasius, proposed that the divine nature had been ‘split’ into two sets of attributes: the outward ones of “majesty,” which were renounced, and the inward ones of “truth, holiness, love,” which were retained. As Moltmann points out, although this dichotomous treatment of divine attributes found no followers, it did serve to highlight one of the inherent problems in kenotic theology. Balthasar’s trinitarian view – discussed here in part – goes some way to resolve that problem, though still not fully (sufficient, however, for the purposes of this discourse). See Moltmann, “God’s Kenosis in the Creation and Consummation of the World,” 139; and K. Ward, “Cosmos and Kenosis,” in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, ed. J.C. Polkinghorne (Grand Rapids, MI and Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans, 2001), 155.

yielding, and dying-to-self. Yet, despite all of its seeming negation, this narrative depicts the messianic kenosis as a bold and revelatory act of *creation*. It purports the physical revelation of God to humanity, but, even viewed as myth, it significantly alters the human situation in which it ‘happens’. The mere notion of a hypostasis of God living amongst humanity – not only in human form, but as that of a servant who is ultimately executed at the hand of humanity – dramatically elevates the possibilities for thinking and acting vis-à-vis human-divine relationality, and therefore vis-à-vis human *being*. In that dynamic, three important characteristics of kenosis are uncovered. Kenosis is seen first as a creative act, second as one which both requires and effects relationality, and third as one which effects “a transition to a higher plane of action and meaning, [which] transforms the nature of what is happening and how it is seen.”¹²

The messianic instantiation of kenosis, as a creative act – which Balthasar refers to as “the horizontal relationship between Crib and Cross” – leads directly to another, more fundamental kenosis. Because the paschal mystery incorporates the whole story of this messiah’s earthly life, it necessarily includes the originating creative act of incarnation, by which the divine is seen to *become human* and *be placed humbly amongst humanity*. Indeed, the incarnation opens up what Balthasar calls “the vertical [relationship] between heaven and the Crib.”¹³ Although Christ’s self-emptying is seen as that which effects his human-ness and consequent passion, it is not that which effects his original creation as a human being; that is, it does not effect his *begetting*. It is in that generation – the incarnation – that Balthasar sees the primal act of kenotic creativity: the self-emptying of the Godhead. As “Father,” Balthasar sees God being the first to let-go of his divinity “in an eternal ‘super-Kenosis,’” by which he “makes himself ‘destitute’ of all that he is and can be so as to bring forth a consubstantial divinity, the Son.”¹⁴ Australian theologian Anne Hunt offers a concise summary of the Balthasarian view:

... all forms of kenosis ad extra are contained within that primal kenosis ad intra that is the Father’s generation of the Son. The generation of the Son manifests the complete self-giving of the Father to the Son, a self-yielding surrender of divine being. Similarly, the Son’s self-giving to the Father in his death on the cross is already contained within this eternal generation; in fact it is a modality of the Son’s procession.¹⁵

This incarnational view not only reveals an originating kenotic event (though not necessarily the first, as will subsequently be seen) but also another underlying

¹² What I am naming as a third characteristic is presented and discussed in G.F.R. Ellis, “Kenosis as a Unifying Theme for Life and Cosmology,” in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, ed. J.C. Polkinghorne (Grand Rapids, MI and Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans, 2001), 126.

¹³ von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*. 23.

¹⁴ Ibid., viii.

¹⁵ A. Hunt, “Psychological Analogy and Paschal Mystery in Trinitarian Theology,” *Theological Studies* 59, no. 2 (1998): 204.

characteristic of kenosis: that of reciprocity. Kenosis elicits kenotic response. (It is, however, important to note that, despite such response being volitional, kenotic response may include agonising reluctance or vigorous resistance, as illustrated in the narrative of Gethsemane). Being a product of the 'Father's' kenosis, the 'Son' responds kenotically, and similarly declines to cling to divine powers or attributes. Thus, a divine desire to relate to humanity is fulfilled in a "double kenosis,"¹⁶ which occurs primordially in God's self-emptying to create itself in human form and, then, secondarily (or consequentially) in Christ's self-emptying to make-room for the desired relations with humanity. In the latter, Christ is seen to *be* human, a constituent to his human context and earthly situation – at least in part. Balthasar describes the ontological identity of the always extant Logos (and eventual Christ) as consubstantially divine; an identity that, despite kenotic transformation, is apparently not surrendered in any ultimate way. There is some sense (the extent an ongoing topic of debate) in which the kenotic Christ remains divine, even while becoming (through incarnation) and being (through passion) human. Theology and theological debate aside, this concept uncovers still more essential characteristics of kenosis. Self-emptying effects heightened "receptivity" and "hospitality," or "a conscious opening up to the other in order to partially become the other," in a kind of "hybridisation" that finds self and others "radically contextualised" in the situation they comprise. Importantly, however, self-emptying does not threaten fundamental self-identity.¹⁷ In fact, the hybridisation and contextualisation of kenosis points to a strengthening of self-identity, if self-identity is not regarded as something to grasp at or cling to.

By invoking Father-Son imagery in his discussions of the incarnation, Balthasar takes an obviously trinitarian approach,¹⁸ which, according to Hunt, finds that "the paschal mystery and mystery of the Trinity are inextricably interconnected."¹⁹ So, amidst the divine kenotic events, what is the nature and place of the third hypostasis, the Spirit? Hunt finds insight in the work of another theologian, François-Xavier Durrwell (1912-2005):

In Durrwell's theology ... the Trinity is these Three: the Begetter, the Begotten, and the divine power of Begetting. The Spirit ... is the power of the process of begetting. Durrwell thus proposes what is effectively a 'bi-polar' trinitarian model.

¹⁶ The notion of a 'double kenosis' is explored more fully in Ward, "Cosmos and Kenosis," 162-165.

¹⁷ Drawing on the works of Yves Raguin, Theo Sundermeier, and Tinu Ruparell, Martha Frederiks (Utrecht University) gathers these notions of kenosis together in an exploration of kenosis as applied to interfaith relations. They are, however, useful and pertinent in describing the fundamental nature of kenosis in any application, not least in application to human creativity. See M.T. Frederiks, "Kenosis as a Model for Interreligious Dialogue," *Missiology, An International Review* XXXIII, no. 2 (2005): 216-217.

¹⁸ Although some scholars are able to find and interpret certain passages of the Hebrew scriptures as suggesting three aspects of God, there is no 'Trinitarian Doctrine' as such. Similarly, no formal doctrine appears in the Christian scriptures, although God's actions can be seen as being of three distinct natures, and there are references to Father, Son, and Spirit, albeit not as a 'Trinity'. The Christian doctrine of the Trinity is first found as a fourth century construct, which has continued to be interpretively expanded.

¹⁹ Hunt, "Psychological Analogy and Paschal Mystery in Trinitarian Theology," 199.

There are only two poles, not three, he insists, for the Father has only one Son, who, as the only-Begotten, is the unique term of the Father's paternal action. The third divine person, the Holy Spirit, is neither the beginning nor the end, but envelops both poles of the paternal relationship.²⁰

Durrwell's argument is reminiscent of the Augustinian view of love as a 'trinity', that of the *lover*, the *beloved*, and their *love*, which, used analogously, also points to the third hypostasis not as one begotten but as that which binds or envelops the other two. Neither view is inconsistent with Balthasar's notion of "inner-trinitarian love."²¹ In their depictions of a triune God and, in particular, their characterisation of the Spirit, both Durrwell and Balthasar open up additional views of kenosis.

First, the Spirit is seen as the agent of kenotic creativity,²² thereby allowing it also to be seen as that which comes to fill the 'space' or 'room' made for it by self-emptying. As discussed, it is in a kind of double kenosis that the Spirit fills the Father's self-emptied-ness to effect the radical hybridisation of the divine in human form, just as it also fills the Son's self-emptied-ness to effect the radical contextualisation of the divine in human situation and relation.²³ Being 'filled with spirit',²⁴ it might be said that kenotic emptiness is 'in-spirited', or 'inspired'. In its emptying and opening-up, kenosis effects a concurrent receptivity or taking-in of the other, a kind of 'inspiration' (a breathing- or drawing-in), and it is precisely this inspired kenotic activity (passive though it may be) that enables the happening of creative events. Second, the Spirit – or creative love – is seen as that which binds the inner-trinitarian relationship, a relationship of *perichoresis* (or circumincession).²⁵ In this relationship, "each person of the Trinity is in ecstasy out of itself in the other ... not only subject of itself but also room for the other,"²⁶ and, in a

²⁰ A. Hunt, "With the Risen Lord: François-Xavier Durrwell CSsR (1912-2005): A Tribute," *Australian eJournal of Theology* no. 7 (2006), http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/37047/20061019-0000/dlibrary.acu.edu.au/research/theology/ejournal/aejt_7/hunt.html.

²¹ Hunt, "Psychological Analogy and Paschal Mystery in Trinitarian Theology," 199-200. Hunt notes, here, that Balthasar is ultimately dissatisfied with trinitarian views that rely on anthropomorphic analogy, such as those of Augustine and, later, Richard of Saint Victor.

²² At Matthew 1:18, notes to the New Revised Standard Version define the Holy Spirit as "creative divine agency."

²³ It could also be said that the story of Mary's impregnation with a "child from the Holy Spirit" (Matt 1:18 NRSV) is another kenotic event, insofar as it is a 'filling' of her openness, her self-emptied-ness that makes-room for what is to happen: "Here am I, the *servant* of the Lord; *let it be with me* according to your word" (Luke 1:38 NRSV, my emphasis).

²⁴ In the Christian scriptures, there are many references to the Spirit's 'filling' nature. Indeed, at First Corinthians 6:19 (NRSV), there is the metaphoric contention that "your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit *within you*" (my emphasis). Arguably, some form of kenosis is required if there is to be room or space made in that 'temple' for the occupancy of a spirit – holy or otherwise.

²⁵ It is worth noting, here, the correlation between this term, *perichoresis* – as appropriated by Christianity – and Plato's notion of *chora* (seen later in this chapter to mean 'space' but also the root of the word 'chorus', as in singers or dancers). The Greek term *perichoresis*, evoking the "mutuality of partners in a dance," is most commonly equated to 'circumincession', from the Latin, meaning "to stand around," but also to 'circuminsession', meaning "to sit around." If no source is being quoted, I will use 'circummincession' (or 'circummincessional'). See Amos Yong, *Spirit-Word-Community: Theological Hermeneutics in Trinitarian Perspective* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002), 53.

²⁶ Moltmann, "God's Kenosis in the Creation and Consummation of the World," 141. Here, Moltmann is elucidating the Balthasarian view of kenosis.

sense, each has *partially become* the other. But the notion of perichoresis is not restricted by sacred bounds. In fact, according to the Christian narrative, incarnational creation sees divine love offered to the world, with humanity thereby invited to join in “an extended perichoresis of sorts,”²⁷ reciprocally responding to divine acts of kenotic creativity with its own. That, in itself, secularises the concept. Even outside theological considerations, the notion of spirit or inspiration – as the creative agent that is love – reveals *in* kenosis a call to human creativity through “deep interpersonal binding,”²⁸ a call paradoxically made answerable *through* kenosis.²⁹

Succeeding the Kenosis

That which follows the messianic kenosis is, like that which precedes the kenosis, also revealing of kenotic characteristics. After its reference to “death,” and “even death on a cross,” the Kenosis Hymn makes no further reference to resurrection – and certainly not to bodily resurrection – yet it does link the kenotic event to Christ’s ultimate “exaltation” (Phil 2:9-11). It is a curious passage, presenting more of those problems and difficulties to which Balthasar and Moltmann refer. It might be read to imply that God’s exaltation is posthumous, but that would contradict and virtually negate the Christian story. More likely, since the hymn does not end with death and, instead, goes on to describe another event, is the implication that the once-deceased is, by whatever means, again living (or at least *being*), presumably in full divinity. As such, one reading of the kenotic event could see kenosis as a kind of deceit, a mere stratagem by which to seduce humanity with divine trickery and then reward God’s second form with both restored powers and exaltation. But a divine being, which has only partially and temporarily taken human form, would have no need to be exalted, since such a being is already some integral aspect of the already exalted God, with no higher rank or position to which to be elevated. I leave the actualities of the event to historians and theologians, instead focusing on its potentiality as a concept in creativity.

Recognising the implausibility – if not irrationality – of God elevating God, and the contradiction that a divine deceit would present in the context of a message so focused

²⁷ M.G. Doncel, “The Kenosis of the Creator, His Creative Call and the Created Co-Creators,” *European Journal of Science and Theology* 2, no. 4 (2006): 9.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Slavoj Žižek points out that “the finite existence of mortal humans is the only site of the Spirit, the site where the Spirit achieves its actuality. What this means is that, in spite of all its grounding power, Spirit is a *virtual* entity in the sense that its status is that of a subjective presupposition: it exists only insofar as subjects *act as if it exists*.” See S. Žižek, “The Fear of Four Words: A Modest Plea for the Hegelian Reading of Christianity,” in *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic?*, ed. C. Davis, *Short Circuits* (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 2009), 60. Seen in light of this discussion, the filling of kenotic emptiness by spirit, or agent of creative love, is not power in itself, since it is not, itself, actualised. As Durrwell suggests, spirit is the power of a *process* of ‘begetting’, or creativity. It is not capable of controlling the situation, but it may empower its receiver to respond to the situation with inspired attentiveness, and, I as I will argue, it is received through kenosis.

on love, I would argue that, viewed kenotically, the so-called exaltation cannot be seen as the elevation of a divinity or the divine. Instead, it must be seen as an elevation of servitude and the inspired (creative) love out of which that arises.³⁰ It is servitude and love that form the very identity of the exalted God-in-human-form, as well as the essential nature of the originating Godhead. In that sense, it is kenosis that is finally extolled, as that which invites the creativity of servitude and love. Implicitly revealed in this exaltation are two further characteristics of kenosis. To extol kenosis is to extol all of the risks inherent in servitude and love, for example, “the risk of rejection, the risk of suffering, the risk of having to give up preconceived ideas,”³¹ all of which – and more – are encountered in the deep interpersonal binding of being present and receptive to the other. But, if kenosis entails nothing more than risks and demands constant (and futile) self-sacrifice, then there is little to extol. The exaltation of kenosis suggests that it is not merely risky, challenging, and weakening, but ultimately power-producing. In the Christian narrative examined thus far, kenosis is seen to produce all of the ‘power’ needed to effect fulfilment of messianic creation (incarnation) and creativity (passion). Of the power that emerges in kenosis, Ian Barbour (1923-2013) observes that it is “not power as control over another person, but power as empowerment of another person.” Such empowerment – *mutual* empowerment – is what Christianity espouses as the purpose of the divine kenotic events. “Creative empowerment is not a ‘zero-sum’ game (in which one person loses something when the other person gains it), but rather a ‘positive-sum-game’ (in which both parties can gain).”³² Although ‘game’ is a dubious image in this context, Barbour’s metaphor serves to illustrate a crucial point, one which transcends theology: kenosis is mutually fulfilling, even plenitudinous. Dispossessed of self and in an ‘exalted’ state of kenotic servitude, “we are able to absorb the amazing riches of others, the persons in themselves,”³³ as well as all they embody.

An Empty Passage

Despite its brevity (just eleven verses), the bible’s only direct reference to divine kenosis presents one of Christianity’s most abundant concepts. But it is its emptiness that sustains kenosis as a subject of ongoing thought in theology and beyond. Equally or more important than that which is said is that which is not said, not written, and not

³⁰ Such a notion is not unique to the Kenosis Hymn. It also appears in Matthew 23:12 (NRSV), where exaltation proceeding from such self-emptying attributes is extended to anyone in whom they manifest: “... all who humble themselves will be exalted.” Interestingly, this promise is preceded by an opposite warning against self-assertion: “All who exalt themselves will be humbled ...”

³¹ Frederiks, “Kenosis as a Model for Interreligious Dialogue,” 216. Here, Frederiks draws on the work of Edward Matthew and Tariq Mitri.

³² I.G. Barbour, “God’s Power: A Process View,” in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, ed. J.C. Polkinghorne (Grand Rapids, MI and Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans, 2001), 10.

³³ Yves Raguin invokes the notion of kenotic plenitude in Frederiks, “Kenosis as a Model for Interreligious Dialogue,” 216.

certain; that which forms and sustains mystery. The kenosis passage is itself kenotic – itself emptied. Yet it is power-filled, a paradoxical representation of the divine: “never mightier than in the act of [its] self-limitation ... and never greater than in the act of [its] self-humiliation.”³⁴ Its power is that of vulnerability or powerlessness, which asks to be attended. It asks readers and thinkers to see what is unspoken and hear what is unwritten; to wait, but also to await. And, in its emptiness, it invites thinking from diverse perspectives, especially outside theology. That task requires a turn toward antiquity and, then, an about-face toward modernity.

ANTECEDENTS

Kenosis is not a new concept when it appears in the Christian scriptures. Its novelty, there, could only be claimed in connection with its direct attribution to the divine. But is such attribution actually novel? Classical Christianity appropriates much from the philosophy of classical antiquity, in particular that of Plato and Aristotle. Moreover, Christian theology is constructed on a foundation provided by the theology and philosophy of Judaism. As constant historic conversers, and often as antagonists, Western philosophy and theology (both Judaic and Christian) are fundamentally connected, no less with regard to kenosis. Just as this discourse cannot, and need not, restate all that theology has said about the advent of kenosis in Christianity, the same is true of its origins in philosophy and Judaic thought. It is important, however, to acknowledge and outline the kenotic antecedents presented by both, especially those aspects, which, as seen in subsequent chapters, support the application of kenosis to creativity and, thereby, to architecture.

In Philosophy

To speak of emptying and emptiness is to ask of that which is emptied and that which it is emptied of. It is to ask of the container and the contained, of space and things in space, and of the places that things form. Such inquiry is found in Greek philosophy as early as the Pythagoreans, who, as Aristotle later tells it:

“... asserted the existence of the void and declared that it enters into the heavens out of the limitless breath – regarding the heavens as breathing the very vacancy – which vacancy ‘distinguishes’ natural objects ... since it is this void that delimits their nature.”³⁵

Some five or six centuries before kenosis appears in the Christian scriptures, the notion of empty space, including its role in relating the heavens with natural objects on earth, is

³⁴ This is Moltmann’s description of a kenotic God. See Moltmann, “God’s Kenosis in the Creation and Consummation of the World,” 148.

³⁵ Aristotle, *Physics*, 213b24-28.

addressed philosophically.³⁶ Like the later Christian concept of a Holy Spirit, the Pythagorean vacancy of limitless breath describes a creative agent, insofar as it delineates or creates the nature of things. Pythagorean 'space', portrayed as dichotomous with matter, is associated with 'air'.³⁷ It is void and sometimes referred to as "the empty" or, in Greek, *kenon*, a term derived from the same root as kenosis, and therefore of interest here. Democritus (460-370 BCE) and other Atomists deploy the concept of *kenon* with increased emphasis, seeing it as the unoccupied or empty space *between* particles of matter (but not including the matter itself), which allows for movement of the particles. Atomistic *kenon* is what Edward Casey calls the "strict void," or "no-place." Being utterly empty, it lacks "predetermined routes" and therefore has no "places or regions" that might otherwise provide "qualities of its own."³⁸

Significantly expanding the concept of space – and seeing therein certain qualities of its own – Plato (ca. 428-348 BCE) posits space as "the natural receptacle of all bodies,"³⁹ which is itself a quality. As such, Plato's *chōra* (literally 'space', but from which is derived the notion of 'chorus', as in that involving singers or dancers) carries with it a sense of boundedness, and that begins to connote the existence of place. This boundedness does not suggest *boundaries* at which the *chora* and its happenings are stopped, but *thresholds* at which it and its happenings become enabled.⁴⁰ Therefore, *chora* is often likened to places that enable becoming, places such as room, womb, and dance floor. *Chora*, however, cannot be seen to possess anything like the same determinacy of bounds that such metaphoric references might imply. Plato describes the *chora* as "the nurse of all becoming,"⁴¹ and elucidates its (indeterminate) qualities:

... it continues to receive all things, and has never in any way whatsoever itself taken on any shape similar to any of the things that enter it; for it is by nature a matrix for everything which is moved and refigured by the things which enter it, and because of those things it appears different at different times.⁴²

³⁶ It is no great leap to see the notions of 'heavens breathing' (inspiration and expiration), and 'limitless breath', as prefiguring the kind of 'spirit' (discussed in the previous section of this chapter) that would be portrayed as appearing on earth like a "violent wind," and as that with which the followers of a messiah, said to have been originally created in such spirit, would be "filled" (Acts 2:2-4 NRSV).

³⁷ Such identification is suggested by J. Burnet, quoted in M. Jammer, *Concepts of Space: The History of Theories of Space in Physics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1969), 9.

³⁸ E.S. Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*, Paperback ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 33.

³⁹ Plato, *Timaeus*, 50b. Unless otherwise noted, I am using Plato, *Timaeus and Critias*, trans. D. Lee and T.K. Johansen, Penguin Classics ed. (London: Penguin Group, (1965) 2008).

⁴⁰ This notion of boundary – one generally deployed throughout the dissertation – is that which Heidegger refers to and elucidates in M. Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking," in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 152. Specifically, Heidegger states: "a space is something that has been made room for, something that is cleared and free, namely within a boundary, Greek *peras*. A boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something *begins its presencing*."

⁴¹ Plato, *Timaeus*: 49a.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 50c.

The 'quality of its own' possessed by the chora is not any particular shape or character but the *capacity to transform*, when and as needed, in order to receive whatever enters it. Hence, while the Atomists contrast matter and space, Plato conjoins them, even while maintaining their distinction. Matter *becomes* in the receptacle of space, because, as Max Jammer describes it, "a physical body is merely part of space limited by geometric surfaces containing nothing but empty space."⁴³ For their identity and existence, matter and space are mutually reliant on this matrix, which is "the generatrix of created things: their *mater* or material precondition."⁴⁴ It is important to note, however, as both Casey and F.M. Cornford do,⁴⁵ that this matrix is not, itself, the begetter or creator but rather the medium of creating. It is that which provides "a seat [or situation] for everything that comes to be."⁴⁶ Thus, in his turn from *kenon* to *chora*, Plato's conception of space continues to reveal kenotic insights. Through kenosis – that is, by *emptying* – room is made for *receiving*, and, through the active passivity of both, *becoming* is enabled not only the becoming of the received but also of the receiver. Kenosis is not merely an emptying but all that the emptying effects. The emptied, receptive receptacle is that "in which" the qualities of the creation appear, and, by virtue thereof, so too appear the (always varying) qualities of the receptacle, in the same manner "as fleeting images are seen *in* a mirror."⁴⁷ It is a kind of locus of creat-ivity, creat-ing, and emergent creat-ion; a kind of 'place' of unfolding kenosis. Plato's *chora*, then, is by no means an empty void. In fact, it is "richly plenary,"⁴⁸ and that, too, is a quality that corroborates kenotic plenitude.⁴⁹ Paradoxically, it is by emptying the concept of *kenon* of its utter emptiness – to posit, instead, *chora* – that Plato's work can be seen to open-up the concept of *kenosis*.

Of equal or greater importance to the unconcealment of kenosis is Plato's concept of the choric happening, that which ultimately results in qualitative and sensible creation. Although the *chora*, as matrix, associates itself with matter, it is not material. "Let us not say that the mother and receptacle of what has come into being as visible or generally as perceptible is either earth or air or fire or water."⁵⁰ Instead, the *chora* receives and transforms such matter and forces, even as it transforms its non-material self in order to

⁴³ Jammer, *Concepts of Space: The History of Theories of Space in Physics*: 14.

⁴⁴ Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*: 24.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 37; F.M. Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology: The Timaeus of Plato Translated, with a Running Commentary* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, (1935) 1997), 187.

⁴⁶ Plato, *Timaeus*: 52b. (The word translated as 'seat', in this version, is rendered as 'situation' in Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology: The Timaeus of Plato Translated, with a Running Commentary*: 192.) In this sense, Plato's concept of 'space' prefigures the Christian notion of a Holy Spirit, especially when, as seen, the latter's nature is portrayed not as 'begetter', but as 'the power of the process of begetting'. (See note 20, and surrounding discussion.)

⁴⁷ Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology: The Timaeus of Plato Translated, with a Running Commentary*: 181.

⁴⁸ Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*: 33.

⁴⁹ See note 33 and surrounding discussion.

⁵⁰ Plato, *Timaeus*: 51a.

do so. This transformation – this happening – is one of motion. Motion in the chora is caused by its reception of dissimilar matter, which produces an imbalance of forces and a consequent lack of “equilibrium.” Thus, in the original choric happening,

the nurse of becoming ... swayed unevenly in every direction as it was shaken by the forces, and being moved it in turn shook them. And the things that were moved were constantly being separated and carried in different directions ... It separated the kinds most unlike each other furthest away from each other and pushed those most like each other towards the same place, with the result that they came to occupy different regions of space, even before they were arranged into an ordered universe.⁵¹

According to this, and as Plato goes on to suggest, it could be surmised that once this “winnowing” – or sorting – is finished, such a happening might end in a permanent state of rest. But such is not the case in the chora. Owing to the sphericity of its motion, and therefore a natural inclination “to return on itself,” a kind of compression occurs “in which small parts are juxtaposed with large ones, and the smaller disintegrate the larger, while the larger cause the smaller to combine, and all are carried ... to their own region; for a change in size involves a change in the position of their region.” So it is that the bodies are constantly “transforming themselves into each other,”⁵² such that “disequilibrium always keeps coming into being” and “perpetual motion” is ensured.⁵³ This vivid description reveals the chora’s constant heterogeneity and indeterminacy, but it also reveals its regionality and, in that, its relationality.⁵⁴ By way of its regionalising activity, it not only empties and makes-room, so as to gather-in the various parts that come to comprise a region, but also establishes the relationality of each region’s parts – to the point of bodies becoming the other – and, as well, the relationality of diverse and always-changing regions. In so doing, the *chora* reveals the potential for peri-chor-esis, the invitation and drawing-in to deeply intertwined relationship (discussed earlier in the context of trinitarian theology and interpersonal binding).⁵⁵ Such revelations say much about Plato’s chora, but they say as much or more about the nature of kenosis, that by which the choric happenings are enabled, animated, and maintained. Kenosis is shown to be an emptying effected by self-contraction, or a re-turning-in on itself. By virtue thereof, it is also clearing, receiving, pluralising, relationalising, transforming, and

⁵¹ Ibid., 52e-53a.

⁵² Note the similarity between this aspect of the choric happening and the aspect of kenosis, presented earlier, in which those engaged kenotically are seen to “partially become the other.” See also note 17 and surrounding discussion.

⁵³ Plato, *Timaeus*: 57e-58c. In Chapter 7 of this dissertation, I draw on this notion of ‘disequilibrium’ using, instead, the term ‘dynamic equilibrium’ to suggest a condition of relationality that can be asymmetrical and hierarchical, so as to be effectively powered, yet remain balanced – all by way of constant shifts in the prioritisation of related parts.

⁵⁴ The notions of choric homogeneity and regionalisation are explored more fully in Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*: 34-36.

⁵⁵ See notes 26, 27, 28, and surrounding discussion.

unending. Moreover, its being all of this is contingent and indeterminate, if not also mysterious. Kenosis shows to be as enigmatic as the matrix it permeates, and perceivable only “in a kind of dream.”⁵⁶

Just as the Pythagorean concept of *kenon* (void, as empty space) is advanced by Plato and his concept of *chora* (space, as receptive matrix), the latter is further advanced by Aristotle (384-322 BCE) and his concept of *topos* (place, as position in space). And, like Plato’s progression, the detail of Aristotle’s progression is comprehensively analysed and documented elsewhere, not least in the respective works of Jammer and Casey. Of concern here are those aspects of Aristotelian *topos* that continue to uncover the nature of kenosis. As seen, Plato discusses the choric motion that establishes regions, each of which constitutes some sort of ‘place’, even as he also discusses the movement from region to region as bodies “exchange places.”⁵⁷ In the *Physics*, Aristotle similarly discusses “locomotion” as “change in respect of place,”⁵⁸ but does so from a significantly different perspective. Plato prioritises an amorphous but essentially singular receptacle, or matrix. Therein are found various regions consisting of transient and transforming bodies that occupy space (place) specific to them, such that their places move with them. Place is never fixed, and the ‘exchange’ of places is merely the result of bodily transformations that necessitate the occupancy of a smaller or larger ‘place’. Aristotle, on the other hand, prioritises a plurality of places – positions in space – and sees bodies constantly moving between such places, regardless of their size. Thus, it is the fixed-ness of place that allows movement to be discerned, and it is place that transforms according to the transformed size and configuration of what moves to it. Space, to the extent Aristotle considers it, is therefore “the sum total of all places.”⁵⁹ It is not a singular structure constituted to maintain plural and diverse complexity, but a unitary primordial structure whose very constitution *is* such complexity.⁶⁰ That is an important distinction in itself, but it also reveals another. Plato’s view that the *chora* is *constituted* sees its limits being *imposed* from outside itself (as by Demiurge). His is a distinctly different view to Aristotle’s, in which the limits of *topos* are *immanent*,⁶¹ or, as he states it, “limits are

⁵⁶ Plato, *Timaeus*: 52b.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 57c.

⁵⁸ Aristotle, *Physics*: 208a31-32. Unless otherwise noted, I am using Aristotle, *Physics, Books III and IV*, ed. J.L. Ackrill and L. Judson, trans. E. Hussey, Clarendon Aristotle Series (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

⁵⁹ As Jammer notes: “In the *Physics*, Aristotle uses exclusively the term ‘place’ (*topos*)” and, therefore, in a strict sense, “does not advance a theory of space at all,” other than implying its composition as a collection of places. See Jammer, *Concepts of Space: The History of Theories of Space in Physics*: 17, 23.

⁶⁰ I use the term “unitary primordial structure” from Heidegger’s discussion in *Being and Time*, a term and concept I discuss further in Chapter 7. See M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, ed. D.J. Schmidt, trans. J. Stambaugh, SUNY Series in Contemporary Continental Philosophy (Albany: State University of New York Press, (1927) 1996), 123 (H. 131).

⁶¹ This distinction between imposition and immanence is discussed in Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*: 55-56. Casey also cites A.N. Whitehead’s suggestion that Plato’s view may invoke *both* imposition and a kind of immanence. See *ibid.*, 42.

together with what is limited.”⁶² Such limits – seen as potentiality, not merely restriction – are effected in the ability of topos “to contain by surrounding” without being part of that which is contained.⁶³ Place is thus vessel-like but unlike a vessel in its fixedness. Hence place is “a vessel which cannot be moved around.”⁶⁴

A later Atomist, Epicurus (341-270 BCE), sees all three notions of space – kenon, topos, and chora – as three kinds of the same “intangible substance.” *Kenon* (void) is “unoccupied space.” *Topos* (place) is “occupied space ... the [stationary] location of a sensible thing *in* space.” And *chora* (room), no longer seen as a self-contained matrix, is the room through which bodies “roam,” through which they move to other places. Epicurus is thus able to maintain the Atomist distinction of kenon, accept Aristotelian notions of topos, and emphasise the dynamic of inter-place movement through the chora. In so doing, he portrays space as “giving place and room for everything,” as “the very medium of [atomic bodies’] situatedness and movement, the scene of their multiple occupation.”⁶⁵ Such a portrayal sees relationality in this medium as having both fixed and kinetic dimensions, at once connected to and changing places. Despite substantially differing views of void, something like this Epicurean medium is advanced by the Stoics (from the early third century BCE) in clearly physical terms: “an *agent* responsible for the propagation of physical processes through space,” manifesting as a kind of “tension (*tonos*) in its active state.” By virtue of this agent, “distant parts of the universe are able to influence each other,” and the cosmos becomes “one field of action” where elements are not so much contained but bound together by “internal cohesion”⁶⁶ (a notion that once again echoes perichoresis). In all of these concepts, the resulting dynamic is a highly creative one, one of constant change, in which not only do things change place but place changes as a result, even while remaining identifiable and of fixed location.

The progression of post-Platonic conceptions of space – including distinctions, contradictions, and ongoing questions – does not end here. But even an incomplete outline is sufficient to harvest the essential insights that such developments contribute to a foundational understanding of kenosis. To be, *kenotically*, is not merely to exchange places (in the Platonic sense). It is not merely to move self and self’s space to a different location, even if as a result of self-transformation. Instead, it is to engage with another place – or what is actually a place of the other – such that self, other, and place are mutually transformed through such engagement. Moreover, it is to invite reciprocal

⁶² Aristotle, *Physics*: 212a30.

⁶³ Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*: 55.

⁶⁴ Aristotle, *Physics*: 212a14-15.

⁶⁵ Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*: 83. Notwithstanding this concept’s limitations, Casey joins those who posit that Epicurus – by way of this concept – “explicitly identifies void proper with what we must begin to call *space*.”

⁶⁶ Jammer, *Concepts of Space: The History of Theories of Space in Physics*: 23 (my emphasis).

kenotic engagement, the dynamism of movement back and forth between places, the movement itself causing places to change. Viewing such places as immoveable ‘vessels’ is to see them as ‘situations’, where situatedness is defined by all that is contained therein, as well as by all that moves thereto and therefrom. A situation effects more than emptying and receiving. It actively encompasses and surrounds. Movement to a situation of the other, then, is itself kenotic; an opening-up and gathering-in of situatedness, whereby the moving element finds itself already in the situation to which it moves, the situation in which the other is likewise embedded. So it is that the limit or creative potential of the situation already lies, immanently, within the situation’s situatedness. Insofar as this creative movement occurs in a ‘matrix’, through a ‘medium’, and by way of an ‘agent’, each can be seen as a permeance of kenosis. In the emptying that is filling, and in the emptiness that is plenitude, relationality is passively held in tension, in a creative and productive field of action. Such dynamism reveals the complex relationality that kenosis animates: the diversity, plurality, and entanglement, which creates of itself – without imposition – a unitary and perichoretic structure.

In Judaism

Well before – or, at the latest, contemporaneous with – early classical Greek philosophy, the notions of matrix, medium, and agent are linked with creativity in the Judaic story of cosmogenesis, as put forth in the first book of the Hebrew Scriptures. “In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters” (Gen 1:1-2, NRSV).⁶⁷ Despite use of the term ‘void’, there is some-thing present in the deep (even if that is to name the non-substantive) and in the waters (already a name for the substantive). Indeed, there is some-thing that gives them ‘face’. Casey observes that, in this account, there is “neither chaos nor void” but a “generative matrix of things-to-be, things-to-come,” which is “aqueous in character.”⁶⁸ I would expand that notion to suggest that there is a matrix to be found in the deep (as place of origin), a medium to be found in the waters, and an agent that takes the form of wind (or, in an accepted alternative translation, “the spirit of God”).⁶⁹ Amidst emptiness, this generatrix –

⁶⁷ Although Genesis is traditionally said to have been “dictated by God to Moses” (sometime during the sixteenth to fourteenth centuries BCE), it is more reliably thought that Genesis was “composed and compiled during the tenth through the sixth centuries BCE” and ultimately woven together by one or more editors. See Attridge and Meeks, *The HarperCollins Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, 3. Greek philosophy is generally seen to arise in the sixth century BCE.

⁶⁸ Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*: 24-25. Casey also notes that a similar notion of watery matrix – though no mention of ‘earth’ – is found even earlier, in the creation story of *Enuma Elish*, dating to sometime before the nineteenth century BCE.

⁶⁹ Here is an antecedent reference to spirit, which, when later viewed through Christianity’s trinitarian doctrine, sees Durrwell describe the ‘Holy Spirit’ as “the power of the process of begetting,” a power present from the first act of begetting. In fact, there is already an emergent trinity comprised in this matrix (source or

an inseparable union of matrix, medium, and agent – is a situation of great creative potential; one which is enabled, animated, and maintained by its emptiness. Thus the Judaic creation story, which is later assumed by Christianity and Islam (with certain variations and further developments), can already be seen to involve something of kenosis, insofar as this originating instance of divine self-realisation – preceding even Balthasar’s super-kenosis⁷⁰ – emerges out of an emptiness that is nonetheless filled.

There is yet another Torahic tale in which the notion of matrix, medium, and agent manifests in a creative situation. It is a tale that meets the kenotic criterion of effecting a transition to a higher plane of action and meaning,⁷¹ and it does so conceptually, regardless of historicity. In Exodus, the second book of the Hebrew Scriptures, Moses is said to be commissioned for his leadership in nothing less than an earthly encounter with a manifestation of the divine (Ex 3, NRSV). Amidst the bleakness of “the mountain of God”⁷² (obviously, a *place* of the divine), “the angel of the Lord appeared to [Moses] in a flame of fire out of a bush.” Already, in just one verse, a kenotic situation is presented. The appearance of bush-as-matrix and fire-as-medium and angel-as-agent is set against, and hence enabled by, the emptiness of the mountain. Then, the story continues with Moses noticing that “the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed.” And it is “out of the bush” that the divine itself next calls to Moses, asking that he remove his sandals because of the site’s sacredness, a request to which Moses presumably complies. Thus, as this kenotic situation unfolds, the divine matrix (the place or source of divine appearance) is seen to be burning in the medium of fire but does not burn up. It undergoes an ultimate act of self-dying, or self-contraction, yet retains its integrity and can even be seen as strengthened, presencing not only the angel-agent but also its divine dispatcher. Such presence signals divine attentiveness, not only to Moses and the immediate situation, but also to the larger human situation that Moses represents (in the immediate situation, the Israelites). I would suggest that this is another narrative of divine kenosis – and more. According to this story, it is in response to the kenotic event he witnesses that Moses responds reciprocally, in his own act of kenosis. By removing his sandals, Moses is, of course, being obedient in overawing circumstances, but his act is ultimately volitional and subjects him to ultimate vulnerability. He deprives himself of his capacity to flee the situation and thereby signals his heightened, if reluctant, attentiveness to it. The removal of his sandals is a physical manifestation of self-

originating place), medium (source made manifest), and agent (spirit or inspiration of making manifest, of creating).

⁷⁰ See note 14 and surrounding discussion.

⁷¹ See note 12 and surrounding discussion.

⁷² This is a reference to Mount Sinai, also known as *Horeb*. Biblical descriptions of the mountain are found in Exodus 19 and 24.

emptying.⁷³ What is created in this event of kenotic reciprocity is twofold: another divine self-realisation (a divine appearance to humanity) and the divine-human relationality arising therefrom.

It is during this encounter that the divine presence is said to speak to Moses. In addition to its matrical appearance through the medium of fire, the deity identifies itself. Commonly translated as “I am *who* I am,” an equally accepted alternative translation sees the divine utterance as “I am *what* I am,” the latter moving toward de-personification. But, more important to present purposes, a third and also equally valid translation presents as “I am *what* I *will be*” (Ex 3:14, NRSV).⁷⁴ By that, the deity is not only de-personified but also self-described as still *becoming*. Inasmuch as its ongoing becoming is effected in kenotic events, like this one, its kenosis must also be ongoing, essentially without end. This additional act of self-realisation furthers the establishment of a divine-human relationship. Even before revealing its exact identity, the deity offers Moses the assurance of its ongoing presence, promising that, during the impending tasks, “I will be *with you*” (Ex 3:12, NRSV, my emphasis).⁷⁵ Since the deity’s presence comes to be through kenosis, its future and continued *being-with* can also be seen as kenotically effected. And, by accepting and opening-up to the tasks ahead – albeit with great reluctance – Moses once again responds to divine kenosis by reciprocating with his own. There is, however, another important aspect of kenosis at work here. Kenosis is not merely a matter of accepting and opening-up to a situation. It is doing so in the face of challenge. In this situation, not only does the divine challenge Moses to take on tasks for which he feels incapable, Moses also challenges the divine to say exactly who or what it is. Both challenges imply that neither the divine nor the human is absolutely self-sufficient, that their relationship is to some degree interdependent and effected by mutual and ongoing kenosis. Both challenges are met reciprocally.

In such biblical legends, the notion of source matrix is clearly a notion of place, a place *out of* which something (usually divine) originates. Similarly, the notion of medium – for example, depicted as water or fire – is a place *in* which or *through* which something is realised, or made to appear. Wind (or spirit) acts as agent, on or at these places, to

⁷³ As such, I would argue that this is also one of the first acts of Judeo-Christian *liturgy*: kenotic response to a kenotic event that represents and celebrates divine kenosis. Jewish liturgy celebrates the kenosis of the first creation and divine revelation, whereas Christian liturgy primarily celebrates the kenosis of the second creation and divine revelation, the incarnation.

⁷⁴ These translations appear as part of the primary text in the NRSV but are also elucidated in the notes. Of additional interest is the fact that “the word ‘Lord’, when spelled with capital letters [in Hebrew] stands for the divine name, *YHWH*, which is ... connected with the verb *hayah*, ‘to be.’” While the latter could be read as simply meaning ‘to exist’, it could also be seen to suggest ‘coming to be’ or ‘coming into existence,’ thereby lending support to the third translation. See Attridge and Meeks, *The HarperCollins Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, 88-89.

⁷⁵ In this instance, the promise is to be with Moses, but it is a promise that becomes extended to all Israelites. (In the New Testament, of course, the promise is extended also to gentiles and, effectively, to all of humanity.)

effect the creation of something, though not necessarily something substantive. And kenosis is the emptying that makes room for and enables place; that is, it effects the happening of place. It is therefore not surprising that, as early as the first century CE, Palestinian Judaism was commonly substituting the term “‘place’ (*maqom*) as a name for God.” Such usage likely came about through the abbreviation of the original term for “‘holy place’ (*maqom qadosh*), the place of the ‘Shekinah,’”⁷⁶ and that opens-up yet another important aspect of kenosis. *Shekinah* (to settle, inhabit, or dwell) describes the concept of divine ‘indwelling’ amidst the people of Israel (itself a ‘place’),⁷⁷ an inhabitation made particularly present in the ‘holy place’, the Holy of Holies of the Temple.⁷⁸ On the one hand, this suggests a requisite kenosis to make room for such indwelling; some sort of emptying, not merely in the construct of the temple, but also of the people who would become inhabited (whether individually or collectively). On the other hand, it points to the need for the indweller’s kenosis, and, concerning that, there are at least two views. Abraham Heschel posits that the divine indweller is infinite “in heaven” but finite when “in his exiled people.” Such finitude, in an otherwise infinite being, presumably requires some sort of self-emptying, or self-withdrawal, to effect. Equally, it would seem that divine self-withdrawal is required in Franz Rosenzweig’s view, which sees a (clearly personified and masculine) God who “‘himself cuts himself off from himself [and] gives himself away to his people.’”⁷⁹ Thus shekinah must include not only the *filling* of space, or place, with divine presence but also, at least implicitly, the *emptying* required by both the receiver and the received in order to effect such filling.

Shekinah’s reference to emptying, however, may not be strictly implicit. The Hebrew term *shekinah* and the Aramaic *shekinta* are thought to be derivatives of the earlier Greek noun *skēnōsis*,⁸⁰ which, for obvious reasons, is a term of interest in this discourse. Skenosis appears in the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Book of Second Maccabees, possibly completed as early as 124 BCE.⁸¹ Therein it is told that priests, seeking divine protection of the temple and its ‘holy place’, pray to God with a reminder: “You were pleased that there should be a temple for your habitation [*skēnōseōs*] among us” (2 Mac 14:35, NRSV). In this invocation of divine habitation amongst humanity, there can be seen a prefiguration of the later Christian notion of incarnation. Indeed, the idea of skenosis is found again in a New Testament announcement of the incarnation: “And

⁷⁶ Jammer, *Concepts of Space: The History of Theories of Space in Physics*: 28-30. Here, Jammer also notes that “the Arabic term *makām* designates the place of a saint or of a holy tomb.”

⁷⁷ “I will dwell among the Israelites, and I will be their God” (Ex 29:45, NRSV).

⁷⁸ Moltmann, “God’s Kenosis in the Creation and Consummation of the World,” 142.

⁷⁹ The Heschel and Rosenzweig views are presented somewhat more fully in *ibid.*, 143-144. Moreover, the Rosenzweig view echoes the Kabbalistic notion of *zimzum*, discussed in the next section, under the sub-heading, “Rabbi Luria and Kabbalistic Creation.”

⁸⁰ M. McNamara, *Targum and Testament Revisited: Aramaic Paraphrases of the Hebrew Bible*, Second ed. (Grand Rapids, MI and Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans, 2010), 148.

⁸¹ Attridge and Meeks, *The HarperCollins Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, 1519.

the Word became flesh and [from the verb *skenóō*] lived among us” (Jn 1:14, NRSV).⁸² In both Old and New Testament portrayals, skenosis is the indwelling or filling of place, enabled by the emptying of *kenosis*. Thus, not only does skenosis imply kenosis, the terms can be seen as two sides of the same coin. If merely examining the structure of the words, it may be tempting to view kenosis as being already embedded in skenosis, but I would argue that the opposite is true. It is skenosis that is already embedded in kenosis, because the occupation of place is reliant on the emptying by which place happens. Kenosis therefore already includes skenosis; that is, emptying simultaneously effects filling, and to empty is to become filled, or, more simply, it is to *become*.

So it is that antecedent philosophy and theology return this discussion of kenosis to the point where it began: its locus classicus in Christianity. There, the notion of divine indwelling amongst humanity is radicalised to that of an earth-dwelling, situationally-human divinity. But all such invocations of skenosis are merely progressive steps in the development and portrayal of the concept of divine omnipresence. In Jewish *midrashim*, that concept is sometimes puzzlingly conveyed, for example: “We do not know whether God is the place of His world or whether His world is His place.” More directly, Rabbinic theology contends that “even the empty space is full of God.”⁸³ In both cases, kenosis and skenosis are again shown to be conjoined, just as *empty* space is again shown to be *full*. Whether emptiness is seen as being ‘filled’ by a theological divinity or, more philosophically, by some kind of matrix, medium, and agent, it is foremost a place brought about and permeated by kenosis; a place of creative potential. Empty space is full of creativity. It is the *place* of creativity – empty by virtue of its being full of creative emptiness.

MEDIEVAL THINKING

Having turned from Christianity, to look back at antecedent principles of kenosis in the philosophy and theology of antiquity, this survey now turns to look in the direction of an ultimately contemporary context. But, before progressing to modern developments in kenotic thinking, it is important to acknowledge and briefly consider those of the Middle Ages. Such contributions are once again found in both Christianity and Judaism (as well as in other traditions, as discussed later in this chapter). Although consummately religious and Christian, the scholastic Thomas of Aquino, known as Thomas Aquinas (ca. 1225-1274), and the mystic Johannes Eckhart, known as Meister Eckhart (ca. 1260-1327/8), explore concepts of Being and being in such a way that both find their

⁸² The verb *skenóō* means, literally, to pitch a tent. See *ibid.*, 1816.

⁸³ Jammer, *Concepts of Space: The History of Theories of Space in Physics*: 30-31.

work officially censured.⁸⁴ Aquinas, however, goes on to become canonised, and both become recognised for their advancement of ‘philosophical theology’ (a kind of philosophy *within* theology, if that is actually philosophy). More important to this discussion, each opens-up insightful aspects of kenosis, even if not intentionally or explicitly. Judaic mysticism, particularly the sixteenth century strain known as *Kabbalah*, does the same with more directness. Of particular interest, arising during the transition from Middle Ages to Early Modernity, is the Kabbalistic notion of *zimzum*, a distinctly kenotic concept posited by Rabbi Isaac Luria (1534-1572), which eventually provides impetus to the Late Modern revival and development of kenotic thought.

Thomas Aquinas and the “Five Ways”

Although his writings are far more prolific and profound, it is his relatively brief ‘proofs’ of God’s existence – known as the “Five Ways” – by which Thomas Aquinas is perhaps best known. Appearing early in his *Summa Theologiæ*,⁸⁵ and clearly influenced by Aristotle’s arguments concerning the existence of a ‘First Unmoved Mover’, each Way deploys a different argument in an attempt to reach one common conclusion; namely, that some ultimately causal something exists, a something that, according to Aquinas, “everyone understands to be God” or “everyone gives the name of God.” The qualified nature of his conclusion – never quite saying that the causal something *is* God – invites debate as to exactly what Aquinas intended to prove. It also renders his arguments susceptible to those critics who assert that they do not prove, at all, the existence of God (at least not the Christian God, or a God of religion), and, even if it were otherwise, that they do not necessarily lead to the same God and may only lead to a concept of God.⁸⁶ Whatever they prove, or fail to prove, I suggest an alternative reading of the Five Ways; one in which they are seen to efficaciously demonstrate the reality of kenosis, or kenotic phenomena. It is that reading which warrants further exploration here. Aquinas’ arguments rely on sensibly perceived effects, caused by something indiscernible.

⁸⁴ J.D. Caputo, *Heidegger and Aquinas: An Essay on Overcoming Metaphysics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982), 276.

⁸⁵ T. Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (*Summa Theologiæ*), trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Bros., (ca. 1274) 1947), First Part, Question 2, Article 3, response. This is the source of all subsequent quotations from the “Five Ways.”

⁸⁶ For example, Timothy Pawl (Thomist scholar and Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of St Thomas in Minnesota, USA) argues that Aquinas “does not take himself to have already shown that the God of the Christian creed exists.” On the other hand, after acknowledging major criticisms of the Five Ways, Leo Elders (Roman Catholic priest, Thomist scholar, and Fellow of the Pontifical Academy of St Thomas Aquinas) concludes that while Aquinas leaves room for a reasoned or philosophical interpretation, the ultimately theological setting of this work means that the final subject of Aquinas’ arguments can only be the God “revealed” by “Christian faith.” He writes: “Aquinas by no means reduces the God of the Christian faith to philosophy. Rather philosophy serves as a preparation for the faith.” The latter, of course, calls into question whether philosophy at the service of theology is actually philosophy. See T.J. Pawl, “The Five Ways,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas*, ed. B. Davies and E. Stump (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 115; and L.J. Elders, *The Philosophical Theology of St Thomas Aquinas*, ed. A. Zimmerman, Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990), 130-131.

Therefore, the cause 'proven' by each is self-evidently hidden, something self-withdrawn, or self-contracted, but nonetheless powerful as a result. Such attributes are already revealing of kenotic ontology.

The First Way argues on the basis of *motion*, using Aristotelian principles from *Physics* and *Metaphysics*. Aquinas describes motion as "nothing else than the reduction of something from potentiality to actuality," and posits that "whatever is in motion is put in motion by another." As in all of the Ways, the first invokes the principle of causality, concluding that there must have been an original 'cause'; in this case, a cause of effected original motion. Here, and in the discussion of all subsequent Ways, I leave the veracity of that conclusion, and the constitution of that 'cause', to those theologians, philosophers, and scientists who continue to consider it. Of greater interest is the argument's opening-up of a kenotic scenario. Motion is said to be a "reduction"; that is, some sort of contraction or diminution. Not only that, it is a reduction of potentiality in favour of actualisation. Hence this argument suggests that whatever constitutes the original cause, such constitution must be seen as the sole source of potentiality for motion. Therefore, the actualisation of initial motion in an initial object requires some self-reduction, or self-emptying, of the potentiality for motion – that held solely by the original cause – until the originating moment. It is thus kenosis, which requires and is itself motion, that initially enables motion. It follows, then, that such initial motion is also a kenosis of the affected object – an emptying that makes-room for the receipt of, and filling by, the potentiality for motion that is given up by the original cause, and with which the object becomes enabled to actualise movement. But what becomes of the self-emptied portion of the potentiality for motion in the original cause? It draws-in, and is filled by, that portion of the affected object now also holding like potentiality for motion (albeit already partially-emptied to actualise this motion by which it partially becomes the original cause). Thus, in this double kenosis⁸⁷ – an originating act of kenosis responded to reciprocally – both original cause and affected object are transformed, and, despite the onset of complexity (which will only increase), a unitary primordial structure is maintained.

Indeed, the First Way is fundamentally about coming-into-being, or *becoming*; that which kenosis animates. Not only does the affected object partially become the originating cause (its 'other'), the originating cause also partially becomes the affected object (its 'other'), both doing so by virtue of their emptying and making-room for such happenings. Since it is about becoming, the First Way is also about continuousness; the unending nature of kenosis. The Thomist view of continuous movement (via Aristotle) finds that "as long as a movement lasts, the actualization is incomplete and continues

⁸⁷ It is worth considering this notion of 'double kenosis', as I present it here, juxtaposed with its counterpart in trinitarian theology, presented earlier. See note 16 and surrounding discussion.

toward further fulfilment.”⁸⁸ It follows that kenosis, as long as it elicits reciprocal kenotic response (the essence of its ‘movement’), continues unendingly, not unlike the perpetual motion of Plato’s chora.⁸⁹ And because kenosis is potentiality without teleological ends – that is, without the purpose or strategy of fulfilment – it is always incomplete, never fully actualised. Viewed in the context of the First Way, kenosis can be seen not only as that which enables originating movement and animates ongoing movement but also as that which thereby maintains potentiality.

In a sense, the remaining Ways are subsidiary to the First. Well before Aquinas, the Islamic philosopher Averroës (Ibn Rušd, 1126-1198) had viewed Aristotle’s argument from motion to be the “only decisive proof” (of first movers),⁹⁰ and Aquinas commences his First Way by calling it “the first and more manifest way.” Nonetheless, the others build the case, and, just as importantly, they continue to reveal the Ways’ kenotic bases. The Second Way shifts the focus from the becoming of effects (like motion) to their *being*. It emphasises the seriality of the causes producing such effects, whereby each effect in a series of effects is dependent on the causality of the one prior, which Aquinas sees as ‘proof’ of a first cause. Viewed through a kenotic lens, the Second Way turns its attention from the notion of reciprocal response to that of an “efficient” (used in the Aquinian sense) kenotic act. In that act, the responding something transforms and becomes, so as to cause, or enable, the transformation and becoming of something else (even as the enabling something is consequently transformed). Thus the being of kenosis – its onward extension – can be portrayed as a series of efficient acts. In unending continuance, each kenotic act produces both reciprocal response and propulsive extension, such that becoming is being, being is becoming. But, as it turns out, what appears to be neat seriality is actually complex and entangled relationality. What then might be said of the necessity of being? Aquinas turns to that subject in his Third Way, and therein raises the issue of being’s corruptibility, or its possibility not to be. The argument is used to posit a ‘first necessity’, something “having of itself its own necessity,” (much like the chora, or matrix, which Plato also named ‘necessity’). This too is not without implications concerning kenosis. Insofar as kenosis is essential to an original happening (the enablement of motion, animation of becoming, and maintenance of being), it is its own necessity, the ontology of creativity. And, even though it is continuous and unending, it is not incorruptible amongst that which it creates. That is particularly so amongst humanity, which, being corruptible, can fail to reciprocally respond to kenosis

⁸⁸ The Aristotelian principle of continuous movement, as appropriated by Aquinas, is posited in Elders, *The Philosophical Theology of St Thomas Aquinas*: 91.

⁸⁹ See note 53 and surrounding discussion.

⁹⁰ Elders, *The Philosophical Theology of St Thomas Aquinas*: 96.

(either by ignorance or wilful choice) and thereby provisionally defer, alter, or otherwise violate its ongoing-ness – indeterminate as that already is.

The Fourth Way argues that the potential of something's being lies in that something's grounding, and that ultimate grounding is to be found in that which first causes "being, goodness, and every other perfection" (meaning maximum potential development). Once again, inasmuch as kenosis permeates an original creative event, it is a fundamental grounding, a primary source of potentiality. In other words, kenosis can be seen to permeate the grounding of all things, such that all things have the potential to be kenotic. Indeed, the potential of such things' being – which is finally their potential to be somehow creative or re-creative – lies paradoxically in their potential to be kenotic, to be self-emptying. The notion that such potential leads to an inevitable "end" forms the basis of the Fifth Way. In the last of Aquinas' arguments, he suggests that "things which lack knowledge ... act for an end ... so as to obtain the best result ... not fortuitously, but designedly." With that, he makes a case that "some being endowed with knowledge" must therefore exist to direct (designedly) the movement of such things "toward their end." Not surprisingly, its use of creationist and teleological propositions has been duly criticised. From the Atomists and Epicureans (notwithstanding intervening defences by Plato and Aristotle), through to modernity and contemporary science, the notion of 'design' in nature has been challenged and debated,⁹¹ and cannot be resolved here. Nonetheless, it is at this juncture that the notion of a supreme creator/director can be seen to contradict the notion that creation is enabled, animated, and maintained by kenosis. For if created things (knowledgeable or not) are purposefully 'designed', and thereby controlled and directed to inevitable and therefore preconceived 'good' ends (even by way of destruction and 'evil'), then kenosis – an emptying and opening-up that ongoingly effects indeterminate creation and transformation of that created – is superfluous, or worse, a tool of divine deceit and gamesmanship vis-à-vis the divine's creation.

Notwithstanding such difficulties, the Fifth Way goes on to reveal more of kenosis, even if not exactly as Aquinas may have intended. Its proposition that action "always or nearly always" moves toward the "best result" can be seen to support the notion that ongoing kenosis – kenotic response and extension – inevitably moves toward that which 'needs' to happen, rather than toward an already designed outcome. Furthermore, the kenotic happening may not result in what is 'best', at least not in the Aquinian sense of something perfect or perfectly good. Instead it results in what is 'necessary' to a given

⁹¹ Elders discusses the debate and claims that his analysis offers sufficient answers to those who would object to the creationist and teleological arguments, ironically lamenting that he nonetheless expects them to "be of little help against prejudice," as if his own answers do not suffer the prejudice of a strictly Christian viewpoint. See *ibid.*, 125-127.

situation. It is also not an 'end' in the sense of finality, because even the necessary result in a given situation already presents an altered situation, in need of its own next 'end' or 'best result'. Becoming and being, permeated by kenosis, can only lead to interim and fleeting ends. The being and end of so-called ordered things is to be constantly disordered and re-ordered, even in unordered ways. Moreover, although Aquinas views his Fifth Way only through unknowledgeable things, such as "natural bodies," it offers equally important insight into humanity and its ends. Since humanity's cognition is always volitional – at least in part – its awareness and embrace of kenosis is likewise. Kenosis is susceptible to human resistance and therefore never a certainty in every situation. But the being of humanity, and the interim ends thereby reached, are already indeterminate when left to kenotic unfolding, and such indeterminacy is unaltered (even if temporary situational responses are) by the ignorance of or resistance to such unfolding. The latter may even be seen as part of what some particular situation 'needs' – at some particular moment. Paradoxically, then, whether produced by choosing or denying kenosis, the 'ends' of human being – that is, the effects of being rather than being's demise – are of *human design* and ultimately pursuant to kenosis, even when tortuously so. Choosing kenosis is neither mandatory nor prescriptive, and offers no certain outcome. It simply – but importantly – offers the potential for heightened awareness and, thereby, enhanced creativity.

Meister Eckhart and *Gelassenheit*

A fellow Dominican who follows and draws on the work of Aquinas, but also differentiates himself, Meister Eckhart posits exactly such kenotic potential, albeit without deploying the term kenosis. He speaks first of "detachment," referring to a liberation "from your own self-will" and declaring that "undetached people" are "full of self-will."⁹² His view of self-will includes not only that which might compromise the body but also that which might restrict the mind (cognition).⁹³ Philosopher and Eckhartian analyst John Caputo (1940-) observes:

Eckhart associates the mystical-ascetical notion of purifying oneself ... with Aristotle's *tabula rasa*, which is the 'emptiness' or receptivity necessary for cognition. In both the 'detached heart' and the 'passive reason' there is the same necessity of the subject to purify itself of its subjectivity.⁹⁴

⁹² See "The Talks of Instruction" (particularly no. 3) in J. Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Selected Writings*, trans. O. Davies (London: Penguin Books, 1994).

⁹³ *Ibid.*, lvii.

⁹⁴ Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought*: 148. Caputo attributes the said association to Eckhart's treatise, *On Detachment*, but Oliver Davies suggests that "it is by no means clear that this [treatise] is by the hand of Eckhart." See Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Selected Writings*: xxxix; and, for the full text of "On Detachment", see Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Selections from His Essential Writings*: 103-118. Nonetheless,

Clearly, the subject's purification of itself is a self-emptying, a kenosis that grants heightened awareness of that which is other than self; in other words, potentiality beyond self. But it is not only the desired outcome of detachment that concerns Eckhart. He is also interested in the means by which such detachment might be effected, and coins a word to identify his concept – *Gelassenheit* – a word which describes existential notions of 'letting-go' and 'letting-be', or, in its most common translation, 'releasement'.⁹⁵ It follows, then, that kenosis can be seen as the emptying of self-will, realised as detachment and effected through releasement.

To his notion of detachment, Eckhart ironically appends an attachment. Inherent in his "releasement-from" (self-will), there is a "releasement-to – a deferral or leaving [of] matters and one's own motivations up to – the will of God."⁹⁶ From that, it might appear that releasement is conditional and not quite fully kenotic. But Eckhart's view of God, perhaps even more so than Aquinas', is that of a withdrawn and hidden mystery: "the divine abyss, the divine nothingness ... the divine 'wasteland'."⁹⁷ Any releasement-to this "truly divine God (*der göttlich Gott*)," which Eckhart contrasts with "the purely thought-up God (*der gedachte Gott*)," is itself a releasement to emptiness; that is, a self-emptying which makes-room to be filled by emptiness. Caputo summarises the Eckhartian argument, stating that "it is not Being, but what knows Being, an *openness* to Being which is divested of Being in order to be taken over by Being."⁹⁸ Such openness and willingness to be taken over is clearly passive, but actively so. It is not the posture or act of a bystander simply observing the situation. It is an engagement with the situation, without the goal of dominating it. It thereby invites the approach and appearance of what the situation itself needs; a situation already including anyone and anything engaged with it, and hence including their needs as well. Such a kenotic event – incorporating detachment and releasement – obviates willed imposition and prioritises creativity. It does so not through the seeking of novelty but through novelty's divestiture. In that, the ultimate novelty – unique apposition – is paradoxically enabled to appear. It is 'created'. Insofar as Caputo argues that "the fully radicalized meaning of *intellectus* in

the themes that underlie such association can be amply seen in other Eckhart writings. See, for example, "The Talks of Instruction" in Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Selected Writings*: 1-52.

⁹⁵ After Eckhart, *Gelassenheit* is a recurrent concept in German thinking, eventually becoming closely associated with the work of philosopher Martin Heidegger, whose interpretation is both an amplification of, and significant deviation from, that of Eckhart's, and about which more follows in this and subsequent chapters.

⁹⁶ From the "Translator's Foreword" in M. Heidegger, *Country Path Conversations*, ed. J. Sallis, trans. B.W. Davis, *Studies in Continental Thought* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2010), xi (my emphasis); but, for a more thorough discussion of this and other comparisons of the Eckhart and Heidegger interpretations, see Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought*: 173-183.

⁹⁷ These are frequent themes in Eckhart's sermons, as discussed in Caputo, *Heidegger and Aquinas: An Essay on Overcoming Metaphysics*: 275.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 277 (my emphasis).

Meister Eckhart ... is *Gelassenheit*,”⁹⁹ I would propose that, in turn, such meaning grants another radicalisation, that in which kenosis is seen as being creative but, more importantly, in which creativity is seen as kenosis.

Rabbi Luria and Kabbalistic Creation

Although, as already noted, the Judaic story of original creation (along with others) implies a kenotic setting – that of nothingness or emptiness – it is not until Rabbi Luria develops his doctrine of *zimzum* that creation is explicitly suggested to be the result of something like an act of divine kenosis.¹⁰⁰ Luria does not use the term kenosis, but *zimzum* closely mirrors its meaning. Literally meaning ‘concentration’ or ‘contraction’, the term *zimzum* is translated as ‘withdrawal’ or ‘retreat’ when used in Kabbalistic contexts. Rejecting the cosmogony of earlier Kabbalists, which simply sees creation as a projection of God’s creative power, Luria approaches the subject by way of the notion of Shekinah (discussed earlier), positing that God, despite infinitude, is capable of sufficient self-contraction so as to concentrate *at a point*, namely, inside the temple’s Holy of Holies. Contraction and concentration, however, can also be seen as a withdrawal or retreat *away from a point*, and it is that view that Luria attributes to original creation. Gershom Scholem (1897-1982), scholar of Kabbalah and a professor of Jewish mysticism, explains:

According to Luria, God was compelled to make room for the world by, as it were, abandoning a region within Himself, a kind of mystical primordial space from which He withdrew in order to return to it in the act of creation and revelation. The first act of *En-Sof*, the Infinite Being, is therefore not a step outside but a step inside, a movement of recoil, of falling back upon oneself, of withdrawing into oneself. Instead of emanation we have the opposite, contraction. The God who revealed himself in firm contours was superseded by one who descended deeper into the recesses of His own Being, who concentrated Himself into Himself, and had done so from the very beginning of creation.¹⁰¹

Despite being seen by some as bordering on blasphemy, Scholem (following Jacob Emden) sees the paradox of *zimzum* as “the only serious attempt ever made to give substance to the idea of Creation out of Nothing,” *creatio ex nihilo*.¹⁰² Creativity, manifested in creation, is therefore the product and ‘necessary result’ of *zimzum*, for which kenosis is arguably synonymous. “Every new act of emanation and manifestation is preceded by one of concentration and retraction,” and, together, they effect the

⁹⁹ Ibid., 277.

¹⁰⁰ The term *zimzum* can also be found with spellings that include *zimsum*, *tsimtsum* and *tzimtzum*, all interpretations of the original Hebrew צמצם. I am using the English spelling that appears in G. Scholem, J. Garb, and M. Idel, “Kabbalah,” in *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Melbourne: Gale Cengage Learning, 2007), 641-644.

¹⁰¹ G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, (1941) 1995), 260-261.

¹⁰² Ibid., 261-262.

“perpetual tension” and “ever repeated effort” by which everything exists.¹⁰³ Kenosis is creative, creativity is kenosis – neither conceivable without the other – and both continue endlessly, such that creation is not merely what it *is* but what it *will be*.

Emanating from the zimzum is primeval space, a kind of perpetually pulsating matrix in which, despite the withdrawal of divine substance, there is still “a vestige or residue of the divine light (*Reshimu*),” much like the residue of oil or wine that remains in a bottle that is poured-out.¹⁰⁴ Thus, whatever non-divine substance is created in this matrix, now ‘separated’ from the divine, it is nonetheless inseparably part of the divine, even as the residual divine substance is inseparably part of the non-divine. In this kenotically-created matrix of creativity, the divine and the non-divine are able to partially become the other without loss of self-identity. The acts of the zimzum form a complex mythological story, well-documented elsewhere and unnecessary to retell here in full.¹⁰⁵ (Like many religious concepts, the detail gives rise to disagreement and debate.) Pertinent to this search for kenotic content, it suffices to say that the creative matrix becomes filled with divine light, in a spherical manner, and produces “primordial man” (*Adam Kadmon*); a creation not yet entirely human but a “first configuration of the divine light,” such light emerging as beams from its “eyes, mouth, ears and nose.”¹⁰⁶

Here, then, is another kenosis, an emptying of divine light into the creative matrix. Eventually, to effect order amidst the matrical disorder, “vessels” (*kelim*) emanate to catch and preserve particular emptied lights for the creation of various ordered things. Although certain of these vessels initially succeed in a methodical containment of their designated lights, there comes a point at which the light explodes, ricocheting through the matrix and impacting the vessels such that they break and shatter.¹⁰⁷ As a result of this event, known as the “Breaking of the Vessels” (*Shevirath Ha-Kelim*), “the entire world process ... is at variance with its originally intended order and position. Nothing, neither the lights nor the vessels, [remains] in its proper place,” yet even that is seen in the Lurianic Kabbalah to be necessary and inevitable to the situation.¹⁰⁸ The inability of certain vessels to contain and surround results in a further emptying of divine light and fragments of vessels, some sinking “into the lower depths of the primordial space,” such that “the good elements of the divine order [come] to be mixed with the vicious ones.”¹⁰⁹ Embedded in this imaginative invocation of incompleteness and imperfection is a call to

¹⁰³ Ibid., 261. In this description can be heard echoes of similar notions attributed to Plato's *chōra*.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 264.

¹⁰⁵ See the works of Scholem, as cited previously and henceforth.

¹⁰⁶ Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*: 265.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 266.

¹⁰⁸ Scholem, Garb, and Idel, “Kabbalah,” 646.

¹⁰⁹ Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*: 267-268.

mend and restore the situation, and to do so through ongoing and kenotically-animated creative acts – not unlike those from which the broken situation originated.

In this Kabbalistic story, the restitution of creation is revealed as creation's purpose or, to avoid implications of predetermined design, its being. Restitution is what the (broken) situation calls for, what needs doing (much as suggested by Aquinas' Fifth Way). Creation goes on creating, because to be is to create. Thus, the situation of creation calls for *tikkun*¹¹⁰ – the ongoing mending, restoration, or “re-integration of the original whole” – which, once zimzum began, was neither realised nor, as it turns out, in need of realisation if creation was to have the opportunity to ongoingly become what it will be. In theological terms, God's revelation “does not reach its conclusion in God,” because it is humanity – through the process of *tikkun* – that “adds the final touch to the divine countenance.” Thus God's zimzum, or contraction, is nothing less than kenosis. It is an emptying of self-will, realised in detachment and effected by letting-go and letting-be (the latter invoking Eckhart's releasement, or *Gelassenheit*), which establishes the interdependency of divinity and humanity. And, since *tikkun* can only end with the coming of a messiah, “the *tikkun*, the path to the *end* of all things, is also the path to the *beginning*”¹¹¹ (a concept noted here, near the beginning of this discourse, but taken up again nearer its end, in Chapter 7). Since *tikkun* is ongoing creation, and creation is enabled by kenosis, it can be seen that to engage in *tikkun* is to enact or instantiate kenosis. And since all of creation is called to *tikkun*, all are “raised ... to the rank of protagonist in the great process of resitution.”¹¹² All are participants, none are spectators. Taken together, *tikkun* and *shevirath ha-kelim* and *zimzum* grant a view of kenosis, and show it as that which engenders – but never compels – unending kenotic response; that which, amidst contingency and indeterminacy, effects movement toward completion and perfection, even as it precludes the attainment of either.

MODERN DEVELOPMENT AND REVIVAL

Long before the sixteenth-century Kabbalah, there is, as already discussed, abundant evidence of kenotic thought – even when only implicit – including the constituting of Plato's *chora* and the early Judaic stories of creation and divine-human relations. At the chosen starting point of this exploration, there is the explicit Christian invocation of kenosis on the part of a messiah in human form, and, in turn, its implication that the messianic incarnation may have required an even earlier kenosis by the Godhead, itself. Then, in the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century works of Aquinas and Eckhart, creator and

¹¹⁰ In an expanded notion of *tikkun*, Rabbinic literature may invoke *tikkun ha-'olam* or, in modern parlance, *tikkun olam*, meaning to mend, repair, or restore the world, society, or the universe. In Chapter 6, I discuss *tikkun olam* in connection with Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum Berlin.

¹¹¹ Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*: 273-274 (my emphasis).

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 284.

creation are portrayed in terms that appear suspiciously kenotic. Such portrayals only increase, as original creation is more explicitly equated to notions of God's self-limitation or self-humiliation – kenosis in all but name – seen, for example, in the fifteenth century work of Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464).¹¹³ Nonetheless, and not without irony, it is the Jewish mystic Rabbi Luria – with his doctrine of *zimzum* – who offers the fundamental premise by which modern Christian theologians can conclude, as Keith Ward (1938-) does, that “one can thus see a form of kenosis in the creation of the universe” by which “kenosis ... belongs to the creation of rational creatures even before it belongs to incarnation.”¹¹⁴ That is a significant development, to which I will return, but the path from Nicholas to contemporary theology and philosophy is not so direct, and includes other contributors worthy of mention or, in some cases, more substantial exploration.

Early Modernity

At the onset of Early Modernity, philosopher Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499) discusses principles of relationality, which, although not concerned with original creation, are no less about creativity and no less kenotic. In his *Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love*, Ficino reflects on the Platonic portrayal of love as “a bitter thing” and goes further, saying, “love is a voluntary death.”¹¹⁵ In so doing, he invokes two dimensions of kenosis: its volitionality and the extended characterisation of its self-emptying as a kind of *dying-to-self*. Such dying enables people to open-up and give themselves “to the other in order to receive the other.” In that, two more dimensions of kenosis are revealed: its highly-active passivity, and its inherent elicitation of reciprocal response, without which there is effectively no kenosis, only some form of unrequited kindness (whether love, charity or compassion). For Ficino, the very nature of self-dying can be seen in this mutual exchange. The lover, “oblivious to himself” and with “attention ... always turned to the beloved,” not only “does not think about himself, he certainly does not think *in* himself,” and therefore “does not exist in himself either.” This description also reveals another important aspect of kenosis: the paradox of heightened situational awareness that proceeds from self-emptying. Moreover, it points to the kenotic requisite of relinquishing aspirations of control or mastery. Ficino confirms the same when he contrasts the “power of Cupid” with the “violence of Mars,” likening “love” to the former and “dominion” to the latter. “The ruler possesses others through himself; the lover recovers himself through

¹¹³ J. Moltmann, *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God*, trans. M. Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 87.

¹¹⁴ Ward, “Cosmos and Kenosis,” 162. Although Ward is joined in this, or similar, conclusions by many prominent and highly-respected theologians – including, for example, John Polkinghorne and Ian Barbour – it should not be thought that their views are necessarily shared by all modern theologians, from all of Christianity's traditions and distinct denominations.

¹¹⁵ This and subsequent quotes in this paragraph are from M. Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love*, trans. S. Jayne, (Dallas: Spring Publications, (1469) 1985), 54-56.

another, and the further each of the two lovers is from himself, the nearer he is to the other, and, dead in himself, revives in the other.” Thus self-dying effects resurrection and fuller life (in love); powerlessness effects power; self-emptying effects strengthening; kenosis effects plenitude. But, as in the Christian kenosis story, the self who might dominate is called to eschew any striving for power. While there is no mention of creation or kenosis in Ficino’s commentary, his thoughts on love are ultimately thoughts on the creation of relationality and the creative potential therein, both effected and permeated by kenosis. And that is precisely the substance of the various Judeo-Christian creation stories, wherein divine love is a limit – a threshold or beginning – of creation by kenosis and the creative relationality that flows therefrom.¹¹⁶

As theology continues to interact with philosophical – and scientific – views of space (never far from thoughts about creation), Gottfried Leibniz (1646-1716) builds his conception of space around the notion of relation and situation. Using the metaphor of a genealogical ‘tree’, he posits that there is amongst things “a certain Order of Co-Existence, according to which the relation of one thing to another is more or less simple. This Order is their Situation or Distance.”¹¹⁷ Leibniz advances his concept as a rejection of the theory of “absolute space” put forth by Isaac Newton (1643-1727), in which “absolute space in its own nature, without relation to anything external, remains always similar and immovable.”¹¹⁸ Newton’s theory reveals the theology embedded in his science. Apparently influenced by Thomas More (1478-1535; described as a “chief disseminator of Cabalistic and Neo-Platonic ideas”¹¹⁹), Newton deploys space and time to characterise his concept of God, saying that God is “eternal and infinite,” and that “in him are all things contained and moved.”¹²⁰ Leibniz, too, is interested in theology, but places his faith in reason rather than metaphysics. So the Newton-Leibniz debate continues until the latter’s death, some forty years after which, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) makes an attempt, early in his career, to reconcile the two views. He eventually abandons that attempt in favour of the Newtonian theory, and, by the time of his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), he states that “space does not represent any property of things in themselves, nor does it represent them in their relation to one another.”¹²¹ Kant’s view clearly lacks the religious zeal (and bias) of Newton’s. And, in the same document, Kant is seen to “object to the Ontological, Cosmological and Physico-theological (Design) arguments for God’s

¹¹⁶ Moltmann describes the Christian view that “creation proceeds from God’s love.” Accordingly, “a love that gives the beloved space ... is the power of lovers who can withdraw in order to allow the beloved to grow and to come. Consequently, it is not just self-giving that belongs to creative love; it is self-limitation, too; not only affection, but respect for the unique nature of others as well.” See Moltmann, “God’s Kenosis in the Creation and Consummation of the World,” 147.

¹¹⁷ Leibniz is so quoted in Jammer, *Concepts of Space: The History of Theories of Space in Physics*: 117.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 99.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 111. Jammer uses, here, an earlier, alternative spelling of Kabbalistic.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 113.

¹²¹ Ibid., 138.

existence.”¹²² Kant is nonetheless with the majority in his acceptance of absolute space, and Newton’s theory long prevails over that of Leibniz.

Late Modernity

By the mid-twentieth century, however, modern science sees the theory of absolute space ‘overcome’, albeit in a process that Albert Einstein recognises, in 1953, “is probably by no means as yet completed.”¹²³ Indeed, in the sixty years since Einstein’s comment, the overcoming theory – that of relational space – is itself no longer universally accepted by now even-more-modern science. But, amidst such open-endedness, Einstein is nonetheless able to conclude that “there is then no ‘empty’ space,”¹²⁴ and it is that summation which may be most pertinent to a discussion concerning kenosis. For, insofar as kenosis is an emptying, its emptying makes room for, or makes the space of, an “always bounded yet ... always open and dynamic” place (or situation). Its bounds – ever changeable and changing – define the starting thresholds of a situation of openness and movement in which “things can ‘take place’,” and mark a place from which things move to other places.¹²⁵ The potentiality of such happenings lies in the situation’s emptying and emptiness, the kenosis by which it gains the capacity to be filled and, consequently, to pour-out. Seen through a kenotic lens, such space is relational and situational in its fundamental boundedness, even as it is indeterminately open and creative in its extendedness, with the latter ultimately dependent on the former. This view of space as place of creativity can, of course, be overlaid with theology, and its measurement can be pursued by science. But, as philosophy, it stands quite independently and offers valuable insights into the concept of kenosis embedded therein.

From the Enlightenment forward, theology is increasingly challenged not only by philosophy but also by the discoveries of modern science. The development of kenotic thought offers Christian theology a means of legitimately re-thinking those doctrines of faith that appear to give rise to major tensions, not least, those of original creation. As Keith Ward explains, “In classical theories ... God is *exclusively* infinite and perfect.” But humanity’s increasing attentiveness to earthly finitude and imperfections, seen by theologians as “outside of God,” increasingly casts God as distant and un-related to the

¹²² L. Pasternack and P. Rossi, “Kant’s Philosophy of Religion,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. E.N. Zalta (Palo Alto 2014), under heading, “3.2 God in the Critique of Pure Reason’s Transcendental Dialectic”. As a noteworthy aside, Slavoj Žižek argues that “Kant started as the great destroyer ... of theology,” but “ended up ... constraining the scope of Reason to create a space for faith.” See Žižek, “The Fear of Four Words: A Modest Plea for the Hegelian Reading of Christianity,” 58.

¹²³ From the Foreword by Albert Einstein, in Jammer, *Concepts of Space: The History of Theories of Space in Physics*: xvi.

¹²⁴ Ibid., xvii. In the same statement, Einstein clarifies his use of the term ‘empty space’ to mean “space without a field,” that is space unrelated to that which may be or may happen in it.

¹²⁵ J. Malpas, “Putting Space in Place: Philosophical Topography and Relational Geography,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 30 (2012): 235-236.

very creation it supposedly created. Thus, owing to the work of Georg Hegel (1770-1831),¹²⁶ but also to others,¹²⁷ post-classical theories shift toward a view of God as “*inclusively* infinite,” whereby divine perfection includes “relationship to whatever other realities exist.” That view necessarily sees the divine creator involved in “giving up ... complete control, and accepting the freedom of created beings.” Both are acts of making-room for all of the indeterminacy and contingency associated therewith. Such self-limitation and self-humiliation – indeed, self-emptying – is nothing less than “a kenotic act on God’s part.” But this emptying is also a filling, or *pleroma*, in that, through self-giving, the divine gains relationship with creation and, thereby, “the possibility of *genuinely new creativity*, undetermined even by [the divinity’s] own previous nature.”¹²⁸ Importantly, this ‘modern’ view is made possible largely by infiltration of the medieval Kabbalistic doctrine of God’s self-limitation – most fully developed in Luria’s *zimzum* – and it is that which grants some measure of relaxation in the tension between theology and science.

As the scientific theory of evolution later emerges (culminating in Darwin, but prefigured in the work of others), the notion of divine self-limitation continues to be useful. As early as 1927-28, Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947), who challenges the necessary link between God and religion and calls for “the secularization of the concept of God’s functions in the world,”¹²⁹ also posits that “the ‘consequent nature’ of God is the physical prehension by God of the actualities of the evolving universe.”¹³⁰ Drawing on Whitehead’s work, the notions of *zimzum* are more specifically linked to evolution (and later to the Holocaust, or Shoah) by Hans Jonas (1903-1993).¹³¹ Although he philosophically struggles with the modern tension between theology and science and aids in secularising the concept of God, Jonas nonetheless concludes that some ‘creative

¹²⁶ In a more radicalised view, Slavoj Žižek (drawing on Catherine Malabou) suggests that what Hegel ultimately demonstrates is that “the distance of man from God is ... the distance of God from himself.” In that, it can be seen that the divine kenotic act, by which God separates from ‘himself’ to enable creation (including that of humanity), is that which establishes the distance or, rather, the situation of and relation between God and humanity. And that, once again, reveals the relationality and situationality of kenosis. See Žižek, “The Fear of Four Words: A Modest Plea for the Hegelian Reading of Christianity,” 59.

¹²⁷ Prior to Hegel, such ‘others’ include Freidrich Oetinger (1702-1782), and J.G. Hamann (1730-1788). Contemporaneous with Hegel is F.W.J. Schelling (1775-1854), the two initially friends and later adversaries. Following Hegel, the works of Alexander von Oettingen (1827-1905) and Emil Brunner (1889-1966) continue to develop the notion of creation as “the first act in the divine self-humiliation,” which prefigures the second, the incarnation, and the third, the self-humiliation of Christ. See Moltmann, *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God*: 87.

¹²⁸ This and previous quotations in this paragraph are from Ward, “Cosmos and Kenosis,” 157-160 (my emphasis).

¹²⁹ Whitehead states: “The concept of God is certainly one essential element in religious feeling. But the converse is not true; the concept of religious feeling is not an essential element in the concept of God’s function in the universe. In this respect, religious literature has been sadly misleading to philosophic theory, partly by attraction and partly by repulsion.” See A.N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (Gifford Lectures Delivered in the University of Edinburgh During the Session 1927-28), ed. D.R. Griffin and D.W. Sherburne, Corrected ed. (New York: The Free Press, (1929) 1978), 207.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 88.

¹³¹ Moltmann, “God’s Kenosis in the Creation and Consummation of the World,” 147.

source', which may be called God, "surrendered itself to the 'endless play of the finite,' the 'inexhaustibility of chance,' the 'surprises of the unplanned,' that is, the evolution of life."¹³² In this portrayal of divine self-limitation (or zimzum or kenosis), there is a God or force that sets evolution into play but, then, is subject to evolve and *become*, even as – or indeed because – creation does. This God is relational but not "a sorcerer who in the act of caring [for creation] also provides fulfillment of his concern: he has left something for other agents to do and thereby has made his care dependent on them." As noted by Christian Wiese, this sees Jonas advocating a kind of "de-Messianized *tikkun*" and making the "divine adventure" a "human responsibility."¹³³ Concerning kenosis, this is to unconceal not its surety but its dangers, risks, and responsibilities.

Perhaps most notable in taking up the Christian correlation of zimzum (and therefore kenosis) with original creation, is theologian Jürgen Moltmann, particularly in his *God in Creation*, of 1985.¹³⁴ There, using both Lurianic and Eckhartian (if not also Heideggerian) language, he states that "God 'withdraws himself from himself to himself' in order to make creation possible," which means that "he 'creates' by letting-be, by making room, and by withdrawing himself."¹³⁵ (Embedded in this original divine self-emptying are the later incarnational and messianic events of kenosis, to which Christianity subscribes.) But, when God is seen as one that withdraws and lets-be, it is easier for humanity to withdraw from concepts of God and simply let God be – or not. Indeed, well before Jonas and Moltmann, it is Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) – with an echo of Hegel – who declares, in 1882, that "God is dead" and humanity is responsible: "*We have killed him – you and I,*" says Nietzsche's 'madman'.¹³⁶ But this 'killing' is not another execution. It is actually another kenosis – this time humanity's – in which humanity begins to gradually empty itself of the metaphysical God and, therefore, empty an intrinsic part of its self, ongoingly making-room for other world views.¹³⁷ In the late 1960s, this kenosis is taken up by Thomas Altizer (1927-), a Christian theologian of the so-called God is Dead Movement who draws significantly on Nietzsche (and Hegel). He sees this kenosis as an

¹³² C. Wiese, *The Life and Thought of Hans Jonas: Jewish Dimensions*, ed. J. Reinharz and S.F. Fried, trans. J. Grossman and C. Wiese, The Tauber Institute for the Study of European Jewry Series (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2007), 124.

¹³³ Ibid., 120. See also the earlier discussion of *tikkun* in this chapter, under the heading, "Rabbi Luria and Kabbalistic Creation."

¹³⁴ Moltmann, *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God*.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 88-89.

¹³⁶ W. Kaufmann, ed. *The Portable Nietzsche* (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), 95 (author's emphasis).

¹³⁷ There is a distinct current of kenosis in the madman's soliloquy, as can be seen in *emptiness*, as the madman considers God's 'killing': "Do we not feel the breath of empty space?"; in *strengthening*, when he claims that "for the sake of this deed," all of those "born after us ... will be part of a higher history than all history hitherto"; in *danger, risk and responsibility*, as he asks, "Who will wipe this blood off us?", and "What water is there for us to clean ourselves?"; in *imperfection* and *incompleteness*, as he declares that "this tremendous event is still on its way, still wandering ... still more distant." See *ibid.*, 95-96; but also see Martin Heidegger's exposition in M. Heidegger, "The Word of Nietzsche: 'God is Dead,'" in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays, Martin Heidegger: Works* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1977), 53-112.

emptying of “even the most awesome and oppressive manifestations of an alien otherness” that humanity has attributed to God – including archaic language, creeds, and dogmas – so as to negate “every power confining life and energy”¹³⁸; that is, every power attempting to confine evolving creation. For Altizer, this emptying consummates the death of the transcendent God, begun at the Crucifixion, and effects the emergence of an immanent and *becoming* God.¹³⁹ This kenosis – and all kenosis – can thus be seen as an emptying of universal metaphysical truths, as well as an opening-up to the manifold and evolving truths of each (evolving) situation.

The metaphysical ‘truth’ of a divine creator is, of course, that most challenged by an evolving body of ‘truths’ presented by physics. Ironically, it is the conflation of kenosis and the Judeo-Christian creation story that grants theology a closer alignment with science and philosophy, even as it also challenges theology’s self-sufficiency. The notion of initial and ongoing kenosis can be seen – with or without divinity – in various cosmogonical options, including in a “*unique Big Bang*,” which “assumes a beginning of time,” and is “closest to the *ex nihilo* tradition”; in the “successive cycles of *an oscillating universe*, expanding and contracting, with a Big Crunch before each Big Bang”; or in “the theory of *quantum vacuum fluctuations*,” wherein a seemingly (but not) ‘empty’ and otherwise energy-conserving vacuum is briefly violated by an “enormous fluctuation that rapidly expand[s]” into a universe amidst many coexisting universes.¹⁴⁰ In one sense, such theories and their kenotic attributes fulfil Altizer’s advocacy, in that each – no matter how incomprehensibly expansive – portrays a world view of creation as immanent and becoming, as existing and evolving. But even such portrayals are evolving with the evolvment of understanding, and the consequent emergence of ‘truths’. So, as much as kenosis is a call to greater awareness of what exists, it is also a call to be open to being open; a call to be sceptical, even of one’s own scepticism.

Awareness, openness, and other aspects of kenosis are considered and nuanced, in many different ways, by the philosophers of late modernity, particularly those associated with Continental Philosophy. Some deal directly with the subject of kenosis, while others deal with variously named topics that are nonetheless somehow kenotic. For example, the hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) – paralleling

¹³⁸ T.J.J. Altizer, *The Gospel of Christian Atheism* (London: Westminster Press, 1966), 112-114.

¹³⁹ This aspect of Altizer’s theology is discussed and compared with the corresponding philosophy of Gianni Vattimo (whose work I discuss later in this chapter and in several subsequent parts of the dissertation) in M.E. Harris, “Gianni Vattimo and Thomas J.J. Altizer on the Incarnation and the Death of God: A Comparison,” *Minerva-An Internet Journal of Philosophy* 15(2011): 1-19.

¹⁴⁰ Barbour, “God’s Power: A Process View,” 16-17. Barbour explains that, in quantum theory, the vacuum is not in fact ‘empty’ but is “a sea of activity in which pairs of virtual particles come into being and almost immediately annihilate each other.” Such quantum view is been correlated with kenosis and Christian pneumatology in E. Simmons, “Toward a Kenotic Pneumatology: Quantum Field Theory and the Theology of the Cross,” in *Expanding Humanity’s Vision of God: New Thoughts on Science and Religion*, ed. R.L. Hermann (West Coshohocken, PA: Templeton Foundation Press, 2001).

others, such as Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005) – is clearly linked to kenosis by its advocacy of interpretive openness as a means of ongoing transformative engagement. Such connection is evidenced, first, by the strong tradition of hermeneutics in religion,¹⁴¹ precisely that which prompts critical interpretation of the kenotic locus classicus (already discussed), and, second, by the concepts' mutual attributability: hermeneutics is inherently kenotic and kenosis is inherently hermeneutical.¹⁴² Contributing to the same discussion is the work of Walter Benjamin (1892-1940), whose thoughts on the topic of 'play' show affinity with Gadamer's, insofar as both view play not as an act of disengagement but of heightened engagement, to which one yields by way of what can be seen as a kenosis.¹⁴³ Benjamin's view of play further aligns with kenosis through his notions of 'losing oneself' and approaching situations as if 'at first sight'.

Often portrayed as being in opposition to Gadamer, the work of deconstructionist Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) explicitly equates kenosis with hospitality.¹⁴⁴ Arguably, kenosis can be seen as that which permeates the "gap" or "abyss" that Derrida's language suggests must be faced in the making of responsible and hospitable decisions,¹⁴⁵ and, equally, that out of which arises the "irresolvable quality [of] Gadamer's notions of meaning and truth."¹⁴⁶ Kenosis also bridges Gadamer and Derrida by linking their mutual rejection of homogeneity, of engagement as calculated rationality, and of universal rules.¹⁴⁷ Approaching the topic of kenosis directly, and with certain similarities to Derrida (though distinctively nuanced), is Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995), who sees kenosis as an ethical responsibility – a kind of hospitality, but not of free choice, something like *tikkun olam* – which can and does manifest as disruption and dispossession.¹⁴⁸ One of Gadamer's teachers, and one with whom Levinas philosophically spars, Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) does not address the topic of kenosis directly, but his work nonetheless invokes and informs many aspects of kenotic

¹⁴¹ Hermeneutics is practised by many religious traditions, often leading to new strains of such traditions. It is, however, a particularly strong notion in Christianity.

¹⁴² The subject of hermeneutics most explicitly arises in Chapter 7, during an exploration of creative engagement and participation.

¹⁴³ A comprehensive analysis of a large cross-section of Benjamin's work, including that regarding 'play', is presented in G. Gilloch, *Myth & Metropolis: Walter Benjamin and the City* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996). Gadamer's philosophy of 'play' is closely analysed in M. Vilhauer, *Gadamer's Ethics of Play: Hermeneutics and the Other* (Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2010).

¹⁴⁴ This is a topic I examine in connection with the architecture of Daniel Libeskind and Peter Eisenman, in Chapter 6.

¹⁴⁵ These notions of "gap" and "abyss" are identified in R.J. Bernstein, "The Conversation That Never Happened (Gadamer/Derrida)," *The Review of Metaphysics* 61, no. 3 (2008): 598.

¹⁴⁶ P. Kidder, *Gadamer for Architects*, ed. A. Sharr, Thinkers for Architects (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 114.

¹⁴⁷ These particular commonalities, as well as the more general relationship between the work of Gadamer and Derrida, are explored in Bernstein, "The Conversation That Never Happened (Gadamer/Derrida)," 597; and in Kidder, *Gadamer for Architects*: 114-115.

¹⁴⁸ Levinas writes explicitly on the subject of 'kenosis' in E. Levinas, "Judaism and Kenosis," in *In the Time of the Nations* (London: The Athlone Press, 1994). His work is comprehensively analysed and amplified by R. van Riessen in several works, as cited in connection with specific subsequent discussions.

thought. Indeed, one of Heidegger's concepts is foundational to kenotic discourse, and, since its appearance in Heideggerian philosophy is actually the reappearance of an already-discussed Eckhartian concept, it thus becomes a recurrent theme in this discourse and warrants further mention.

Gelassenheit Redux

Although Heidegger respectfully takes up Eckhart's term – *Gelassenheit* – he does so with intentional difference. In particular, he distances his thinking from any notions of releasement as subordination *to* a deity. As discussed earlier, such subordination can be found in Eckhart, where releasement appears to be left within the confines of willing – the very confines that Heidegger insists releasement must also be releasement *from*. For Heidegger, there is only “non-willing”; that which “remains absolutely outside any kind of will,” and that which enables one “willingly to renounce willing.”¹⁴⁹ If releasement leads to that outside all will, it cannot itself be willed, nor can it be strategically effected, and that is especially pertinent to an understanding of kenosis. Although well-known, it is worth revisiting Heidegger's explanation, as posited in “Conversation on a Country Path”:

SCHOLAR. So far as we can wean ourselves from willing, we contribute to the awakening of releasement.

TEACHER. Say rather, to keeping awake for releasement.

SCHOLAR. Why not, to the awakening?

TEACHER. Because on our own we do not awaken releasement in ourselves.

SCIENTIST. Thus releasement is effected from somewhere else.

TEACHER. Not effected, but let in.

SCHOLAR. To be sure I don't know yet what the word releasement means; but I seem to presage that releasement awakens when our nature is let-in so as to have dealings with that which is not a willing.

SCIENTIST. You speak without letup of a letting-be and give the impression that what is meant is a kind of passivity. All the same, I think I understand that it is in no way a matter of weakly allowing things to slide and drift along.

SCHOLAR. Perhaps a higher acting is concealed in releasement than is found in all the actions within the world and in the machinations of all mankind.

TEACHER. ... which higher acting is yet no activity.

SCIENTIST. Then releasement lies – if we may use the word lie – beyond the distinction between activity and passivity ...

SCHOLAR. ... because releasement does not belong to the domain of the will.

SCIENTIST. The transition from willing into releasement is what seems difficult to me.

TEACHER. And all the more, since the nature of releasement is still hidden.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ M. Heidegger, “Conversation on a Country Path About Thinking,” in *Discourse on Thinking: A Translation of 'Gelassenheit', Martin Heidegger: Works* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 59. The distinction between Eckhart and Heidegger, however, may not be as great as it first appears. Earlier in this chapter, I argued that any releasement *to* Eckhart's concept of God is actually a releasement *to* a form of emptiness, a kind of kenosis (see discussion under heading, “Meister Eckhart and *Gelassenheit*”). A possible ambiguity in Heidegger's notion of ‘non-willing’ is taken up by John Caputo, who also argues that subordination to Eckhart's God is ultimately subordination to “a nameless and will-less abyss.” See Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought*: 176-181.

¹⁵⁰ Heidegger, “Conversation on a Country Path About Thinking,” 60-61.

At this juncture, it may be tempting to think that releasement *is* kenosis, and vice versa. Indeed the closeness of their relationship is undeniable, but, before concluding that they are also synonymous, it is helpful to look at Heidegger's concept of releasement as presented by philosopher Charles Guignon (1944-) in his book, *On Being Authentic*. When his view is juxtaposed with Heidegger's, it can be seen as offering both faithful interpretation and important amplification:

The idea of releasement proposes not passive quietism in which one does nothing, but an activism that operates with a heightened sensitivity to what is called for by the entire situation. It is a stance that is motivated less by a concern with making than with finding, less by calling forth than being called. In place of the emphasis on calculation and insistence on one's own ends, there is the kind of situational awareness of what should be done that comes readily to those who have cultivated in themselves a sense of decency and compassion.¹⁵¹

It is not difficult to find Heidegger's releasement in Guignon's (with echoes of Ficino, as well). Although Guignon's releasement is not passive quietism, the activism he proposes instead is necessarily passive – a transcendence of activity and passivity – so as to maintain heightened sensitivity and avoid freneticism. Guignon's situational awareness enables what Heidegger, later in his 'conversation', describes as "a receiving of the regioning of that-which-regions."¹⁵² Such receiving cannot be seen as something that one strategically sets out to *do*. It is not activated or awakened by self, but in the call of the situation; by letting-in and letting-be the situation, free of goals – emptied of willing.

Kenosis, I would suggest, is the latter emptying, the passive – and risk-laden – 'activity' of willingly renouncing self (or "subject-ism"¹⁵³), without surety of outcome and therefore preclusive of opportunism. It neither effects nor awakens releasement but keeps one awake to releasement's approach. It advantages the onset of heightened situational attentiveness, or awareness, of what should be done. Thus kenosis is not releasement and releasement is not kenosis, though they are conjoined. Guignon's view of Heidegger facilitates such a finding. But then Guignon invokes a notion that seems to return to Eckhart's alleged confinement of releasement within the realms of will and morality. He conditions releasement on an apparently pre-existing and self-willed "sense of decency and compassion" (cultivation in oneself presumably requiring will). As problematic as that may be, vis-à-vis Heidegger's strong stance against willing and his desire to free releasement of morality in favour of thinking, Guignon's conditional clause is at least partially redeemable in kenosis. The clause could instead invoke decency and compassion as being amongst that with which releasement may fill the emptiness made

¹⁵¹ C. Guignon, *On Being Authentic* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), 167.

¹⁵² Heidegger, "Conversation on a Country Path About Thinking," 81.

¹⁵³ Heidegger's use of this term is noted and discussed in Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought*. 175.

ready by kenosis (the in-dwelling of *skenosis*),¹⁵⁴ if and as called for by the entire situation. Decency and compassion would therefore also be amongst the bounds that define the situation's open and creative domain. Restated thusly (and not insignificantly), kenosis remains an act of will but one that is passive and, most importantly, one that results in the negation of will. As such, kenosis is granted its full dimensions, whereby self-emptying is seen to foster self-fulfillment but is properly freed of self-serving connotations.¹⁵⁵

The benefit of awaiting releasement's approach and in-dwelling is, according to Heidegger, the potential for transformed thinking. By that he means not merely "the capacity to re-present what is put before us,"¹⁵⁶ nor "calculative thinking," but something more akin to "meditative thinking"; the "thinking which contemplates the meaning which reigns in everything that is," or, more succinctly, thinking which fosters "an openness to the mystery."¹⁵⁷ Such *thinking* may not be synonymous with *creativity*, but the two notions are as conjoined as releasement is to kenosis, and as both pairings are to one another. Heidegger confirms as much. "If releasement toward things and openness to the mystery awaken within us, then we should arrive at a path that will lead to a new ground and foundation. In that ground, the creativity which produces lasting works could strike new roots."¹⁵⁸ Moreover, Heidegger famously links his view of thinking to "building" and "dwelling" – particularly when the latter are engaged "poetically,"¹⁵⁹ or, one might say, creatively – a linkage discussed more fully in later chapters. Suffice to note, here, that kenosis, as seen throughout this chapter, is that by which openness (to mystery) is made possible, that which readies for awakening, for the in-dwelling of heightened attentiveness, and for the non-willed creativity emergent therefrom.

ANALOGOUS CONCEPTS

It is clear that, for more than two millennia, Western theology and philosophy (with the significant influence of science) have been engaged in an ongoing dialogue concerning

¹⁵⁴ Without using the word *skenosis*, Heidegger nonetheless refers to "the in-dwelling of releasement." See M. Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking: A Translation of 'Gelassenheit'*, ed. J.G. Gray, trans. J.M. Anderson and E.H. Freund, Martin Heidegger: Works (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 85.

¹⁵⁵ Contrary to the dichotomy that Guignon presents early in his book, placing self-loss and releasement (which he explicitly equates also to *kenosis*) in opposition to self-possession or enownment, the concept of kenosis already includes the self-empowerment – the "becoming what you are" – which self-emptying effects. More accurately oppositional to self-emptying is the concept of *self-assertion*, the advocacy of self-interest, irrespective of what the situation is calling for. See Guignon, *On Being Authentic*: 6-7. This matter is also taken up in J. Malpas, "From Extremity to Releasement: Place, Authenticity, and the Self," in *The Horizons of Authenticity: Essays in Honor of Charles Guignon's Work on Phenomenology, Existentialism, and Moral Psychology*, ed. H. Pedersen and L. Hatab (Dordrecht: Springer, 2014).

¹⁵⁶ Heidegger, "Conversation on a Country Path About Thinking," 65.

¹⁵⁷ Heidegger, "Memorial Address," 46, 55.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 56-57.

¹⁵⁹ Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking."

kenosis, even if not always obvious or explicit. Before continuing and concluding this chapter with an examination of the postmodern radicalisation of that dialogue, it is important to see that kenotic thought is not limited to that which has occurred in the West. Indeed, thinking about things kenotic is something that transcends cultures and faith traditions, and finds considerable relevance in, for example, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam, but undoubtedly also in others. I have neither sufficient expertise nor space in this dissertation to thoroughly elucidate the connections between kenosis and Eastern cultures,¹⁶⁰ but even their nominal treatment is important in order to establish the inter-culture and inter-faith relevance of kenotic concepts, especially in the context of globalisation. There are also two other reasons. First, such treatment sets the stage for subsequent exploration of architecture and architects, somehow influenced by Eastern cultures and traditions: Tadao Ando and Buddhism at The Church of the Light (Chapter 5), I.M. Pei and Islam at the Museum of Islamic Art (Chapter 4), and Louis Kahn and Hinduism, the latter tradition intermixing with others to influence Kahn's projects and design theories more generally (as briefly discussed in Chapter 3).¹⁶¹ Second, this overview invites more expansive and exhaustive research. Many theologians have taken up the topic of kenosis for its potential as a dialogical bridge between East and West; amongst them Jürgen Moltmann and Thomas Altizer (discussed earlier), as well as John Cobb, Jr. (1925-) and Masao Abe (1915-2006).¹⁶² Philosophers such as Kitaro Nishida (1870-1945), his student Keiji Nishitani (1900-1990), and, more recently, Steve Odin (1953-) have done likewise.¹⁶³ Although much more could be done, this dissertation takes steps toward an opening-up of the same potential in architecture, an initial step being the following sketch, which locates kenotic thinking in major Eastern traditions.

¹⁶⁰ John Caputo notes similar limitations as he begins to write on "Heidegger, Eckhart, and Zen Buddhism, in Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought*: 203. Here, Caputo also notes Heidegger's reservations about the limitations of East-West dialogue, as expressed in his letter to the 1969 East-West Philosophers' Conference, meeting in Hawaii to explore "Heidegger and Eastern Thought." See W.E. Nagley, "Introduction to the Symposium and Reading of a Letter from Martin Heidegger," *Philosophy East and West* 20, no. 3 (1970): 221. In his letter, Heidegger laments the difficulties posed by "the fact that with few exceptions there is no command of the Eastern languages either in Europe or the United States," and by the deficiencies of translations, particularly into English.

¹⁶¹ A non-practicing Jew, Kahn is also influenced by the mysticism of the Kabbalah, and one of his most important works – Jatiyo Sangshad Bhaban (the National Assembly Building) – is located in Bangladesh, a predominantly Islamic country (though officially secular).

¹⁶² See, for example, J.B. Cobb and C. Ives, eds., *The Emptying God: A Buddhist-Jewish-Christian Conversation*, First Indian ed. (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1996); and Frederiks, "Kenosis as a Model for Interreligious Dialogue."

¹⁶³ Nishida founded the Kyoto School of philosophy and, there, in 1945, introduced the correlation of kenosis and Buddhist sunyata, which has been called, "Japanese kenoticism." See E. D. Cabanne, "Beyond Kenosis: New Foundations for Buddhist-Christian Dialogue," *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 13(1993): 103; and also, Keiji Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, trans. Jan van Bragt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982); and S. Odin, "A Critique of the 'Kenōsis/Sūnyatā' Motif in Nishida and the Kyoto School," *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 9 (1989).

Buddhism and Taoism

The most obvious connection of Buddhism to kenotic thinking lies in the title of *Buddha* and in the story of its conferment. As the message of Siddhartha Gautama of the Sakyas fervently spread across India, people began to ask if this man was a god, an angel, or a saint, to which the man's consistent reply was, "No." But, when finally asked, "Then what are you?", the man answered, 'I am *awake*.'" Thus "his answer became his title ... *Buddha* ... the Awakened One"; the "man who shook off the daze, the doze, the dream-like inchoateness of *ordinary awareness*."¹⁶⁴ His legend unfolds – often with remarkable affinity to that of Jesus, more than 600 years later¹⁶⁵ – as he forsakes the power to rule, which he would otherwise inherit from his father, and chooses to withdraw from the world of his self and be "clothed in [the] ragged raiment" of a servant, all passive actions that would see his ultimate exaltation.¹⁶⁶ Arguably, then, Buddhism is foundationally kenotic, insofar as the story of Buddha is a story of kenosis; that of a volitional and risky act of self-emptying, by which the Buddha makes-room and makes-ready for – and keeps awake to – the approach of releasement, its potential in-dwelling, and the even greater situational attentiveness accorded thereby. Indeed, by way of kenosis, Buddha can be seen to exemplify Heidegger's notion of thinking. The root term *budh* not only means to awake but also to *know*. Buddha can therefore also mean "Enlightened One."¹⁶⁷ But to know is to be aware, which need not imply already knowing or being aware of everything. Therefore, it may be equally or more accurate to see Buddha as *becoming* enlightened – kenotically – through an ongoing engagement with thinking (the ground of creativity).

This notion of thinking can also be seen to connect kenosis with Taoism (or Daoism),¹⁶⁸ a Chinese tradition that significantly influences Zen Buddhism (itself a branch of Mahayana Buddhism).¹⁶⁹ Indeed, Heidegger begins to suggest such a connection when, in *On the Way to Language*, he writes: "The word 'way' probably is an ancient primary word that speaks to the reflective mind of man. The key word in Laotse's poetic thinking is *Tao*, which 'properly speaking' means way." But then he laments that, owing to a tendency to interpret 'way' superficially, *Tao* is often translated as "reason, mind, *raison*, meaning, *logos*." As Heidegger sees it,

¹⁶⁴ H. Smith, *The Religions of Man* (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), 80-81 (my emphasis).

¹⁶⁵ There are, of course, fundamental theological differences, not least that between Christian monotheism, and Buddhist non-theism, but, in their respective legends, the key figures of each tradition bear many resemblances. The notion of early Buddhist influence on Christianity is a source of some debate amongst modern historians and Christian scholars.

¹⁶⁶ Smith, *The Religions of Man*: 82-85.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 80.

¹⁶⁸ *Tao* is also romanised as *Dao*.

¹⁶⁹ Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought*: 204-205. Mahayana Buddhism distinguishes itself from Hinayana Buddhism in that it "stresses the accessibility of the divine to the layman" without need to enter a monastery.

Tao could be the way that gives all ways, *the very source of our power to think* what reason, mind, meaning, logos properly mean to say – properly, by their proper nature. Perhaps the mystery of mysteries of thoughtful Saying conceals itself in the word ‘way,’ *Tao*, if only we let these names return to what they leave unspoken ...¹⁷⁰

Thus, the link between Tao and kenosis is powerfully made. Kenosis, seen as that original opening-up which invites releasement and, with it, thinking – more precisely, poetic thinking¹⁷¹ – surely also invites the source of such thinking’s power. But this is not the only occasion on which Heidegger connects his concept of thinking with Buddhist thought. In “Who Is Nietzsche’s Zarathustra?”,¹⁷² he acknowledges Buddhism’s attention to the overcoming of self-will, or subject-ism; such subjugation being a prerequisite for Heidegger’s kind of thinking. In that attention, Buddhism is connected to what I have portrayed as the kenosis that makes-ready for releasement, and to the thinking, or creativity, that arises therefrom. Huston Smith (with vivid echoes of Heidegger) renders this Tao connection to creativity as “creative quietude,” and distinguishes it from any notion of “do-nothingness” or “passive abstention,” instead portraying it as the combination of “supreme activity and supreme relaxation.” Engaged in creative quietude, humanity “rides on an unbounded sea of Tao which feeds ... through [the] subliminal mind.” Smith elaborates:

One way to create is through following the calculated directives of the conscious mind. The results of this mode of action, however, are seldom impressive; they tend to smack more of sorting and arranging than of genuine creation. Genuine creation, as every artist has discovered, comes when the more abundant resources of the subliminal self are somehow released. But for this to happen, a certain dissociation from the surface self is needed. The conscious mind must relax, stop standing in its own light, *let go*.¹⁷³

The kenotic concept of emptiness leading to fullness is directly traceable to the *Tao Te Ching* (also Dao De Jing, or Daodejing, with texts dating from ca. 300 BCE), its writing traditionally attributed to an ancient Chinese philosopher and poet, Laotse (historicity uncertain). In fact, Heidegger quotes the entirety of its Chapter 11 in “The Uniqueness of the Poet”,¹⁷⁴ wherein a wheel, a vessel, and a house are used to illustrate the essentiality of the emptiness in each. For example, the wheel is only able to propel

¹⁷⁰ M. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, trans. P.D. Hertz (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 92 (my emphasis). This translation renders the name of the ancient Chinese philosopher as ‘Laotse’, but more contemporary romanisation often sees it as ‘Laozi’ or ‘Lao Zi’. To avoid confusion, I will use Laotse, as used in this initial citation.

¹⁷¹ In the paragraph following this discussion of Tao, Heidegger appends poetry to thinking – as he does elsewhere – saying “These lectures make their way within the neighborhood of poetry and thinking ...” See *ibid.*, 92.

¹⁷² M. Heidegger, “Who Is Nietzsche’s Zarathustra?,” *Review of Metaphysics* 20, no. 3 (1967): 424.

¹⁷³ Smith, *The Religions of Man*: 181 (my emphasis).

¹⁷⁴ M. Heidegger, “Die Einzigkeit des Dichters,” in *Gesamtausgabe* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2000), 43.

the cart by virtue of the *emptiness* of its hub, which receives the axle, and by the *empty space* between its spokes, which allows the spokes to absorb tension and compression. Hence, while it is by the components of each object that they are used, such use is only made possible by the emptiness between those components. Heidegger reads Laotse in such a way as to support his notion of Being (granted by “the Non-being”) and being (yielding “the utility”); a reading critiqued by some Tao scholars as too ‘violent’ and self-serving of his own project, but defended by others.¹⁷⁵ Nonetheless, what is at work here is clearly kenotic. Underscoring the essentiality of *wu* (the Chinese term for ‘not to be present’) in relation to *you* (the Chinese term for ‘there exists’)¹⁷⁶ is comparable to underscoring the essentiality of emptying and emptiness as a readying for that which might approach, be received, and in-dwell; the essentiality of kenosis in relation to skenosis.

Perhaps the most kenotic aspect of Buddhism lies in its concept of *śūnyatā*. According to Masao Abe, “the ultimate reality for Buddhism is neither Being nor God, but Sunyata,” a term which “literally means ‘emptiness’ or ‘voidness’, and can imply ‘absolute nothingness’ ... because Sunyata is entirely unobjectifiable, unconceptualizable, and unattainable by reason or will.”¹⁷⁷ Particularly emphasised in Mahayana Buddhism, “Sunyata not only is not Being or God, but also *not* emptiness as distinguished from somethingness or fullness.”¹⁷⁸ To self-empty is also to empty oneself of any attachment to the emptiness. Nishitani elaborates, describing sunyata as “the point at which we become manifest in our own suchness,” even as it is also “the point at which everything around us becomes manifest in its own suchness.” Thus it is seen as “an absolutely transcendent field,” yet “on our near side,” effecting an “absolute death-*sive*-life.”¹⁷⁹ At this field – what could be seen as a bounded open domain, a ‘place’ or ‘situation’ – “everything that exists, including God ... and the relationships between them, [are] made

¹⁷⁵ Lin Ma is amongst those who closely analyse Heidegger’s use of Laotse’s writings and find “heavy-handed modifications of [Laotse’s] verses in order to suit them to his central concern with Being.” See L. Ma, “Deciphering Heidegger’s Connection with the *Daodejing*,” *Asian Philosophy* 16, no. 3 (2006): 159-167. Xianglong Zhang undertakes equally careful analysis, which includes many observations similar to Ma’s, but nonetheless attempts “to defend Heidegger’s Daoist exegesis and disclose the significance of his interest in Daoism.” See X. Zhang, “The Coming Time ‘Between’ Being and Daoist Emptiness: An Analysis of Heidegger’s Article Inquiring into the Uniqueness of the Poet via the Lao Zi,” *Philosophy East and West* 59, no. 1 (2009): 71-87.

¹⁷⁶ These are the definitions presented in Ma, “Deciphering Heidegger’s Connection with the *Daodejing*,” 161. As seen later, in Chapter 5, the Japanese rendering of this term is *mu*, or, if specifically referring to the empty space *between* as in an interval, then the term *ma* can be used. (The term’s similarity to author Lin Ma’s surname is coincidental.)

¹⁷⁷ M. Abe, “Kenotic God and Dynamic Śūnyatā,” in *The Emptying God: A Buddhist-Jewish-Christian Conversation*, ed. J.B. Cobb and C. Ives (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1990), 27. Here, Abe also suggests that to properly portray its unobjectifiable nature, “we should ... put a cross mark ‘X’ on Sunyata,” just as Heidegger did with his term, *Sein*, for the same reason. The referenced use of a cross mark ‘X’ over the word *Sein*, appears in M. Heidegger, *The Question of Being*, trans. J.T. Wilde and W. Kluback, First ed. (Albany, NY: NCUP, 1958), 88.

¹⁷⁸ Abe, “Kenotic God and Dynamic Śūnyatā,” 27.

¹⁷⁹ Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*: 90-91.

possible.”¹⁸⁰ Indeed, it is here “that beings one and all are gathered into one, while each one remains absolutely unique in its ‘being’,” and form a relationship wherein “all things are master and servant to one another,” in other words, a “circuminsessional” relationship (and thereby, a compassionate one), which also brings forth the existence of ‘things’.¹⁸¹ Potentially manifested at this “field of circuminsessional interpenetration” is consciousness, because “consciousness is *originally* emptiness.”¹⁸²

Thus, the Buddhist concept of sunyata – “the pure activity of absolute emptying”¹⁸³ – shares fundamental characteristics with the Western concept of kenosis, which, if not precisely the same, must at least be seen as the making-room for, and enabling of, the field of sunyata. Found therein are the self-emptying or self-dying of a “death-sive-life”; the surrender to a field or situation in which self, others, and other things exist relationally, in a circuminsessional relationship that is *perichoresis*; and, finally, the potential approach and filling, or in-dwelling, of consciousness, also seen as awakedness, awareness, attentiveness, thinking, or creativity. Moreover, like kenosis, sunyata is dynamically immanent, incomplete, and unending. According to Abe:

We are right here, right now, *in* Sunyata. We are always involved in the ceaseless emptying movement of Sunyata, for there is nothing outside it. And yet, in another sense, we are always totally embracing the ceaseless movement of Sunyata within ourselves. We *are* Sunyata at each and every moment of our lives ... In this living realization ... true Sunyata is nothing but the true self and the true self is nothing but true Sunyata. Apart from the absolute present – right here, right now – this dynamical identity of self and Sunyata cannot be fully realized.¹⁸⁴

Although little is said of the volitionality of sunyata, there is an understanding that one can attempt to objectify the unobjectifiable sunyata – doing so intentionally or otherwise – and thereby remain attached to being, or “the objects of self.” This “endless, unconscious thirst to be” – *avidya* – “can be overcome when one completely empties oneself.”¹⁸⁵ So, although sunyata is constantly underway – like kenosis – its realisation is imperfect and susceptible to compromise, whether by ignorance or will. In its unceasingness, sunyata is also forever incomplete – like kenosis – neither a goal nor an end, but a threshold.

Against the Buddhist notion of sunyata being unobjectifiable, it is worth noting that antecedent ideas had already become represented (a kind of objectification), when, in early Indian culture, the symbol for ‘zero’ – a dot – evolved to become an open circle and

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 99.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 148. Nishitani uses the term “circuminsessional” with the same meaning as others use ‘circuminsessional’. Both nonetheless describe the Greek notion of *perichoresis*. See note 25.

¹⁸² Ibid., 153.

¹⁸³ Abe, “Kenotic God and Dynamic Śūnyatā,” 27.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 28.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 45.

was named by the Hindu word *sunya*, which also implied void or nothingness or emptiness. Buddhism gradually became imbued with such ideas, which, particularly in Zen Buddhism, extended to conflate notions of form with emptiness. Zen and its circle imagery thrived in their emigration from India to China and, in the thirteenth century, from China to Japan, where the figure of the circle became known as the *ensō* and was further objectified in painting and calligraphy.¹⁸⁶ Diverse meanings are attached to this 'circle'. John Daido Looi (1931-2009), a Zen Buddhist *rōshi* (Master teacher, or elderly wise man), sees the enso much as Abe sees *sunyata*: the “direct expression of thusness, or this-moment-as-it-is,” but also as “enlightenment” and the “continuing and ceaseless action through all time.”¹⁸⁷ Robert Aitken (1917-2010), a Zen teacher, ascribes to these circles the potential for both “emptiness” and “fullness.”¹⁸⁸ Indeed, the daily act of drawing an enso can be seen as a kind of self-emptying, a kind of kenosis that enables spiritual filling. And Audrey Seo (1966?-), scholar and author in Japanese art, notes that, while it can indeed invoke universal power, the enso is at once symbolic of “the void, the fundamental state in which all distinctions and dualities are removed: ‘Outside – empty, inside – empty, inside and outside – empty.’”¹⁸⁹ Although the enso is often drawn as a complete circle, it can also be drawn incompletely, with an opening in its perimeter that would seem to challenge its self-sufficiency, express its concurrent emptiness and fullness, and connect its within-ness and without-ness (see fig. 2.1). In virtually any of its interpretations, the enso can readily be seen as an effective symbol of kenosis.



FIGURE 2.1
The Japanese *enso* – shown here in its incomplete or ‘broken’ form.

¹⁸⁶ The historical development and interpretation of the *enso* is more fully explicated in A.Y. Seo, *Ensō: Zen Circles of Enlightenment* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 2007), 1-18.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, xi-xii.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

Hinduism

Philologist and scholar of Oriental studies F. Max Müller (1823-1900) famously nominates the Indian culture as the one that “has most deeply pondered over the greatest problems of life,” and he proposes Indian literature as that from which may be drawn a way “to make our inner life ... more truly human”¹⁹⁰; or, it might be said, a way to *become* human. Older than Buddhism, and the ground of its origins,¹⁹¹ Hinduism – despite evolving with many differences of view and practice – shares with its ‘offshoot’ an emphasis on ‘way’. Like the later Taoist and Heideggerian ‘ways’, that of Hinduism also reveals kenotic fundamentals, volitionality foremost amongst them. While acknowledging the vastness of Hindu thought, Huston Smith usefully proposes its condensation into a kind of conundrum. In one breath, it says to humankind, “You can have what you want.” Then, it “throws the problem back in our laps,” asking in the next breath, “For what *do* we want?”¹⁹² The wants of pleasure, worldly success, and fulfilled duty – though, in that order, they incrementally increase in nobility and decrease in self-focus – ultimately fail to liberate. According to Hinduism, humanity’s greatest desire is liberation, or *mukti*: “complete release from the countless limitations that press so closely upon [mankind’s] present existence,” at once a “detachment from the finite self” and an “attachment to reality as a whole,” which, together, leads to being, knowing awareness, and joy. This liberation is approached – or, more precisely, one is made ready for the possibility of *its* approach – by “turning away from an easy this, toward a beckoning yet-to-be,”¹⁹³ a beckoning to *become*. In fact, it is a call to *become human*, not only in body and personality, but, most importantly, in the “hidden self or *Atman*, [which] is no less than *Brahman*, the Godhead,” and which lies “buried under the almost impenetrable mass of distractions, false ideas, and self-regarding impulses that comprise our surface being.” Becoming an integrated human, then, commences with an emptying of those aspects of self that bury, block, and otherwise compromise one’s essential humanity – that being its godliness.

The foregoing conceptualisation of Hinduism reveals much of a kenotic nature, and arising therein is the potentiality of Eckhart’s ‘detachment’, his and Heidegger’s ‘releasement’, and Guignon’s ‘heightened sensitivity’ and ‘awareness’, all of which is Heideggerian ‘thinking’ made possible by the ‘way’. Hinduism offers, to a diverse humanity, not one but four ‘ways’ – four *yogas* – to becoming: through knowledge (*jnana*

¹⁹⁰ F.M. Müller, *India: What Can It Teach Us?* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1883), 6.

¹⁹¹ Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan observes that “early Buddhism is not an absolutely original doctrine. It is no freak in the evolution of Indian thought ... Buddhism, in its origin at least, is an offshoot of Hinduism.” See Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, ed. H.D. Lewis, Second ed., vol. I, The Muirhead Library of Philosophy (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, (1923) 1977), 360-361.

¹⁹² Smith, *The Religions of Man*: 16.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 20-27.

yoga), through love (*bhakti yoga*), through work (*karma yoga*), and through psychological exercises (*raja yoga*). Likewise, there are four life stages in which such becoming can occur. Presenting as problematic, however – especially to Western sensibilities – is the notion that there are various stations of life, or *castes*, which humanity occupies during its becoming; a peculiarity that stems from the belief that people are already what they are, or will be, and therefore occupy a corresponding place or station, even as they are still and always becoming that which they cannot avoid being. Thus there is little opportunity – so coveted in the West – to become anything or anyone other than that predetermined and pre-existent within. Nor is there seen to be any need for such opportunity, since the hidden self, if sought and found, is already infinite and perfect.

It is Hinduism's sense of determinacy that reveals a divergence from kenosis. Unlike Guignon (and Heidegger before him), who attaches his notions of sensitivity and awareness to the contingency of each situation and the ultimate indeterminacy of reality, Hinduism's call for detachment from self is a simultaneous call for attachment, or attentiveness, to 'reality as a whole', the essence of which is seen as already existing and merely in need of discovery, by whatever *yoga* might be chosen. Amidst such determinacy, self is seen as a mere spectator, detached from self and the reality of each present situation, and therefore able to be dispassionate and distanced from any pressing need to engage in the working-out and shaping of the present. The reality to which the Hindu is called to attach is something eternal, the reality of a separate self that underlies the superficial self and transcends the individual experience of a provisionally real world.¹⁹⁴ This kenosis that empties and opens-up self is actually a turning-in toward a deeper, *pre-existing* self, which may open-up to the other but, presumably, only in cases where such is its pre-existing essence (as pre-determined by undertakings in prior lives). Thus, even if such opening-up to the other did occur, there would not necessarily be the potential for reciprocal response (unless the other was likewise predisposed), nor for the mutual transformation that might arise from such reciprocity. Of course, even in 'classical' kenosis the notion of self-emptying – as an opening-up to the other – is also a turning-in or turning-back into oneself, in the sense that self is found already in the other. But the self to be found is neither pre-existent nor pre-determined, so the finding requires ongoing emptying, as well as an openness to the unknown – particularly the unknown potential for transformation of both self and other. By contrast, the kenosis evident in Hinduism tends to become short-circuited by what appears as a call to open-up to a

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 28, 74. According to Hinduism, this dispassionate relationship to the situation of the world does not necessarily lead to a languishing society. Liberated individuals go on performing their duties "efficiently ... no longer motivated by their passions though they still possess them. Worldly affairs continue."

closed system. Such a call presents as a kind of 'determinate kenosis', itself a contradiction in terms.

Three additional aspects of Hinduism are worth mentioning for their kenotic dimensions. First are the well-known Hindu figures of *Kali*, the dancing goddess who brandishes a sword and severed head, and *Shiva*, an aspect of God as destroyer (the other two aspects being creator and preserver). Both figures can be seen to imply a violent Hindu outlook, but, in fact, their destruction is directed toward the finite – that impenetrable mass of superficial being – so as to make-room for the infinite. In effect, theirs are acts of emptying, which prove to enable creativity. Second is the Hindu view of the world as *lila*, meaning 'God's play'. In this view, God's so-called destructiveness is actually that which empties and makes-room for a "cosmic dance," whose energy and endless movements see "all creatures and all worlds" come to be. Creation is thus presented kenotically, even conjuring images of Plato's chora as cosmic dance floor. (There is also, in this view, some sense of indeterminacy, which stands in contrast to the suggestions of determinacy seen in the previous paragraph.) Third is Hinduism's ultimately kenotic inclusion of and opening-up to other faith traditions, at least in principle if not always in practice. Sri Ramakrishna (1836-1886) teaches that the ways to the divine are various, and that "every religion in the world shows one of these ways."¹⁹⁵ Smith extends the Ramakrishna view, lamenting that "as long as religions remain in the foothills of theology, ritual, or church organization, they may be far apart," and then observing, in the manner of Hindu maxims, that "it is possible to climb life's mountain from any side, [and] when the top is reached the pathways merge."¹⁹⁶ I would suggest that the pathways merge – at the 'top' – in their shared kenotic ontology; this pinnacle being not only the terminus of the pathways but also their genesis. Although the downward paths to various belief systems diverge and sometimes lead to violent separations in the 'foothills', they nonetheless can be seen to begin and end – to merge and dissolve – in kenosis. The mystery, indeterminacy, and risk of such merger and dissolution may account for the fact that the foothills are so well populated and the mountaintop is so empty.

Islam

Less need be said of kenotic presence in Islam, not because Islam is of any less importance or is any less demonstrative of kenosis, but because its Abrahamic roots are shared with Judaism and Christianity, and many aspects of the kenosis evidenced in such roots has already been discussed. Consequently, further discussion can focus on

¹⁹⁵ Abhedananda, *The Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna* (New York: Cosimo Classics, (1903) 2010), 10.

¹⁹⁶ Except as otherwise cited, quotations in this paragraph are from Smith, *The Religions of Man*: 75-77.

some of the unique elements of Islam that reveal kenotic thought. (Additional considerations are taken up during an exploration of the Museum of Islamic Art, in Chapter 4.) As with Buddhism, the evidence of kenotic thought in Islam begins with the tradition's name; a name that originates with the word *salam*, meaning peace but also surrender, particularly a surrender or emptying to God. By such emptying, one is filled with 'perfect peace'. God, or *Allah*, seen as the singular and absolute Almighty, is immaterial and invisible, a kind of emptiness that is nonetheless something. But, as Smith points out, such emptiness does not impugn divine reality for those in the Arab world, since they "never learned the art of ignoring everything but what could be seen" and have always been accustomed to "invisible hands that ... swept the desert and formed ... deceptive mirages."¹⁹⁷ Since the creator Allah is perfection, this creator's creation is also essentially perfect; such belief in the reality of worldly matter stemming from Judaism and Christianity and sharply distinguishing all three traditions from the Hindu notion of provisional reality.

All of Islam's five pillars reflect the faith's call to surrender, but three are especially kenotic. The second pillar, for example, calls the Muslim to "be constant" in prayer, as a means to understand humanity's subordination to God – the certain condition of not-being God. This is a call to the constant self-emptying of any notions of grasping, clinging-to, or exploiting god-like power, or god-like centeredness; a call echoing precisely the same renunciation that precedes the messianic kenosis in Christianity (what I earlier called a prerequisite to kenosis). In this constancy – wherein all Muslims pray five times per day (with some exceptions) and, regardless of their location on earth, do so facing the direction of Mecca (the Qibla) – there is a worldwide relationality that, once again, invokes a kind of *perichoresis*, achieved in humanity's response to divine kenosis by the reciprocation of its own. Something similar – another kind of constancy – is called for by the fourth pillar, the annual observance of *Ramadan*, during which Muslims undertake to fast, abstaining from food and drink during daylight hours (and moderation thereafter). This, too, is a self-emptying – even more literal – the purpose of which is to elevate thinking, heighten sensitivity to humanity's situation, and instil compassion for others. Such attentiveness and compassion is to be demonstrated in fulfilment of the third pillar, that of charity. This pillar calls Muslims to still another self-emptying, also constant, a sort of annual "graduated tax on the haves to relieve the circumstance of the have-nots." But, unlike Judaism and Christianity, this is not also intended to support the maintenance of religious institutions.¹⁹⁸ The third pillar, like the fourth, invokes heightened situational sensitivity and a concern for, and particular kind of openness to, the other – all

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 204-205.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 213.

fundamentally kenotic. The institutionalised imposition of the pillars, however, is problematic to kenosis, since such imposition ultimately contradicts the volitional openness and emptying being sought.

The relationality promulgated by the second pillar is a reflection of the Prophet Mohammed's intent to establish the brotherhood of Islam, and his declared success in doing so. It was and is an Islamic ideal, and a subject given great importance. As a social framework for interpersonal relations, its objective "is precisely that of Jesus ... brotherly love."¹⁹⁹ Unlike Jesus, however, Mohammed not only posited an ideal, he wrote the prescription for its achievement (believed by Muslims to have been revealed by God). The Koran presents this prescription and establishes a social order in which "faith and politics, religion and society, are inseparable."²⁰⁰ This notion of entangled relationality is, of course, kenotic, at least in conception. But in practice, the prescription that establishes it, like all prescriptions (not least those of other religions), is and must remain exclusive to *its* followers. It is Mohammed, himself, who confirms the exclusivity of his religion (and others), even as he espouses religious toleration. Concerning how the followers of Islam should deal with those of different traditions, he instructs:

"Say, 'O disbelievers, I do not worship what you worship. Nor are you worshippers of what I worship. Nor will I be a worshipper of what you worship. Nor will you be worshippers of what I worship. For you is your religion, and for me is my religion'" (Koran 109:1-6, Sahih International Version).

Thus, in Islam, as in all faith traditions that rely on exclusivity – and for that matter, all kinds of institutions that do the same – those principles that are largely keno-*tic* can, by virtue of the principles' own internal barriers, be compromised and fail to manifest their full potentiality as keno-*sis*.

POSTMODERN RADICALISATION

Secularisation

The potentiality of kenosis that transcends disciplines and cultures, and establishes its ultimate relevance, lies not in its religiosity but in something much deeper – its becoming-ness, or, more precisely, its capacity to effect humanity's becoming what humanity *will be*. Reflecting on such becoming, Indian philosopher Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888-1975) observes that "individuality is an unstable state of being which is ever growing ... a perpetual process with nothing permanent." Amplifying that view, he quotes T.W. Rhys Davids (1843-1922):

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 215.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 216.

There can be no individuality without putting together, there can be no putting together, no confection, without a becoming; there can be no becoming without a becoming different; and there can be no becoming different without a dissolution, a passing away, which sooner or later will be inevitable.²⁰¹

Nearly a century later, postmodern philosopher Gianni Vattimo (1936-) insightfully radicalises this view (with a debt to Hegel and a variety of theologians since the 1960s), specifically naming kenosis – including its instability, its plurality and differentiability, its perpetuality, its impermanence, its dissolutions, and its inevitability – as that which enables and animates humanity becoming human. In his philosophy of ‘weak thought’, Vattimo, a student of hermeneutician Hans-Georg Gadamer and significantly influenced by Heidegger and Nietzsche, sees kenosis manifested in *secularisation*: the becoming worldly of the world and, with that, the becoming human of humanity.²⁰² Of particular interest, in light of this chapter’s preceding discussion, is that Vattimo’s view is not *necessarily* atheistic. In fact, it is quite Christian-centric, though his theism is so liberated from dogma and metaphysics as to be largely unrecognisable by the institutionalised church. For him – an avowed Catholic, who embraces the Nietzschean death-of-God and quotes an Italian expression, “Thank God, I’m an atheist,” in support of his advocacy to “take the Bible seriously”²⁰³ – secularisation as kenosis begins with the kenotic event of incarnation, the moment at which God is able to be seen and spoken of as human and therefore secular; the moment at which God can be seen as self-emptying and beginning to ‘die’. Vattimo thus returns this discussion, once again, to the locus classicus at which it began: the Kenosis Hymn.

The kenotic dissolution or weakening of God paradoxically sees not the overcoming of Christianity but the continuation of its essence, a kind of fulfilment. Indeed, the overcoming of a religion only invites its replacement with another religion or belief system manifested in new claims of metaphysical truths. Since it is from such truths that ‘violence’ can emerge – not primarily physical violence, but that arising in exclusivity, hubris, and mastery desires – the secularisation or desacralisation of God is actually a salvific process of conversion away from violence. This weakening is a gradual conversion, a constant emptying, an always ongoing kenosis:

For Christianity, history appears as the history of *salvation*; it then becomes the search for a worldly condition of *perfection*, before turning, little by little, into the

²⁰¹ Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, I: 383.

²⁰² A useful synthesis and elucidation of Vattimo’s philosophy of secularisation is found in H.J. Prosman, “Secularization as Kenosis,” in *The Postmodern Condition and the Meaning of Secularity: A Study on the Religious Dynamics of Postmodernity*, ed. M. Sarot, M. Scott, and M. Wisse, Ars Disputandi Supplement Series (Utrecht: Ars Disputandi [<http://www.ArsDisputandi.org>], 2011), 175-223.

²⁰³ Vattimo invokes the Bible, not as a tool of proselytisation or the sanctioning charter of a religious institution, but as “the principal book that has marked deeply the ‘paradigm’ of Western culture.” See G. Vattimo, *After Christianity*, trans. L. D’Isanto, Italian Academy Lectures (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 7.

history of *progress*. But the ideal of progress is finally revealed to be a hollow one, since its ultimate value is to create conditions in which further progress is possible in a guise that is always new. By depriving progress of a final destination, secularization dissolves the very notion of progress itself, as happens in nineteenth- and twentieth-century culture.²⁰⁴

Slowly, in its emptying-out and dissolution, progress becomes *routine*.²⁰⁵ Metaphysics is fulfilled in science and technology – and ends. The difference between art and reality blurs, as art is fulfilled in philosophy – and ends. The need for objective truth diminishes. Nihilism, then, is “heir to the Christian myth of the incarnation of God.”²⁰⁶ And God’s ‘death’ is the revelation and realisation of God, all by virtue of God’s self-emptying.

Christianity can therefore be seen to be fulfilled – or moving toward fulfilment – as its kenotic ontology and consequent tendencies toward hermeneutics and mission position it to sponsor secularisation. Arising therefrom is “a wide ranging pluralism of religious forms that are all legitimate interpretations of the original hermeneutic event: the incarnation.”²⁰⁷ Secularisation as kenosis enables “a positive nihilism ... [the] aesthetization of culture ... the pluralization of lifestyles.”²⁰⁸ Amidst this plurality of legitimate interpretations, Vattimo invokes only one interpretive limit or threshold; that being *caritas* (and, alternatively, charity or love), by which he means “the reduction of violence in all its forms.”²⁰⁹ He sees the “indefinite drift” of secularisation as “reading the signs of the times with no other provision than the commandment of love, which cannot be secularized, because ... it is a ‘formal’ commandment ... which does not command something specific once and for all.” Instead, it calls for “applications that must be ‘invented’ in dialogue with specific situations ...”²¹⁰ This, too, is the advancement of a

²⁰⁴ G. Vattimo, *The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Postmodern Culture*, trans. J.R. Snyder (Cambridge: Polity, 1988), 7-8 (my emphasis).

²⁰⁵ As Vattimo notes, this is a notion already argued by Arnold Gehren, as a condition of what he calls ‘post-histoire’. See *ibid.*, 7. Testimony to progress becoming routine is widespread but well summarised in the words of Huston Smith, from 1958, directed particularly to ‘progress’ in the “Anglo-American world.” In his view, it “is not voluptuous; visitors from other cultures are almost unanimous in their impression that, despite superficial appearances to the contrary, English-speaking peoples do not enjoy life a great deal and are not really intent upon doing so – they are in too much of a hurry. The impress of Calvinism and Puritanism is still deep. What has conquered the West is the gospel not of sensualism, but of success.” See Smith, *The Religions of Man*: 17-18. In a sense, Smith appears to invoke Heidegger, asking of the West’s capacity to ‘dwell poetically’.

²⁰⁶ Vattimo, from *Beyond Interpretation* and quoted in Prosman, “Secularization as Kenosis,” 196; this is a point also made in F. de Lange, “Kenotic Ethics: Gianni Vattimo, Reading the ‘Signs of Time,’” in *Letting Go: Rethinking Kenosis*, ed. O. Zijlstra (Bern: Peter Lang, 2002), 57. For Vattimo, however, nihilism is not any kind of finality. Instead, being a product of kenosis, it is “an infinite never-ending process.” See G. Vattimo, *Belief*, trans. L. D’Isanto and D. Webb (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 65; but also G. Vattimo, “Nihilism as Postmodern Christianity,” in *Transcendence and Beyond: A Postmodern Inquiry*, ed. J.D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon, *The Indiana Series in the Philosophy of Religion* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2007), 44-48.

²⁰⁷ Prosman, “Secularization as Kenosis,” 195.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 187.

²⁰⁹ Vattimo, *Belief*, 88.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 66.

(the) central Christian precept.²¹¹ But, somewhat startlingly, Vattimo adds to his proposition, arguing that such invention be undertaken “in light of what the holy Scriptures have revealed.”²¹² It must be acknowledged that Vattimo is writing from a specifically Christian perspective, but I would suggest that in order to embrace pluralism and avoid the exclusivity and peremptoriness that he argues against, the concluding phrase can and should be omitted, insofar as its addition imposes a very specific command indeed. His language might be broadened to include so-called books of wisdom from all faith traditions, but even that is unnecessary, since invoking the application of the non-peremptory principle of love or *caritas* – *to each situation* – already encompasses all that each situation comprises, including any extant ‘wisdom’ that may influence it or those who are part of it, and, in some situations, which may itself be the subject of necessary emptying. The initial proposition is sufficient and a more integral continuation of Christianity – true to its kenotic propensities – than it is when consideration of the Christian scriptures is imposed. It already includes everything needed to maintain the unfolding kenosis. Anything more risks the erection of barriers to emptying.

Though not without risk, secularisation offers opportunity. Vattimo sees the opportunity for an aesthetic way of being, one that is real, not superstitious or supernatural. Even his invocation of the Christian scriptures is a call to their “continuing reinterpretation” in response to a given situation, not the commendation of a “God who ... does not ‘exist’ as an objective reality.”²¹³ He sees human creativity escaping the limitations of science and technology so as to freely shape life – beginning at the threshold of *caritas*, or love, and without need for self-assertion or other forms of violence. In the absence of a transcendental and judgemental God, however, the kenosis that makes room for *caritas* and love is volitional, raising the matter of why it would be chosen over what may appear more expedient. Though a less specific aspect of his project, Vattimo addresses this issue by once again pointing to Christian tradition – its inherently kenotic nature, and its consequent natural tendency toward *caritas* (notwithstanding historic and current episodes of violence) – as the impetus that guides choice, at least in the long-term. Like others before him, Vattimo points to the cognition of violence as a condition of its rejection. The very exposure of violence as violence begins a process of change or conversion. Secularisation, as kenosis, is the matrix of such a process, producing heightened awareness and a willingness to name and reject

²¹¹ Vattimo argues that “the essence of [God’s] revelation is reduced to charity,” or love. See *ibid.*, 77; Eckhart, however, praises “detachment above all love,” because love “compels me to love God,” while “detachment compels God to love me.” He thereby maintains, as I have, that kenosis enables and animates reciprocal love. See Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Selections from His Essential Writings*: 104.

²¹² Vattimo, *Belief*: 66.

²¹³ Vattimo, *After Christianity*: 8.

violence in metaphysics, theology, and ideology.²¹⁴ Manifested in this matrix is an increasingly pluralistic and aesthetic society, which increasingly comes to value and deploy *caritas* – over self-willing – not as the result of coercion but because of its potentiality to unconceal the inherent ‘beauty’ in what situations call for. To humanity and its creativity, *kenosis* grants a crucial role.

Transformation

Vattimo, of course, is not alone in the postmodern advancement or ‘radicalisation’ of kenotic thought. John Caputo, for example – introduced earlier in connection with Aquinas and Eckhart (and their connections to Heidegger) – also pursues the ‘weakness of God’. He sees religion and theology as “all too human,” tending to “associate themselves with a discourse of power,” and, therefore, “not to be confused with God.” In that view, he supposes that God “belongs not to the fixed order of presence, but to the (dis)order of the deconstruction of presence”; that God “withdraws from the world” so as to be stationed “with everything that the world despises”; that God is not a “kingly power, but ... prowls the streets (a *voyou*) and disturbs the peace”; that God “can do without religion if religion means cultic sacrifice and ritual, but not without the event of justice, which is not always what religion means”; that God is not intent on establishing “an oppressive patriarchal model of sovereign power, but the revitalization of worldly power”; and, finally, “that God moves not by force but by attraction, like a call,” harbouring “an event of solicitation.”²¹⁵ In each of his suppositions, Caputo ultimately describes God in kenotic terms and reprises many aspects of *kenosis*, already discussed: the self-emptying that deconstructs what is present, effects withdrawal, causes disruption, promotes justice (*caritas* and love), eschews power in order to power, and that calls humanity to action – to the passive activity of reciprocal *kenosis*.

Caputo rejects the classical view of *kenosis* that culminates in majestic exaltation, because “the power of the cross is a power without power, particularly without *sovereign* power.”²¹⁶ For him, *kenosis* is best evidenced in the transformation of sovereignty, in the shift from “*my* sovereignty, or *our* sovereignty, to the sovereignty of the *other*,” including “each and every person, each and every thing.” The “autonomy of sovereignty” thus becomes the “heteronomy of hospitality”:

²¹⁴ I return to this aspect of ‘violence’ in Chapter 7.

²¹⁵ J.D. Caputo, “The Weakness of God: A Theology of the Event,” in *The Mourning After: Attending the Wake of Postmodernism*, ed. Neil Brooks and Josh Toth (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2007), 287-289.

²¹⁶ J.D. Caputo, “Beyond Sovereignty: Many Nations Under the Weakness of God,” *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 89, no. 1-2 (Spring-Summer) (2006): 29 (my emphasis). Caputo’s ‘rejection’ is not dissimilar to mine, as explained earlier in this chapter. See discussion under sub-heading, “Succeeding the *Kenosis*”.

Hospitality represents a very interesting combination of power and powerlessness. I cannot invite the other to *your* house. Hospitality means that the host is the master of the house, that he or she owns the premises, and that means the host has to have some kind of power, but this is a power that makes itself vulnerable to the other. It is power interrupted by the call of the other.²¹⁷

In this scenario – as with all kenotic scenarios – nothing is ‘lost’ or ‘sacrificed’. Self-identity is retained, possessions are not compelled to be relinquished, and ‘power’ is fully preserved. It is only power’s attributes and exercise that change, as sovereign-ness is transformed into hospitality, and hospitality is put into practice as responsibility. Left only at that, however, the situation can appear one-sided, with transformation seeming to involve only the host-as-self. But, just as the host is also other, the guest-as-other is also self, with some measure of sovereignty and power, even if only pertaining to self. Kenosis is a call to mutual transformation and is only fully instantiated when reciprocal, when the guest-as-self is also willing to become open and vulnerable to its other, and thereby host the host. Such is the tension that effects creativity, and, as widely demonstrated in theology and philosophy, the ontology of such tension is kenosis.

* * *

In what can only be a broad survey, this chapter has located the origins and development of concepts – both explicit and implicit – that relate to kenosis. It has demonstrated the relevance of kenosis, not only across the disciplines of theology and philosophy, but also across cultures, East and West. It has introduced many of the major thinkers and thinking that arise from those disciplines and cultures. Subsequent discourse builds on the foundations laid here. It next looks to architecture – an endeavour of human creativity at theoretical, aesthetic, and applied levels – for evidence of kenosis, seen not only in concretised instantiations but also in missed opportunities. In so doing, it asks what architecture says of kenosis. With that, the discourse can later turn to ask kenosis what it says of architecture; which, stated in other terms, is to ask of architecture how it – and human creativity, more generally – might be informed and transformed by its own kenosis.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 34 (author's emphasis).

Part Two – Manifestations

Architecture and Essence: Modernism

MODERNISM'S RELIGIOSITY (AND KAHN'S)

Intended or not, when Modernist architect Louis I. Kahn (1901-1974) famously muses that “inspiration is the feeling of beginning at the threshold where Silence and Light meet,”¹ he aligns his thinking with the Judeo-Christian creation myth, and in so doing locates his aesthetic theory – but also, by inference, all human creativity – firmly within the concept of kenosis. Silence and light are frequent metaphors for the divine; less frequent, but particularly apt, for the divine at kenotic moments. In meditative traditions, across time and cultures, silence is seen as a fundamental requisite for divine communion, and, in the Judeo-Christian tradition, as a fundamental presence and power of God.² As discussed in Chapter 2, profound silence is the implied condition of the God-alone, pre-cosmic state of Genesis. It is in such silence that can be found the Kabbalistic notion of divine withdrawal or emptying, and the simultaneous onset of ‘power’ that results from the silent letting-go of power; that is, the powerfulness of powerlessness. But what is this paradoxical power? According to the classical account of Genesis, it is “the spirit of God.”³ To Kahn it is “inspiration.” Both interpretations find kenosis at a threshold, at a point where things become empowered to begin, at the edge of a domain of emptiness in which creation can emerge. At this threshold, so the biblical narrative claims, there is an awakening from silent darkness, and, by God’s utterance – “Let there be light” – light is the first creative emergence from original divine emptying and filling. Kahn simply says, “Silence and Light meet.” Subsequent developments in both Judaism and Christianity amplify the meaning of light. Lurianic Kabbalah sees the light of creation producing emanations of God, those spiritual attributes of humanity by which God can be

As noted in the Acknowledgements, some of the concepts included in this chapter represent the development and elaboration of work previously published in Lindstrom, “Revisiting Kahn: A Theological Case for Kenotic Design.”

¹ J. Lobell, *Between Silence and Light: Spirit in the Architecture of Louis I. Kahn* (Boston and London: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 2008), 20.

² These notions of ‘silence’ are also linked to Kahn’s use of the term in V. Scully, “Louis I. Kahn and the Ruins of Rome,” *Engineering and Science* 56, no. 2 (1992): 6; and in H. Hermann, “On the Transcendent in Landscapes of Contemplation,” in *Contemporary Landscapes of Contemplation*, ed. R. Krinke (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 37.

³ The text of the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible uses, in Genesis 1:2, the phrase “a wind from God” but, by footnote, equally accepts “the spirit of God,” where either is seen as a “divine substance,” distinct from the “mere matter” of pre-creation chaos. As discussed in Chapter 2, it is the later trinitarian doctrine that sees the “spirit of God” as the Holy Spirit, or the “power of the process of begetting,” which also figures in the ‘second creation’ – the incarnation of God as messiah.

known.⁴ In Christianity, the creation of light by *word* is conflated with the identification of their messiah, Jesus, as the *logos*, the *Word*, the personification of divine wisdom.

Kahn's threefold theory – silence, light, and inspiration – finds strong analogies in both Judaism and Christianity.⁵ It is, however, by way of Christianity's incarnational dimension that Kahn's theory is best seen to reflect the modern tension between sacred and secular, a tension ever present in his Modernism. As Vattimo has already been seen to argue, it is the notion of incarnation, the becoming of the sacred – the Word, or the light – as human flesh, which allows the sacred to be spoken of as part of the secular.⁶ Light (and enlightenment) stand with the “shadow, which belongs to Light,”⁷ as Kahn's secularising counterpart to sacred silence. Kahn restates much the same when he describes silence as “the unmeasurable” (the sacred or numinous), light as “the measurable” (the secular or profane), and inspiration as “the sanctuary of art” (the matrix of creativity).⁸ In relatively few words, dismissed by some as “rhapsodic ... obfuscatory and transcendentalising,”⁹ Kahn not only presents the foundations of his aesthetic theory but broadly outlines the foundational theologies of Western religion.

It is therefore unsurprising that Kahn describes art as “the language of God” and, equally, “the only language of man”¹⁰; the two references pointing to the between-ness of the divine and human. It is also unsurprising that Kahn refers to his Modernist practice of architecture not as a business, but as “a religion, devotion and dedication, for human enjoyment”¹¹; a statement that similarly reinforces his dichotomisation of religious sacredness and human secularity. Yet there is no evidence of Kahn's allegiance to any particular religion, unless humanism is granted religious status. He was born into the Judaic faith; a faith conscious of the divide between sacred and secular, heaven and earth, and, despite contrasting messianic views, a faith that shares with Christianity the belief that the divine has entered human history. Kahn neither denied nor observed his

⁴ A. Gorlin, “Kabbalah and Architecture,” *Faith and Form* 41, no. 2 (2008); but see, also, G. Scholem, “Issac Luria: A Central Figure in Jewish Mysticism,” *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 29, no. 8 (1976); and Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*. (The Kabbalah is discussed more fully in Chapter 2.)

⁵ Michael Benedikt suggests that Kahn's theories are also reconcilable, at least in part, with Hinduism, insofar as Kahn's notion of ‘inspiration’ can be seen relating to the Hindu representation of an aspect of god, *Shiva* (presumably known to Kahn as a result of his work in Dacca). Benedikt sees Shiva as a “precursor of the Holy Spirit in Christianity, or of *nefesh*, *ruach*, and *neshama* in Judaism.” See Benedikt, “Shiva, Luria, Kahn,” 34-35. See also the discussion of Hinduism in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

⁶ This Vattimian notion is discussed more fully in Chapter 2.

⁷ Lobell, *Between Silence and Light: Spirit in the Architecture of Louis I. Kahn*: 20. Kahn credits Light as “the giver of presence,” but also recognises that it “casts its shadow”; a contrast used to describe the human condition of light and shadow, and one reflected in Michelangelo's observation: “Art is but a shadow of divine perfection.”

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ S.W. Goldhagen, *Louis Kahn's Situated Modernism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 1-2.

¹⁰ J.A. Burton, “Notes from Volume Zero: Louis Kahn and the Language of God,” in *The Religious Imagination in Modern and Contemporary Architecture: A Reader*, ed. R. Hejduk and J. Williamson (New York and London: Routledge, 2011), 65.

¹¹ J.A. Burton, “The Aesthetic Education of Louis I. Kahn, 1912-1924,” *Perspecta* 28(1997): 216.

inherited faith, but he did acknowledge a more than passing familiarity with Jewish mysticism.¹² Such familiarity undoubtedly influenced the shaping of his personal values and, consequently, his aesthetic theory. He imagines the origins of the world in almost biblical terms, as “an ooze without any shape or direction” animated by a “force of Joy,” which is the “essence of creativity.”¹³ But, whatever Kahn’s actual religious beliefs (to the extent any were consciously held), I would suggest that his religiosity is most vividly seen in his acts of creativity, through architectural design. Given the era and context of his practice, it is not unreasonable to suggest that Modernism was, for Kahn (and others), a kind of religion. In fact, Michael Benedikt argues:

Modernism itself was ... a religious movement from the start – a Protestant, counter Counter-Reformation, this time not so much against the Church and its attachment to pomp, hierarchy, convention, iconography, and embellishment, but against the class-conscious bourgeoisie’s attachment to the same.¹⁴

Benedikt’s analogy begs further exploration, because major religious movements, not least those in Western traditions, reveal an important aspect of kenosis: its dynamism. Such movements ricochet between and within traditions, sects, and denominations, each addressing perceived changes to their own and the other’s condition, as the following sketch demonstrates.

In antiquity, the fundamental sensibilities of kenosis are already found embedded in Judaism (seen in Chapter 2). Centuries later, a sect within that tradition, which would come to be known as Christianity, arises to challenge the tradition’s self-sufficiency and plead for a kind of kenosis (without using the term) that would open-up Judaism to gentiles.¹⁵ By the Middle Ages, a Judaic mystical movement – the Kabbalah – emerges, but it is at the cusp of modernity that the Lurianic Kabbalah, with its creation story of zimzum, reinforces Judaic connectedness to kenotic thinking. At about the same time, the Protestant Reformation arises to call for the reform of perceived corruptions within institutionalised Christianity, as well as for an opening-up of the church to new knowledge, to hermeneutics, and, consequently, to re-formed theology. Arising in response, the Counter-Reformation – or Catholic Revival – proves not to be an opening-up but a containment, largely antithetical to kenosis. It would seek to affirm foundational practices and beliefs – which, in Christianity, necessarily emerge from kenosis – but to do so through control, including the prosecution of Judaising and all things Protestant. The call for reform would, as well, inevitably turn back toward Protestantism. Throughout

¹² Burton, “Notes from Volume Zero: Louis Kahn and the Language of God,” 70.

¹³ Lobell, *Between Silence and Light: Spirit in the Architecture of Louis I. Kahn*: 6.

¹⁴ Benedikt, “Shiva, Luria, Kahn,” 33.

¹⁵ Scholarship concerning the early Christian church and its ‘split’ from Judaism is prolific. A valuable introduction is found in T.P. Rausch, *The Roots of the Catholic Tradition*, vol. 16, Theology and Life (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1988), 98-118.

modernity, it is persistently challenged from within its own emerging sects, or denominations, to re-open and re-form in response to new 'truths' emanating from sectarian hermeneutics; such challenges being met – as kenosis usually is – by both acceptance and strong resistance. But it is in Catholicism that the most significant modern movement arises. Seeing little change since the sixteenth century Counter-Reformation, a 'counter Counter-Reformation' begins to emerge as early as the mid-nineteenth century. This 'Liturgical Movement' would, yet again, plead for a kenosis in the church and see its plea culminate, more than a century later, in the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), which finally sanctions liturgical change as part of far more widespread renewal. Justifying the Council's convocation, Pope John XXIII reportedly declares: "I want to throw open the windows of the Church."¹⁶ He calls for *aggiornamento* – a "bringing up to date"¹⁷ – and suggests "a new order of human relations."¹⁸ Hence, not only does the Second Vatican Council prove to be a kenotic event in Catholicism, it goes further, contributing to new interfaith interest and interaction, and thereby effecting at least some measure of kenosis amongst many religious traditions in the West and beyond.¹⁹

Given the complexities of religious history, this is an incomplete and unjustly brief review, but, even as such, there is sufficient detail to see the procession of religious 'movements' as ongoing calls-to-action, all in pursuit of renewal over stagnation and excess. Presented is a kind of whirling kenotic dance, at times graceful, often lurching forward and backward, occasionally violent, but generally tending toward self-correction – even if incremental and incomplete – because it is a dance that ultimately effects humanity's becoming human, a requisite for, and outcome of, religion's becoming. This dance is the struggle of becoming, which kenosis animates.²⁰

¹⁶ This quotation – highly modernist in concept – is widely attributed to John XXIII but apparently not authoritatively substantiated. Nonetheless, the metaphor is consistent with the tone and substance of his address at the opening of the Council. (See note 18.) It is both interesting and ironic to note that, in his pre-papacy Vatican personnel file, John XXIII found a premonitory notation: "Suspected of modernism." See G. Tobin, *The Good Pope: The Making of a Saint and the Remaking of the Church – The Story of John XXIII and Vatican II* (New York: Harper One), 57-58.

¹⁷ M. Sullivan, *101 Questions and Answers on Vatican II* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2002), 7. According to Sullivan, critics expressed concern that this term positioned the pope "dangerously close" to Martin Luther and his concept of reform.

¹⁸ John XXIII, "Address on the Occasion of the Solemn Opening of the Most Holy Council," (11 October, 1962).

¹⁹ The effects – beyond Catholicism – of the Roman Catholic liturgical movement and Vatican Council II is a subject of extensive scholarship, succinctly and usefully summarised in J.F. White, *Protestant Worship: Traditions in Transition* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989), 32-35.

²⁰ In addition to further development throughout this chapter, notions that link kenosis to 'dance' have already been seen in Chapter 2, during discussions of Plato's *chora* (as 'dance floor') and the concept of *perichoresis* (the mutuality of dance partners), and it is again taken up in Chapter 4, where I.M. Pei's Museum of Islamic Art is considered vis-à-vis the 'whirling' Dervishes.

It is not unreasonable, then, to view artistic movements – not least, those of architecture – in a similar light. Such a view renders plausible Benedikt's argument, that Modernism is a religious movement, and allows my extension of that argument to all architectural 'isms'.²¹ None is self-sufficient, and each is a challenge to its predecessor, even as each will be challenged by its successor. There is, therefore, a 'between-ness' about such movements; between the preceding and succeeding, obviously, but also between that which is sacralised by the previous movement and that which, in the current and following movements, appears to be secularising the formerly sacred. When the relationality of between-ness is maintained – that is, when movements are the progeny of their forerunners and the parentage of their progeny – there exists an unfolding, or an evolvment of tradition, which is clearly kenotic in its tensility, dynamism, and heightened capacity for creativity. Thus, movements produce *movement*. When such relationality is disconnected, however, and tension is raised through mere self-interested assertion – ignorant of or inattentive to the others and other things of the situation – then kenosis is suppressed, and creative movements become vulnerable to the violence of trend, fad, and gimmick. That is the point at which movements produce *inertia*. Such is true in religion, in architecture, and in creative pursuits of all kinds.

Modernism, then, is just one movement in a complex, entangled, and *multilinear* continuum of movements, not immune to episodes of inertia and regression. At its beginning, it is a call-to-action, a call to challenge the perceived stagnation and excesses of Neo-Classical styles in architecture, but, more importantly, to respond to changed and changing cultural, political, and social issues – largely the same issues of secularisation that religion faces. Late modernity – and, with it, emerging Modernism – undergoes another cycle of sacred and secular between-ness. Modernism (in architecture) parallels the modern liturgical movement (in Catholicism), with both viewed as 'counter Counter-Reformation' movements, and both significantly influencing religious architecture of the West. In 1906, it is a Protestant denomination that builds one of the first Modern churches: the Unity Temple in Oak Park, Illinois. Designed by Frank Lloyd Wright (a significant contributor to emergent Modernism in the US, even if antagonistic toward the later International Style), the temple prefigures eighteen modern churches and synagogues that he would design in the first six decades of the twentieth century. And, in 1923, Modernism makes one of its earliest appearances in the Catholic Church with the realisation of Auguste and Gustave Perret's design for the Église Notre-Dame du Raincy, which, although largely traditional in its liturgical configuration, nonetheless challenges artistic conservatism and presents a compelling contemporary alternative.²² The

²¹ This extension is argued more comprehensively in Chapter 7.

²² White, *Protestant Worship: Traditions in Transition*: 32-33.

momentum of reform movements – in both architecture and religion – increases after World War II and finds Christian and Jewish congregations amongst Modernism's most eager clients.²³

By that time, however, Modernism (never a single school of thought or style) has come to see one of its more avant-garde strains gain status as an emblem of the 'new', attain increasingly prominent commercial and institutional commissions, and emerge under the banner of the 'International Style'. Its proponents, as described by architectural historian Vincent Scully, would seek freedom from the "shackles of responsibility"; that is, from responsibility to either context or construction. "Buildings were to have no top, no bottom, no side, no up, no down – nothing that would read of construction, but rather of composition."²⁴ While Scully's assessment may be unfair in its generalisation, it does point to the fundamental one-size-fits-all approach of the 'style'²⁵; an approach for which it was named, of which it boasted, and in which lay its demise. The International Style would come to present the paradox of kenosis, but, at last, do so antithetically. Rather than evincing strength in the 'weakness' of self-emptying, its narrative would become a kind of parable in which fatal weakness stems from the claimed 'strength' of self-assertion (the assertion of universal responses to all situations). In the meantime, it presents a more radical and abrupt shift than that proposed by the earlier (original) iteration of Modernism. That iteration of Modernism acknowledges a need to open up to the others and other things of modernity's situation, even as it progresses architectural tradition. As such, I would argue that it is Modernism – at its origins – that best fulfils Benedikt's notion of a 'counter Counter-Reformation'. Clearly challenging the 'truths' of Classical (or Neo-Classical) precepts, the early iterations of Modernism do so without necessarily invalidating classic architectural attributes; those such as symmetry, permanence, and beauty, which are neither universal truths nor inherently and inevitably in conflict with any particular style or period, including those considered 'modern'.²⁶ Thus, to the changing

²³ The breadth of post-WWII modern church architecture, particularly in Europe but also in the US, can be seen in numerous publications, including E.D. Mills, *The Modern Church* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1956); G.E. Kidder Smith, *The New Churches of Europe* (New York, Chicago, San Francisco: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964); D.J. Bruggink and C.H. Droppers, *When Faith Takes Form* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1971); H. Schnell, *Twentieth Century Church Architecture in Germany: Documentation – Presentation – Interpretation*, trans. P.J. Dine (Munich and Zurich: Schnell & Steiner, 1974); Lindstrom, *Creativity and Contradiction: European Churches Since 1970*.

²⁴ Scully, "Louis I. Kahn and the Ruins of Rome," 4.

²⁵ In Modernism, of course, the term 'style' carries a significantly different meaning than during any period or movement before. 'Style' had previously been largely a prescription for the 'additive'; those features considered essential to include or add. But, in Modernism, the term becomes a prescription for the 'reductive'; that is, the omission or reduction of things – sometimes everything – that 'styles' had previously prescribed. Moreover, with a shift away from the decorative came a shift toward the functional, the latter itself becoming a 'style'. Nonetheless, 'style' in Modernism – just as in previous movements – remains prescriptive and a reflection of asserted 'truths'.

²⁶ It might be suggested that classical precepts *are* in conflict with a movement such as Deconstructivism, particularly if that movement is seen to assert only the 'truth' of the non-symmetrical, non-permanent, and, perhaps, the non-beautiful. But, I would argue that the essential precept of Deconstructivism – if it is not to be

situation of twentieth century modernity, initially-emergent Modernism can be seen as a kenotic response – self-emptying and opening, without loss of self-identity – especially in contrast to the subsequent development of Modernism’s so-called avant-garde, the International Style, a response asserting its own universalism.

Kahn is a product of the transition from Neo-Classicism to Modernism and navigates its between-ness. He is trained in “the order of the Beaux-Arts,” under architect and teacher Paul Cret,²⁷ who, notwithstanding Neo-Classical predispositions, is a significant figure in the early stages of Modernism. Kahn works in Cret’s office, a few years after graduating, where he engages in the “modern classic” or “stripped modern” projects, for which Cret had become known.²⁸ And, almost concurrently, Kahn witnesses the emergence of the International Style; an emergence that he cannot ignore – at least not initially.

... Kahn did his best to do this new light architecture, with thin columns and weightless walls of glass. He wasn’t bad at it, but he wasn’t exceptionally good at it either. And, he would not have become the Kahn we know had he continued to do it. He just didn’t feel it.²⁹

Well known is the fact that Kahn did not continue to do it,³⁰ yet it seems insufficient to ground such a drastic shift in mere lack of feeling. Is there something in Kahn’s ‘religious’ approach to creativity that leads to this conversion? A compelling explanation emerges out of a philosophical argument concerning the kenosis of divine incarnation. In that argument, Jesus is said to paradoxically possess “a limitation necessary for revealing that which is unlimited”; said limitation being attributed to “his capacity to share human suffering ... and his capacity to be genuinely tempted.”³¹ I would argue that these attributes – held to reveal divine creation – are also essential to human creation and arise out of kenosis. Human creativity is indeed elevated by a capacity to empathise with and attend to every element of a situation; indeed, to every element’s “desire to be, to

merely another ‘style’ – is to question and challenge all precepts (all asserted stylistic ‘truths’), not necessarily to forevermore invalidate the attributes that such precepts may espouse, nor to deny any possibility of their manifestation in any situation. If able to maintain that stance, Deconstructivism can be compatible with – even exemplary of – a kenotic approach to architecture. (I discuss a more self-assertive strain of Deconstructivism in Chapter 7, particularly in connection with Daniel Libeskind’s Jewish Museum Berlin.)

²⁷ Scully, “Louis I. Kahn and the Ruins of Rome,” 4.

²⁸ Ibid., 4-5. Chicago architect Lawrence Perkins (a contemporary of Kahn) notes that “there were stirrings of modernism in ... Paul Cret.” He was one of the “*enfants terribles* of that day, stirring and challenging the everlasting classic.” See L.B. Perkins and B.J. Blum, *Oral History of Lawrence Bradford Perkins*, Revised ed. (Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, (1986) 2000), 41 (author’s emphasis).

²⁹ Scully, “Louis I. Kahn and the Ruins of Rome,” 5.

³⁰ Others also discontinued doing it or, at least, moderated their doing of it. Despite the fanfare associated with his Villa Savoye (1929-31), which was, in many ways, a prototype of the International Style, Le Corbusier eventually “reassessed and altered” his own architectural vocabulary, distancing himself and his work from the analogy of building as machine. See Goldhagen, *Louis Kahn’s Situated Modernism*: 199.

³¹ P. Forrest, “The Incarnation: A Philosophical Case for Kenosis,” *Religious Studies* 36, no. 2 (2000): 134.

express.”³² Moreover, it is elevated by a capacity to be genuinely tempted, not least by the seductions of style. Empathy and attentiveness are hallmarks of kenosis, while temptability holds the power to recognise temptation for what it is and thereby distinguish attentiveness from exploitation – in a process that sees cognition initiate conversion. Arguably, such can be seen in the tension between Kahn’s temptation by stylistic machinations and his gradual rejection of the same; and therein is also a reflection of the modern condition. But such an argument is not meant to deify or further mystify Kahn. It is to suggest – contrary to any notions of divine inspiration or intervention – that Kahn awakens to the deceit of style through the celebration of human ‘limitation’; a form of self-emptying and something deeper than religiosity, wherein ‘limitation’ must again be seen as threshold or starting point. With that, seemingly ‘unlimited’ creative potential is invited to approach and reveal itself; as attentiveness is directed not to trend or fashion but to the situation and its ‘desires’.

By his recognition and rejection of stylistic temptation, Kahn frees himself. But his is not a call for freedom from responsibility, as was that of the avant-garde. Instead, he calls for a resurgence of responsibility, not least with regard to context and construction. He turns back to his beginning to find his end. He returns to the ‘order’ of his Beaux-Arts training, but confidently employs his own evolving vocabulary of stripped back, abstracted – or modern – forms, without apology for the evident inspiration of historical precedent. He stands amidst the tense between-ness of modernity and, in kenotic fashion, struggles with it. Ultimately – especially in his mature work – he can be seen to plead not for another new ‘movement’ but for a revival of what had already been begun. He pleads for a transformation toward a more modern, situationally-attentive architecture, which, like all transformations, is merely part of what had already always been underway: architecture’s ongoing kenosis, a whirling dance in which Kahn takes his steps. It is in that sense – not merely in its protestations against the “class-conscious bourgeoisie”³³ – that Modernism, particularly Kahn’s Modernism, can be said to be a religious-like movement. But the kenosis at work here is something more profound, something that transcends religion and architectural ‘-isms’, and something that can be seen instantiated in Kahn’s work.

KAHN AT THE SALK INSTITUTE

Late modernity’s tension between the sacred and the secular is simply another iteration of the between-ness that is fundamental to human being. Heidegger uses the term “manifold Between” (*vielfältige Zwischen*) to describe the world where humanity dwells “between earth and sky, between birth and death, between joy and pain, between work

³² This is another of Kahn’s descriptions of ‘Light’. See Lobell, *Between Silence and Light: Spirit in the Architecture of Louis I. Kahn*: 20.

³³ See note 14.

and word.”³⁴ Kahn likewise speaks of between-ness when he locates inspiration between silence and light, when he places humanity between knowledge and intuition, and when he envisages a meeting between the measurable (also light) and the unmeasurable (also silence).³⁵ But, for Kahn, it is not only inspiration and humanity that are found in this between-ness. His theory suggests that light is measurable, which, I would argue, is meant in the Heideggerian sense, wherein “measure taking” (*messen*) unconceals or makes known.³⁶ Of course, the scientific properties of light can be quantified, but light is unconcealed by shadow, the presence of which is made possible by things; things that are given their presence by light, and by which light is granted its shadow and, therefore, its presence. Shadow, then, joins humanity and inspiration between silence and light. And it is in this shadow that what Kahn calls “Order” can be found, not only the order of nature, but also the order of those things made in humanity’s conjunction with inspiration. Things humanly created in search of such order, including art and architecture, are offered sanctuary in this shadow. John Lobell frames this juncture as “the Order of the Shadow – what lies between idea and reality, between Silence and Light.”³⁷

I would suggest that kenosis can be seen as that which animates the movement between silence and light, between idea and reality. Where is human creativity to be found – particularly architecture – if not in that movement amidst between-ness? Architecture, then, can be expected to concretise kenosis. Just as Goethe calls architecture “frozen music,”³⁸ it may equally be said that architecture has the capacity to freeze the fluidity of kenosis; to instantiate kenosis in the creation of a building. Architecture, being always incomplete, sees change begin almost immediately upon completion of construction, and then continue – by virtue of weathering, alterations, and additions, if not eventual demolition. Nonetheless, the record of architectural creating, not least the concrete record provided by the building, unconceals evidence of kenosis in the movement from idea to reality, despite the reality that kenosis is always continuing.³⁹ Architecture offers a trove of such evidence, as discussed in this and the following three chapters. The work of Louis Kahn, however, offers perhaps the most efficacious

³⁴ M. Heidegger, “Hebel – Friend of the House,” in *Contemporary German Philosophy*, ed. D.E. Christensen (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1983), 93; translated from M. Heidegger, *Hebel - der Hausfreund* (Pfullingen: Günther Meske, 1957), 17.

³⁵ Lobell, *Between Silence and Light: Spirit in the Architecture of Louis I. Kahn*: 69. Kahn consistently uses the term ‘unmeasurable’, rather than the grammatically correct ‘immeasurable’. In the tradition of Kahn scholarship, I use his term unaltered.

³⁶ Heidegger, “... Poetically Man Dwells ...,” 221.

³⁷ Lobell, *Between Silence and Light: Spirit in the Architecture of Louis I. Kahn*: 70. Lobell’s equation of ‘idea’ and ‘reality’ with ‘Silence’ and ‘Light’, draws on a poem by T.S. Eliot, “The Hollow Men,” in which Eliot writes: “Between the idea / And the reality / Between the motion / And the Act / Falls the Shadow.”

³⁸ J.P. Eckermann, *Conversations with Goethe in the Last Years of His Life*, ed. G. Ripley, trans. S.M. Fuller, vol. IV, *Specimens of Foreign Standard Literature* (Boston: Hilliard, Gray, and Company, 1839), 282.

³⁹ The notion of lifecycle transformations in architecture is explored in T.F. Gieryn, “What Buildings Do,” *Theory and Society* 31, no. 1 (2002); and in S. Brand, *How Buildings Learn: What Happens After They’re Built*, Revised ed. (London: Phoenix Illustrated, 1997).

introduction, for reasons that have already begun to emerge in this chapter. And, amongst Kahn's oeuvre, there may be no better evidence of kenotic between-ness than that revealed by the inception, conception, and construction – the idea, shadow, and reality – of the Salk Institute at La Jolla, California.

Idea

Viewed kenotically, all architecture – not only Kahn's – emerges from what Kahn calls silence. More precisely, it emerges from the event in which 'silence' undergoes kenosis; that is, the event in which silence is emptied to create a domain in which ideas can emerge. Kenosis, in other words, opens-up a situation to which response, or at least the idea of responding, is possible (irrespective of need or implementation). Because the situation arises out of an opening-up, the situation mandates ideas for response that are open to the situation, that are attuned to situatedness and more than mere reaction. And, because it is ongoing, kenosis goes on opening-up the situation, presenting changed boundaries and shifted horizons that mandate openness to the evolvment and re-attuned ideas for responsiveness. There are, then, situations in which ideas for attuned response include architecture. In such cases, the *idea* of architectural response is, in itself, reciprocally kenotic toward the kenosis that originates and animates its emergence. Most often, however, an idea is only one in a continuous thread of ideas, each idea responding to ongoing changes in situatedness. When Jonas Salk gives voice to the specific idea of designing buildings to house a biological research institute and constructing them in La Jolla, California, it is a contingent idea that follows many other contingent ideas, including the idea of an institute at all. It is preceded by ideas (all of which were eventually rejected or ignored) that include locating the institute in Pennsylvania or another part of California, using temporary or existing facilities, and ensuring that the institute not be named for any living scientist, particularly its founder. It is followed by ideas that shape, and are shaped by, situational boundaries such as finance, administration, and aesthetics, each idea contributing its own situational change and thereby requiring a re-attuned response. Salk (ultimately with Kahn) is required to work out – that is, to *design* – responses to an indeterminate and contingent situation. The idea for the Salk Institute, as it eventually manifests in the early 1960s, emerges gradually out of Salk's continued openness to an evolving situation, a kind of kenotic vigilance.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ The story of the Salk Institute's inception is told, to some extent, in almost all accounts of the project. However, the most contemporary and non-architectural telling is from the perspective of a scientist who has worked at the institute and in the Kahn buildings since 1963, when "the Kahn building site was only a hole in the ground." See S. Bourgeois, *Genesis of the Salk Institute: The Epic of Its Founders* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013). Another valuable and non-architectural view is offered in S.W. Leslie, "'A Different Kind of Beauty': Scientific and Architectural Style in I.M. Pei's Mesa Laboratory and Louis Kahn's Salk

At the Salk Institute, as in most other situations, the idea of creating a building emanates not from an architect, but rather from one who may become an architect's client.⁴¹ Like most clients, Salk's idea is of place and relationality – more than it is of buildings – and is characteristically broad and open. He imagines a place where “birds can migrate and lay their eggs,” where people can “work in peace,” and where the mix of people includes not only scientists but also humanists, all of whom share a “deep understanding and feeling for the problems of each other, and for the problems of humanity.” He calls it “a shot in the light.”⁴² Citing what he views as the “key” to Salk's idea, Kahn recalls Salk saying that

... medical research does not belong entirely to medicine or the physical sciences. It belongs to population. He meant that anyone with a mind in the humanities, in science, or in art, could contribute to the mental environment of research, leading to discoveries in science.⁴³

Salk thus demonstrates – and Kahn recognises – a kenotic openness to others and other things, as well as to their creative potential; an openness that, ironically, the architectural profession is often criticised for overlooking, if not assertively resisting.⁴⁴ Amplifying this openness, Salk famously states that his idea for a research environment necessarily includes those attributes that would be able to attract, and extend hospitality to, a visit by Picasso. This is an idea to humanise science and, through its union with art and architecture,⁴⁵ to “merge intuition and reason.”⁴⁶ In its totality, Salk's idea is to create a place *of* and *for* kenosis (though never stated in those terms). Ultimately, he needs an architect with whom he relates and in whom his idea resonates.

Jonas Salk and Louis Kahn are consistently portrayed as kindred spirits, ambitious and open to the openness of their shared humanist principles.⁴⁷ But they approach such principles from their differing perspectives – science and art – and are therefore each other's other; Salk even being described as Kahn's “alter ego, a complementary opposite.”⁴⁸ Their first encounter can be seen as serendipitous, but is

Institute,” *Historical Studies in the Natural Sciences* 38, no. 2 (2008). Amongst many architectural accounts are E. Stoller and D.S. Friedman, *The Salk Institute*, ed. M. Lamster, Building Blocks (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999); and J. Steele, *Salk Institute: Louis I. Kahn*, Architecture in Detail (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1993).

⁴¹ Exercises such as urban planning present a possible exception, especially in cases where planners might be architects, or where architects are included on a planning team specifically charged with a task of ideation.

⁴² Leslie, “A Different Kind of Beauty”: Scientific and Architectural Style in I.M. Pei's Mesa Laboratory and Louis Kahn's Salk Institute,” 204-206.

⁴³ Steele, *Salk Institute: Louis I. Kahn*: at figs. 1-8.

⁴⁴ The subject of architecture's limited implementation of ‘participative’ design is discussed more fully in Chapter 7.

⁴⁵ Steele, *Salk Institute: Louis I. Kahn*: at figs. 1-8. Incidental to his Picassoan remark, Salk later married (in 1969) Françoise Gilot, a former muse of Pablo Picasso.

⁴⁶ Stoller and Friedman, *The Salk Institute*: 3.

⁴⁷ Various insights about the relationship can be gleaned from each account of the Salk Institute's inception and realisation. See note 40.

⁴⁸ Stoller and Friedman, *The Salk Institute*: 2.

primarily the result of Salk's openness to meet with an architect only made known to him by two friends. These friends had heard Kahn speak about his design for the University of Pennsylvania's Richards Medical Research Building (then under construction), at an event entitled "The Arts and the Artist and Society," a title already revealing the potential for Kahn's ideas to align with Salk's. Salk's commissioning of Kahn – without considering other candidates – is largely owing to Salk's willingness to look beyond his reservations about the Richards Building and remain open, instead, to its underlying idea, as well as to Kahn's apparent understanding of and openness to Salk's idea. Kahn's openness to the others of each situation is clearly indicated in his self-described approach to a new project:

"The exhilaration of getting the assignment of course makes you want to talk to people. You can't just sit back and merely wrap yourself up with yourself ... From talking to people you get a sense of their radar about this problem and from that a sense of beginning for yourself."⁴⁹

It can thus be seen that Kahn's espoused approach appears as kenotic as Salk's. Their ensuing relationship evinces volitional self-emptying and filling with the other, mutual exchange and influence, and permission to challenge the self-sufficiency of the other. Kahn's architecture tests Salk's ideas about research, and, in turn, Salk's philosophy tests Kahn's ideas about architecture, at times robustly.⁵⁰ The dynamic that develops between scientist and architect prefigures exactly that expected at the institute they are conceiving. Indeed, Salk describes their relationship as "more like partners" or "co-creators ... reliant on one another," and Kahn reciprocates, saying, "Dr Salk is just as much the designer as I am."⁵¹ But, true to its kenotic nature, this open exchange – this hybridisation of ideas – threatens neither the scientist's nor the architect's self-identity.

The domain of openness that arises in the kinship between Salk and Kahn does, however, present at least one threat with manifold ramifications. Contentment with openness can lessen the need for closure. As a result, Salk and Kahn are happy to ideate without the 'restrictions' of a program and, initially, without its interdependent counterpart, a budget.⁵² Both already existed – even if in unarticulated form – as two very real boundaries of the domain in which ideas were emerging. It is simply that, for quite

⁴⁹ Goldhagen, *Louis Kahn's Situated Modernism*: 13.

⁵⁰ One observer of such robust exchange – a Kahn employee – indicates that a "telephone conversation with Dr Salk was so upsetting that Mr Kahn was unable to work effectively for three days." Later, in another episode after construction had begun, Salk writes to Kahn in exasperation over missed deadlines and mounting costs: "I have been called to account by the Board of Trustees and others regarding the responsibility for the present demoralized state of the Institute building program. The seriousness of the situation demands the following. Stop." See Leslie, "'A Different Kind of Beauty': Scientific and Architectural Style in I.M. Pei's Mesa Laboratory and Louis Kahn's Salk Institute," 209-213.

⁵¹ M. Blackwood, "Louis Kahn: Silence and Light," (USA: Michael Blackwood Productions, 1995).

⁵² Most accounts confirm the absence of program, but the absence of its budgetary counterpart is also named in Bourgeois, *Genesis of the Salk Institute: The Epic of Its Founders*: 114.

some time, neither was attended to; the lack of articulation being the first evidence of inattention. Unattended boundaries breach the open domain, thereby curtailing the emergence and outpouring of ideas, especially ideas that are fully-responsive to the situation. Kenotic potential – the potential fluidity of movement between idea, shadow, and reality – is thus compromised. In the case of the Salk Institute, the breaches of unattended program and budget see the emergence of no less than three distinct planning and design proposals in three years (plus various iterations of their development), each full of ideas (many of the most fundamental carried over), but each only gradually attending to all of the situation's boundaries, particularly the two boundaries most notably ignored at the beginning. The same breaches also lead to the painful deferral of the residential and meeting house facilities (still unbuilt and likely to remain so); to the inability, for decades, to complete the south laboratory building; and to the corresponding financial implications, which burden the institute's formative years and remain today.⁵³ Although the need for successive design proposals can be seen to stem from the hindrance of kenosis, each proposal demonstrates the incremental rise of kenotic effect through ever-heightening attentiveness to situation. Viewed in its entirety, this evolvment of ideas effectively reveals an instantiation of kenosis – indeterminate and contingent, like the whirling dance it is.

Shadow

Conjoined with Kahn's hierarchical theory of creativity, kenosis can be seen, not only as that which animates the emptying of silence, its filling by inspiration, and the emergence of ideas, but also the movement from ideas toward the creation of things; things made present by the light that is made present by the shadows of those things. It is therefore in what Kahn calls the "ambience" of shadow – and the light to which shadow belongs – that humanity seeks order (including the order that is disorder) in its creation of things. In that ambience, the things of architecture are created and begin to become and, by virtue of light's shadow, begin to reveal their order. To Kahn, "our work" – human creativity and the things created thereby – "is of shadow."⁵⁴ Design is thus found in the realm of shadow; a realm between the realms of idea and reality, which, as Kahn suggests, are only portrayed as separate "for the convenience of argument."⁵⁵ The realm of between-ness offers a worthwhile vantage point from which to see kenosis concretised in design,

⁵³ Though a very real initial burden, the institute's high construction costs are generally seen as having been beneficial in the long-term. See Leslie, "'A Different Kind of Beauty': Scientific and Architectural Style in I.M. Pei's Mesa Laboratory and Louis Kahn's Salk Institute," 214; and Bourgeois, *Genesis of the Salk Institute: The Epic of Its Founders*: 114-119.

⁵⁴ C. Norberg-Schulz, *Architecture: Meaning and Place* (New York: Electa/Rizzoli, 1988), 203. Norberg-Schulz notes that Kahn "uses the word 'shadow' in connection with the concrete things of our world, as was done by Plato in his *Allegory of the Cave*."

⁵⁵ Lobell, *Between Silence and Light: Spirit in the Architecture of Louis I. Kahn*: 20.

and the Salk Institute, with its famous central courtyard, seems to embody that realm. Like all things, its order is destined to be revealed by the shadows it enables light to cast, but the order of this particular thing proves especially accommodating to their interplay – their kenotic dance – and therefore also to this discourse.⁵⁶

The heart of Salk is an open-ended central courtyard that divides two parallel wings, each lined along the inside face by five freestanding towers – the wings house laboratories; the towers, arcaded at the base, house private studies. In plan, labs and studies form two serrated bars that straddle the sun-baked courtyard. Standing at the entrance to this serene, open-air nave, ten thousand eyes have lifted cameras to cheekbones to record Kahn's perspective gift. A narrow ribbon of water pulls each lens due west along the courtyard's centreline, launching the viewer into a distant belt of ocean that joins the surface of the court to infinite space.⁵⁷

There may be no better evidence of kenosis frozen in architecture than that offered by the Salk Institute's central courtyard. True to kenotic paradox, however, it is not the building masses that manifest kenosis but the space between: the void, the emptiness, the *chora* that is a dance floor. There, in the between-ness of "Salk's extramundane space,"⁵⁸ this thing – this built environment – empties itself, simultaneously receives its others, and responds to the entirety of its situation. In Heideggerian terms, it gathers the fourfold of earth, sky, divinities, and mortals. Though worthy in their own right, the buildings in this courtyard are cast in a supporting role, yet, like shadow, remain essential to the unconcealment that results. It is similarly paradoxical, and evidential of kenosis, that this result owes more to Mexican architect Luis Barragán than it does to Kahn.⁵⁹ Long before the current courtyard is designed, Kahn and Salk consistently envisage a courtyard at the institute and conceive it as a garden cloister – a nostalgic reference to the monastic cloister at Assisi.⁶⁰ But it is Barragán, out of his own opening-up to the unique situation presented by *these buildings*, at *this location*, and in *this time*, who tells Kahn, "Don't put one leaf, nor plant, not one flower, nor dirt" in this

⁵⁶ Considerable scholarship, in both architectural and scientific communities, provides a comprehensive narrative of the project, including its various iterations and developments during the six years in which Salk and Kahn collaborated (1959-65), and its pre- and post-project history. For the purposes of this discourse, I focus only on the final design proposal and only on that portion of it that is finally realised; namely, the research laboratory complex.

⁵⁷ Stoller and Friedman, *The Salk Institute*: 1.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Barragán's participation is recorded in almost all accounts of the project. Amongst such accounts, there are slight discrepancies in each party's telling of the story (Barragán, Kahn, and Salk), including variations in the attribution of certain remarks. The substance of the story, however, is largely corroborated in each telling. See Leslie, "'A Different Kind of Beauty': Scientific and Architectural Style in I.M. Pei's Mesa Laboratory and Louis Kahn's Salk Institute," 214; Steele, *Salk Institute: Louis I. Kahn*: at figs. 19-22; and Stoller and Friedman, *The Salk Institute*: 8-10.

⁶⁰ Salk credits "the spaces, the play of light and shadow, the colours, and the very stones" of Assisi (particularly its monastery) with having "opened his eyes to new ways of producing his polio vaccine." See Leslie, "'A Different Kind of Beauty': Scientific and Architectural Style in I.M. Pei's Mesa Laboratory and Louis Kahn's Salk Institute," 208.

courtyard.⁶¹ Of course, it is Kahn who invites such advice by opening-up to and inviting Barragán's collaboration. It is Kahn and Salk who open-up and recognise that a stone courtyard floor actually becomes another of the project's "façades," one that "rises to the sky and unites the two."⁶² And it is Kahn and Salk who ultimately empty themselves of pre-conceptions, reject suggestions for "softening,"⁶³ and open-up to the other that lies in Barragán's idea. Thus, a garden transforms into an "oratory."⁶⁴ That the courtyard finally embodies kenosis is owing to an unfolding of kenotic events that give it presence; events that see light enable its shadows (see fig. 3.1).



FIGURE 3.1
The Salk Institute central courtyard, viewing west over the site's ravine to the Pacific Ocean.

Barragán's idea also awakens Kahn to an alternative view of the design's formality, not as two buildings and a courtyard, but as one larger totality whose centre is "hollowed out."⁶⁵ Such a view places greater emphasis on the thingness of the architecture – the boundedness of the thing's defining surfaces – and renders the whole

⁶¹ Steele, *Salk Institute: Louis I. Kahn*: at Figs. 19-22.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ After Barragán's proposal, Salk and Kahn consulted with landscape architect Lawrence Halprin, "who suggested several ways of 'softening Barragán's idea.'" Kahn ultimately rejected all such suggestions, with Salk's concurrence. See Leslie, "A Different Kind of Beauty: Scientific and Architectural Style in I.M. Pei's Mesa Laboratory and Louis Kahn's Salk Institute," 214; and Stoller and Friedman, *The Salk Institute*: 9.

⁶⁴ Stoller and Friedman, *The Salk Institute*: 9.

⁶⁵ Steele, *Salk Institute: Louis I. Kahn*: at Figs. 19-22.

thing a receptacle, capable of receiving and therefore of pouring-out.⁶⁶ Foremost, it is a receptacle of light, as evidenced by its cyclical filling with, and emptying of, shadow. In its reception, light – both solar and lunar – is registered as it marks “the passage of time, via constantly moving shadows cast by the angled side walls onto the travertine floor.”⁶⁷ And, by virtue of those angled walls, light is reflected back and forth between them, in a manner akin to the light of Kabbalistic zimzum, ricocheting across the empty, pre-creation matrix of divine withdrawal,⁶⁸ or kenosis. Hence, even as Kahn’s hollowed-out courtyard receives, registers, and reflects light – all kenotic attributes – light reciprocates, as it receives, registers, and reflects the courtyard in shadow. This courtyard is made to receive light, and is made by casting shadows. Light and the courtyard enjoy a kenotic relationship, each bettered by the other.

Proving the relationship kenotic is the fact that both light and courtyard are able to challenge the self-sufficiency of the other. At the most fundamental level, light challenges the courtyard (and the forms that define it) to make itself present without casting shadows, which it cannot do, especially in the absence of light. Light then challenges the courtyard to deal with light’s intensity, which threatens to shatter and break the order of this receptacle, much as it did in the Kabbalistic portrayal of the “Breaking of the Vessels” (see Chapter 2). Kahn’s design for the courtyard welcomes light but returns the challenge, putting “the sun on trial.”⁶⁹ In his famous paraphrase of Wallace Stevens, Kahn notes that “the sun never knew how great it was until it struck the side of a building.”⁷⁰ In essence, he challenges the sufficiency of the sun to prove its greatness without things to illuminate, and things to produce its shadow; things such as architecture. The Salk Institute and its courtyard generously grant sunlight – as well as moonlight and starlight – the knowledge of its greatness, even as they also preclude its triumphalism. Kahn goes on to challenge sunlight’s siblings – glare and heat – which emanate from the intentionally un-landscaped courtyard and threaten to infiltrate the buildings. He does so by wrapping walls around transparent portions of the laboratories, and by employing bespoke architectural louvres at other openings, effectively prosecuting “the law of light.”⁷¹ Thus, just as light is made known by shadow, it is Kahn’s design intent to see the

⁶⁶ Here, I use the terms ‘thing’ and ‘thingness’ in the Heideggerian sense. See Heidegger, “The Thing,” 163-180.

⁶⁷ Hermann, “On the Transcendent in Landscapes of Contemplation,” 44-46.

⁶⁸ From this feature arises the comparison of Kahn’s 1965 courtyard to Barnett Newman’s 1969 sculpture, *Zim Zum I*. See Gorlin, “Kabbalah and Architecture,” under headings, ‘Concepts of Kabbalah’ and ‘The Tsim-tsum and the Ray of Light’.

⁶⁹ Stoller and Friedman, *The Salk Institute*: 11.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Steele, *Salk Institute: Louis I. Kahn*: at Figs. 15-18.

desirable glimmer and warmth of the courtyard made known by the subjugation of glare and heat in the laboratories.⁷²

It might be said that the courtyard and light are engaged in 'dialogue', but the term understates kenotic relationality. Kenosis may include dialogue, but it is not mere dialogue, and this courtyard is responsible for more. As seen, it relates to light in various and mutual ways, but such engagement is not limited to light. In fact, this receptacle courtyard is the connection and confluence of all relationality at the Salk Institute, binding architecture with situation, and sometimes placing the two in tension. It is the latter that holds the project's intrigue. In addition to light, the courtyard receives the 'others' of its situation, including earth, ocean, sky, and the built forms that define its receptivity. Through its relationship with the earth, the courtyard gathers-in the site's deep ravine (with which it aligns), and, it is by way of that particular contraction or self-emptying of the earth that the courtyard enjoys an unearthly view – figuratively and literally. Gathering-in the hollowness of the natural ravine, the courtyard unconceals and pours out the emptiness of its own hollowness, granting the natural topography a mimetic and empathetic architectural extension. Not everything, however, is kenotically relational between this architecture and the earth that bears it. Extensive excavation and earthworks were required to accommodate the design, which – purportedly in the name of satisfying local height limitations – places the courtyard at natural grade level, while depressing each flanking laboratory building one level into the ground. The expansive rectangle of earth beneath the courtyard therefore had to be isolated and maintained – in a most unnatural way, using twenty-foot-high retaining walls – as substantial portions of earth all around it were removed. James Steele's account of the project attributes this to the "close relationship between building and ground,"⁷³ but it actually results from the opposite: a building design that wilfully resists the topography on which it rests and thereby exhibits less than complete responsiveness to the entirety of its situation. Nonetheless, there is a sense in which even such incongruity offers evidence of kenosis, insofar as it confirms the imperfect, incomplete, and contingent nature of kenotic events.

As a consequence of the relationship between courtyard and ravine, the courtyard comes into a unique relationship with the ocean, as if the earth relinquishes its right to the ocean's horizon and gifts it to the courtyard, alone. Galvanising this relationship is the courtyard's central channel of water, an extraordinarily narrow axis that nonetheless unites the courtyard with the vastness and seeming infinity of the ocean. Heinrich Hermann notes that this "'River of Life' ... seems to feed the ocean."⁷⁴ His observation is

⁷² The glare and heat in the courtyard, itself, is another matter. See note 83 and surrounding discussion.

⁷³ Steele, *Salk Institute: Louis I. Kahn*: captions at figs. 30-33.

⁷⁴ Hermann, "On the Transcendent in Landscapes of Contemplation," 42.

correct, but it is equally or more important that the ocean also seems to feed the channel and its surrounds. Ocean and channel appear to simultaneously empty into, and be filled by, the other. By way of this channel, the relationship between courtyard and ocean transcends mere view, mere gazing at the ocean – an activity facilitated at innumerable sites – and, instead, establishes mutuality and hybridisation. Neither the courtyard nor the ocean, however, suffers any loss of identity. Ocean remains vast and cosmic, while courtyard remains defined and human. It is, of course, an illusion. The bodies of water are not connected, but their visual relationship is a powerful symbol of the kenosis that is actually at work.

The courtyard's opening toward the ocean seamlessly joins its largest opening, that which opens toward the sky, and they become a single orifice. In like fashion, the ocean and sky often appear to join and be received, as one, by the one opening. The courtyard gathers-in all that the sky offers – sun, moon, stars, and ever-changing atmospheres – as well as that which the ocean reflects and enhances, or the horizon delimits; the latter marking the ocean's relationship with the sky. Such gathering-in opens-up a Heideggerian world between courtyard and sky, and offers a place where mortals can receive or contemplate the divine (regardless of how 'the divine' is interpreted). But, just as with earth, light, and ocean, the courtyard's relationship with sky goes beyond receptivity to include exchange. The opening that empties and gathers-in also pours-out. It is this opening that presents the courtyard's horizontal façade back to the sky and its shadows back to the sun and moon. And, it is this opening that presents the courtyard's human activity back to the sky. The floor of the courtyard becomes a kind of mirror in which mortals and 'divinities' reflect the presence of the other, and in which earth and sky do likewise.⁷⁵ Thus, the courtyard is a place designed to foster looking "within" and "without," for connecting the human to the cosmic.⁷⁶

Finally, the courtyard establishes the relationality of human activity in this place, not only the creative activity that formed the place, but also that for which the place was formed. Such human activity first creates and places, in a very particular relationship with the situation, the two architectural components by which the courtyard is given form, and by which the void and mass conjoin as one, thingly, hollowed-out receptacle. It is in this work of shadow – undertaken by Salk, Kahn, and all of their collaborators – that the architecture is enabled to appear, to enter into relationship, and, as a consequence of both, to become a place for becoming – essential to the always-incomplete and always-

⁷⁵ This is in reference to Heidegger's notion of "mirror play," wherein "each of the four[fold] mirrors in its own way the presence of the others." See Heidegger, "The Thing," 177.

⁷⁶ Kahn invokes this concept (though not directly in connection with the Salk Institute) in a kind of parable, used to conclude a 1969 lecture at Zurich. See Hermann, "On the Transcendent in Landscapes of Contemplation," 48.

becoming nature of science. In turn, the architecture places into relationship the scientific activities to be engaged therein – also the work of shadow. The resulting dynamic supports a view of buildings being at once “made and capable of making.”⁷⁷ From its centre – outward in the direction of the two buildings that define it – the courtyard establishes the relationality amongst places of interaction (courtyard), contemplation (private studies), and collaboration (laboratories), and thereby embodies Salk’s monastic model for scientific research. In so doing, the courtyard also reveals the kenotic relationship that exists between the hollow receptacle and its containing surrounds.

Despite dramatically different ontologies, the courtyard (human and social) and the laboratories (material and technical) open up to one another, even while demonstrating that neither is self-sufficient. And both share the same dynamic with the private studies (individual and isolationist). The three, together, form the institute’s plan, wherein “rooms relate to one another to strengthen their own unique nature” and thereby become what Kahn calls “a society of rooms.”⁷⁸ Beyond their societal interdependence, however, Heinrich Hermann describes the “interchangeability of what is ‘auditorium’ and what is ‘stage’” at this place.⁷⁹ He notes that when viewing from a lab into the courtyard, the lab is auditorium, and the courtyard is a stage for social performance; but, when viewing from the courtyard into a lab, the courtyard becomes auditorium, and the lab is a stage for technical performance (see figs. 3.2 and 3.3). Although insightful to that point, his analogy fails to include the elements that stand between the courtyard and the laboratories: the private study towers (see fig. 3.4). They are no less interchangeable. In effect, they are the auditorium’s box seats – in a “deliberately elitist” scientific forum⁸⁰ – from which to view, open-up to, and become immersed in, not only the courtyard’s human performances, but also those of the ocean and sky beyond; those seemingly unrelated things from which may emerge the highly pertinent. Conversely, when viewed from the courtyard, as elements of the stage set, the private studies signal the importance of solitary and unobserved performances, as well as the potentiality and actuality of the contributions those performances make. Such interchangeability is not necessarily of practical use since the “beholding and being beheld”⁸¹ are constantly ongoing, never fixed, and seldom consciously observed. Nonetheless, it characterises the nature of the society created by this institution’s plan. Interchangeability exemplifies mutual exchange and influence, an ability to partially become the other, and hybridisation – all evidence of

⁷⁷ Gieryn, “What Buildings Do,” 37. This is a notion that Gieryn credits to Nigel Thrift, but similar views have been expressed by others.

⁷⁸ L.I. Kahn, “The Room, The Street and Human Agreement,” *AIA Journal* 56, no. 3 (1971): 33.

⁷⁹ Hermann, “On the Transcendent in Landscapes of Contemplation,” 48.

⁸⁰ Leslie, “‘A Different Kind of Beauty’: Scientific and Architectural Style in I.M. Pei’s Mesa Laboratory and Louis Kahn’s Salk Institute,” 199.

⁸¹ Hermann, “On the Transcendent in Landscapes of Contemplation,” 48.

kenosis. Indeed, if the Salk's courtyard is an architectural manifestation of what poet Wallace Stevens sees as "the dumbfounding abyss between ourselves and the object, or between ourselves and the other selves,"⁸² then it is the project's kenosis that fills the abyss and animates the buoyant movement in its between-ness.



FIGURE 3.2
Above, the courtyard as 'stage', with laboratories and study towers as 'auditorium'.



FIGURE 3.3
Above right, the laboratories as 'stage' (despite the onset of unintended subdivisions and clutter), with the courtyard as 'auditorium'.



FIGURE 3.4
Right, the private study towers as 'props' on the courtyard-stage but 'box seats' in the courtyard-auditorium.

It would, however, be an injustice to kenosis – as well as to Kahn's design – to suggest that any project manifesting kenosis is, or could be, as idyllic as the Salk Institute is often portrayed to be, and as this discourse, without the following moderation, might be

⁸² This is a paraphrase of Stevens in H. Bloom, *Kabbalah and Criticism* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975), 109.

seen to support. The indeterminacy and contingency of kenosis is such that things created kenotically – even if approaching the “unmeasurable” of Kahn’s aspirations – can only be incomplete and imperfect. Despite the deliberateness and virtuosity of its architectural orchestration, the Salk’s design represents one working-out of the situation (actually, the third or more of such workings-out), and is not perfect. The intended relationality, which is so carefully designed into the architecture, remains susceptible to the unpredictability and uncertainty of human experience and reaction. For example, observations by scientist Suzanne Bourgeois, a researcher at the institute for more than fifty years, describe an experience of and reaction to the courtyard. She cites a particular contingency – that of the weather – as a primary source of the institute staff’s “love-hate relationship with Louis Kahn.”

On rainy and windy days ... the courtyard is slippery, and the wind can blow you away ... Yet when the sunshine returns and dries up the marble, much is forgiven. Our iconic courtyard ... is a nice site to visit and take pictures, but it is not a comfortable place for scientists to meet, sit, and talk. The glare, the hot afternoon sun, and the hard marble benches are not friendly. In fact, the courtyard stands empty most of the time ... Nonetheless, we love our courtyard and enjoy the shows that it offers. Kahn provided a dramatic stage for watching natural happenings – spectacular sunsets [and] the sun setting in line with the courtyard’s central canal twice a year on the equinoxes.⁸³

Her comments are largely corroborated by science historian Stuart Leslie, who goes on to describe other experiential imperfections of the design:

An architectural plan intended to encourage communication and contemplation could just as easily foster insulation and isolation ... Active fellows often turned their studies over to their postdocs ... preferring small offices in their laboratories that were closer to the action.⁸⁴

It must also be noted that the transparent laboratories, which Kahn and Salk intended as a symbol of openness and a practical enabler of inward and outward viewing, are now rendered virtually opaque by the subdivision of their perimeters as smaller labs, offices, and meeting rooms (see fig. 3.4). With such subdivisions come the consequent placement of bookcases (often full height), desks, and other furnishings against the glass envelope, as well as the attachment of posters, charts, and notices thereto.⁸⁵ There is virtually no remaining position from which Kahn’s vision of open lab space can any longer

⁸³ Bourgeois, *Genesis of the Salk Institute: The Epic of Its Founders*: 117.

⁸⁴ Leslie, “‘A Different Kind of Beauty’: Scientific and Architectural Style in I.M. Pei’s Mesa Laboratory and Louis Kahn’s Salk Institute,” 215-216.

⁸⁵ Leslie (quoting architectural critic Allan Temko) describes an even more chaotic atmosphere, one wherein those using the laboratories “appeared content with ‘happy squalor: books tumbling on floors, furniture pushed every which way, snacks on the laboratory tables and enormous sheets of aluminum foil (in a couple of cases, white paint) masking the big windows ...” See *ibid.*, 216.

be seen.⁸⁶ Yet all such clutter and dishevelledness is completely reversible. The openness in fact remains, even if temporarily impeded, and that is testimony to the design's kenotic capacity.

Notwithstanding imperfections, Bourgeois concludes that "our building gives us our identity"; the substance of its design "gives confidence that our research is equally substantial" and "attracts outstanding faculty and generous donors." She contends that the founders' endurance of design and construction hardships "paid off," since it is exactly that design and construction that provides the institute's "most valuable advantage today."⁸⁷ Importantly, Leslie adds that the institute has "survived and thrived ... by becoming a conventional academic laboratory in an unconventional building," the "inward-directed gaze of Kahn and Salk's monastic cloister" being replaced by "outreach and collaboration."⁸⁸ (However, the notion of one 'replacing' the other misses the point, already seen, that the institute is designed to be a place of looking *both* within and without.⁸⁹) Collectively, these observations convey an ambivalence – it might even be said, an *ebullient* ambivalence – that points to the ongoing indeterminacy and contingency affecting perception, use, and experience of the building, regardless of design intent. Rather than diminishing the argument for the Salk Institute's instantiation and concretisation of kenosis, the evidence of such imperfection and incompleteness only amplifies it. These are not design imperfections that result in failure, only in not-quite-complete success, because the architecture's performance is still unfolding. More importantly, these are not *contrived* imperfections, intentionally designed to represent and assert 'incompleteness' (which needs no assertion since it is already and always present). These are honest imperfections, arising out of creative human efforts that strive for perfection, even in the face of imperfection's inescapability. I would suggest that when Kahn situates design in 'shadow', he recognises precisely such inescapability. Shadow is never fully light, but it is inextricably the product of light, light that is always becoming. And it is light's becoming – light's kenosis – that moves it toward reality.

⁸⁶ Such was the case during a private tour of the institute on 14 November, 2013, and, according to the docent, is a situation that has existed for quite some time.

⁸⁷ Bourgeois, *Genesis of the Salk Institute: The Epic of Its Founders*: 118. Additionally, it is worth noting that Warren Weaver, amongst the first Fellows of the institute, wrote a 1963 letter to other Fellows acknowledging the difficulties being experienced in connection with design and construction. Therein, he stated that Kahn "is extremely talented, very widely known and appreciated, sensitively aware of the unusual nature of this enterprise, devoted to designing a building that will be serviceable both to the scientific function and to the broader intellectual and aesthetic purposes of the Institute – but something of a dreamer who is bored by time schedules, who loves to keep thinking of new and better ideas, and who is therefore very hard to pin down to the calendar." He then goes on to speculate on the long-term potential of enduring: "We are paying a price – namely a disappointingly slow start – for the architectural beauty and for the functional convenience which, over the long haul, will certainly justify the price." See Leslie, "'A Different Kind of Beauty': Scientific and Architectural Style in I.M. Pei's Mesa Laboratory and Louis Kahn's Salk Institute," 213-214.

⁸⁸ Leslie, "'A Different Kind of Beauty': Scientific and Architectural Style in I.M. Pei's Mesa Laboratory and Louis Kahn's Salk Institute," 217.

⁸⁹ See note 76.

Reality

As light, or *idea*, emerges from silence in the work of *shadow* – the work by which those things that cast light's shadow are created – Kahn envisages “a wild dance of flame that settles and spends itself into material.”⁹⁰ Idea thus becomes *reality*. In fact, he sees all the matter of reality – mountains, streams, atmosphere, and humankind – as “spent light,”⁹¹ and all human creation (that which enables appearance, and which Kahn refers to as art) as the “making of a life,” where making is synonymous with “design.”⁹² Extending the analogy, it follows that architecture is threefold spent light: first in its materiality, second in its creators, who materialise it, and, third, in those others and other things that are receiving and being received by its materialisation. The term ‘spent’, however, is not to be interpreted as exhaustion or consumption but, rather, as evidence of always-underway *becoming*, which might also be described as *being kenotically*. Kahn's light becomes material, but it is a temporal condition – a frozenness – not one of finality or demise. By means of cosmic, evolutionary, and human creation, light goes on becoming material reality, even its spent form ultimately becoming light again, and again becoming spent. The act of designing, or the making of art – ‘the making of a life’ – is the same. It is always underway and never finished, just like the situations to which such designing responds. Design and situation empty themselves, each to the other, hybridising and partially becoming the other, even as that precipitates a changing of the situation's boundaries and horizons, and a consequent need for further designing.

In another view of light (or idea) and reality, Kahn sees the reality of structure as “the giver of light,”⁹³ but Kahn is no structuralist. Structuring is the ordering of the thing, which will order the light that gives the thing its presence. The design of the structure and its materiality (the thing) will determine the shadow it casts and, therefore, the light that will be presenced by it.⁹⁴ An interdependent and kenotic relationship exists between light and structure, and the designed structuring of the Salk Institute reflects exactly that. Kahn's choices of structural elements and materiality are made for the sake of light, which is to say, for the sake of realising the idea. From the beginning, that idea anticipated the realisation of a building that could become, even as would the science conducted therein; a building that could seamlessly relate the art and science of architecture, just as Salk intended the institute to relate science with the arts and humanities. In its reality, the Salk's architecture sees structure, materials, and construction systems incorporated into

⁹⁰ Lobell, *Between Silence and Light: Spirit in the Architecture of Louis I. Kahn*: 20.

⁹¹ Burton, “Notes from Volume Zero: Louis Kahn and the Language of God,” 72.

⁹² Norberg-Schulz, *Architecture: Meaning and Place*: 203.

⁹³ Lobell, *Between Silence and Light: Spirit in the Architecture of Louis I. Kahn*: 34.

⁹⁴ According to Kahn, “the choice that you make of the element of structure should be also the choice of the character of light that you may want,” and that places structure and materiality in a fundamental relationship with light. See Norberg-Schulz, *Architecture: Meaning and Place*: 205.

the relationality already established by its idea, an incorporation that expands the building's capacity to become; that is, to be kenotic.

Aside from its ever-changing, always-becoming courtyard, two features of the institute's structuring and materiality are – in reality – most responsible for its capacity to become. They are inseparably related to the institute's idea and to each other. They arise out of a kenotic approach to research and result in a kenotic approach to architecture. Salk envisages a research program opened-up to the startling nature of discovering the others and other things that might disturb, disrupt, discontinue, or otherwise alter existing and planned pursuits. This, coupled with his interdisciplinary aspirations, demonstrates not just an openness toward but also a craving for such discoveries. Kahn responds with the idea of expansive, column-free laboratories that provide an unconventionally high degree of practical, spatial flexibility. But spatial flexibility is not enough. To be effective, it must be accompanied by equal flexibility in the delivery of services to what is conceived to be an always-changeable laboratory configuration. In consultation with structural engineer, August Komendant, Kahn achieves the desired flexibility in space configuration and service delivery by spanning each of three laboratory levels, in both buildings, with Vierendeel trusses of reinforced concrete.⁹⁵ The desired clear span necessitates trusses that are approximately nine feet deep (2.7 metres) – essentially a full storey – which provides unusually generous interstitial space, not only for services, but also for the movement of personnel as services are altered and delivered to new entry points in the laboratories' ceilings. Thus, while three floors of laboratories effectively require six floors of building, the scheme offers utmost flexibility, which, in turn, enables an extraordinary capacity to open-up to the others and other things that research presents.⁹⁶

The scheme also realises, in vivid form, Kahn's long-explored concept of "served" and "servant" spaces,⁹⁷ his full storey over each lab being the ultimate servant space, in this case laid horizontally. Kahn, the architect, simply states that "one serves the body, and one is the body itself." But, being the scientist, Salk finds a biological analogy for the

⁹⁵ Vierendeel trusses include only vertical web members to support top and bottom horizontal chords, thereby omitting the diagonals that are usually essential to truss strength. They therefore offer easier movement of systems and personnel through them. However, the use of such trusses at the Salk Institute, particularly in concrete, was of concern to San Diego building officials, who demanded engineering proof that such a system would adequately resist seismic forces. Komendant was able to demonstrate that the proposed system would not only meet requirements but do so more effectively than a comparable steel structure. See Steele, *Salk Institute: Louis I. Kahn*: at Figs. 36-37; and Stoller and Friedman, *The Salk Institute*: 6.

⁹⁶ To those at the institute, this flexibility is also seen as a recruitment asset, with researchers attracted to the notion of "being given an empty space in which they can design their own new lab." Serendipitously, with deferral of the originally planned Meeting House, the same flexibility allowed the initially-unfinished south building to serve as the institute's temporary recreation and conference centre until 1996, when the south building was finally completed, and a new east building (not of Kahn's plan or design) was constructed to house administrative and meeting functions. See Bourgeois, *Genesis of the Salk Institute: The Epic of Its Founders*: 116-118.

⁹⁷ Goldhagen, *Louis Kahn's Situated Modernism*: 106-107.

interstitial space, calling it the “mesenchyme,”⁹⁸ and describes the relationship between served and servant spaces in physiological terms, with “the laboratories and studies carrying the cerebral function; the service spaces carrying arteries, veins, and nervous system; the mechanical [spaces] acting as the respiratory system, etc., each integral.”⁹⁹ Accordingly, each laboratory is “like a living organism ... capable of differentiation in response to evolving needs.”¹⁰⁰ Salk’s physiological conclusion reveals an important instantiation of kenosis, not only in the idea and design of the institute, but in its reality. It is a building so receptive to an evolving or changing situation that it can transform its body and systems accordingly. This ability to transform is a proven and ongoing actuality, allowing “the in-house building crew [to] reconfigure labs almost at will, while causing only minor disruption,” but at the same time making reconfiguration so easy that “construction never stops.”¹⁰¹ While it is true that most buildings are “unendingly renovated into something they were not originally,”¹⁰² it is the reality of the Salk Institute that structure and systems provide the architecture with an ability to preserve its self-identity, even amidst significant change and transformation.

It is not, however, structural or mechanical systems that attract Kahn’s attention. It is the structuring of the design and the realisation of the idea that motivate him. In fact, he makes very clear the place of mechanical systems in that structuring and realisation:

I do not like ducts; I do not like pipes. I hate them really thoroughly, but because I hate them so thoroughly, I feel they have to be given their place. If I just hated them and took no care, I think they would invade the building and completely destroy it.¹⁰³

Kahn’s approach to this matter reveals another kenotic instantiation. Ducts and pipes are the other, or other things, when it comes to his architecture. At the Salk, he and his building design are obviously open to them. He empties himself to the realities of mechanical and structural engineering, and, in turn, his building empties itself to receive the requisite ducts and pipes, even to the point of employing unique and costly structural engineering solutions to do so. Importantly, however, both he and the building do their emptying with a healthy sense of caution and reluctance. The receptivity of kenosis is not necessarily based on an a priori love for the other. In fact, kenosis may require the overcoming of a perceived sense of indifference or hatred, in the recognition that

⁹⁸ Bourgeois, *Genesis of the Salk Institute: The Epic of Its Founders*: 118.

⁹⁹ E. McCoy, “Dr Salk Talks About His Institute,” *Architectural Forum* 127, no. 5 (1967): 27.

¹⁰⁰ Leslie, “‘A Different Kind of Beauty’: Scientific and Architectural Style in I.M. Pei’s Mesa Laboratory and Louis Kahn’s Salk Institute,” 211.

¹⁰¹ Bourgeois, *Genesis of the Salk Institute: The Epic of Its Founders*: 118.

¹⁰² Gieryn, “What Buildings Do,” 35.

¹⁰³ Steele, *Salk Institute: Louis I. Kahn*: at figs. 38-41. Like many designers, Kahn was often seen as an “impractical dreamer,” allegedly oblivious to concerns about technicalities such as structural and mechanical systems. His work at the Salk Institute, as well as at many other projects, challenges that view, and Kahn’s words provide important perspective.

heightened attentiveness toward the other may reveal what a given situation calls for, and may be what fosters the other's reciprocal response. Without using the language of kenosis, Kahn nonetheless demonstrates an appreciation for its underlying principle; namely, that to be attentive to the other is to self-empty but also to self-strengthen, and to ignore or resist the other, or to merely feign attention thereto, is to self-destruct – even when the other is nothing more than a pipe or duct.

The other might also be something as humble, utilitarian, and – to some eyes – undesirable as concrete. At the Salk Institute, concrete 'freezes' kenosis in two significant ways, first as the project's materiality. When 'light settles' in this project, it spends itself into the materiality of cast-in-place concrete. Perhaps Kahn or Salk, or both, might have preferred marble or stone, given the inspiration they derived from the monastery at Assisi. (Kahn would eventually choose travertine for the floor of the courtyard, when slate was ruled out due to higher cost.¹⁰⁴) But, when the situation presents its complex boundaries – including those of structure, mechanical systems, time, and budget – both architect and scientist open themselves to what can be seen as the situation's calling for concrete. Kahn and Salk open up to the material, but not without challenging it and one another. For Salk's part, he insists that Kahn achieve a finish that looks "warm and alive," something like "man-made marble."¹⁰⁵ For Kahn's part, concrete is nothing new in structural terms, but he recognises a need to reacquaint himself with the material that, here, would also be the project's most visible finish. Kahn is famously known for his conversation with brick: "I asked the brick what it liked, and the brick said, 'I like an arch.'"¹⁰⁶ In that fabulation, Kahn is effectively emptying himself to brick, and when he does likewise to concrete, he concludes that "concrete really wants to be granite."¹⁰⁷ He therefore approaches concrete with the respect that might otherwise be reserved for granite, paying extraordinary attention to the mix, the forms, and the joints, all of which record the very nature of the material and its use. Salk joins Kahn in honouring this unexpected 'other' material, fastidiously inspecting and often rejecting test panels, not to impugn the concrete, but to say that there is more of the material's full potential to be unconcealed.

It is in its nature and potential that concrete reveals a second instantiation of kenosis. Concrete, in a sense, *is* kenotic. It transcends the standard attribute of most building materials; that is, their capacities to be harvested, fabricated, and assembled. In its initial plasticity, concrete is open to be transformed. It is able to partially become the

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., at Figs. 42-43.

¹⁰⁵ Stoller and Friedman, *The Salk Institute*: 7.

¹⁰⁶ Burton, "Notes from Volume Zero: Louis Kahn and the Language of God," 8.

¹⁰⁷ Leslie, "'A Different Kind of Beauty': Scientific and Architectural Style in I.M. Pei's Mesa Laboratory and Louis Kahn's Salk Institute," 212.

other and other things that its situation calls for, manifested most obviously in the formwork that defines its shape and shadows. Its expression requires the emptying and filling of those containers that grant its formal identity. And, when rigidity replaces plasticity, those containers pour-out the emergent thing. Throughout its existence, that thing reflects an image of its parental containers, which in the case of the Salk Institute, is a reflection of the formwork that Kahn eventually specified: “exterior plywood, filled and sanded, and finished with coats of catalysed polyurethane resin.”¹⁰⁸ All of those materials – the concrete’s others – become physically absent with removal of the formwork, yet are still and always present in the concrete. The emergent thing also reflects an image of its creators, and the degree of openness and attentiveness with which they approach its creation. Concrete pleads for attunement to its between-ness, that which happens between forms (tie rods and their residual holes), between pours (control joints), and between panels (construction joints). At the Salk, it is said that “Kahn’s seams ‘polish’ the wall.”¹⁰⁹ Clearly, if concrete really wants to be granite (or be deployed as worthily), its becoming of that is dependent on the transformation occurring through mutual exchange and influence with all of its others. Yet, despite such transformation, and an inextricable relationship with its forms and forming, concrete retains its self-identity and goes on challenging its perceivers to remain open – receptive – to the qualities of its character. Thus, in response to a kenotic approach to its creation, concrete responds reciprocally. Then it asks the same of those to whom it becomes the other. And, true to its kenotic attributes, it spans the between-ness of the secular and the sacred. It is a secular material (not synthetic, but nonetheless a human manufacture), which, according to Kahn, wants to become something sacred – and, when approached with reverence, does (see figs. 3.5 and 3.6).

At the Salk Institute, concrete – formed by containers – takes form as a container; that is, as a receptacle that receives and grants presence to others and other things. It does so by becoming the containing elements of the courtyard, studies, and laboratories. Its transformation to rigid form seemingly suggests permanence and a new-found unwillingness to transform further. Yet, even though the columns, trusses, and walls of concrete are necessarily stable and require major construction to alter, they remain open to the other things to which they are related, including especially space and services. These strong, fixed concrete elements are central to the institute’s relationality, and prove to be the enablers of the institute’s always-becoming – its high degree of physical changeability in response to changing research. The institute’s capacity for openness, to science and interdisciplinary collaboration, is made possible by this realisation of design

¹⁰⁸ Steele, *Salk Institute: Louis I. Kahn: at Figs. 27-29.*

¹⁰⁹ Stoller and Friedman, *The Salk Institute: 7.*

in concrete. Inherently kenotic concrete, approached kenotically by its shapers, is key to the kenotic nature of the architecture it defines and, thereby, to the kenotic nature of the institution's reality. Arguably, that is why it may be said that concrete – a specific and particular ordering of concrete – is what the situation of the Salk Institute seems to have called for, and what now equips it to respond to shifting boundaries and horizons. Such ability to respond has “ensured longevity in an endeavour increasingly fraught with the risk of renovation or demolition.”¹¹⁰ The spent light that is concrete – its humble and ‘measurable’ nature nonetheless able to conjure the ‘unmeasurable’ – has proven to embody the project's complex relationality and instantiate its kenosis.



FIGURE 3.5
The Salk Institute's 'cloister' juxtaposes the courtyard's travertine floor and Kahn's concrete structure.

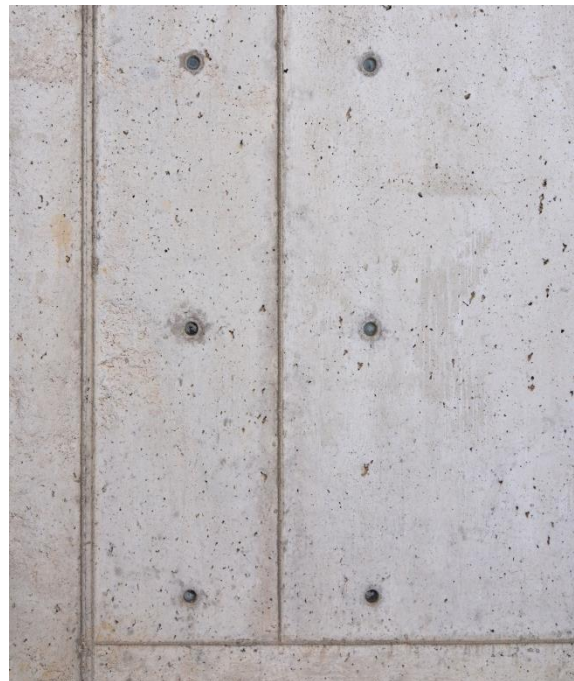


FIGURE 3.6
Detail of the concrete exterior showing finish and expressed methods of construction.

KAHN ASCRIBED

Owing to what is often seen as cryptic language and the supposed mystery it creates, Louis Kahn's espousals and oeuvre – both separately and together – have been exhaustively analysed, each analysis seeming to search for another label to ascribe to the architect or his 'style'. Various analysts label Kahn as a mystic, romantic idealist, essentialist, and social or political activist. His 'mature' work is variously located in the stylistic categories of Modernism, Late Modernism, High Modernism, Heroic Modernism –

¹¹⁰ Steele, *Salk Institute: Louis I. Kahn*: at Figs. 42-43.

even emergent Post-Modernism – and, more recently, Situated Modernism.¹¹¹ Embedded in each analysis are astute and accurate observations, but, as I attempt to argue, none are sufficient. Somewhat more satisfying, architect Steven Holl manages to avoid labels by describing Kahn's work as transcending time, spanning between "archaic and modern times," and therefore able to "cut through the problem of styles."¹¹² Holl echoes Kahn's own espousal of a 'timeless' architecture, meaning an architecture free from the temporal trappings of style.¹¹³ The futility of labelling and categorising is made obvious by the proliferation and impermanence of the labels and categories ascribed, and that tends to render Holl's observation the most perceptive. But, like the labels and categories he avoids, Holl's view falls short of explaining how, or by what, Kahn's work is made transcendent and immune to stylistic labelling. Absent such explanation, ascribed immunity is deficient. Hence, while additional labels and categories are unwarranted, the pursuit of an explanation for the superfluosity of existing ones is essential. An examination of the major attributes ascribed to Kahn strips them of their contradictions and instead reveals their commonality.

Mystic

According to D.S. Friedman, Kahn was "an architect, not a mystic," ultimately more interested in building architecture than espousing its mystical qualities, though he enjoyed both.¹¹⁴ Yet, mysticism and mystical qualities are amongst the most frequent ascriptions made to Kahn's approach and work. As seen in the first section of this chapter, there is a case to be made for the religiosity – the zeal and, perhaps, mystery – of Modernism, not least Kahn's Modernism. Augmenting that case, Michael Benedikt observes that "Kahn was an architect happy to stand at the gates of Mystery," whose "humanism was religious, not secular." According to Benedikt, it is Kahn's work in India that sees him influenced by the Hindu god – or, rather, an aspect of such god – called *Shiva*, whose dance animates the Universe, whose depiction "gives equal weight to both creation and destruction as necessary for purification," and who Benedikt likens to Dionysus, the God of Creative Ecstasy.¹¹⁵ More specific alignment with mysticism, however, is seen as Benedikt joins Joseph Burton to unravel Kahn's familiarity with Jewish mysticism, including the Kabbalah (discussed earlier in this chapter and, more fully, in Chapter 2).¹¹⁶

¹¹¹ To distinguish Kahn's earlier attempts at Modernism, those in the 1930s and '40s, the term 'mature' is often applied to his later work, that emerging in the early 1950s and continuing until his death.

¹¹² Blackwood, "Louis Kahn: Silence and Light."

¹¹³ Steele, *Salk Institute: Louis I. Kahn*: at Figs. 42-43. Here, Steele elaborates on this notion, writing that "Kahn frequently spoke of a 'timeless' architecture, and of discovering 'what has always been, and what will always be'. His diverse historical interests, from Roman engineering techniques to Scottish castles, were all related to this idea of enduring institutions, and durable transcendent forms that were above whim and fancy."

¹¹⁴ Stoller and Friedman, *The Salk Institute*: 10.

¹¹⁵ Benedikt, "Shiva, Luria, Kahn," 34-35.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 37; and Burton, "Notes from Volume Zero: Louis Kahn and the Language of God," 70.

It is through this familiarity that Kahn would have been acquainted with the concept of zimzum. Kahn, himself, told colleague William Huff a story of his mystical background, explaining that

... his maternal grandfather, Abraham Mendelssohn, was a 'famous,' well-beloved Jewish mystic and spiritual healer in Riga. Kahn reported that the entire city of Riga, Christian and Jew alike, had expressed their esteem for his mystic grandfather ... He also told Huff, as well as Anne Griswold Tyng,¹¹⁷ that in Philadelphia, his mother was considered the neighborhood counselor and 'wise woman.' ...Kahn said his mother had received a 'healing secret' from her father [Mendelssohn] at his deathbed, which was to be revealed to Kahn on her own deathbed. Unfortunately, Kahn arrived in California from the East Coast one hour after his mother's passing in 1958, never learning this promised secret.¹¹⁸

Mysticism is also seen in Kahn's projects. Architect Alexander Gorlin points to direct Kabbalistic references in Kahn's plan for the Mikveh Israel synagogue, as well as various other indirect references in his designs for the Hurva Synagogue in Jerusalem and the Holocaust Memorial for New York.¹¹⁹ Certainly, such evidence may be ascribed as mysticism, but such would only name a possible signifier of Kahn's capacity to transcend style, not identify its cause or source. Kahn's mysticism (to whatever extent it existed) and his ability to avoid stylistic labels are separate attributes, and neither is *prima-facie* evidence of the other. Of interest, then, is that which links Kahn's mystical proclivities to his creativity and creative outcomes.

Unconvinced of Kahn's mysticism is architectural historian Sarah Goldhagen, who, like Friedman, dismisses the notion that Kahn was a "mystical thinker." She sees that as a creation of Kahn's own making, a particular "vision of his agenda" that he "retroactively" encouraged "toward the end of his life, when under the influence of spiritually minded architects, mostly from the Indian subcontinent." She argues that Kahn intentionally "laid this imaginative, otherworldly language on top of a 'this-worldly' architectural vocabulary that had decidedly non-transcendental origins and intentions."¹²⁰ Hers appears as a surprising, if not pathetic, portrait: a declining man, easily affected, conniving to shape his legacy. As in the case of arguments *for* Kahn's mysticism, Goldhagen's arguments *against* may be correct, even while also being insufficient. Although his espousals may appear to become more mystical as Kahn ages, perhaps even by conscious intent, it is clear that the influence of mysticism and mystical thinking originated in his childhood and appeared in events well before his work in India – and well before the end of his life. Moreover, while Kahn's architectural vocabulary may have had

¹¹⁷ Tyng began as an employee at Kahn's office, but went on to become a partner. In 1954, she and Kahn had a daughter, Alexandra Tyng.

¹¹⁸ Burton, "Notes from Volume Zero: Louis Kahn and the Language of God," 70.

¹¹⁹ Gorlin, "Kabbalah and Architecture," under heading, 'The Tsim-tsum and the Ray of Light'. (All of the mentioned projects are unbuilt.)

¹²⁰ Goldhagen, *Louis Kahn's Situated Modernism*: 2.

non-transcendental origins and intentions, that does not unavoidably exclude the possibility of so-called otherworldly inspiration playing a part in the development of a design vocabulary that proves to be prudent and practical – indeed, even political – in this world. The very notion of the transcendental is embedded in the non-transcendental, the two being as interdependent as Kahn's own light and shadow. Of greater concern is the nature of the embeddedness.

Romantic Idealist

Closely related to Kahn's purported mysticism is the ascription of romantic idealism. In fact, Burton conjoins the two as "romantic mysticism," crediting the origins of Kahn's philosophical and aesthetic thought to Kahn's mother, Bertha Kahn (née Mendelssohn), who serves as her son's "tutor and guide into a Romantic world view, based largely upon German literary sources." Such a narrative is strengthened, not only by Bertha's relation to German Romantic composer Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847) and his grandfather Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786), a Jewish philosopher of the German Enlightenment, but also by Bertha's literary interest in authors including Schiller, Nietzsche, and especially Goethe. Kahn's wife, Esther, describes Bertha as "an expert on Goethe," and Kahn, himself, acknowledges that his mother "raised him on Goethe." Accordingly, Kahn is seen to have become acquainted with, and influenced by, the Neo-Platonic thought and philosophical principles that formed the idealistic and mystical visions of German Romanticism.¹²¹ Such influence presents little conflict with Kahn's eventual Beaux-Arts education and its emphasis on "clear order." It is that training which Kahn is said to have lost (or denied) as he flirted with avant-garde Modernism, but which reawakens in his early 1950s travels to Italy, Greece, and Egypt.¹²² And in the romantic idealist view of Kahn's story, his transcendent 'style' – or, more accurately, his style-defiant approach to creativity – is seen to emerge from that reawakening.

Amongst those who espouse a romantic idealist view (including aspects of mysticism) is architectural historian Vincent Scully, not only a colleague of Kahn's at Yale University, but also an admitted admirer. Scully emphatically rejects attempts by Neo-Modernists to distort the romantic idealist view into a portrayal of Kahn as "hero architect, once more shaping the world anew," because, according to Scully, that was "not the way it went."¹²³ Even while insisting on Kahn's attraction to Modernist abstraction and his determination to avoid the literal quotation of historic forms, he unequivocally describes Kahn as "an idealist and, indeed, a Romantic Classic architect." He contends that Kahn tries "to revive architecture by going back and starting with the ruins of Rome," searching

¹²¹ Burton, "Notes from Volume Zero: Louis Kahn and the Language of God," 69-70.

¹²² Scully, "Louis I. Kahn and the Ruins of Rome," 4-6.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 4.

for “fundamentally sublime effects” that deal with “the awesome and the unfinished, the primitive and the frightening,” as featured in Piranesi’s prints of the Roman ruins.¹²⁴ He points to Kahn’s early 1950s drawings of Italian towns, in which he locates the emergence of Kahn’s approach, an approach that defies style. In particular, he refers to a pastel of the Piazza del Campo in Siena:

[Kahn] makes it curiously timeless by taking out all the elements – windows, doors, people – that tell you scale or time or use. Everything is dissolved in one great bath of red shadow, which then floods down over the Campo. This is exactly what he’ll later come to build – an architecture where all time and scale elements are eliminated.¹²⁵

Scully’s is a compelling interpretation by an eyewitness to the events, yet even it falls short of explaining how, or by what, Kahn might have come to this weakening dissolution that produces such creative strength – or how one could possibly result in the other. Nor does Goldhagen’s dismissal of Scully’s view offer such insight. She points to Kahn’s exploration of abstraction as evidence that there was no reawakening of Classical sensibilities.¹²⁶ However, as the Scully view demonstrates, the two are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, the openness of Scully’s argument reveals the closedness of Goldhagen’s. She argues that the development of Kahn’s vocabulary is complex, but, in dismissing the role and influence of romantic idealism – incorrectly equating it to heroicism, despite Scully’s explicit assertions to the contrary – she dismisses a significant and abstract dimension of complexity, and forfeits the opportunity to explore its nature.

Essentialist

Taking up another view of Kahn’s approach is architectural theorist Christian Norberg-Schulz, who uses the philosophy of Martin Heidegger – characterised by some as romantic, mystic, and nostalgic¹²⁷ – to extrapolate or extend Kahn’s fragmentary, but not incoherent, aesthetic theories. According to Norberg-Schulz, “Kahn’s famous question, ‘What does the building want to be?’ ... suggests that buildings possess an *essence* which determines the solution” to their design, or more precisely, “an *order* which precedes design.”¹²⁸ The notion of pre-existing essence appears underscored in Kahn’s musings about the definition of art: “What *is* has always been. What *was* has always

¹²⁴ Ibid., 10.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 5-6.

¹²⁶ Goldhagen, *Louis Kahn's Situated Modernism*: 3, 205.

¹²⁷ A. Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects*, ed. Adam Sharr, Thinkers for Architects (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 3. Sharr sees “unapologetic mysticism” and a “tendency to nostalgia” as “distinctive characteristics” of Heidegger’s work. He cites “the potential for romantic myths of belonging to exclude people as well as include them,” as one of the “dangers of the *milieu* of Heidegger’s thinking.” Although not an uncommon view, it is also not without those who refute it. See J. Malpas, “Rethinking Dwelling: Heidegger and the Question of Place,” (Lecture given at the University of Auckland, School of Architecture, Auckland, NZ, 16 May, 2012).

¹²⁸ Norberg-Schulz, *Architecture: Meaning and Place*: 201 (author’s emphases).

been. What *will be* has always been.”¹²⁹ However, reading Kahn in this way – and proposing a correlation of that reading with Heidegger – seems to deny the modernity of both men and their instinct to look forward. It relies on the view that their respective philosophies are nostalgic. According to such a view, if an essence already exists, it is to be found retrospectively, by looking back amongst all that has already come into existence; and, based on the already extant essence, the solution is not just determinable but already *essentially* determined. The Norberg-Schulz reading is additionally problematic in its use of singular nouns – *an* essence, *an* order, *the* solution – which seemingly excludes the potential for a plurality of essential qualities and, therefore, a plurality of interpretations and solutions. As already seen, Kahn produces three different solutions for the Salk Institute. Although each follows an essentially similar approach to siting (which nonetheless cannot be claimed to be exclusively apposite), each reveals fundamental differences in interpretation and solution. The first is ‘urban’ in its approach – essentially a re-interpretation of the Richards Medical Research Building — thereby making it inattentive to the essence of an expansive coastal site, but presumably responsive to something else that Kahn initially senses to be essence. The second responds to a presumably enlightened and convincing interpretation of essence, since it progresses to the point of signed contracts for its construction. And, the third – a solution now revered as Kahn’s ‘masterpiece’ – urgently follows abandonment of the second; a response to the appearance and interpretation of new essentials (or, at least, factors affecting the project’s essence), most notably those of project finances. The Salk thus offers little evidence of either determinacy or singularity in its design, while also drawing attention to a weakness in the Norberg-Schulz reading of Kahn.

A closer reading reveals that Kahn, like Heidegger, embraces the indeterminacy and contingency of existence, as well as the potential for its plural interpretation.¹³⁰ Such can be seen, for example, in Kahn’s admonition to designers: “It is not what you want, it is what you sense in the order of things which tells you what to design.” While his first phrase calls for self-contraction (an appeal to some other or other things), the second is a charge to interpret and be attentive to the boundaries and consequent domain of the entire situation. Absent is any suggestion that the situation and its potential for interpretation are either fixed or necessarily singular. Further evidence is found in Kahn’s discussion of ‘Form’ (the realm of nature, the nature and order of things) and ‘Design’ (the

¹²⁹ Burton, “Notes from Volume Zero: Louis Kahn and the Language of God,” 72 (author’s emphases). Interestingly, this seems to be an echo of the Kabbalistic ‘great name’ for all of creation, *Yod Heh Vav Heh*, which means, “That which was, is, and shall be.” Moreover, according to Burton, this “great name is not peculiar to Jewish thought, alone. Classically, it was used to describe pagan gods.”

¹³⁰ The argument pertaining to Heidegger is parallel because of Norberg-Schulz’s reading through a Heideggerian lens. It is, however, an argument separate to this discourse and fully articulated elsewhere. (See note 127.) My concern, here, is with Kahn and, more particularly, the kenosis evidenced by his theories and works.

realm of human creation): “You turn to nature to make [Form] actually present. Form precedes Design. Form is impersonal; Design belongs to the designer.”¹³¹ According to Norberg-Schulz, Kahn is talking about “man’s basic forms of being-in-the-world, to use Heidegger’s terminology,” wherein “life is not arbitrary, but has a structure which comprises man and nature,” and wherein humanity has the task of “uncovering [that] structure”; an interpretation that can be seen to reinforce the notion of pre-existing essence, or determinacy. I would argue, however, that it is not a conclusion that Kahn necessarily intended.

Although Kahn makes a distinction between unchanging natural law (governing form) and ever-changing human rules (governing design),¹³² which might appear to support the notion that form (the order preceding design) is fixed, Kahn’s distinction actually only acknowledges the fixed-ness of nature’s laws. It does not suggest that nature itself is fixed. In fact, it is precisely by such unchanging natural laws that nature, and the nature of things, so constantly emerges changed. Such change is not arbitrary, but it is indeterminate. The ‘structure’ comprising humanity and nature is actually that of complex, entangled relationality, which is also constantly emerging and changing. Sociologist Émile Durkheim suggests that “structure itself is encountered in *becoming*, and one cannot illustrate it except by pursuing this process of becoming.”¹³³ Hence, the task of uncovering this structure is not one of discovering a single, already existing relationship (an essence) but one of constantly working-out the current, shifting, and entangled boundaries that create relationality in a particular situation. It is then to be attentive thereto and respond accordingly. What has “always been” has always been unfolding and becoming, and has always been amenable – though not without resistance and challenge – to its working-out. Again, that raises the question as to how, and by what, Kahn approaches this working-out.

Social and Political Activist

Notwithstanding already noted problematics in some of her arguments, Sarah Goldhagen offers a view of Kahn that does indeed see him ‘working out’ a complex and evolving situation. Her view, however, is carefully distanced from others. She writes:

Kahn was not a lone genius ... he was a lively social animal, a creature of the culture that he inhabited. He was not an apolitical mystic, but a highly self-conscious social activist who, based on an understanding of the evolving needs of his and other societies, worked out a complex agenda to fuse the personal experience of self-revelation with the social experience of strengthening one’s

¹³¹ Lobell, *Between Silence and Light: Spirit in the Architecture of Louis I. Kahn*: 28. The capitalisation of form and design is Kahn’s, much as he also capitalises silence, light, shadow, etc.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 26-28.

¹³³ Durkheim is quoted in Gieryn, “What Buildings Do,” 36 (author’s emphasis).

bonds to the community – experiences that are normally perceived as antithetical, but which Kahn saw as complementary.¹³⁴

This is a view that associates Kahn with the call-to-action, the political and social agendas, and the religious zeal of early Modernism. It sees Kahn intentionally develop an agenda to “situate” people “socially, geographically, within their communities, and inside and outside themselves,” all pursuant to a better world. It is an agenda-focused view, with architecture portrayed, first, as a vehicle for the agenda’s fulfilment, and, second, as a vehicle for satisfying Kahn’s attraction to “monumentality and authenticity”; the second ultimately a servant to the first. In this view, Kahn eventually embraces historical precedents from the “legacy of monumental architecture,” because, once architecturally abstracted (apparently the apologetic that makes their modern use acceptable), they allow his buildings to “become receptacles for communal identification, partly by provoking viewers’ associate memories – embodied history, internalised as second nature and so forgotten as history.” Viewers thereby appropriate Kahn’s architecture “as a modern continuation of a pre-existing communal nature.” When employed in his political and religious buildings, Goldhagen suggests that this strategy “monumentalises democracy” by inducing in the users a sense of responsibility for self, as both community member and human being.¹³⁵ Such a reading allows Kahn to be seen as faithful to his modern agenda – even if disloyal to some of its developing architectural vocabulary – but it does not establish that such faithfulness requires Kahn’s infidelity toward the influences of mysticism and romanticism in childhood, or toward the influences of Classicism in his education and early training.

Goldhagen’s arguments – despite adding considerably to the compendium of Kahn scholarship – thus grow additionally problematic. First, it is of course true that Kahn’s work can be seen as a “modern continuation,” but not necessarily the continuation of a “pre-existing communal nature.” Such a notion invokes determinacy, and I have already argued against determinacy in Kahn’s theories. While it might be said that humanity is ontologically relational, the communal entities arising from such relationality have been manifold and constantly evolving. The meaning and import – indeed, the nature – of community that may have existed at the time of an historical architectural precedent is apt to be substantially different to that at the time of its modern abstraction. Moreover, the abstraction of an architectural precedent may also abstract, and thereby disconnect it from, its original connotations of community. I would argue that Kahn’s ‘continuation’ is that of an evolving architectural tradition, which, at its best, embraces

¹³⁴ Goldhagen, *Louis Kahn's Situated Modernism*: 199.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 207-210.

both precedent and innovation.¹³⁶ In fact, as discussed earlier in this chapter, such is Kahn's Modernism: a call for the renewal or opening-up of architecture to changing situations, but not for the abandonment of all that came before – particularly not the spiritual or inspirational therein. In 1953, referring to his Beaux-Arts education at the University of Pennsylvania, Kahn declares, "Although I can still feel the spiritual aspects of that training, I have spent all my time since graduation unlearning what I learned."¹³⁷ Faced with changing situations, he frees himself from or simply changes those rules of Neo-Classicism that are restrictive or outmoded – just as he eventually also frees himself from similarly restrictive stylistic rules in Modernism – but he concurrently acknowledges something in the Classical that is spiritual and worthy of retention. He confirms the same when he cautions that a "nostalgic yearning for the ways of the past will find but few ineffectual supporters," and then admits to a realisation that "the architecture of Italy will remain as the inspirational source of the works of the future."¹³⁸ I would suggest that there are no contradictions in these statements, only evidence of Kahn's understanding that architecture is an evolving tradition with evolving connotations and meanings, all of which require constant working-out; or, in other words, that architecture is a kenotic unfolding.

Of concern, secondly, is Goldhagen's distancing of Kahn from spirituality. In sharp contrast to Benedikt and Burton, she affords little attention to Kahn's childhood – its mystical and romantic connections – and almost completely disconnects him from religiosity, simply by virtue of his non-observance of Judaism and his family's willingness to find commonality, rather than difference, amongst their friends of other faith traditions (neither particularly uncommon in the American 'melting pot'). In place of spirituality, she contends that Kahn finds "an explicitly non-transcendental religious ideal."¹³⁹ Such an interpretation might reasonably be construed, for example, from Kahn's view of architectural practice – something quite capable of being non-transcendental – as his 'religion'. At the same time, however, that interpretation is betrayed by the fact that Kahn views architecture in highly transcendental terms. As seen, he goes to great lengths to describe creativity, art, and architectural practice in terms that even Goldhagen calls "transcendentalising". In his espousals there is little account of a calculatedly non-transcendental social and political agenda, except that which might be extrapolated from his intentionally transcendental view of architecture. To the extent that Kahn is agenda-focused, his is an architectural agenda undergirded by Modernism's aspirations

¹³⁶ My argument, here, owes a debt to thoughts presented in J. Pallasmaa, "What Would Utzon Do Now?: The Lessons of Louis Kahn and Jørn Utzon," (Public Lecture at the University of Tasmania, School of Architecture and Design, Launceston, Tasmania, AU, 11 March, 2014).

¹³⁷ Goldhagen, *Louis Kahn's Situated Modernism*: 73.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 53-54.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 13, 91.

and zeal, but primarily one that anticipates the realisation of integrity through architectural form and design. Rather than seeing Kahn as a social and political crusader, I would suggest a view of Kahn in which he constantly – even zealously – addresses the architectural challenges presented to him, attends to their situatedness, and thereby sees his consciousness elevated. Each situation includes amongst its myriad boundaries those of social, cultural, and political dimensions. Kahn sets about to work-out and respond to all boundaries (or as many as he can), and he does so with both aesthetic and ethical impulse,¹⁴⁰ seen to climax in his ‘mature’ work. Despite some of her own seemingly contradictory portrayals, Goldhagen finally arrives at much the same assessment when she states that “at each step in Kahn’s architectural trajectory ... he took in a new set of ideas and formulated his own response to them.”¹⁴¹ In other words, Kahn can be seen opening-up to indeterminate and contingent situations, attentively working-out each situation’s ‘desire to be’, and respectfully responding. That people still respectfully respond to his work is owing not to so-called timelessness (his work is actually very time-full) but, rather, to an openness and incompleteness – both his and that of his architecture – which grants ongoing relevance and transcends categorisation.

Each, All, and None

To some extent, Louis Kahn is each of his critics’ ascriptions, and, to some extent, he is all of them, which only reveals that he is entirely and convincingly none of them. Since each is incomplete, their mere collection does not produce a whole. The labels reveal their own deficiencies and superfluousness. Each label proposes traits of Kahn’s being, without asking after the grounding of such traits, and each suggests that such traits constitute a particular kind of being, without venturing into how, or by what, such being might be animated. Moreover, the plurality of labels suggests a plurality of beings, which tends to foster a competitive dynamic – the correctness of one suggesting the fallacy of another. Such a dynamic, however, merely masks the fact that the traits ascribed to Kahn share a common ontology. Indeed, a closer look reveals that the ascriptions are part of a creative matrix out of which each is able to arise, but that none can fully describe. It is that view in which Kahn and his work are opened-up and extended beyond the narrowness of categorisation.

¹⁴⁰ The notion of aesthetic and ethical impulse is explored in Benedikt, "Shiva, Luria, Kahn," 34.

¹⁴¹ Goldhagen, *Louis Kahn's Situated Modernism*: 206.

KAHN EXTENDED

If Kahn is not precisely any of that ascribed to him, then what is it that animates his creativity – his being? Although not before stated in such terms, I argue in this chapter that there is much of kenosis to be seen in Kahn. Indeed, I would further suggest that it is due to the instantiations of kenosis in Kahn's work – appearing in his approach, designs, and realisations – that he is assessed, critiqued, and categorised so prolifically and diversely. It is a particularly personal instantiation of kenosis by which Kahn invites exactly such analysis – such 'extending':

I don't know how to extend things, because I don't have any historical knowledge, nor any research tendencies. I can't look up and find other literature, I just can't do it. And so it's left, in a way, in a very undeveloped state, as though it were just an offering for someone else, you know, to extend.¹⁴²

And so, Kahn is once again extended, here, but not this time in an attempt to merely extend the proliferation of labelling. Instead, this 'extension' invites the appearance of what underpins all such labelling, and paradoxically appears in the labels themselves – as seen in many examples.

Modernism – not least, Kahn's brand of it – can be seen as somehow religious or with characteristics resembling a religious movement, but that is not due to any connection with a particular religion; rather, it is because creativity (not only architecture, and not only modern) and religion are ontologically kenotic. Kahn's so-called happiness at the gates of mystery can be seen to derive from a willingness to self-empty and be filled with the unknown other. To the extent that his work reflects Shiva's dance, such is due to the fact that Kahn engages in the whirling phenomenon of kenosis; moving between the sacred and the secular, the transcendental and the immanent, the constructive and destructive. If Kahn, the romantic idealist, looks back to the classical, it is only to find his place in the modern, and he does so by way of kenosis. Insofar as he is able to dissolve scale and time in order to find abstract simplicity, such ability lies in a kenotic approach that accommodates complex relationality. His charge to designers can be seen as a call to self-empty, to heighten attentiveness to the other and other things of the situation, and to respond as the situation requests, recognising that the order of things is neither pre-existent nor singular, but indeterminate, contingent, and plural – requiring constant working-out. And his openness to such working-out can be seen in his activism. Kenosis is a call to action, a call to strive for betterment, despite the impossibility of absolute achievement. If Kahn's architecture 'situates' people, if it is socially, culturally, and politically responsible, and if it is immune to style, then, I contend,

¹⁴² Burton, "The Aesthetic Education of Louis I. Kahn, 1912-1924," 204.

that is because his approach to each situation is kenotic: emptying, receptive, and responsive.

Of course, it might be argued that kenosis, particularly in its adjectival form – kenotic – is merely another label to trump and replace those already ascribed. But kenosis is not the name of, or definition for, a particular way of being, as differentiated from other ways of being. It is being. It is constantly happening, and humanity can either engage with it or self-assertively ignore and resist it for a time, though such ignorance and resistance paradoxically come to be a part of the kenotic unfolding. Kahn seems to recognise as much in an exchange with one of his students, who asks “Why architecture?” The teacher, Kahn, replies, “If you were to define it, you would destroy it.” But then he turns the question back to the student, in what he calls a “Hebraic way,” suggesting that the better question would be, “Why anything?” To that, the student answers, “Because it is,” and Kahn affirms the reply. “Yes. Exactly. Because it is.”¹⁴³ At a more fundamental – perhaps even spiritual – level, Kahn reveals the kenosis of his approach and understanding:

I tried to find what Order is. I was excited about it, and I wrote many, many words of what Order is. Every time I wrote something, I felt it wasn't quite enough. If I had covered, say, two thousand pages with just words of what Order is, I would not be satisfied with this statement. And then I stopped by not saying what it is, just saying, “Order is.” And somehow I wasn't sure it was complete until I asked somebody, and the person I asked said, “You must stop right there. It's marvellous; just stop there, saying, ‘Order is.’”¹⁴⁴

Rather than rushing to label Kahn and his work, I suggest that it is sufficient to witness the kenosis in his approach and in his buildings. To do so – including with discursive text such as this – is to extend Kahn, and also to open-up and engage kenosis. It is also to see the name ‘Kahn’ as open and self-emptying. It is to see that Kahn's being (and that of all humanity) is between and therefore becoming. Thus it might simply be said – in present tense, to reflect the continued becoming of both the architect and his architecture – “Kahn is.”

Thomas Gieryn notes that “in buildings, and through them, sociologists can find social structures in the process of becoming.” He laments the fact that the becoming is often “solidified first in floor plans, then in walls and doors,” such that “retrofitting begins almost immediately ... and every once in a while, somebody is forced to reconsider (and justify) how the building came to be this way.” Portrayed is a kind of material and semiotic deconstruction, amidst which “meanings and stories are sometimes more pliable

¹⁴³ Lobell, *Between Silence and Light: Spirit in the Architecture of Louis I. Kahn*: 56.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 18.

than the walls and floors they depict.”¹⁴⁵ Kahn’s buildings continue to undergo abundant reconsideration and deconstruction of that sort, but they prove highly resilient. Kenotic instantiations at the Salk demonstrate – in the most literal and physical sense – that walls and floors can be as pliable as meanings and stories. And almost all of Kahn’s ‘mature’ buildings demonstrate that the kenosis of their design and realisation is that which animates their becoming, as well as the becoming of the social structures they host. That pliability – the paradoxical strength of self-contraction, the monumentality of understatement – has seen almost no retrofitting, other than that intended as part of the design concept, and has required relatively little justification. If it can be said that “Order is” and “Kahn is,” then the same can also be said of Kahn’s architecture. It *is*.

¹⁴⁵ Gieryn, "What Buildings Do," 35.

Architecture and Empathy: Postmodern Historicism, Environmentalism, and Regionalism

As Kahn is at the height of his career (and nearly its end), Modernism begins to yield to its successors. The transition to Post-Modernism – sometimes seen as more of a schism – is famously confirmed and sanctioned by Robert Venturi, in 1966, with his *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*.¹ Venturi pleads for an architecture that better empathises with the growing complexity of a pluralistic and secularised world; a world rejecting the notion of universal truths, particularly that espoused by Modernism's so-called International Style. Modernism's initial successor, Postmodern Historicism (or Neo-Historicism), could hardly have been more different – or so it seemed. But it would not be the only response to Venturi's call. Emblematic of Venturi's complexity and the fallibility of universalism, the oil crises of the 1970s highlight the finitude of natural resources and lend momentum to growing environmental awareness. In architecture, that prompts the first urgent discussions about energy-conscious design, elicits audacious proposals such as Paolo Soleri's "arcology,"² and foreshadows the crescendo of Environmentalism – a plea for sustained ecological empathy – that would emerge in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Meanwhile, architectural critic Kenneth Frampton argues against Modernism's notion of universality (though not its social and political aims) and Postmodern Historicism's reliance on caricaturisation, but in favour of heightened awareness of environmental circumstances (albeit not primarily resource- or ecology-focused). In a famous 1983 manifesto, he pleads for an architecture that better empathises with its regionality, but it is not romantic or nostalgic regionalism that he promotes. He advocates an "architecture of resistance," or what he calls "Critical Regionalism" (a subject to which I return later in this chapter and in Chapter 7).³ Each of these postmodern themes warrants exploration in the light of kenosis. However, rather than analysing the architectural movements, in themselves – abundantly done elsewhere – this chapter identifies and discusses the instantiations of kenosis evidenced in three buildings that arise out of these movements and, particularly, out of each movement's call for some aspect of greater empathy.

¹ R. Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (London: Butterworth Architecture, 1990).

² The principles of "arcology" are presented in P. Soleri, *The Bridge Between Matter and Spirit is Matter Becoming Spirit: The Arcology of Paolo Soleri* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday 1973). A more complete compendium of Soleri's design philosophy is found in P. Soleri, *What If?: Collected Writings 1986-2000* (Berkeley, CA: Berkeley Hills Books, 2002).

³ K. Frampton, "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance," in *Postmodern Culture*, ed. H. Foster (London and Sydney: Pluto Press, 1985).

In the distinctly European context of The Hague, architect Michael Graves – a champion of Postmodern Historicism in America – reprises his trademark exaggeration of historical quotations in a government office building known as Castalia. Despite seemingly extreme divergence from Modernism, such quotations present what can be seen as a plea for the kenosis of widely-accepted architectural principles; a plea that echoes precisely the original plea of Modernism. Designed and constructed during almost the same period, a Norman Foster project – the Commerzbank in Frankfurt – makes claims that are substantially kenotic; such as those which see it as a pioneer of high-rise environmental friendliness, and as exceptionally attentive to the needs of its district and that district's other occupants (its 'situation'). And it is not without some irony that the uncovering of kenosis in the architecture of postmodernity is rewardingly advanced by exploring the work of Modernist architect, I.M. Pei; most notably his Museum of Islamic Art at Doha, where the call to regional awareness and empathy is both unique and strong. All three projects contribute to the discourse relating kenosis and architecture, though not with equal significance. They contribute in a manner that recalls the well-known musing attributed to Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr: "I would not give a fig for the simplicity this side of complexity, but I would give my life for the simplicity on the other side of complexity."⁴ The project by Graves finds simplicity well before complexity. The project by Foster pushes beyond simplicity to deal with complexity. But, of these three, it is the project by Pei that achieves simplicity on the other side of complexity and thereby demonstrates, most vividly, its kenotic provenance. Although, for that reason, Pei's project is the primary focus of this chapter, the works by both Graves and Foster provide a no less valuable backdrop.

GRAVES AT CASTALIA

Venturi echoes Holmes, but in architectural language: "The recognition of complexity in architecture does not negate what Louis Kahn has called 'the desire for simplicity.' But aesthetic simplicity which is a satisfaction to the mind, derives, when valid and profound, from inner complexity." In a simpler restatement, he observes that "forced simplicity results in oversimplification."⁵ Venturi's critique of Modernism, and what he calls "Orthodox Modern architects," has proven to be a legitimate and well-earned response to the excesses of Modernism's orthodoxy, especially as epitomised by one of its

⁴ Although apparently without authoritative source, this musing is widely attributed to US Supreme Court Justice, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., and is quoted in M. DePree, *Leadership is an Art* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1989), 22. In slightly different form, however, it is also attributed to Justice Holmes' father, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr., a physician, poet, and professor at Harvard Medical School.

⁵ Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*: 17.

oversimplified truths: the Miesian mantra “less is more.” It is a critique grounded in more multifaceted assessments, such as those of August Heckscher, who notes that

the movement from a view of life as essentially simple and orderly, to a view of life as complex and ironic, is what every individual passes through in becoming mature ... A feeling for paradox allows seemingly dissimilar things to exist side by side, their very incongruity suggesting a kind of truth.⁶

From that, however, it might be construed that a simple truth is merely to be replaced by a more complex truth, when, in fact, even a complex truth is subject to oversimplification. Indeed, that is exactly what the ensuing anti-Modernists or Post-Modernists do, at least in their initial Historicism. They oversimplify their movement’s ‘new’ truths – complexity and contradiction – which even Venturi reduces to two simplistic mantras: “more is not less” and “less is a bore.”⁷ They overemphasise irony and paradox at the expense of validity and profundity. In fact, according to Venturi, they do precisely that which Orthodox Modernists had done; that which eventually effected Modernism’s demise. “In their attempt to break with tradition and start all over again, they idealised the primitive and elementary at the expense of the diverse and the sophisticated.”⁸ Post-Modernism, then, can be seen as always already embedded in Modernism, just as other movements had been embedded in their predecessors.

It must be said that Venturi does not specifically call for the Postmodern Historicism that initially responded against Modernism. Not unlike the modern plea against Neo-Classicism, Venturi’s is a ‘postmodern’ plea for a kenosis of Modernism (though without using that phrase). It does not invoke a ‘style’, but calls for the emptying of superfluous restriction and an opening up to new others – social, cultural, and political – such that architecture might “evoke many levels of meaning and combinations of focus,” with spaces and elements that “become readable and workable in several ways at once.”⁹ In the early stages of Post-Modernism, many architects find what they saw as new meanings and foci by turning to pre-Modern precedents,¹⁰ much as Kahn had already done (hence the occasional association of Kahn with emergent Post-Modernism). Notably, Michael Graves (1934-2015) and architects of similar leanings replace Kahn’s abstraction of historical precedent with caricaturisation, attempting to eschew the supposed seriousness of Modernism through the deployment of irony, paradox, and wit. Such deployment provides the opening for a plethora of new architectural trends, fads,

⁶ A. Heckscher, *The Public Happiness* (New York: Atheneum, 1962), 102.

⁷ Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*: 16-17.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Precedents referenced by some architects also included the vernacular and popular.

and gimmicks.¹¹ In fact, it is Graves who produces one of the best known and most controversial icons of the movement: The Portland Building, in Portland, Oregon (USA).¹² It is, however, his project at The Hague, Netherlands – a project known as Castalia (1998) – that contributes more to this discourse (see figs. 4.1 and 4.2). Not only does it see the American architect responding in his particularly Historicist style, it also sees him doing so in a particularly historic and European context, one in which empathy could be reasonably expected.



FIGURE 4.1
Castalia, situated adjacent to the historic precinct of The Hague.



FIGURE 4.2
The 'twin towers' of Castalia, viewed from its entry plaza.

¹¹ The short-lived trappings of 'style' are, of course, evidence of ongoing kenosis in architecture (and all creative pursuits), but are more likely to be indicative of attempts to ignore or resist or control kenosis – that is, 'trying too hard' – rather than to embrace it by counterintuitively 'letting-go'. So-called Orthodox Modernism had not been immune to much of the same, but being less linked to precedents, the onset of trends, fads, and gimmicks was perhaps slower to be recognised. Interestingly, however, Kahn and his (kenotic) Modernism remained largely immune to stylistic temptations, as discussed more fully in Chapter 3.

¹² Controversy surrounding the Portland Building was such that many attendees at the 1983 national convention of the American Institute of Architects wore lapel buttons reading, "I Don't Dig Graves," as a means of protesting Graves' receipt of an AIA Honor Award for the Portland Building, that year. As a delegate to that convention, I was witness to the event, but it is also recorded in J.C. Rohrer, "Michael Graves: Matrix 81," (Description of Artist and Exhibit, held 26 September to 25 November, at Hartford, CT: Wadsworth Atheneum, 1984).

At the time of its realisation, Castalia dominated The Hague's skyline as a disruptive other,¹³ but, in only fifteen years, it is now dwarfed and obscured by the increased density and one-upmanship of taller, newer, and showier neighbours (see fig. 4.3). From most vantage points, today, the tops of its twin, twenty-five storey towers are framed by an array of competing monoliths.¹⁴ At first impression, Castalia's towers appear as two aging yuppies at a crowded party of young hipsters – enduring the event but absent relationality, other than that afforded by chance proximity. There appears little openness to one another and, therefore, little exchange or influence. A closer reading, however, reveals something more. Castalia's architecture grants it a unique and memorable – though not necessarily likeable – identity that its counterparts are unable to equal. The differentiation of its historicism can even be seen as having become a kind of lynch pin for relationality between the city's old and new precincts. Amidst such complex interdependence, which can initially be overlooked or dismissed, Castalia reveals a sometimes ambiguous and imperfect – but nonetheless instantiated – kenotic grounding.



FIGURE 4.3

Castalia, viewed in the context of its position between the old and new sectors of the city.

¹³ Corroborating this view, philosopher Joseph Pitt states that Castalia “does not contribute positively to the environment it is in, rather it disrupts it.” Noting what he sees as the mutual exclusivity of disruption and harmony, he adds: “Celebration of the site is crucial but not by way of degrading what else is already there.” See J.C. Pitt, “Design Criteria in Architecture,” in *Philosophy and Design: From Engineering to Architecture*, ed. P.E. Vermaas, et al. (Berlin: Springer, 2008), 324.

¹⁴ ‘Twin’ towers is an apt description of the building’s appearance, but there is actually only one structure, which features two distinct roof forms on one brick shaft, visually bifurcated by a glass ‘joint’ so as to give the appearance of separate buildings. The project was designed and constructed to utilise the structural core of an existing structure from 1967, known as the Transitorium. Castalia extends that structure from its original 73 metre height to a new height of almost 104 metres. Some sources indicate the number of storeys to be twenty or twenty-one, but the architect’s website indicates twenty-five. (Differences are likely due to varying interpretations of ‘storey’ as related to mechanical spaces in the gable roofs.)

Castalia would merely be another high-rise office building were it not for two distinguishing architectural motifs. According to the architect, this project “recalls Dutch roof forms” and features “façades [that] reflect fenestration patterns typical of the area, where window and wall have equivalent areas and are read as a rich but planar surface.”¹⁵ Indeed, most striking are the building’s two extremely steep, parapeted gable roofs, credited to Dutch derivation. However, in the absence of characteristic stair-stepping, or curvilinear shapes and culminating pediment, the gables fail to meet the definition of either a stepped gable (sometimes associated with Dutch architecture, and widely used there, but originating in many parts of Northern Europe) or a Dutch/Flemish gable (more correctly associated with the Low Countries). The simplified expression – as merely steep gables – might be seen as an ‘abstraction’. However, when placed atop a high-rise office building and intimately juxtaposed with historic buildings on which stepped and Dutch gables are indigenous, this motif can only be described as an exaggeration – the caricature of a Dutch gable – such exaggeration being a hallmark of Postmodern Historicism.¹⁶ Likewise, the over-scaled window configurations, which are applied to the brick façades in the elementary manner of a child’s drawing, evidence the exaggeration of another historical reference, original examples of which permeate Castalia’s immediate context. A ‘deceit’ occurs in the use of what would traditionally be single-storey windows, here presented as colossal six-paned openings. In fact, the windows span two storeys, their top two panes in one storey, their bottom two panes in another, and their middle panes actually an opaque spandrel that covers the interstitial space between floors. Neither the roof nor window motif is a literal translation. Neither is a faithful paraphrase. Both are witty and ironic, if not trivialising, parodies. As a result, Castalia’s Post-Modernism stands guilty of precisely those charges that Venturi levels against the Modernists and Modernism: forced simplicity, oversimplification, idealisation of the primitive and elementary, and missed opportunity for diversity and sophistication.¹⁷

There is ample cause to criticise the incongruities of Castalia’s aesthetics, to see its design as ignoring or resisting the whole of the situation’s kenotic potential. But Graves claims that Castalia attempts to show “respect for local context,” which is also the stated goal of the development within which his project is located.¹⁸ His portrayal of

¹⁵ "Castalia: Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, 1993-2000, The Hague, Netherlands," Michael Graves & Associates, Inc., <http://www.michaelgraves.com/architecture/project/castalia.html>.

¹⁶ In contrast, it is worth examining – for differences effected by scale and interpretation – the Advaney House, from 1991; a ‘Modern’ Dutch residence designed by Hugh Jacobsen, featuring parapeted gable roofs that are both steep and stepped. I would suggest that Jacobsen offers a ‘faithful paraphrase’ of this Dutch motif. See R. Grattaroti, ed. *Hugh Newell Jacobsen, Architect: Recent Work* (Rockport, MA: Rockport Publishers, 1994), 98-111.

¹⁷ See notes 5 and 8.

¹⁸ "Castalia: Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, 1993-2000, The Hague, Netherlands". Castalia is part of a mixed-use development project, known as ‘De Resident’, in an area of The Hague that was bombed during WWII. Its master plan was designed by Robert Krier and nine other domestic and foreign architects, including

empathy toward the historic setting could therefore be seen as a kenotic gesture of receptivity, an opening-up to the building's antecedent others, by which the others' reciprocity might be elicited. But, once opened-up, precisely how, and to what extent, can a twenty-five-storey building be expected to attend to its largely three- to six-storey others? Its building mass, alone, is self-assertive, regardless of how the facades are manipulated. So, if the building fails to fully respond to its situation, the responsibility for such failure may not rest as much with those who shaped the current architectural response, as it does with those who – by their own earlier responses – found themselves shaping the situation to which architecture was then called to respond. After all, the boundaries and horizons of the situation become significantly changed when decisions are made to introduce a precinct of high-rise buildings into an historic context of already strong and opposite character. With such decisions, incongruity becomes much more likely, if not unavoidable. Indeed, it becomes at least a part of the situation's kenotic potential; that is, a part of what the situation needs. Incongruity – though not necessarily caricature – might well be seen as appropriate and kenotic responses to such a situation; as embodiments of Heckscher's "feeling for paradox," which enables the proximate placement of dissimilar things.

Incongruity, however, is not found only in the relationship between Castalia and its historic context. It can also be seen in the relationship between Castalia and its contemporary context. Excepting the dome-topped Zurich Tower (1999), designed by Cesar Pelli,¹⁹ the newer and taller neighbouring towers are comparatively generic, decorated shafts, seemingly transportable to or from any modern, metropolitan skyline. The sameness of their height and façadal manipulations leads to their un-impressiveness and ultimate un-memorableness. They are now the disruptive others in Castalia's situation. Their size diminishes Castalia, and their honest expressions of floor height only highlight the trickery of scale that marks Castalia's façade. They challenge Castalia's high-rise credentials, asking after its true identity, because Castalia is also a decorated shaft and an intrusion to its context, yet it curiously appears to have a foot in both the modern and historic camps. Ironically, it is its empathy – notwithstanding exaggeration and trickery – that now sets Castalia apart and positions it to challenge its larger neighbours' ostentatious assertions, asking after their attentiveness to the entirety of their situations. Thus, the relationship between Castalia and its contemporary others is also

Michael Graves and Cesar Pelli. The stated goal of the development is that it be a "city within a city," which "forms a bridge between the low-rise buildings of the old city centre, and the large-scale office buildings within the vicinity of the The Hague's Central Station." See "De Resident: The Project," MAB Group B.V., <http://www.derresident.com/project/index.htm>.

¹⁹ "Zurich Tower, The Hague, Netherlands," Pelli Clarke Pelli Architects, <http://pcparch.com/project/zurich-tower>. Pelli makes no particular claim to historic references. Although the tower's dome is invested with historic architectural connotations – as are all domes – there does not appear to be any attempt to link this dome directly to The Hague or to The Netherlands.

one of incongruity. They are of the same typology but not the same philosophy, and their respective architecture concretises the differences. There may be no apparent influence or hybridisation, but there is exchange. Each is bettered by the other's presence. Castalia, the one-time intruder to its historic context, is now made to appear relatively assimilated by virtue of the newer, anonymous, and foreign towers. And those towers – now the intruders – are made to appear less intrusive by the presence of their relatively modest and assimilated older neighbour.

Castalia has, in a sense, finally become the kind of bridge between The Hague's old and new districts that its developers espoused.²⁰ It not only enjoys a relationship with each district but now defines the relationship between those districts. Were it not for Castalia, that relationship would be something quite different. Paradoxically, the incongruity that exists between Castalia and its old neighbours, as well as that between Castalia and its new neighbours, is that which serves to mitigate the even greater incongruity that exists between those old and new neighbours. Castalia is not historic, but it references history. It is modern, but appears not to be so. It is curiously unlike its fellow high-rises, but is nonetheless one of them. Literally and figuratively, Castalia is between. Situated at the threshold of both old and new, it marks the beginning of each, and does so in unexpected manner. Since its development, Castalia has become, and is becoming. To the historic context that it once confronted (arguably, that it mocked), and to the more contemporary skyscrapers that now confront it (arguably, that mock it), Castalia is an enabler, not of harmony, but of happy incongruity. Insofar as there is 'truth' in such incongruity, I would suggest that it lies in the reality of ongoing kenosis, the opening-up and always becoming of the situation, even when a response to the situation has ignored or resisted such kenosis. Despite what initially appears as Castalia's self-assertiveness, it is becoming more fully empathetic to its situation, ironically by moderating the self-assertiveness of its newest others. Castalia thus finds itself somewhat transformed, no longer resisting but facilitating its situation's kenosis.

FOSTER AT THE COMMERZBANK

Completed one year before Castalia, and constructed less than five hundred kilometres away, in another historic precinct of Europe – the *Bankenviertel*, Frankfurt's traditional banking district in the *Westend* – the Commerzbank Headquarters (1997) eschews notions of the "decorated shed" (a building with "a rhetorical front and conventional behind"), and presents itself as a new and improved reprisal of the Modernist "duck" (wherein exterior and interior are an integrated whole, and where both reflect the

²⁰ See note 18.

building's purpose).²¹ Although these two contemporaneous buildings share high-rise typology, neither is quite as ruthless as the prolific towers that assert their spectacularity in metropolises the world over and, more often than not, achieve only the anonymity of sameness. Castalia and the Commerzbank are similar in that they each evidence less of that sameness. But, at a more fundamental level, their dissimilarities are striking. As a "decorated shed," Castalia's empathy toward its situation is *applied*, symbolised superficially by cladding or decoration. As a "duck," the Commerzbank's situational empathy is purportedly *in-built*, the whole of the building intended to be a symbol. With mixed results and to varying degrees, the Commerzbank does symbolise an empathy toward the architectural, social, and ecological aspects of its situation. In each aspect, instantiations of kenosis can be seen, but the ecological aspect is most revealing, because it is that aspect which effects the other instantiations. Indeed, the Commerzbank's architectural and social achievements, to the extent they occur, are by-products of its being the "world's first ecological office tower,"²² and its being attentive to some of the complexities of that distinction.

Nonetheless, before it is an *ecological* office tower – the topic of subsequent discussion – the Commerzbank is first an office tower, freighted with all of that typology's associated symbolism, including the excesses of capitalism and American-style urbanisation. The story of its contentious prehistory, as well as its controversial and prolonged naissance, is well-documented by Steven Moore and Ralf Brand.²³ Of importance, here, is to note that much of what appears to be empathy is actually part of a forced, and enforced, political solution. For example, project designer Norman Foster (1935-) and his firm, Foster + Partners, indicate that empathy with the district's existing architectural fabric is reflected in "the restoration and sensitive rebuilding of the perimeter structures to reinforce the original scale of the block."²⁴ That feature of the project,

²¹ In *Learning from Las Vegas*, Venturi and wife Denise Scott Brown criticise Modernism for its allegiance to "the duck ... a special building that *is* a symbol," and suggest that the duck must yield to Post-Modernism's "decorated shed ... the conventional shelter that *applies* symbols." The Venturis laud the superiority of the decorated shed, because therein "space and structure are directly at the service of the program, and ornament is applied independently of them." In contrast, they suggest that 'the duck' distorts space, structure, and program, in favour of sculptural and monumental expression. See R. Venturi, D. Scott Brown, and S. Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas: The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form*, Revised ed. (Cambridge, MA, and London: The MIT Press, 1977), 87-92; and H. Foster, "Image Building," in *Architecture: Between Spectacle and Use*, ed. A. Vidler (Williamstown, MA: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2008), 166-167. The Venturis' analogy – and consequent critique – is a curious one, since the (zoological) duck has evolved to be nothing more or less than the unity it needs to be for survival and propagation. The duck is hardly distorted by nature for mere artificial or extraneous purposes. Arguably, rather than being designed for purpose, the duck – and all evolutionary life – has merely taken on the behaviour and functionality that its evolvments permit and advantage.

²² "Commerzbank Headquarters, Frankfurt, Germany, 1991-1997," Foster + Partners, <http://www.fosterandpartners.com/projects/commerzbank-headquarters/>.

²³ S.A. Moore and R. Brand, "The Banks of Frankfurt and the Sustainable City," *The Journal of Architecture* 8, no. 1 (2003): 7-16; and, in longer format, S.A. Moore, *Alternative Routes to the Sustainable City: Austin, Curitiba, and Frankfurt* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007), 117-151.

²⁴ "Commerzbank Headquarters, Frankfurt, Germany, 1991-1997".

however, is primarily necessitated by the inherently dissimilar scale that a 300 metre, forty-five storey tower presents to a five- and six-storey neighbourhood (see fig. 4.4).



FIGURE 4.4
The forty-five storey Commerzbank and its low-rise perimeter surround.

Furthermore, the notion of a low-scale perimeter arises not foremost as a proactive and progressive architectural proposal but as a result of “intense, detailed negotiations between the Commerzbank and the city,” well before Foster’s commissioning. From those prolonged negotiations emerged the mandate for housing as part of the complex.²⁵ The inclusion of apartments, ultimately located in the project’s low-rise perimeter buildings, addresses a vital social need in the district. But, since residential

²⁵ Moore and Brand, “The Banks of Frankfurt and the Sustainable City,” 14.

use comprises only slightly more than three percent of the project's floor area, and less than half of the floor area devoted to car parking,²⁶ its presence appears to speak more of acquiescence than empathy.²⁷ Indeed, the settlement that produced these results was characterised, by citizen activists, as offering "no reason to rejoice but a compromise we can live with."²⁸ None of this is to say that such a solution is necessarily made less empathetic by its provenance. Rather, it is to say that these gestures of apparent empathy are more indicative of tolerance than kenosis. Kenosis is engaged volitionally, even if reluctantly. In this case, opening-up comes as a requisite condition of the project's realisation, and therefore must be tolerated. While tolerance is not unrelated to kenosis, it is absent the essential *self*-emptying that arises out of attentiveness to the other; the 'emptying', here, having to be mandated by some of those very others to whom attention might otherwise be volitionally directed. It is therefore also absent the full potential for gathering-in and pouring-out that kenosis entails.

Of similar concern is any notion that some twenty years of negotiations – which merely move the situation from one that is competitive and conflicted, to one that is tolerable – portray an entirely virtuous and paradigmatic process of conflict resolution, or any corollary notion that mere conflict resolution exemplifies kenosis. Describing the project's emergence and its manifestation as architecture, Moore and Brand reveal the reasons for such concern:

One cannot help but be impressed by the degree of conflict resolution achieved in the process of developing Frankfurt's banking landscape. Although the articulation of differences in 1980 – the height of the housing conflict – was distinct and powerful, by 2001 respondents from each interest group voiced only minor dissatisfactions. This may well be a sign that most interests were satisfied and that no principal interest was vanquished. It may also be a sign that weaker interests were suppressed. Of course, there were many less visible interests, such as Jews, bank employees, and dislocated renters that were never invited to participate in the discussion in the first place.²⁹

Notwithstanding aspects of success, this process of conflict resolution is embedded with the potential for wearing down or overcoming certain interests and, equally, excluding some. Moreover, one interest holds the trump. In its enshrinement of the concept of 'weighing up' (*Abwägung*), German law grants to planning officials the ability to determine which interests hold sway.³⁰ That, of course, might be used to favour more weakly

²⁶ "Commerzbank Head Office, Frankfurt am Main," (Frankfurt: Commerzbank AG, n.d.), at heading, 'Facts and Figures'.

²⁷ Corroborating my view, Moore and Brand suggest that "60-70 units (of housing) is a drop in the bucket compared to the number of units that were displaced by related commercial development in the neighbourhood," which their sources estimate at nearly 30,000 units. See Moore and Brand, "The Banks of Frankfurt and the Sustainable City," 18.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 14.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.

represented interests, but it can equally be used in the opposite manner, taking advantage of such weakness to favour dominant or what appear to be 'majority' voices, often those who hold financial power.

The 'process' that Moore and Brand describe is not kenotic. While conflict resolution may include kenotic effect, kenosis is not mere conflict resolution, especially not by way of so-called compromise. The value of kenosis lies not in its capacity to resolve conflict but, rather, to obviate it, even while making room for reticence and challenge. Such is effected through a kind of hybridisation: the mutual transforming of selves, others, and other things in a given situation, without their loss of respective identities. This hybridisation is not simply the finding of compromise. More precisely, it is not the nominal changing of a situation's other things, by dominating and largely unchanged selves, in order that the situation comes to be seen as tolerable by its others – those who have also been changed by a process that produces fatigue and encourages acquiescence. Furthermore, kenosis cannot exclude *any* of the others and other things that comprise a situation. And, since kenosis is a complex and entangled procession of events, it is not and cannot be made into a determinate process that leads to if-then outcomes. (These aspects of kenosis, which cut across entrenched hierarchies and determinist views, are discussed more fully in Chapter 7.) As the Commerzbank project demonstrates, the mere implementation of widespread public talk does not, in itself, convincingly evidence kenosis or the situational empathy that kenosis can foster.

More convincing is the project's empathy toward ecological concerns, and the kenosis that instantiates. From the time of the project's inception, energy efficiency and environmental friendliness were amongst the aspirations of both city and bank. Such notions required no imposition by authorities. For the bank, they were also a part of corporate policy,³¹ presenting both direct and indirect commercial value. Not surprisingly, the Commerzbank has come to be seen as a symbolic milestone in the environmental movement of the late twentieth century, a movement that continues even stronger today. Yet it is an ambiguous, if not contradictory, symbol. Some observers see the notion of a sustainable skyscraper, particularly one that headquarters a financial institution, as oxymoronic; effectively 'green-washing' corporate hegemony.³² There are, however, those who view the project's technology-based energy efficiencies as at least more environmentally conscious than that of equivalent structures, and therefore they applaud its achievements. Of course, the latter stance requires resignation to the inevitability of high-rise buildings, a resignation that not all accept. Such contradiction can be extended

³¹ Ibid., 14. Moore and Brand characterise the project brief as "a material proposal, or recipe for conflict resolution."

³² This notion is amplified in *ibid.*, 14, 16-17.

to almost all architecture. Self-evidently, building effects environmental change, whether directly or indirectly, whether at micro or macro scales; and due to its inherent consumptiveness, building effects change that includes deleterious dimensions, often of significant consequence. Hence, in design, realisation, and utilisation, architecture can only be made relatively more 'friendly' toward the environment by virtue of its being made less consumptive of resources, or more worthy of the consumption it effects. In other words, architecture can only be made increasingly empathetic to the others and other things that make up the complex environmental situation. The Commerzbank takes steps toward such goals, and not without some success. Whether it – or any architecture – does enough to mitigate and warrant its environmental cost is a subject worthy of debate, but one beyond the scope of this discourse. Despite all of the inherent self-assertiveness of its high-rise typology, the Commerzbank's environmental attitude effects an opening-up; that is, a rising attentiveness to at least some dimensions of the environment, which is as unprecedented as it is incomplete and insufficient. It also spawns the expansion of such opening-up and attentiveness by a new generation of architecture's creators, out of which might emerge the kind of thinking that sees high-rise architecture become superfluous, salvational, or transformed into something as yet unimagined.

Commerzbank's eventual commissioning of Norman Foster mirrors its environmental commitment. Foster's firm is well known to champion high-tech architecture and superior environmental performance. While such performance can be seen as having a kenotic dimension – an opening-up to certain environmental others – that is not of primary interest, here, since there is ample analysis and documentation of the Commerzbank's energy efficiencies available elsewhere.³³ Of greater interest is the manner in which the building's design and realisation has yielded or contracted – that is, self-emptied – in order to make room for heightened environmental attentiveness (at least on selected fronts). Its self-emptying must be seen relative to more typical examples of high-rise typology. In that light, what the Commerzbank empties itself of is a significant measure of developer voraciousness. It is to some lesser extent that this building exploits its typology's dogged determination to maximise those things that maximise financial performance. Of course, even the maximisation of energy-efficient technologies can be seen as arising out of exactly such determination, since, in the long term, operating expenses are thereby reduced. But sophisticated technology also effects high capital costs, which can dull investor attraction. It is not through such technologies, however, that the project relinquishes some of its typology's grip on maximising efficiencies. Instead, it is owing to uncommon attitudes toward the relationality of space,

³³ Ibid., 15n40.

humanity, and nature that the project begins to 'let go' and become something that most of its siblings are not.

Unlike more formulaic skyscrapers, the Commerzbank does away with the customary central service core; a feature known for organising all forms of vertical distribution with maximum efficiency, and thereby contributing to the greatest possible ratio of net to gross floor area. In its place is a 160-metre high atrium, which offers light and ventilation to improve the spatial quality of inside spaces,³⁴ even as it also increases the sense of relationality that occupants have with other occupants across the atrium. There are, however, associated 'inefficiencies' in planning, construction, and cost. Splitting vertical services into three smaller cores and relocating them to the triangular building's three corners, the design denies this high-rise its expected corner spaces, prized for dual aspect views, coveted for private offices, and typically seen as privileged and prime-value real estate.³⁵ Thus, a more egalitarian configuration begins to breakdown entrenched hierarchical elements (even while creating new ones). But none of the building's yieldingness is as significant as that which grants the building its nine 'sky gardens'. Each four stories in height, the enclosed but ventilated gardens are staggered up the exterior, three on each of three sides. As a result, only two-thirds of any given floor plate is available for office use. The balance is 'sacrificed', either as the garden floor at one level or, at the other three levels, as part of the void creating the garden's height and volume. Occupants at every office level are thereby offered views and natural ventilation by one of the gardens, and no occupant is more than three floors away from accessing a garden for informal meetings and breaks. Not only are these gardens part of the environmental scheme – providing natural light and ventilation to offices and atrium alike – they also create openness and spatial volume of a kind that is highly uncommon in typical high-rise structures. And, like the central atrium, the gardens enhance the relationality of both occupants and spaces.

With its atrium and sky gardens, the Commerzbank yields to many of the others and other things that comprise its situation. It is emptied of substantial portions of its primary functional potential: the efficient provision of office space. But, as a result, its potential as a healthy work environment – promising greater human productivity – is paradoxically enhanced, such that there is at least partial justification for what some would otherwise see as an investment in inefficiencies. It is in the spaces emptied of expected office usages – the inefficient spaces that are something only because of their

³⁴ The maximum distance from work station to operable window is nine metres, less than one structural bay. See *ibid.*, 15.

³⁵ Three decades before the Commerzbank, Perkins and Will daringly maximised the corner real estate in their design of the U.S. Gypsum Building in Chicago. The corners were 'notched' to, in effect, create eight corners instead of four, and the building was rotated forty-five degrees counter to its site in order to maximise light and air to each side. See Perkins and Blum, *Oral History of Lawrence Bradford Perkins*: 107-109.

relative nothingness – that the Commerzbank best instantiates kenosis. Such ‘weakening’ can be seen as a strengthening of this building. It can also be seen to contribute to a strengthening of the high-rise typology, though that contribution risks overstatement. In the modern urgency to find the ‘new’ and label it accordingly, the Commerzbank has been described as “a significant new building type,”³⁶ and “the reinvention of the skyscraper as a building type.”³⁷ But, it is neither. Although demonstrably innovative in various respects, it remains an evolvement of the architectural tradition begun by William LeBaron Jenney in Chicago, with the first iron and steel framed high-rise, itself an evolvement of an even older tradition of high-rise construction.³⁸ As such, it can lay claim to high-rise orthodoxy – that verticality and density moderate suburbanisation, and that centralisation reduces transport demands – but the facts remain that its gestures toward mixed-use are relatively modest, and that it continues to be a part of a still automobile-dependent urban environment.

Certainly, the project does not achieve anything as radical as Paolo Soleri’s “arcology,” which advocates “the expulsion of those elements that go for the chastising of the urban landscape and the punishment of its dwellers.”³⁹ Nor could such achievement be expected of any one project. Yet the Commerzbank does take incremental and evolving steps – for some, glacial and insufficient – in Soleri’s direction. In its attempts at operational frugality, it reduces energy consumption, waste, and pollutants. And, in its attempts to foster relationality – human to human, and human to nature, even in an un-natural environment – it at least begins to acknowledge Soleri’s plea for “something healthier,” something to “supplant [the] decaying organism” embodied by many other urban constructs.⁴⁰ The Commerzbank does not offer a wholly new way of sustainably being, and many would argue that it merely assuages the guilt of continuing to unsustainably be in the same way we have been. Nonetheless, it presents instantiations of kenosis, and they reveal the becoming of this building and its typology. It recognises and signals the need for empathy and heightened attentiveness toward the complexities of the environment in every situation, even as it also recognises its own inability to fully address such need. The Commerzbank is an incomplete and contradictory exemplar, but, relative to its counterparts, it speaks worthily of kenosis in architecture.

³⁶ S. Guy and S.A. Moore, “Sustainable Architecture and the Pluralist Imagination,” *Journal of Architectural Education* 60, no. 4 (2007): 20.

³⁷ Moore and Brand, “The Banks of Frankfurt and the Sustainable City,” 15.

³⁸ Although examples of ‘high-rise’ buildings (with load-bearing walls) can be found in antiquity, they proliferate when combined with the advent of the elevator in the nineteenth century. It is, however, architect and engineer William Le Baron Jenney who is credited with the 1884 design of the first iron and steel skeletal-framed building, a ten-storey structure known as the Home Insurance Building in Chicago, Illinois (USA). It is that advancement in high-rise design that makes the modern ‘skyscraper’ possible. See D. Lowe, *Lost Chicago* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1975), 128-131.

³⁹ Soleri, *The Bridge Between Matter and Spirit is Matter Becoming Spirit: The Arcology of Paolo Soleri*: 51.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 54.

PEI AT THE MUSEUM OF ISLAMIC ART

The architecture of Ieoh Ming Pei (1917-) is not self-evidently a product of Post-Modernism, yet his career spans well beyond the period of Modernism, and his work is unbound by Modernist orthodoxy. Moreover, Pei's oeuvre is not that of Postmodern Historicism, yet Pei is reliant on history – especially in his later works – as a source of conceptual inspiration and formal direction. His work does not overtly espouse Environmentalism, yet he is keenly interested in appropriate responses to climatic forces and the achievement of environmental 'fit'. Pei's name is absent from the customary lists of architects who supposedly practise Critical Regionalism,⁴¹ but his highly disciplined empathy and responsiveness to a project's situation demonstrates a critically regional approach of high order. As seen to be the case with Louis Kahn, attempts to categorise Pei are similarly problematic. All of the foregoing '-isms' apply, yet none does, because Pei and his work – like Kahn and his – eschew easily labelled self-assertions. Instead, architect and architecture reveal significant instantiations of kenosis; vitally being, and thereby becoming, but not in a particular way or style. Unlike Kahn, however, whose work was produced within the period of Modernism (to the cusp of Post-Modernism), Pei's longevity sees his work transcend Modernism and all of the '-isms' it spawned. Accordingly, Pei and what is likely his career-culminating project merit closer scrutiny.

Container and Contained

Contained and presented in the monumental, twenty-first century container-of-culture known as the Museum of Islamic Art, in Doha, Qatar, is a modest, sixteenth century container called a *kashkúl*, which, by way of kenotic provenance, presents back to the museum a metaphor for its own being. The kashkul opens-up an understanding of the extent to which the museum understands itself as kenotic. Originating as a pre- and early-Islamic 'drinking bowl' for wine, the kashkul eventually took on mystical significance – its vinous contents heralded as a source of spiritual illumination. But the kashkul also came to be used by the humble Dervishes as a "begging bowl."⁴² On display in the museum, the kashkul appears to be little more than an object to be observed, but, like Heidegger's 'jug',⁴³ it is actually a thing made thingly by the experience of its everyday engagement and, therefore, its relationality with human beings (see fig. 4.5). With reference to the jug – but equally true of the kashkul – Heidegger notes that science would see such a vessel as never actually 'empty', always containing at least air. The

⁴¹ Such lists usually begin with those architects originally named by Frampton as exemplifying his view of Critical Regionalism; namely, Utzon and Aalto, to which others are often added, including Botta, Siza, Monao, Ando, Murcutt, Pallasmaa, Zumthor, and Scarpa.

⁴² P. Jodidio and L. Lammerhuber, *Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar*, Museum ed. (Munich, Berlin, London, New York: Prestel Verlag, 2008), 150.

⁴³ Heidegger, "The Thing," 163-180.

Dervishes, however, would be able to testify to the everyday experience of the kashkul's 'emptiness' and the consequent human ramifications. They would also know that in its emptiness is the capacity to be filled; in that filling is the potential for pouring; and in that pouring is the "gift of the outpouring," which is its fundamental character.⁴⁴ Thus, the kashkul's essence is emptiness and fullness, poverty and plenitude, incompleteness and completeness; each trait already embedded in the other.



FIGURE 4.5
A sixteenth century Dervish *kashkul*, or 'begging bowl'.

In Dervish hands, the kashkul is no ordinary beggar's bowl, because Dervishes – having chosen a life of extreme poverty and austerity – do not assertively beg. Instead, they engage in public praise of the divine and passively receive, from volitional donors, the alms and scraps of food that are placed in their kashkul.⁴⁵ This Dervish passivity is actually active. In an intentional act of humility, the kashkul is carried as an empty receptacle to be filled by the carrier's other with signs of empathy and concern. Although demonstrating compassion on the part of the donor, that, in itself, fails to reveal kenosis, since there would seem to be no reciprocal response from the receiver. Indeed, it would seem that the Dervishes are being served, rather than being of service; whereas exactly the opposite is ordinarily expected from an ascetic religious order. Receiver response, however, is forthcoming. First, the Dervishes "call down the blessing of Allah at the doors

⁴⁴ This assessment of the character of the kashkul is occasioned by Heidegger's discussion of 'the jug' in *ibid.*

⁴⁵ Y. Afroukhteh, *Memories of Nine Years in 'Akká*, trans. R. Masrour (Oxford: George Ronald, 2003), 193; and S.M. Zwemer, *Across the World of Islam: Studies in Aspects of the Mohammedan Faith and in the Present Awakening of the Moslem Multitudes* (New York, Chicago, London, Edinburgh: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1929), 7.

where they have filled his kashkul,”⁴⁶ and, then, they give any monetary collections to those who involuntarily find themselves in a state of poverty like that which the Dervishes choose. Hence, the kashkul proves not to be a container for taking and keeping but for outpouring. The Dervish, already set apart as an ‘other’ in society, makes empty and open his kashkul – a sign of self-emptying. With that, he presents an opportunity for his ‘others’ to self-empty and open-up to him, so that he, in turn, can empty and open-up to still others, who, in turn, can expand and reprise the entire cycle. In this, which might be seen figuratively as a kind of continuous ‘whirling dance’ of kenosis, the image of another Dervish tradition is evoked: their literally whirling – and seemingly endless – dance, deployed to pursue religious ecstasy (*ex-stasis*) in an out-of-self, or self-emptied, ‘otherness’.

The kashkul not only embodies the humility, self-emptying, and opening-up to the other that is kenosis but also the absence of ‘grasping’ and ‘clinging’ to power (the latter discussed in Chapter 2 as a prerequisite to kenosis in its Christian formula). Persian poet Sa’di (ca. 1213-1291), who travelled as a Dervish, extols this eschewal of power and glory, seeing it as a kind of releasement or letting-go, and a call to serve. In *The Gulistan* he writes:

One of the pious dreamed of a king in paradise and a hermit in hell. ‘What caused the one to be so high and the other so low?’, he asked. ‘It is contrary to what people would have thought.’ A cry came, saying, ‘This king is in paradise because of his *devotion to dervishes*, and the hermit is in hell because of his *attachment to kings*.’

Of what use is all your dervish paraphernalia?
Free yourself of blameworthy deeds.
There is no need for you to have a sheepskin cap.
Be dervish-like, and wear a Tatar hat.⁴⁷

As in the Christian formula, exploiting, grasping, or *seeking attachment* to a higher power – in Christ’s case, divinity, and in the case of this religious devotee, nobility – is deprecated in favour of *devotion*. Here, that term is used as it is by Levinas, when he refers to devotion, or “being dedicated” even to “the other not worthy of desire,” as a central kenotic characteristic.⁴⁸ In the king’s case, devotion is an opening-up to the humble Dervishes and a recognition of mutual otherness. It is precisely such relationality that is absent as the supposedly humble hermit futilely grasps-at and clings-to

⁴⁶ Zwemer, *Across the World of Islam: Studies in Aspects of the Mohammedan Faith and in the Present Awakening of the Moslem Multitudes*: 9.

⁴⁷ Sa’di, *The Gulistan of Sa’di*, trans. W.M. Thackston, Bilingual English and Persian ed. (Bethesda, MD: Ibex Publishers, 2008), Chapter II, Story 16 (my emphases).

⁴⁸ R. van Riessen, “Hermeneutics of Kenosis: The Road of Dispossession,” in *Man as a Place of God: Levinas’ Hermeneutics of Kenosis* (Dordrecht: Springer Verlag, 2007), 193-194.

supposedly powerful kings – whose power is paradoxically found in Dervish powerlessness.

Beyond the story's illustrative and moral value, the matter of its translation raises a question as to how we, in modernity, come to understand and interpret this Dervish lore. In fact, the question is particularly pertinent to an examination of the Museum of Islamic Art, where the kashkul is housed as a representation of such lore, and where the museum's edifice is meant to embody the modern relevance of the kashkul's wider Islamic culture and context. The excerpt, above, is from one of many versions of *The Gulistan*, all of which attempt to *translate* medieval Islamic thought – written as Persian prose and poetry – into the language of another day and culture; in this case, early twenty-first century English.⁴⁹ The proliferation of translations makes it self-evident that not all are the same or likely to be equal or necessarily faithful, a concern noted by Heidegger. "One can no more translate thought than one can translate a poem. At best, one can paraphrase it. As soon as one attempts a literal translation, everything is transformed."⁵⁰ Indeed, a translator of Heidegger's works goes further, describing all translation as "already an interpretation" and "risky business, ever bordering on the possibility of betrayal."⁵¹ Equally applicable and important to architecture – not least, this museum – it is suggested that a faithful paraphrase is to be prioritised over what may be literally accurate but interpretively errant. Translation, then, can be seen as requiring kenotic devotion: a self-emptying in order to open-up to and partially become the other, in thought, culture, and the nuances of each. And like kenosis, translation entails the risks of transformation, whether such translation involves the language of word or architecture.

It is a faithful paraphrase that I.M. Pei seeks in the design of the Museum of Islamic Art. Cast as the translator – intrinsically an 'other' – he immerses himself in the otherness of an ancient and unfamiliar cultural language, and he accepts the risks of translating it into the language of contemporary architecture. The context of Middle Eastern modernity presents risks to which many architects have succumbed: the allure of spectacle, the temptations of trend and fashion, and the promise of glory. Pei's response to that context runs counter to many of the Middle East's modern architectural projects. In an attempt to be attentive the entire situation, he looks back to find the contemporary and relevant, the innovative and novel. He uncovers commonality in difference, otherness in sameness. The State of Qatar sees this museum as an enduring 'container' that speaks of an enduring culture, a culture recognised for enduring contributions to

⁴⁹ There are no less than sixteen English translations of *The Gulistan*, the first published in 1774, and the most recent in 2008 (used here). It has also been translated into many other languages.

⁵⁰ M. Heidegger, "Only a God Can Save Us": The Spiegel Interview (1966)," in *Heidegger: The Man and the Thinker* ed. T. Sheehan (Chicago: Precedent Publishing, Inc., 1981), 63.

⁵¹ M. Heidegger, "On the Being and Conception of Φύσις in Aristotle's Physics B, 1," *Man and World* 9, no. 3 (1976): 221.

society. It therefore must be a container able to pour out those contributions to a world that sometimes sees Islam – and is sometimes seen by Islam – as ‘the other not worthy of desire’. The events that mark the museum’s creation – cultural translation, situational response, and realisation – reveal the museum’s kenotic self-understanding, just as metaphorically prefigured by the humble container it contains: the kashkul.

Cultural Translation

The Call

There can be little doubt that, in commissioning the Museum of Islamic Art, the Emir of Qatar sought to see his culture translated and presented to the world at large. Sheikha al-Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, chairperson of the Qatar Museums Authority, describes the state’s aspiration for “a modern institution that will engage with the world, bridging the gap between tradition and modernity, highlighting the power of culture to transcend differences and cross artificial barriers.” She portrays the museum as one of many “platforms” where “people from around the world can unite,” platforms that “share a common language.” This museum, then, is nothing less than “the artistic expression of Islamic heritage.”⁵² Notwithstanding lofty language and questions of achievability, this ‘brief’ includes a clear and ambitious cultural goal, extending far beyond the display of artefacts and the demographics of those who visit. In the Middle East – of late, engaged in what has been called a “cultural arms race”⁵³ – the response to such a brief “presents the constant danger that [the outcome] will morph into a world of Ali Baba kitsch,”⁵⁴ or simply revert to another attention-seeking edifice, perhaps aesthetically seductive but not fully related to the *entirety* of its situation. Pei’s charge, then, is not merely to satisfy the situation’s obvious and tangible needs – those of a state-of-the-art museum. He must also attend to its intangible and hidden needs, those satisfied only by the building’s ability to self-empty, to open-up its culture to the other that is the world, and to thereby be filled by that world of which it is always already a part. Like the kashkul, the museum is grounded in the interdependence of emptiness and fullness. It calls for faithful translation, radical contextualisation, heightened situational awareness – and that is a kenotic undertaking.

It can be argued that architects are almost always ‘translators’, at minimum translating their clients’ quantitative needs into built form – but normally with an expectation of something more. Translations take place in the context of manifold

⁵² Jodidio and Lammerhuber, *Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar*: 15.

⁵³ T. Friel, “theartsdesk in the Emirates: A Cultural Arms Race,” *theartsdesk.com*(2009), <http://www.theartsdesk.com/visual-arts/theartsdesk-emirates-cultural-arms-race>.

⁵⁴ E. Woodman, “I M Pei’s Museum of Islamic Art Opens in Doha,” *Building Design: bdonline.co.uk*(2008), [http://www.bdonline.co.uk/buildings/im-peis-museum-of-islamic-art-opens-in-doha-\(review\)/3129204.article](http://www.bdonline.co.uk/buildings/im-peis-museum-of-islamic-art-opens-in-doha-(review)/3129204.article).

bounds, emerging within those bounds, but often not without testing their limits; the latter recognising that bounds are changeable, changing, and sometimes kaleidoscopic. Betrayal and faithfulness sit side by side amidst such an indeterminate domain. There is, however, some measure of stability to be found in the kenotic-ness of the translator's attitude and approach; that is, the extent to which the translator is open, alert, and aware. Is the translator readied to translate? Is the translator's attitude and approach empty enough – vulnerable enough – to be filled by the entirety of the situation, even to the point of discerning and discriminating that which is contrary to preconceived notions and presumed 'knowledge'? It is through the translator's vulnerable readiness that the situation – the bounded creative domain – is opened-up, and the situation's emergent potential may reveal itself. Such is the 'risky' topographical matrix in which the architectural translator is found, not least in the instance presented by the Museum of Islamic Art.⁵⁵ It is a matrix that kenosis permeates, animates, sustains (and complicates), but paradoxically also makes more navigable.

Rejection and Acceptance

In the museum's design narrative,⁵⁶ there is considerable evidence to suggest that Pei's approach is substantially, if not entirely, a kenotic one. The first such evidence appears when Pei effectively rejects the project by choosing not to participate in the 1997 design competition that was to have determined its designer. As a matter of policy (and mirroring the Dervish aversion to assertive begging), Pei does not participate in design competitions.⁵⁷ Such a policy can be seen to demonstrate kenotic inclinations, because design competitions can be seen as largely antithetical to kenosis. Their propensities toward exploitation, grasping, and clinging are embedded in the very word 'competition'. Despite the noble purposes and good intentions that can characterise well-administered design competitions, the dynamic of a competition is ultimately competitive. The client, wittingly or not, exploits the competitors for the often under-compensated services required, in many cases with the hope of attaching themselves and their project to an architect of some fame; in more sensational instances, a 'starchitect'. In similar fashion, the competitors grasp at the glory of a preeminent client or project, seeing therein significant prestige and further marketing potential, especially if selected as the competition 'winner'. But for each winner there is typically a long trail of non-winners, and

⁵⁵ This use of the Heideggerian notion of topos, and topography or topology, is explored and developed in J. Malpas, "Pensando Topográficamente: Lugar, Espacio, y Geografía [Thinking Topographically: Place, Space, and Geography]," *Documents d'Anàlisi Geogràfica* 61 no. 2 (2015).

⁵⁶ In addition to the numerous sources cited and noted throughout this chapter, the project is thoroughly documented in Jodidio and Lammerhuber, *Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar*. The latter source includes significant material gathered in several interviews with Pei, conducted during the course of the project's execution.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 43.

an inestimable quantity of intellectual resources offering little residual value – to client or competitor – other than the mere experience of the competition; the benefit of which may have been derived to the same or greater extent from more productive pursuits. In this dynamic, even winners can be losers, as in the case of the museum competition. After the winning entry was announced and publicised internationally, both the competition and its winner were abandoned for largely unexplained reasons. Architectural observers, including respected critic Paul Goldberger, have speculated that the winning entrant, Jordanian architect Rasem Badran, “despite his distinguished reputation within the region, did not have the degree of international stature the nation sought.”⁵⁸ It would appear that Qatar was grasping for more, and eventually they found it, but not amongst the next-in-line non-winners, instead, in an architect who refused to compete.

It is improbable that Pei’s stance against design competitions stems from their commercial culpabilities, alone, since his firm(s) would be as financially capable of participation as most – if grasping for such prizes were central to his organisations’ ethos. I would suggest that, in addition or perhaps instead, what Pei rejects in competitions are those aspects most antithetical to kenosis. Design competitions intentionally distance a project’s most important ‘others’ – the clients and users – those with whom designers must develop relationality if approaching the project kenotically. The absence of clients and users is typically mediated by little more than the program or project brief. A design competitor can engage with the words of that document and access a project spokesperson for the purpose of answering questions – provided that both questions and answers are disseminated to all competitors without difference or bias – but such substitutions can be largely unsatisfying. In Germany, where design competitions are common, one architect describes the deficiency: “You have no partners in the first stages of the project; you must be a detective.”⁵⁹ Of course, it is true that investigation is integral to design, and that the ‘other things’ of a project, including site and surroundings, remain accessible in design competitions. But the lament, here, concerns an absence of the essential other, an absence that undermines both the client’s and the architect’s potential for emptying and opening-up. Such absence is not simply due to the difficulties of establishing and developing relations between what may be numerous clients and competitors. It is, instead, owing to the fact that relationality cannot exist without some degree of difference, and that would be almost certain to bias the competition, either toward or against those competitors with whom relations prove most different. In a legalistic sense, client detachment may seem fair and objective, but in other, arguably

⁵⁸ P. Goldberger, “Islamic Architecture, Modernism, and I.M. Pei: The Challenge of the Museum of Islamic Art” (paper presented at the Hamad bin Khalifa Symposium on Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar, 29 October 2011).

⁵⁹ Lindstrom, *Creativity and Contradiction: European Churches Since 1970*: 125.

more important senses, it proves wholly unfair to the project. The competition's outcomes are denied a substantial and critical component of their potential human-ness, and are actually products of curtailed relationality. Hence it is unlikely, if not impossible, for such outcomes to be attentive to the entirety of the situation since such relationality is a defining part of the situation to which all parties are meant to be attentive. By declining to participate in the museum design competition (and all such competitions), Pei signals his desire to be attentive to the project's *entire* situatedness, and, in that, he signals a kenotic approach.⁶⁰

Kenosis is likewise to be seen in the client's eventual invitation, to Pei, to undertake the museum project, and in Pei's considered acceptance. The nature of invitation and acceptance initiates relationality, precisely that which the abandoned design competition inherently lacked. To abandon such a public and publicised event requires a significant element of humility, and to offer the commission to an 'other' requires an opening-up to that other. The other's acceptance is a recognition of the opening-up that the invitation presents and a reciprocal response. Thus, the acts of opening-up mirror one another. With such rapprochement, a kenotic event is germinated – though not assured. It is Pei's view that "a good client makes good architecture."⁶¹ And by his accounts, the Qatar clients were 'good', opening-up a relationship that not only offers access to the Emir and Sheikha and museum officials but also fosters mutual exchange and influence.⁶² Such relationality allows Pei to open-up to the cultural 'text' he is meant to translate. It is his entrée to months of preparation for emergent creative events; preparation that includes engagements with self, others, and other things – the situation's bounds – and thereby invites the opening-up of a domain in which translation can happen.

Readying and Waiting

Arguably, it is Pei's willing engagement with self that prefigures his 1990 retirement from Pei, Cobb, Freed & Partners and sees the establishment of a small practice; one bearing only his name and accepting only projects outside the USA. Of this intentionally boutique practice, Pei says, "I selected places to work where I did not know the cultures," and that

⁶⁰ This discourse concerning design competitions is not to suggest that other forms of competitive 'exploitation' and 'grasping' cannot or does not occur in other architect selection processes, including the more common tendering and qualification-based methods. The culpability of design competitions lies in the fact that such competitiveness, and with it the mandatory absence of the other, extends to the *conclusion of design conception*, after which the 'winner' is selected. In most other processes, competitiveness extends to the time of selection, but selection then *precedes design*, thereby ensuring the presence of the other and the opportunity for relationality to develop, *prior to and during design conception*.

⁶¹ B. Landin and S. van Wagenen, "Learning from Light: The Vision of I.M. Pei," (USA 2009).

⁶² Ibid. This video documentary includes excerpts from a variety of interviews with Pei, as well as a joint interview with Sheikha al-Mayassa, conducted at Pei's New York premises.

made each “a learning process.”⁶³ Indeed, Qatar was just such a place. “I knew the East because I was born there, the West because I was educated there, but the Middle East I didn’t know”; a matter amplified by the fact that his professional education had “never revealed ... Islamic architecture as a major architectural invention.”⁶⁴ And, in addition to architecture, the Islamic religion presents another area of unfamiliarity to Pei. Although Christianity and Buddhism are part of Pei’s life, he knows almost nothing about Islam, a religion inseparable from Islamic culture and, therefore, its architecture. Thus, even as he accepts the role of translating and expressing Islam through architecture, Pei acknowledges his ignorance and willingly accepts the consequent risks. His is not, however, the risk-taking customarily associated with architecture. As a seasoned practitioner and nonagenarian, Pei’s risk is not that of a fledgling architect or architectural firm, strategically eager to take almost any project for the sake of experience and continued livelihood (a risk that includes an element of grasping). Moreover, there is nothing to suggest that the museum project requires Pei to take any unusual financial risk. Nor is Pei’s risk one of potentially failing to garner the approval of a twenty-first century audience – professional and public – seeking to be ‘wowed’ by the so-called unconventional. Indeed, the latter is no risk at all, as recognised a century earlier by playwright and author Somerset Maugham:

It is not difficult to be unconventional in the eyes of the world when your unconventionality is but the convention of your set. It affords you then an inordinate amount of self-esteem. You have the self-satisfaction of courage without the inconvenience of danger.⁶⁵

The inconvenient danger of Pei’s risk-taking is of greater consequence. It is the risk of interpretive betrayal, of failing to be attentive to the project’s entire situatedness. Left unattended, elements of a situation – whether regarded as agreeable to the situation or not – merely go on attempting to establish their relatedness, and such attempts only highlight the state of un-relatedness.⁶⁶ Ironically, it is precisely such un-relatedness that is often overlooked or dismissed by some, even as others offer praise for its unconventionality and its ability to deliver the popularly sought ‘wow-factors’. Pei’s approach shows little concern for the ‘wow’ of fashion or trend,⁶⁷ and, according to one

⁶³ Jodidio and Lammerhuber, *Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar*: 38. Amongst such later projects are Pei’s extension to the German Historical Museum (Berlin, Germany, 1998-2003), the Miho Museum (Shigaraki, Shiga, Japan, 1998-2002), Mudam Luxembourg (1999-2006), and Suzhou Museum (Suzhou, China, 2003-06).

⁶⁴ Landin and van Wagenen, “Learning from Light: The Vision of I.M. Pei.”

⁶⁵ This observation is made via the statement of a fictional character in W.S. Maugham, *The Moon and Sixpence* (Grosset & Dunlap, 1919), 80; and is also cited in B. Thomas, “Culture, Merchandise, or Just Light Entertainment? New Architecture at the Millennium,” *Journal of Architectural Education* 50, no. 4 (1997): 255.

⁶⁶ As used here, ‘relatedness’ does not connote ‘sameness’ and may, in fact, manifest in marked difference.

⁶⁷ Pei is described as “too old and too clever to worry about fashion” in E. Heathcote, “A Monument to the Possible: Edwin Heathcote visits what may be 91-year-old I.M. Pei’s swansong, the Museum of Islamic Art in

observer, “runs counter to the ever-accelerating pace of the global age, not to mention our obsession with novelty.”⁶⁸ It unassumingly reflects what Levinas refers to as “sublime kenosis” and, with that, the courage and “greatness” of those “who risk being taken for failures.”⁶⁹ Pei’s ignorance of Islam – and disinterest in fashion – puts him at exactly such risk, but, in that vulnerability, he is liberated from its restrictions. Such risk-taking is neither strategy nor mere humility. It is an aspect of kenosis. It evidences the “denucleation of the subject,” whereby “the consciousness releases its self-ness, so that it becomes ‘selfless’, and no longer clings to itself or hardens itself.”⁷⁰ Emptiness and openness originate in denucleation, standing in sharp contrast to the already fullness of self-assertion.

Self-emptying or denucleation, however, is only one side of the kenotic coin. As discussed in Chapter 2, the other side is skenosis, the revelation, filling, and indwelling – even overflowing – made possible by emptying. But, how are these effects of skenosis effected? For Levinas, filling is enabled by the approach of the Infinite,⁷¹ or what Heidegger calls “the appearance of a god.”⁷² Each description stops short of direct contact between the Infinite and the finite. And although both philosophers use language that can be regarded as numinous, neither is referring to a deity, but to a phenomenon. It is the phenomenon that can be seen occurring in Michelangelo’s *Creation of Adam* (particularly if its theological and anthropomorphic expressions are put aside). Therein, the Infinite approaches, appears, and even extends itself toward the finite, but, despite the finite’s reciprocal response, physical contact remains incomplete – held in suspension. Less ambiguously, there are contemporary Christian theologians who turn from notions of God as entity – especially anthropomorphic entity – and authoritatively posit God as phenomenon, not least as the phenomenon of “serendipitous creativity,”

Qatar,” *Financial Times*, 17 May 2008, 11; Pei’s oeuvre, however, suggests that his aversion to fashion and trend has been lifelong; he and his work described, for example, as “never ... easily characterized” in Goldberger, “Islamic Architecture, Modernism, and I.M. Pei: The Challenge of the Museum of Islamic Art.”

⁶⁸ N. Ouroussoff, “For I. M. Pei, History Is Still Happening,” *New York Times*, 14 December 2008.

⁶⁹ Levinas, “Judaism and Kenosis,” 118. Here, Levinas names “the saintly and humble”, and even “God”, as those willing to be seen as failures. Pei is neither deity nor saint, but his approach is such that he arguably qualifies as humble – and kenotic.

⁷⁰ R. van Riessen, “Creative Kenosis: Levinas and Christian Theology,” in *Responsibility, God and Society: Theological Ethics in Dialogue, Festschrift Roger Burggraeve*, ed. J. de Tavernier, et al. (Leuven: Peeters, 2008), 147.

⁷¹ Ibid. Earlier in her discourse, van Riessen posits that, for Levinas, “the Infinite” may include the notion of God as divinity and, equally, the experience of transcendence, if not ‘thematized’ by theology (p. 145). While recognising that theology and religion have, over time, been significant repositories of transcendent experience, Levinas remains ambiguous toward both, suggesting, in van Riessen’s interpretation, that “the true metaphysician is not a theologian, but an ‘atheist’.”

⁷² Heidegger, “Only a God Can Save Us”: The Spiegel Interview (1966),” 57 (my emphasis). A translator’s note suggests that “in all probability, Heidegger is not using the word ‘god’ here in any personal sense, but in the sense ... [of] the concrete manifestation of Being as ‘the Holy’.”

whether cosmic, evolutionary, or human.⁷³ If the notions of God, a god, and the Infinite are taken broadly to mean 'creativity', then self-emptying is that which readies for – that which enables the awaiting of – creative emergence and the filling it can effect. The "readying of this readiness" is fostered by "thinking and poetising," which Heidegger proposes as "the standard measure of [human] activity,"⁷⁴ and which he cautions can only be conjoined because of their difference and distinctness.⁷⁵ Poetising differs from and complements thinking, in that it is "measuring" (*messen*), but not in scientific or mathematical terms. Instead, it is a measure-taking that unconceals the self-concealed, not by assertive extraction, but by respecting the concealment. It is thus

[a] strange measure for ordinary and in particular also for all merely scientific ideas, certainly not a palpable stick or rod but in truth simpler to handle than they, provided our hands do not abruptly grasp but are guided by gestures befitting the measure here to be taken. This is done by a taking which at no time clutches at the standard but rather takes it in a concentrated perception, a gathered taking-in, that remains a listening.⁷⁶

This activity that complements thinking – this poetic measuring – is a passive activity that is actually a kind of listening, though not limited to the audial. Levinas paints a similar notion with a different brush, seeing it as a change in the very nature of thinking, wherein thinking ceases as activity and becomes passivity, or what he calls *affectivity*: "an irreversible affection of the finite by the infinite; [a] passivity and patience ..."⁷⁷ Affectivity is therefore an active passivity, a form of receptivity like Heidegger's listening, which readies or heightens attentiveness to the approach, or the appearance-through-unconcealment, of that which is unknown and remains not-fully-knowable. There is no evidence to suggest, and no argument here, that Pei's readying for the museum project is the conscious pursuit of such philosophical concepts. But in his ways of readying, such concepts are nonetheless manifested, and the argument that such readying is kenotic becomes stronger.

Pei's initial self-emptying – including his recognition of ignorance and acceptance of consequent risk – readies him to await the approach of what he calls the "essence,"⁷⁸ or what might also be understood as the infinite unknown of Islamic architecture. He further readies his readiness by opening-up to the others who shaped and are shaping the things of Islamic culture, as well as to those things by which the others were shaped

⁷³ G.D. Kaufman, "A Christian View of Creativity: Creativity as God," *Dao* 6, no. 2 (2007): 106-107. Professor Kaufman (1925-2011) was an influential liberal theologian, and member of the Faculty of Divinity at Harvard Divinity School, since 1963.

⁷⁴ Heidegger, "'Only a God Can Save Us': The Spiegel Interview (1966)," 56-7.

⁷⁵ Heidegger, "'... Poetically Man Dwells ...'," 216.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 221.

⁷⁷ van Riessen, "Hermeneutics of Kenosis: The Road of Dispossession," 189.

⁷⁸ Jodidio and Lammerhuber, *Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar*. 44.

and are being shaped, not least architecture. Initially, Pei opens himself to the mysteries of the Islamic religion and the mind of its prophet, and follows that with extensive travel, submitting himself to 'concentrated perception' and a 'gathered taking-in' of the people and places of Islamic significance, from Spain to India. By thinking and poetising, Pei makes himself a receptacle – a kashkul – to Islam and its architecture, inviting (but not begging) its unknowable essence to approach. Like the Dervishes, his passive receptivity is not inactivity. Through a kind of devotion to the other and other things of Islam, he pays close attention to their essential diversity and nuance.

The Approach

Unlike architects who, when faced with unfamiliar project demands, find themselves consciously or subconsciously grasping at precedents with mimetic potential, Pei does not search for features to copy. As translator, he seeks a faithful paraphrase, not the literalness that risks betrayal. He awaits the unconcealment of Islamic architecture's being by respecting its concealment. The wait frequently yields only that which is readily revealed: excessive Spanish influence at Cordoba, excessive Indian influence at Fatehpur Sikri, and the contaminating reverberations of Roman and Christian history at Damascus.⁷⁹ But, in Tunisia, the *ribat* (fort) at Sousse (821 CE) bares something that Pei believes is "coming closer to the essence of Islamic architecture, where sunlight brings to life powerful volumes, and geometry plays a central role."⁸⁰ Noteworthy is that his description is not of forms but of the essence that exists in the *relationality* of forms and light.⁸¹ Indeed, that essence is amplified by the central courtyard and ablutions fountain at Cairo's mosque of Ahmad Ibn Tulun (876-879 CE), where he not only notes fundamental geometric progression but is specific about their square and octagonal shapes. In that, Pei is 'thinking'. But when he attempts to name that which unconceals itself in this place, he is wholly unspecific, using the term "severe" and finding that severity not in architectonics but "sun ... shadows, and shades of colour."⁸² In that, Pei is 'poetising'. These are essences that thrive on their self-concealedness in a desert region, and are unconcealed – contingently, never fully – in direct proportion to the perceiver's respect for and attentiveness to the concealment. Just as, for Heidegger, "the

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 46.

⁸¹ Worthy of note is the resonance between Pei's view of the relationship of light and form, and that of Deleuze, as interpreted in B. Massumi, "Sensing the Virtual, Building the Insensible," *Architectural Design: Hypersurface Architecture (Profile 133)* 68, no. 5/6 (1998): 21. There, Massumi writes that, "Architecture, Deleuze will say ... is a distribution of light before it is a concretion of forms. Its basic medium is light. It uses concrete and stone, metal and glass, to sculpt light in ways that either direct the fixations of attention steadfastly away from their confounded conditions of emergence, or on the contrary enable it sporadically to fold-back into them. The separation between 'primary' sensations (i.e. depth and forms) and 'secondary' sensations (in particular color and lighting) is untenable."

⁸² Jodidio and Lammerhuber, *Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar*: 51.

unknown god appears as the unknown by way of the sky's manifestness,"⁸³ the unknown-ness of Islamic architecture appears as the never-fully-known in the manifestness of an ablutions fountain. As this infinite spirit, or inspiration, of Islamic architecture approaches and appears, it is, in Levinasian terms, Pei's affectivity – his patient and actively passive openness – that readies him to recognise and receive it (though never fully).

When Pei substitutes the word 'inspiration' for essence, as he does in declaring various Islamic locations to be places where "I did not find my *inspiration*,"⁸⁴ there is an unsettling temptation to think of inspiration – and by association, essence – as it is sometimes viewed in so-called creative industries (not exclusive of architecture). There, inspiration can be seen as something to be searched-for or chosen, an exemplar or prototype requiring only clever adaptations to suit a new time and use, and thereby a saviour from the real dangers of creating. Pei's attitude and actions, however, demonstrate an understanding of inspiration in a more original sense, meaning to be breathed into or upon, as by the 'spirit'; or to take-in, as with the inhalation of air. As such, inspiration is not optional. It is neither searched-for, nor chosen; and although it can be invited, it remains contingent. "The inspirational thus exerts a power that derives both from the nature of that which is taken in, and from the nature of the lives ... into which it flows."⁸⁵ Every setting, not least those Islamic settings that Pei visits, is imbued with the inspirational, though not necessarily the spectacular. Inspiration is no less real or important when it approaches from out of the ordinary, the everyday, and even the undesirable. To some extent, every perceiver breathes-in the inspiration on offer, and that is one dimension of the filling that accompanies self-emptying.⁸⁶ But the power of the connection – between that which is taken in and that into which it flows – is never assured and never the same. Self-emptying is itself contingent, and, although the taking in is reflexive, the potential for synergy depends on the nature of the perceiver's engagement and relationality with self, others, and other things; in other words, with the *world*. The concentrative perceiver, who is also the attentive listener and affective receiver, is made more open to the approach of each situation's infiniteness – and potential inspiration – than is the perceiver who already 'knows', is already full, and is unwilling to empty. Worthy of further examination is the response to kenotic experience – the *expiration*, or breathing out, that accompanies inspiration – especially as seen by examining Pei's response to the inspiration of Islam and its architecture. In that

⁸³ Heidegger, "'... Poetically Man Dwells ...'," 221.

⁸⁴ Jodidio and Lammerhuber, *Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar*. 44 (my emphasis).

⁸⁵ J. Malpas, "Breath and Revelation," *Inspirational Landscapes: Perspective Essays* 2(2003): 12. Herein, the philosophical concept of inspiration and landscape – seen as breath and revelation – is insightfully explored.

⁸⁶ The analogy of breathing is useful in discussing kenosis only in that it allows the dissection and examination of the kenotic phenomenon by its parts. Kenosis, however, is not to be seen as a sequence of acts, one (self-emptying, or exhaling) followed by another (filling, or inhaling), but rather as a single act of synchronous exchange.

examination, the question arises: Does readying, awaiting, and resultant filling with inspiration actually advantage a more attentive response?

Situational Response

"Architecture is form, space, light, movement, all of that. But more important is the *place* where you build."⁸⁷ In so declaring, Pei nominates place as that aspect of this project – indeed, of all architecture – demanding the greatest attentiveness. Hence, it is also that aspect by which the Museum of Islamic Art must first be seen and assessed. So, what is the placedness of this building? It is placed in the world, as a building with which to bridge *world* cultures, just as it is also the "crown" in a program designed to establish Doha as "a cultural capital for the *region*."⁸⁸ It is equally placed in the greater *city* of Doha and in the immediate *environs* that surround and define the museum *site*. The project's placedness, then, includes each and all measures of proximity. Although the same is true of virtually all architectural projects, even if to modest extent or affect, architecture can often be seen to prioritise the 'selfness' of the immediate context over the 'otherness' of more distant surroundings. Indeed, there are abundant examples, not least in contemporary architecture, of the narrowest self-priority, that of assertively, if not defiantly, ignoring context – including aspects of the building's own site – and thereby producing the kind of un-relatedness that might be unseen, ignored, forgiven, or even valorised for its 'different-ness'. Such distinction, however, frequently only serves to make a building the same as so many other 'different' buildings. By contrast, Pei recognises that the bounds and horizons of place can open-up a surprisingly broad domain, and be constantly changing.⁸⁹ Although risky and demanding of attentiveness, place is creatively charged.

When Pei is offered a variety of sites along Doha's prime waterfront, known as The Corniche, he rejects all and – with the approval and support of the Emir – instead thrusts a new peninsula into the Persian Gulf. So doing, he creates a new semi-circular bay, in which he constructs a new island, on which he builds the new museum, and, ironically, by which he physically isolates the museum *site* from its proximate built *environs* and its host *city*. He cites his concern for "what will come after" the museum; that is, its potential to be "overshadowed" or "destroyed by something else."⁹⁰ Sounding self-assertive and scarcely kenotic, Pei proclaims, "I didn't choose the location; I made

⁸⁷ Landin and van Wagenen, "Learning from Light: The Vision of I.M. Pei," (my emphasis).

⁸⁸ Jodidio and Lammerhuber, *Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar*: 12.

⁸⁹ The citation for Pei's 1983 Pritzker Prize affirms that "his concern has always been the surroundings in which his buildings arise." See *ibid.*, 34.

⁹⁰ N. Ouroussoff, "Pei's Doha Museum Reflects Splendor of Islamic Art," *International Herald Tribune* 2008.

it.”⁹¹ Although he admits to what many might think – that “this was very selfish”⁹² – his admission belies an outcome noteworthy for its kenotic sensibilities. His bold and deliberately separated siting finds the museum *apart* from its surroundings, yet simultaneously and inseparably *a part* of all that comprises its place. The island museum develops an “insistent relation of distance,”⁹³ wherein the water between mainland and island creates an interval, much like those that separate but also intimately relate notes of music. By emptying itself of contiguous connection to the mainland, the island opens-up to an even stronger connection with that from which it is separated. Such relationality can be seen to create dynamic tensions and heightened potentiality.

According to a well-known quip by architect Hugh Jacobsen, “Good architecture, like a well-mannered lady, never shouts at the neighbours.”⁹⁴ Employing that standard, the manners of Doha’s contemporary architecture are a legitimate subject of scrutiny. Though not yet on a par with Dubai, the buildings that comprise Doha’s “look-at-me skyline” have been described as products of “the same developer greed, the same architectural autism, in which buildings ascend as if alone, not on speaking terms with their neighbours,”⁹⁵ a lament applicable to many skylines of the world (see figs. 4.6 – 4.8). Pei shares similar sentiments, especially toward architecture that fails to prioritise relationality with its contexts. In Doha, Pei finds “real life” and “real context” only at the old marketplace – the *Souq Waqif* – a context to which most of modern Doha fails to empathise (see fig. 4.9).⁹⁶ Assessing notable projects and architects in the Gulf Region, Pei reveals sly modesty. “They are trying to do something novel. I think that what they are interested in is the ‘shock of the new’. I do not go along with that, because I am not competent to do it that way.”⁹⁷ Fearing that such novelty or shock will one day dominate The Corniche, he conceives of his man-made peninsula, bay, and island (see figs. 4.10

⁹¹ J. Merrick, “Xanadu Reborn: New Museum of Islamic Art,” *The Independent*, 25 November 2008; and Landin and van Wagenen, “Learning from Light: The Vision of I.M. Pei.” With greater modesty and diplomacy, Pei describes this matter differently in Jodidio and Lammerhuber, *Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar*: 43. There, he says, “I asked if it might not be possible to create my own site.”

⁹² Jodidio and Lammerhuber, *Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar*: 43.

⁹³ This phrase and the logic of ‘apart/a part’ are from A. Benjamin, *Present Hope: Philosophy, Architecture, Judaism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 23. Benjamin’s work, in this instance, pertains specifically to memory, and thereby indirectly to architecture. My extrapolations relate similar concepts directly to the architectural production under discussion.

⁹⁴ H. Jacobsen, “The Alumni Center: Dedication Day,” *The Michigan Alumnus* 89, no. 4 (1982): 5. The same quotation appears in numerous other interviews, both print and film.

⁹⁵ E. Heathcote, “Bridge in the Gulf: There is no shortage of self-conscious architecture in Doha but a new city centre promises something different,” *Financial Times*, 12 February 2011. The term ‘architectural autism’ is especially apt, because it is the condition of ‘disturbed perceptions and relationships’ that I am discussing in connection with placedness.

⁹⁶ Ouroussoff, “Pei’s Doha Museum Reflects Splendor of Islamic Art.” Pei is not suggesting that Doha – or any place – should be ‘frozen’ in the architecture of its past, nor is he minimising the potentiality of contemporary architecture in place-making (to which he is dedicated). He is advocating that, in the act of ongoing place-making, the new can empathise with the heritage that is already part of the place being made, and do so without unduly restricting the identity of the new as new.

⁹⁷ Jodidio and Lammerhuber, *Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar*: 45. Pei attributes the phrase ‘shock of the new’ to a book of that title, written by Australian critic Robert Hughes.

and 4.11). With that, the museum is gifted with a 'difference' that prevents its dissolution into the 'sameness' of other Doha buildings, those trying so desperately and vainly to be different. Such buildings ascend *as if alone* and fail to be in relationship, despite their proximity. The Museum of Islamic Art is *alone* and at a comfortable distance. In that, it shares an intimate relationship with its environs and city neighbours. It converses with them, and never has need to shout. Thus, as one Islamic critic observes, rather than following other contemporary examples in the region, where "architecture [is] naively used to express artificially the Islamic identity," Pei's museum addresses "Doha's contemporary aspirations without neglecting the value of its contextual heritage," a heritage that uniquely arises from its "belonging to the Arab and Islamic world."⁹⁸



FIGURE 4.6
The skyline of Doha's new business district, at the northern side of The Corniche.



FIGURE 4.7
New high-rise buildings compete for attention.



FIGURE 4.8
Islamic motifs applied to modern buildings.



FIGURE 4.9
Doha's historic market district, the *Souq Waqif*; according to Pei, Doha's only "real" life and context.

⁹⁸ A.A. Alraouf, "The Role of Museum's Architecture in Islamic Community: Museum of Islamic Art, Doha," *Journal of Islamic Architecture* 1, no. 2 (2010): 66.

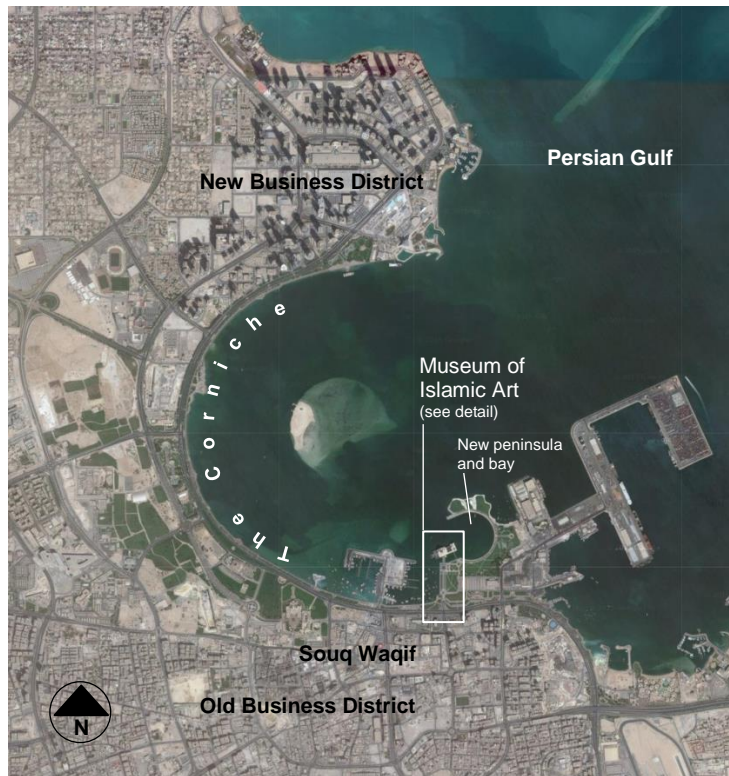


FIGURE 4.10

Pei's new peninsula, bay, and island-museum, as related to The Corniche, the city of Doha, and the Persian Gulf.



FIGURE 4.11

Detail of the museum as island.

At another scale, the museum's island siting also makes a significant contribution to its relationality with region and world. It would be an overstatement to suggest that such relationality could only exist by virtue of this siting solution, but it is nonetheless true that this siting solution manifests that relationality in ways difficult to effect by other solutions. Of course, Pei's project is not the first to occupy re-claimed land. Various airports around the world, for example, have created previously non-existent sites far more ambitiously and extensively, primarily to overcome localised land shortages. But the museum island does not exist because of insufficient available land; quite the contrary. Nor does it exist as an easy or obvious solution. In fact, it is problematic, not least to the fundamental functionality of a museum, which dares not have either exhibits or storage below the water table. The island's existence, then, appears to be primarily a matter of place-making being given priority over functionality.⁹⁹ By virtue of that prioritisation, a small fragment of disconnected terrestrial world is created, never before existing in that form. Though separated from the mainland by only 60 metres, it is

⁹⁹ As Pei explains it, he elevates the building on its island platform – to a greater height than initially envisaged – so as to maintain sub-exhibit level storage spaces above the water line. The approach to the public entrance is thus ramped, culminating in a bridge to the island. See Landin and van Wagenen, "Learning from Light: The Vision of I.M. Pei."

nonetheless physically excised from Doha; as if not in the exclusive grasp of either city or state; as if cast off to float toward the world beyond Doha and Qatar. Having emptied itself of attachment to Doha (even without losing its identity as a part of Doha), it is opened-up to the region and world. Although there is no ambiguity about ownership and sovereignty – Qatar is clearly the host and the museum is undeniably political – the museum’s siting speaks of the potential for transforming sovereignty into hospitality and responsibility,¹⁰⁰ not only to benefit local constituents, but also all of the others for whom the island museum designedly exists. In such transformation – kenotic transformation – lies the capacity to bridge world cultures and thereby fulfil Qatar’s vision of “a modern institution that will engage with the world.”¹⁰¹

It is in fact a bridge – physical, but also metaphorical – that connects the island museum to Doha, the region, and the world. And, in so doing, it establishes the museum’s placedness. It is a bridge not unlike that described by Simmel, in “Bridge and Door,”¹⁰² and subsequently by Heidegger, in “Building Dwelling Thinking.” From the latter:

[The bridge] does not just connect banks that are already there. The banks emerge as banks only as the bridge crosses the stream. The bridge designedly causes them to lie across from each other. One side is set off against the other by the bridge ... With the banks, the bridge brings to the stream the one and the other expanse of the landscape lying behind them. It brings stream and bank and land into each other’s neighborhood. The bridge gathers the earth as landscape around the stream.¹⁰³

The bridge at the Museum of Islamic Art does indeed set off the island and the mainland against one another, even as it gathers the landscape lying behind each toward the interval of water. The landscape lying behind the mainland’s bank is that of Doha and the Qatar desert, beyond. The landscape behind the island’s bank is the Persian Gulf and the world to which it and related waterways are connected. Without the bridge, there would be island and mainland, related by proximity but not *in relationship*; there would be island and world, with respective positions but little mutual exchange and influence. Without the bridge, the island would be one of what Heidegger calls “many spots” in the water, rather than a “location” or place. The place of the island museum “comes into existence only by virtue of the bridge.”¹⁰⁴ For Heidegger, the bridge is a place that establishes relationality as it “gathers the fourfold” of earth and sky, divinities and mortals. All places are constantly engaged in such gathering, yet not all places are equally placed.

¹⁰⁰ The concept of sovereignty transforming into hospitality and responsibility is discussed more fully in Chapter 2.

¹⁰¹ Jodidio and Lammerhuber, *Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar*: 15.

¹⁰² G. Simmel, “Bridge and Door,” *Theory Culture and Society* 11(1994).

¹⁰³ Heidegger, “Building Dwelling Thinking,” 150.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 152.

Kenosis, which is already gathered into this gathering, sees those places of heightened relationality – those most instantiative of kenosis – become, like Heidegger's bridge, very special, if not sacred or 'holy'.¹⁰⁵

Pei's bridge is such a place. Not only does it gather the landscape of the earth, from behind its two banks, but it also gathers – or assembles and presents – the other elements of Heidegger's fourfold. It gathers the sky by receiving the sky's sun and thereby creating shadow and reflection in the water it crosses. It likewise receives the sky's storms and sees the rain-turned-sea flow under it. It gathers people (mortals) and presents their crossing-over to the sky and world, while also presenting sky and world back to those who cross-over. And in the event of crossing-over, the bridge presents an opportunity for people to contemplate the 'power' of all that the bridge presents: self, others (who share in the crossing-over), and the worlds at each of its ends. Perhaps most importantly, as that which enables the crossing of threshold or boundary, the bridge is "that from which something begins its presencing."¹⁰⁶ In the case of this project, it is the museum that begins its presencing at one end of the bridge, while the city and region and world are seen to emerge at the other end. The bridge grants the museum placedness, not only by connecting it to existing places, but also by revealing the museum as a place for and of people – a place of human experience and relationship. Hence, even as the bridge is itself always already kenotic – opening-up to and gathering-in the fourfold – it is additionally a conduit of kenosis, facilitating the ongoing exchange and influence of museum to world, and world to museum.

Furthering its kenotic conduction, the bridge is partnered by a triple *allée*, formed by four colonnades of palm trees. Marking an axial approach from the mainland, the centre *allée* accommodates vehicles, while those flanking it serve pedestrians. Although palms of proper scale and durability proved difficult to procure, and their use attracted the Emir's misgivings, Pei defends the scheme for its 'ceremonial' value, an attribution that warrants further exploration.¹⁰⁷ The colonnades actually extend the effect of the museum's bridge and perform in like manner to the bridges of Heidegger and Simmel. In fact, a colonnade shares similarities with all of Simmel's archetypal elements – road, bridge, window, pillars, and door – each of which says something of kenosis, something of the connecting or opening-up of a world.¹⁰⁸ Like the road and bridge, the colonnade connects the destinations at each of its terminuses. Like the window, the colonnade frames the outside world – in a multiplicity of views – and thereby evokes the potential for

¹⁰⁵ The notion that Heidegger may have viewed the bridge as a "sacred place" is proposed in Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects*: 50.

¹⁰⁶ Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking," 152.

¹⁰⁷ Landin and van Wagenen, "Learning from Light: The Vision of I.M. Pei."

¹⁰⁸ Simmel, "Bridge and Door."

freedom beyond the frame. Like the pillars, the colonnade provides the directionality of perspective, and, in this case, four parallel rows of palms offer both axial and lateral perspective, directing attention in four directions. Like the door, the colonnade separates 'inside' and 'outside' by means of defined threshold – here, tree trunks and canopies – yet makes them always apparent and apparent to one another. The colonnade, then, connects and directs. At the Museum of Islamic Art, the four colonnades join the bridge, to serve as prelude in one direction, and postlude in the other, placing the museum in the world and opening each up to the other. Indeed, there is 'ceremony' in all of this, but not merely that of special occasions. In their connecting, framing, directing, and defining, these colonnades celebrate the on-going ceremony of human creativity. It is such creativity to which the museum is dedicated, and through which humankind and the world engage, kenotically. The experience of the colonnades sees this ordinary – yet also extraordinary – ceremony celebrated every day.

Materialisation

The bridge (conjoined with its palm tree colonnades) grants the museum building its placedness, a place in its own right. The building, too, gathers the fourfold, much like another of Heidegger's built examples, the temple, which he presents in "The Origin of the Work of Art."¹⁰⁹ Heidegger's thinking about the temple provides a useful framework through which to examine the self-understanding of Pei's museum – materialised in built form. Something of the nature of the museum as 'container' can be assessed by way of the building's exterior, and something of its nature as 'containment' by way of its interior. However, those aspects deal with little more than architectonics unless they reveal the building's essential self-understanding; that is "the original determinations of the thingness of the mere thing."¹¹⁰ The building's architectonics must be seen against those (already discussed) determinations in which the building originated. Such inquiry goes beyond mere exterior and interior appearance, instead probing the thingness of the thing's exteriority and interiority. It asks to what extent each contributes to a 'faithful paraphrase' of traditional culture, and to what extent their sum manifests, anew, the essence of Islamic architecture.

¹⁰⁹ 'Earth' and 'world' are the two named elements related by the temple in Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 40. However, an implicit relation of 'humans' to 'gods' is also established. Taken together, the four elements can be seen to prefigure the fourfold concept. The notion of a more fully fourfold structure emerges in M. Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, trans. P. Emad and K. Maly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999); while "the fourfold" (das Geviert) is made explicit and prominent in Heidegger, "The Thing."; and is important to Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking." This development is traced and elucidated in J. Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 225-229.

¹¹⁰ Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 28.

Exteriority

Although Pei's encounter with the 'essence' of Islamic architecture occurs at an architectural site,¹¹¹ he describes that which is encountered as austerity and severity, manifested by sun, shadows, and shades of colour. None of what he describes is inherently architectural or even portrayable by architecture, but it can all be gathered in architectural places. There, it can be discernible to listening, concentrative perceivers. For Pei, the essence that manifests in a Cairo ablutions fountain does not appear in the architecture of that fountain as much as it does in what that architecture gathers – although it is that particular architecture in which that particular gathering is able to occur, and it is in that gathering that the architecture emerges.¹¹² Hence, the architecture and what it gathers share an inextricable but delicate relationship. Such can be seen in Heidegger's description of the temple:

A building, a Greek temple, portrays nothing. It simply stands there ...

Standing there ... the lustre and gleam of the stone, though itself apparently glowing only by the grace of the sun, yet first brings to light the light of the day, the breadth of the sky, the darkness of the night. The temple's firm towering makes visible the invisible space of air. The steadfastness of the work contrasts with the surge of the surf, and its own repose brings out the raging of the sea ... The Greeks early called this emerging and rising in itself, and in all things, *phusis*.¹¹³

Pei confirms his understanding of the relationship between architecture and that which it gathers – as well as the priority implicitly granted to the latter – when he observes: "It is the light of the desert that transforms the architecture into a play of light and shadow."¹¹⁴ In its relationship with light, the Museum of Islamic Art emerges (see fig. 4.12). It does so through its capacity to receive and gather the light granted by the desert sun (and moon), even as it offers that light back to the fourfold by means not available to light alone.¹¹⁵ Light's reliance on the building and the building's reliance on light may not be equal, but such asymmetry can be seen to produce dynamism and power, without hierarchical inequity.¹¹⁶ Moreover, the relationship is interdependent, much like that of the sun and moon, themselves.¹¹⁷

¹¹¹ Pei's use of the term 'essence' differs from Heidegger's, as explained in *ibid.*, 17. "What something is, as it is, we call its essence or nature. The origin of something is the source of its nature."

¹¹² As noted earlier, Pei is neither ignorant of nor uninterested in the architecture of the ablutions fountain, particularly its geometry and proportions. But, when describing its essentiality, architectonics is not prioritised. This is affirmed in Jodidio and Lammerhuber, *Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar*: 50. "Pei's design ... is intimately related to the architecture of Islam, but also, in an even more fundamental way, it has to do with the way the sun shines in these confines of the desert and the sea."

¹¹³ Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 40-41.

¹¹⁴ Jodidio and Lammerhuber, *Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar*: 56.

¹¹⁵ Pei's understanding of light is similar to that of Louis Kahn (the latter discussed in Chapter 3).

¹¹⁶ This notion of asymmetry without inequity is discussed more expansively in Chapter 7.

¹¹⁷ The relationship between sun and moon – not least its kenotic nature – is portrayed in the parable of "the Moon that makes itself little," as described and analysed in Levinas, "Judaism and Kenosis," 116-118. Using



FIGURE 4.12

Museum of Islamic Art, as seen from the south-eastern end of The Corniche.

The essence of Islamic architecture that Pei encounters in Cairo proves to be both limiter and enabler. It limits his formal vocabulary, but only in the sense that such limits, or bounds, open-up a creative domain in which essence can emerge anew, responding to a new situation. In that domain, there emerges a particular vocabulary of form and materiality – one approvingly described as “almost primitive”¹¹⁸ – that can maintain the tenuous relationship with light; that can empty itself to light, radically contextualise light, and partially become light, in a way that not only maintains but strengthens architectural identity. That identity is partially grounded in Pei’s ‘thinking’ view of Islamic essence, wherein he sees powerful volumes and geometry. But Pei concludes that “when you have the sun, architecture does not need anything; all you need is the faceting ...”¹¹⁹ And, when the volumes and geometry are reduced to their facets, they come to express the essence of Islamic architecture that he ‘poetises’ – severity, austerity, and simplicity. (Knowingly or not, his description of Islamic essence echoes the standard of ‘severe simplicity’ set down by the Prophet Mohammed as Islam was born.¹²⁰) Thus, beyond mere volumes and geometry, it is the severe simplicity of complex faceting that, in concert with light, enables the appearance of the building’s constantly-changing forms and colours (see fig. 4.13).

It can be argued that the museum’s assembly of faceted, stone-clad forms – appearing to one observer to possess the innocence of “a compulsively precise child, playing with chalky geometric blocks”¹²¹ – is merely a result of the geometric obsession shared by both Islamic culture and its architectural translator in this case. If true, that

the apparent contradiction presented by Genesis, wherein the creation of “two great lights” is announced and immediately followed by reference to “the greater light” and “the lesser light”, Levinas explores the matter of equity in an asymmetrical but nonetheless interdependent relationship.

¹¹⁸ Ouroussoff, “For I. M. Pei, History Is Still Happening.”

¹¹⁹ Jodidio and Lammerhuber, *Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar*: 76.

¹²⁰ E.B. Smith, *The Dome: A Study in the History of Ideas* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), 42.

¹²¹ Merrick, “Xanadu Reborn: New Museum of Islamic Art.”

would not bode well for faithful translation, since such obsession could be seen to cloud objectivity. And it is precisely such clouded objectivity that Goldberger sees evidenced by Pei's avoidance of the decorative detail seen in so many examples of Islamic architecture, and by his embrace, instead, of only those elements that appeal to his Modernist sensibilities.¹²² Although prejudice is inevitable in all human endeavour, Pei persuasively counters by explaining that, in Islamic architecture, the shift from austerity to decoration had often been effected by the non-Arab geographies, cultures, and climates into which Islamic architecture was transposed; and, in some locales, by the affluence into which Islam grew, contrary to its original standard of severe simplicity.¹²³ Hence, rather than avoiding any essential aspect of Islamic architecture, I would argue that Pei is marking an important distinction between 'essence' and its 'embellishment', between the 'essential' and the 'non-essential'. In so doing, he confirms a kenotic outlook. By his emptying and opening-up to Islamic architecture, Pei invites a reciprocal response: an emptying and opening-up of Islamic architecture that reveals its essence.



FIGURE 4.13
Museum of Islamic Art, as seen from the new peninsula that forms the island's bay setting.

¹²² Goldberger, "Islamic Architecture, Modernism, and I.M. Pei: The Challenge of the Museum of Islamic Art."

¹²³ Landin and van Wagenen, "Learning from Light: The Vision of I.M. Pei."

Goldberger goes on to conclude that the museum is a “meaningful success,” but he attributes that to Pei’s ability to *synthesise* the “many architectural elements that Islamic and Western architecture have in common.”¹²⁴ Pei’s kenotic-ness, however, suggests that such a conclusion understates what is actually at work. Merely searching for architectural forms that Islam and the West coincidentally and conveniently share, and then combining those forms into an architectural composition, does not demonstrate attentiveness to situation or necessarily result in placedness. In fact, such a pursuit is antithetical to kenosis, and likely to find only the lowest common denominator. Rather than synthesis, or the finding of common ground, I would suggest that Pei’s museum is more the product of kenotic *hybridisation*. Rather than being the result of combining co-original forms into a complex whole, it is a product of cross-fertilising and breeding whole formal expressions that are relevant and specific to the entirety of the museum’s unique situation, even if not entirely or strictly ‘new’. Consequently – and notwithstanding critical aesthetic assessments¹²⁵ – the building rests comfortably, convincingly, and uniquely in *its situation*; not readily transposable to other Islamic contexts, and not readily transportable between Islamic and Western contexts. While such a test of placedness is neither definitive nor infallible, it is also not unreasonable, particularly in connection with an architecture of kenosis. Its apparent simplicity and obviousness masks what is actually a difficult and complex test to pass. Most other contemporary buildings in Doha and the Gulf Region – and many worldwide – fall well short of the expectations it proposes.¹²⁶

A closer examination of just one of the museum’s exterior formal expressions further reveals the kenotic grounding of the whole project.¹²⁷ Pei was not obliged to

¹²⁴ Goldberger, “Islamic Architecture, Modernism, and I.M. Pei: The Challenge of the Museum of Islamic Art.”

¹²⁵ For example, Pei’s design is labelled “elephantine” and “tired and cold-hearted” in T. Boddy, “I M Pei,” *The Architectural Review* (2012), <http://www.architectural-review.com/reviews/i-m-pei/8634670.article>; as well as “bombastic,” and “flat-footed and pompous,” in Woodman, “I M Pei’s Museum of Islamic Art Opens in Doha”.

¹²⁶ For example, Jean Nouvel’s *Doha Tower*, or *Burj Doha* (2012) – despite superficial overtures to the detail and decoration that Pei finds ‘non-essential’ to Islamic architecture – is essentially a Neo-Modern high-rise, not fundamentally different to its counterparts worldwide. In fact, its fundamental ‘uniqueness’ lies in the development and deployment of a new structural system, a feature that actually marks its ‘sameness’ with so many other modern high-rise buildings employing structural systems that were unique at the time of their construction. In examples of another sort, the Dubai *Ismaili Centre* by Rami el Dahan (2007) and the current mosques of architect Abdelwahed El-Wakil are so regional and historicist as to be ‘unique’, but also sentimental and pastiche. Scrupulously and even skilfully re-presenting traditional Islamic architectural motifs, their actual modernity is rendered indiscernible and contradictory. Of note, however, is *Musheireb*, a new city centre and public forum development in Doha, “whose surrounding buildings become subsumed into the space” so as to produce “an architecture of deference ... contemporary and specific to the city’s fierce climate,” which makes it, “in its quiet way, the most radical thing in the Gulf.” This project is examined in Heathcote, “Bridge in the Gulf: There is no shortage of self-conscious architecture in Doha but a new city centre promises something different.”

¹²⁷ Although I choose, here, to examine the museum’s dome, other formal features, such as its arches and arcades, could be similarly analysed in support of the same argument. For example, Pei’s round-headed arches have been criticised for being untrue to the pointed shapes more commonly associated with Islamic architecture. Round-headed arches, however, “are found in the earliest period of Islamic architecture ...” Pei’s

culminate his architectural composition with a dome. Only one of the six finalists in the original design competition included a dome, and that not as a culminating element. Pursuant to Goldberger's analysis, Pei could be seen to consider a domical top because of the dome's obvious commonality to both Islamic and Western architecture, and because of its potential to challenge and satisfy Pei's geometric predilections. If that were the case, Pei would have been well within architectural norms to re-present, in some manner, the dome atop the Cairo ablutions fountains, at which he claims to have encountered Islamic essence. Modernist interpretations of that dome might have manifested as something akin to the new steel and glass dome atop Berlin's renovated Reichstag (a project discussed more fully in Chapter 6), or merely as a direct but stylised reference to the original form, executed with contemporary means and materials. Although such interpretations might be seen to take steps toward abstraction, they would forever remain neither original nor new. Pei's eschewal of such interpretations, and his pursuit of another, reveals that Goldberger's premise is too simplistic.

Instead of selecting the dome from a smorgasbord of common architectural forms and employing it for easy stylistic result, Pei engages the dome, kenotically. He attentively 'listens' to it. Indeed, he 'struggles' with it. For Pei, the dome is excessively referential to Renaissance and religious architecture.¹²⁸ Yet it is ubiquitous in Islam and of Islamic essence. Such essence can be traced to the dome's ancient and primitive beginnings, as domestic shelters of crudely-circular shape and corresponding curved roof. Remembered and revered over generations, the dome's ancestral connection and protective power eventually transcended domestic use, becoming a cosmic symbol, place of ritual, sacred shelter, royal tent, mortuary, and, in virtually all iterations, a *manifestation of the divine*. Thus, amongst pre-Islamic Arabs and many other cultures, the domical *shape* gave way to domical *ideology*, commencing a gradual process that led to the dome's monumental use. Mohammed's early-seventh century call for severe simplicity was also a condemnation of Christians and Jews for their use of domed tombs as places of worship, but, by that century's end, the Prophet's followers had "begun to make the *kubba* (domical hut or tent) an architectural symbol of their religion." The dome's development was not at all independent or exclusive to a particular civilisation. "The formation of domical architecture – in the Roman Empire, India, the Christian and Sassanian East, and [later] the Islamic Empire – was the result of an intricate fusion of various domical traditions and a multilateral dispersion of structural methods ..."¹²⁹ In the West, the dome's origination as a concept of 'house' led to its use not only at important

choice to employ the earlier and simpler expression thus appears consistent with his striving for essence. See B. O'Kane, "Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar (Jodidio)," *Museum Anthropology Review* 4, no. 2 (2010).

¹²⁸ Landin and van Wagenen, "Learning from Light: The Vision of I.M. Pei."

¹²⁹ Smith, *The Dome: A Study in the History of Ideas*: 3-9, 41-44.

houses of worship but also at many sorts of secular 'houses', those dedicated to culture, politics, and, more recently, sports and entertainment. In Islam, the dome remains most closely associated with places of worship (mosques) and royalty (palaces).

Clearly, then, the domical shape is shared by Islam and the West, but the development of its ideology is diverse and entangled across time and cultures. Pei's apprehensiveness toward the form is well founded. He sees the dome as an important expression of Islamic essence, and therefore as an essential component of the museum, but he is wary of unintended and inconsistent ideological connotations that any of its traditional shapes might convey to either Islamic or Western observers. Rather than attempt to resolve the questions of shape and ideology with one dome, at one project, Pei is content to leave such questions open. He reverts again to essence; that is, to the dome's essential capacity to manifest the divine – or, at least, to hold mystery. Since such capacity depends more on ideology than shape, Pei does not see the dome's essence aligned strictly with traditional form. That shift makes room for the emergence of a unique formal expression. Pei's 'dome' conceals a traditional domical interior shell within a decidedly non-traditional cubic exterior shell; the cubic exterior serving to augment the museum's essential faceted-ness, as a traditional dome could not (see fig. 4.14). Goldberger notes that doctrinal Modernism would find this configuration "false," a denial of "the structural reality of the dome," and an "architectural cover-up ... characteristic of historicist architecture."¹³⁰ But such charges are contestable. There is, for example, a long tradition of double-shell domes with differing interior and exterior profiles,¹³¹ a tradition maintained by Pei's dome, albeit in radicalised form. Moreover, if there is a 'cover-up', it is a porous one and anything but historicist. Piercing all four sides of the exterior cube are openings – wide in breadth, narrow in height – taking the shape of circular segments and resembling flat-bottomed crescents or lunes. These openings offer unexpected and curious glimpses of the outer surface of the concealed interior dome, which prefigures, but leaves ambiguous, the dome's actual shape and the awaiting experience of its interior expression. Sheikha al-Mayassa speaks of comments, made to her, suggesting that these restricted and mysterious openings conjure images of a veiled woman wearing the *niqab*. Although Pei denies any such analogous intent, he accepts it as a compliment, recognising that "a mysterious quality is very difficult to attain in

¹³⁰ Goldberger, "Islamic Architecture, Modernism, and I.M. Pei: The Challenge of the Museum of Islamic Art," n.p. Goldberger notes that these comments concerning the dome are not intended to be critical; his stated point being to "point out the fallacy of so much of modernist rhetoric."

¹³¹ Although revived in the Renaissance, double shell domes are Byzantine in origin. It is additionally noteworthy that Islamic wooden domes of the early tenth century employed a form of inner shell and outer cupola, as noted in Smith, *The Dome: A Study in the History of Ideas*: 41.

architecture.”¹³² To the extent that the analogy applies, it is both apt and paradoxical. Severe as it may seem to some, the niqab nevertheless reveals its wearer’s eyes, and therewith it reveals itself as a very liberal revealer. By virtue of its dome, Pei’s museum does likewise.



FIGURE 4.14

The faceted forms of the museum culminate in Pei’s particular expression of ‘dome’.

Through hybridisation, not synthesis, the museum’s dome achieves both honesty *and* intrigue. It is neither Islamic nor Western, but is designedly both, specifically responding to the museum’s entire situation and holding the tensions thereof. It is at once traditional and non-traditional, but, being the latter, it is ultimately modern. In the tradition of the dome at the ablutions fountain of Ibn Tulun, to which Pei presented himself as a receptive ‘listener’, this dome also invites ‘listening’, and, to the attentive perceiver, it lets something of its full existence be known. This dome empties itself, even of expected domical traits, but without loss of identity. In so doing, it reflects a kenotic understanding of itself, its designer, and its placedness. And because dome and building are one – the dome not acting as an added ‘crown’ – the attributes of the dome are also those of the building as a whole. The dome is a microcosm of the museum, a building like Heidegger’s temple, which although it just stands there, is much more than an object for gazing.

¹³² This exchange between the Sheikh and Pei is part of their New York conversation, recorded in Landin and van Wagenen, "Learning from Light: The Vision of I.M. Pei."; however, a similar analogy, referring to the dome as a "limestone version of a woman's veiled face that catches the changing light of the sun", is invoked in Friel, "theartsdesk in the Emirates: A Cultural Arms Race".

Interiority

Pei's museum and Heidegger's temple are things to be engaged and experienced by humanity. Both are worthy containers, which, in concert with their interior containment – already foretold by the exterior – offer humanity a view of the world. Once again, Heidegger's temple provides a means of probing the museum's self-understanding, this time by way of its interiority:

The [temple] encloses the figure of the god, and in this concealment lets it stand out into the holy precinct through the open portico. By means of the temple, the god is present in the temple. This presence of the god is in itself the extension and delimitation of the precinct as a holy precinct. The temple and its precinct, however, do not fade away into the indefinite. It is the temple-work that first fits together and at the same time gathers around itself the unity of those paths and relations in which birth and death, disaster and blessing, victory and disgrace, endurance and decline acquire the shape of destiny for human being. The all-governing expanse of this open relational context is the world of this historical people. Only from and in this expanse does the nation first return to itself for the fulfilment of its vocation.¹³³

Strictly speaking, a museum is not a temple, at least not in the religious sense (although even that is ambiguous in an Islamic context). So, can there be 'a god' presenced by it? Noting the potential for exaggeration, Goldberger posits that "the museum has come to occupy a position in contemporary international culture not unlike the position once held by the cathedral," a claim supported by largely coincidental similarities.¹³⁴ It is a commonly invoked analogy – applicable to many of the cathedral's modern-day substitutions – which, at a superficial level, merely recognises that as the roles and cultural importance of various institutions change, the architectural manifestation of those institutions usually adjusts likewise.¹³⁵ At another level, however, the analogy points to the widely-observed march of modern secularisation, and the perception that religion must therefore be in decline. Yet, as discussed in Chapter 2, it is this secularisation that Gianni Vattimo sees as evidence of on-going kenosis, leading not to religion's demise but to its fulfilment. No longer locked up in one construct – as might be represented by the 'cathedral' – religion can open-up to manifold legitimate interpretations not only within Christianity but, importantly, beyond it. If an interpretation is seen as a way of viewing the world, then, in Heideggerian terms, it is also 'a god'. The temple encloses and reveals 'a god', not merely because it contains a god-figure, but because the temple and its containment fit together, and thereby open-up, a world view of

¹³³ Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 40-41.

¹³⁴ Goldberger, "Islamic Architecture, Modernism, and I.M. Pei: The Challenge of the Museum of Islamic Art." Although his analogy is Western- and Christian-centric, Goldberger uses it to discuss the identity of any contemporary museum, and I explore the analogy in that same vein.

¹³⁵ In this analogy, 'museum' can readily be substituted with 'shopping centre', 'high-rise tower', or 'sports and entertainment centre', without altering its message.

the people who shape the temple and are shaped by it. Thus a god – or the divine or the infinite – is ongoingly revealed in humanity's being; in humanity's becoming human. Such is what Heidegger is describing when he says that "the world worlds."¹³⁶ The temple is not the world, but it sets up a world, and is a work arising out of the world's worlding. The world's worlding is animated by its self-emptying, its ongoing kenosis.

As a work itself, and in its containment of works, the Museum of Islamic Art presents an interpretation, a view of the world that transcends being-there. By virtue of that, 'a god' is indeed presenced. (By extension, it can be said that 'a god' is presenced in every work – architectural and otherwise – but what each work reveals, and the extent to which revealment occurs and manifests 'a god', remains contingent and indeterminate.) Such presence is amplified at the museum, because the works it contains are grounded in a world view that conjoins life and faith. Persian philosopher Hossein Nasr writes: "Traditional Islamic civilisation is marked by its emphasis upon beauty being wedded to every aspect of human life ... [and] as a complement of the Truth."¹³⁷ Hence, in traditional Islam (absent modernist and fundamentalist influence) every creative event – including the ordinary, everyday, and mundane – is "a sacred act contributing to the overall spirituality of the individual and community ... each based upon a science of nature, concerned not with the outer appearance of things, but with their inner reality." Islamic works of art inspire "the remembrance and contemplation of God,"¹³⁸ and, in their 'thingness', are seen as presencing 'a god'. Through such works, human creativity is celebrated for its whole- and holy-ness, for its holding of the divine or mysterious. The museum and its collection – much of which comprises the ordinary, everyday, and mundane – can therefore be likened to the temple and the god-figure it encloses. A god is not present merely by virtue of the museum and the items it contains, but as a result of the wider relationality established and presented by the works, importantly including that between those who created the works and those who now experience them. As in the account of the Dervish kashkul, such relationality is complex. The works of art – the museum and its collection – empty themselves to be filled by each other. They also empty themselves to be filled by their perceivers, those who come self-emptying, readied to engage and be filled by the works that they also fill. Thus, emptying is always already enabled by the emptying of the other. The museum, the collection, and their perceivers engage kenotically – almost cyclonically – to invite the unconcealment of 'a god', a world view set amidst a world always worlding.

¹³⁶ Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 43; additionally, Heidegger's notion of 'worlding' is explored and further developed in Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology*: 227-228.

¹³⁷ S.H. Nasr, *Traditional Islam in the Modern World* (London: K. Paul International, 1990), 20.

¹³⁸ Alraouf, "The Role of Museum's Architecture in Islamic Community: Museum of Islamic Art, Doha," 61.

Of concern to some Islamic observers is the potential for a museum such as this – a container and its containment – to ‘freeze’ the contributions of Islam primarily in its past, rather than recognise the culture’s longevity, continuity, and contemporary influence on the world and world views. This concern is exacerbated when fear, misconceptions, and mistrust – often invoked, bilaterally, by Islam and the West – have the effect of masking Islam’s intrinsic identification with beauty.¹³⁹ The extent to which specific museum exhibits can overcome such concerns is largely a matter of curatorship, and therefore a subject better left to other discourse, because Pei is neither the designer nor the curator of the exhibit spaces.¹⁴⁰ But, as designer of the museum and its major interior space, Pei is afforded an opportunity to create and contribute a major work of Islamic art that evidences continuing cultural relevance. It is a task to which his philosophical and historical perspective seems well matched. “You have to be modern as well. You cannot just go back to history. There is the past, but also everything that has happened since.”¹⁴¹ Although the architecture of the museum is not Islamic by authorship (Pei not being Muslim), it is certainly Islamic in its commissioning, and can be equally so in its essence as a work of art, regardless of authorship. In fact, to the extent that a “Western architect” (Pei’s self-description)¹⁴² is able to transcend Western-ness – including its hegemonic propensities – and effect such a contribution, it could be argued that the outcome does more to foster intended cultural bridging than would a product of ‘pure’ Islamic provenance. I have already posited that the museum’s exteriority is a faithful reflection of Islam’s aesthetic essence. Additionally, I have endeavoured to demonstrate that the museum as container, together with its contents – the latter a major element of interiority – presences a world view embedded in Islamic art and culture. There is, however, another major element of the museum’s interiority, unsurprisingly found at its core: the central and first-to-be-experienced interior space (see fig. 4.15). Remaining to be explored is the question as to whether and how this element of the museum’s interiority fits together with its exteriority to advance the museum as a cohesive work of contemporary Islamic art.

¹³⁹ Such concerns are identified and discussed in *ibid.*, 61, 67.

¹⁴⁰ Jodidio and Lammerhuber, *Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar*. 70. By choice, Pei did not involve himself or his firm with the interior design of the exhibition galleries, bookshop, and offices. Instead, he defined and arranged the gallery spaces, but selected French interior designer Jean-Michel Wilmotte (with whom he had collaborated in the design of the Louvre museum) to design the gallery interiors and displays. As described by Jodidio, the result suggests that Wilmotte “deliberately allowed his display cases and galleries to cede to the objects they contain,” in an approach that is “far from being current amongst designers intent on making their own reputation.” I would suggest, however, that Wilmotte’s approach is very much aligned with, and a complement to, what can be seen as Pei’s kenotic approach to the entire project.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 84.

¹⁴² E. Heathcote, “I M Pei: ‘I’m a Western Architect’,” *FT.com* (2010), <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/f75a20c4-2261-11df-a93d-00144feab49a.html#axzz2ZvOCG7H0>. More fully, Pei states: “I’ve never left China. My family’s been there for 600 years. But my architecture is not consciously Chinese in any sense. I’m a Western architect.”



FIGURE 4.15
The museum's central hall, with main entrance to the left and culminating dome overhead.

The museum's central interior space is a five-storey hall, which, at each level, is surrounded on three sides by exhibition galleries and other functional spaces. It is this space that culminates in Pei's unique dome. To label the space an 'atrium' would unfairly connect it with the proliferation of atria in the world's contemporary hotels and other commercial developments; a proliferation that trivialises the term and the space it describes. One critic makes exactly that connection, suggesting that the museum's atrium is "one part grand mosque to two parts Hyatt Regency."¹⁴³ Such a description,

¹⁴³ Woodman, "I M Pei's Museum of Islamic Art Opens in Doha".

however, is less than one part correct. Because the museum is a place of Islamic art and is itself such art, and, because Islamic art is so closely connected with spirituality, the central hall can be seen to evoke mosque-like qualities. But it is clearly not a mosque. It is also not a hotel. And the central hall eschews both possibilities. Such a space cannot be disparaged simply because the enduring concept of an atrium is, at a particular point in time, seen to be appropriated by commercial interests. As if to extend the indictment, the same critic claims that the central hall “has nothing whatsoever to do with the business of looking at art”¹⁴⁴ – a claim that misses the point entirely. The central hall has everything to do with looking at art. It gathers around itself – it makes room for, assembles, and presents – all of the exhibition galleries and their collections. It makes room for perceivers and offers them a place to prepare for their encounter with the art, to ready their readiness for an experience that transcends gazing. More than merely the inner surface of the container-museum, it is actually one of the museum’s exhibits. Indeed, it is arguably the museum’s most important exhibit, in that it prefigures all of the other exhibits and the world view they hold. The central hall is an exhibition that exhibits art, not least the work of art that is itself.

As a contemporary work of Islamic art, the central hall works to preclude the cultural frozenness about which some worry. Unlike its essentially severe and austere container, the central hall presents an opposing aspect of Islamic architecture – that of decoration – which Pei has already been seen to reject as inessential, at least in connection with exterior expression. Pei characterises the contradiction as a subjective indulgence, but it more accurately appears to be a response to the self-contradiction and contingency of Islamic essence. Notwithstanding austere origins, Pei recognises that “Islamic architecture often comes to life in an explosion of decorative elements.”¹⁴⁵ Even within severe exteriors, there are interiors that present “a riot of forms.”¹⁴⁶ Accordingly, the central hall makes room for decoration, albeit neither explosively nor riotously, and never overshadowing the project’s essential simplicity (see fig. 4.16). The decoration is almost entirely reductive or integrated, and muted in colour: inlaid geometric floor patterns, coffered ceiling planes, sculpted stairways, and expressed structural elements. The hall’s giant ‘chandelier’ is one of the few additive features, which, despite a great difference in scale, is added in the manner of its Byzantine antecedent: the suspended oil lamp. At the zenith of the space, the inner surface of the dome’s interior shell is revealed, the outer surface of which is first glimpsed at the building’s exterior. It is discovered that the dome’s cubic exterior gives way to an interior shell of traditional domical shape.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Jodidio and Lammerhuber, *Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar*: 56.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 76.

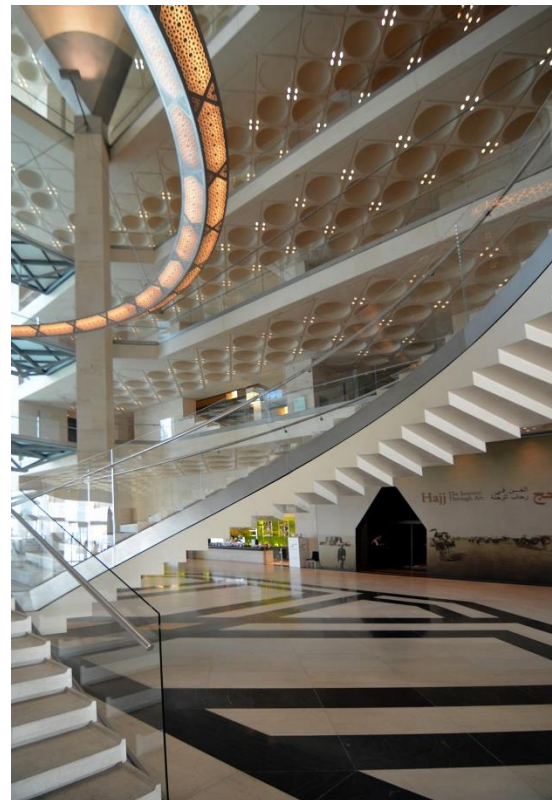
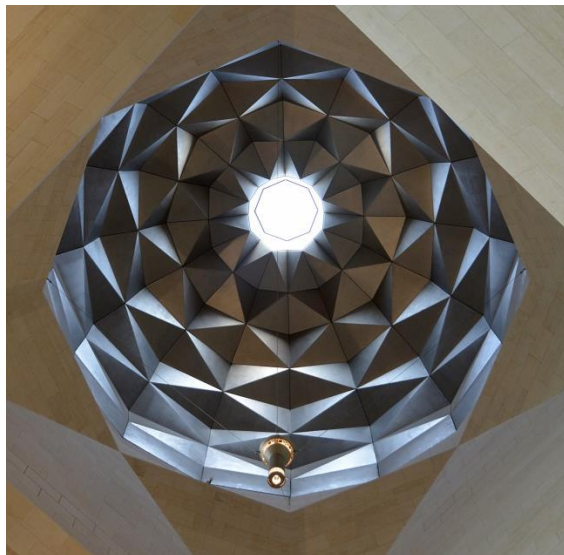
Decidedly untraditional, however, is the shell's execution in distinctly modern stainless steel; the surface of which presents a three-dimensional "geometric matrix [that] transforms the dome's descent from circle, to octagon, to square ..." ¹⁴⁷ An oculus admits natural light to play against and reveal the dome's exuberant multi-facetedness, though not all of it. Consequent shade and shadow create an Escherian effect – an element of mystery – and see the dome fulfil its domical ideology, manifesting something of the divine (see fig. 4.17).

FIGURE 4.16

Right, decoration integrated into architectural and structural elements.

FIGURE 4.17

Below, the interior's traditional domical form, expressed in faceted stainless steel.



Directly, and more abundantly, light is also admitted by way of the museum's only major window. It is this window that gathers, and brings to the interior, the desert sun and its play of light and shadow; that which Pei considers so essential to Islamic architecture (see figs. 4.18 – 4.19). The term 'window', however, understates its forty-five metre height, its axial location opposing the central hall's main entry and monumental staircase, and its role in framing a view of the landscape beyond the museum; primarily the new business district's skyline, but also the Persian Gulf (region) and all to which the gulf leads (world). This great window, like the window described by Simmel, is "a link between internal space and the outside world," one in which "the teleological direction is

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 60.

almost exclusively from the inside to the outside.”¹⁴⁸ As such, it is another exhibit – a vertical mural of the Islam that stands *outside* the museum, there to be viewed in the context of the image of Islam presented *inside*. Compared to a door, Simmel sees the window’s restrictiveness, citing “the fact that it can only be traversed by the gaze.” But that attribution may be this window’s most important asset, in that it offers a kind of protection or guard against that aspect of modernity that demands the surrender of cultural identity. Since such a demand is antithetical to kenosis, this window is actually kenotic – more liberating than restrictive. It can therefore be seen as an exhibit of that from which it frees the visitor. It can also be seen in its own right, as a modern artwork of metal and glass. The simple grid-like pattern of mullions serves to reinforce the concept of protection, but, overlaid with a more intricate solar and acoustical screen, this window adds another element of geometry to the decorativeness of the central hall.

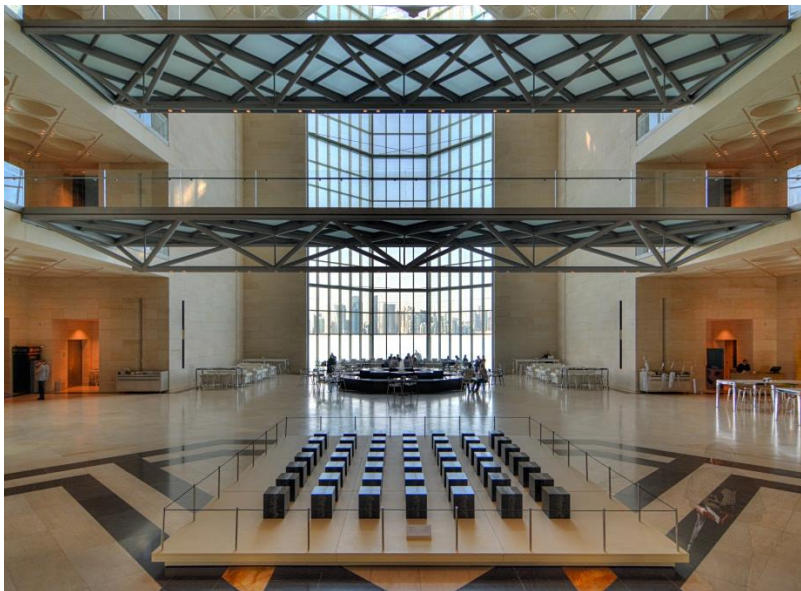


FIGURE 4.18
The ‘window’ of the central hall, framing a view of the new business district.

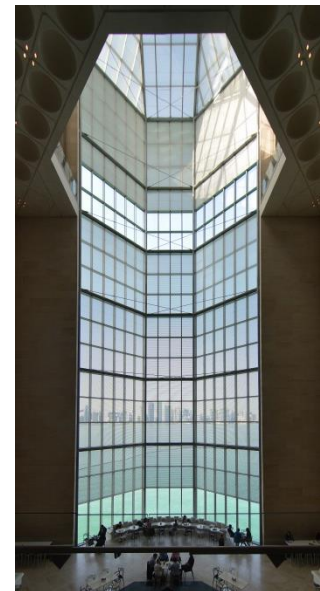


FIGURE 4.19
The ‘window’ as screen.

What might be seen as an inconsistent departure into decorative expression is, in fact, further evidence of the kenosis in Pei’s approach. It demonstrates Pei’s willingness to empty himself, even of his commitment to essential austerity and his suspicions toward ornament and decoration. True to kenosis, he is content to be suspicious of his own suspicions and thereby open himself, and the museum’s central space, to both the essence and the enigma of Islamic architecture. Reflecting on the personal challenge of this unexpected foray, Pei confesses: “I would have created more decorative patterns if I

¹⁴⁸ Simmel, “Bridge and Door,” 8.

had had more courage.”¹⁴⁹ His restraint, however, is arguably due less to trepidation than to attunement. Pei understands that his paraphrase of Islamic architecture risks vastly different reactions in the West and the Middle East, and therefore necessitates heightened recognition of, and attentiveness to, situational bounds.¹⁵⁰

Fidelity

Insofar as the museum is a faithful paraphrase of Islamic architecture – in modern terms and bearing – I would suggest that such is largely owing to Pei’s kenotic posture.¹⁵¹ Even if not consciously assumed, it is that posture which allows Pei to avoid the incongruities – and spectacles of incongruity – that can arise when contemporary Islamic architecture is defined in terms of Western modernity, or when it resorts to various forms or combinations of imitation, alteration, and restatement.¹⁵² By eschewing all such machinations, Pei’s museum achieves something extraordinary; yet, as one critic observes, “there’s nothing revolutionary about the building.”¹⁵³ Therein lies kenotic paradox. When compared to other buildings – those in the Middle East, and elsewhere, so intent on being ‘revolutionary’ – it is the un-revolutionary nature of the Museum of Islamic Art that transcends the others’ extraordinary ordinariness. Making that possible is Pei’s fidelity to the task of translation; his awareness that neither literal translation nor controversial interpretation assures faithful paraphrase.

Pei commits himself to the purpose of learning about a culture previously unknown to him. He empties, opens-up, and is filled by a culture quite un-Western and un-Modernist, especially in the inseparability of faith from life and therefore from art. He comes to understand that, in Islam, all architecture (and urban design) is fundamentally an expression of faith. That is significant, because such a cultural precept can be difficult to reconcile with Modern architecture. According to Ali Alraouf, professor of architecture at Qatar University, Islam’s mid-twentieth century introduction to secular modernity – and with it Modernism – seemed to demand a disconnection of faith and architecture. It presented Islam with a conundrum: how to discuss modern architecture with faith removed from the conversation. Yet the architecture of Western modernity – in its

¹⁴⁹ Jodidio and Lammerhuber, *Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar*: 76.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 45. Here, with reference to his museum project in China, Pei recognises that “the West may look at Suzhou and say I have not done anything very different, but the East may think I have gone too far.” His comments are no less applicable in the context of the Museum of Islamic Art.

¹⁵¹ Sheikha al-Mayassa offers support to this contention when she refers to Pei, saying, “He’s so curious; always looking for new things to inspire him.” Then, in reference to Islamic architecture, she declares, “He’s mastered it.” Landin and van Wagenen, “Learning from Light: The Vision of I.M. Pei.”

¹⁵² Certainly, not all modern Islamic architecture falls prey to such pitfalls, and Pei does not offer the only exception. In Doha, for example, noteworthy exceptions are anticipated in projects such as Jean Nouvel’s National Museum of Qatar (sited not far from the Museum of Islamic Art), and the new city-centre development, called *Musheireb*, masterplanned by AECOM and Arup, with Allies and Morrison as architectural consultants. See note 126.

¹⁵³ Ouroussoff, “For I. M. Pei, History Is Still Happening.”

various expressions – came to be embraced in much of the Middle East as a means of securing ‘modern’ credentials; in some sense, as an act of conformance to an increasingly hegemonic world view.¹⁵⁴ Its embrace and proliferation, however, did not mask its contradictions with Islamic culture. Thus, for the Museum of Islamic Art to be a faithful paraphrase of the culture to which it was dedicated, its design could not resort to Modernist orthodoxy, alone.

Nor could it turn toward anything historically imitative. Traditional Islam would see Postmodern Historicism and any form of romantic or nostalgic regionalism to be as unsuitable as Modernism. Alraouf observes that, in Islam, all of those who engage in innovation and creativity have a *duty* to worthily represent culture and faith – and their oneness. Hence, “copying or reshuffling old architectural vocabularies, from past eras,” could legitimately be seen as a violation of that duty.¹⁵⁵ “Contemporary Muslims,” declares Alraouf, “need to use art, architecture and creativity ... to vigorously emphasize that their presence on earth is a sacred mission, characterized by a compelling desire, faith, and commitment towards enhancing mankind.”¹⁵⁶ Indeed, such a call-to-action was, in part, answered by the advent of Critical Regionalism – neither imitative nor sentimental. Credited with sparking alternative and noteworthy architectural responses to the Islamic context from a number of indigenous architects,¹⁵⁷ the movement’s nuanced shift away from Modernist precepts allowed the re-opening of a dialogue between architecture and a faith-driven culture; a dialogue with the potential to see Islam’s creative duty restored. In that potential, those who placed great import on the relationship of art to Islam saw an opportunity, not only to express cultural identity, contribution, and relevance, but also to heal the damage done by the rush to Western modernity. In other words, they saw the potential for faithfulness in their architectural identity.

When faced with the situation at Doha, Pei sees the same potential, but, importantly, he owes no allegiance to any style or movement or ‘-ism’, including Modernism, Historicism, and Critical Regionalism. It is true that his museum building meets some of the tests of the latter label; for example, in its placedness, self-identity, rejection of imitation, and undeniably modern grounding. But its kenotic self-understanding prevents the project from being convincingly characterised as either “an

¹⁵⁴ The relationship of modernity, Islam, and architecture is further developed in Alraouf, “The Role of Museum's Architecture in Islamic Community: Museum of Islamic Art, Doha,” 62.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 67. One aspect of such ‘duty’ derives from a command in the Quran (V; 1) to be faithful to one’s ‘covenants’, as discussed in Nasr, *Traditional Islam in the Modern World*: 36. There, Nasr writes that “these covenants ... according to traditional Islamic commentators, include the whole of man’s relations to God, himself, and the world ...”

¹⁵⁶ Alraouf, “The Role of Museum's Architecture in Islamic Community: Museum of Islamic Art, Doha,” 67.

¹⁵⁷ As examples, architects Abdel Halim Ibrahim, Rasem Badran (the original winner of the Museum of Islamic Art design competition), Riffat Jadergi, and Ali Alshuaibi are named in *ibid.*, 62.

architecture of resistance” or “a self-conscious synthesis.”¹⁵⁸ In some ways, it is quite the opposite and, in others, significantly more. The museum is critically regional, but it transcends Critical Regionalism. Despite its monumental scale, it is not architecture with a rebellious cause or contention. It just stands there. Rather than overt resistance, there is relinquishment and opening-up. Rather than the self-consciousness of overstatement, there is the self-contraction and self-withdrawal of understatement. Rather than synthesis, or mere combination, there is hybridisation and the establishment of mutual exchange and influence amongst situational elements. And, as is always the case with kenosis, there is paradox, because, in all of this, there *is* a quiet and humble resistance – to assertive resistance. Another description of the museum building has it attempting “to reconcile regional tradition with modernity.”¹⁵⁹ Limited to mere aesthetics, the description perhaps has merit, but reconciliation is not what the building represents. More accurately, the building explores the compatibility of Islamic tradition and modern expression, but makes no attempt to cover up the associated unresolvedness. The building establishes relationality between itself, city, region and world – its placedness – even as it acknowledges and celebrates inherent tensions; some of which may never be resolved or need resolution; and some of which may actually serve and preserve relationality. It opens up to its others and partially becomes them, without jeopardising its self-identity. In so doing, the museum accurately reflects its kenotic self-understanding and invites a kenotic understanding of the world. It thereby likens itself, yet again, to Heidegger’s temple: “The temple, in its standing there, first gives to things their look and to men their outlook on themselves.”¹⁶⁰

Dervish-ness as Kingly-ness

From its inception, the Museum of Islamic Art can be seen as a vital revelation of the world of Islam to the world at large. And the acts of conceiving and realising the museum are as much a revelation of Islam’s artistic and cultural contributions as are those objects and exhibits that the museum contains. The container is what it is capable of containing, and therefore what it can potentially pour out: a creative work of humanity, fitting-together and revealing a particular world view. I.M. Pei demonstrates his commitment to faithfully translate and represent that world view with an approach to the project that is arguably kenotic. His receptivity and heightened attentiveness prefigure a building of like character: withdrawing to connect, drawing close to detach, celebrating inherent tensions, and thereby establishing dynamic relationality. By virtue of its own kenosis, the museum

¹⁵⁸ Frampton, “Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance,” 22. The first phrase is Frampton’s sub-title for Critical Regionalism, and the second is that which he attributes to Jorn Utzon’s Bagsvaerd Church, near Copenhagen; cited as a primary example of Critical Regionalism.

¹⁵⁹ Jodidio and Lammerhuber, *Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar*: 82.

¹⁶⁰ Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” 42.

makes-room for, gathers-in, and pours-out the essence of a culture, for world-viewing, world-shaping, and, in turn, the shaping of the culture being viewed. The 'whirling' nature of this kenosis mirrors that of the Dervishes and their distinguishing kashkul, with which this discourse began.

Pei's museum is described as being "sober rather than sumptuous, more a receptacle than a showpiece."¹⁶¹ Also an insightful description of kenotic character, it applies not only to the museum-container but, equally, to the kashkul contained therein and to the creators of both. Each is sober and receptive. In so being, each is also a sumptuous showpiece of sobriety and receptivity. In the earlier-cited medieval writings of Sa'di, the sobriety and receptivity of the Dervishes is set against the presumed sumptuousness and showiness of the king. While the latter attracts the devotion of the hermit and sends him to hell, the former attracts the devotion of the king and sends him to paradise. Thus, in *The Gulistan*, Sa'di poetises the paradox of kenosis: kingly-ness is ultimately found in Dervish-ness, much as the cosmopolitan is ultimately found in the fundamental. In the Museum of Islamic Art, I.M. Pei concretises the paradox and, so, enables its appearance, even while respecting its concealment and the mystery thereof. His is a cosmopolitan museum grounded in Islamic essence. The convergence, in Doha, of this designer, this design, and those who commissioned and realised this design presents a particularly intriguing view of Islam and modernity engaged. More importantly, it reveals the always ongoing and never complete nature of kenosis: the present in the past and the future in the present.

¹⁶¹ "Books And Arts: Smart Art Mart; Qatar's Museum of Islamic Art," *The Economist*, 22 November 2008.

Architecture and Nothingness: Neo-Modernism

Having considered, in the preceding two chapters, various manifestations of kenosis in secular architecture, attention now turns to the happenings that can be seen to occur in a situation wherein kenosis and its religious foundations intersect with a building of sacred purposes. The building in question, however, is no 'ordinary' example. It transcends yet revives Modernism, in what has been labelled Neo-Modernism, but notions of 'style' or 'movement' are only one aspect of the building's kenotic-ness. Indeed, it is the encounter of architectural and religious ideologies that, in this case, most affects the instantiation of kenosis. Although the building represents only one faith tradition, it is said to be strongly influenced by two others. Such influence arises naturally from the situation itself, but its promotion comes most significantly from the architect. Moreover, although each tradition – whether influenced or influencing – is kenotically grounded, each incorporates and expresses kenosis with vital differences. The architecture emerging from that dynamic can be considered not only for its own manifestations of kenosis but also for its ability to enable and empower the kenosis of theology and liturgy; precisely that for which the architecture has presumably been conceived. In such an exploration, the thinking about kenosis through architecture is importantly expanded.

ANDO AT THE CHURCH OF THE LIGHT

Criticising Perfection

Attending a wintertime worship service at the Church of the Light – the famously 'empty' edifice by Neo-Modernist architect Tadao Ando (1941-), at Ibaraki (Osaka), Japan – I was struck by thoughts of Modernist architect Richard Neutra (1892-1970).¹ In particular, I recalled one of Neutra's clients retelling a possibly mythical but nonetheless pertinent anecdote:

[Neutra] studied architecture at the [Vienna University of Technology], and the senior students always visited St Stephen's Cathedral. Neutra's class went and came back. The professor said, 'What did you think?' And, Neutra said, "It was beautiful, but there are three things wrong with it." No one had ever before found fault with St Stephen's. The professor said, "Oh? What is possibly wrong with St

¹ Coincidentally, Ando received the 2012 Neutra Medal for Professional Excellence, awarded by Cal Poly Pomona, Department of Architecture, where Neutra once taught.

Stephen's?" And, the young student said, "Well, it was so dark, I couldn't see. The acoustics were so bad, I couldn't hear. It was so stuffy, I couldn't breathe!"²

Myth or not, the story presents the spectre of criticising the seemingly un-criticisable – the 'perfect'. The young Neutra's critique does not dismiss the ascription of beauty generally accorded to the historical edifice. Instead, it honestly calls attention to deficiencies that may go unnoticed or unnamed in connection with legendary architectural 'greatness'. In essence, the critique suggests that the architectural grandeur of St Stephen's does not come without certain – and significant – experiential costs.

It is tempting, also, to see perfection in the Church of the Light, particularly in what appears to be architectural purity. But, like St Stephen's, it too can be critiqued – even while appreciating its widely-revered status – because Church architecture must be assessed not only on the basis of espoused and ascribed aesthetic theories but also on the basis of a building's capacity to fulfil its commission; to respond fully to its situation. Ando describes his Church of the Light as "a space of nothingness" and as "spatial emptiness,"³ phrases readily adopted by professional and lay observers in expressions of both praise and disapproval.⁴ Prominent amongst professional observers is Jin Baek, who, in his analyses of the church building and Ando's theories about it, offers generous and deserved praise for the architecture, while also advancing a commonly discussed link between the Japanese religio-philosophical tradition of "nothingness" and Christian kenosis.⁵ In that light, it is reasonable and worthwhile to critically consider (1) the situation's *potentiality* to instantiate kenosis; (2) the building's *receptivity* – its kenotic openness – to the church's kenotic purposes; and (3) the *creativity* with which the architecture's conception is approached, and the extent of kenosis evidenced therein. Insofar as such consideration reveals imperfections and irregularities – as would be expected in all creations – a further and final question is raised as to whether and how imperfection influences valorisation.

To effect the proposed assessment is to search for the building's character – not in its myth, but in its maturation. Philosopher Walter Benjamin suggests that "historical

² R. Schuller, "Reflections on the Crystal Cathedral," *Faith & Form: Journal of the Interfaith Forum on Religion, Art and Architecture* XVII(1984): 20.

³ J. Baek, *Nothingness: Tadao Ando's Christian Sacred Space* (New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 195.

⁴ A. Kroll, "AD Classics: Church of the Light / Tadao Ando," *ArchDaily* (6 January, 2011), <http://www.archdaily.com/101260>. Kroll notes that this project has been dismissed by some as "nothing more than six [planes]," but counters by suggesting that "there is a whole level of design aesthetic implemented by Ando and his contractors that is misread and unrecognised by the occupants."

⁵ Kenosis, as a concept in Christianity and other faith traditions, is discussed more fully in Chapter 2. Baek's discourse, positioning the Church of the Light within Nishida's philosophy of nothingness (and the correlation of Nishida's philosophy with kenosis) is found in J. Baek, "Empty Cross: Nothingness and the Church of Light" (University of Pennsylvania, 2004); J. Baek, "Kitaro Nishida's Philosophy of Emptiness and Its Architectural Significance," *Journal of Architectural Education* 62, no. 2 (2008); and Baek, *Nothingness: Tadao Ando's Christian Sacred Space*.

'understanding' is to be viewed primarily as an afterlife of that which has been understood; and so what came to be recognized about works through the analysis of their 'afterlife', their 'fame', should be considered the foundation of history itself."⁶ Or, as Graeme Gilloch interprets Benjamin: "the modern reveals itself as ruin" and truth only appears through gradual demise, a "destruction of deceptive appearance" that "facilitates a process of reconstruction."⁷ This interdependence amongst apparent contradictions is analogous to that of kenosis and skenosis, and the paradox of weakness producing strength (discussed in Chapter 2). It may seem premature to speak of the Church of the Light in terms of 'ruination' or 'demise', but, like all finite creation, it has begun its march in that direction. With more than a quarter-century of 'fame', it is better positioned to be more self-revealing – more self-emptying, or kenotic – and to submit to fresh critical analysis that benefits from the intimacy of greater distance.

Potentiality

The kenotic potentiality of a situation rests, first, in its very nature and, second, in that which is brought to the situation by those who are already part of it and will respond to it – particularly, in this case, the church congregation and their chosen architect. Each aspect warrants exploration. The nature of this situation can be seen in its genealogy. At a global scale, the mere notion of a Christian church on Japanese soil – where Buddhism and Shintoism are predominant – holds inherent kenotic potential. In fact, the proposition fundamentally relies on at least some measure of mutual opening-up. Then, as mentioned, the Japanese tradition of nothingness – grounded in Buddhism and revived in the twentieth century by Kitarō Nishida and his Kyoto Philosophical School – establishes a connection between Buddhism and Christianity, notably by way of kenosis. Such can be seen not only in Nishida's writings but also in a considerable volume of subsequent and continuing discourse that posits kenosis as an important, if imperfect, model for interfaith relations.⁸ Influenced by such tradition and philosophy, Ando uses the Japanese terms *mu* (nothingness) and *ma* (interval or in-between) to discuss his aesthetic theories,⁹ and he expresses an unequivocal intention to further the interfaith connection. It is his hope that the deployment of an architecture "that seeks to embody

⁶ W. Benjamin as quoted in Gilloch, *Myth & Metropolis: Walter Benjamin and the City*. 111.

⁷ Ibid., 14.

⁸ Discourse connecting Japanese 'nothingness' with Christian kenosis also includes: Cobb and Ives, *The Emptying God: A Buddhist-Jewish-Christian Conversation*; and Odin, "A Critique of the 'Kenōsis/Sūnyatā' Motif in Nishida and the Kyoto School." The concept of kenosis as a model of interfaith missiology is found in Frederiks, "Kenosis as a Model for Interreligious Dialogue."

⁹ Baek, *Nothingness: Tadao Ando's Christian Sacred Space*: 196. The term *mu* is merely the Japanese rendering of the Chinese term *wu*, which is used to describe this same sense of emptiness or nothingness in the Chapter 2 discussion of Buddhism.

the spiritual realm, explained by the religious and philosophical notion of nothingness, will bridge Buddhism and Christianity.”¹⁰

Accordingly, Baek can adopt Nishida’s philosophy as an interpretive framework for the Church of the Light,¹¹ and that allows him to posit:

The molding of the church is a creative linguistic event of interpretation, arising from the common ground between nothingness, on which Ando stood, and the God of Christianity, as re-introduced to East Asia with the inception of modernization during the second third of the nineteenth century.¹²

By his own comments and through his participation in Baek’s project, Ando at least tacitly accepts this portrayal. He also strengthens the link with kenosis, stating that his interest in spatial emptiness goes beyond the perceptual and is meant to convey the concept of sharing,¹³ which is an aspect of kenosis. Going further, Baek specifically correlates Nishida’s theory of self-negation with Christian kenosis, and associates both with Ando’s religious architecture.¹⁴ Although the genealogy may appear somewhat circuitous, the relationship between kenosis and the situation that produces the Church of the Light is clearly established as one of potentiality.

Presented is nothing less than the potential for East-West exchange – between Buddhism-via-Nishida and Christianity – with Ando as chief envoy. Notionally, the exchange relies on similarities in the Buddhist concept of sunyata – central to Nishidan philosophy – and the Christian concept of kenosis. The potential of the exchange is made richer and more entangled by Ando’s acknowledgement that he is also influenced by Shintoism; not so much a religion, but a polytheist spirituality, which, unlike Buddhism and Christianity, is indigenous to Japan. Such a confluence of traditions only reinforces Ando’s observation that the “co-existence of religions is a very important part of Japanese spirituality.”¹⁵ So, it would seem that – at least in theory – the situation of the Church of the Light holds the potential to concretise an avenue of interfaith dialogue. However, two important questions arise, asking, first, whether such dialogue is kenosis and, second, whether kenosis can be seen as an aspiration of those who commissioned the project. Regarding the first question, it is important to appreciate that although dialogue can be kenotic, kenosis is not mere dialogue; nor is it simply the discovery of comforting but possibly naive analogies, or ‘common ground’. Open-ended, kenotic dialogue requires

¹⁰ Ibid., 188. At the same interview, immediately following Ando’s statement, his wife, Yumiko, amplifies the kenotic connection: “The negation of self, or nothingness in Nishida’s philosophy, seems to remain as the point of common ground between the two religions.”

¹¹ Ibid., 8. It should be noted, however, that Ando also points to the significant influence of philosopher Tetsuro Watsuji: “For architects, I think Watsuji’s philosophy is more accessible than Nishida’s. In contrast, even though I also tried to read Nishida’s books, they were extremely difficult to understand.” See *ibid.*, 176.

¹² Ibid., 8.

¹³ Ibid., 195.

¹⁴ Ibid., 141.

¹⁵ Ibid., 183.

“entering into relationships that go on raising questions about the adequacy or otherwise of the terms [the conversers] use,” relationships that are allowed to “challenge any sense of self-sufficiency” and “confront the edges and boundaries of the known.”¹⁶ Hence, the extent to which this situation’s potential can be actualised is held in the second question; one contingent upon the willingness of the project’s commissioners to open-up and give the building over to that end, to challenge and be challenged, and to risk the possibility of partially becoming the other. Exploration of that question requires some understanding of the commissioning Christian denomination, as well as the potentiality of its relationship with the traditions at the other end of Ando’s ‘bridge’, particularly Buddhism.

The Church of the Light is the worship centre of a local congregation of the *Kyodan*, the United Church of Christ in Japan (UCCJ). The UCCJ was formed in 1940-41 as an evangelical union of all formerly independent or denominational Protestant churches – more than thirty at the time.¹⁷ While the union created an ecumenical and globally-engaged organisation, the UCCJ Constitution is unambiguous about the authority it finds in the God of Christianity:

God, summoning from every land and people those whom, in Christ, it pleases Him to call, consecrates these people and reveals to them His grace and truth, bestowing upon them the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. This, then, is the holy catholic Church.¹⁸

The Constitution and its companion documents, the Confession of Faith and Guidelines for Christian Living, are silent on the subject of interfaith dialogue, but the language in each is unwaveringly self-sufficient; a fact that may not jeopardise religious co-existence but, if taken seriously, could stand in the way of more meaningful exchange. Indeed, such doctrine can be read to suggest that the embrace of religious pluralism and interfaith dialogue would necessarily rely on some form of “sameness universalism,” whereby the in-principle equality of other faiths is recognised, but without the obligation to open-up to their possible influence – particularly influence seen as challenging to existing doctrine.¹⁹ One might speculate that, in practice, the UCCJ is less rigid than its doctrine, and that congregational latitude is likely and tolerated. However, a 2008 disciplinary case, in which the UCCJ – prevailing over lay and clerical pleas for greater charity – admonished

¹⁶ M. Barnes, “The Intimacy of Distance: On Faith Learning from Faith,” *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 6, no. 1 (2006): 63-4.

¹⁷ “A Brief History of the Kyodan,” (The United Church of Christ in Japan, 1968). Kyodan history notes that although union had been a topic of earlier discussion, its enactment coincided with government pressure for consolidation.

¹⁸ “Kyodan Constitution,” (The United Church of Christ in Japan, 1946, amended 1994).

¹⁹ J.H. Fletcher, “Religious Pluralism in an Era of Globalization: The Making of Modern Religious Identity,” *Theological Studies* 69, no. 2 (2008): 400-01. Here, Ulrich Beck defines ‘sameness universalism’: “Universalism obliges us to respect others as equals in principle, yet for that very reason it does not involve any requirement that would inspire curiosity or respect for what makes others different. On the contrary, the particularity of others is sacrificed to an assumed universal equality which denies it its own origins and interests.”

and eventually dismissed a local minister for administering the sacrament of communion to unbaptised worshippers, provides evidence that doctrinal exclusivity is real, and enforcement is strong.²⁰ In the confident espousal of represented, metaphysical 'truth', to the exclusion of other interpretations, there is, arguably, a sense of clinging or grasping that is antithetical to both Buddhist sunyata and Christian kenosis. Found therein are barriers to the metaphor of church building as interfaith bridge.

It is not only the client, however, presenting such barriers. In certain ways, Ando does as well. Indeed, there is a part of Ando's thinking that seems to impact the situation's kenotic potentiality, well before the conception of a building. Acknowledging that "religion is a very difficult issue for me,"²¹ Ando's self-described approach to religion reveals what I consider to be two noteworthy biases. Although perhaps predictable, understandable, and benign, they are nonetheless barriers to kenosis. They manifest in Ando's inclination toward Buddhist-inspired thought,²² and in his disinclination toward liturgy. The latter is discussed in the next section of this chapter, but the former I discuss here, beginning with Ando's view of nature, God, and where God supposedly exists:

God (*kamisama*), to the Japanese, exists in nature. I do not know whether this would be an acceptable view in Christianity or not. Many people think that god exists outside the self. But, a god who exists in nature is also in one's mind (*kokoro*). In this sense, my intention in church architecture is to lead one to the awakening of the mind as the locus of god. God does not exist in the church itself, but the architecture rekindles the callous mind from the everyday life into the locus of god.²³

Additional insight comes as Ando compares his churches to those of Rudolf Schwarz and Sigurd Lewerentz. "I believe that God exists inside one's self and my churches reflect this, while I think Schwarz and Lewerentz each intended to create a church as the domus of God."²⁴ Marking a similar distinction, Ando sees Kenzo Tange's well-known St Mary's Cathedral, in Tokyo, as being "Western," insofar as it "expresses the moment of moving toward heaven, symbolising heaven as the locus of God."²⁵ Perhaps Ando's assessments stem from his basic view of nature, which is, according to Kenneth Frampton, "oriented towards an ineffable manifestation, bordering on the

²⁰ "Executive Council Votes to Admonish Pastor, Abolish Mission Commission," *Kyodan Newsletter*, 22 October 2008. The pastor was eventually dismissed in 2010.

²¹ Baek, *Nothingness: Tadao Ando's Christian Sacred Space*: 187.

²² As discussed in Chapter 2, there are many apparent commonalities between Buddhism and Christianity, particularly when viewed kenotically. Nonetheless, there are fundamental theological differences leading to practical liturgical differences. Since Ando's project is strictly Christian – albeit situated in a Buddhist/Shinto context – such differences cannot be overlooked since they affect any kenotic potentiality that the project may present.

²³ Baek, *Nothingness: Tadao Ando's Christian Sacred Space*: 188.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 191-4. At the time of this interview, Ando had completed two buildings intended as Christian churches. Other religious projects included Christian-like wedding chapels (for use by all, and not to be seen as Christian churches) and Buddhist temples.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 190. As with Tange's cathedral, the faith tradition that Ando is called to house is also "Western."

animistic.” Or perhaps they are grounded in what Frampton describes as Ando’s “basic concept of creating introspective microcosms to stand against the urban chaos of the late modern world.”²⁶ Indeed, Ando seems to confirm the latter suggestion, saying, “In our contemporary culture, where all of us are subjected to intense exterior stimulation, especially by the electronic environment, the role of architectural space as a spiritual shelter is crucial.”²⁷ Notwithstanding their sincerity and merit, Ando’s views find him aligned with two aspects of Buddhist thought that most separate it from Christianity. First, his view of nature sits comfortably alongside the absence, in Buddhism, of theism and all centricisms, especially anthropocentrism; an absence that allows the suchness of everything to be realised. But this is in contrast to a theocentric, christocentric, and historically anthropocentric Christianity, which, even while acknowledging the immanence of God in nature, first sees nature as evidence of God’s exclusive power to create it – originally from somewhere outside itself – and to cause its ongoing existence. Second, Ando’s view of God is in accord with Buddhism’s rejection of “the notions of a transcendent ruler of the universe or of a savior outside one’s self,” but it is in sharp contrast to Christianity’s emphatic embrace of precisely those notions.²⁸ (In separate comments, Ando curiously seems to deny this fundamental difference, saying that Christianity and Buddhism “are similar in that Sakyamuni [Buddha] and Jesus are each presented as the paradigmatic representative of humanity and as savior.”²⁹ But that paints only part of the picture. In Buddhism, Sakyamuni is actually quite unlike the human-but-divine Jesus, since Sakyamuni is presented as “*none other than a person* who awakens to the ... truth,” and the salvation he presents is *not* purported to derive from any supernatural existence.³⁰)

Another of Ando’s interpretations is similarly askew with Christianity, that being his view of where God is to be ‘found’. As seen, he does not consider God existing *in* the church itself, by which he could mean *in* the worship space, *in* the people who comprise the church (skenosis), or *in* the architectural fabric of the building. Regardless of which meaning is intended, his premise is difficult to reconcile with the Christian belief that arises from the well-known words attributed to Christ: “For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them” (Matt 18:20, NRSV). Christianity posits that the second hypostasis of a triune God is ‘present’ (albeit not in a single, identifiable

²⁶ K. Frampton, “Thoughts on Tadao Ando” (paper presented at the The Pritzker Architecture Prize Induction Ceremony, Versailles, 1995).

²⁷ T. Ando, “Acceptance Speech” (paper presented at the The Pritzker Architecture Prize Induction Ceremony, Versailles, 1995).

²⁸ Abe, “Kenotic God and Dynamic Śūnyatā,” 29. According to Abe, sunyata is neither outside one’s self-existence, nor inside. It completely empties everything, including itself; the pure activity of absolute emptying is true sunyata.

²⁹ Baek, *Nothingness: Tadao Ando’s Christian Sacred Space*: 187-8.

³⁰ Abe, “Kenotic God and Dynamic Śūnyatā,” 29 (my emphases).

body) whenever two or more Christians gather; meaning, amongst other possibilities, that when Christians gather together for worship, God is present *in* their midst and, therefore, *in* the church's worship space. Furthermore, the apostle Paul adds, "Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it" (1 Cor 12:27, NRSV). Although usually interpreted as referring to a *mystical* body, Paul nonetheless names a presence of Christ *in* the people who constitute the church, and, by extension, also *in* the places they occupy. Presence in a building's architectural fabric, however, is only implied – by virtue of a church building's consecration, or dedication, for use by the people in whom Christ is said to be present.

For Ando, the church building is where "one goes ... to search for god,"³¹ and, since he also believes that the locus of God is in one's mind, the church is a place for introspection, a place at which to search for God within one's self – a search perhaps nurtured by architecture. While Christianity recognises each individual 'self' as a part of the body of Christ, it is in communal celebration, when the parts are joined together, that the body is made whole. While Christianity proclaims Christ's presence in and amongst the people of the church, such presence occurs when an individual is gathered with at least one other. And while Christianity includes acts of individual piety, such acts are seen as an extension of communal worship, not in lieu of or in isolation. Hence, while Christianity certainly includes self-examination, such is more an assessment of one's faithfulness than it is a search for God within (notwithstanding the striving for godliness that faith demands). Indeed, the interpretation of Christianity espoused by the UCCJ finds that "God chooses us by His grace," and that "the Holy Bible is the Word of God, which gives us full knowledge of God and salvation, and is the unerring standard of faith and life."³² So, contrary to Ando's vision of humankind in search of God, his client portrays God in search of humankind – or as already having found those "it pleases Him to call" – with any need for the converse made superfluous by the definitive information already available in the biblical texts.

Ando's desire to build an architectural bridge between Buddhism and Christianity – a significant aspect of this situation's potentiality – is neither unfounded nor unfathomable, since many of the requisite theological and cultural bridges have been and continue to be built. His views of religion and philosophy, however, from which he effects such a construct, are often quite dissimilar to those espoused by his client. It is difficult to conclude that, in commissioning the Church of the Light, the UCCJ aspired to the level of religio-philosophical influence that is suggested by its positioning within Nishida's legacy,

³¹ Baek, *Nothingness: Tadao Ando's Christian Sacred Space*: 190.

³² "Confession of Faith," (The United Church of Christ in Japan, 1954).

or to the level of interfaith 'bridging' to which Ando is committed. Nevertheless, it is apparent that those with design approval authority were, at the time, accepting of Ando's proposals. Ironically, that acceptance has proven to evangelise the project's architecture and architect to a far greater extent than it has their own evangelism.³³ Although contemporary Christianity sees church primarily as people, and only secondarily as buildings, the wholeness (if not the holiness) of church comes in the hybridisation of the two – the opening-up of one to the other. Ando's church building, however, says much about its own character but little about the character and practices of those for whom it was created. The building's reductive modernity, simplicity, and emptiness could reasonably be expected to herald progressive Christian teaching; teaching that perhaps makes-room for interfaith sensibilities and other world views. But such appears not to be the case. Faithfulness to denominational doctrine constricts the building's spatial emptiness as a means to fully open-up and gather-in what the others of the world might open-up and pour-out in mutual exchange. Looking beyond architectural ascriptions and the irony of Japanese Christianity's missionary origins – effected only by the willingness of Japan (and other countries) to make-room for Christianity – the kenosis and therefore the cosmopolitanism of the situation of the Church of the Light is largely a latent promise; perhaps never being more than Ando's hope, unrealised in the actuality of the church's whole.³⁴

Receptivity

Accepting that the situation of the Church of the Light has, at the global scale, inherent kenotic potential – albeit compromised in various ways by client and architect – it is then necessarily important to shift to the local scale and explore the extent to which the church building instantiates kenosis through the experience it affords. In question is the building's openness and hospitality – its receptivity – not so much to *users*, but to the *use* for which it is intended; the latter being the ultimate expression of hospitality that can be extended to users. What is the building's capacity to receive, accommodate, and amplify the kenosis occasioned in Christian worship – that is, in liturgy?³⁵ It is often suggested that liturgy can take place in almost any setting because liturgy is primarily action; that liturgy can overcome unsympathetic architectural conditions. Indeed, a building can host

³³ Owing primarily to the large numbers of people wishing to see the architecture, the church has been forced to implement strict policies concerning visitors, under which reservations are required not only for weekday 'sightseeing' but also for the Sunday worship service. (The church website explains: <http://ibaraki-kasugaoka-church.jp/e-forvisitors.html>.)

³⁴ The concept of religious cosmopolitanism is discussed in Fletcher, "Religious Pluralism in an Era of Globalization: The Making of Modern Religious Identity," 407-11.

³⁵ When I speak, here, of 'use' and its 'accommodation', I am not thinking of function alone. I am not thinking about use that is merely effective, efficient, and convenient. Rather I am thinking of use – as experience or performance – that also aesthetically, tactilely, and emotionally satisfies the users, in the manner called for by the situation. The latter instantiates kenosis.

worship activities without necessarily being especially kenotic or receptive to kenotic events. But in the case of a building dedicated solely to the action of liturgy, much more can be reasonably expected. Indeed, such a building might be expected to be particularly attentive to what happens in Christian worship; in the symbology and practice of liturgy. Because liturgy's purpose is to celebrate the mystery of kenosis, attentiveness to liturgy *is* attentiveness to kenosis, and such attentiveness is manifestly important to 'church' – seen both as people and building.

Church and Liturgy

In his analysis, Baek refers to Ando's worship space, interchangeably, as 'church' or 'chapel', perhaps tempted to deploy the latter term because of the building's relatively modest scale and seating capacity. The terms are not, however, synonymous; the distinction is not merely a matter of size; and the practical consequences are not insignificant, especially as related to liturgy. Manifested in built form, a *church* is "an edifice for public Christian worship," whereas a *chapel* is "a private or subordinate place of prayer or worship."³⁶ The worship space at the Church of the Light is neither private nor subordinate to another space. Its primary purpose, then – regardless of size or seating capacity – is *liturgy*, defined as "a form of public worship; a ritual."³⁷ As a church building, it has specific liturgical duties; the foremost to accommodate public worship with architecture that can functionally and aesthetically sustain – and ideally enhance – events of prescribed liturgy. The same expectations would not apply if were it a chapel, thus intended primarily for private (and often spontaneous) prayer or meditation by individuals and small groups. This is not to say that a church might not be used for private prayer and meditation, and accommodate those activities well. Nor is it to say that a chapel might not be used for small liturgies. It is merely to say that liturgy is not the primary purpose at a chapel in the same way that it is at a church. Hence, church and chapel present different criteria by which their architecture is to be assessed, and the Church of the Light must be judged on the basis of its primary purpose; namely, as a church in which to conduct the liturgies of public Christian worship, particularly those of the UCCJ.

It is in this regard that a second of Ando's biases is revealed (the first having been discussed in the previous section of this chapter). In addition to his inclination toward Buddhist-inspired thought, Ando betrays a disinclination toward liturgy. The joining of the latter with the former importantly prefigures his design for the Church of the Light and the reception it offers to liturgy. In Ando's view:

³⁶ *Macquarie Dictionary*, Fifth ed., s.v. "church", "chapel".

³⁷ *Ibid.*, s.v. "Liturgy". The original Greek word, 'leitourgia', means not only 'public worship', but also 'public duty'.

Both Christianity and Buddhism put emphasis on ritual and liturgy. But, I doubt whether they are still spiritually powerful. What we need at this point is not repetition of ritual and liturgy, but a place of spirituality. Once we have this place, we might have a qualitatively different experience in performing ritual.³⁸

Ando's aspiration for a worthy place of spirituality, and for the enhancement of the experience that might accrue in such a place, is commendable and likely to be shared by most ecclesiastical clients (even accounting for widely-varying interpretations of 'spirituality'). Of concern here – in light of Ando's charge to design a place for Christian liturgy – are his misgivings toward liturgy, the potency of liturgy's contemporary spiritual power, and the essentiality of liturgy's repetition. Given various indications of decline in mainstream Christian churches (often citing attendance), a case could be made for liturgy's diminishing influence. But the measure of its full power would have to include humanity's instinctive attraction to liturgy and para-liturgy, whether or not of the religious kind. Such attraction is seen on many occasions of great import – whether tragic or festive, organised or spontaneous – including the milestones of life, natural and humanly-caused disasters, and the openings and closings of major events. In many parts of the world, there is surprising interest in the liturgies of Christmas and Easter amongst non-Christian populations. Hence, while the contemporary power of liturgy may sometimes appear dormant, it would be premature to suggest or predict its demise.

Regardless of its adjudged power, repeated liturgy is the essential activity of the church. Indeed, the UCCJ "understands its true purpose to be the carrying out of the functions of the catholic Church ... the accomplishment of which is the mission for which it exists," and it defines those functions to be the conduct of public worship on every Sunday – including proclamation of the gospel through hymns, scripture readings, sermon and prayers – and the administration of the sacraments, comprising baptism and communion.³⁹ Ando's client sees its very identity in the repetition of liturgy. Ando, however, suggests that such repetition is unnecessary or at least subordinate to the promise of architecture. In Ando's view, architecture can rescue liturgy from what he sees as its ineffectualness. Thus he proposes a relational union predicated on one changing the other; that is, architecture changing liturgy so as to effect a liturgical experience presumed superior by virtue of the architectural environment. It is anything but a kenotic proposal. Certainly, architecture and the experience of its perception can prompt a perceiver's fascination or awe, but not with any guarantee of profundity or longevity. Spiritual power germinates in what happens at a place – often in what happens repeatedly – and gestates in the memories of those happenings. (This is true not only in religious places but across a wide range of human institutions.) When a

³⁸ Baek, *Nothingness: Tadao Ando's Christian Sacred Space*: 195.

³⁹ "Kyodan Constitution," articles I and VIII.

building offers open and receptive hospitality to the happenings and their memorialisation, it becomes the placed materiality of memory.⁴⁰ When those who hold the memories are reciprocally open and receptive to the hospitable building, aspects of spirituality may be achieved. The 'spiritual' approaches contingently in the repetition of liturgies, in the memories thereof, in architecture's hospitality to both, and in the relationality thereby established. When architecture empties and opens-up to the otherness of liturgy, and liturgy does likewise to the otherness of architecture, it is possible to see realised that which Ando calls a "qualitatively different experience of liturgy."

Christian liturgy – not limited to but most frequently found in Sunday public worship – is a celebration of reciprocal kenosis; the divine and human in relational union. Such celebration is intended to mark the self-offering of the Father in the incarnation and the self-offering response of the Son in his passion. But it also calls, through the Spirit, for the faithful to respond with their own self-offering, so as to join an extension of divine perichoresis. The latter is seen not "as something that we do, but as something that happens to us, that lifts us out of ourselves and transports us, however fleetingly, to a place of supreme fulfilment ..."⁴¹ As such, liturgy is intended neither as personal piety nor individual meditation (though both, conducted on other occasions, can be nurturing to liturgy), but as a self-transcendent, relational, and communal celebration of kenosis. Clearly then, Christian liturgy presents something quite different to introspection, even though elements of introspection may be part of liturgy. That difference points to a further difficulty in syncretising Christianity and Buddhism, particularly if intending to do so by deploying Christian liturgical architecture.

The philosophy of the Kyoto School relates kenosis to sunyata by way of defining the latter as 'selflessness' or 'non-ego' (*anātman*). Christian scholars, including Balthasar and modern mystic Thomas Merton (1915-1968), acknowledge the importance and applicability of that definition in Christian meditation and contemplation. But they also point to the "vital difference between a kenotic buddhology that is based on an act of self-negation in the locus of nothingness, and a kenotic christology centred on the sacramental life of the church community,"⁴² as observed in liturgy. In Christianity, the event of the cross *is* the mystery of kenosis, liturgised in the sacrament of communion and seen as Christ's ongoing kenosis.⁴³ Such historical and eschatological dimensions of

⁴⁰ The concept of space, place, and memory is more fully explored in J. Malpas, "Building Memory," *Interstices: Journal of Architecture and Related Arts* 13 (2012).

⁴¹ R.J. Daly, "Sacrifice: The Way to Enter the Paschal Mystery," *America* 188, no. 16 (2003): 14-16.

⁴² Odin, "A Critique of the 'Kenōsis/Śūnyatā' Motif in Nishida and the Kyoto School," 77.

⁴³ I use the term 'sacrament of communion', here, as used by the UCCJ and many Protestant denominations. Synonymous is the term 'Eucharist', as used in Catholic and Orthodox traditions, as well as in certain other Protestant denominations.

kenosis are not found in Buddhism.⁴⁴ Although Baek recognises this difference, he is less interested in “whether this notion of self-emptying by Nishida conforms to Christianity” than he is in the “hermeneutic openings it has brought to [Nishida’s] understanding of Christianity.”⁴⁵ Notwithstanding the value of the latter pursuit, the degree of correspondence in Nishidan philosophy and Christianity is critically important when evaluating architecture for Christian liturgy that is purported to be significantly influenced by that philosophy. As discussed, such architecture can reasonably be expected to honour, foremost, its identity as a Christian church. Then – if the commissioning church body assumes a kenotic posture – the exploration of hermeneutic openings may well hold the potential for mutual exchange between Christianity and its others, including that which architecture might aid. But architecture alone, no matter what philosophy is embraced by its architect or with which it is imbued, cannot effect the hermeneutics necessary to change entrenched doctrines and practices. Ironically, in the case of a church, such change – such kenosis – is more likely to be effected by quality liturgy, which architecture *can* be designed to effect.

Liturgy, Symbolology, and Architecture

At the Church of the Light, Ando’s ‘reduction’ initially appears successful in architecturally syncretising Buddhism and Christianity: a space of nothingness evoking sunyata, and, central on its front wall, the symbol of the cross, deployed as a monumental incision admitting natural light (see fig. 5.1). Attributing the stark simplicity to “Ando’s anti-semiotic attitude” toward Christian architecture,⁴⁶ Baek describes the survival of the cross in an otherwise thorough ridding of things religious:

The fact that this cross, along with the displaced altar, is left in the church first indicates that the cross must survive the process of emptying the space, even as other icons, figures, and images are purged. This characterizes ... the fundamental difference between the cross as the universal Christian symbol and other figurative icons or images.⁴⁷

Although the symbol of the cross far predates Christianity and arose only gradually in its early celebrations, the cross and Christianity are now categorically linked, with the cross seen as “the primordial emblem shaping the [Christian] community.”⁴⁸ But primordality, universality, and centrality, do not establish the cross as a complete symbol, or as the only essential symbol in Christian liturgy.

⁴⁴ Odin, “A Critique of the ‘Kenōsis/Śūnyatā’ Motif in Nishida and the Kyoto School,” 79.

⁴⁵ Baek, *Nothingness: Tadao Ando’s Christian Sacred Space*: 77.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 94.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 96.

⁴⁸ G.T. Ryan, *The Sacristy Manual* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1993), 51.



FIGURE 5.1
View toward chancel, unoccupied (2006)
(Photo: Naoya Fujii)

Primal Symbols

In the full conveyance of the *event* of the cross – the mystery of kenosis – Christianity relies on a collection of primal symbols. According to Baek, the symbols, icons, figures, and images that Ando purges are those that link to antecedent ‘prototypes’ and therefore become figurative re-presentations. Certainly, such a distinction pertains to secondary symbols, for example, the chalice and paten re-presenting their prototype cup and dish from the Last Supper. It also pertains to elements such as icons, paintings, and statues, which usually re-present some prototypical image of an important religious figure. But it is not a distinction that can be applied to Christianity’s primal symbols. *Light, bread and*

wine, word (or wisdom), water, oil, and assembly (or community) do not depict prototypes, and it is exactly that attribute which marks their power to evoke manifold layers of meaning and transcend figuration – to be symbols. They are, in concert with the cross, the primal symbols of Christian liturgy, used to celebrate kenosis. Ironically, amongst these primal symbols, it is only the cross that has a prototype – an ancient instrument of execution – and therefore the potential to be made figurative. Left at that, the cross has little meaning, but seen as part of the *event* of the cross, in which it becomes intrinsically connected to the other primal symbols, it transcends its prototype and is thus able to be a symbol.

Ando's almost exclusive attention to the cross may seem prudent insofar as it can be said that the other primal symbols are already embedded in the cross. But, equally important – and challenging to that prudence – such embeddedness does not equate to subordination, because the cross is likewise embedded in each of the other primal symbols. Water, for example, is used in baptism to symbolise not only mystical cleansing but a 'sharing' of the event of the cross.⁴⁹ Just as Christianity is defined by the cross, Christians are defined by the water of baptism and their willingness, as the baptised, to receive and open-up to their own 'crosses'. The symbol of water points to the cross and already holds it (a relationship Ando deftly manifests at the Church on the Water, where a monumental steel cross rises out of a large reflecting pool). Indeed, the cross and all of the other primal symbols are similarly interdependent. None can replace or be replaced by the cross. Furthermore, the primal Christian symbols – notably *excepting* the cross – transcend Christianity and have meaning for all of humanity, regardless of religious views or affiliations. It is therefore not the cross but the other primal symbols that offer the greatest potential to bridge Buddhism and Christianity, as Ando aspires to do. In their embodiment of kenosis, they present the potential of relational union and, in so doing, transcend faith traditions and perhaps all categories of opposition. They point toward what has been called Christianity's "nonreligious destiny."⁵⁰ Yet, at the Church of the Light, these other symbols are largely neglected.

Liturgical Places

Christian liturgy invites architecture to join it in a kenotic relationship of respect, challenge, and mutual influence. Important to the architect and architecture, such a relationship requires more than the creation of an ambiguous liturgical setting in which selected symbols are treated as props on a stage. It requires heightened attentiveness to

⁴⁹ Baptism is referred to as "being plunged into the paschal mystery," and it is by such plunging that one is incorporated as a part of the 'body of Christ'; that is, the church. See P.E. Fink, ed. *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1990), s.v. "Baptism, Symbols In", 109.

⁵⁰ G. Vattimo, "Toward a Nonreligious Christianity," in *After the Death of God*, ed. Jeffrey W. Robbins (New York and Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2007), 27-46.

liturgy's potential and the consequent provision of liturgical *places* to honour each of the primal symbols; places that accommodate their respective furnishings and actions, and facilitate participant movement from one to another. Important to the liturgist and liturgy, the relationship requires heightened attentiveness to architecture's capacity for liturgical enhancement and a willingness to let-go of practices evolving from expediency and habit so as to focus, instead, on the potentiality of the rites conducted at each place. In short, the relationship demands mutual awareness of the hermeneutic openings in each discipline that might strengthen understanding, spatial realisation, and practice – and, as a result, invite the approach of spirituality. It is a relationship left significantly unfulfilled at the Church of the Light. Ando's space of nothingness contains only two major liturgical places: that of the assembly, and that of the chancel. The latter prioritises only one of Christianity's primal symbols and collaborates in Ando's diminishment of the others. Although liturgy 'saves' the other primal symbols – insisting on their survival in some form – the architecture's minimalism nonetheless succeeds in overpowering all that might compete with the architecture of space and cross. Unnecessarily, there is more of contest than relationality.⁵¹

The separation of liturgy into performance and observation (or, chancel and assembly, stage and audience) grows out of an historic and still evolving dynamic in which it is not uncommon to find the ministers (ordained or lay) thought of as those who perform the rituals, and the congregation as those who observe and receive the supposed benefits of the performance (but who actually comprise a primal symbol). That Ando did not undertake to challenge this enduring subject-object relationship – and include its manifestations in his purge – marks a significant missed opportunity to concretise the kenotic relationship of liturgy and architecture. Perhaps it can be explained, however, by the UCCJ's prescriptive and hierarchical culture,⁵² wherein consideration of a more egalitarian liturgical setting may not have been ponderable. Baek alludes to such tension, noting that Ando's focus on "the sense of emptiness as the paramount leitmotif of the church" was accompanied by his "grappling with the demands and forces of particularization."⁵³ Yet, in terms that name few particularities, Ando is portrayed as merely taking the archetypal space of emptiness (already employed in his design for the Azuma house) and then "installing the cross, the pews, the altar, and the

⁵¹ It must be said that the awareness of liturgy and liturgy's potential, as I describe it here, is not consistently shared by all Christian denominations. Indeed, such potential may not have been embraced or emphasised by those who commissioned the Church of the Light. Hence, Ando's apparent 'inattention' to liturgical opportunity is not necessarily negligent or egregious. But, even in its simplest view and practice, Christian liturgy involves much more than one symbol, and places for each of the required symbols will be found – by default, if not by design. I therefore open-up these issues in order to explore the potential for a kenotic design approach to serve a liturgy that is inherently kenotic.

⁵² "Kyodan Constitution," articles IV-XII.

⁵³ Baek, *Nothingness: Tadao Ando's Christian Sacred Space*: 29.

pulpit, and bestowing importance upon the front wall as the backdrop for the performance of the codified Protestant liturgy of the [UCCJ]."⁵⁴ Such a description suggests that the architectural needs of liturgy amount to little more than one symbol and a few items of furniture. It reinforces the notion of liturgy as performance, and thereby implies that the metaphor of stage and audience is appropriate. And it sees the front wall as a vestige of the *reredos* – the screen or wall behind and above an eastward altar – made largely obsolete, though not extinct, by free-standing altar-tables and celebrants in westward posture,⁵⁵ both longstanding Protestant norms.⁵⁶ The bifurcation of space and participants, the self-important backdrop, and the marginalisation of other primal symbols can thus be seen to evidence a tension between architecture and liturgy, one that is neither creative nor kenotic.

At the Church of the Light, it is the chancel on which almost all liturgical action is staged – congregational responsories being the obvious exception. In addition to seats for the liturgists, the chancel includes: (1) a reading-table (pulpit, lectern, or ambo) that holds the symbol of *word*, (2) an altar-table that presents the symbols of *bread* and *wine* for the sacrament of communion, and *water* for the sacrament of baptism, and (3) behind the chancel, the incised and glazed cruciform that simultaneously presents the symbols of *cross* and *light*. Amongst these, only the cross is given permanence of place. Although the positioning of the other two furnishings – and, with them, the primal symbols they hold – is of Ando's determination, they are ultimately susceptible to relocation, interchange, and replacement by future liturgists. Such is the case because, although they are placed on the chancel, a *place* is not made for them that convincingly defines their identity and the liturgical action they facilitate. Yet, in their marking of the mystery of kenosis, the cross and other primal symbols are equally essential and permanent. Each deserves closer examination.

Place of the Cross

Ando's zeal for the cross not only results in its exclusive pride of place but also in its magnification to monumental scale. Monumentality, however, is not an originating characteristic of the cross as a symbol. Although other primal symbols were used in the rituals of the early and largely domestic Roman churches,⁵⁷ the cross emerged slowly

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ J.G. Davies, ed. *The New Westminster Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1986), s.v. "Reredos" and "Posture" and "Orientation". 'Eastward altar' refers to an altar placed against the back wall or reredos of a church, such that a celebrant facing the altar faces away from the congregation. 'Westward posture' refers to the celebrant's position, usually at a free-standing altar-table, facing toward the congregation. Both references are used without regard for actual compass directions.

⁵⁶ For the past half-century, since Vatican Council II, Roman Catholicism has adopted the same norm.

⁵⁷ The emergence and use of primal symbols in Christianity is presented in: E. Foley, *From Age to Age* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1991).

and tentatively. It appeared for processional use – small and portable – in the fourth century,⁵⁸ “leading the community into their gathering place” and then “prominently positioned for the rest of the ritual action.”⁵⁹ The cross was thus given a place of honour but as a means to focus attention on the action taking place before it. In the Middle Ages, with ritual action becoming the purview of the clergy, and processions of the assembly becoming infrequent, the processional cross came to be replaced by a larger and fixed cross or crucifix, positioned alternatively on the altar, above the celebrant’s head, or at the centre of the reredos. The most monumental symbols of the cross were spawned by the Catholic Counter Reformation.⁶⁰ In some churches of that time, the cross came to be “enormous, dwarfing the very altar it was meant to embellish.”⁶¹ Ando’s cross can be seen in the modern lineage of that development and, arguably, in the same relationship with its companion altar-table.

Since the cross spans the full height and width of the church’s front wall, its leg extends to, or emanates from, the lowest elevation, which is the floor of the chancel. It can therefore be said that the cross “anchors its body at the low end of the chapel” and “actualizes humility.”⁶² But it is not to remain in a humbled state.

The cross becomes increasingly towering and prominent as one descends into the cavernous space that engulfs all other material and superficial signs. One’s descending is thus his or her humbling, and, when the journey is done, the cross that symbolized the modesty of the Word God by standing at the lowest point of the church has already been transformed into that of the highest loftiness.⁶³

So it is that the cross is cast as a dynamic embodiment of kenosis. It takes an initially humble position in order to reflect the posture of the incarnated God, but, then, by virtue of a perceiver’s descending “journey” through the stepped seating, the added perspective of a third vanishing point is meant to increase its verticality and prominence. It is, however, a phenomenon difficult to appreciate, because the entire height of the cross is seen from the moment of entry and during any part of the descent that one might experience. The potential for this transformation of the cross – from humility to glory – is largely reliant on a modest vertical change in the perceiver’s viewing position, and that change is effected only to the extent that one actually descends (either to find a seat or to participate in a ritual at the chancel). In fact, the cross is little changed regardless of

⁵⁸ Davies, *The New Westminster Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship*, s.v. “Cross, Crucifix”.

⁵⁹ Ryan, *The Sacristy Manual*: 49-50.

⁶⁰ Davies, *The New Westminster Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship*, s.v. “Cross, Crucifix”.

⁶¹ Ryan, *The Sacristy Manual*: 50. The cross thus became divested of its processional role, largely left as an object to be gazed at. Modernity has seen processional action restored to the cross, in Catholicism as well as many Protestant denominations, but often in addition to the presence of a fixed monumental cross. Such duality acts to dilute the originally-intended power of a singular focus.

⁶² Baek, *Nothingness: Tadao Ando’s Christian Sacred Space*: 137. ‘Chapel’ is Baek’s term, notwithstanding earlier discussion that points to this being a ‘church’. See note 36 and surrounding discussion.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 136.

viewing position. The kenotic allegory, if intended as described, could be achieved with greater effect by deploying other expressions of design. For example, this cross of light could – instead of taking the most prominent position – take the church’s most ‘humble’ position, opposite the chancel, on the *back* wall. There, it would figure prominently on arrival and entry – invoking the original role of the cross to gather-in the assembly. By virtue of this withdrawn position, it would yield to the other primal symbols during worship, but finally return to prominence during the recessional; becoming the last symbol seen by the assembly as it leaves and takes up the (kenotic) call to serve others. Thus, in a journey that the entire assembly takes on every occasion, an even more dynamic transformation of the cross could be experienced; one that more fully marks the absence and presence – the emptying and filling – of kenosis.

Putting aside issues of scale, another major attribute of the cross is the brightness and intensity of the natural light it admits. In almost evangelistic terms, Baek equates its admission of light with “the love of Jesus Christ filling the hearts of the believers,” and describes an almost aggressive effect, whereby “one is penetrated by the phenomenal light” and “the penetrating light crushes our ego self.”⁶⁴ Notwithstanding the possibility of such effect for some perceivers on some occasions, and not discounting its spectacularity, this phenomenal light has another effect, one that significantly influences the liturgical experience at this church. Intense light, introduced through a narrow incision into an otherwise intentionally dark space, results in pupillary constriction and heightened contrast. In turn, the dark timber chancel furnishings – placed on an equally dark timber floor and set against only marginally lighter concrete walls – are almost fully obscured on entry to the space. Indeed, they remain silhouetted throughout a service, even after gradual but never sufficient pupillary dilation (see fig. 5.2). While it may be that the cross of light operates at many levels of encounter and dramatic effect, and “gives existence to the spatial emptiness,”⁶⁵ it does so at significant cost to the other essential and primal symbols of Christianity – those on which liturgy equally relies.

Places of Bread and Wine, Word

Most affected by the intensity of light emanating from the cross are the chancel’s two tables, the primal symbols they present, and the liturgical action associated with each. Not only are the tables and their small symbolic objects obscured in darkness, so are the gestures and facial expressions of the liturgists. The visibility of such gestures and expressions are central to the sacrament of communion and the proclamation of word, and those rites are central to UCCJ liturgy, the accommodation of which is a

⁶⁴ Ibid., 148-50.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 30.

mandatory 'particularisation' of the project. Indeed, the monumental cross and spatial emptiness are co-conspirators against the successful particularisation of the liturgy's full and multi-layered celebration of kenosis. Citing an idea of Christian theologian and philosopher Paul Tillich (1886-1965) that emptiness is a "condition for the return of God" and therefore an essential identity of church, Baek observes that Ando's bold cross "is not just placed within the church as an additional installation to offer a religious identity to an otherwise unidentifiable space of emptiness; it constitutes itself as the other essential element of the church, displacing the altar-table to the side."⁶⁶ Thus, any 'competition' between the symbol of the cross and those of communion (*bread* and *wine* on altar-table) is clearly resolved in favour of the cross. And, when cross is conjoined with emptiness, the two supposedly represent all that is required to define the essence of church.



FIGURE 5.2
View toward chancel, occupied.
(Photo: Tadao Ando Architect & Associates)

⁶⁶ Ibid., 29.

However, as discussed earlier, there is no competition between the cross and other primal symbols and, hence, no need for competitive resolution. Indeed, the very notion of subordinating the altar-table and its symbols contradicts both the concept of Christian kenosis and the Buddhist rejection of dominant-subordinate relationships.⁶⁷ But if subordination of the altar-table was Ando's goal, it is better achieved by obscurity in darkness than by displacement. In fact, the positioning of the altar-table, on the left side of the centre aisle and centreline of the cross, mirrors the position of the reading-table (with symbol of *word*), on the right side. The two tables are thus twinned in a symmetrical arrangement about the church's longitudinal axis. Together, they occupy the same central position in front of the cross, where, in some traditions, the altar-table might be found alone. In this case, horizontal displacement – off of centre, but very centre-related – merely results in the counterbalancing of word and communion, a notion that is not at all unusual in Protestant (and many other Christian) worship spaces. Displacement, however, is not limited to the horizontal. It also occurs vertically, by way of a stepped assembly floor that culminates with the chancel at the lowest elevation. From Ando's point of view, any prominent placement of altar-table and reading-table is associated with Western church architecture, and that is something to be avoided at a church intent on bridging East and West traditions.⁶⁸ Yet, at the Church of the Light, such prominence is actually not avoided, since the chancel and its two symmetrically placed tables are at the natural focal point of the stepped arrangement. Furthermore, such a configuration is common in Western church architecture – particularly for Protestant denominations – its antecedents found in facilities such as theatres, concert halls, and lecture venues. It is a particularly suitable arrangement for Protestant liturgies, wherein the focus – often for long periods of time – is on preaching and teaching, which demands effective lines of sight and sound.

Ando describes his use of the stepped configuration as a means to acknowledge the "humbleness of God" and to "equalize the eye levels of the believer and the pastor," because the "Supreme Being is with us, not only with the pastor."⁶⁹ Such intent is problematic, however, because in most applications, the stepped configuration is used not to diminish but to elevate the importance and authority – even superiority – of those who occupy the lowest elevation: the actors, performers, lecturers, ministers, liturgists, and other presenters, who have something to offer to those who have come to witness

⁶⁷ Abe, "Kenotic God and Dynamic Śūnyatā," 30.

⁶⁸ Baek, *Nothingness: Tadao Ando's Christian Sacred Space*: 195. Notwithstanding the potential merits of interfaith bridging, the logic of this particular avoidance is curious since the theology and liturgy of the church that Ando is commissioned to design is, undeniably, a product of the West. As such, its rites carry with them certain expectations, whether they are conducted in the West or in the East.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 195-6. Nuanced differently, the configuration could be seen as a means of humbling God and the church leaders who might otherwise see themselves in a privileged position.

their presentation. Nonetheless, Ando defends his schema, saying, “I wish to stress the dimension of sharing, not the authoritative aspect of the church as institution.”⁷⁰ But that defence is also problematic, in that the altar-table he seeks to subdue is not a symbol of church authority. To the contrary, it is the embodiment of communal sharing. Although the altar was historically the domain of the priest, and could therefore have been seen as a symbol of ecclesial authority, modern theological development and liturgical reforms – both in Protestantism, since the Reformation, and in Catholicism, since Vatican Council II – see the altar-table marking the place where, if not physically then at least symbolically, the whole ‘community’ gathers-around to share *bread* and *wine* in communion (albeit a members-only community in many traditions, including the UCCJ). Although the ritual may be presided over by a minister, the activity is seen to be corporate⁷¹; one of mutual sharing rather than one characterised by a server-served, dominant-subordinate relationship. Hence, Ando’s striving to diminish the altar-table – intentionally by displacement and depression, perhaps unintentionally by obscurity – only serves to diminish the notion of sharing that he wishes to elevate. Arguably, it thereby weakens the very bridge he seeks to build between Buddhism and Christianity; a bridge whose promise rests in the shared embrace of kenotic thinking.

Places of Water, Oil

Essential to the Christian’s full celebration of kenosis is the primal symbol of *water*. At the Church of the Light, the symbol of water is placed at the chancel. Actually, the chancel does not provide a *place* for water, but a vestige of the symbol in the form of its container⁷² – a relatively small and shallow glass bowl, sitting atop the altar-table (see fig. 5.3). On the occasion of worship that I attended, the bowl remained empty and dry, presumably to be filled when the sacrament of baptism is being observed. Without water, the bowl is merely the *sign* of a transient symbol. The church is thereby denied any ongoing reminder of baptism’s essential role in Christian initiation. Even filled with water, the size and scale of the bowl is such that it is of little relative significance, especially juxtaposed against the cross. Furthermore, its placement on the altar-table confuses its unique meaning and diminishes its importance. In that location, the *water* of baptism is presented alongside the symbols of an entirely different rite – the *bread* and *wine* of communion – suggesting that the altar-table must therefore be some sort of multi-purpose fitting. And, like the communion symbols, the water falls into the same darkness as that to which the entire altar-table, and anything atop it, is inevitably relegated.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 195.

⁷¹ Davies, *The New Westminster Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship*, s.v. “Communion Table”.

⁷² By its nature, water will always be presented by some form of ‘container’, but such a container is not the symbol. Indeed, such a container may best honour the symbol if it proves unable to fully contain something as inherently uncontainable and out-pouring – and kenotic – as water.



FIGURE 5.3
View toward assembly (2013).

Water, like the other primal symbols, cannot be purged from liturgy or liturgical space, and will survive any architectural attempt at reduction because it must. It warrants the same architectural hospitality as that extended to the cross. Particularly curious is that Ando clearly understands the significance of water's abstraction – in its “strange power to stimulate the imagination and to make us aware of life's possibilities,” and in “the profound relationship between water and human spirit.”⁷³ Yet, here, in a Christian context that celebrates exactly that abstraction, the symbol of water is not granted an identifiable *place*. It therefore languishes in the ambiguity of inconsistent presence, minimal scale, residual space, and the obscurity of darkness. Not only obscure but absent from view is the symbol of *oil* (chrism). As another symbol of initiation, oil is often a companion to water, used at confirmation and baptism but also reserved for anointing (as in ordinations) and rituals of healing. In Roman Catholicism and some Protestant denominations, oil is gaining a more visible presence as a symbol of the church's preparedness to welcome new members. But, in more evangelical settings, it tends to remain an occasional and discreet liturgical guest, if used at all. Its apparent absence at the Church of the Light is, therefore, neither surprising nor necessarily subject to

⁷³ Baek, *Nothingness: Tadao Ando's Christian Sacred Space*: 123n39.

criticism.⁷⁴ Nonetheless, oil merits mention for its place in the mystery of kenosis and, consequently, its potential when placed in liturgy and liturgical environments.

Place of the Assembly

In its marking of Christian initiation and the oneness of the baptised, water points toward another essential liturgical symbol: the church assembled and seen as the 'body of Christ'. The *assembly* is an oft-forgotten symbol of Christianity, but liturgy and its celebration of reciprocal kenosis cannot occur without it.⁷⁵ Although a relationship with the divine can be expressed privately and individually, an individual's reciprocal response to divine kenosis is demonstrated through self-emptying and openness to other human beings – and that requires an assembly of at least two (as does the promise of Christ's presence). Since the assembly is comprised of liturgy's essential participants, it is not merely an audience for clergy-enacted rituals at the chancel. Hence, its placement, configuration, and relationship to the other co-originating symbols are critically important. Liturgy and the liturgical environment offer many opportunities to dismantle the clergy-assembly divide, foremost by placing the primal symbols at their most effective location and avoiding their concentration at a place (such as the chancel) that appears to 'belong' to the clergy. For example, the symbol of water can be given its *place* at the threshold of the assembly space or in its midst or nearer to the chancel, but, in any case, it is more effectively associated with the baptised, rather than the baptiser. Similarly, the altar-table, where communion is to be shared, can be placed in such a way that the assembly – at least in sufficient part – is actually seen to 'gather around' it, so as to blur any lines of territorial demarcation between it and the clergy. But it is the configuration of the gathered assembly, itself, that holds the greatest opportunity to express liturgy's communal nature. Ando senses that nature but ironically misses the opportunity that it presents for his bridge-building – for kenosis. He relates the Japanese tea room to the Church of the Light, observing that both are spaces of nothingness and suggesting they have largely similar purposes. According to Ando, the tea room is a place for "man to man" contact. "It is the space of *ma* (nothingness) for the encounter between the two participants," in which they think about "matters related to the mind" and are thereby afforded an opportunity for "cultivation of the self."⁷⁶ He sees the Church of the Light similarly:

⁷⁴ I am unaware, and have been unable to determine, whether the UCCJ uses oil in the conduct of any of its rites. Oil is not, however, obviously displayed at the Church of the Light.

⁷⁵ In Roman Catholicism, the US Bishops underscored this essentiality, saying, "Among the symbols with which liturgy deals, none is more important than the assembly of believers," as found in Foley, *From Age to Age*: 147.

⁷⁶ Baek, *Nothingness: Tadao Ando's Christian Sacred Space*: 194-5.

A simple box, into which multifarious manifestations of light are drawn, is adopted as the space of encounter. People come to the church to encounter God and fellow believers, or other participants who might be non-believers. The architectural performance of the church is, in this sense, the same as the Japanese tea room. There is nothing there except for the deep awakenings of the self, in the minds of the participants.⁷⁷

For Ando, the tea room and the church are places at which to encounter the 'other', but the outcome is an experience of 'self'. Participants are related by proximity and common pursuit; namely, personal introspection. That relatedness, however, is little different to what exists, for example, at theatre performances, at lectures, and on public transportation, where participants are *related* but not necessarily *in relationship*; certainly not in a kenotic relationship that calls one to partially become the other and enter into the Christian community. Ando's seating arrangement at the Church of the Light exemplifies the distinction. The assembly is *seated together* but not *gathered*. Individuals are proximate, but there is little semblance of engagement. Despite the intimacy of his simple box, and its potential for interpersonal relationship, Ando deploys the most anonymous of seating arrangements, wherein awareness of one another is limited to the profile of those immediately aside and the backs of those immediately in front. Although of longstanding precedence in Christian churches, the arrangement is derived from church-appropriated basilicas, and responds to a clergy-focused liturgy. It is not a reflection of progressive Christian thinking.⁷⁸

Other aspects of Ando's treatment of the *assembly* reveal not symbolic but practical inhospitableness to liturgy. The stepped configuration is, at best, unfriendly and, at worst, inaccessible to those with physical limitations. Although disabled visitors can be accommodated in a limited fashion, behind the back row of pews and before the steps begin, access to liturgical participation at the chancel – to read the scriptures, to contribute musically, to be baptised, or even to make an announcement – is fully impeded. Only extraordinary measures could overcome the barriers; measures that would likely call greater attention to the disability.⁷⁹ But the configuration is problematic beyond issues of accessibility. The omission of side aisles hinders the realisation of full seating capacity, restricts liturgical movement, and is unfriendly to visitors who may be reticent to disrupt strangers in order to gain seats. Instead of emptiness, the resulting wall-to-wall furniture evokes a sense of fullness (seen earlier in fig. 5.3). Heightening that

⁷⁷ Ibid., 195.

⁷⁸ A comprehensive and progressive exploration of church seating arrangements is found in E.A. Sovik, *Architecture for Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1973).

⁷⁹ In 1988-89, when the Church of the Light was designed and constructed, the elevation of consciousness toward issues of access for the disabled was underway but certainly not at the levels known today; levels that continue to rise. Nonetheless, attempts to mitigate at least some of the named breaches could have been reasonably expected in a place of public worship.

sense is an array of ad hoc post-occupancy additions – lights, speakers, and heaters, all portable and floor-standing – compensating for the insufficiency of original infrastructure.⁸⁰ Such appurtenances clutter the space and challenge its ‘nothingness’ (see fig. 5.4). And, in another practical injustice, the architectural device meant to prevent direct sunlight from entering the side window – and reaching worshippers’ faces – fails in its task. On Sundays in late January, and presumably all other days of similar solar trajectory, those seated near the side window are subjected to direct sunlight throughout the service and forced to use worship bulletins as eye shades. Although Ando is praised for avoiding “the minimalistic conundrum where the practical matters of life are set aside,”⁸¹ many aspects of the Church of the Light point to the contrary.



FIGURE 5.4
View toward chancel (2013)

⁸⁰ The necessity for such appurtenances might have been even greater had Ando realised his original intent "not to glaze the empty cross ... but to use it as the channel for the introduction of not only light, but also wind and rain." Baek, *Nothingness: Tadao Ando's Christian Sacred Space*: 29.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 160.

Architecture and Church

The emptiness of Ando's church building is found to be filled with many self-contradictions. His architectural confrontation with Christian symbology, in which he attempts to purge all but the cross in the name of emptiness, proves to be a contest with liturgy itself, the central and essential purpose of this and any building purporting to be a church. Although Ando is able to purge the church of icons and statues – an act not at all new to Protestantism – the primal symbols of liturgy survive, despite diminishment, to demonstrate that Christian liturgy is irreducible to one symbol; that the cross symbolises an event, which is the mystery of kenosis; and that liturgy, being the celebration of that mystery, is multi-layered and demanding of multiple symbols for its full conveyance and experience. Thus, Ando succeeds only in having his cross dominate its companion symbols, an outcome that fails his intention to actualise humility. Indeed, this cross can be seen to assume the very posture that Christian kenosis and Buddhist sunyata denounce: "the vertical posture in which one would confront, in an overbearing manner, the opposite party." And, in that posture, the church risks embodying the "haughty, dominant and arrogant uprightness"⁸² that Ando intends to negate.

The potential for this architecture to evoke spirituality is largely reliant on the cross of light in its space of nothingness, a reliance restricted to the realm of the visual (and therefore inaccessible to those without sight). Minimised is the architectural accommodation and punctuation of those other primal symbols that, together, invite more expansive engagement and offer additional paths to meaning and understanding. Liturgy, expressed through all of its primal symbols, is an aesthetic and kenotic happening, an "event of the beautiful" that can "both invite and enable" a kenotic response.⁸³ At the Church of the Light, an extraordinary awareness of the cross offers aesthetic spectacle, but otherwise leaves the fullness of liturgy to emerge from its small and obscured co-original symbols. Fullness of participant response is thereby made even more contingent. The synchronous emptying and filling of kenosis may be experienced, but requires the overcoming of missed architectural opportunities. Here, it is not so much that this architecture subverts liturgy; indeed, liturgy of some form occurs in the church every week. Rather, it is that this architecture is inhospitable – unreceptive – to the fullness of liturgy's kenotic experience, and the liturgy that does occur is required to overcome or adapt to that inhospitality. Although it cannot be said that Ando's empty space fails to be 'numinous', it is fair to say that, in its indifference toward all but one of

⁸² Ibid., 134.

⁸³ The notion of liturgy as aesthetic event is discussed in: R.D. McCall, "In My Beginning is My End": Remembering the Future Shape of Liturgy," *Anglican Theological Review* 82, no. 1 (2000): 26.

the primal symbols of Christian liturgy, its numinousness is not fully manifested.⁸⁴ That failing ironically brings the building precariously close to the kind of architecture against which Tilloch warns, and from which Ando seeks distance: “An empty room filled only with benches and a desk for the preacher is like a classroom for religious instruction, far removed from the spiritual function which a church building must have.”⁸⁵ Insofar as it approaches Tilloch’s description, Ando’s empty space points to the essentiality of a kenotic relationship – opened-up and receptive – between church architecture and the church (its people and their liturgy).

Creativity

There is no reason to think that either Ando or his client has – or necessarily should have – considered the extent to which kenosis permeated the conception of the Church of the Light. But I would suggest that, if viewed through a kenotic lens, the ascribed and self-described theories, intentions, and experiences that surround the building’s design – as well as the built result – yield valuable insights. Of interest is the extent to which this building’s conceptualisation emerges from a kenotic approach to creativity, and whether and how that may have affected the creating of it. These issues reach to the underpinnings of creativity – not only Ando’s but also that of others who influenced the creation.

Conversations with Self and Others

A creative event emerging from kenosis is one in which participants are called to what Eckhart and Heidegger term “releasement,” and what Guignon defines as “heightened sensitivity” to situation (as discussed in Chapter 2). A similar call is evidenced in Nishida’s philosophy, particularly as he adopts and incorporates the Japanese notion of *shintai* (body): “the sensational capacity to be filled by the world of things,” or “the corporeal agency through which one empties selfhood to accept the other into his or her own self.”⁸⁶ In effect, *shintai* nudges the philosophy of nothingness further toward kenosis. But, it is Ufan Lee (1936-) and those of his modern movement, called The School of Things, who interpret Nishida – and seem to prefigure Guignon – with an emphasis on awakening to the “situated-ness (*jōtai-sei*)” of subject and thing. Such an awakening involves a divestment of self, of presumed sufficient knowledge, and of domination goals. One so awakened assumes the posture of a “situated actor” rather

⁸⁴ The term ‘numinous’ is famously used to encompass a variety of attributes such as the tremendous, the awful, and the mysterious, in: R. Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational*, trans. J.W. Harvey, Second ed. (London, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, (1923) 1958).

⁸⁵ Baek, *Nothingness: Tadao Ando’s Christian Sacred Space*: 24.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 66-8.

than an “authoritative master of creation.”⁸⁷ Such a posture would seem appropriate in situations like Ando’s, where a non-Christian architect is asked to design a Christian church. The pertinent issue, however, is not the architect’s religion. Ando declares, “I do not think that it should matter whether the architect is a Christian or Buddhist,”⁸⁸ and, at least *in principle*, he is correct. Indeed, the irrelevant criteria should include all faiths and no faith at all. But, I would argue that, *in practice*, Ando’s observation remains operative only when the architect assumes a kenotic posture, volitionally emptying self (including whatever faith that may or may not comprise) to effect a heightened awareness of what the situation comprises and calls for – and thereby to eschew personal predilections.

Ando seems to reflect the sensational and situational aspects of the kenotic/shintai call in his admonition to other designers: “You must be closely aware of where you stand ...” But then, with words that seem to cast ‘self’ as benefactor and ‘other’ as beneficiary, he adds, “... and be thinking everyday about what *you* can do *for* society, and about what *you* can communicate”.⁸⁹ Notwithstanding the merits of contributing to society, the latter comments include echoes of classic architectural Modernism, wherein architecture is portrayed as a saviour of society. They also seem to uphold Ando’s view, discussed earlier, of architecture as a saviour of liturgy, in little need of mutual exchange or influence. Such a uni-directional, subject-object view also arises in suggestions that, at the Church of the Light, Ando “saved” the cross “from the grip of debased perception” and effected “the cross’ retrieval of its efficacy.”⁹⁰ Such indicators of architecture’s potential for conceit are not limited to or uniquely evidenced by Ando and his work, but they do open-up a question as to whether Ando’s creative approach moves beyond a conversation with self, so as to challenge self-sufficiency and ask: *To what extent am I open to the others of this situation?*

Ando’s views of creativity and spirituality appear correlated, wherein the significance of nothingness lies “in the discovery of self and the procedure by which one is led to the discovery.”⁹¹ But in nothingness and its relation to shintai, the encounter with the other is pivotal to the procedure of self-discovery and found in the dualistic aspect of the body: the simultaneity of ‘I’ (me/subject) and ‘other’ (world). Hence, entering into a creative event with heightened attunement to the entire situation (the world), shintai – like kenosis – “effectuates the reciprocal matrix of actions from the world to the subject, and from the subject to the world.”⁹² Accordingly, it is not unreasonable to expect that, in the

⁸⁷ Ibid., 47-51.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 183.

⁸⁹ S. Morikawa, “Tadao Ando – An Interview with,” *The GROUND* (2012), <http://www.thegroundmag.com/tadao-ando-an-interview-with/>. (Italics are my emphasis.)

⁹⁰ Baek, *Nothingness: Tadao Ando’s Christian Sacred Space*: 59, 142.

⁹¹ Ibid., 182.

⁹² Ibid., 68-9.

conception of the Church of the Light, challenging encounters or conversations might have occurred amongst Ando (self/subject and his world), his client (the other), and their Christian theology and liturgy (their world) so as to foster mutual exchange and influence. However, Ando's engagement with the world of his client is seen to be largely limited by his desire to express a distinctively architectonic symbol of the cross, almost to the exclusion of Christianity's other primal symbols. Even his displacement of the altar-table – a kind of engagement – is said to be “evidence of *Ando's desire* to make the cross the central and essential element.”⁹³ But did that desire emanate from mutual exchange with the others in this particular situation? Or, did it originate in Ando's personal views of Christianity and his architectural preferences? Baek's narrative begins to answer to such questions when he describes Ando's creation of the cross as a “*self-imposed task*” fulfilling *his* “two-fold wish ... to differentiate it from the conventionalised emblems of the post-war spectacle and ... allow it to be read as a cross”; and when he states that “the molding of the cross ... comes from *Ando's conception of sacred space*.”⁹⁴ Although the client accepts the manifestation of Ando's desires and wishes, such acceptance does not necessarily evidence kenosis in the creative event. Indeed, it might even be said that Ando's celebrated anti-semiotic attitude actually shows itself to be antithetical to kenosis, particularly when exercised in the context of Christianity and its kenotic grounding.

Certainly, client-architect conversations occurred, and it may be that such conversations were creatively productive. Speaking of the project's beginnings, Ando recalls discussions with his client about “limited funds” and the anticipation of “many difficulties.” He also evokes some notion of exchange when he cites “the church people's passion and eagerness” as a source of his “hope.”⁹⁵ For its part, the client recalls asking for a church “open to anybody,” one of “dignity and beauty.” Their brief called for “a simple building with sacred space which realises Jesus Christ's words: ‘Where two or three come together in my name, I am there with them.’”⁹⁶ Not surprisingly, each of these client requests invokes something of Christian kenosis. On the one hand, their requests are open to many sorts of architectural response, but, on the other, they posit a specific view of God's presence, which is seen to misalign with Ando's personal view. Indeed, it is the clients' latter request to which the design seems least attentive, instead manifesting Ando's preference for introspection over communal liturgy. At the church's dedication, Ando refers to the building as one which his office and the builder “have brought up under our enduring care, and will hand over to the church people today.” He admits to having

⁹³ Ibid., 103 (my emphasis).

⁹⁴ Ibid., 103, 107 (my emphases).

⁹⁵ T. Ando, “A Building Created by Our Hearts” (paper presented at the Ibaraki Kasugaoka Church Dedication Ceremony, Ibaraki, Japan, 1989).

⁹⁶ N. Karukome, “To Our Visitors: Our Building,” (Ministry of Ibaraki Kasugaoka Church, 2007).

been “concerned about whether the church people would use this building well,” but suggests that such concern is assuaged by the “faces” of those at the ceremony.⁹⁷ Notwithstanding the latter assurance, Ando’s words portray a giver-receiver relationship, one in which the architect presents the client with a worthy gift and, then, is left only to hope that the client proves worthy of it. In this case, there is little doubt about the worthiness of the architect’s gift. But reasonable doubts do arise concerning Ando’s attentiveness to this project’s *entire* situation and the scope of mutual exchange and influence that occurred. Clearly, the influence of architect and architecture on the local congregation is realised, on-going, and longstanding – in the form of a fame-filled building. But the influence of the congregation (and its doctrinal traditions) on the architect and architecture – especially during conception, when such influence would most matter – is much less evident. Ando’s architecture clearly demonstrates a bond between self and the creation – a significant out-pouring of the creator (self) in the act of creating – and may initially appear to meet Nishida’s characterisation of the work of art as “the pure body (*junsui shintai*) of the artist.” But, as Baek elucidates, it is through the agency of *shintai* (and, one might also say, *kenosis*) that a work of art is “the very *expansion* of the bodily self”; that the emptied self comes to be filled and overflowing with the world (the entirety of the situation). And it is that very notion that calls into question the extent to which Ando’s creativity exposes or overturns the “limited capacity of the self,”⁹⁸ so as to be filled with all that comprises the situation of the Church of the Light.

Conversations with Other Things

Sensational and situational awareness requires not only conversations with self and others but also with other things. Such conversations can result in what Nishida sees as a transformation of will, whereby “we totally immerse the self into the thing ... and we feel the action of the thing to be the activity of our own will.”⁹⁹ Nishida’s view aligns with the kenotic notions of radical contextualisation, hybridisation, and partially becoming the other (concepts introduced in Chapter 2). Indeed, Ando demonstrates an understanding of such concepts and alludes to the sort of conversation by which they can be effected:

The *shintai* (body) is a sentient being that responds to the world. When one stands on an empty site, one can sometimes hear the land voice a need for a building. The old, anthropomorphic idea of the *genius loci* was a recognition of the phenomenon. The point is that what this voice is saying is actually ‘understandable’ only to the *shintai*.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Ando, “A Building Created by Our Hearts.”

⁹⁸ Baek, *Nothingness: Tadao Ando’s Christian Sacred Space*: 69 (my emphasis).

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 60.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 128 (author’s emphases).

But, in light of questions about the extent of kenotic-ness in his approach, Ando's openness to hear the 'voice' of the site stands in contrast to what I have characterised as the appearance of inattentiveness – even intentional inattentiveness – to many things of liturgy that call to be engaged and heard in the situation of a Christian church building. Such contrast opens-up additional questions about Ando's approach to still other 'things'. In his engagement with an empty site, there is an echo of Louis Kahn's 'conversation' with brick – a conversation that I have suggested is kenotically based (see Chapter 3). Does Ando also converse with potential building materials? And, if so, are such conversations similarly kenotic?

Surveying Ando's largely concrete projects, it is easy to imagine him paraphrasing Kahn, saying, "I asked the concrete what it liked, and the concrete said, 'I like a wall.'" Indeed, Frampton writes that Ando's basic syntax, arising in his early residential projects, comprises an "habitual use of fair-faced in-situ concrete, inside and out, either as a bounding wall or as a free-standing frame."¹⁰¹ Clearly, Ando's architectural vocabulary extends beyond concrete walls, but he has used the idiom often enough, masterfully enough, and in sufficiently diverse situations, so as to establish the bond between himself and the material. In what would appear to be a mutual and, perhaps, kenotic relationship, concrete is open to Ando's intentions and Ando is open to the material's nature. However, the ubiquitousness and subjectiveness of Ando's deployment of concrete calls into question whether its selection as a building material – prior to considerations of its manner of use – is in fact the product of kenosis (or shintai). Acute attentiveness to each project's entire situation would seem unlikely to produce such similar determinations of materiality in so many dissimilar situations. Self-emptying, and its consequent openness to each situation's world of things, point to a high likelihood of unique and varied responses – amongst them, those of materiality – unless the responses are primarily the product of whim or preference or self-assertion. The latter sorts of responses are not uncommon or discouraged in architecture (beginning in architectural education), but neither are they kenotic.

Material selection and use are closely related and, according to Ando, the connection can be seen in traditional Japanese houses. Figuratively speaking, he claims that, in such houses, "the wall does not actually exist." Clarifying the claim, he explains that in "an aesthetic devoid of actuality and attributes ... it is the wall, made as light and thin as possible, that permits – or perhaps more accurately evokes – space."¹⁰² In other words, the materials of a Japanese house are *selected* for their capacity to create the lightest and thinnest of walls, and then *used* in such a way as to be self-withdrawing, so

¹⁰¹ Frampton, "Thoughts on Tadao Ando."

¹⁰² Baek, *Nothingness: Tadao Ando's Christian Sacred Space*: 90.

as to realise not walls but space. The imagery, however, is difficult to reconcile with Ando's work and his self-described architectural pursuit: "I create enclosed spaces by means of thick concrete walls."¹⁰³ Recognising the dilemma, and the apologetics in which Ando engages, Baek elucidates Ando's theory. He cites the "subtlety and smoothness" of his concrete – opposed to the textural roughness of *béton brut* – as that which "removes materialistic sensuousness" and creates "a self-effacing surface" below which concrete's inherent strength is concealed. From that self-effacement, "thinness ... lightness ... and delicacy" are meant to emerge in a paradox that reconciles Ando's thick, heavy, and strong concrete walls with the insubstantial walls of wood, paper, earth, and straw – as found in Japanese houses and tea rooms.¹⁰⁴ Without debating the validity of the paradox, and notwithstanding its convenience, I would suggest that reconciliation remains problematic. Materialistic sensuousness has not been removed from the concrete at the Church of the Light, because smoothness is as much a texture as roughness, and it is not only sensuous but, arguably, more so. Thus, the ascribed self-effacement and its attributes are not realised. Furthermore, concrete's thickness is in its structural nature – strong in compression, weak in tension – and its heaviness is consequential. In this situation, not only is its thickness (and strength) not concealed, it is vividly revealed by the (structurally heroic) cruciform incision through the front wall, which commands focus and presents the wall's full thickness for perceptual or actual measurement.

Ando's selection and use of concrete, particularly at the Church of the Light, presents three additional ironies. The first arises from concrete's requisite twofold construction. Ando's contained emptiness is created by initially constructing an empty container around it, one which is extraordinarily thin compared to that of the space it defines. Then, the emptiness and thinness of the surrounding container are displaced by the fullness of concrete and steel reinforcing, ultimately producing walls that appear thick. The second irony finds the initial surrounding container, or form, comprised of two thin 'walls', often made or lined with wood. And it is these walls – stripped away after their filling – that would seem to share a stronger relationship to the walls of a traditional Japanese house than do the thick concrete walls they parent. A third irony can be seen in Ando's bond with the material. Notwithstanding his appreciation of concrete, he primarily engages only those properties needed to produce his trademark rectilinear and occasionally (in other situations) curvilinear slabs. Notably passed over is the potential of concrete's plasticity, as explored and deployed by many designers including Oscar Niemeyer, Félix Candela Outeriño, Pier Luigi Nervi, and Japan's Kenzo Tange. Therein

¹⁰³ Kroll, "AD Classics: Church of the Light / Tadao Ando".

¹⁰⁴ Baek, *Nothingness: Tadao Ando's Christian Sacred Space*: 91-93.

lies concrete's capacity to be shaped in ways that actually achieve the relative thinness, lightness, and delicacy to which Ando purportedly aspires.

Ando opens up to concrete's nature as a means of mastering it and, then, uses that mastery to control his architecture. Concrete is at Ando's service, but to what extent is the reverse true? In many ways – though certainly not all – Ando deploys concrete at the Church of the Light (and at many other projects) as Kahn does at the Salk Institute. But the two situations are dramatically different. At a particular place on a particular Californian coastline, Kahn heard the situation calling for concrete, and the concrete asking to be granite. At a suburb of Osaka, did a particularly different situation also call for concrete? And, if so, what did the concrete want to be, there, that it did not want to be in California? If, as Ando suggests, it wanted to be like the walls of traditional Japanese houses – and 'not exist' – is such a request honoured by a response largely similar to situations where concrete's existence is so plainly evident? Does Ando approach concrete's inherent kenotic-ness with his own kenosis, as Kahn seems to have done? For Kahn, concrete never becomes the trademark that it does for Ando. Kahn responds with concrete at the Salk Institute, where the situation seems to call for it. In other situations, he responds with whatever else seems to be called for. Ando, however, responds to most situations with concrete. The difference, I suggest, is the extent of kenotic-ness in the two creators' approaches to creating; that is, in their creativity.

Certainly, there is evidence that Ando's approach recognises self-insufficiencies and embraces aspects of kenosis (specifically via Eastern thought). The creative event appears to be a significant spiritual experience for Ando. And, in the case of the Church of the Light, it is clear that Ando converses not only with self but also with certain others and other things. But, as seen, some of those conversations appear to lack the vulnerability, heightened sensitivity, and mutuality that mark instantiations of kenosis. In his conversations with self, there is more to be seen of self as a benefactor to architecture and architecture's beneficiaries than there is of self as a situated actor, attentive to his situation. In his conversations with others and other things, there is evidence of selective attentiveness and intentional inattentiveness. Such observations are not condemnatory and, to greater or lesser degrees, can be widely ascribed to architects and their approaches to design – both contemporary and historic. They emerge from the measure-taking of a particular situation. As such, they hold open the question of Ando's alignment with Nishida's "new phase of shintai," wherein "the created figure is neither a representation of subjective intentions, nor an element in the iconographical system to be manipulated by the heroic and hegemonic instrumental

subjectivity.”¹⁰⁵ In fact, many aspects of Ando’s approach point to subjective intentions and reflect traits of heroism and hegemony toward the outcome. Consequently, it proves difficult to view the Church of the Light as emerging from kenosis. To the extent that kenosis is evidenced, it appears inchoate, primarily in the domain of the architect and part of the architect’s search for self. In a sense, that portrays kenosis as something self-controlled, which, of course, is oxymoronic, since kenosis is a call for self to *lose* control.

Valorising Imperfection

No creator is obligated to assume a kenotic attitude toward creating. However, when Ando is called to join in creating a Christian church building, the project brief can only be for a building in which the mystery of kenosis is to be celebrated – communally and repeatedly. Hence, kenosis is an inescapable aspect of the product, if not the process, and, at a minimum, accommodation of the kenotic celebration is a reasonable expectation. Furthermore, when the church building is to be situated in Japan, and Ando therefore invokes a particular Japanese philosophy of nothingness – with meaningful links to Christianity’s kenosis – he invites the project to be scrutinised in light of kenotic thinking. Such scrutiny reveals that the situation of the Church of the Light holds inherent kenotic potential, much of which is unrealised. Although that result may be primarily owing to religious doctrine rather than architecture, it nonetheless indicates some misalignment of client and architect views. Then, in the realisation of the architecture, significant opportunities for liturgical place-making are foregone; opportunities that hold not only the capacity to accommodate the church’s kenotic celebration but also to elevate the potential of the worship experience, and thereby elicit the community’s kenotic response. The building’s performance is a reflection of its conception. Ando’s approach offers limited evidence of kenosis, instead revealing the characteristics of a more conventional, architect-centred event, paradoxically controlled by an architect whose adopted philosophy espouses self-loss and self-withdrawal. Like all creations, this work of architecture – both process and product – is imperfect. Yet, in its architectonics, it is also remarkable, noteworthy and, in some ways, spectacular.

Ironically, it is the building’s most spectacular feature – its cross of light – that presents its most significant imperfections. Ando attempts to de-objectify the cross (even though the same symbol is objectified elsewhere at this and other Ando projects) in order to ensure, as Baek describes it, that this cross of light “is not the cross that the reductive procedure would take as the object of riddance.”¹⁰⁶ Ando’s intent, however, is “to break

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 68-69.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 3.

light down to individual particles' so that it may become almost touchable."¹⁰⁷ In that palpability, the cross of light virtually returns to an objectified state. Furthermore, this light fails to find what Heidegger describes as a "clearing" (using the German word, *Lichtung*, itself a reference to light):

The forest clearing is experienced in contrast to dense forest ... To open something means: To make something light, free and open, e.g., to make the forest free of trees at one place. The openness thus originating is the clearing ... But light never first creates openness. Rather, light presupposes openness.¹⁰⁸

Not only does the cross of light not create openness, it is denied the presupposition of it. In fact, it is the cross of light that makes the space of emptiness more like a dark and dense forest than a light, free, and open clearing. Although the cross gives the empty space 'existence', it does so by joining with the concrete walls to enclose the emptiness, compound the darkness, and make the space shrine-like. But Ando's building is not a shrine, nor is it primarily a space for individual contemplation. It is foremost an evangelical church, existing to accommodate free and open communal celebrations (albeit subject to doctrine) in the 'light' that Christianity ascribes to their Christ. That light presupposes a clearing for it, in the Christian community. It is therefore an opening – a kind of Heideggerian clearing – that is essential to Christian liturgy. The Church of the Light, however, manifests enclosure. In so doing, it is faithful to Ando's desire for closed and introspective spaces, and may be perfectly suitable for retreat, meditation, and self-reflection. But it fails to manifest the open domain in which communal liturgy can happen to its fullest extent. This central imperfection is largely disregarded by visitors and critics whose attention becomes almost overwhelmed – exactly as Ando intends – by the dramatic play of light and dark; an abstraction and magnification of the effect created by candles in a darkened shrine. Numinousness – in things spiritual as well as architectural – is often more easily effected by a superficial presentation of spectacle and drama, rather than by the more painstaking process of attentively responding to a situation's entirety (which may, paradoxically, call for another, more profound sort of spectacle and drama). Neither public nor critical valorisation of architecture is necessarily conditioned on the latter.

All creating involves situational awareness, even when the creation is an intentional rejection of, or rebellion against, the situation. Variable is the degree of awareness and attention. In his critique of Modernism, Robert Venturi cites Modernist

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 108-9.

¹⁰⁸ M. Heidegger, "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking," in *On Time and Being*, Martin Heidegger: Works (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 65; This concept of 'clearing' is further explored in Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology*: 247-8.

Paul Rudolph, who, while recognising that perfect attentiveness is beyond reach, makes a crucial point:

It is characteristic of the twentieth century that architects are highly selective in determining which problems they want to solve. Mies [van der Rohe], for instance, makes wonderful buildings only because he ignores many aspects of a building. If he solved more problems, his buildings would be far less potent.¹⁰⁹

Rudolph's observation, coupled with those in this chapter, opens to speculation what the Ibaraki church might be like had Ando's architectural prowess – even genius – been applied with greater attentiveness to its entire situation. The concept of kenosis – particularly in the unique situatedness of a Christian church on Japanese soil, designed by a non-Christian architect – suggests that opportunities exist beyond those explored (even in light of known budget constraints and, perhaps, because of them). It suggests that Ando's architectural objective, that of "instilling fascination into visitors,"¹¹⁰ is paradoxically better accomplished through the emptying of such objectives. Thus emptied, room is made for the fascination – even spirituality – that accrues when situation and response come into relational unity (without compromising individuality and respective complexities). Notwithstanding Rudolph's prophecy, the concept of kenosis suggests that heightened attentiveness need not produce impotency, but exactly the opposite. Still, the responses emerging from such attunement can only be imperfect (or there would be no need for ongoing kenosis). Such imperfection, however, is not that produced by ignoring or rejecting any of the situation or its kenosis. Precisely because of that, it is the sort of imperfection worth valorising.

¹⁰⁹ Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*: 16-17.

¹¹⁰ Morikawa, "Tadao Ando – An Interview with".

Architecture and Memory: Critical- and Non-Modernism

Eyewitness to the advent of Modernism, and later amongst its disciples, Larry Perkins describes an exchange between his father, Dwight Perkins (1867-1941) – one of the architects whose work in the so-called Prairie and Chicago Schools prefigured Modernism – and Jens Jensen (1860-1951),¹ a noted pioneer of modern landscape architecture:

Dad and Mr Jensen were looking at [one of dad's school building designs], and Mr Jensen, a magnificent big old Dane, with white handle-bar whiskers and a very gruff, hearty manner, said, 'Yes, Dwight, it is fine. It is direct. It is strong. But, is it kind?'²

Given the context of the question, immersed as it was in the naissance of Modernism and that movement's founding concern for social responsibility (certainly an aspect of kindness), the question could be read ... is it *Modern*? But Jensen's question is more startling in its use of a very simple and ordinary term, *kind*. Kind-ness is a rare criterion to be applied to architecture – especially Modernist architecture, eventually accused of the opposite – yet Jensen uses the term with pointed intention, surely beyond its usual reference to mere benevolence, cordiality, or helpfulness. Amongst customary definitions, 'indulgence' may be nearest to Jensen's intent, yet even that remains insufficient.³ Toward whom or what might a building be expected to be indulgent? Would such a one-way relationship – if demonstrable – be enough to answer Jensen's question in the affirmative? In the context and sense of Jensen's usage, I would argue that the term *kind* invokes nothing less than a profound and multi-dimensional view of kenosis. As a result, the question can also be read ... is it *kenotic*?⁴ Read as such, Jensen's question opens-up another avenue for taking the measure of kenotic influence in architecture. It proves especially pertinent in considering three contemporary projects in

¹ Beyond their professional collaborations, Jensen and Perkins were members of a self-established, socially- and environmentally-concerned, 'Committee on the Universe', which met for dinners at the Perkins residence. More on Jensen can be found in R.E. Grese, *Jens Jensen: Maker of Natural Parks and Gardens* (Baltimore: JHU Press, 1992).

² Larry Perkins (1907-1997) was co-founder of the Chicago-based architectural firm of Perkins and Will, now ranked amongst the largest international practices. As my teacher, mentor, and friend, he shared this anecdote on more than one occasion, but it is also documented in Perkins and Blum, *Oral History of Lawrence Bradford Perkins*: 14. There, the junior Perkins also admits that "some of dad's stuff is a little bit heavy-handed." And, assessing Jensen's critique, he acknowledges that "it sticks in and quivers" and "has a little justice to it."

³ *Macquarie Dictionary*: s.v. "kind".

⁴ There is no evidence that Jensen was ever asked to clarify his use of the term 'kind'. Nor is it known whether or what Jensen knew of the concept kenosis. Nonetheless, I would suggest that the connotation of kenosis – as described here – is reasonably inferred by the context of his question.

Berlin, each founded in what Jean-Luc Marion describes as a “saturated phenomenon,”⁵ a most extreme and exploitative act of assertion, authenticity,⁶ and *unkind*-ness: the Holocaust, or *Shoah*.⁷

The Jewish Museum Berlin, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, and the Reichstag (renovated as part of the Bundestag complex) – all initiatives of German governmental bodies – emerge from and respond to the memory of an atrocity rooted in fanatical notions of self-sufficiency and singularity; the antithesis of kenosis. Notwithstanding the significant programmatic differences in these projects, their fundamental grounding raises a question as to the role that kenosis plays – or could have played – in each project’s response to, and ongoing relationship with, the profoundly unkenotic Shoah. Because the relationship is inherently one of opposition, a kenotic response – perhaps even a *profoundly* kenotic response – could be seen as particularly appropriate, even if counterintuitive. Indeed, it is the extremity of unkind-ness, to which these projects respond, that makes it reasonable to ask of each project’s kind-ness. The question is neither simple nor superficial. It must be asked in the fullness of Jensen’s original critique, which, I suggest, is to be read as including the Levinasian view of kenosis as ethical responsibility, the Derridan view of kenosis as hospitality, and the Vattimian view of kenosis as charity-in-friendship over metaphysical truth (such views introduced in Chapter 2).⁸ Affirmative answers, however, are not necessarily privileged, since such privilege would only see kenosis portrayed as exactly the kind of metaphysical truth that kenosis contests. As I have posited in previous chapters, no creator, creative act, or created thing has a duty to instantiate kenotic traits – and not all will – but the unfolding of all creative events is nonetheless a consequence of ongoing kenosis. Kenosis is always and everywhere at work – at the cosmic, evolutionary, and human levels – and is therefore already bound into creation. Uncertain and variable is the extent to which human response will attend to the kenotic unfolding, or, conversely, will overlook, ignore, and resist it. Thus it is that, paradoxically, every response to a situation evidences kenosis in some way. But *kind*-ness – as Jensen proposes it, and I interpret it – is more than a mark of an inevitable process. It is first a measure of kenotic attunement in a creator’s approach to that process, then a measure of kenotic influence in the

⁵ Marion’s ‘saturated phenomenon’ is specifically explored vis-à-vis the Shoah in M.L. Baird, “Kenosis, Saturated Phenomenology, and Bearing Witness,” in *Answering Auschwitz: Primo Levi’s Science and Humanism After the Fall*, ed. S.G. Pugliese (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011).

⁶ I use the term ‘authenticity’, or ‘extreme authenticity’, as it is discussed and developed in Malpas, “From Extremity to Release: Place, Authenticity, and the Self.”

⁷ Regarding the events of the Holocaust, or *Shoah*, the reader’s knowledge is assumed. For consistency, I will use the Hebrew term *Shoah*, except where a quotation, or the given name of a project or project component, requires otherwise.

⁸ The notion of juxtaposing these three views is proposed and explored more fully in M.L. Baird, “Whose Kenosis? An Analysis of Levinas, Derrida, and Vattimo on God’s Self-Emptying and the Secularization of the West,” *The Heythrop Journal* 48, no. 3 (2007).

creating, and finally a measure of kenotic manifestation in the created thing. And it is such measuring that continues to be of interest in this chapter.

In their connection to the Shoah, the three Berlin projects are also linked to the milieu of early twentieth century Europe in which both the Shoah and architectural Modernism arose. Insofar as these projects respond against the Shoah, it follows that they might also respond against Modernism. Indeed, writer and architectural critic Charles Jencks connects all three projects to what he calls "Critical Modernism," a post-Post-Modern view not unlike what others have called "Nonmodern."⁹ About Berlin, Jencks writes: "Except for Hiroshima, [it] is the city that suffered the most under modernity, so it is no surprise that it has some of the best works of Critical Modernism."¹⁰ As examples, he cites Daniel Libeskind's museum and Peter Eisenman's memorial, as well as aspects of Norman Foster's parliament building, although, in the latter's "living across time," he also sees traits of Postmodern Historicism.¹¹ Jencks proposes that his concept of Critical Modernism reveals a "deeper truth," which is "that the critical and the modern have formed a dynamic hybrid where the scepticism of the former and transcendence of the latter make a potent cocktail – the creative tradition that lasts."¹² Although his claim to a truth (especially one that lasts) sounds unsettlingly metaphysical – and is, ironically, a claim of the same sort that Jencks and many others have criticised Modernism for espousing – I would argue that his lengthy description, like Jensen's single word, emerges from kenosis. For if the modern is marked by a striving for transcendence, and the critical is marked by a striving for scepticism, and, furthermore, if their union forms a dynamic hybrid, then both the modern and the critical are derivatives of kenosis, because, as discussed in previous chapters, kenosis is nothing less than dynamic hybridisation, impelled by scepticism and capable of transcendent result. Thus, in the Critical Modernism of these Berlin projects – each distinct, but with shared bloodlines – there are valuable opportunities to measure the kenosis instantiated by their creation.

Introducing an early publication of "Between the Lines" – Libeskind's written statement about the then-proposed design for what would become the Jewish Museum Berlin – Stanley Allen refers to various newspaper accounts about the 'fall' of the Berlin Wall, on 9 November, 1989. In particular, he notes those with headlines announcing a realised toppling (for example, "Berlin Wall comes tumblin' down," in the New York Daily News), but with juxtaposed photos showing the wall still very much intact. Of the

⁹ The term "Nonmodern", and its concept as related to architecture, is posited and explored in S.A. Moore, "Technology, Place, and the Nonmodern Thesis," *Journal of Architectural Education* (1984-) 54, no. 3 (2001).

¹⁰ C. Jencks, "Why Critical Modernism?," *Architectural Design* 77, no. 5 (2007): 142-143.

¹¹ C. Jencks, *Critical Modernism: Where Is Post-Modernism Going?* (Great Britain: Wiley-Academy, 2007), 26.

¹² Jencks, "Why Critical Modernism?," 145.

contradiction, Allen says, “illustrations and their captions are often at odds.” Observing that it was not the architecture of the wall that had changed but its performance, he posits that the wall’s demise only came when its value as architecture was exceeded by the value of the spectacle produced by its fall. This, Allen suggests, is the fissured context for Libeskind’s museum proposal: “a web of actual physicality and programmed spectacle,” the relationality of architecture and event.¹³ Arguably, it is also the context for Eisenman’s memorial and Foster’s parliament building. More than that, Allen’s observation ironically proves to be a description of each project’s realisation. Indeed, the architecture of each – seen as manifested ‘illustrations’ – is often at odds with its ascriptions; that is, with the ‘captions’ assigned to it by philosophers, theorists, designers and others. Much has been written in scholarly and popular publications about these Berlin projects, with analyses from both architectural and philosophical points of view. Though not without exception, the attention has been largely favourable – at times, acclamatory – particularly in philosophical circles. Of concern in this discourse is less what has been written and more what has not. In developing and reaching certain philosophical claims about these projects, it would appear that many architectural considerations must be, and have been, overlooked. Through a kenotic lens, the efficacy and sufficiency of such claims can be examined, even as other philosophical principles can be shown to be at work.

LIBESKIND AT THE JEWISH MUSEUM BERLIN

Libeskind’s Jewish Museum Berlin and Pei’s Museum of Islamic Art in Doha (the latter a focus of Chapter 4) have little in common, regardless of what is compared – approach, design response, or realisation. Libeskind’s project is his first to be constructed,¹⁴ while Pei’s is regarded as amongst his last. Libeskind is selected by international competition, while Pei is commissioned directly. Of his museum, Libeskind says, “You shouldn’t worry about superficial issues such as form; it is enough that it is different from the existing.”¹⁵ But Pei sees built form as architecture’s foundational and enduring mode of expression, and he searches Islam for ‘essences’ that might inspire form’s shaping. And, while Libeskind’s museum prioritises its own identity over curatorial concerns, Pei’s exhibition

¹³ D. Libeskind, S. Allen, and D.F. Krell, “Between the Lines: Extension to the Berlin Museum, with the Jewish Museum,” *Assemblage*, no. 12 (1990): 20-21.

¹⁴ A. Cobbers, *Daniel Libeskind*, Second ed., vol. 1, Architects & Master Builders in Berlin (Berlin: Jaron Verlag, 2006), 9. The Jewish Museum is the first project of Libeskind’s to commence construction. Another, the Felix-Nussbaum-Haus, commenced construction after the Jewish Museum but was completed in 1998, the year before the museum.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 17.

spaces yield to their exhibitions, even while establishing a strong self-identity.¹⁶ Direct comparison is not necessarily productive, since Libeskind's project is extolled for attributes intentionally opposed to those of most other contemporary museums, including Pei's.¹⁷ About the Jewish Museum Berlin, Australian art historian and critic Terry Smith writes: "Functionality, legibility, a spectacular external gestalt, deference to the higher arts, contextualism – all are rejected, emphatically."¹⁸ With regard to the rejection of functionality, it is tempting to strike a comparison with Ando's Church of the Light (the focus of Chapter 5), where, as I argue, Ando prioritises personal architectural preferences over the accommodation of his client's liturgical practices and requirements. But such a comparison also yields mostly differences, because the functionality of museums is much less prescribed (though not without certain expectations), and Ando's church is nothing if not legible and of considerable gestalt. Indeed, rather than comparing it to other buildings, the Jewish Museum Berlin is more effectively examined vis-à-vis the key terms by which its claimed singularity has been defined: *uncanniness*, *hope*, and *laughter*. It is through these 'captions' that the museum's kenotic reckoning emerges.

According to Daniel Libeskind (1946-), the task of designing what came to be called the Jewish Museum Berlin did not require that "I ... go to the library to research, and look into the archives and find out about the history of Berlin, because I'm a part of its history."¹⁹ The precise factuality of that claim notwithstanding,²⁰ Libeskind projects an air of self-sufficiency that opens-up the question of kenotic-ness in his creative approach.²¹

¹⁶ As noted in Chapter 4, Pei was not responsible for the interior design of the exhibition spaces, but he did determine their size, shape, and ordering.

¹⁷ In fact, museums by both architects can be examined within Berlin, itself, since Pei has also contributed to the city's assemblage of museum facilities with his Exhibitions Building of the German Historical Museum, located not far from the Jewish Museum. Such examination is worthwhile because the two projects are, more or less, contemporaries. Pei was commissioned in 1996, seven years after Libeskind's design for the Jewish Museum had been selected by competition. The Exhibitions Building opened in 2003, four years after construction of the then-still-empty Jewish Museum had been completed and made available for public viewing, but only two years after the latter's exhibits had been installed and the museum fully opened. Like Libeskind's museum 'extension', Pei's is sited in close relation to historic structures, in this case Neo-Classical buildings by Karl Schinkel. More about the Pei museum can be found in U. Kretzschmar, ed. *I.M. Pei: The Exhibitions Building of the German Historical Museum Berlin* (Munich, Berlin, London, New York: Prestel Verlag, 2003); and A. Cobbers, *Jeoh Ming Pei*, vol. 6, *Architects & Master Builders in Berlin* (Berlin: Jaron Verlag, 2004).

¹⁸ T. Smith, "Daniel Among the Philosophers: The Jewish Museum, Berlin, and Architecture after Auschwitz," *Architectural Theory Review* 10, no. 1 (2005): 117.

¹⁹ M. Blackwood, "Berlin's Jewish Museum: A Personal Tour with Daniel Libeskind," (USA: Michael Blackwood Productions, 2001).

²⁰ D. Libeskind, *Breaking Ground: Adventures in Life and Architecture* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2004). Here, autobiographical details indicate that Libeskind was born and raised in Lodz, Poland (some 500 km from Berlin), until his family emigrated to the US, in 1959, when he was 13. He and his wife, Nina, established their professional practice at Berlin, in 1990, after winning the international design competition for an extension to the Berlin Museum. (The firm's website indicates the firm's founding to have been in 1989.)

²¹ Some might ask if it is possible for any architect (any creator) to avoid biographical statements that connote 'self-sufficiency'. I would argue that the answer to such a question is 'yes'. As seen in Chapters 3 and 4, Kahn and Pei, for example, are able to challenge their self-sufficiency and do so without compromising self-identity or self-confidence. The latter traits are quite different to the former, and, viewed kenotically, the latter traits are strengthened by the challenges to the former (challenges emanating from both self and others). This topic is introduced in Chapter 2, and I explore it more fully in Chapter 7.

Granting that his experiences in post-war Poland, and those of his parents (Shoah survivors) prior to and during the war, were largely determined by events in or emanating from Berlin, and likewise granting that his very being is imbued with Jewish history and culture (including that inseparable from Berlin's), Libeskind's attitude toward this project's situation – that is, how he addresses and thinks about it – nonetheless appears to initiate in a form of certitude. His words, though perhaps glib, suggest a less than open attitude to that which, in and in relation to Berlin's history, might be unattended in whatever already comprises his knowledge. They also echo the solidarity expressed in John F. Kennedy's famous "Ich bin ein Berliner"²²; solidarity that Libeskind amplifies. "After the tragic and disastrous consequences of the Holocaust and its impact on Modernity, everyone is also a survivor."²³ Such solidarity, however, is neither preclusion nor substitution for ongoing openness to that which one inevitably does not know. In fact, when viewed kenotically, solidarity is that which might be expected to dilate openness and encourage proactive attentiveness.

Uncanniness

Amongst the traits frequently ascribed to the Jewish Museum Berlin is that of *uncanniness*. Those ascribing it have amply explained various nuances of meaning, only a sketch of which I include, here, for purposes of initiating this discourse.²⁴ Standard dictionary definitions of uncanny include "unnaturally strange" and "superstitious uneasiness."²⁵ In philosophy, the term is often presented as an English translation of the German term *unheimlich* (explored by Heidegger and others before and after him), a more literal translation being *unhomely*.²⁶ Uncanniness, then, describes the condition of being not at home, not at ease, amidst the unknown and unfamiliar and strange; or of estrangement and being a stranger. And, within Heideggerian thought, uncanny can be extended to mean "that which lies outside of our knowledge," where knowledge is seen as "that 'locality' in which we are at home."²⁷ Hence, the uncanny can be understood as the risk-fraught and possibly overwhelming condition of not knowing. But already embedded in the un-canny is the canny, that relatively safe locality of homeliness and

²² J.F. Kennedy, "Ich bin ein Berliner," (Speech given at the Rathaus Schöneberg, Berlin, West Germany 26 June, 1963).

²³ D. Libeskind, "Between the Lines: The Jewish Museum, Berlin," *Research in Phenomenology* 22, no. 1 (1992): 83.

²⁴ J.E. Young, "Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum in Berlin: The Uncanny Arts of Memorial Architecture," *Jewish Social Studies* 6, no. 2 (2000): 1-2. Here, as an example, Anthony Vidler's notion of the 'architectural uncanny' is pursued in an analysis of Libeskind's museum as 'uncanny memorial architecture'.

²⁵ *Macquarie Dictionary*: s.v. "uncanny".

²⁶ Preference is given to the English term 'strange' (with uncanny a synonym) as the translation of 'unheimlich' in M. Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. R. Manheim (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1959), 161; more contemporarily, however, in M. Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. G. Fried and R. Polt (New Haven: Yale University Press, (1953) 2000), 127, the translation as 'uncanny' is preferred.

²⁷ Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology*: 374n101.

stability: our knowledge, sagaciousness, even astuteness.²⁸ I would suggest that the connection is more than lexical; that it is kenotic, and that kenosis is the instantaneous and direct, yet unending and non-linear, transport between the two 'localities'. It is the awakening from, or opening-up of, the safety and presumed certitude of knowing, so as to become more attuned to the risk-laden uncertainty of what is not yet known but may appear. The two localities empty, fill, and empty back into themselves, such that they reveal each other.

In connection with a Jewish museum for Berlin, uncanniness can be seen in the traumatic experience of Jewish Berliners, made strangers in their 'home' country – to the point of annihilation – or estranged through exile. From that, it follows that uncanniness may well be the apposite condition to be embodied by such a museum.²⁹ But how might that embodiment be manifested in architecture? One possibility lies in what might be perceived as a risky and perhaps spectacular assemblage of 'strange', 'unfamiliar', and 'destabilising' forms and spaces; that is, in architecture that asserts its uncanniness, strives to *appear* uncanny, and thereby offers a particular strange experience to the perceiver, which may be little more than a fabricated sensation. Architecture of this sort seems to presuppose that the challenge of architecturally configuring trauma is best met with a traumatic configuration of architecture. It also prioritises the contrivance and control of experiences – particularly those that shock or wow. Another possibility, however, sees the uncanny strangely manifesting in forms and spaces that are not necessarily of strange or unfamiliar traits, but which establish a kind of relationality – amongst themselves and their perceivers – that opens-up to the trauma and its full range of questions, responses, and experiences, *all without re-presentation*. Architecture of that sort prioritises the attending of complex relationships, those amidst which contingent and indeterminate experiences can happen. More elusive and more difficult to 'know', it is that sort of architecture that can actually be uncanny.

Conceptualisation and Production

The embodiment of uncanniness seems a perfectly appropriate and worthy aspiration for a Jewish museum in Berlin. The extent to which it is an aspiration fulfilled by *the* Jewish Museum Berlin is an appropriate and worthy question. Viewed superficially, Libeskind's museum appears to achieve the uncanniness of the peculiar. It can certainly be read as strange, risky, and avant-garde, but soon it is seen that such traits derive primarily from the known and intended (the canny), rather than the unknown and unintended (the uncanny). It becomes clear that Libeskind conceptualises the museum from a locality of

²⁸ *Macquarie Dictionary*: s.v. "canny".

²⁹ Young, "Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum in Berlin: The Uncanny Arts of Memorial Architecture," 1.

homeliness, from well within his body of knowledge. Not only the themes but also many of the formal expressions that would evolve into those of the museum were already familiar to Libeskind as a result of explorations and developments undertaken years before the museum project. Substantial aspects of the museum's conception can be seen to emerge from two of Libeskind's seminal theoretical projects.³⁰ First, in the spatial universe of *Micromegas*, from 1978 – a decade before the museum competition – Libeskind juxtaposes “fragmentation and explosion” against presupposed “objects and continuity,”³¹ and reveals a “preoccupation with absences, voids, and silences.”³² Later, in a 1983 project, *Chamber Works*, he displays a vivid fascination with lines and acute angular geometries, both of considerable complexity. And then, in 1989, many of these previously drawn theories appear to congeal in response to the international competition for the “Extension of the Berlin Museum with the Jewish Museum Department,” which Libeskind describes in his original submission, entitled “Between the Lines”.

All of this amounts to two broken lines: one straight but fragmented; the other tortuous but continuing into infinity. As the lines develop ... they also fall apart – become disengaged – and reveal themselves as separate, so that the void that runs centrally through what is continuous materializes outside as something that has been ruined ... a voided void. Fragmentation and splintering mark the coherence of the ensemble ...³³

At this point, it might be argued that during his years of developing architectural theory, Libeskind *uncannily* foresees the museum's situatedness long before its inception, and begins responding to it – at least in theory. That, however, also suggests that he foresees a situation that no one else could see, not even those who would eventually define the situation for the international competitors asked to respond to it. And, as it transpires, Libeskind's submission does not respond to the situation described. More plausibly, the museum competition provides Libeskind with a platform for the application of theoretical musings and ongoing investigations,³⁴ which were not only already known to him but were a part of him. Viewing himself as a part of Berlin's history, it follows that he could view his theories likewise. Such an approach – operating within and drawing inspiration from what is known or familiar – is neither uncommon nor illegitimate in creative pursuits, least of all architecture. It does not suggest that Libeskind's proposal is

³⁰ The conceptual complexity of these projects is widely-recognised, though not elucidated in this necessarily brief mention. However, key aspects of these projects are discussed, throughout this chapter, as they are seen to manifest in the museum project under consideration.

³¹ Libeskind, Allen, and Krell, “Between the Lines: Extension to the Berlin Museum, with the Jewish Museum,” 21.

³² Young, “Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum in Berlin: The Uncanny Arts of Memorial Architecture,” 11.

³³ Libeskind, Allen, and Krell, “Between the Lines: Extension to the Berlin Museum, with the Jewish Museum,” 49.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 23. This phrase – “ongoing investigation” – is used by Allen to characterise Libeskind's view of “building”; a view emerging after many years of inquiry that had primarily comprised a “rigorous investigation of drawing.”

merely regurgitative. But, rather than *uncanny*, his approach shows itself to be *canny*. Although it might appear to be a kind of 'self-emptying', its carefulness and astuteness – indeed, its canniness – belie such characterisation. It is not an approach that opens-up to, or engages and fills with, those unfamiliar others and other things that reveal a particular situation's call. Nor does it enable attentiveness to that call. Rather than kenotic, Libeskind's approach is assertive, a canny assertion of familiar knowledge (including any predilections and preconceptions that might reside therein); in effect a self-assertion. If there were a kenotic moment in the conception of the Jewish Museum, it would seem to have occurred as Libeskind initially explored his theoretical concepts in relation to the imagined situations he was then responding to; not years later, when, as it would appear, the knowledge of those earlier explorations was revisited and made to be assertable as a proposal in the museum competition.

It is important to remember that, in 1988-89, Libeskind and his fellow competitors responded to a brief that would see the existing Berlin Museum expanded, with only one-third of that expansion earmarked for the museum's "Jewish Department." Libeskind's "Between the Lines" was submitted as a solution to that 'situation', a situation that largely called for what Libeskind did not offer. Indeed, as James Young describes it, Libeskind's proposal was less a solution than an "architectural articulation" of the conundrum presented by the situation.³⁵ Through its narrative, both explicit and implicit, as well as its formal expression, his solution had the effect of asserting an entirely different proposition. It declared the need for a Jewish Museum (if not a Jewish memorial), one that transgressed the competition brief in all of its terms – philosophical, aesthetic, functional – and one which eventually prevailed. Following extensive deliberation and debate, the jury concluded that "the true dilemma at the heart of their project was not apparent ... until revealed in Libeskind's design."³⁶ Thus, an arguably canny proposal elicited an extraordinarily uncanny response. A proposal that largely failed to be attentive to its situation at the time – not only as limited by context and brief but also by history, politics, and socio-cultural issues – saw the situation become attentive to the proposal; or, at least, saw the commissioners become more attentive to the situation as a result of the proposal. The designer's approach, though revealing little instantiation of kenosis, was met with a highly kenotic response from the commissioners. They became suspicious of their own knowledge – their own canniness – and that enabled their opening up to the situation's others and other things, which, until then, had remained concealed, ignored, or resisted. Ironically, then, it is the commissioner's approach – and the kenosis therein – that reveals a greater degree of uncanniness. The startling nature of Libeskind's

³⁵ Young, "Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum in Berlin: The Uncanny Arts of Memorial Architecture," 9-10.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

participation in the competition might therefore be seen as fortuitous in sparking a kenotic occurrence that the situation was calling for. But that, in itself, does not make his proposed architectural solution either responsive to that shifting situation or uncanny.

Further evidence of the proposed solution's canniness is revealed in its near immutability. Following the jury's kenotic moment, a chain of significant events affects the project's situatedness. There occurs a kind of situational kenosis, even as the project's design is being advanced. The Berlin Wall falls, Germany reunifies, and the Berlin Museum is excised from the project; the latter a contentious political development that finally sees the entire project become the autonomous Jewish Museum Berlin (effectively by 1997, and officially in 1999).³⁷ For the museum, important symbolic and functional ramifications arise from these developments, yet in the face of such vital changes, Libeskind proposes virtually no conceptual *design* changes in response.³⁸ Only the designer's conceptual *narrative* changes with the times. As events unfold, Libeskind expands his project description by referring to other sources of inspiration, or what he calls other "dimensions of the project,"³⁹ which were either not included or referenced tangentially in the original description. Like many of the original concepts, these further named influences derive from Libeskind's locality of knowledge. An architectonic dimension comes from the hexangular geometries of the Star of David, distorted as a "nexus of lines connecting invisibles"⁴⁰; a musical dimension from a long held fascination with the unfinished Schönberg opera, *Moses und Aron*; and a textual dimension from the *Gedenkbuch*, literally a 'memorial book' in two volumes, listing the names of Germans persecuted under the National Socialist regime, as well as their birth dates, deportation dates, and places of extermination.⁴¹ In later versions of this second narrative, Libeskind includes reference to a fourth and also textual influence: the writings of Walter Benjamin, particularly in *One-Way Street*, which are well known to the architect.⁴² Finally, by 1995,

³⁷ The Berlin Museum would be relocated from the historic Kollegienhaus, the building to which this project is an 'extension'. A full chronology can be found in "The History of the Origins of the Jewish Museum Berlin," (2013), http://www.jmberlin.de/main/EN/Pdfs-en/About-the-Museum/History_Museum/Museumsgeschichte_EN.pdf.

³⁸ Over the project's decade-long development, there were certain alterations made to the design, but primarily instigated and directed by museum and city officials, and not necessarily in response to these eventuations. There was an attempt to maintain project costs within a budget that, despite steady increases, remained limited. Amongst the most significant architectural changes – opposed by Libeskind – was the straightening of the originally proposed sloping walls (a functional as well as financial concern for museum officials). Additional details are found in Young, "Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum in Berlin: The Uncanny Arts of Memorial Architecture," 15. See also note 44.

³⁹ Libeskind, "Between the Lines: The Jewish Museum, Berlin," 82-87.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 84.

⁴¹ As Libeskind explains it, he was not aware that such a compilation existed in bound form. But, the reality of its contents – the fact that so many victims met these ultimate fates – would have been well known to him.

⁴² D. Libeskind, "Between the Lines: The Berlin Museum with the Jewish Museum," in *Radix-Matrix: Architecture and Writings*, ed. A.P.A. Belloli (Munich: Prestel, 1997), 34; D. Libeskind, "Project Memory," in *Daniel Libeskind: Jewish Museum Berlin, Museum Building Series* (Barcelona: Ediciones Polígrafa, 2011), 72; Walter Benjamin's influence is further discussed in Smith, "Daniel Among the Philosophers: The Jewish Museum, Berlin, and Architecture after Auschwitz," 111; and in E. Akcan, "Apology and Triumph: Memory

with the museum becoming entrenched as a symbol for its own autonomy, Libeskind introduces yet another explanation for what he freely comes to call “the Jewish Museum.” In this third narrative, he focuses on “three basic ideas”: the intrinsic link between Berlin’s history and Jewish contribution, the integration of the Shoah into Berlin’s consciousness and memory, and the recognition of erasure and void to ensure the “human future” of Berlin’s and Europe’s history.⁴³ Like earlier iterations, this is a distillation of the known or expected, the sagaciousness of the canny. Taken together, these highly mutable narratives come to defend the immutability of the design concept and its formal expression, even in the face of situational transformation.

Amidst the transformation, and as Libeskind is positing his second design narrative, Jacques Derrida responds to that narrative (a response to which I will later return). Naming only two of the major shifts in Berlin’s boundaries and horizons, Derrida rhetorically asks Libeskind about the relationship between design and situational change. “During the process of the elaboration of plans of your project, as everybody knows, the Wall came down. My question would be to what extent this event affected your project. Then there is the matter of reunification.”⁴⁴ Derrida’s question opens up a broader issue. If the design proposal is conceptually responsive to the original situation, it follows that it could not go unchanged and remain equally responsive to a substantially altered situation. Conversely, if, as already seen, Libeskind’s proposal is not responsive to the original situation, then it would have to be that the situation just happens to evolve in such a way that it becomes perfectly matched to the original proposal. If the latter were the case, uncanniness – at least of the situation – appears undeniably established. But, if that seems unlikely, there are at least three other scenarios to consider. First, it could be that Libeskind’s solution is so universally ‘true’ as to transcend situation. With its Modernist ring, such a notion is antithetical to Libeskind’s deconstructivist anti-Modernism.⁴⁵ After all, Modernism (particularly its universally true International Style) is

Transference, Erasure, and a Rereading of the Berlin Jewish Museum,” *New German Critique* 37, no. 2 (2010): 161. Benjamin’s influence actually manifests rather obscurely – and therefore rather inconsequentially to the visitor – in the “sequence of sixty sections along the zigzag,” which Libeskind relates to the sixty short commentaries that comprise *One Way Street*. See W. Benjamin, “One-Way Street,” in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 1, 1913-1926*, ed. M. Bullock and M. Jennings (Cambridge, MA and London, UK: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004).

⁴³ Akcan, “Apology and Triumph: Memory Transference, Erasure, and a Rereading of the Berlin Jewish Museum,” 162-163.

⁴⁴ J. Derrida, “Response to Daniel Libeskind,” *Research in Phenomenology* 22, no. 1 (1992): 90. Although no formal reply from Libeskind was necessarily expected at the time of Derrida’s question, Libeskind later addresses the matter somewhat obliquely, if not disingenuously. Although he strongly resisted orders – from museum officials – to straighten his originally-proposed sloping walls, he later offers an alternative account, saying: “As soon as Berlin was unified, I straightened all the walls ... because I felt the project was no longer protected by the schizophrenia developed out of the bilateral nature of the city.” See: Young, “Daniel Libeskind’s Jewish Museum in Berlin: The Uncanny Arts of Memorial Architecture,” 15; and Libeskind, “Between the Lines: The Berlin Museum with the Jewish Museum,” 113.

⁴⁵ Although Libeskind distances himself from the ‘deconstructivist’ label, his works are consistently named as exemplary of deconstructivist theories. That association began as early as the ground-breaking exhibit at

an assertion that disproved its own purported uncanniness. Second, the proposal is so chameleonic as to succeed in adapting to the evolved situations. Although such a scenario would present potential uncanniness, Libeskind's proposal underwent no responsive adaptations to the evolving situations, and showed no proclivity for doing so. Third, the proposal is so self-assertive – and canny – as to simply overpower all situational forces. This, I would suggest, is the more plausible scenario, but it is really a matter of little import, since all three scenarios suggest an indifference to situation. None sees the project respond reciprocally to the kenosis of the situation, and, therefore, none convincingly reveals uncanniness in the project's conception or production.⁴⁶



FIGURE 6.1

Aerial view of the Jewish Museum Berlin, showing the zinc-clad, extruded zigzag form of Libeskind's design. The fragmented concrete 'void' is evidenced only by a straight dual row of skylights on the new building's roof (beginning top middle, extending to bottom left), which is interrupted as the solid form interacts with it. To the right of the new museum 'extension' is its 'host', the Kollegienhaus, an historic Baroque building that serves as the public entrance to the entire complex and provides amenities. To the new museum's left is the only 'void' externally expressed as concrete, the Holocaust Tower (top), and, behind it (middle), the Garden of Exile. (Photo: Günter Schneider)

New York's Museum of Modern Art, entitled "Deconstructivist Architecture," which featured Libeskind's work and that of others in the same genre. See P. Johnson and M. Wigley, "Deconstructivist Architecture," ed. The Museum of Modern Art (Boston: Little, Brown, 1988).

⁴⁶ It might be argued that there is something uncanny about a single design concept that is able to engender several different design narratives in defence of its ongoing 'fit' with evolving situational circumstances. If that were in fact the case – and the differing narratives were not merely retrospective rationalisation – perhaps such could be seen as uncanniness. Indeed, certain situations may call for a concept that can remain open and adaptable to at least some degree of changing circumstances. Such a concept, however, would evidence its uncanniness by virtue of its kenotic-ness. And, the narrative would have no reason to change, because the concept's narrative would be the concept's mutability. Moreover, there may be no need for a narrative, since, through its self-revelation, the concept would sufficiently speak for itself.

Formality and Spatiality

But is it the case that canny conception and production is nonetheless capable of realising an architecture of uncanniness? The realisation of Libeskind's formal expression relies heavily on his own set of values – those of estrangement and unfamiliarity, disorientation and disintegration, fragmentation and void – as a vocabulary with which to express the uncanniness of Jewish history. As seen, those values privilege acute angles and jagged geometry. In fact, according to Libeskind, he began formal explorations with a geometric preconception: "I started by trying to plot a hexagonal figure; I don't know why. In a way it sounds very kitschy, the star of David; it is such a cliché." His explorations go on to see him draw connections, on a map, between the addresses of famous Jewish Berliners, from which emerges additional geometry. "I ended up with a kind of distorted hexagonal set of lines. It was a framework: I did not want to begin with a grid, or with a square or a module, but I had to start somewhere in the nowhere."⁴⁷ In these exercises, Libeskind can be seen to indulge in the very sort of geometric fixation for which Modernism is roundly criticised; an indulgence that is not uncanny.

Emerging from this "rather irrational set of lines" is a zigzag floor plan, comprising space for most of the museum's programmatic brief. The lightning-bolt-like form, however, is only perceptible in plan; that is, from bird's-eye view (see fig. 6.1). It is virtually constant in cross-section, thereby producing a uniform extrusion of the zigzag.⁴⁸ As a result, the full impact of the form's unusualness – potentially that which might contribute to a sense of estrangement and uncanniness – is absent for the visitor. Instead, from eye-level, there appears a relatively opaque and monolithic building mass, punctuated by occasional, angular slashes of glass that present Libeskind's theme of randomly connected Berlin street addresses, but without any perceptible relation to the spaces through which they slash (see fig. 6.2). As a counterpoint to the 'solid' zigzag form, a linear 'void' – also of constant width, but rising the full height of the building – pierces through the zigzag, manifesting wherever void intersects solid. The result is actually a series of individual 'voids', but Libeskind envisages them as the fragmentation of one ongoing void (a notion that can only be perceived and understood by examining a floor plan). This collection of voids (six within the zigzag, plus one in the museum's original Baroque building and one detached as the 'Holocaust Tower') can, in some ways, be seen to represent the Jewish absence in Berlin – a "self-inflicted void at [the city's]

⁴⁷ Libeskind, "Between the Lines: The Jewish Museum, Berlin," 83.

⁴⁸ The plan's ubiquitous use as the museum logo, combined with aerial photos in the museum guide, offer visitors the only visual reference to the jagged and disintegrated configuration they traverse. Its manifestation as a chrome-plated paperweight, on sale in the gift shop, provides the most tangible evidence of the form's extruded three-dimensional reality.

centre.”⁴⁹ Such a view, however, depends primarily on the perceivers’ attunement to and empathy with the project’s grounding – perhaps developed long before entering the building, and experienced at any number of places within it – rather than on the intrinsic character of these particular voids. Indeed, these voids prove to be more sign than symbol. The brutality of concrete construction is well suited to the desired notion of void, but were the building used for any other purpose, it might simply be said that the spaces in this jagged structure are organised around a series of ‘light wells’ – industrial in character.



FIGURE 6.2

Street level view of the Jewish Museum Berlin ‘extension’. At the extreme left is the previous Berlin Museum (housed in the historic Kollegienhaus), which is now the public entrance to the entire museum complex. (Photo: Mark B. Schlemmer)

To be expected from an extrusion, the museum’s interior spaces are as constant as the exterior form. Although the zigzag plan creates a variety of exhibition halls with different sized and shaped floor plates – the result of “irregular shapes and odd angles”⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Young, "Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum in Berlin: The Uncanny Arts of Memorial Architecture," 20.

⁵⁰ A. Elon, "A German Requiem: Two Millennia of German History, Jewish Museum, Berlin," *The New York Review of Books* 48, no. 18 (2001), <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2001/nov/15/a-german-requiem/?insrc=toc>.

– they are largely of the same width, height, and rectangular cross-section. They further present the same materiality: smooth walls and ceilings of constant light colour, with polished concrete floors. The halls, therefore, tend toward monotony and anonymity. As with the exterior form, punctuation of these spaces comes only by way of random, angular slashes of glass, which neither prefigure nor correspond to any cross-sectional angularity of space, or to anything other than flat, horizontal movement through the halls.⁵¹ The ensuing sameness demonstrates little virtuosity in the orchestration of space, material, and light. Where the voids penetrate the halls, they do not reveal their ‘void-ness’ but, instead, show themselves as objects with opaque walls and only small slits of glass through which the void – the hollow interior of the shaft-like object – can be viewed (if the narrow and relatively short slits are noticed). Since the wall surfaces of the void are materially indistinguishable from other walls,⁵² they are presented in a contrasting colour: charcoal grey (see fig. 6.3). Thus it would seem that objectification and colour-coding are tasked with ensuring that the voids’ intended omnipresence is not overlooked. Not surprisingly, that proves ineffective. What otherwise might be ‘bridges’ of some kind – crossing over or through the void, to encourage and amplify its encounter – actually manifest as curious and relatively narrow corridors between exhibit halls. Corroborating my observations, an architectural critic and frequent visitor notes that “visitors pay [the voids] little heed, notice them only as passageways to be traversed or empty areas to be avoided, and not as metaphysical or existential challenges.”⁵³ Indeed, challenges to the visitor are more often of the practical kind. Libeskind’s composition has been so successful in achieving the intended visitor disorientation that museum officials have deemed it necessary to install permanent directional markers on floors throughout the museum⁵⁴; all in an effort to make more apparent the hidden and confusing pathways to successive exhibits, exits, and entrances (see fig. 6.4).

⁵¹ Vertical circulation is provided by several standard stairwells, where diagonal fenestration continues but not in any perceptible relation to the stairs or their angularity. (Lifts are provided elsewhere in unexpressed shafts). And, at the museum’s major stairway, inherently angular movement is greeted by a rare, nearly-horizontal window. Although the window offers an arguably important view of the Berlin neighbourhood in which the museum is sited – and which was an important part of Jewish-German history – the juxtaposition of angular movement and horizontal window renders the view unachievable on all but a few of the stairway’s steps (which can also be unsafe). That contradicts the potential importance of the view, and, for many, the view goes unnoticed.

⁵² I refer, here, to the walls of the voids that face the exhibition halls. Only the interior surfaces of the voids reveal their concrete construction.

⁵³ P. Chametzky, “Not What We Expected: the Jewish Museum Berlin in Practice,” *Museum and Society* 6, no. 3 (2008): 235.

⁵⁴ The intentional confusion and disorientation presented by the museum’s plan might be rationalised as analogous to the extraordinarily traumatic confusion and disorientation of Nazi persecution and the Shoah. Such rationalisation, however, raises a question as to whether trauma (actually, mere traces of trauma that could be seen as tokenistic) needs to be repeated or re-presented in architectural form – and in an entirely different context – in order for it to be evoked and remembered.



FIGURE 6.3

View of a typical 'void fragment' (as seen looking from one exhibition space toward another), manifesting as a solid grey object that separates two corridors, each with a narrow slit for viewing into the void's concrete shaft.



FIGURE 6.4

Typical floor markers, as deployed to overcome visitor disorientation.

The museum's interior spaces are not entirely limited to those within the extruded zigzag. In the museum's basement entrance, Libeskind's three axes of Jewish history – continuity, exile, and Holocaust – take the form of relatively narrow, tunnel-like, black and white corridors (see fig. 6.5). Their skewed floor planes can be disconcerting, and their acute crossings, at three different and unprioritised junctures, present to visitors their first encounter with disorienting choices of direction. Then, segregated from the zigzag, there are a further two components. Indoors, but untempered and unlit – other than by the daylight from a small, invisible opening at the roof – one of the six voids appears as a free-standing, twenty-four metre high concrete shaft, called the Holocaust Tower (see fig. 6.6), which is intended "to convey the feeling ... of hopelessness."⁵⁵ Outdoors, The Garden of Exile (see fig. 6.7) comprises an ordered grid of forty-nine, closely spaced but traversable concrete stelae, each measuring seven metres in height and filled with earth that sustains one oleaster tree planted at its top. Here, the skewing of the ground plane is exaggerated well beyond that of the interior axes, and the stelae are set perpendicular to the skewed plane such that they lean, pronouncedly. For a visitor moving amongst the stelae, the combination of skewing and leaning creates physical dis-ease. And that is precisely Libeskind's intent. "One feels a little bit sick walking through it. But, it is accurate, because that is what perfect order feels like when you leave the history of Berlin."⁵⁶

⁵⁵ C. Beeck, *Daniel Libeskind and the Jewish Museum* (Berlin: Jaron Verlag, 2011), 49. This description of the emotion intended to be evoked – hopelessness – stands in contrast to the museum's portrayal as an 'architecture of hope', discussed in the next section of this chapter.

⁵⁶ Chamezky, "Not What We Expected: the Jewish Museum Berlin in Practice," 225. This quotation appears on the 'wall statement' at the Garden of Exile.

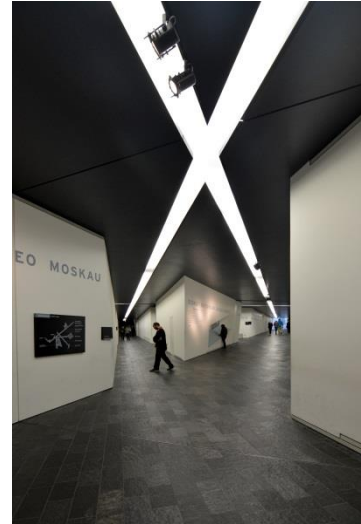


FIGURE 6.5

View of the primary public circulation and orientation spaces – with skewed floor planes – at the basement level of the new building. These are the first spaces to greet visitors, immediately after entering the museum.

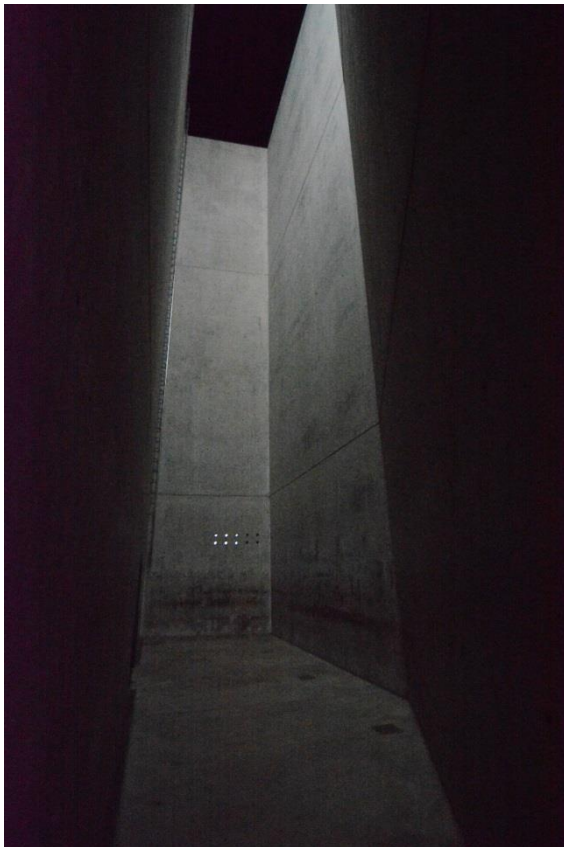


FIGURE 6.6

View from within the Holocaust Tower, a free-standing concrete 'void', unconnected to the museum building except by tunnel.



FIGURE 6.7

View from within the external Garden of Exile, showing the intentionally skewed stelae and floor planes.

In both formal and spatial expression, Libeskind strives for disintegration and, thereby, for what Anthony Vidler and James Young refer to as the uncanny. Vidler expresses the intended uncanniness in vivid terms:

... when confronted with the withdrawn exteriors and disturbing interiors of the Jewish Museum ... we find ourselves in a phenomenological world in which both Heidegger and Sartre would find themselves, if not exactly 'at home' (for that was not their preferred place), certainly in bodily and mental crisis, with any trite classical homologies between the body and the building upset by unstable axes, walls and skins torn, ripped and dangerously slashed, rooms empty of content and with uncertain or no exits and entrances.⁵⁷

He rationalises the upset as "so many tests of our own abilities to endure the vertigo experience of the labyrinths that make up our modernity."⁵⁸ Vidler is not alone. In the form of an open letter to Libeskind, philosopher David Krell praises the proposed building's uncanniness, saying of what he expects to be its experience, "No one will feel at home, whether on the inside or the outside." For Krell, Libeskind's museum is "architecture undone and redone," an effective antidote against submission to a dreaded set of values: "beauty, harmony, and totality."⁵⁹ The bind, however, is that opposition to one set of values is the espousal of another; in this case, that of Krell, Libeskind, and others who undo and redo architecture, whether they be called Deconstructivists, Critical-Modernists, Non-Modernists, or the next label that follows. A dichotomy of value systems is established where there need be none. In that light, this 'avant-garde' genre is exposed as mere latter-day Modernists, not any more avant-garde or uncanny than any other genre.

Similarities between Modernism and the genre with which Libeskind is associated are seen least in Modernism's socially-conscious beginnings and only somewhat in its rebelliousness (virtually all movements are somehow rebellious). The most significant similarity is found in Modernism's eventual assertion of an approach and design vocabulary so un-relational and unresponsive to situation as to be internationally transportable and transposable. Libeskind's work, but also that of others who are considered or consider themselves to be avant-garde, betrays exactly such transportability and transposability, even if not explicitly asserted. Libeskind undoes and redoes architecture – wherever the opportunity arises – with forms and consequent spaces that are essentially oblivious to place. Moreover, they are forms and spaces largely beholden to a relatively limited vocabulary of design already 'familiar' and 'known',

⁵⁷ A. Vidler, *Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The MIT Press 2000), 237.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 240.

⁵⁹ Libeskind, Allen, and Krell, "Between the Lines: Extension to the Berlin Museum, with the Jewish Museum," 55-56.

not only to him and those of like values, but also to the design community at large and, increasingly, to the public.⁶⁰ Even as the Jewish Museum Berlin was being constructed, Libeskind was transporting many of its concepts, forms, and mannerisms to Osnabrück, at the opposite side of Germany, where they were transposed as a gallery to house the collection of Jewish painter Felix Nussbaum, murdered by the Nazis.⁶¹ Notwithstanding the obviously shared aspects of both projects, it is not unreasonable to argue that other significant differences in situation – including project brief, macro- and micro-geographies, scale, client, and clientele – warrant, and would likely produce, substantially different responses and architectural expressions, if preconceptions were not being asserted.

There are other instances that support the same argument. For example, the acute angularity and zigzagging geometries of the Jewish Museum, recurring in much of Libeskind's work, is transported to – and thereby suggested as being equally suitable for – an entirely different situation on another continent; namely, in his plan for the Denver Art Museum (2006). Likewise, distinctly recognisable elements of the Jewish Museum's façade are transported to Toronto and transposed in the Royal Ontario Museum (2007), although, there, the façade is even more exaggerated, like that which was to have originally enveloped the Jewish Museum, had its walls not been straightened. Such international appearances are not all of Libeskind's authorship, nor are they limited to the northern hemisphere. In Australia, for example, at Melbourne's Federation Square (2002), significant aspects of that project's angular geometries, forms, and façades bear more than coincidental resemblance to the Jewish Museum Berlin (see fig. 6.8 and 6.9). Designed by Peter Davidson and Donald Bates, the project (which became their first constructed commission, just as the Jewish Museum had become Libeskind's) was selected by international competition and judged by a panel that included Daniel Libeskind. Bates had not only been a student of Libeskind's at Cranbrook Academy of Art but also an employee at Libeskind's Berlin office, where Bates served as an associate architect for the Jewish Museum competition entry.⁶² That a former student and employee might re-explore and re-present his mentor's themes is neither surprising nor necessarily egregious. The influence and application of architectural precedence is commonplace throughout history, absolutely original authorship being difficult to establish. What is extraordinary – if viewed kenotically – is that a particular architectural expression, ostensibly conceived in response to a particular situation, could also be the

⁶⁰ A worthwhile discussion of the avant-garde's familiarity can be found in Thomas, "Culture, Merchandise, or Just Light Entertainment? New Architecture at the Millennium," 256-259.

⁶¹ Beeck, *Daniel Libeskind and the Jewish Museum*: 23.

⁶² P. Raisbeck, "LAB Architecture Studio," in *The Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture*, ed. P. Goad and J. Willis (Cambridge, Melbourne, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 393-394.

best and most suitable response to a wholly different situation, particularly different in its geography and all that flows therefrom. Such ready transportability and transposability exposes the canniness of these expressions. It is by their un-fittingness that they are asserted to be fit responses to each of their situations. Intentionally unfitting responses are, perhaps, the easiest to create and, certainly, amongst the most canny. They merely conjure the unknown, knowingly. They knowingly ignore or resist a situation's kenosis, and are unaffected by their diaspora. Indeed, they are incapable of knowing unhomeliness – uncanniness – because they know no home.



FIGURE 6.8
Exterior, Jewish Museum Berlin.
(Photo: Wojtek Gurak)



FIGURE 6.9
Exterior, Federation Square at Melbourne, Victoria,
Australia. (Photo: Shutterstock)

So-called avant-garde designs – particularly those that claim to be such – can soon appear familiar, largely because they are distinguished not by the uncanniness of unique and situationally-attentive response but simply by degree and manner of formal distortion, which is less a response than a preconception. Although knowingly asserted distortion can succeed in inducing particular reactions (usually discomfort of a kind), that sort of success fails to prove the uncanniness of either the distorted architecture or the induced reaction. For it must be asked whether, in such distortion, the mystery of the

experience can be held in uncanny tension. Contrary to Libeskind's claim that the museum "poses many questions to visitors," and that "there is no set way to read [it],"⁶³ I would suggest that his forms produce their effect in quite direct, calculated, and therefore canny ways. In the case of the Jewish Museum, this is made almost self-evident by the fact that, at all of its major experiential junctures, the architect's intention for each experience is presented as a wall statement. About this, eminent Israeli journalist and author Amos Elon observes:

On the one hand, Libeskind seems to believe that his architecture achieves nothing less than the evocation of sensations akin to those felt by deportees to concentration camps. On the other hand, he seems so unsure that his building will reflect his intended message that he feels compelled to tell you, wherever you turn, what you are supposed to feel and where and what you must remember or reflect.⁶⁴

The experiences intended to be evoked at this museum are not unique, nor are they necessarily dependent on the distortion of its architecture or its architect's descriptions of the effect such distortion should evoke. Worldwide, various Shoah sites arouse the sickening sensations of the event and its memory. Other 'sites of memory' stir a range of bodily and emotional experiences – as do many works of architecture – though not necessarily or exclusively by their assemblage of forms and spaces. Uncanniness does not rely on the distortion of form and space. Only if viewed elementally – in the well-known experiences of illusionary constructs such as the maze, the fun-house, the hall of mirrors, and the haunted house – is disorientation, disconcertion, dis-ease, and sickness reliant on architectural distortion. And when such effects occur, they are anything but inexplicable or uncanny, other than to the most naive perceiver.

Libeskind's striving for uncanniness betrays canniness, which, in turn, betrays a form of 'grasping' and 'exploitation', the resistance of which is a prerequisite to kenosis. Such striving presents as self-assertion – the assertion of what one thinks one already knows. It stands as a barrier to self-emptying and its consequent attunement to the fullness of place, or situation. The realisation of Libeskind's museum employs forms and spaces that assert uncanny credentials, boldly claiming that their assemblage comprises "a new Architecture,"⁶⁵ an architecture supposedly unfamiliar and hitherto unknown. But

⁶³ J. Bitter, *Daniel Libeskind: Jewish Museum Berlin*, Museum Building Series (Barcelona: Ediciones Polígrafa, 2011).

⁶⁴ Elon, "A German Requiem: Two Millennia of German History, Jewish Museum, Berlin"; L. Joffe, "Amos Elon: Eminent Author and Journalist Dubbed 'Chief Chronicler of the Israeli Story'," *The Guardian*, 4 June 2009.

⁶⁵ Libeskind, "Project Memory," 73; Elsewhere, in Libeskind, Allen, and Krell, "Between the Lines: Extension to the Berlin Museum, with the Jewish Museum," 25, Stanley Allen notes that, "Libeskind may be the only architect today who has the temerity to write Architecture with a capital A."

the formality and spatiality of the building are soon seen to be quite conventional in their square tubularity, while the diagonal fenestration and jagged plan reveal as superficial manipulations, pursuant to the geometric preconceptions of the designer. That revelation ironically echoes the same Walter Benjamin whose writing is named as one of the influences leading to the museum's supposedly novel idioms: "The illusion of novelty is reflected, like one mirror in another, in the illusion of infinite sameness."⁶⁶ It is precisely such illusion that sees the canny fashioned as the uncanny, and the Modern fashioned as the Non-Modern or the Critical-Modern or the Deconstructed. Not only does Libeskind's response to this situation fail to react against the canniness of orthodox Modernism, it shows itself to be of the same ontology. In its preconceptions and self-assertiveness, it fails to be attentive to the unfoldings of kenosis, the very unfoldings that open up domains beyond the reflected illusions of novelty. The uncanny ultimately appears not as a result of grasping at it or exploiting it. It appears experientially, from the unanswered, the unseen, the ineffable, and the unknown, those unintended consequences of created – but not contrived – relationships amongst form, space, and perceivers, or what Kahn called the 'unmeasurable'.

Derrida presents the prospect of illusion to Libeskind in two ways. In the first instance, he refers to Gershom Scholem (a friend of Walter Benjamin) who, in a post-war speech marking the completion of a long-awaited Buber-Rosenzweig translation of the Bible into German,⁶⁷ said that this particular translation was (in Derrida's words) "a gift [that] the Jews, as guests (*Gastgeschenke*), wanted to give back to the Germans, but that it was too late; there had never been anything like a German-Jewishness or a Jewish-Germanness," and therefore it was a Bible that "nobody in Germany will ever read." Then, viewing Libeskind's museum as a similar sort of 'gift', Derrida asks Libeskind, "What do you think of this return of the museum as a gift ... a ghostly gift to this country?"⁶⁸ Scholem's contention suggests that, in the long history of Jews and Germans in *relation*, there is actually an absence of *relationship*. Amidst such absence, a 'gift' can be seen as an assertion and, rather than being met with acceptance, can occasion ambivalence or resistance.⁶⁹ Indeed, Derrida's question is made even more pertinent by the didactic and almost triumphal words with which Libeskind describes his 'gift': "Here at last [is] a place where Germans might face their history."⁷⁰ A gift conceived cannily, and

⁶⁶ Gilloch, *Myth & Metropolis: Walter Benjamin and the City*: 121.

⁶⁷ The circumstances surrounding this translation are discussed in L. Rosenwald, "On the Reception of Buber and Rosenzweig's Bible," *Prooftexts* 14, no. 2 (1994).

⁶⁸ Derrida, "Response to Daniel Libeskind," 91. Scholem's contention and his development of it are published in G. Scholem, "Jews and Germans," *Commentary* November (1966).

⁶⁹ This is a notion discussed further in Chapter 7, under the sub-heading, "Vernacular-ism".

⁷⁰ Libeskind, *Breaking Ground: Adventures in Life and Architecture*: 144.

presented (or asserted) in the absence of a kenotic relationship between giver and receiver, cannot be uncanny any more than it can be kenotic or, ultimately, kind.

In a second and related instance, Derrida recalls Walter Benjamin's friendship, not only with Gershom Scholem, an anti-Communist 'Zionist' and scholar of Jewish mysticism, but also with Scholem's older brother, Werner, a 'Marxist' who sat in the Reichstag as a member of the Communist Party (1924-28) but was eventually killed by the Nazis at Buchenwald.

Benjamin was emblematically always divided between the Scholem brothers, between Zionism and Marxism. I do not know what Benjamin – divided as he was between these Marxist-Russian and Jewish-Messianic poles – I do not know, but I wonder what he would have thought about your project ...⁷¹

Here, seen through a kenotic lens, Derrida's wondering exposes a dichotomy; that which exists between the Messianic, questioning, and always-yet-to-come nature of Zionism, and the political, didactic, revealed-truth nature of all ideologies, exemplified by Marxism. It is a dichotomy between the kenotic and the assertive; and, therefore, also between the uncanny and the canny. Merely by raising the question and leaving it open, Derrida suggests that Benjaminian approval cannot be presumed. In fact, an examination of the museum's conception, production, and realisation suggests that Benjaminian approval can be imagined, confidently, only in a scenario that sees the emblematic divide closed in favour of Werner over Gershom. That is a scenario never realised and one question, among many, left open by Benjamin's suicide in 1940.

Hope

Open questions seem appropriate to Libeskind's museum, insofar as its ability to leave "all questions intact, all doubts and difficulties in place" is offered as testimony to its uncanniness. According to James Young, the questions left open are "as daunting as they are potentially paralysing" since they centre on the conundrum of linking "a museum of civic history with the altogether uncivil treatment of that city's Jews," and doing so without suggesting "reconciliation and continuity."⁷² Philosopher Andrew Benjamin takes the position that in addressing such a conundrum, not with attempted answers but by holding open – in the present – the questions that surround and transcend it, the museum is "the architecture of hope."⁷³ This 'hope', a philosophical concept, is said to be found in the building's relationality, incompleteness, and vigilance, as well as in its rejection of any ascribed identity. It is to be found in its 'work' as art, or figure, holding open the

⁷¹ Derrida, "Response to Daniel Libeskind," 93-94.

⁷² Young, "Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum in Berlin: The Uncanny Arts of Memorial Architecture," 20.

⁷³ Benjamin, *Present Hope: Philosophy, Architecture, Judaism*: 103-118. Importantly, Benjamin makes this assessment while the museum is still under construction, two years before its completion. His views, therefore, do not stem from an experience of the museum as built but, rather, as conceived and taking form.

fundamental question of Jewish identity and being. Such notions of hope are aspects of kenosis. Therefore they, and their claimed architectural manifestations in this project, warrant further examination in the light of kenosis; an examination that compares 'illustration' with 'caption' and assesses the extent to which this project can support the weight of the philosophy with which it has been laden.

In the museum's work, as figure, Benjamin emphasises the actative over the substantive,⁷⁴ which can be read to suggest that what the building's design instigates or inspires, as action, should perhaps be privileged over what it is, as substance – as constructed architecture. Such privileging would see the action effected by the museum – even if effected only by its concept and not concretised beyond discourse – as being of greater import than either its built form or the performance of that form in pursuit of intended purpose. Notwithstanding the merits of the actative, this premise effectively apologises and grants absolution, in advance, for any failings that might be found in the realised building, provided that its theory or concept fosters continued discourse concerning either its own claims or those attributed to it. In fact, since the concept is already the dominant and deciding source of value, realisation would seem to be of little additional value. But, if the architecture is realised in the substantive, the premise implies that its appearance and prompting of consequent discourse (both effecting a kind of kenotic opening-up) are sufficient to fulfil its actative work, whether or not it successfully 'works' (i.e., performs or functions) in the manner expected or required by its commissioners and users. Thus the premise can be seen to suggest that architecture has a capacity to achieve sufficient – if not greatest – value in a theoretical or conceptual state. But can it be said that architecture is fully architecture while remaining in such a state? Or, in that state, is it actually only architectur-al? And, under such a premise, is consideration actually given to architecture, as that which is meant to be occupied, used, and experienced by human beings? With those questions held open, for the moment, the search for hope in the Jewish Museum Berlin can continue.

Reconciliation and Continuity

Libeskind, himself, invokes the notion of hope in the original submission of "Between the Lines," wherein he explains that the museum "must be a place where all citizens, those of the past, of the present, and of the future, discover their common heritage and individual hope."⁷⁵ In a later narrative, he anticipates the larger impact that the museum might have for Berlin, saying, "... the idea is to give a new value to the existing context, the historical

⁷⁴ Ibid., 105.

⁷⁵ Libeskind, Allen, and Krell, "Between the Lines: Extension to the Berlin Museum, with the Jewish Museum," 48.

context, by transforming the urban field into an open and hope-oriented matrix.”⁷⁶ And after the museum’s opening, in yet another narrative called “Project Memory,” he states that his use of the void reveals the opening of a “hopeful horizon,” and adds that the museum as a whole is “an emblem of Hope” (with the word finally capitalised).⁷⁷ The hope that Libeskind ascribes and invites to be ascribed to his museum is clearly not that which might be seen as false hope, nor is it the hope for some restorative outcome, especially one that leads to forgetting. His fragments, splinters, and shards were, according to him, never “some prior whole” and cannot be “reassembled in some hypothetical future.”⁷⁸ Young makes it clear that Libeskind’s fragmented forms eschew any suggestion of “wholeness and mending, salvation or redemption,” and, instead, “represent the breach itself, the ongoing need for *tikkun haolam* ... and its impossibility.”⁷⁹ Invocation of the term *tikkun ha-‘olam* (as it appears in rabbinic literature), or *tikkun olam* (as evolved in modern parlance),⁸⁰ opens an important door to kenosis and invites further discussion about its manifestation in Libeskind’s museum.

As seen in Chapter 2, but worthy of brief reprise, *tikkun olam* is pervasive in Judaism, but features centrally in Kabbalah, particularly Lurianic Kabbalah. The latter advances the notion of *zimzum*, God’s withdrawal to make room for the creation that includes humanity and human activity, or, stated more broadly, the paradoxical concept of presence through absence. Humanity is seen as having a duty to respond to ‘broken’ creation through *tikkun olam*: “a person’s theurgic potential to repair the fragmented world with the goal of restoring it to its original design.”⁸¹ In late modernity, these propositions spark renewed interest in, and an expanded view of, the Christian theology of kenosis. Therein, the Judaic notion of *tikkun olam* becomes a call for humanity’s kenotic response to divine kenosis; that is, a call for openness and responsiveness to the others and other things that comprise the world, society, and universe. The concepts of *tikkun olam* and kenotic reciprocity, as well as the faith traditions in which they originate – Judaism, steeped in messianic waiting, and Christianity, with its anticipation of a ‘kingdom’ yet to

⁷⁶ D. Libeskind as quoted in Benjamin, *Present Hope: Philosophy, Architecture, Judaism*: 113. This text, using the phrase “hope-oriented,” was written subsequent to Libeskind’s original submission of “Between the Lines.” In the original submission, Libeskind uses the phrase “future-oriented.” See Libeskind, “Between the Lines: The Jewish Museum, Berlin,” 49. This is of some interest since Libeskind’s original text positions the project and its contextual impact as directing attention to the future. Such positioning differs somewhat from Andrew Benjamin’s, wherein he sees the project as “not linked to a futural and thus hoped-for occurrence, but ... at work necessarily in and at the present,” since “the future will demand another thinking.” Benjamin adds, however, that “the condition of the future is already located in the present.” See Benjamin, *Present Hope: Philosophy, Architecture, Judaism*: 114-115.

⁷⁷ Libeskind, “Project Memory,” 73.

⁷⁸ Libeskind, Allen, and Krell, “Between the Lines: Extension to the Berlin Museum, with the Jewish Museum,” 49.

⁷⁹ Young, “Daniel Libeskind’s Jewish Museum in Berlin: The Uncanny Arts of Memorial Architecture,” 19 (author’s emphasis).

⁸⁰ L. Cooper, “The Tikkun Olam Catch-All,” *Jewish Educational Leadership* 11, no. 1 (2013): 46.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 47.

come – indisputably sustain a sense of incomplete restoration, even as they promote humanity's responsibility to ceaselessly, constructively, and hopefully contribute to restoration's pursuit. Neither suggests that the pursuit is futile. In fact, both call for action through substance, or the actative *and* the substantive.

How does the Jewish Museum Berlin answer that call? Echoing Libeskind's own narratives, Young suggests that the call is answered by designing and building a representation of the un-mended and un-mendable breach, thereby ensuring the remembrance of both the breach and humanity's duty to work toward mending. That reckoning, however, exposes a bind. By its purposeful striving to avoid any suggestions of mending, the Libeskind design is proposed as a symbol for the ongoing need to mend. But in that proposal is the suggestion that the museum can symbolise tikkun olam without accepting the responsibility that tikkun olam assigns to it; namely, to at least *attempt* to progress mending through its own manifestation. Even in the face of trauma deemed impossible to mend – something as impossibly 'saturated' as the Shoah⁸² – the principle of tikkun olam does not exempt humanity from its responsibility to work *toward* the mending of a world overwhelmed by an un-mendable event. The bind comes as Libeskind's design eschews mending while also purporting to represent the very notion that insists mending not be eschewed. Two aspects of this bind reveal kenotic potential, while a third precludes its realisation. By resisting the portrayal of mending as something already complete, the design makes known that kenosis is not reconciliation – though it may prove reconciliatory – that it is always incomplete and remains challenging to all claims of self-sufficiency. In its striving to ensure that the need for ongoing mending (of the breach) is never forgotten, the design upholds the ongoing relevance of kenosis and its hopefulness in the present. But in forgetting or discounting the opportunity cum responsibility to progress mending – if not of the event, then of the world thereby affected – the design finally suppresses the kenosis that could advance unending remembrance and the efficacy of hope. To respond to a traumatic event by reifying trauma in architecture – with architectural devices deployed for visual and other sensational effect – and, at the same time, intentionally suspending any response that might express the concept of healing's pursuit (even if not its achievement), is to place at risk the trauma's remembrance; that which this project sets out to ensure. It is to reveal not openness, but closure; not kenosis, but an assertion that is ever subject to amnesic reaction when novelty inevitably wanes. It is also to invite questions about the architecture's kind-ness.

Kenotic opportunity – not least, the opportunity for kind-ness – can be located in the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas (introduced in Chapter 2), who looks outside the incarnation-centred Christian interpretations of kenosis (largely avoided in Jewish

⁸² I am referring, again, to Jean-Luc Marion's notion of "saturated phenomenon." See note 5.

theology⁸³), and beyond Kabbalistic zimzum, to see kenosis as having “full meaning in the religious sensibility of Judaism.”⁸⁴ If divine kenosis is seen as God’s self-contraction, or absence, made present not in the Christian messiah but in ‘the other’, and if such absence is seen to consequently result in the disruption of religious desire and its redirection from the transcendent to the immanent,⁸⁵ then “human existence should not be thought of as ‘self-oriented,’ but as a ‘reception of the other,’”⁸⁶ even “the other not worthy of desire.”⁸⁷ Such kenotic receptivity is an ethical responsibility (not unlike tikkun olam) and not a “free decision of the receiving subject,” especially since Levinas sees the other as “an unwelcome intruder: the one who disturbs the peace, the one I do not want, the ‘unwanted par excellence.’”⁸⁸ In that light, it might be tempting to analogously view the disintegrated motif of the Jewish Museum Berlin as the intruding unworthy other, eliciting hesitant receptivity from those receiving subjects it disturbs (its visitors), and to thereby see the relationship as kenotic. But, such is a perversion of kenosis, particularly Levinasian kenosis, because, in this instance, the other (the museum) is intentionally distorted – intentionally made to appear unworthy – to attract the attention of the receiver; in essence grasping or begging for that attention. The other is thus not kenotic, but self-assertive.⁸⁹

The kenotic opportunity of this project, much of which I argue is overlooked, lies in an architecture that would responsibly – even if reluctantly – receive its ultimately intrusive, disturbing, and unwanted other: the fragmented events of Jewish contribution and persecution in Berlin, climaxing in the Shoah. It would do so, not with didactics or falsely sentimental notions of reconciliation and uninterrupted continuity, but with openness, unresolvedness, and emptiness; a peculiar and paradoxical architecture of kind-ness. Such architecture would be able to hold ineffable tension without resorting to the indignity and futility of shouting, instead letting the tension be revealed uncannily, in a way “not of this world.”⁹⁰ It would be able to present that tension humbly, without a need to re-present it. I contend that such architecture would even be able to meet the challenge presented by philosopher and sociologist Theodor Adorno (1906-1989). Initially declaring that “to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric,” he later acknowledges that suffering has a “right to expression,” and concedes that perhaps some “poems may

⁸³ van Riessen, “Hermeneutics of Kenosis: The Road of Dispossession,” 185n22.

⁸⁴ Levinas, “Judaism and Kenosis,” 114.

⁸⁵ van Riessen, “Hermeneutics of Kenosis: The Road of Dispossession,” 193.

⁸⁶ van Riessen, “Introduction,” 1.

⁸⁷ van Riessen, “Hermeneutics of Kenosis: The Road of Dispossession,” 194.

⁸⁸ van Riessen, “Introduction,” 1.

⁸⁹ This notion of a grasping and begging ‘other’ stands in contrast to the Dervishes, discussed in connection with the Museum of Islamic Art in Chapter 4. One might, however, say that the ‘deceit’ of this other (the intentional distortion to attract attention) is itself a form of unworthiness and something that a kenotic relationship should be open to. But, it is difficult to reconcile the notion that a relationship grounded in deceit can be reciprocal (other than to reciprocate deceit), and, therefore, that such a relationship can be kenotic.

⁹⁰ van Riessen, “Hermeneutics of Kenosis: The Road of Dispossession,” 183.

be written.” In support of that possibility, he cites playwright Samuel Beckett and, in particular, his play *Endgame* as providing “the only fitting reaction to the situation of the concentration camps – a situation he never calls by name, as if it were subject to a strict image ban.”⁹¹ The sort of architecture that arises out of kenosis – in response to an utterly un-kenotic event – is that which would have no need for spectacular identity, in name or image. It would have no need to claim the status of poetry, but would become such by receding, poetically. It would recede to the overwhelm-ment of the event, rather than meeting the event with architectural attempts to overwhelm. And while honouring the ineffableness of the event, it would nonetheless give expression to the event’s trauma, through “a gentle whisper.”⁹² Such architecture would vigilantly maintain the questions and confirm their unanswerableness, but advocate that in their mystery lies hope.

Questions and Negotiations

Andrew Benjamin contends that Libeskind’s design for the Jewish Museum Berlin exemplifies the unanswered question and the hope therein, while it might appear that I suggest the opposite, particularly concerning the design’s realisation. The difference is not, in fact, one of opposition, but, rather, emerges from Benjamin’s emphasis on the project’s active work and my insistence that such emphasis can lead to a discounting of architecture’s physical manifestation and experientiality. In the museum’s conceptual narrative – at least in the active interdisciplinary dialogue produced as a result of that narrative – the project may do all that Benjamin describes. But in its substantive work – its unexpurgated performance as architecture – it reveals severe deficiencies. In no way does this impugn the merits of Benjamin’s philosophical exploration of hope or the value of its application to architecture. Indeed, it is stimulating to ponder what the architectural outcome of the Jewish museum project might have been, had Benjamin’s ideas formed the original brief. But advancing those concepts, as worthy philosophical aspirations for the project, is something quite different to locating their achievement in Libeskind’s built solution.

According to Benjamin, a question can be built and a building – more particularly, Libeskind’s museum – can be the manifestation of a question.⁹³ He sees such a construct as:

⁹¹ Smith, “Daniel Among the Philosophers: The Jewish Museum, Berlin, and Architecture after Auschwitz,” 105-107.

⁹² van Riessen, “Hermeneutics of Kenosis: The Road of Dispossession,” 183. This is a reference to 1 Kings 19:12, and its connection to the Levinasian notion of transcendence presenting in humility.

⁹³ Before exploring this notion, Benjamin explains that “a building is not just built,” but is subject to the complexities of built time. See Benjamin, *Present Hope: Philosophy, Architecture, Judaism*: 115.

... a building that guards the question of representation, refusing it finality and thus necessitating its retention as a problem to be investigated, while allowing at the same time presentations; a building that questions display while allowing for display; a building that in its effectuation as building, holds open the question of remembrance as question, enjoining humility while providing – because of the question – the necessity for a vigilance that can be identified as present remembrance.⁹⁴

Absent finality, there is a “structure of hope” – not in the future, but the present – one in which answers may be produced, “but not the answers that close off the question.” In the case of Libeskind’s museum, it is its void that assumes the central role of holding open the question. In one iteration of Libeskind’s narrative, the void promises “to be experienced by the public ... visible, accessible.” Accepting that promise, Benjamin anticipates an “inscribed and insisting void, a void space that is always being encountered.”⁹⁵ But neither the promise nor the anticipated result is fulfilled.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the void’s visibility and opportunity for encounter is something far less than the narrative promises. While passing from gallery to gallery, there is limited and uncelebrated visibility into the void’s various fragments, and therefore little experience of them – more often obliviousness. Accessibility is similarly limited, though not completely. Of the six fragments that comprise the jagged building’s central void, only two are accessible. One is experienced at the Rafael Roth Learning Centre, in the museum’s basement. There, one is offered an upward glimpse from a lecture space, whose furnishings and activities compromise the sense of absence that the void is intended to evoke. The second, known as the Memory Void, can also be entered, but only if its entrance is discovered at the end of a temporary gallery; a discovery easily missed. The Memory Void is relatively large and presents as a potentially significant experience of void. But its emptiness – an important dimension of which is aural – is filled with the harsh and highly reverberant noise of footfall on loose steel discs, which cover this void’s floor as an art installation, called *Shalechet*.⁹⁶ Two other voids – not part of the fragmented central void and segregated from the main building – are also accessible. The first is located in the adjacent Kollegienhaus – a Baroque building that originally served as a Prussian courthouse and later became the Berlin Museum – and serves as the sole point of ingress and egress to the new ‘extension’. As such, it is an unavoidable void and, therefore, the most encountered. Its void-ness, however, is compromised by the constant flow of visitor traffic descending and ascending the staircase it envelops; a staircase leading to the primary public circulation

⁹⁴ Ibid., 115-116.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 116-117.

⁹⁶ Beeck, *Daniel Libeskind and the Jewish Museum*: 52. The Hebrew word *shalechet* translates as ‘fallen leaves’ and refers to the more than ten thousand discs that feature cut-out faces, with mouths agape, over which visitors to the Memory Void walk.

and orientation spaces (or dis-orientation spaces, as Libeskind would have it), at the basement level (seen earlier in fig. 6.5) The second is the most popular void – the Holocaust Tower (described earlier, and seen in fig. 6.6) – and the void that best fulfils the promise of encounter and experience with absence. Yet, because it is segregated and a terminal destination (as it symbolically needs to be), it cannot contribute to the experience of a larger void that is always being encountered. Hence, whether considered individually or collectively, the void, as physically manifested and conjoined to the function of the museum, is not insisting and pervasive in the experiential way that conceptual narratives and philosophical musings suggest.

However, to say that the void is not in any way insisting and pervasive would be incorrect. Describing the specific manner in which the museum might hold open the question and embody present hope, Benjamin sees the void “giving rise to the necessity that each exhibition, if not the policy of exhibition itself, will have to *negotiate* with it”⁹⁷; the premise being that the unending need for such negotiation ensures the question’s unresolvedness. Actually, he sees a twofold negotiation, anticipating the first to take place between the museum building and its visitors, with each visitor having to “confront the void” while viewing the exhibits. As already seen, that negotiation proves less confronting than imagined and, in key instances, goes unnoticed due to the void’s weak manifestation and restricted experientiality. But the second negotiation is unavoidable: “Curators will have to negotiate with the void in constructing and planning exhibitions.” In fact, Benjamin foretells, the curators will have to negotiate with “each aspect of the Museum,” because all aspects “will combine in such a way as to hold the question in place,” and “their combination will define the ambit of curatorial practice.”⁹⁸ This concept of spatial and material negotiation is intriguing, both philosophically and architecturally, but, once again, this ‘caption’ is at odds with the ‘illustration’ it describes. The museum, as built, is simply not designed to negotiate, at least not if the definition of negotiation is seen as holding open the questions of give and take, compromise, and equitable outcome amongst the negotiating parties.

As Benjamin predicts, the fragmented void does manifest amidst the exhibition galleries as something to be dealt with. But rather than spaces of emptiness and absence, to be experienced as counterpoints or complements to the exhibition galleries, they present as a series of objects; essentially opaque shafts (seen earlier in fig. 6.3). For visitors, these objects must simply be gotten past while en route to the next gallery. Such ‘negotiation’ is merely navigation, not mutual engagement. For curators, there is no alternative but to plan around the object-like fragments of void, wherever they happen to

⁹⁷ Benjamin, *Present Hope: Philosophy, Architecture, Judaism*: 117 (my emphasis).

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 117.

occur and regardless of legitimate exhibition needs. Such is not negotiation at all but, instead, preordained surrender. Furthermore, like the entire museum, the void was conceived, designed, and constructed well before either exhibition needs or curators were known. Forfeited, in that sequence of events, was the opportunity for preliminary negotiations – at the conceptual and creative stages – that may have produced a building capable of subsequent and ongoing negotiations. In that forfeiture, the void and other aspects of the museum do, as predicted, conjoin to define the ambit of curatorial practice. They do so, however, not by encouraging negotiation, but by precluding it.

Although Libeskind's original design submission touts "a set of flexible spaces,"⁹⁹ the size, shape, and character of the realised exhibition galleries are fixed and invariable, not unlike traditional, nineteenth and twentieth century museums.¹⁰⁰ Despite the conceptual equation of fragmentation with incompleteness or unfinishedness, the building, as constructed, is anything but incomplete or amenable to 'finishing'.¹⁰¹ It is, therefore, always the prevailing party in any negotiations, a situation that renders the negotiation unnegotiable before it commences. Having no choice but to accept the building's unyielding obstacles, curators are often forced into awkward solutions – making already awkward spaces even more so. Within the galleries, there are added mezzanine platforms and staircases (inaccessible to the disabled), subdividing partitions, and incongruous exhibit fittings, almost all indifferent to, if not in conflict with, the architecture. As a consequence, exhibitions often appear as guests in their own home (see figs. 6.10 - 6.12). Equally apparent are curatorial attempts to deal with the random placement of diagonal windows – and the sometimes unwanted light they admit – by going so far as to cover them over with black film or bespoke architectural devices, such that exhibits and exhibit fittings can be configured with less restriction (see fig. 6.13). Now permanently installed, it is obvious that such features were neither anticipated by the architect nor able to be accommodated by the architecture. Curators are coping – sometimes desperately – with an architecture of intransigence. Lamenting what he sees as the galleries' "bewildering maze of crammed nooks and corners," Amos Elon nonetheless expresses

⁹⁹ Libeskind, Allen, and Krell, "Between the Lines: Extension to the Berlin Museum, with the Jewish Museum," 50.

¹⁰⁰ Stanley Allen observes similarly, saying that Libeskind ironically chooses "the most conservative form of the museum from recent practice, the 'culture bunker,' to house a radical critique of the institution." See *ibid.*, 24.

¹⁰¹ Benjamin observes that "even in having been built, [a building] may always be yet to be completed." See Benjamin, *Present Hope: Philosophy, Architecture, Judaism*: 115. My professional experience corroborates his theme, with one astute client – a congregation preparing the brief for its new church building – articulating a desire that their new building offer opportunities for future generations to go on contributing to its 'completion'. Their suggestion was not that any part of the building be left in a raw state of construction but that its finished-ness never close off the question of the church's identity. My argument, here, is not in opposition to such a worthy concept but, rather, suggests that the Libeskind museum does not present an effective example of its fulfilment.

admiration for these curators, saying that others “might have been discouraged from trying to fit a museum into such a Procrustean bed as its building.”¹⁰²



FIGURE 6.10

Typical exhibit spaces, showing curatorial installations, conceived and installed over the course of more than two years following the museum's construction.

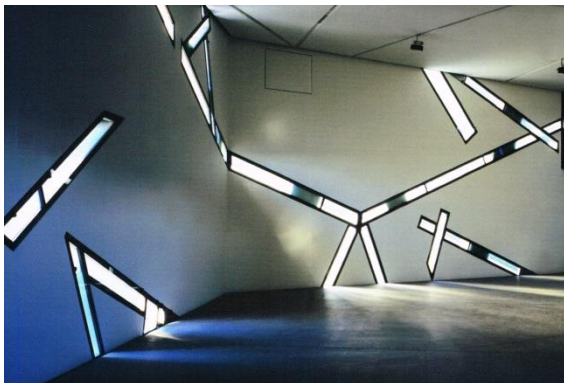


FIGURE 6.11

A typical exhibit space prior to curatorial installations, showing the relationship of angular fenestration to the then-empty space – at a time when the ‘museum’ served largely as a ‘memorial’.
(Photo: Stefan Müller)



FIGURE 6.12

The same exhibit space after curatorial installations, showing the scale and relationship of angular fenestration to later exhibits and exhibition furnishings.

¹⁰² Elon, "A German Requiem: Two Millennia of German History, Jewish Museum, Berlin".

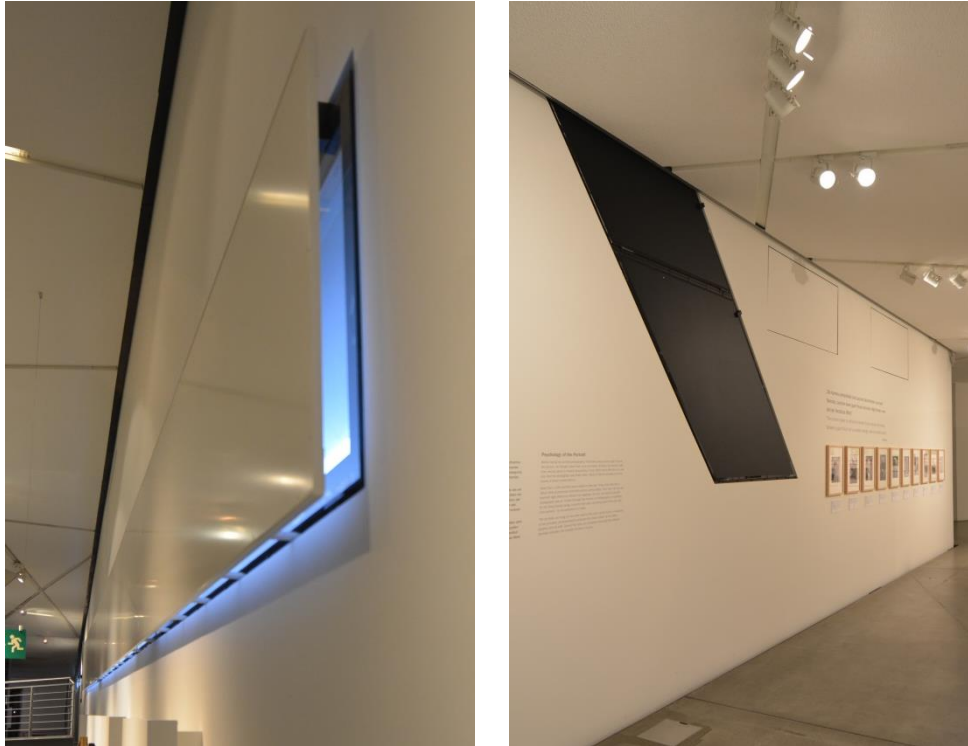


FIGURE 6.13

Detail views of typical curatorial attempts to 'negotiate' with the fenestration. *Left*, a permanent baffle covers the window but allows the indirect admission of light. *Right*, material is used to totally black-out the window and light.

These circumstances do not point to the ongoing negotiation of an open question. Instead, they highlight a domineering building, which, by its self-assertion, closes off questions, particularly ones of context, curatorship, and use. Such an outcome was neither unpredictable nor unpredicted. According to James Young, the competition jury expressed concern "that in the face of such a stupendously monumental piece of architecture ... the contents of the museum itself would wither in comparison"; the museum's then-director saying that the building "might seem to make its contents subordinate and insignificant."¹⁰³ Young obliquely acknowledges the same concern, but effectively absolves any eventual curatorial difficulties with the justification that Libeskind's disintegrated design resists "continuous, homogenous history-housing" and thereby "never allows memory of this time to congeal into singular, salvational meaning."¹⁰⁴ Barely veiled is a presupposition that the exhibition of discontinuous and heterogeneous history requires a disintegrated building, and that architectural resistance is necessary to avert redemptory presentations; a presupposition that, itself, closes off the question of curatorship and rules in favour of architecture. Final absolution, however, comes in an each-way bet, when Young concludes that Libeskind's design is "partly integrationist and partly disintegrationist," one that "allows for the *attempt* at integration as

¹⁰³ Young, "Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum in Berlin: The Uncanny Arts of Memorial Architecture," 13.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

an ongoing, if impossible project, even as it formalises disintegration as its architectural motif.”¹⁰⁵ Young’s contention implies – and reality confirms – that attempts to integrate architecture and curatorship are largely futile, essentially unnegotiable by virtue of the building’s self-assertion. In a sense, the ongoing struggle between building and exhibitions is a fulfilment of Libeskind’s claim the museum is “a new realisation of the relationship between program and architectural space.”¹⁰⁶ But the achievement is neither constructive nor, in reality, supportive of the underlying merits in Young’s and Benjamin’s themes.

So, what might be an alternative? An architectural solution instantiating kenosis can be envisaged as offering the flexible spaces that Libeskind promised. Such spaces, along with other unfixed features, would enable relationality and genuine negotiations amongst the context, visitors, curators, and exhibitions – present and future – with which the museum purports to conjoin in a matrix of hope. Benjamin argues that gestures toward the future risk dislocation of the question from the present, and that such gestures require “spatial neutrality,” which, at least in concept, the Libeskind design avoids.¹⁰⁷ The realisation of Libeskind’s design, however, delivers exactly such spatial neutrality and, with it, the spatial inertia evidenced by sameness, rigidity, and stringency – especially in its galleries. It follows, then, that a kenotically-derived alternative would be marked by the openness necessary to perpetuate the question, by some form of spatial kenosis or capacity for spatial self-emptying, and by concurrent receptivity to situational demands. In short, it would enjoy a capacity for complex relationality with all that the building is meant to engage.¹⁰⁸ Countering neutrality and inertia, spatial kenosis offers a dynamism that perpetuates the question, in both the present and the future (a future that, according to both Benjamin and kenotic thinking, is located already in the present). Indeed, spatial kenosis addresses Benjamin’s contention that the future “will demand another thinking.”¹⁰⁹ It does so by opening-up, and opening-up to, exactly such thinking(s); by accommodating changed boundaries, new domains, and resultant emergences that the perpetuated question and interim answers present over the course of the building’s

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 19 (my emphasis).

¹⁰⁶ Libeskind, “Project Memory,” 73.

¹⁰⁷ Benjamin, *Present Hope: Philosophy, Architecture, Judaism*: 114.

¹⁰⁸ Benjamin likens openness to freedom, in that it “demands the complexity of relation.” Kenosis, being that by which openness emerges, demands the same. See *ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 114-115. Benjamin also suggests that the “use and the varying possibilities open to the building once the building is understood as built” are already determined and “built in,” such that “a change in the nature of the building and a related reallocation of function would demand a rebuilding, a transformation on the level of building.” Such a presumption, however, is not substantiated by the potential of architectural design. If changes in the nature of the building – prompted by the question of its identity being held open – are anticipated at inception and conception, the potential to accommodate such change, that is, the potential for transformation on a level less than ‘building’, may well be that which is ‘built in’, that which is integral to the building’s design. Such transformation cannot be presumed to require or result in spatial neutrality, as I argue here.

lifetime. Spatial kenosis does not exclude the particularity of spaces such as a Holocaust Tower, or a Garden of Exile, which serve to anchor the boundaries of openness at its edges. Nor does spatial kenosis lead to the banality of multi-use space. It simply asks of space – of architecture – that it be humble enough to respond, perhaps reluctantly but always responsibly and hospitably, to the disturbances of open questions, yet strong and confident enough (even in spectacular modesty) to do so while maintaining integrity and identity. Such architecture is positioned, over the self-assertive, to sustainably be “an architecture of the question.”¹¹⁰

Identity and Being

The question of Jewish identity is that which Libeskind's museum design is said to hold open, and, in so doing, invoke present hope. In the built and curated museum, two statues stand side by side, as their kin have done since medieval Christianity. Both of attractive female form, they are replicas of those at the Roman Catholic cathedral of Bamberg, Germany, and are similar to those at other such cathedrals (see fig. 6.14). *Ecclesia*, the allegorical figure of the Christian church, stands next to its counterpart, *Synagoga*, personifying the Jewish synagogue. Although there are many versions and variations, *Ecclesia* is typically portrayed as forward looking and self-sufficient, even triumphal, while *Synagoga* is limp, downcast, and often blindfolded. It is *Synagoga* that Benjamin uses to explicate one view of the question of Jewish identity – that of *being a Jew*, not of Jewish being – a view that closes off the question.¹¹¹ A short sketch of his narrative, though not fully just, provides a sufficient platform for further analysis. “The blinded Synagogue is linked to the Jew's blindness and refusal” to accept the Christian messiah; the obvious deficiency of Judaism in Christian thinking. “Their refusal,” according to Pascal, writing in the *Pensées*, “is the foundation of [Christian] belief.” This is a portrayal not of mere blindness but of stubborn blindness, a “sustained lack of insight” despite the alleged clarity of what is available to be seen. It is a “gift” to the Jews of a lesser identity, one described by Sartre as “segregated, untouchable, shamed and proscribed”; in essence, “pitiable.” It is a gift that can be neither simply refused nor completely destroyed. It thereby carries “the intention that Jews, in order to be Jews, would then have to live out the expectations and possibilities” that the asserted ascription presents, or at least accept them as part of the framework surrounding the question of identity. “Thus the Jew is positioned, by Christian thought, *not* as the other ... but as involved in a relation of dependency that holds the Jew outside.” Such dependency

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 116. The phrase is Benjamin's ascription to Libeskind's design.

¹¹¹ Benjamin, writing prior to the museum's completion and curation, and therefore prior to any knowledge that the museum would actually contain these figures, refers to the figure of *Synagoga* that appears at the cathedral in Strasbourg, France, but his explication is equally applicable to all such figures. Notably, Benjamin does not discuss the figure of *Ecclesia*, but it is her depiction that works to establish polarity with *Synagoga*.

fosters abjection, which, in turn, sanctions thoughts of “expulsion [to] rid Christianity of its relation of necessity to the blind Jew” ¹¹²; thoughts that have been seen to conjure violent perpetrations.



FIGURE 6.14

On display in the museum, replicas of two statues at the cathedral of Bamberg, Germany. *Left*, Ecclesia and, *right*, Synagoga.

Here, in a depiction offered by two stone figures, the Christian faith – whose myth, distinction from Judaism, and claim to relevance are entirely dependent on assertions of kenosis – can be seen responding to another faith, of common heritage, in a manner wholly antithetical to kenosis. The response is not self-emptying openness to the other. Instead, it is judgement and a dependent identity; such identity ascribed to the other by a party that asserts its dominance only out of the authority of its own assertions. A twofold disparity is thus revealed, one deriving from an indemonstrable – though not simply rejectable – assertion by Christians toward Jews, and another from a self-evident

¹¹² Benjamin, *Present Hope: Philosophy, Architecture, Judaism*: 105-109.

incongruence between Christianity's assertiveness and its claim to kenosis. The former exploits what Benjamin calls "disequilibrium of power,"¹¹³ even as the latter signals an hypocrisy that ultimately, and paradoxically, disallows the dominant position being grasped at.¹¹⁴ The product of Christianity's performance – the two statues – attempts to answer the question of Jewish *identity*. Although much of the question is answered by the creation and promulgation of the image of Synagoga, it is only by conjoining it to the image of Ecclesia that relationality is established and the question can be seen as closed. But two entirely different images can be imagined, emerging not from asserted dominance but from a kenotic posture, and necessitating neither disequilibrium nor perfect symmetry. Such transformation is made possible in a celebration of difference – an engagement that challenges one another's self-sufficiency, and sees each partially become the other, even while retaining fundamental self-identity. In that kind of celebration, the moulding and ascribing of identity is rendered impossible, because identity is grounded in being and being unfolds kenotically – openly and questioningly.

Although silent on the subject of Ecclesia, Benjamin contrasts the figure of Synagoga with the figure of Libeskind's museum, suggesting that, unlike Synagoga, Libeskind's museum design "allows identity to endure as a question." It does so by being a museum of "remembrance" and "acts of commemoration." Its very "nature" questions those aspects of its being, and therefore the building remains a question. Thus, the claim: "What it holds in place is the link between being and questioning."¹¹⁵ Benjamin declares that such "is the only possibility" for a Jewish museum, but stops short of saying that Libeskind's museum is its only possible manifestation, acknowledging instead that this "singular possibility ... has no single predictable concrete form."¹¹⁶ I argue similarly, up to a point. Indeed, Benjamin's singular possibility is a worthy aspiration of, and properly belongs to, a Jewish museum in Berlin. It proposes that such a museum – irrespective of Libeskind's particular manifestation – must remain open to the questioning of itself, its work, and, by inference, the relation of itself and its work to the others thereby engaged. In short, the museum must remain open to its being. Benjamin's proposal can thus be seen as a call for kenotic architectural response. And a kenotic response to events so antithetical to kenosis is, if not the only possible response, at least a response

¹¹³ Ibid., 107.

¹¹⁴ Modern Christianity, particularly in the aftermath of the Shoah, includes the development of 'Dual-Covenant Theology'. It argues for the existence of two covenants between God and humanity, one with Jews (the Old Covenant) and another with Gentiles (the New Covenant), thereby mediating messianic differences. There is, however, no universal acceptance of such theology in Christianity, with more conservative contemporary theologians arguing strongly against it. For further explication, see, for example, J.J. Johnson, "A New Testament Understanding of the Jewish Rejection of Jesus: Four Theologians on the Salvation of Israel," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 43, no. 2 (2000).

¹¹⁵ Benjamin, *Present Hope: Philosophy, Architecture, Judaism*: 118.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

with heightened potential to be situationally attentive, or 'fitting', and also uncannily hope-filled.

At that important juncture, however, my argument diverges, because Libeskind's museum – if viewed, beyond its narrative, to include conception, realisation, and experience – is not such a response. In fact, in its assertion of self-sufficiency and singularity, and in its inability to negotiate with the others and other things that its work engages – curators, exhibitions, and users – it works to reveal two paradoxes. First, by its dominant counter-relational performance, it cannot be likened to Synagoga. Instead, it bears semblance to that which it is not meant to be, Ecclesia; in this context a symbol of perpetration. Then, in its fixed and stubborn formalisation, it answers and closes off the question of its identity, and thus resembles that which it is meant to oppose, Synagoga; blind to the situation, and pitiable. Libeskind's museum is intended to be like neither of these two figures it contains, but, in its desperate attempt to avoid the connotations of each, it becomes both. As such, it accepts that Ecclesia and Synagoga frame the field in which the question of its identity is to be examined. Instead of being an architecture of the question, Libeskind's building is an assertive statement (like Synagoga); instead of an organism that pulsates and responsively reacts to the contingent events of its being, it is single-minded and disinterested (like Ecclesia). Instead of linking its being with questioning, the museum responds to its situation much as medieval Christianity did to Judaism, with an assertion of power supported only by the certitude of its own assertions. Certitude attenuates the need for hope and its promise, while assertiveness proves futile, and both are susceptible to pity and laughter.

Laughter

A third and final theme in this discussion is that of 'laughter'. The source of this theme comes from Libeskind's "paradigm of the irrational," which he explains by stating that "the best works of contemporary spirit come from the irrational, while what prevails in the world, what dominates and often kills, does so always in the name of Reason."¹¹⁷ Declaring the irrational to have been the museum's "nonbeginning," Libeskind seeks a clear disassociation with reason and what Stanley Allen terms "the rationality of instrumental logic." This attempt at disassociation is somewhat ironic since Libeskind's predilections toward unusual and distorted forms depend, almost entirely, on the most rational and logical of instruments for their realisation: the computer. The logic of forms is inversely proportional to the logical power required for their determination, and, in that sense, Libeskind's architecture is ultimately the work of logic and rationality. It is not that

¹¹⁷ Libeskind, "Between the Lines: The Jewish Museum, Berlin," 82. Capitalisation of the word 'reason' is Libeskind's.

irony, however, which prompts the ascription of laughter to Libeskind's work. Allen describes Libeskind's practice as a "practice of laughter" and amplifies the theme, saying that the work of such a practice – in particular, the Jewish museum – "must erupt in hysterical laughter at the absurdity of reason itself." One such eruption is purported to occur in Libeskind's design process, which, according to Allen, seeks neither to find meaning nor to have meaning found in it. Instead, it reveals itself as "a fact of the making," a process both "unfinished and undecidable," employing logic "only to call logic into question," and producing an object that is "always more and less than the record of its making." These attributes are named as the irrationalities of Libeskind's process and equated to the "contradictory structure of laughter," the embrace of which is posited as the only means to confront the "absence and horror" that underlie the museum project. Therefore, "this is a building that must disturb: out of disaster, laughter and 'convulsive beauty.'"¹¹⁸

In this paradigm of the irrational, set in opposition to the rational, there arises a problem inherent in many dichotomies: the criteria by which either trait can be precisely established is unclear, except perhaps at the traits' extremes. Exactly at what point, and by what actions, does a purportedly rational design process become irrational; and at precisely what point does an irrational process cease to be so? Many other corollary questions emerge to challenge this logic that claims to question logic. Can a creative process (distinct from mathematic or scientific processes, themselves not absolute) ever be completely finished or fully decidable? Can a process be creative if it fails to be suspicious of its own logic? Can an object produced creatively (extra-engineering) be merely a record of its making – no more or less? Can a creative process be undertaken and, of necessity, concluded without there remaining unexplored avenues of further promise and hope? More fundamentally, can creativity really be reduced to a 'process', or can it only ever be an indeterminate and contingent pursuit of one approach amongst many? Are not all creative acts animated by kenosis, whether its effect is seen or unseen, attended to, ignored, or resisted? Are not all creative acts unfoldings and openings-up – at cosmic, evolutionary, and human levels – subject to the contradictory structure of laughter?

The latter three questions again evoke a Levinasian view of kenosis. Therein an utterly irrational "divine comedy" proposes the absurdity of an absent God being made present in the other, often intrusively and disturbingly. With that proposal, it also absurdly redirects humanity's desire for contact with God back to humanity itself, even to those

¹¹⁸ Libeskind, Allen, and Krell, "Between the Lines: Extension to the Berlin Museum, with the Jewish Museum," 24; the phrase, "practice of laughter," is a reference to the notion that "every practice which produces something new (a new device) is a practice of laughter," as presented in J. Kristeva, "Maldoror and Poems: Laughter as Practice," *Revolution in Poetic Language*.

perceived as least god-like.¹¹⁹ This is the kenosis of dispossession, a disruptive emptying of power and simultaneous filling with strength. It is ultimately foolish in its proposition of powerlessness, and ultimately irrational in its proposition that such powerlessness has power. So, kenosis is seriously foolish and irrational. But it cannot be taken with the seriousness that renders it strategic. "When foolishness becomes serious, [it is] no longer truly foolish."¹²⁰ The mere *pretence* of irrationality and foolishness – the striving for and exploitation of such traits for the sake of establishing power, winning, or out-doing, and without a full, foolish, and powerless opening-up – is antithetical to kenosis. Indeed, the work arising from such pretence turns back into the realm of the rational, serious, and canny, from which it tries so desperately to flee. I contend that the Jewish Museum Berlin is a casualty of exactly such paradox.

When Libeskind's procession of narratives is placed in dialogue with concurrent and subsequent philosophical analyses, the result is a compendium of rationale for the museum's design. Instead of eschewing "reasons and signs"¹²¹ – as kenosis would suggest, and as Libeskind's irrationality claims to do – the museum is surrounded and filled by them, in a relentless challenge to the claim. If one looks beyond what *appears* to be an irrational form, the manifestation of Libeskind's design proves to be rational and reasoned. Its fundamental architectural element is that of square hollow tubes (one jagged, one straight but fragmented), in which jaggedness and fragmented-ness present more as gimmicks than as consistently compelling spaces or experiences. There is a twist, however. Amidst Libeskind's strategic and rational decision to evoke irrationality, the only irrationality that actually results is functional. And such functional irrationality is merely the predictable consequence of those originating rational decisions. In all of this, the building reveals an ultimately economic logic: the value of the spectacle of irrationality is greater than the value of the museum's functional and experiential performance. Kenosis, on the other hand, has no economic logic, no *quid pro quo*. It simply unfolds. It is a challenge to "power and rationality, but not one that substitutes a new concept of power and rationality."¹²² It is, and remains, a foolish and irrational comedy. Thus, in grasping for irrationality, Libeskind precludes an irrational realisation and shows the grasping to be the comedy.

It follows, then, that a 'practice of laughter' is actually one that emanates in kenosis, not one whose work *must* erupt in hysterical laughter, but one that is – absurdly

¹¹⁹ van Riessen, "Introduction," 1, 14.

¹²⁰ B.E. Benson, "The 'Thinking-After' of Metanoia," *Philosophy and Theology* 16, no. 2 (2004): 225. Drawing on the work of Stanislas Breton and, to some extent, that of Friedrich Nietzsche, Benson articulates a strong case for the 'foolishness' of kenosis.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid., 223-224. Benson uses this phrase to describe the concept of the cross in Christianity. In that tradition, however, kenosis can also be described as the 'mystery of the cross', making the phrase equally applicable to kenosis.

and with great abandon – *willing* to erupt if the situation calls for that or, equally, to subside for the same reason. It does not strive for irrationality because to do so requires rational intent; nor does it strive for rationality, because such striving proves vainly irrational. Instead, it sits comfortably with both, as in the tension and contradictory structure of laughter. In his rationale for a practice of laughter, Allen cites the writing of Comte de Lautréamont:

My reasoning will sometimes jingle the bells of madness and the serious appearance of what is, after all, merely grotesque (although according to philosophers, it is quite difficult to tell the difference between the clown and the melancholic man, life itself being but a comic tragedy or a tragic comedy).¹²³

Lautréamont invites considerations that perhaps go beyond those Allen intended. In a strategic attempt to achieve irrationality, Libeskind risks creating a serious appearance of what is, after all, merely grotesque. He risks creating an architecture that is both clown-like and melancholic, with the potential to elicit reactions of laughter (as is suggested to be the intention) or, alternatively and just as likely, reactions of pity. In connection with a Jewish museum in Berlin, the risk is elevated by the history of Jewish disparagement and persecution, symbolised in the previously-discussed figure of Synagoga. If a practice of laughter is to produce such a museum, it cannot afford to create a pitiable laughing stock – the laughter directed to its pitiable-ness indistinguishable from the pity directed to its laughable-ness. It cannot risk the assertion of cheap and contrived comedy or the strategic deployment of laughter as a winning end; for “the fool’s laughter is not *designed* ... or else the fool would no longer be a fool.”¹²⁴ Viewed kenotically, a practice of laughter must foolishly give up goals of mastery and winning, give up reasons and signs (and their inherent logic). Indeed, it must give up gamesmanship – particularly one-upmanship – and leave the “nothingness of kenosis ... dangling and disturbing.”¹²⁵

Foolishly opening itself up, a practice of laughter makes itself vulnerable. In the consequent emptiness, it attends to all aspects of its situatedness: the disturbing bedazzlement of complex relationality presented in the project, its contexts, and those others and other things that affect or are affected by it. Although attentiveness is never finished or completed (even though it may necessarily be concluded for a time) it enables the emergence of paradox, irony, and therein laughter – even hysterical laughter. Such laughter is not only grounded in the Levinasian divine comedy but can also be seen to emerge from Vattimian *caritas*, as it manifests in the ludicrous abandon of compassion, friendship, and love. This is not merely laughter *directed at* the absurdity of reason (a

¹²³ Libeskind, Allen, and Krell, “Between the Lines: Extension to the Berlin Museum, with the Jewish Museum,” 24-25. Comte de Lautréamont is the pseudonym of French poet, Isidore-Lucien Ducasse.

¹²⁴ Benson, “The ‘Thinking-After’ of Metanoia,” 225.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 227.

form of ridicule), but, more fundamentally and sophisticatedly, it is laughter *arising out of* that which renders reason absurd (a form of critique). To confront the unkind, or unkenotic, acts that generate this project's underlying absence and horror, a practice of laughter need not rely on the disruption of distorted forms and their limited comic effect. Instead, the irrationality and hilarity of kenosis can be presented, which hilariously proves to be also kind.¹²⁶ Such is the opportunity discounted or overlooked at the Jewish Museum Berlin, not only by the architectural and philosophical narratives – beginning with the designer's own – that ascribe a concept of laughter to Libeskind's design, but also in the performance of the realised design and the experience thereof.

Spectacularity and Exemplarity

At the Jewish Museum Berlin, instantiations of kenosis – of self-emptying, filling with the other, and pouring-out – are limited by the architecture's self-fullness and self-assertiveness, but that is not to suggest that the project is without all kenotic effect. Indeed, its conception and realisation can be seen to prompt a significant opening-up of interdisciplinary dialogue amongst philosophy, architecture, the arts in general, and society more broadly; not least German society. Although kenosis is not mere dialogue – and certainly not mutual admiration – the discourse surrounding this project goes further, at times challenging the self-sufficiency of its conversers (such as in Derrida's response to Libeskind). Thus, in its actative work, it is a figure – and spectacle – whose manifestation becomes a worthy subject of intellectual and emotional exchange. In so doing, it instantiates kenosis. At that point, however, kenotic evidence begins to wane, primarily because the actative work is not matched by the substantive reality. Much of what was said about Libeskind's concept cannot be said about Libeskind's building. Or, returning to Allen's analogy, captions may have matched the conceptual illustrations, but now that those illustrations can be entered and experienced, the same captions are of questionable fit. Moreover, the comprehensive discourse demanded by this project – this situation – is such that it must transcend architecture. As James Young argues, and Andreas Huyssen upholds, "the debates surrounding the design and meaning of memorials may be even more important than the finished memorials themselves."¹²⁷

Arguably, the inherent profundity of this project's situation demands extraordinary kenotic attentiveness, including, of course, far-reaching interdisciplinary dialogue and

¹²⁶ This is not to suggest the substitution of kenosis for distortion. Distortion is already one of the many approaches and outcomes to which kenosis might point in a particular situation. My argument is not that distortion, in itself, can be judged as inappropriate to a Jewish museum in Berlin, but, rather, that neither distortion nor any motif can be asserted as a privileged response to this or any other situation. Viewed kenotically, the appropriateness of all response emerges from a particular situation's unfolding and calling.

¹²⁷ A. Huyssen, "Memory Culture at an Impasse," in *The Modernist Imagination: Intellectual History and Critical Theory*, ed. W. Breckman, et al. (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2009), 157.

debate, so as to invite the approach and appearance of all aspects of the situation's being. It is from such attentiveness that kenotic responses – architectural and otherwise – can emerge. But in the case of this memorial, a discontinuity in the debate and dialogue may well have affected, if not prefigured, the architectural response. Although the project's inception is marked by abundant and robust discourse, the subsequent design competition temporarily suspends discussion and thereby blocks Libeskind's (and his fellow competitors') full engagement with the situation during the period when such engagement holds its greatest potential; that is, during conception of the architecture that is meant to be attentive and responsive to the situation.¹²⁸ Of course, the discourse resumes after conception – in *reaction* to the concept – and, indeed, the situation significantly evolves. But, as seen, Libeskind's proposal seems to be its own defence against change. A situation of this complexity is one that stands to benefit most from releasement, by all participants, to the situation's kenotic unfolding. Through such letting-go – such receptivity – a response to the situation, in both actative and substantive dimensions, holds the potential to instantiate the situation's kenosis; and an architectural response, in particular, is able to be as 'spectacular' as the situation calls for – perhaps even in modesty.

By grasping at and exploiting spectacularity, the Jewish Museum Berlin compromises its receptivity. Indeed, if it can be said of I.M. Pei's museum, at Doha, that it is "more a receptacle than a showpiece,"¹²⁹ then the opposite must be said of Libeskind's museum. Yet the latter's centrepiece, both philosophically and architecturally, is that of the void and the absence or emptiness it evokes. Given that emphasis and its appropriateness, the notion of receptacle – like that exemplified by Heidegger's jug or the Dervish kashkúl – might arguably be more pertinent to Libeskind's project than to Pei's. The Libeskind museum, however, reveals an occupation with itself (irrespective of exhibitory content), a self-containment and, therefore, a solidification or constrained sort of boundedness that stands as a barrier to emptiness, receptivity, and pouring-out. This problematic aspect of the museum is raised in Derrida's response to Libeskind's not-yet-built design, particularly in connection with the void. (And, since the void emblemises the entire museum, Derrida's challenge could be seen so extended.) Derrida notes the apparent contradiction between Libeskind's "determined void" and the indeterminacy of the Platonic *chora*, a "place," which, despite emptiness and absence, is something (even if that something comprises nothing) and, therefore, is not a void.

¹²⁸ The limitations of design competitions, from a kenotic point of view, are discussed at greater length in Chapter 4.

¹²⁹ As I did in Chapter 4, I refer again to a description of the Museum of Islamic Art found in "Books And Arts: Smart Art Mart; Qatar's Museum of Islamic Art." In the context of this chapter, it is perhaps worth repeating my argument that Pei's museum, by virtue of its being a receptacle, becomes a kind of showpiece of receptivity.

My *anxious* question would have to do with the relation between this determined void of yours, totally invested with history, meaningfulness, and experience, and place itself, place as a nonanthropological, nontheological possibility for this void to take place. The logic of the chora, then, is a challenge to the logic of exemplarity, the human, theological space in which the void is determined ...¹³⁰

Libeskind's void, so full and invested, so evocative of the human and theological, is not empty. It is not the chora – empty, receptive, and outpouring – the place that “receives all the Forms, and which gives place to everything that is inscribed in the Forms.”¹³¹ Reliant on the void for its identity, the museum reveals itself as showpiece; a spectacle of fullness and investment.

It is such fullness and investment that prevents the museum from instantiating the responsibility of Levinasian kenosis (and tikkun olam) to openly pursue justice, the *caritas* of Vattimian kenosis to freely and foolishly extend compassion in friendship and love, and the hospitality of Derridan kenosis to break through exemplarity and self-sufficiency. It is the same fullness and investment that causes the museum building to assert the already-known with distorted but familiar motifs that deny it uncanniness; to didactically answer and close-off questions of identity, and do so with an ambivalence toward negotiation that denies it hope; and to strategically protest rationality and reason in pursuit of laughter, which such protestation ultimately denies by exposing itself as rational and reasoned. It is also that fullness and investment which, on the one hand, distances the project from the best aspirations of Modernism's beginnings, while, on the other hand, reveals it to be as value-driven and assertive of universal claims as Modernism's worst. As with all creations, the production of Libeskind's museum is a part of ongoing kenosis, but the building does not find its self-understanding in kenosis. It therefore stands nervously and self-consciously when faced with the sort of observation and interrogation that Jens Jensen might present. It is, in some ways, strong. But, is it kind?

EISENMAN AT THE MEMORIAL TO THE MURDERED JEWS OF EUROPE

On a trajectory that chronologically trails but otherwise largely parallels the Jewish Museum Berlin, another place of memory – the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe – manifests as a ‘field’ of some 2,700 undulating concrete stelae, just steps away from the Brandenburg Gate (see figs. 6.15 – 6.17).¹³² It could be argued that the absence of this

¹³⁰ Derrida, “Response to Daniel Libeskind,” 93.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 92.

¹³² The history of the project's controversial development is well documented. See, for example, J.E. Young, “Germany's Holocaust Memorial Problem – and Mine,” *The Public Historian* 24, no. 4 (2002); as well as, J. Schlör and J. Hohmuth, *Memorial to the Murdered Jews in Europe, Berlin*, ed. F. Berchtig, trans. P. Aston, Second ed. (Munich, Berlin, London, New York: Prestel, 2008). In short, the project's official origins date to 1988, with two international design competitions ensuing. The first, in 1994-95, produced a controversial

memorial, during the decade or more in which the Jewish museum was conceived and realised, is responsible for having instigated the original and ongoing conundrum over the Jewish museum's identity and purpose (discussed earlier in this chapter). Although Libeskind's project was always to be, and function as, a museum, it came to be seen by many (arguably, including its designer) as also assuming the role of surrogate memorial, and, therewith, as bearing the weight of a memorial's additional responsibilities.¹³³ Conversely ironic, Eisenman's project was always to be and function as a memorial, yet came to include – over the designer's objections – an Information Centre, which, by every measure, is a museum.¹³⁴ Not surprisingly, the "prolonged, complex and difficult controversy,"¹³⁵ which similarly surrounded both projects, is reflected in ambiguities of identity. But, throughout the controversy, and undoubtedly owing to it, the memorial's jury – charged with managing the process and mediating the debate – underwent a kenotic experience, an attitudinal kenosis prompting members to challenge their own suspicions concerning a memorial's identity and purpose.¹³⁶ In so doing, their experience seems to have mirrored that of the commissioners for the Jewish museum.

The contemporaneous and ongoing dialogue surrounding both projects is also similar.¹³⁷ Eisenman, himself, claims the characteristic of uncanniness for his project,¹³⁸ echoing the similar ascription to Libeskind's museum. Just as Libeskind eschews rationality, Eisenman is well-known to view reason and meaning as "fictions," and to advocate the excise of functionality and human values from architectural design (such advocacy nonetheless value-laden and leading to a kind of functionality through

'winner' but no memorial. The second, in 1997, produced four finalists (including Daniel Libeskind), from which the entry by architect Peter Eisenman and artist Richard Serra emerged as that to be realised. Government imposed changes saw Serra withdraw in 1998, even as debate and controversy continued. Nonetheless, the memorial's construction was legislated by the Bundestag in June, 1999, the same year in which construction of Libeskind's museum was completed. Eisenman's memorial opened in May, 2005, nearly four years after the Jewish Museum Berlin had been curated and officially opened.

¹³³ Libeskind's museum unofficially opened – completely empty – in 1999, just as Eisenman's memorial was being sanctioned. In the more than two years before it was curated and officially opened, the museum attracted over 350,000 visitors, with suggestions that it be left permanently empty as a "Holocaust memorial," and "perhaps even supplant the need for ... other memorials." See discussion in A. Sodaro, "Memory, History, and Nostalgia in Berlin's Jewish Museum," *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 26, no. 1 (2013): 85.

¹³⁴ Eisenman's objections were not entirely unsuccessful, insofar as the Information Centre was finally located underground, visually disconnected from and undisruptive to the surface memorial. As a result, the memorial and its museum are experientially distinct. Libeskind's building presents differently. Notwithstanding any success it may have enjoyed as a 'memorial' – when empty – it ultimately had to be filled by the contents of a museum. The fact that it fills with such difficulty (as discussed in the previous section) corroborates the notion that Libeskind seems to have prioritised his imaginings of its memorial nature over its efficacy as a museum.

¹³⁵ Schlör and Hohmuth, *Memorial to the Murdered Jews in Europe, Berlin*: 34.

¹³⁶ The jury's experience is described at length in J.E. Young, "Peter Eisenman's Design for Berlin's Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe: A Juror's Report in Three Parts," in *(Re)Visualising National History: Museums and National Identities in Europe and in the New Millennium*, ed. R. Ostow (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2008).

¹³⁷ As argued previously, this speaks most convincingly to the profundity of the events underlying both projects and to the need for philosophical discourse pertaining thereto; discourse perhaps prompted by architectural manifestations but not necessarily dependent on particular formal expressions.

¹³⁸ Young, "Germany's Holocaust Memorial Problem – and Mine," 76.

intentional dysfunction).¹³⁹ And, like Libeskind, Eisenman unabashedly promotes his reputation for creating disturbing and destabilising spatial experiences,¹⁴⁰ which, according to Andreas Huyssen, unites the two architects with others of their genre as “representatives of a prevailing architectural style.”¹⁴¹ Finally, there is the notional similarity between Libeskind’s “void” and Eisenman’s “absence in the void” (both of which Derrida questions). Hence, many aspects of Eisenman’s approach and work can be aligned with Libeskind’s.¹⁴² Importantly, however, there are other aspects of Eisenman’s memorial project, which, by kenotic reckoning, differentiate it from Libeskind’s museum.



FIGURE 6.15

Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, viewed across the field of concrete stelae.

¹³⁹ P. Eisenman, "The End of the Classical: The End of the Beginning, the End of the End," *Perspecta* 21 (1984): 155.

¹⁴⁰ See, for example, the evidence of exactly such intentions in Eisenman's design for a convention centre at Columbus, Ohio, as discussed in M.A. Branch, "Critique: Queasy in Columbus?," *Progressive Architecture* 75, no. 2 (1994): 78, 80.

¹⁴¹ Huyssen, "Memory Culture at an Impasse," 156. Huyssen's link comes in response to what he and others have seen as formal analogies in Libeskind's 'Garden of Exile' (at the Jewish Museum) and Eisenman's memorial.

¹⁴² It is worth noting that Libeskind studied under Eisenman at Cooper Union, and was abortively employed at Eisenman's Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies. See Libeskind, *Breaking Ground: Adventures in Life and Architecture*: 40-41. Additionally, in light of Libeskind's claim that he had no need to conduct historic research in preparation for his design of the memorial, it is interesting to find that Eisenman studied extensively in order to "know the history of that period inside and out." See J. Åhr, "Memory and Mourning in Berlin: On Peter Eisenman's Holocaust-Mahnmal (2005)," *Modern Judaism* 28, no. 3 (2008): 296.



FIGURE 6.16
The memorial and its immediate urban context.



FIGURE 6.17
The memorial, looking toward Tiergarten.

Even in what appears to be another similarity – the claim to extraordinary interpretive openness – Eisenman’s memorial is actually distinct. Unlike the museum, the memorial substantially and effectively fulfils the claim. The memorial has been described as a “metaphor machine,” able to “elicit a totally different response from each person who encounters it.” Eisenman supports that description, saying that it was his design intention “to deny opticality,” to prioritise the tactile experience over the retinal, and to eschew “the metaphysics of presence, that is, iconography, meaning, symbolism ... [and] information of any sort.” For him, “there is nothing symbolic in the material and the being. It just is. We were trying to reduce [the memorial] to pure presence.”¹⁴³ In that regard, a memorial is advantaged over a museum, insofar as a memorial enjoys a greater luxury to just be. Functionally, it need not be anything other than a place that holds memory and, perhaps, invites thinking. It need not convey information, and it has no duty to overtly display particular symbolism (though it is likely to be interpreted symbolically). Consequently, in this memorial’s abstractness and absence of information – not least, the absence of information like that at Libeskind’s museum, which attempts to explain each of the designer’s experiential intentions – the project presents as being open to the other (the visitor), invites the other to respond with reciprocal openness, and accepts the indeterminacy and contingency of the relationship that ensues. These are effective instantiations of kenosis in architecture.

Transformability

Kenosis promotes and animates the transformability of each and all of the others and other things that comprise a given situation. Although its muscularity and apparent permanence suggest immutability, Eisenman’s memorial is nonetheless transformable by virtue of the unique relationship it strikes with each visitor and the diverse interpretations that consequently result. Indeed, transformation is mutual when the visitor is “open ... to

¹⁴³ M. Blackwood, “Peter Eisenman: Building Germany’s Holocaust Memorial,” (USA, Germany: Michael Blackwood Productions, 2006).

semiotics, readings that transgress 'logocentrism.'"¹⁴⁴ Visitors can be seen engaging the memorial in many different ways – its ambiguity even leading to some engagements that might be seen as inappropriate to a commemorative place. Actions include standing and climbing, running and walking, conversation and silence, frivolity and contemplation.¹⁴⁵ For some visitors, it appears to be hallowed ground, for others a civic playground, for still others merely a tourist destination at which to be photographed; and there are also those who appear to be as ambivalent as the memorial itself. That is as Eisenman intended. Observing visitors at the memorial, he remarks:

They're moving just for the sake of moving and having that experience. Usually, in experiences [such as this] you expect to find something ... but there's nothing to find. People start out saying, 'What's the point?' The point is: there is no point. What's wonderful is to see so many people being happy, here. And, I think the fact of being happy is something that will open up the Germans to relaxing their anxiety about the guilt. The Germans that I've seen, here, don't seem to feel much guilt. That's great, because this was not intended to be guilt-inducing. People are not being good to this place; they're just being as they are.¹⁴⁶

Eisenman accurately describes the experientiality of the memorial. By virtue of its hospitality – stark and stern as it may be – the memorial receives the visitor with the expectation of relationality and, therefore, the potentiality of transformation. Similarly, the visitor receives the memorial – often as a disturbance and with reluctance – only to find that it is open to any relationship that might emerge. Thus the visitor is subject to transformation, even as the memorial transforms to suit the visitor's relationship with it. Such is the hybridising potential of kenosis. At work, however, is much more than amity or mutuality, and much that challenges both.

Certainly, this memorial challenges its visitors. In fact, its very presence challenges all of Berlin, all of Germany, and all of humanity. It invites relationship, not by comforting, but by opening-up difficult and therefore transformative questions. Importantly, however, it is not didactic or threatening, nor is it triumphal. As Eisenman explains, it does not ask Germans to grovel and surrender their identity. It invites them to be "as they are." And all of those challenged by the memorial are able to question and challenge it, just as they have done since its inception and continue to do – the ongoing discourse being another example of kenotic aftermath. In response, the memorial transforms to the manifold interpretations of its visitors, but never at the expense of its fundamental identity. Indeed, defending that identity and its necessary abstraction,

¹⁴⁴ Åhr, "Memory and Mourning in Berlin: On Peter Eisenman's Holocaust-Mahnmal (2005)," 298.

¹⁴⁵ Despite the museum's openness to variant human behaviour, or perhaps because of it, the conditions of entering the memorial (in December, 2013) now state that visitors do so "at their own risk," must refrain from "climbing onto or hopping across the stelae," and must not engage in "noisy behaviour, smoking and drinking alcohol." See "Information: Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe and Information Centre," (Berlin: Stiftung Denkmal, n.d.).

¹⁴⁶ Blackwood, "Peter Eisenman: Building Germany's Holocaust Memorial."

Eisenman argues: "In fifty years, [visitors will] ask the question, 'What is this field, here?' And, that's exactly the question I wanted to provoke."¹⁴⁷ His proposition evidences the potential of kenotic exchange, because implicit in the future visitors' question is the memorial's question to future generations: Who are you, and how will you relate to my being? In this memorial's instantiation of kenosis – a relatively kenotic response to the most un-kenotic of events – it works toward mending a world still affected by the un-mendable event of the Shoah. In so doing, it also instantiates tikkun olam,¹⁴⁸ even as it avoids any suggestions of redemption, reconciliation, or false hope.

Pointlessness and Arbitrariness

Whereas Eisenman sees the memorial's openness embedded in its incompleteness, pointlessness, and arbitrariness, I suggest that its openness arises from kenosis, which is always incomplete but neither pointless nor arbitrary. The contrast of views is worth exploring. Eisenman's claim that there is no point to the memorial is slightly exaggerated, if not disingenuous. To say that the memorial is not "reducible to any single or simple notion" is undoubtedly true,¹⁴⁹ but, being a commissioned construct, there must be some point to its existence, or it would have had neither a brief nor a name, and simply would not exist. Perhaps it could be said that this memorial is so profound that its 'points' are too numerous to name. But it is surely not pointless. Still, it is the case that Eisenman goes to great lengths to disassociate himself and the project from any precedents that might imply points or meanings, whether they be cultural, architectural, or symbolic. For example, he opposes the trope of a cemetery, even though such imagery is, for many – including the original competition jury – an instinctive reaction to the memorial's point and physical manifestation.¹⁵⁰ When an obvious comparison is made to the crowded and disturbingly unstable semblance of The Old Jewish Cemetery in Prague (see fig. 6.18 and 6.19), Eisenman defends his originality, saying, "I have never seen that."¹⁵¹ Perhaps not, but to intentionally design nearly five acres of closely-spaced concrete objects, whose size and proportions take on the appearance of unadorned caskets or sarcophagi,

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ The association of this project with the Judaic notion of tikkun olam is also made in Åhr, "Memory and Mourning in Berlin: On Peter Eisenman's Holocaust-Mahnmal (2005)," 297. In this article, Åhr establishes that not only is Eisenman not a practicing Jew, he is "not barmitzvahed, supports neither Judaism nor Israel, [nor] the necessity for a 'homeland.'" Nonetheless, he finds that Eisenman's memorial is imbued with tikkun olam, and interprets that as a reflection of Eisenman's "faith in the possibility of such change," despite a belief that there will also always be "anti-whatever ... against difference."

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 285.

¹⁵⁰ Young, "Germany's Holocaust Memorial Problem – and Mine," 76.

¹⁵¹ Åhr, "Memory and Mourning in Berlin: On Peter Eisenman's Holocaust-Mahnmal (2005)," 286; and H.W. Pickford, "Dialectical Reflections on Peter Eisenman's Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe," *Architectural Theory Review* 17, no. 2-3 (2012): 428. The same association with the Jewish Cemetery, in Prague, is made by journalist and critic Heinrich Wefing in Blackwood, "Peter Eisenman: Building Germany's Holocaust Memorial." During my own visit to the Prague cemetery, immediately following investigations at the memorial in Berlin and prior to any knowledge of these references, I was also spontaneously struck by the connectedness of the two environments.

is to knowingly invite the suggestion that the marking of death – “mass, industrially organised death”¹⁵² – is at least one of the memorial’s points.¹⁵³



FIGURE 6.18
The Old Jewish Cemetery in Prague.



FIGURE 6.19
The memorial in Berlin.

Over his own protestations, it is Eisenman who demonstrates that there are intended points and meanings to his memorial. Discussing its undulating and unstable ground plane (see fig. 6.20), Eisenman explains that this feature references the Nazi mantra of *blut und boden* (blood and soil, the latter meaning either ground or homeland) and, in particular, its implication that “the Jew was without ground.” The memorial’s ground is meant to “take the ground away,” such that the “stelae sink into a morass” and the visitor can “feel the leaning.”¹⁵⁴ Groundlessness is thus employed as a symbol, or representation, to evoke the malevolent and exclusionary ascription of Jewish identity, and “to induce disorientation and claustrophobia” as a kind of “proxy for the trauma of living in a concentration camp.”¹⁵⁵ Such intent is not pointless. Nor is it “not design,” yet that is how Eisenman portrays the memorial’s conception. He describes the creative – and rational – process by which he and Richard Serra took the site’s natural topography (more or less), as given and superimposed the topography they intended for the stelae tops, but then he claims that the exercise was “not design.” According to him, it was

¹⁵² Ninety-seven percent of the stelae (2,628 of 2,711) are of the correct horizontal and vertical dimensions to support the analogy of casket or sarcophagus and, therefore, cemetery. Only eighty-three stelae are of such height that they appear pillar-like. See Schlör and Hohmuth, *Memorial to the Murdered Jews in Europe, Berlin*: 45.

¹⁵³ Many other analogies have been suggested – “a wheat field blown by the wind,” and “the ruins of a lost city,” or Albert Speer’s ‘Cathedral of Light’ at the Nuremberg Rallies – but none is as immediately apparent as the reference to cemetery. The first two of these interpretations are offered by journalist and critic Heinrich Wefing, the latter by art historian Horst Bredenkamp. It must also be said that many readings do not stop at representational analogies, but go on to criticise the memorial’s very nature. For example, author Adolf Muschg has called it “an enormously violent act,” and a place where “one learns to admonish.” Similarly, German producer and director Volker Schlöndorff has said: “Its brutality, [its] stone, its oppressiveness, and its claim to permanence make it seem like a reflection in a horror mirror of the Third Reich, its architecture and its art.” See Blackwood, “Peter Eisenman: Building Germany’s Holocaust Memorial.”

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ Åhr, “Memory and Mourning in Berlin: On Peter Eisenman’s Holocaust-Mahnmal (2005),” 285.

simply “connect the dots.”¹⁵⁶ Although that may be what it was, only one set of the dots was given (even that requiring intervention), and the other set had to be designed (see fig. 6.21). The notions of connecting the dots, and determining the manner in which they should be connected, were nothing less than design decisions; only two, I would argue, amidst a complex array of others that establish the project’s relationality. It is from the openness – but not pointlessness – of kenosis that relationality can emerge.

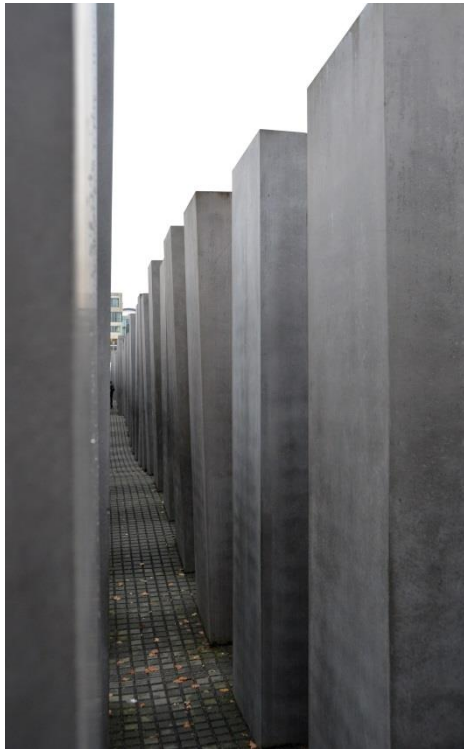


FIGURE 6.20
View amongst the stelae, showing the undulating (groundless) floor plane.



FIGURE 6.21
View of floor plane and stelae tops – two connected topographies.

Eisenman’s notion of pointlessness is a close companion to his notion of arbitrariness, the latter proving to be equally problematic. Most accounts suggest that the number of concrete stelae, at the memorial today, is ‘arbitrary’ and substantially less than originally proposed. Eisenman tells the story of a surprise exchange with then-Chancellor Helmut Kohl as the project’s fate was being decided: “Mr Kohl said, ‘Look, you have 4,400 stones; how many do you need?’ So, I said, ‘How about 2,700?’ And, Kohl replied, ‘You’ve got a deal.’” Underscoring the supposed arbitrariness, Eisenman adds, “There’s no magic in the number 2,700.”¹⁵⁷ Although the final number of stelae may have

¹⁵⁶ Blackwood, “Peter Eisenman: Building Germany’s Holocaust Memorial.”

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. Other reports, indicating that the original scheme comprised either 4,200 or 4,000 stelae, suggest that there was also “no magic” in the original number. Even so, it is not likely to have been entirely arbitrary, since there would be a definitive number of stelae, in their originally designed size and shape, which could fit on the

been spontaneously determined, it cannot be deemed arbitrary. First, Eisenman's number is not so much indiscriminate whimsy as calculated strategy – albeit hurried – posited in the hope that approximately two-thirds the original number would be seen as a compromise sufficient to win the project's approval. Second, if the number were completely arbitrary – without any importance or significance – then it follows that any arbitrary number would be suitable to the project's realisation. At upper extremes, the number could not be completely arbitrary because it is ultimately limited by the size of the site, as well as the size and arrangement of the stelae to be placed on it; that eventually influenced by practicality. Moreover, absolute arbitrariness would mean that the number of stelae could suitably be as little as one or, theoretically, none.¹⁵⁸ As the lower extreme is approached, there comes a point at which even the site and the fundamental concept of stelae become untenable. Beyond the issue of number, the stelae are also not arbitrarily placed or shaped or coloured; they are designedly ordered and consciously designed. Claims of arbitrariness are therefore difficult to support since the arbitrary is no longer arbitrary if determined. The truly arbitrary is “not design,” but this memorial is worked-out and designed, which shows the notion of arbitrariness to be incongruously ascribed. Certainly, there was latitude in the number and size and arrangement of stelae that could fulfil the designers' conceptual intentions, and each different number would require a different design, but it was not the case that absolutely any arbitrary number would do. As the situation unfolded, it had to be worked-out.

Valuelessness

In his well-known essay, “The End of the Classical,” Eisenman argues that Modernism is merely a continuation of the classical and advocates an “alternative idea of architecture,” provisionally titled “the *not-classical*” or “architecture as *is*.”¹⁵⁹ Aspects of his argument parallel my own, in this dissertation. But Eisenman depends heavily on arbitrariness to

site. And, there would have been any number of intentional design decisions (including stelae size and shape, as well as spacing) that would have been manipulated to determine the number.

¹⁵⁸ It is important to note that since construction of Eisenman's project, another memorial to Nazi victims has been designed and constructed just across Ebertstrasse, at the southwest corner of the Jewish memorial and at the eastern edge of the Tiergarten. The “Memorial to the Homosexuals Persecuted under the National Socialist Regime,” was designed by Michael Elmgreen and Ingar Dragset. It adopts the formality of the Jewish memorial, but intentionally features only one stele. The single stele is of slightly larger size, compared to its opposite counterparts, and includes a viewing window through which visitors see a repeating film that marks the ‘danger’ (during the Nazi regime and, still, in many places today) of the homosexual kiss. Separate to this discourse, it may be worth considering whether this single stele, on a site not much larger than itself, is any more or less significant than the 4.5 acre field of 2,711 stelae it faces. Such consideration might include Andrew Benjamin's thoughts about “the detail of mass death.” He cautions that “the detail” can negate memory, and that such “detail emerges at the moment where numbers, despite the cumulative addition ... begin to add nothing.” See Benjamin, *Present Hope: Philosophy, Architecture, Judaism*: 111. (Also constructed subsequent to the Jewish memorial is the “Memorial to the Sinti and Roma of Europe Murdered under the National Socialist Regime,” on a site near the Reichstag. Designed by artist Dani Karavan, it adopts a formal expression entirely different to its two companion memorials.)

¹⁵⁹ Eisenman, “The End of the Classical: The End of the Beginning, the End of the End,” 164-167.

end what he sees as the value-laden, classical (and therefore Modernist) notion of a beginning (or essential origin). The same arbitrariness pre-empts strategy and thereby also ends the equally value-laden, classical (and Modernist) notion of an end (or idealised goal). His proposal is meant to render architecture “timeless (originless, endless) ... non-representational (objectless) ... and artificial (arbitrary, reasonless),” all of which, Eisenman admits, are values.¹⁶⁰ Thus he effectively substitutes the values of timelessness, non-representationalism, and artificiality for those he labels as classical: representation, history (timefulness), and reason (which embeds utility), or, in other terms, beauty, harmony, and totality. Despite the boundedness of his substitute values, he persists in advocating the freeing of architecture from its boundedness, and pleads for extreme boundlessness. He proposes doing away with “structures of belief” – what he names as “origins, transformations, and ends” – in favour of a “‘timeless’ space of invention.” He proposes “maintaining a state of anxiety ... which maintains its own fictionality rather than proposing a simulation of truth.”¹⁶¹ Instead of seeing his proposals as part of a complex and multilinear continuum of evolving tradition,¹⁶² he suggests a radicalisation that must either deny or overcome human values and, therefore, lie outside tradition (notwithstanding the inherent contradiction presented by his substitute values).

In effect, Eisenman proposes that architecture empty itself – in what I call a kenosis of architecture – but he seeks an emptying that cannot occur in his proposed state of boundlessness, because emptying is reliant on bounds. If Heidegger’s jug had no bounds, it could not empty or fill or pour out. The bounds of any situation may be constantly changing – some appearing clearly, others vaguely – but they nevertheless exist. In the reality of such boundedness, it is an architecture of kenosis that can be ‘as is’. Boundaries seen kenotically, as thresholds, offer manifold beginnings and endings, where none of the former is absolutely privileged, and none of the latter is absolutely terminal. Kenosis thus enables the “timeless space of invention” that Eisenman seeks, because, amidst constantly evolving bounds, new domains of creativity are constantly unfolding and opening-up. Since that unfolding is ongoing and never finished, so must be the responses to it. Kenosis has no strategic beginning, and no idealised end, nor any sense of structured transformation. It invites letting go – foolish abandon – as an enabler of engagement and response, and that is transformative, but indeterminately so. It requires an always incomplete working-out of changing situations. It does not offer a set of conclusive and immutable truths, only greater attentiveness with which to undertake the working-out. What Eisenman calls the state of anxiety is the kenotic state of

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 172.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Pallasmaa, “What Would Utzon Do Now?: The Lessons of Louis Kahn and Jørn Utzon.” The term “evolving tradition” is drawn from Professor Pallasmaa’s lecture.

attentiveness. That attentiveness is human creativity, and one of its products is architecture, designed *by* and, more importantly, *for* human beings. Architecture's humanity – and human values – cannot be denied or overcome.¹⁶³ In the end, Eisenman's end of the classical and, with it, the end of the beginning and end of the end, is merely another branch of kenotically evolving tradition.

Eisenman posits that his memorial "just is." To the extent that is true, I would suggest that it is the memorial's instantiation of kenosis that makes it so. Architecture can only be a temporal response to a situation as it is, whether that situation is real, surreal, perceptible, or imagined. In its kenotic attunement, architecture can also be alert to clues – signs and traces – as to what the situation might *become*, and thereby at least attempt to be hospitable to that becoming. In so doing, architecture, too, remains unfinished and continues to become. The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, in its openness and relationality and transformability, instantiates kenosis and does so – despite the designer's claims – not arbitrarily or irrationally, but by design.



FIGURE 6.22

Foreground, Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe; *background*, the Reichstag and its distinctive dome.

¹⁶³ From his own interviews with Eisenman, Johan Åhr contends that Eisenman appreciates this fact; that "despite his wish to provoke shock and suspension of belief, he yearns for the place to become one with its human environment, integrated with everyday life, 'the mundane.'" See Åhr, "Memory and Mourning in Berlin: On Peter Eisenman's Holocaust-Mahnmal (2005)," 286.

FOSTER AT THE REICHSTAG

Within sight of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe stands the historic Reichstag, its modern glass dome signalling the building's extensive renovations (see fig. 6.22). Designed by Norman Foster (Foster + Partners) – the same firm that authored the Commerzbank in Frankfurt (Chapter 4) – and completed in 1999, the project offers a tangible demonstration of Eisenman's view that Neo-Classicism, Modernism, and Post-Modernism are all merely descendants of the classical. Indeed, unlike its neighbouring memorial and the not-too-distant museum, the Reichstag does not work through distortion or fragmentation. Nonetheless, it joins those other projects to form a sort of Berlin triumvirate, whose respective situations derive from common origins and evoke the remembrance of those origins in the present.

Mutuality

Compared to the disturbances intended at Eisenman's memorial and Libeskind's museum, the Reichstag could be described as friendly, approachable, and compliant; well within an evolving tradition of architecture,¹⁶⁴ but nonetheless innovative and certainly not conventional.¹⁶⁵ Yet, in a way, it is also disturbing. Its iconic glass dome – that by which one first recognises it – is patently foreign to its historical host, even though hospitably received. That relationship presents a microcosm of the entire project, which, according to one admiring observer, "ingeniously integrates the latest in high-tech design principles ... into the 1894 building's frame ... while transforming the structure's outdated functional core to answer its contemporary practical and symbolic demands."¹⁶⁶ Indeed, as renovation began, it is said that Bundestag members viewed the historic building "as an invalid, entrusting it to the 'intensive care unit of high-tech architecture.'"¹⁶⁷ The building's very existence thus became dependent on modern and Modernist intervention. But the host's hospitality to such intervention was a prerequisite for its continuing life. In Foster's final iteration of design, this interdependent relationship is honoured, not only by the dome, but also throughout the renovation (see fig. 6.23). In terms that ring true to Modernist (and to some extent Post-Modernist) principles, Foster + Partners describes its attitude toward the situation:

¹⁶⁴ See note 162.

¹⁶⁵ Ironically, 'conventional' is precisely the term used to describe Eisenman's intended disturbance and unconventionality in his design for the convention centre at Columbus, Ohio. See Branch, "Critique: Queasy in Columbus?," 81.

¹⁶⁶ P. Chametzky, "Rebuilding the Nation: Norman Foster's Reichstag Renovation and Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum Berlin," *Centropa* 1, no. 3 (2001): 247. It should be noted that not all reactions to the project are as admiring as this. Others assail what is seen as its relative conservatism, and lack of sufficient disturbance.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 254.

As we peeled away the layers of history, the bones of the old Reichstag came to light, revealing striking imprints of the past ... We have preserved these memories of the past, allowing the Reichstag to function as a living museum of German history. We have followed a clear ethos of reconciling our new interiors with the old. Junctions between existing and new work are expressed; and where the fabric has been repaired, it is articulated, allowing the building's many historic layers to be read clearly.¹⁶⁸

This is an 'approach' (albeit articulated after the fact) that is clearly laden with the kind of values that Eisenman proposes to overcome in pursuit of the "not-classical." And it produces a building that stands in sharp contrast to Libeskind's museum, which adopts a domineering posture over its historic host and thereby constrains the host's receptivity. Foster's approach to the Reichstag is distinct from both of its counterparts. Certainly, kenosis is more than mutuality, but, in the mutuality that the 'new' Reichstag enjoys with the 'old' – as well as that which both enjoy with their situation – something of kenosis is instantiated.



FIGURE 6.23

Exterior and interior views, showing interdependent relationship of 'old' and 'new' elements.

Above, top and bottom, the dome and its historic 'host'; top right, articulation of new works in historic context; and bottom right, the new parliamentary chamber inserted into a former courtyard, with dome overhead.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 250.

It would be mistaken, however, to suggest that the designer's approach to this project – regardless of what it produced – is entirely kenotic. Unlike Pei's approach at the museum in Doha, which reveals its kenosis in a more or less linear and progressively unfolding design event, the Reichstag project and Foster's approach to it are marked by a more equivocal (and highly politicised) situation, with consequently disjunctive events. Though not without resistance, Foster attends to a changing situation with changing responses. Indeed, the mutuality of old and new elements, as seen in the realised project, is not found in Foster's initial responses, and the concept of a new dome is one to which he objected. His first proposal (prepared for the 1992 design competition) demonstrates significantly more self-assertion toward the existing architecture, which is left on display as a gutted shell – an artefact of history – surrounding a new, glass-enclosed plenary chamber at the shell's centre. Then, a grandly-scaled, umbrella-like, glass canopy, supported by a regular grid of slender columns, rises well over the top of the domeless Reichstag building and covers both it and a portion of the Platz der Republik to the west, even extending partially over the Spree River to the north.¹⁶⁹ The proposal is meant to convey an embrace and acceptance of the past, even while stepping into the present and future. That conveyance, however, relies on a somewhat prejudicial arrangement that sees the 'old' placed prominently, but in a nonetheless subordinate position relative to the dominant 'new'. Neither this proposal, by Foster, nor those of two other competition 'co-winners' received a mandate, and the entire situation continued to evolve.

New plans emerged for development of the area around the Reichstag, and a second phase of the Reichstag design competition was announced, based on a modified brief and a Bundestag edict that "the basic appearance of the [Reichstag] would remain," and there would be included some sort of glass dome.¹⁷⁰ Although Foster finally received the commission in 1993, he did so having to concede to the dome's replacement, a feature that had already been proposed by one of Foster's ultimately unsuccessful co-winners in the first phase of competition.¹⁷¹ Thereafter, the dome became the subject of myriad alternative designs from Foster and his team.¹⁷² In all of this, it can be seen that Foster's initial responses are not fully attentive to the entirety of the situation – not least

¹⁶⁹ D.A. Barnstone, *The Transparent State: Architecture and Politics in Postwar Germany* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 175-184; D. Langmead and C. Garnaut, "Reichstag: Berlin, Germany," in *Encyclopedia of Architectural and Engineering Feats* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2001), 271.

¹⁷⁰ Chametzky, "Rebuilding the Nation: Norman Foster's Reichstag Renovation and Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum Berlin," 253.

¹⁷¹ Barnstone, *The Transparent State: Architecture and Politics in Postwar Germany*: 176. The co-winning competition entry, by Santiago Calatrava, proposed a new glass dome to replace the original Paul Wallot design (from 1882), which featured a then-modern steel and glass dome. However, German architect Gottfried Böhm is widely credited with having first proposed the concept – including public circulation ramps – as early as 1988.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 203-204.

its politics – but Foster’s willingness to respond to change does demonstrate a kind of self-emptying, albeit reluctant. Although such willingness might be viewed sceptically, as mere strategy or political expediency needed to win the commission, it finally required that Foster overcome his reluctance,¹⁷³ give up any notions of mastery, and enter into a mutual relationship with the changing situation. In that mutuality and its exchange, Foster’s approach reveals some measure of kenosis; at least enough to enable the project’s own kenosis – the fundamental accord it strikes between old and new.

Governance and Architecture

Beyond relational grounding, there are at least three other aspects of the Reichstag’s realisation that warrant brief exploration in light of their kenotic dimensions: (1) the claim of environmental friendliness, (2) the ideology and occupancy of the dome, and (3) the metaphor of transparency. In this project, each is made somewhat more important by its connection to the issues of politics and governance.

Acknowledging the Environment

According to Foster, one of the project’s primary pillars is “a passionate adherence to the low-energy, environment-friendly agenda, which is fundamental to the architecture of the future.”¹⁷⁴ As discussed in connection with the Commerzbank, this is a frequent, if not mandatory, claim in the architecture of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. It is especially so in high profile projects, and often crescendos in those from the realm of politics and governance. Indeed, there are times when the claim may be more important than the delivery. Nonetheless, it is self-evident that any heightened responsiveness to the ongoing kenosis of the earth’s environment is commendable – and reciprocally kenotic. Environmental friendliness, however, requires a holistic view; one which becomes complex and complicated. Like the Commerzbank, the Reichstag’s environmental consciousness – as radical as it might have been, and as effective as it may still be – nonetheless rests in its ability to reduce ongoing consumption and emissions by technological means. Notwithstanding the merits of that pursuit, the argument can be made – and is – that such savings cannot justify the substantial consumption of resources that were required to realise the project and transport the Bundestag from relatively new quarters in Bonn to those in Berlin. A more holistic and radical view might look to the development of communications and other technologies for

¹⁷³ An example of Foster’s ‘reluctance’ is found in his fundamental resistance to the inclusion of a dome.

Barnstone writes: “Because at the core Foster was opposed to building a dome of any kind, he and his team looked at numerous ways of designing a dome that was not a dome ...” See *ibid.*, 202.

¹⁷⁴ N. Foster, *Rebuilding the Reichstag* (Woodstock, NY: Overlook Press, 2000), 12. This and other resources document the environmental features and performance of the Reichstag, which are not repeated or discussed at any length, here.

its potential to render certain types of construction and transport redundant, and thereby open-up fundamentally new attitudes toward architecture, governance, and environment. For example, does a kenotic and modern view of human relations and governance necessarily require the number and forms of assemblies that currently mark geopolitics? Does every needed assembly need a unique building in which to assemble? And does assembly always necessitate physically assembling?

Although the Reichstag's dome is cited as a centrepiece of its environment-friendly agenda, it must be said that a dome is not the only formal expression capable of achieving similar environmental results. Indeed, Foster undoubtedly would have championed like performance in his initial, domeless proposal. Today, however, visitors to the Reichstag are told that the dome's primary purposes are to accommodate visitors (a subject discussed in the following section) and to effect environmentally-friendly ventilation, heat, and natural light.¹⁷⁵ As important as the latter purpose is, it could have been successfully addressed by many solutions other than this particular domical shape (numerous examples of which were explored by Foster + Partners). And, even strictly technological solutions, involving neither a dome nor any visually-expressed form, would have held similar potential. So, the dome cannot be seen as a required environmental feature. It came to be one part of a required technological solution that mitigates environmental concerns, only after it first came to be a required component of the project's aesthetics. And both requirements ultimately emerged from the politics of the situation.

Desacralising the Dome

Unmistakably, the crowning feature of the Reichstag – whether in historic or contemporary contexts – is its dome; a form that is, as discussed in Chapter 4, invested with the ideology of majesty and manifestation of divinity. And such ideology can be seen as problematic to both contexts. In 1894, Paul Wallot's steel and glass dome, which first sat atop the Reichstag, "was meant to relocate symbolic power from the crowned head of the state to Germany's still youthful parliamentary institutions."¹⁷⁶ Yet, despite such intention and physical relocation, the power of the form was such that it would continue as a reminder of the majesty and manifestation of divinity previously reserved by the emperor – and only reluctantly surrendered – at a time when German democracy was inherently tentative and vulnerable. Of course, there is a sense in which this late nineteenth century handing-over of power is kenotic; a kind of royal releasement or letting-go, and a public opening-up to shared responsibility for one another. And still

¹⁷⁵ Such was my experience on 7 December, 2013, during a tour with an official government docent.

¹⁷⁶ L. Koepnick, "Redeeming History? Foster's Dome and the Political Aesthetic of the Berlin Republic," *German Studies Review* 24, no. 2 (2001): 306.

another sense of kenosis is evoked by the dome's exposed structure, and its transparency. Simultaneously strong and fragile, the dome can be seen as a symbol of democracy's promise, as well as its openness to critical challenge; symbolism no less attributable to the dome's newly-interpreted steel and glass replacement. But how is the dome's underlying ideology – always present in its form – to be seen in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, particularly in the wake of an intervening dictatorship, from which the fully democratic German nation must be seen to be fleeing? Does the ideology of majesty and manifestation of divinity have any place in modern democratic governance? Can such ideology be transformed to remain relevant in a modern context? These questions challenge the contemporary propriety of a dome – particularly in the architecture of secular governance – and, even if such propriety is established, they challenge the dome's contemporary expression.

The Reichstag's new steel and glass dome, still of fundamentally traditional form, addresses these questions in a manner quite distinct to its counterpart at the Museum of Islamic Art (examined in Chapter 4). Both domes are well-scaled, exquisitely detailed, and appropriately related to their contexts. Yet, at the Reichstag, the underlying ideology of sacred sovereignty remains problematic. While the original dome symbolised a handing-over of sacred power from sovereign to parliament, sacredness nonetheless lingered in its form. In the case of the new dome, however, Foster attempts to fully desacralise it (see figs. 6.24 – 6.27). He seeks to symbolically hand-over power, not only to the people's representatives, but to the people themselves; the secular citizenry of Germany. His dome invites them and their worldwide guests to take a position superior to the government – in the base of the dome, at the Reichstag's rooftop – *above* and *over* the parliament's glass-ceilinged plenary chamber, into which the dome's visitors can ostensibly view. Then, by virtue of the dome's external transparency and a suspended system of double helix ramps, visitors are invited to experience an ascending and descending panoramic view of the city and world from which they came, even as that city and world views them. Notwithstanding these attempts to invert the domical experience – and thereby overcome its ideology – the result speaks largely of gimmick and spectacle; the dome's sovereignty failing, in many ways, to be transformed into hospitality. It receives visitors (its others) but then imposes its will, offering a prescribed and restricted experience. Dark glass and security constraints preclude any genuine view into the parliamentary chamber, and access to the dome is prohibited when parliament is sitting.¹⁷⁷ The ramps are visually striking but it becomes apparent that their purpose “is

¹⁷⁷ The dome can also be found closed due to weather conditions (wind, ice, etc.), since access requires the visitor to traverse an uncovered outdoor walkway from the new elevator towers to the dome entrance, over the original building's roof.

entirely tourist ... an astonishing ride through space and time,"¹⁷⁸ as if the dome is intended as some sort of extreme adventure.¹⁷⁹ Even a philosophical interpretation of the dome, as a place for "present-day flâneurs ... to become leisurely walkers ... [and] behold a transitory capital,"¹⁸⁰ is thwarted by its popularity. The relatively narrow ramps quickly become crowded, a condition that impedes promenading and hurries viewing – whether of the scenery or fellow flâneurs. But, crowded or not, the experience is that of a one-way conveyance with no deviations or escape, little freedom of movement, and no experiential choice; in essence, an undemocratic event. Further limiting the experience is the fact that, after one circumnavigation, the balance of the ascent and all of the descent comprises replays of the same views, differing only by virtue of the perceiver's slightly greater or lesser elevation above the Reichstag's roof – a moot point in this circumstance.



FIGURE 6.24
The dome at its base, atop the Reichstag's roof.



FIGURE 6.25
The dome's interior, with conical ventilation and light reflecting device, and, at its base, the observation windows into the plenary chamber beneath.

¹⁷⁸ Koepnick, "Redeeming History? Foster's Dome and the Political Aesthetic of the Berlin Republic," 308.

¹⁷⁹ Going a step further, one observer suggests that this dome – being the building's central processing 'organ' of natural light and air – is a metaphor for bodily circulation. Such a metaphor sees the renovated Reichstag as the embodiment of "a healthy heart at the heart of a healthy Germany, connected productively to the past and pumping energy and the air of democratic debate into its surrounds." Although this portrays what could be seen as a kenotic relationship of exchange between building and environment, such exchange requires neither human occupancy of the dome nor the witnessing of its invisible environmental processes. See Chametzky, "Rebuilding the Nation: Norman Foster's Reichstag Renovation and Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum Berlin," 255.

¹⁸⁰ Koepnick, "Redeeming History? Foster's Dome and the Political Aesthetic of the Berlin Republic," 313.



FIGURE 6.26
The dome's double helix ramp system for ascending and descending the dome.



FIGURE 6.27
Typical view from the ramp, varying only slightly at the ramps' different elevations.

Foster's dome struggles against, but ultimately is unable to overcome, the inextricable ideology that rests in its form. Thus the dome can be seen as "appeal[ing] to the sacred so as to overcome segregation and remake secular politics in terms of a civil religion"¹⁸¹ – going so far as to include a climb to the Mosaic mountaintop of German politics. There are at least two senses, however, in which the dome's struggle reveals the kenotic. First, it suggests the social and political emptying of a nation, which began at the conclusion of World War II. The Reichstag dome offers a kind of snapshot of this emptying at the time of the dome's completion, but also serves as a symbol of its ongoingness. Second, at a more global level, the attempt to desecralise the dome renders it a symbol of secularisation, that aspect of kenosis in which, as Vattimo describes it, religious faith is gradually replaced by "faith in progress – both a secularized faith and a faith in secularization," or a "faith in the value of the new."¹⁸² By way of high-tech structure and bedazzling transparency, the Reichstag dome seeks its credentials in newness, and, through the spectacle of its secular 'adventure ride', it purports progressiveness. But, just as Vattimo sees modern secularisation dissolving progress into routine, this dome routinises its own progressiveness. In so doing, it paradoxically upholds its sacralising ideology, but now it sacralises secularisation. Although the dome's transparency produces an optical opening-up that might otherwise suggest heightened awareness, the nature of its experience privileges phantasmagoria over social and political reflection. And such privileging has the capacity to compromise society's opening-up to those others whose despair, trauma, and near annihilation compelled the reinstatement of the secular democracy that the dome now ordains.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 311.

¹⁸² Vattimo, *The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Postmodern Culture*: 99-101.

Looking-In and Looking-Out

In this symbol of democracy, the concept of transparency is a multifaceted and much discussed attribute of the Reichstag's modern realisation, often beginning with the equation of transparency and democracy. Deborah Barnstone, in *The Transparent State: Architecture and Politics in Postwar Germany*, challenges the truism that "he who builds transparently, builds democratically." She finds it "easily proved false" and effectively makes that case, labelling it a myth, which, like all myths, is an "emotional appeal to collective desires."¹⁸³ At the core of this myth is the suggestion that architectural transparency somehow ensures the popular supervision of parliamentary activities – a watchful looking-in – as if to effect the Paul Scheerbarth epigram: "A house of glass stays free of vermin."¹⁸⁴ The naivety of the myth, of course, is revealed in the fact that many politicians in many democracies are seen to be content, especially when unchallenged, to follow the principle that citizens are better off not seeing how laws and sausages are made. Moreover, some are seen as willing to engage in very opaque episodes of corruption and backroom deal-making, evidenced even in Germany's transparent Reichstag.¹⁸⁵

The Reichstag's transparency not only facilitates inward-looking but also outward. In connection with its dome, both aspects have already been discussed. Less often considered – though perhaps most germane to this discourse – is the transparency of the plenary chamber's main floor and balcony. At both levels, the entire rear expanse of the chamber is transparent, addressing the also transparent west entry and the open Platz der Republic, beyond. This transparency presents as another symbol of inward-looking public oversight. More importantly, however, this particular configuration of glass extends an invitation for those in the chamber to be outward-looking. While the dome gathers the Heideggerian sky and divinities, it is this horizontal transparency that has the capacity to gather mortals and earth. Although both work to grant the chamber its placedness, it is the latter that opens the chamber to the world it serves, affects, and is affected by. It is therefore also the latter that compellingly presents the need for kenotic relationality amongst the public servants in this Reichstag and the situations – out there – to which they must attend and respond; situations comprised not merely of voters but of interrelated others and other things. Such relationality has the capacity to abate the will

¹⁸³ Barnstone, *The Transparent State: Architecture and Politics in Postwar Germany*: 1-4.

¹⁸⁴ Chametzky, "Rebuilding the Nation: Norman Foster's Reichstag Renovation and Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum Berlin," 255.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 253. Chametzky notes: "Since the fall of Helmut Kohl's conservative CDU government, which initiated the Reichstag renovation, presided over most of its completion, and pushed for the capital to be moved from Bonn to Berlin, it has become increasingly apparent that 'transparency' is an elusive ideal. Since September 1998, when Kohl was voted out of power after fifteen years as Chancellor, the revelation of substantial secret slush funds of illegal cash contributions has beclouded the notion that the government was actually adhering to the ideal of 'transparency.'"

for power, the cynicism in oversight, and the accompanying potential for violence. Indeed, it can establish the kenotic power of powerlessness. Although this transparent feature, of itself, cannot effect such relationality, it does symbolise and invite the emptying and looking-outward that can.

Thus the Reichstag is a contradictory snapshot of unfolding kenosis, a picture of kenotic resistance and embrace. Its modern interventions are clearly distant from their historic host, but they are nonetheless integral and relational parts of its totality. The event of its design is equivocal – original intentions pointing toward something entirely different to the now realised outcome – but the event’s evolving situations are nonetheless attended with evolving openness and responsiveness. The Reichstag’s environmental performance is incremental, and some might argue largely symbolic, but it demonstrates the merit of kenotic human response to the environment’s kenosis. The dome’s design and occupancy attempt to transform the ideology of sovereign privilege into civic hospitality and responsibility, but they do so with an element of kitsch and the enticement of thrill. In addition to visitor amusement, transparency is deployed to portray an openness to scrutiny, but, at times, such transparency can be used to mask closedness. Under-represented in this situation is another, larger dimension of transparency – that found in the self-emptying and outward-looking governance of a self-emptying and outward-looking society. If not a fully convincing and complete instantiation of kenosis, the Reichstag at least presents its kenotic potentiality – and it does that, in no small measure, by virtue of its uncertainty and incompleteness.

COLLECTIVE KENOSIS

Championing the ‘new’ as a new value, all three of the Berlin projects routinise progress in their own ways, and thereby evidence the ongoing kenosis that is secularisation. Foster routinises the spectacle of urbanism, taming even the flâneur’s observation of it. Eisenman routinises monumentality, feeding and exacerbating the insatiable modern appetite to be wowed. Libeskind routinises the dis-ease of distortion and, with it, his genre of the avant-garde. Evidencing kenosis through secularisation, however, is not necessarily evidence of a project’s kenotic self-understanding. In the cases of Foster’s parliament building and Eisenman’s memorial, each reveals a degree of kenotic grounding by way of its attentiveness to situation and consequent hospitality toward context, users, and use. But, in the case of Libeskind’s museum, much the opposite is seen. Notwithstanding its role in prompting valuable interdisciplinary dialogue, the Jewish Museum Berlin is proclaimed to be uncanny in its distortion and disturbance, but realises

such effects in the most literal architectural terms – all quite cannily. In its overt striving to achieve avant-garde unusualness, it is seen to grasp. In the face of the Shoah – an utterly aggressive and un-kenotic event – it responds aggressively and un-kenotically, with a kind of architectural re-presentation of the event. And its self-assertiveness resists ascriptions of uncanniness, hope, and irrational laughter, because such attributes cannot be asserted and are finally seen as emergences of kenosis.

In the relationality of these three projects – found in their shared originating event, geographic proximity, and distinct architectural expressions – they are placed in a unique dialogue. I would argue that this triangulated exchange – transcending any individual claims and reckonings – is their most important instantiation of kenosis. Through it, each opens up to the others, though not without reluctance; each challenges the self-sufficiency of the others and stands transformed in that light; yet each maintains its identity. Eisenman's project, as memorial, challenges the memorial credentials of Libeskind's museum, while the museum's disorder challenges the memorial's claim to arbitrariness. The disturbance and disruption of Libeskind's museum challenges the relative domestication of Foster's parliament, even as the parliament's rational sophistication challenges Libeskind's execution of irrationality. And, the seriousness of Foster's parliament challenges the frivolity sanctioned by Eisenman's memorial, just as Eisenman's project, viewed as counter-memorial and civic playground, challenges the amusement credentials of Foster's parliamentary dome-climb. Each project is transformed by its relationship with the others. In many ways, each has partially become its others. Together, more effectively than in their individuation, they come to terms with the event at their origins; they hold the tensions thereof, and leave its questions unanswered. Thus, it is not any one project but, rather, the relationality of all three that reveals the uncanniness, hope, and laughter, which can humbly attempt to address horror and absence.

The projects can also be seen as part of a creative unfolding, though not a simple or unilinear one. Despite protestations to the contrary, each is a descendent of the 'classical' that Eisenman seeks to end, and each can be located in one or more contemporary '-isms', whether Modernism, Post-Modernism, Deconstructivism, or any of their derivations and successors, including Critical-Modernism, Non-Modernism, and Post-Critical architecture.¹⁸⁶ Such movements or theories typically rely on either the condemnation or overcoming of values – human values – espoused or seen to have been espoused by previous movements, or those contemporaneously seen to be in opposition.

¹⁸⁶ One view of 'Post-Critical' architecture is discussed, at length, in D. Barber, "Militant Architecture: Destabilising Architecture's Disciplinarity," *The Journal of Architecture* 10, no. 3 (2005). See, also, notes 10, 11, and 12.

They are susceptible to politicisation and self-consciousness. However, even the most radical and militant theories ultimately propose some value, or values, to replace those being contested. For example, Eisenman's advocacy of the 'non-representational' and 'reasonless' is little other than a case of negated values masquerading as valuelessness. Such advocacy overlooks the fact that architecture and its practitioners are called to respond to situations always bounded by human values, situations that consequently demand the creative interpretation and application of manifold human values, not merely those privileged by current theory. Architecture is an evolving tradition, subject to the paradox identified by Eugenio d'Ors: "Everything that lies outside tradition is plagiarism."¹⁸⁷ Thus, notwithstanding various degrees of resistance and d'Orsian plagiarism, the three Berlin projects – particularly important for their valuing of memory – are parts of architecture's evolving tradition.

It might be said, then, that these particular Berlin projects are nothing 'special', nothing especially avant-garde, at least not individually. Each is found in the complex and entangled continuum of architecture, and also that of Berlin. In challenging the avant-gardeness of Libeskind's museum – its claimed singularity and exemplarity – Derrida uses the city of Berlin to make his point, a point that relies on a twist, and is therefore worth quoting at some length:

... Berlin as a city is not simply one among others – it is an exemplary city, and because of this, you [Libeskind] can articulate both the singularity of everything you have done and the universality of the meaning of your project. Why is Berlin exemplary? It is a city ... because of its split, which symbolises all the division of the world, all the divided cities of the world – think of Jerusalem, for instance – and because the inner difference and the void precisely follow the line or the cut of this difference. Berlin could be considered a noncity city, a city whose identity or unity is split along an interrupted line. To the extent that it is so divided and so nonidentical, Berlin could claim to be exemplary. It is precisely the way every nation, every people, when they affirm their own singularity, try to justify their avant-garde structure: they say, 'We are the avant-garde, because in our singularity we are witnessing universality, and we bear the responsibility for the universal, for humanity as such.' National affirmation always goes through this exemplary logic, and Germans and Jews have thought of themselves as having been responsible – for universality, for mankind, in the avant-garde ... Sometimes, therefore, I am a little anxious about the language of exemplarity.¹⁸⁸

Derrida's challenge denies Berlin, Libeskind's museum, and, by extension, Eisenman's memorial and Foster's parliament, the claim of singularity, universality, or exemplarity. Yet, by their unique convergence – these projects in this city – they do, indeed, signal

¹⁸⁷ J. Pallasmaa, "Newness, Tradition and Identity: Existential Content and Meaning in Architecture," *Architectural Design* 82, no. 6 (2012): 18.

¹⁸⁸ Derrida, "Response to Daniel Libeskind," 91-92. It is Derrida's anxiety about the logic and language of exemplarity that links this challenge to that which he directs toward Libeskind's void, as discussed earlier in this chapter.

something special, not through avant-garde architecture, but through the collective invocation of tikkun olam. Their relationality makes a collective gesture toward mending a world affected by an un-mendable event. Such is not the mending that allows the forgetfulness of reconciliation, continuity, or salvation, but rather the sort that ensures remembrance. It is a kenotic mending. The city and these projects join to offer an emptying and receptive place that permanently holds pain¹⁸⁹ – its own and that of others – made permanent by its ability to accommodate the indeterminacy and contingency that is always present and always in the present; never forgotten. In that, it is a place open to the disturbing otherness of its history, and one that responds with the responsibility, hospitality, and caritas of kenosis. Thus it is kenosis that is finally the avant-garde, an unfixed but constantly leading edge. And, it is the emptying of this collective urban offering that finally proves to be ‘kind’.

¹⁸⁹ This concept of a ‘place that permanently holds pain’ owes a debt to playwright Tom Holloway. His 2013 play, on the subject of forgiveness, posits that forgiveness is not a single act, especially not an act of forgetting; nor one prompted by reasons, explanations, and excuses; nor one by which wounds are ever healed. At the play’s close, its only character – known simply as “HIM” – explains that “forgiveness is: not one decision, but infinite decisions made every moment of every day for the rest of our lives. Forgiveness is the act of giving pain a permanent place in our hearts.” See T. Holloway, “As We Forgive: Three Morality Plays for an Amoral Age,” (Hobart: Australian Script Centre, 2013), 26.

Part Three – Amplifications

Beyond '-ists' and '-isms': The End of Architecture

The end could be a limit, but also the origin. Architecture starting from the end means that it has to understand itself and its practice by coming back to precisely what is its own limit; it must go to its limit in order to start from it. The end is but the edge. The end might also be death.¹

Upon earning his doctoral degree in the USA, and returning to Melbourne, Australian priest and artist Patrick Negri attended a function where one of the guests enquired about his thesis subject, which Negri happily described as “the spiritual significance of the art of the Abstract Expressionists.” Bemused, the guest responded, “Oh, I wake up in the middle of the night worried about that!”² Perhaps she also worries about whether and how kenosis can inform architecture, though she would likely be amongst very few who do. Indeed, most might find it unimportant to explore architecture – as this dissertation does – by drawing on notions that seem well outside architecture’s domain, excessively theoretical, or unnecessary to its analysis, much less its practice. But it becomes apparent that it is precisely such extra-architectural and interdisciplinary explorations that are able to ask of architecture’s essence, its nature, its ontology. They open-up the question: What is architecture? Such a question is worth worrying about because architecture, whether or not designed by architects, is one of the most – if not *the* most – evident and enduring embodiments of culture. It concretises humanity’s creative response to cosmic and evolutionary creation, and thereby to humanity’s being. To ask, then, of architecture’s being – including its origin and its end – is to open-up to the very thinking and understanding by which its being is strengthened. Indeed, an understanding of the ways in which kenosis informs human creativity – particularly as seen through architecture – effects exactly such strengthening. Therewith comes the strengthening of architecture’s practice, its realisation, its perception, and its use. That impacts virtually everyone. Hence, it is the intent of this chapter to move toward such an understanding.

As noted in the Acknowledgements, some of the concepts included in this chapter represent the development and elaboration of work previously published in Lindstrom, “Sustainability by Design: Kenosis as a Framework for Environmental, Cultural and Social Dialogue.”; and Lindstrom, “Creating Church: Kenosis as Protocol.”

¹ Derrida, “Response to Daniel Libeskind,” 92.

² J. Emery and R.S. Lindstrom, *P. Negri: A Retrospective* (Melbourne: The Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament in Australia, 2008), 1.

To explore the question of architecture's being, I look firstly and broadly to architecture's filling – with the *fullness* of its creators, as well as with the styles and movements that come to be critically and popularly ascribed to it. To some extent, such filling is inevitable, but there is a point at which the fullness becomes a barrier to emptying; that is, to the emptying (and opening-up) that makes-room to gather-in the other and, thereby, strengthen both self and other. Secondly and more specifically, I look to the issue of emptying in architecture, especially against the backdrop of an emptying – secularising – world. That requires thinking about who and what is to be emptied, and how such emptying might affect current relationships and practices; indeed, how it might affect the production of architecture. Thirdly and finally, I look to an architecture that becomes filled with, or by virtue of, its creators' *emptiness*. In light of a kenosis of architecture, I consider the potentiality of an architecture of kenosis. That requires thinking about what architecture's emptying might say about its end.

FILLED WITH FULLNESS

In Chapters 3 to 6, various instantiations of kenosis are shown to be concretised in architecture, whether evidenced by approach, conception, or realisation – or by all three. Equally, aspects of some case studies are seen to concretise the overlooking of, ignorance toward, or otherwise self-assertive resistance against the kenotic opportunities already present in every situation. But it must be said that in all cases, even in those examples shown to be most evidentiary of kenosis (such as Kahn's Salk Institute, and Pei's Museum of Islamic Art), buildings can and do remain 'filled' to varying degrees by their respective creators (architecture's '-ists', and other aesthetic authors), as well as by the design movements and theories with which certain creators become associated (architecture's '-isms'). This filling is not that which results from receptivity to the other, that which accompanies kenotic emptying. It is not the putting of oneself into one's work, which is actually a commitment to attentiveness, derived from emptying. Nor is it simply a case of the creators "actively convert[ing] the invisible throb of impulse into the visible language of art,"³ because such impulse also arises out of attentiveness, at least at some level. This is the filling of the created thing with the selves of the creators – to the exclusion of others. Such filling may be the result of the creators' compromised kenosis (an unwillingness or inability to self-empty), but its real harm – its potential 'violence' –

³ P. Abbs, "The Pattern of Art Making," in *The Symbolic Order: A Contemporary Reader on the Arts Debate*, ed. P. Abbs (Philadelphia: The Falmer Press, 1989), 200-201. In his argument, Peter Abbs appears to contrast passive and active approaches to the creative act, as if one is to be chosen over the other. If viewed kenotically, I am suggesting that they are two sides of the same coin, that they are merely two aspects of attunement, both necessary to creativity. Indeed, I am positing that kenosis is both 'active passivity' and 'passive activity'.

occurs when it compromises the ongoing kenosis of the architecture thereby filled; in effect working to restrict or close-off the architecture's evolving and enduring relationality with the users and perceivers that are its others.

'-ists'

Architecture is most readily filled with its architects, the '-ists' of architecture, which, since the late-nineteenth century, have been labelled not only as Modernists but also as Post-, Neo-, Non-, and Critical-Modernists, as well as Regionalists, Environmentalists, and other distinguishing derivatives. The manner of such filling varies and produces varying consequences. History has long witnessed architects producing regional, national, and global projects (some the outcome of international design competitions) that bring fame to their architects. For example, the Salk Institute is clearly filled by Louis Kahn, but it was not his fame that first filled it. Although Kahn's professional recognition became significant during his lifetime, his public fame was largely gained posthumously, and primarily followed the growing fame of his buildings, not least that garnered by the Salk Institute. The case of Jørn Utzon and the Sydney Opera House offers a similar example of an architect's fame following that of his building. Equally evident, however, is the converse. It is I.M. Pei's eminent reputation (and already famous museum projects) that secures his position as architect for the Museum of Islamic Art. Although his fame is well-known to be met by humility (an aspect of kenosis), his buildings are unavoidably filled with something of his aura. The same must be said for Kahn, Utzon, and many others. Indeed, most architects – whether of renown or relative obscurity – are somehow present in their buildings. But that is often a filling, not with the architects' fullness, but with their emptiness; a notion to which I return, later in this chapter.

Of particular concern, at this point of the discussion, is the filling with fullness that stems from the architects' self-assertion and, consequently, from that of their buildings. Such filling is magnified by the phenomenon of celebrity architects, or 'starchitects' (and their 'starchitecture'); a phenomenon made increasingly possible and exploitable in an era of routinised globalisation, and, thereby, a phenomenon that is, itself, becoming routinised.⁴ The exponential onset and popular acceptance of celebrity status results in a radical commodification of professional repute, and that only serves to reinforce the privileging of architects and architecture. Writer and design critic Deyan Sudjic describes the situation as "an international flying circus which travels the world leaving signature buildings in its wake."⁵ The flight of this circus is fuelled by – but also fuels – a seemingly insatiable worldwide craving to collect such signatures, as civic symbols of capitalism's

⁴ Today, it is increasingly true that celebrity status can also be popularly or critically ascribed, so as to manifest not only through self-assertion but also through the assertion of others.

⁵ D. Sudjic, *The 100 Mile City* (London: Flamingo, 1993), 76.

urbanisation, as corporate symbols of capitalism's globalisation, and as socio-political symbols of capitalism's self-asserted superiority. Indeed, the signatures of those still-practising architects examined in previous chapters – Graves, Foster, Pei, Ando, Libeskind, and Eisenman – are, to varying extents, amongst the ever-expanding list of coveted trophies,⁶ and some are amongst that list's founding members. Arguably, 'starchitecture' evidences architecture's filling with a kind of decadence. One example is presented by architects who strategically market their environmental and sustainability credentials, and thereby see themselves and their teams unsustainably flown around the globe to meet with clients and investigate subject sites – even as the clients and their teams are likewise flown back to the architects' offices. Such is done in the name of producing sustainable and environmentally-friendly architecture, often, however, of a typology that inherently restricts its potential to be so.⁷ Although the environmental dimension of this example points to a possible hypocrisy, it is not that which suggests decadence. Rather, it is self-promotion and self-assertion – the grasping at, exploitation of, and filling with 'stardom' – that can be seen to signal excess and, thereby, stand in the way of architecture's potentiality.

Architects are not alone in their capacity to fill the architecture they realise. Clients can also assume a role of privilege and be equally filling. True throughout history, it is no less so today. The mere commissioning of an architect is largely a privileged luxury. (In developed countries, that remains the case in connection with many building typologies including residential, agricultural, and industrial; while in less developed countries, it can extend to virtually all typologies). And to be a client who commissions an architectural celebrity is to gain a measure of stardom for oneself. Notwithstanding the fame of their architects, however, architectural clients – which include a variety of personalities, as well as public and private institutions – can also fill architecture with their celebrity or some other form of hegemony. Returning to the example of the Salk Institute, as much as it might be filled by Kahn, it is equally (if not more so) filled by Jonas Salk,

⁶ The phenomenon of the global architect is explored, with particular focus on Norman Foster, in D. McNeill, "In Search of the Global Architect: The Case of Norman Foster (and Partners)," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 29, no. 3 (2005): 501-515.

⁷ An obvious example of such typology is the high-rise structure, with the inherent potentiality of its environmental credentials frequently challenged. That topic is discussed in connection with the Commerzbank, in Chapter 4. But, no lesser examples of 'starchitecture' are seen in Graves' work in The Netherlands, Pei's work in Qatar, and the works of Foster, Libeskind, and Eisenman in Germany, as well as all of their works elsewhere in the world. As a practising architect – but certainly not amongst those with a prized 'signature' – I have, on several occasions, been flown to global project destinations in the name of specialised expertise, and can therefore appreciate the allure of the experience, as well as the possible necessity and wisdom of such arrangements in some circumstances (though the latter fails to fully assuage my scepticism). A case can be made – when the architect's signature is not the primary goal and, certainly, when it is irrelevant – that a non-local architect (free of local bias, as it were) may somehow be advantaged to ensure that the architecture produced by his or her presence is actually filled, not by self-assertion, but by what it is that the others and other things of the situation are calling for. I am arguing that such an outcome requires a kenotic approach, and have suggested that such an approach is, for example, what Pei brings to Qatar (albeit along with his signature).

whose professional and public fame far exceeded that of Kahn's at the time of the building's construction. In fact, the Salk Institute – not least its architecture – has done as much to maintain Salk's fame as it has to establish Kahn's.

There are manifold ways in which a building can become known for the client in whose name it was built. Cases of corporate client celebrity can be seen in countless high-rise and other commercial structures, worldwide. Such structures are frequently filled by, and best-known for, those entities whose logos they valorise, but whose association with the architecture may be nothing more than ownership, tenancy, or, in some cases, leased or purchased naming rights. Amongst the more extreme examples of client celebrity pervading architecture are the numerous towers emblazoned with the name of entrepreneur Donald Trump. Few would know the architectural authorship of his buildings, but most would know the celebrity of their developer. Conversely, clients can become known for what they build, an example of which is seen in the Chrysler Building in New York City. Outside architectural circles, the name of the building's architect (William Van Alen) is an obscure fact, but the edifice is internationally known as an icon of Moderne architecture. Indeed, it is that fame with which its commissioner, Walter Chrysler, has become associated; such fame perhaps even rivalling that engendered by his automobile manufacturing company. Furthermore, in cities like Dubai, Doha, and Abu Dhabi, architecture – particularly that authored by celebrity architects – is used to establish, enhance, and enshrine the celebrity of its client countries, which often rests in the leaders thereof.

Beyond architects and clients, there are still others who affect architecture. Engineers, builders, project managers, financiers, jurisdictional regulators, politicians, and others – unknown or renowned – are, in addition to their direct project contributions, implicitly portrayed as essential to curbing the excesses of fame-stricken or otherwise self-assertive architects and clients (a role not always unwarranted). They, too, can fill architecture, often with measures of self-assertion that ironically meet or exceed that of those they are meant to regulate. Architecture's filling can be credited to any or all of a project's creators, with celebrity not the sole contributing factor, merely one that increases the likelihood of filling. To varying extents, architecture is always filled by those who enable its appearance, and all are '-ists' of a kind, whether one of the architectural style-ists, or one of many other '-ists': industrialists, liturgists, monetarists, educationalists, scientists, specialists, even obstructionists, to name a few. Amongst all of these '-ists', who somehow impact the built environment, those who *effect* design are often differentiated from those who *affect* it, with *effect* closely guarded as the purview of

design professionals, and *affect* granted to all of the other “development actors.”⁸ The distinction is clear: there are those who design – in the sense of creating aesthetic concepts – and those who cannot, do not, or may not. It is a distinction and fortification that, at least in the West, begins to be established in architectural education.

Nearly twenty-five years ago, with a reminder that “the attempt to educate architects in universities is a twentieth century experiment,” noted US practitioner and educator Jack Hartray gave notice: “The educational/licensing complex is a powerful cartel, which now totally controls entry into the architectural profession.”⁹ Such control is an attempt to determine who may be – but, just as importantly, who may *not* be – a ‘designer’. It has the effect of establishing an elite, against which Hartray further warned: “Education has no value if it is not shared. It must not be misused to enhance a false sense of professional authority. Instead, it must link the professions to the society which they serve.”¹⁰ But, to a large extent, the architectural profession maintains the elite that education initiates, with further restricted entry into its self-established organisations, with self-granted awards, and with (largely) self-laudatory publications, often featuring or foretelling such awards, and often giving disproportionate priority to the faction of architecture that is (or proclaims itself to be) the current avant-garde.

Professional practice also does its part to protect entrenched hierarchies. Key participants in the architectural process are typically bound to one another by agreements or contracts, which, as such legalities seemingly must, attempt to reserve privileges and limit liability for each party; an exercise intrinsically oppositional. In effect, such bindings are often characterised by the terms of disagreement and the commitments not made to the other. Then, there are some participants who are extra-contractual, exerting power through the authority of governance, and some who are contingent parties, in many instances needing to appropriate power in order to participate. The situation’s non-human participants may go entirely unnoticed unless they present as obstacles, in which case they may be seen as something to overcome rather than open-up to. And, notwithstanding incrementally greater relationality, moderating practices with labels like ‘participatory design’ and ‘co-design’¹¹ can render participation tokenistic or manipulative, merely masking entrenched hierarchies, not least those that guard architectural privilege and sovereignty. Tendencies to view architecture – especially its creative conception –

⁸ The term “development actors” is used in S. Guy and G. Farmer, “Reinterpreting Sustainable Architecture: The Place of Technology,” *Journal of Architectural Education* 54, no. 3 (2001): 147.

⁹ J.F. Hartray, “The Liberal Education of Architects,” in *The Liberal Education of Architects: A Symposium Sponsored by The Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts*, ed. D. Domer and K.F. Spreckelmeyer (School of Architecture and Urban Design, The University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas: The University of Kansas, 1990), 24.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 27 (my emphasis).

¹¹ One view of participatory and co-design practices, emphasising tactical dimensions, is presented in Y. Lee, “Design Participation Tactics: The Challenges and New Roles for Designers in the Co-design Process,” *Co-Design: International Journal of CoCreation in Design and the Arts* 4, no. 1 (2008): 31-50.

as something privileged, and as the sovereignty of a privileged group, serve to establish and maintain the ‘-ists’ of architecture, and, in so doing, to erect barriers to its emptying; that is, barriers to its kenosis and, therefore, its being.

‘-isms’

Just as architecture can be filled by the obsessions with, or of, its various creators, it can likewise be filled by obsessions with creating; those theories, movements, styles, trends, and fads that establish its ‘-isms’. Often, such ‘-isms’ are critically ascribed to architects – even over their objections. For example, at the cusp of so-called Post-Modernism, some critics looked – arguably, in desperation – to Louis Kahn as a ‘founding father’ of the movement, citing his formal references to historic precedents, but largely disregarding the abstract and reductive Modernism which characterises those references.¹² Others suggested that German architect Gottfried Böhm was amongst the first of the movement’s practitioners, owing to his apparent willingness to eschew open planning and, instead, segregate spaces (as if to suggest that Modernism had abandoned all compartmentalisation). When I put the critics’ then-current proposition to Böhm in 1984, he impatiently replied, “I am not an ‘-ism’!”¹³ Notwithstanding such protestations, architecture does tend to become filled by its ‘-isms’; movements that claim new ground but actually describe inevitable unfoldings, usually the result of incremental occurrences rather than abrupt or expansive ones. Although the duration of such movements varies, none endure, each inevitably obsolesced by the perdurance of kenosis.

An ‘-ism’, of almost any kind, identifies an attempt to move toward a totality defined by sameness; that is, by what is seen as being the same in those components or constituents that supposedly comprise it. To retain its identity as something complete (and therefore completely valid), an ‘-ism’ must exclude that which is seen as being different. Heidegger establishes this point when he defines identity as “belonging together,” but then reasons that the phrase’s meaning depends entirely on which word is emphasised. If ‘together’ is emphasised, belonging means “to be assigned and placed into the order of a ‘together’, established in the unity of a manifold ... the necessary connection of the one with the other.” In other words, emphasising ‘together’ gathers sameness together, and relies on the exclusion of difference. If, on the other hand, ‘belonging’ is emphasised, “the ‘together’ is now determined by the belonging.” Emphasising ‘belonging’ allows the gathering of difference together, without need for

¹² Goldhagen, *Louis Kahn’s Situated Modernism*: 3.

¹³ Lindstrom, *Creativity and Contradiction: European Churches Since 1970*: 125.

exclusion¹⁴ – and therefore no potential or need for completion. Andrew Benjamin goes further to equate the latter emphasis and meaning with the notion of the ‘cosmopolitan’, which he grounds in affirmation of the modern impossibility of maintaining community and, hence, exclusive community identities. Benjamin argues that such affirmation ultimately renders even the nation state – nationalism – impossible to retain, if ever completely attainable.¹⁵ Insofar as that is correct, it is apparent that the same must be true of more minor ‘-isms’. Certainly, such is the case with architecture’s ‘-isms’ and, more broadly, with ‘-isms’ that attempt to corral the unfolding of creative events.

Incompleteness

What, then, is attainable? Paradoxically, the answer is incompleteness.¹⁶ Incompleteness is always attainable in its only possible state: the permanent state of becoming. Architecture’s incompleteness originates in the vernacular and then evolves in manifold and multilinear happenings, whereby the vernacular gradually yields to various notions of expertise and style – notions that attracted, and continue to attract, the theorisation and labelling by which they posit their own (unattainable) completeness. Even a brief and simple sketch of Western architecture’s development reveals that its incompleteness is constant, and constantly unfolding through, and despite, the onset of styles and movements. Each pleads for a kenosis with which to attend to architecture’s becoming and, at the same time, stands as a barrier against it. The various periods of Classicism are predominantly identified by the sameness of more or less prescriptive styles. Their unfolding is largely linear, based in aesthetics, and generally building toward greater complexity. In a sense, each ‘new’ order or style suggests the incompleteness of the preceding. More disruptive ‘awakenings’ also occur, with pleas to empty architecture of perceived excess or misdirection, pleas for a kenosis of style. Such awakenings often produce the ‘Neo-’ styles, literally meaning ‘new’, but actually proposing a ‘return’ to previously known sameness made slightly different. Eventually, a compendium of classical styles is available, and, from that, a style deemed most appropriate to a given situation can be chosen and applied, more or less by whim, but also influenced by any

¹⁴ This specific notion is introduced in M. Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, ed. J.G. Gray, trans. J. Stambaugh, Martin Heidegger Works (New York, Evanston, and London: Harper & Row, 1969), 29. Its development, however, extends through the entirety of the work.

¹⁵ A. Benjamin, “Now Still Absent: Eisenman’s Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe,” *Architectural Theory Review* 8, no. 1 (2003): 57.

¹⁶ This point is developed and explicated more thoroughly in *ibid.*, 58. There, Benjamin establishes the link between the cosmopolitan and the incomplete. “The most important feature of the move from a sense of totality ... towards the cosmopolitan is that the move itself cannot be understood in terms of fragmentation. It is not as though there is a totality that has been subjected to a critique resulting in its literal coming apart ... The move from one to the other is a move within identity. However, what occurs is the inception of a conception of identity as the belonging together of the different ... Defining identity as the belonging together of the different demands that difference, rather than being simply posited, has to be thought. An integral part of that undertaking is thinking identity in terms of the incomplete ...”

number of protocols. The advent of late nineteenth century Eclecticism, however, begins to suggest a liberation from prescription – even from the choice of prescriptions – in favour of mixing motifs to produce something that is not ‘traditional’ and, therefore, moving toward the ‘modern’. Modernism is thus revealed as having been already present in Classicism, and in every style since.¹⁷

Modernism is, at first, not so much a style, but a plea for an opening-up to rapid social, cultural, and political changes – magnified in perception, if not reality, by the coincidental onset of the twentieth century. In many ways, the movement effects exactly such an opening-up but, then, gradually closes-down. It becomes mired in its own metaphysical truths, and they become sanctioned in stylistic prescriptions that are not only exclusionary but, for many, also excessive. Some, like Wright, never subscribe; others, like Kahn, break free (see Chapter 3); and Post-Modernism begins to reveal itself as already present in Modernism. Post-Modernism is a plea for another kenosis of architecture, again a rebuke of perceived exclusions and excesses. It, too, effects an opening-up but, then, through its own assertion of truths and stylistic prescriptions – mere substitutes for those it challenged – it closes-down and thus spawns its progeny. In similar fashion, Neo-Modernism reacts against the perceived excesses of Post-Modernism, but it does so with a plea to return to – and reform – what is perceived as the best of a familiar movement. Being less prescriptive, it survives with less exclusion but nonetheless gathers together sameness, even if from a broader range of expression. Deconstructivism, which challenges all presumed orders and stylistic precepts, is (like most movements, at least initially) portrayed as avant-garde and, therefore, could be seen as kenotic. Ultimately, however, it proves to be reliant on the sameness of difference, including that effected by precepts such as disorder, disorientation, disruption, destabilisation, and discomfort. It therefore must exclude, or attempt to overcome, other forms of sameness. And its advocacy against completeness betrays the opposite.¹⁸ Hence, although Deconstructivism stands as an event in architecture’s kenotic unfolding – and joins the pleas for architecture’s own kenosis – it is not, itself, kenotic. Indeed, it is the consistent failure of these and all ‘-isms’ to attain their own completeness that evidences the ‘attainment’ of architecture’s ongoing incompleteness – and, therein, its inherently kenotic nature.

¹⁷ This is a notion explored at greater length in Eisenman, "The End of the Classical: The End of the Beginning, the End of the End." I discuss this aspect of Eisenman’s thinking in Chapter 6, in connection with his Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe.

¹⁸ This is a notion discussed more specifically in Chapter 6, in connection with the Jewish Museum Berlin, by Daniel Libeskind.

In their incompleteness, styles and movements are destined to *dissolution*, either in preceding and succeeding movements – as in the above sketch – or in themselves. One of architecture's more influential modern '-isms' offers an effective demonstration of the latter. Critical Regionalism, as introduced in Chapter 4, is posited by Kenneth Frampton in opposition to Modernism's attachment to "the optimisation of advanced technology," but not its original social and political agenda; in opposition to Post-Modernism's reactionary "regress[ion] into nostalgic historicism, or the glibly decorative," but not its fundamental resistance toward Modernism; and in support of Environmentalism's broad goal to effect "a more directly dialectical relation with nature," but with less fervour than many factional '-isms' that the movement goes on to generate.¹⁹ Frampton suggests that Critical Regionalism is to be effected not from the avant-garde but from the *arrière-garde*; a notion that sounds kenotic and, in some ways, is. Indeed, Critical Regionalism is not a prescription for style. Its criteria allow the embrace of many formal expressions, and not necessarily those that might be expected to be associated with a particular region. Frampton's manifesto constructively grows out of an earlier stated concern for "our present all but total incapacity to create *place*" and the fear that "we might have eliminated, once and for all, the possibility of ever being anywhere."²⁰ It is nonetheless an '-ism', with six prescribed points that ultimately define a particular kind of 'sameness' (albeit with room for difference) needed to resist other, different samenesses.²¹ Like other '-isms', Critical Regionalism ultimately dissolves.

Ironically, Critical Regionalism dissolves amidst the very philosophy of place (or *topos*) out of which it ostensibly grows. The work of Jeff Malpas, on the subject of topology, aids in explicating the dissolution. First, place can be seen as the relationality of region – or regionality – inasmuch as a region is "a set of places that are already, in some sense, related to one another in such a way that they do indeed constitute a region."²² Since architecture responds to regionality by the shaping of space, it can be said that architecture is one of those activities that gives appearance to places within a region. It is, therefore, inherently regional, even if not always attentive to the region in

¹⁹ Frampton, "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance," 20. Although, as a result of this publication, Frampton is widely associated with 'Critical Regionalism', the term was coined by theorists Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre, and first used in A. Tzonis and L. Lefaivre, "The Grid and the Pathway: An Introduction to the Work of Dimitris and Suzana Antonakakis," *Architecture in Greece* 15 (1981). It is Frampton's particular treatment of the term, however, that has primarily come to define it in architecture.

²⁰ K. Frampton, "On Reading Heidegger," *Oppositions* 4 (1975): n.p. (my emphasis).

²¹ Sixteen years after his essay on Critical Regionalism, Frampton "recapitulates" his original manifesto "in a different way," transforming it into seven new points for a new era, with notably greater emphasis on environmental issues. See K. Frampton, "Seven Points for the Millennium: An Untimely Manifesto," *The Journal of Architecture* 5, no. 1 (2000): 21-33.

²² Malpas, "Pensando Topográficamente: Lugar, Espacio, y Geografía [Thinking Topographically: Place, Space, and Geography]," 208. Additional development of this topic is found in Malpas, "Putting Space in Place: Philosophical Topography and Relational Geography.," with more extensive explication in Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology*.

which it is situated. Second, place can be seen as bound and limit. To shape space as a response to place – the definition of architecture, just proposed – is to consciously and intentionally design *in response* to the bounds and limits of place. If design is seen as an intentional act that alters, in some way, not only the place being designed, but also its relationality with other places, theirs with each other, and therefore the regionality comprised by such places, then to design responsively is to design with attentiveness to all that design will alter. Such attentiveness is criticality. It is questioning, listening, and responding. It is the emptying of self that effects an opening-up to, challenging of, and pouring-out of hospitality for a situation's others and other things. And it is through such criticality that the designer is oriented "towards the place out of which questioning emerges, and to which it always turns us back."²³ To design, then, is to be critical; that is, to be attentive to the bounds and limits of place, as well as the relationality of places that effects regionality. Design *is* critical. Architecture *is* regional. Frampton's promulgation of Critical Regionalism may have been, and may remain, a useful admonition to the architectural profession, but it never actually described a 'new' theory; it merely offered a new label for what had been, what is, and what is always becoming. It dissolves into itself, because it offers no more than the profoundly simpler (if not obvious) notion of 'attentively designed architecture', which is always already critical and regional; that is, fundamentally kenotic. Arguably, all movements and styles dissolve in favour of the same.

In their incompleteness, styles and movements can also become categories of *opposition*. Once again, Environmentalism offers a current and useful example. Manifested in architecture under the banner of 'sustainability', Environmentalism is a category that opposes and is opposed. And, like many other movements, it further subdivides to create its own internal categories of opposition, thus presenting as a microcosm of the architectural profession as a whole. In 2001, Simon Guy and Graham Farmer labelled the environment "contested terrain" and enframed the contest in a matrix of six *competing* environmental "logics,"²⁴ really '-isms' by another name. Combined with the authors' call for a "very different dialogue about sustainable architecture" and an "enlarged context in which a more heterogeneous coalition of practices can be developed," their matrix alludes to emerging pluralism (also a theme in Venturi's

²³ Malpas, "Pensando Topográficamente: Lugar, Espacio, y Geografía [Thinking Topographically: Place, Space, and Geography]," 222.

²⁴ Other movements have enframed themselves similarly. For example, vernacular architecture has been portrayed in a "typology of relationships in placemaking." See D. Stea and M. Turan, "A Statement on Placemaking," in *Vernacular Architecture: Paradigms of Environmental Response*, ed. M. Turan, *Ethnoscapas: Volume 4* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1990), 103-106.

complexity and Vattimo's secularisation).²⁵ For well over a decade since the Guy and Farmer entreaty, the contest has continued amidst a not-so-very-different dialogue, which, notwithstanding greater recognition of a pluralistic and complex reality, still operates amidst a paradigm of epistemological competition. It is not, however, the plurality of interpretations that is problematic or contradictory to kenosis. It is the isolation and politicisation of such interpretations – including explicit or implicit claims to truth, and the consequent inference of superiority – that can reduce dialogue to debate, exclude the other, and thereby become barriers to exchange; barriers to kenosis. Although an 'enlarged context' – a more inclusive and pluralistic domain – is certainly desirable (if not inevitable), mere enlargement offers little gain if the domain remains encumbered and compromised by oppositional barriers, especially those that connote victory and defeat, superiority and subordination. Such barriers often present as '-isms' of one kind or another. While they arise in the universal kenosis by which architecture (and everything else) unfolds, they nonetheless impede a kenosis of architecture itself. In so doing, they impede not only a turning away from superficiality and decadence but also a turning back to that from which the question of architecture's being emerges.

Turning Back

It is not unreasonable, then, to think that an architecture freed of '-ists' and '-isms' might be an architecture like that which Derrida invokes in the epigraph to this chapter. Such would be an architecture seeking to understand itself – and thereby consider its future – by emptying and turning back to its beginnings, when architecture was a vernacular pursuit,²⁶ and neither style nor movement were known. Indeed, even many of the ensuing movements are seen to point back. Critical Regionalism – though by no means trivially vernacular – points back to principles that are readily associated with the vernacular. It thereby suggests a kind of professional emptying that restores an emphasis on human experience, responsiveness to nature and context, and prioritisation

²⁵ Guy and Farmer, "Reinterpreting Sustainable Architecture: The Place of Technology," 146-7.

²⁶ I use the term 'vernacular' in the sense that it is used in Brand, *How Buildings Learn: What Happens After They're Built*. 132. Brand ascribes the first use of the term to architectural historians in the 1850s, who appropriated it from the realm of linguistics. There it referred to 'the native language of a region', but could also convey the 'vulgar', as bearing 'folk wisdom', and as being 'common' (the latter including senses of 'widespread, ordinary, and beneath notice'). "In terms of architecture, vernacular buildings are seen as the opposite of whatever is 'academic', 'high-style', 'polite'. Vernacular is everything not designed by professional architects – in other words, most of the world's buildings, ranging in assigned value from now-precious Cotswold stone cottages ... to the despised hordes of factory-built mobile homes." Thus, "old vernacular is lovely," while "new vernacular is unlovely." I would suggest that what Brand calls 'old vernacular' is actually *cultural vernacular* (arising predominantly out of cultural values and motivations), while 'new vernacular' is better seen as *economic vernacular* (arising largely out of economic values and motivations). Thus, when Brand observes that the vernacular is "so immersed in its culture and its region that it looks interesting only to outsiders," he is referring primarily to old – or cultural – vernacular, where 'outsiders' are those outside the culture of the vernacular's origin.

of the tactile over the visual.²⁷ However, despite its pointing back *toward* the vernacular, Critical Regionalism remains firmly planted in expert, professional architecture. It does not, for example, point back as far as the vernacular architecture of Heidegger's farmhouse in the Black Forest, a hypothetical example (with manifold realisations), which, although both praised and maligned in architectural and philosophical circles,²⁸ usefully illustrates an architecture that appears emptied of '-ists' and '-isms'. "Built some two hundred years ago by the dwelling of peasants," this farmhouse empties itself to its situation and is consequently strengthened by the concurrent gathering-in of all that is needed for 'dwelling'.²⁹ It is protected from wind, faces the sun of the southern sky, is located near the source of water, and features a roof of the required slope to bear and shed inevitable snow, with proper overhangs to shield interior spaces from winter storms. Inside, it unselfconsciously accommodates the ordinary, everyday activities and routines of a multi-generational family. "A craft which, itself sprung from dwelling, still uses its tools and frames as things, *built* the farmhouse."³⁰

Heidegger's farmhouse is vernacular, not by way of assertion or strategy, but rather in its responsiveness; its emptied and open response to regionality and, therefore, place. It is vernacular, not as opposed to being something else, but because, for the people who built it, being *is* vernacular and can be nothing else. Heidegger proposes building and dwelling as a single happening. He even attributes the construction of the farmhouse, not to an improbable designer or builder, nor even to the peasant farmers (more probably the designers and builders), but rather to "craft," because, in this example, the notion of craft is intrinsic to dwelling and, consequently, to those who dwell. In the "simple oneness" of building and dwelling, it can be said that "dwelling ... was able to build."³¹ It can also be said that dwelling was able to do so by virtue of its emptying in response to situation: that is, its instantiation of kenosis. Yet, even this architecture is filled. Although emptied of experts and expertise, celebrities and celebrity, it is nonetheless filled with those who dwell, and especially with their dwelling-ness, as simple as that might be. So it is that, in this emptiness that is fullness, building and dwelling are fully integrated.

²⁷ Frampton emphatically "distinguish[es] between Critical Regionalism and simple-minded attempts to revive the hypothetical forms of a lost vernacular." The latter is not the association that I make here. See Frampton, "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance," 21.

²⁸ The farmhouse is famously discussed in Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking," 157-158. Suggestions that its romanticism, and notions of 'authenticity' link Heidegger to National Socialist thinking is summarised in Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects*: 74-75, 88-90. Such critique is further explored and challenged in Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology*: 17-27.

²⁹ The philosophically problematic nature of translating the German word *Wohnen* into English, as dwelling, and the repercussions arising therefrom, are presented in Malpas, "Rethinking Dwelling: Heidegger and the Question of Place." For consistency, however, I have elected to retain and use the common translation.

³⁰ Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking," 157-158 (my emphasis).

³¹ *Ibid.*, 157-158.

However, the globalised barrage of modernity – particularly in the increasing kinds and numbers of competing specialists and specialty typologies – constantly challenges the inseparability of building and dwelling. As building and dwelling split, their simple oneness, which is a *way of being* and therefore something *responsive*, gradually transmutes into a *strategy for being* and therefore something *exploitable*. Or, seen through Heidegger's example, as the act of designing a Black Forest farmhouse progressively shifts into the purview of an expert, the vernacular becomes a kind of Vernacular-ism, providing a set of assertable and exploitable idioms that define expertise, that fill the resultant expert architecture, and thus stand as a barrier to that emptying on which the vernacular actually depends. This disintegration of building and dwelling is what folklorist Henry Glassie describes as "cultural weakening" and "cultural disharmony," made evident when building becomes marked by "the existence of plans on paper," and is made measureable by the "amount of detail" such plans depict.³² Indeed, the ever-progressing disintegration of building and dwelling produces ever-more, ever-new, and ever-more-strategic factions, each accompanied by the production of ever-more-detailed plans, eventually not on paper but on visual display units. A call to turn back to architecture's vernacular beginnings is a call to see, telescopically, beyond the myriad 'isms', and to learn from simple oneness, without becoming mired in nostalgic longings for either style or a simpler time. Heidegger so states when he explains that his vernacular example "in no way means that we should or could go back to building such houses," only that we can learn from it that "dwelling ... is the basic character of Being in keeping with which mortals exist."³³ Indeed, any turning back is equally a looking forward, applying what is learnt in a milieu of intensifying modern complexities.

Vernacular-ism

An emptying and turning back toward the vernacular offers architecture the prospect of an ontological view, one that maintains the integrity of building and dwelling. But if, in practice, barriers to emptying remain, the view can be distorted or occluded, and its potentiality diminished. Indeed, the view can stop well short of the vernacular, at yet another 'ism'; something that might be seen as Vernacular-ism. A pertinent example is presented in the work of "citizen-architect" and teacher Samuel Mockbee (1944—2001), and in the unique practice – called Rural Studio – that he co-founded with Auburn

³² H. Glassie, "Vernacular Architecture and Society," in *Vernacular Architecture: Paradigms of Environmental Response*, ed. M. Turan, *Ethnoscapes: Volume 4* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1990), 274. Glassie goes on to argue that "the more minimal the plan, the more completely the architectural idea abides in the separate minds of architect and client." The fully vernacular, however, would not recognise such a separation, since the vernacular idea would likely abide only in the mind of the user/builder, or, more accurately, spring from and be crafted into building by the dwelling-ness of that user/builder.

³³ Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking," 158.

University (in the state of Alabama, USA).³⁴ The Heideggerian notions of dwelling and, especially, dwelling “poetically”³⁵ – which invoke more than mere dwelling conditions, house-dwelling, or dwelling as a house – would appear to undergird the studio’s work.³⁶ In brief, Rural Studio develops the design and construction skills of architectural students (as part of their curriculum), salvages and recycles unwanted or unusual materials (including hay bales, tyres, automobile windscreens, waste cardboard, and surplus carpet tiles³⁷), and collaborates with benefactors and government agencies to source funding, such that in Hale County – second poorest in Alabama – the neediest residents are given new houses, and the neediest communities are provided with new public facilities and parks. These architecturally-designed ‘gifts’ generally come without any cost to the recipient.³⁸ Thus, Hale County is a social laboratory for an architectural experiment that is driven by commendable moral and ethical intentions, and delivers significant outcomes of mutual benefit. For that, the studio has deservedly received widespread praise and scant criticism.³⁹

In its conception, then, Rural Studio and its work would appear to be shrouded in the ideals of the vernacular and permeated by kenotic principles – all in a situation where both are clearly essential to dwelling poetically. Such appearances, however, prove somewhat ambiguous, if not misleading, largely owing to the project’s premise of gift. What *seems to be* uncomplicated responsiveness invokes the vernacular, but is not entirely so; and, what *is* a kind and charitable gesture invokes kenosis, but is not entirely so. The subject of gift and gift exchange – including the problematics thereof – is well explored elsewhere by figures such as Mauss, Heidegger, Derrida, and others.⁴⁰ For

³⁴ In a comparison of “dispositions of liberal democracy,” Mockbee is named as the “idealised citizen-architect,” exemplifying an “ontological” approach that values “participation” and builds on “regenerative architecture” and “sustainable development.” See Moore and Brand, “The Banks of Frankfurt and the Sustainable City,” 7. Interestingly, Mockbee and his Rural Studio re-present many key characteristics of the architects and projects examined in Part Two (Chapters 3 – 6) of this dissertation. In various instances, Mockbee’s work demonstrates the zeal of Kahn, the exaggeration of Graves, the search for essence undertaken by Pei, Ando’s focus on architectonics, the distortedness of Libeskind and Eisenman, and the environmentalism and high-tech approach of Foster – even if all such characteristics are pursued and achieved with humble and low-tech means.

³⁵ The expanded term refers to Heidegger’s elucidation of dwelling, using a Hölderlin poem, in Heidegger, “... Poetically Man Dwells ...,” 211-227.

³⁶ The story of Mockbee and Rural Studio is well-documented. See, for example, S. Mockbee, “The Rural Studio,” *Architectural Design* 68, no. 7-8 (1998): 72-79; A.O. Dean and T. Hursley, *Rural Studio: Samuel Mockbee and an Architecture of Decency* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2002); and A.O. Dean and T. Hursley, *Proceed and Be Bold: Rural Studio After Samuel Mockbee* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2005).

³⁷ Dean and Hursley, *Proceed and Be Bold: Rural Studio After Samuel Mockbee*: 8.

³⁸ Recipient contributions toward construction costs can occur in some instances, particularly in connection with larger, civic projects. For example, in the case of the Antioch Baptist Church, the congregation raised USD10,000 of the USD35,000 total cost. The balance was ‘gift’. See *ibid.*, 47.

³⁹ This point is acknowledged by admirers, as in Dean and Hursley, *Rural Studio: Samuel Mockbee and an Architecture of Decency*: 12; as well as by critics, as in P. del Real, “‘Ye Shall Receive’: The Rural Studio and the Gift of Architecture,” *Journal of Architectural Education* 62, no. 4 (2009): 123.

⁴⁰ A worthy compilation and analysis of major writings on this subject can be found in A.D. Schrift, *The Logic of the Gift: Toward an Ethic of Generosity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1997). My arguments concerning gift exchange, which I propose specifically in relation to the vernacular and kenosis, are given

purposes of this discussion, suffice it to say that there is a sense (particularly according to Mauss) in which the notion of gifting can be seen as a form of self-assertion toward the other. Regardless of intentions, gifting, in that sense, carries obligations (explicit or not) of immediate, deferred, or perhaps ongoing return by someone, at some time, in some form, if not with in-kind gifts, then at least with appreciation, affirmation, or indirect benefits. Clearly, however, the gifts of Rural Studio are not given with the overt intention to oblige reciprocity. Rural Studio acts on what Mockbee calls a “foundation of decency,” in order to “help those who aren’t likely to help you in return ... even if nobody is watching.”⁴¹ But, of course, many are watching,⁴² and there are returns – direct and indirect – to all of the gift givers (notwithstanding the fact that some returns are unsolicited). In many cases there is a rightful expectation of such return.⁴³ As such, the project is not merely responsive to need. It is also strategic and, in that, its vernacular character becomes dubious. Its kenotic character is similarly challenged in that the project’s ‘gifting’, its pouring-out of apparent hospitality in the form of a new building, is not necessarily the pouring-out of *kenotic* hospitality. Counterintuitively, such hospitality is not the giving of any ‘thing’ the self has *to* the other but, rather, the self’s reception *of* the other, making room for (emptying) and gathering-in (filling with) whatever the other comprises – including that which may not be seen as worthy. Emptying is filling, pouring-out is receiving; passive is active, and active is passive; none are gift. The events of kenotic hospitality are effected concurrently, in simple oneness, not with any expectation of reciprocity, but as a consequential responsibility of becoming human. Paradoxically, then, it is the contingency, vulnerability, and beauty of action-emptied-of-expectation (the antithesis of gift exchange) that invites, even fosters, an unexpected response of reciprocal kenosis and the potential for mutual exchange and influence that flows therefrom.

Gift exchange can distort relationality, especially if the gift recipients have no means of reciprocating, and their participation is thus restricted to passive acceptance, as

impetus by a larger, sociological exploration of the subject in del Real, “‘Ye Shall Receive’: The Rural Studio and the Gift of Architecture,” 123-126. Citing sociologist, Marcel Mauss, del Real notes that unlike commodity exchange, wherein required relationality is defined only by the transaction, “the gift is predicated on a social relation, on a bond (like the family) that demands an economy of reaffirmation,” or “exchange systems of obligation and reciprocity” that establish “dynamic, two-way relationships.”

⁴¹ Mockbee, “The Rural Studio,” 79.

⁴² Indeed, Rural Studio has attained a level of celebrity status. “The work of the Rural Studio has struck such a chord – both architecturally and socially – that it has been featured on *Oprah*, *Nightline*, and *CBS News*, as well as in *Time* and *People* magazines.” See Dean and Hursley, *Rural Studio: Samuel Mockbee and an Architecture of Decency*: inside front cover notes.

⁴³ The university expects and receives a viable vehicle of education and research, as well as the affirmation of positive publicity and its consequent recruitment benefits. The studio’s principals expect and receive the means to satisfy personal and professional ambitions, and, solicited or not, they receive widespread recognition. The students expect and receive an education (that being commodity exchange), as well as the extra return of an extra-ordinary, extra-classroom opportunity. The funding agencies and benefactors, by way of the program’s inherent economies of labour and materials, expect and receive a greater yield than might otherwise be achieved, and enjoy the favourable public image arising from their assistance and philanthropy.

is reportedly the case of most Rural Studio recipients. In that mode, recipients are largely unengaged bystanders. Adding to the disengagement – and contrary to the dynamics of the vernacular – recipients are also largely excluded from hands-on participation in the realisation of what are ostensibly *their* buildings. Since so much of the Rural Studio's work involves unconventional building practices and the use of unconventional materials, and because the project is necessarily a disciplinary training ground, opportunities for non-disciplinary participation are limited. According to critic Patricio del Real, "there is nothing to do – unless invited to participate – but watch."⁴⁴ Insofar as that is true, the problem of non-participation is ironically compounded, since, if recipient participation were to be invited, such would be at the sole discretion and subject to the restrictions of the gift givers. To restrict participation – especially that of the user – is to compromise the integrity of the vernacular, the simple oneness of dwelling and building, the capacity of dwelling to build, and, ultimately, the potential for dwelling poetically. Such limitation compromises kenosis.

Most problematic, however, is the gift itself – neither mere shelter nor necessarily shelter with a high degree of responsiveness to place and region, yet frequently seen as being aligned with the vernacular. Mockbee describes the studio's work as "contemporary modernism grounded in Southern culture" with inspiration from "vernacular sources."⁴⁵ His statement reveals a design strategy, and two glossy monographs of professional architectural photographs reveal the same. The gift of the Rural Studio project is the gift of Architecture (intentionally capitalised).⁴⁶ It presents as an architecture filled by a kind of modern Vernacular-ism and the modern Vernacular-ists who design it. Notwithstanding modest scale, humble materiality, and noble intentions, it differs little from most other expert architecture of one '-ism' or another. Mockbee suggests that the studio's buildings – small and simple – "remind us of what it means to have an American architecture without pretence," yet he also speaks of their ability (and the desirability thereof) to leave the perceiver "awed." He likens such ability to that of larger and more complex structures,⁴⁷ those in which the frequent pretence is precisely that of awe. Eschewed is the "grand and ostentatious" in architecture, yet the architectonics of the studio's work often appear to mimic, or belie a longing to mimic, the motifs of grand and often self-conscious (if not always ostentatious) structures.⁴⁸ Even many of Rural

⁴⁴ del Real, "'Ye Shall Receive': The Rural Studio and the Gift of Architecture," 124.

⁴⁵ Dean and Hursley, *Proceed and Be Bold: Rural Studio After Samuel Mockbee*: 8.

⁴⁶ Although by a different approach, del Real reaches a similar conclusion, arguing that "architecture is the formidable negotiating table on which the Rural Studio comes to talk to the community." See del Real, "'Ye Shall Receive': The Rural Studio and the Gift of Architecture," 123.

⁴⁷ Mockbee, "The Rural Studio," 79.

⁴⁸ For example, the Yancey Chapel (built in 1995 for USD15,000), also called 'The Tire Chapel' (for its use of disused tires, rendered in stucco), could readily be seen as a 'poor-man's' version of Faye Jones' work at the Thorncrown and Cooper Memorial Chapels, or Lloyd Wright's (Frank Lloyd Wright, Jr) Wayfarer's Chapel

Studio's regenerative practices appear to be deployed in service to their Architecture, rather than to the residents' dwelling-ness, and can thereby manifest as self-conscious novelties, architectural gimmicks, and, potentially worse, cultural faux pas.⁴⁹ This filling of the studio's work, with architecture and architects, appears as a barrier to the emptying that nurtures dwelling, and that is most worrying with regard to the inhabitants.

Many of the Studio's architectural photographs, most notably those of residential interiors, reveal what del Real describes as the architecture's "leash of middle class desires" and the "rebellions against architecture orchestrated by [the] inhabitants,"⁵⁰ both of which can be seen as clashes between dwelling and building. Exemplified is Glassie's cultural disharmony,⁵¹ ironically foreseeable in the studio's design strategy, insofar as its espoused contemporary modernism proves not to be so grounded in – not to be in simple oneness with – the Southern culture that defines these residents' dwelling-ness. In many instances, it appears that the architecture provides a dwelling but impedes dwelling poetically. These unintended tensions and impediments appear to emerge from architectural dogma. According to Mockbee:

(itself an antecedent of Jones' chapels). At Lucy's House (designed by Mockbee before his death, and built for USD32,000 in 2002), the 'tower' (redesigned by the studio after Mockbee's death) takes on sharply angular and distorted forms, not dissimilar to those of Daniel Libeskind, and consequently has little relationship to the modesty or simplicity that marks the balance of the original Mockbee design. (Such intentional unrelatedness only strengthens the comparison to Libeskind's work. See Chapter 6.) The Modernist formal composition of the Mason's Bend Community Center (2000), and especially its dominating façade of scalloped glass sheets (actually eighty automobile windscreens), can be aesthetically likened to the work of Norman Foster, not least his scalloped glass dome at the Reichstag (also discussed in Chapter 6). And, at the Antioch Baptist Church (built in 2001 for USD35,000), the manner in which relatively inexpensive galvanised aluminium is used as an exterior cladding belies what appears to be an underlying longing to have used much more expensive zinc cladding, a material which has become ubiquitous in contemporary architecture. These projects appear in the two Rural Studio monographs, both by Dean and Hursley.

⁴⁹ Deployment of the fashionable trend to use discarded materials – though not without good intentions toward economy and sustainability – offers one example of cultural faux pas and disharmony with the particular Southern culture of this context. Recycling thrown away materials is an age-old practice employed by the economically disadvantaged out of need, not trend, and is not necessarily valorised. When such practices are celebrated as contemporary design features – especially as caricatures of more sophisticated motifs – they can be seen to "underscore the actions of poverty," to be an "appropriation of the tactics of the poor," made subject to "architectural disciplinary and elite values" and then "masked behind a common sense universalism that sees efficiency as a virtue – as if the poor could never waste resources." See del Real, "'Ye Shall Receive': The Rural Studio and the Gift of Architecture," 124.

⁵⁰ Specifically, del Real cites "the unease with which the furniture of 'the poor' inhabit these houses," as exemplified at Lucy's house, "where the naked concrete clashes with the plush couch in the family room, or the baroque wooden dresser/vanity collides with the jagged geometry of the bedroom tower." See *ibid.*, 123-126. Arguably, the 'plushness' of the couch and the 'baroque-ness' of other furniture are, themselves, incongruous with the nature of dwelling in Hale County, but the stylistic character of the furniture is no less faux than the vernacularity of the architecture. Beyond that, however, I would suggest that there is a far more telling incongruity at work. Throughout Lucy's house are proudly and prominently placed reproductions of pious (some would say, sentimental) Christian art, each depicting some dimension of kenosis (inasmuch as the Christian story is one of kenosis). This art – despite its 'inauthenticity' in one sense – authentically reveals more about the poetic-ness with which these residents dwell, or at least that in which such poetic-ness is sought, than does the furniture. It is this art, depicting a presumably sincere yearning for openness toward the other, which collides with its host architecture, so self-consciously and 'full' as to block such openness. That collision vividly portrays unease. Other examples of incongruity and unease – of varying degree and manner – are reflected in images of the Bryant (Hay Bale) House (1994), the Harris (Butterfly) House (1997), and the Goat House (1998), as well as in those of several civic facilities, where unremarkable but indigenous 'dwelling' argues with 'building' – with Architecture – and appears to grasp at and assert its remarkability.

⁵¹ See note 32.

There is something divine in a work of architecture, and we must maintain faith in the wonder of architecture to bring us into accord with the natural world, the supernatural world, with our fellow human beings and the great unknown.⁵²

Not unlike Kahn, but perhaps more dogmatically, Mockbee speaks about architecture in terms that are almost religious. Initially, he might even be heard to invoke and support something of Heidegger's thinking about the fourfold and dwelling. But Mockbee is obviously speaking of expert architecture, and his notion – one not uncommon in the profession – is actually more an inversion of Heidegger. Notwithstanding any accompanying advocacy of social responsiveness and civic engagement, Mockbee's is a notion that tends to privilege architecture (expert building), separate it from dwelling, and suggest that dwelling emerges from (expert) building, or that (expert) building is that which builds dwelling. It sees expert building (Architecture) as a gift to humanity. Granted, the act of building (expert or not) may, like other acts of creative endeavour, serve to nurture humanity's dwelling-ness, but, insofar as Heidegger correctly orders it, the act of building that might do so is that which springs from humanity *first* dwelling poetically.

In its practice of architecture, the Rural Studio turns back toward the vernacular of Heidegger's farmhouse – toward the integration of building and dwelling – but without the extent of emptying that fully enables attentiveness to the present and anticipation of the future. Such emptying is, in part, prevented by a view of architecture as celebrated, privileged, and therefore 'gift'. It is in that view that gift can become an assertion of self rather than an opening-up to the other and the other's dwelling-ness. Assertion precludes fully-engaged participation by those very others whose dwelling-ness is meant to be accommodated. Assertion precludes regeneration, because even when regenerative practices are deployed, they are deployed in service to the gift of Architecture. Ultimately, assertion also precludes sustainability, because being sustainably is not sustainable without the dynamic balance engendered by participation and regeneration. Although it exemplifies a kind of turning back that is in many ways commendable, the Rural Studio view does not appear to be that of architecture's ontology – that is, of kenosis – because that view is seemingly blocked by the fullness stemming from a focus on architecture's epistemology and the privileging that supposedly flows from that. Moreover, Rural Studio's practice appears bound in a not atypical paradigm of strategic quest and attainment, a paradigm unable to recognise that the condition of architecture – indeed, of all acts of creation – is always incomplete and unattainable, and therefore 'complete' only in that condition.

⁵² Mockbee, "The Rural Studio," 75.

EMPTYING

Letting-Be and Becoming

Concealed by entrenched paradigms and practices is that which integrates building with dwelling; indeed, that which holds architecture's (vernacular) nature – its *being*. Unconcealment, as Heidegger advises, is not effected by quest or conquest but by respectfully attending to the concealment, a form of 'letting-be'. In 1993, just as the sustainability movement was gaining momentum in architecture, Susan Maxman (then president of the American Institute of Architects) addressed the subject, saying: "Sustainable architecture isn't a prescription. It's an approach, an attitude. It shouldn't really even have a label. It should *just be* architecture."⁵³ Her statement is a subset of my larger argument that the language of architecture can be emptied of all labels and strategies, and thereby be transformed – without jeopardising its fundamental identity. Architecture need only *be* architecture, or, better stated, architecture need only *be*. In that, it transforms and becomes. Architecture's transformation, however, is not merely of paradigm and practice, but also of those who effect, affect, and are affected by both. In other words, architecture's becoming relies on humanity's. But, what is humanity to become? Notwithstanding a naive suggestion that a solution to world problems might exist, and an inherent Christian bias, the following parable offers an answer to the question of humanity's becoming, even while ensuring that the question is left open.

A theologian was asked, 'What should be done about the problems of the world?' His answer was at one and the same time both profound and simple. He said, 'Do as God – *become* human.'⁵⁴

Seemingly anticipated is an epistemological solution to world problems, some grand solution that can be known and implemented. The solution offered, however, is not only sparing but ontological, suggesting that the solution is not to know but to be. It is a solution further revealed by the parable's syntax. The theologian's initial phrase avoids the past simple 'Do as God *did*', the past participle 'Do as God *has done*', and implies the present participle 'Do as God *is doing*', thereby suggesting that the solution is *ongoing*, incomplete, and only occurring in that incompleteness. Then, employing the verb 'become', the second phrase adds the expectation of *ongoing transformation*, that of those becoming, their becoming relationality, and therefore their becoming situation. Both phrases are presented as commands – calls-to-action, calls to become engaged –

⁵³ B. Bilger, "Shaking the Rafters," *Earthwatch* July/August(1993): 11 (my emphasis).

⁵⁴ J. McIntyre, "President's Address" (paper presented at the Anglican Church of Australia, Diocese of Gippsland, Thirty-sixth Synod, Sale, Victoria, Australia, 2012), n.p. (my emphasis). In his address, Bishop McIntyre parabolised, but inadvertently misquoted a statement from W. Bardsley, *Against the Tide: The Story of Adomnan of Iona* (Glasgow: Wild Goose Publications, 2006), 141. Bishop McIntyre's parable is used here, for illustrative purposes, but the theologian's reply has been corrected in accordance with the source text.

but are without coercion or obligation or expectation of attainment. The only expectation is evolvment. Thus, the so-called solution lies in always incomplete transformation, which cannot be known, only experienced and attended. Finally, with its reference to the incarnation – the particular Christian story of God emptying to become and be human – the theologian's answer reveals its grounding in kenosis. Ironically, however, it is a grounding that defies co-optation by any particular interest, religious or otherwise. The invocation of kenosis opens-up a view of becoming human that transcends categories of opposition (the '-isms' of religion or architecture). It is a view that focuses on the always ongoing dynamic by which all of creation moves in and out of relationship, and thereby undergoes constant transformation.

Although the discipline of architecture may not, at first, be seen to rank highly on a list of world problems, many of the subjects that would – environment, housing, health, industry, consumerism – are so intrinsically connected to architecture that its place on such a list is already embedded.⁵⁵ It is therefore no deceit to suggest that this parable points to the potentiality of architecture's transformation. As humanity transforms, so do its pursuits, not least creative pursuits that include architecture. Such transformation requires, and also effects, the removal of barriers to emptying. Freed of barriers, the act of architectural design can be seen as a kenotic event, an *emptying to create*; or, an emptying that makes ready for the appearance of, and enables attentive response to, what it is that a situation is calling for.

Creativity, Creating, and Creation

An account of design – seen as an emptying to create – first takes up the approach or posture with which a creator comes to create. Kenosis, however, offers no procedures by which to invoke creativity, engage in creating, or manifest creation; instead, remaining open to contingent happenings. In that openness, kenosis eschews any notions that creativity can be commodified, learned, and performed according to a process.⁵⁶ When architecture is called to practically transform, for example by changing its 'modes of production', such a call implies changes to existing processes or the discovery of new processes by which architecture can better itself. Both are always possible, both might incrementally improve architecture, and both might somehow transform the (already

⁵⁵ Earlier in this chapter, I argued that the *undertaking* of architectural design is inherently an undertaking of criticality and regionality. Here, echoing Susan Maxman, I would argue that it is also inherently an undertaking of sustainability – clearly a major international concern. That, alone, inscribes architecture amongst 'world problems'. (I posit the argument, however, in full recognition that the *practice* of architecture, which includes its realisations, has been and remains perfectly capable of overlooking, ignoring, or resisting the inherent demands of its undertaking.)

⁵⁶ Architecture does, of course, include a 'body of knowledge' – an epistemology – that can be learned and placed in service to creativity. But such creativity nonetheless defies definition or execution by way of a specifiable process.

futile) ‘process-isation’ of creativity – but not creativity itself. Kenosis calls on the participants in creative acts to counterintuitively focus not on process or strategy but on ways of *being*, particularly ways of *being receptive* to that in which the creative responses are already embedded; namely, the situation to which they are responding. It calls not for transformed processes, but for Heidegger’s *transformed thinking*; not the calculative sort but the meditative (as discussed in Chapter 2 and, again, in Chapter 8). It calls for “askesis or ‘non-verbal pedagogy,’” an “open-eyed mysticism” – practised and contemplative self-emptying – from which arises a “means of true attentiveness,” something that is “more discomforting, more destabilizing to settled presumptions,” than any calculated process could possibly be.⁵⁷ In that call, much of practical import is revealed.

Whether consciously or sub-consciously actuated, creat-ivity begins with the creators’ humanity, or approach to being. Being human begins with becoming a child, but the invocation of mere childlike naiveté and innocence, as attributes of creativity, risks sentimentality and trivialisation. Yet, becoming a child, particularly adopting the child’s willing vulnerability and distinctly open-eyed envisaging and understanding, is a condition of kenotic creativity. The child, of whom Walter Benjamin writes, is not merely naive, innocent, and blissful.⁵⁸ His is a child who knows the anxiety of anticipating an unknown future, one in which everything is seen for the first time. In such anxiety, however, the child is liberated from the more restrictive adult afflictions of habit, desensitisation, and myopia. In the child’s emptiness is the capacity to be filled. From the child’s perspective, objects in the environment appear larger and closer, yet unfamiliarity with such objects effectively renders them smaller and more distant, a phenomenon by which the ‘intimacy of distance’ is experienced. In the child’s ability to disrupt and rebel against adult certitude, the child challenges self-sufficiency in the other. But, to Benjamin, the essence of the child’s responsiveness to its situation is found in the spontaneity and serendipity of discovery, free of strategic intent. “Finds are to children what conquests are to adults,” Benjamin writes.⁵⁹ Rather than seeking to dominate its environment, the child is content with a reciprocal relationship, often delighted to create a miniaturised world using objects that adults have rendered obsolete or nature has moulted.⁶⁰ The child’s approach to creativity is not simply ingenuous, it can be profoundly kenotic. Adults often dismiss the

⁵⁷ M.T. Eggemeier, “A Mysticism of Open Eyes: Compassion for a Suffering World and the *Askesis* of Contemplative Prayer,” *Spiritus* 12, no. 1 (2012): 43, 52-54. In the formulation of these thoughts, Eggemeier draws on German political theologian Johann Baptist Metz and Jewish philosopher Edith Wyschogrod, as well as theologian and philosopher Sarah Coakley.

⁵⁸ Benjamin’s concepts of ‘child’ are explored and developed in Gilloch, *Myth & Metropolis: Walter Benjamin and the City*: 58-67, 83-92. Although neither Benjamin nor Gilloch frame their discussion in terms of kenosis – as I do here – such a connection is clearly invited.

⁵⁹ W. Benjamin as quoted in *ibid.*, 90.

⁶⁰ An example of his writing on this topic is found in Benjamin, “One-Way Street,” 449 (under “Construction Site”).

child's innate self-emptying and attunement to situation as something susceptible to error, misperception, and misjudgement, when, paradoxically, the child's kenosis can effect uncanny revealment that remains imperceptible to the self-absorbed. Kenosis pleads for the recovery, in all creators, of the child's approach – as if 'at first sight' – and the practicable creativity that ensues therefrom.

Approaching with kenotic creativity, the child engages not in idle but transformative 'play', shaping the child and its world without distinction. Benjamin describes such play in terms of transgression, mimesis, and collection, each of which also offers insights into the creat-*ing* that arises out of kenosis. Such creating invites transgression in the form of a willingness to cross thresholds of familiarity; to 'surrender' to the situation, not through acquiescence, but through rapport; and to become practised at, and motivated by, losing oneself in the labyrinth of potentiality presented by every situation. Kenotic creating invites the mimesis of recognising correspondences, partially becoming the others or other things of a situation, and abandoning goals of mastery over any. Kenotic creating also invites, through unexpected discovery, the collection (and re-collection) of lost or forgotten things, not for the sake of possession, but for redemption. It thereby challenges value systems that unsustainably esteem the new and eschew the obsolete, into the ranks of which the new is forever moving. Transgression, mimesis, and collection are pertinent attributes of creating, when creating is viewed kenotically. They are not so much activities to be undertaken, but ways of being, ways for humanity to respond reciprocally to ongoing kenosis. They foster ways of expressing creativity by creating; that is, by letting-go, attending to, discovering, and also by dreaming. Although kenosis entails a willingness to empty oneself of one's own dreams (in the sense of strategies and goals of mastery), it is also a call to join in the dreams of humankind, or what Benjamin sees as the repressed dreams of childhood.⁶¹ Such dreaming is neither delusional nor idealistic when it leads to awakening, and when awakening leads to realisation.⁶² Any idealising indulged in dreaming is the hope for fulfilment, but, in awakening – sometimes necessarily jarring – such idealisation dissolves into its own practical realisation. Whereas creativity is the willingness and ability to dream, creating is the *imagining* in dreaming and the *imaging* in awakening. Dreaming can remain locked in the endless imagining of situational responses unless there is an awakening that enables realisation, the practical appearance of response. But there can be no awakening without dreaming. Both are essential aspects of kenosis.

⁶¹ Gilloch, *Myth & Metropolis: Walter Benjamin and the City*: 91-92.

⁶² Benjamin's notions of dreaming and awakening are explored more fully in *ibid.*, 108-116. He notes that "every epoch not only dreams the next, but while dreaming impels it toward wakefulness."

Response to situation, stemming from kenotic creativity and creating, appears practically as creat-*ion*. Absent awakening, creating can result in the mere production of commodities, rather than the realisation of attentive and responsive creations. Benjamin laments modernity's obsession with commodities,⁶³ which he sees as the "wish-images" of undisturbed dreams; dreams that incessantly produce the "perpetually-new," only to be exposed as nothing more than the fashionably dressed-up "always-the-same." When such wish-images take the form of buildings, commentator Graeme Gilloch summarises the Benjaminian view in stark terms: "The architecture of the recent past [forms] the ruins of the present," and that "provides an archaeology of dreaming." As the "commodity and the processes of its production" are "defetishize[d] and demythifie[d]" by an "outmoded object," the awakening from sleep – the becoming conscious that one is asleep – presents the redemptive possibility of realising the "*actually* new."⁶⁴ From another point of view, but with a similar conclusion, Paolo Soleri – architect, environmentalist, and philosopher – observes that "entropy and pollution are one and the same," that humanity's "accelerating tempo ... works as a grinder, and debris of all sorts – things, concepts and conviction – litter our inner and outer landscapes." Redemption is realised in a "non-expedient environment" and a "world of non-obsolescent character."⁶⁵ Kenosis, then, is catalysed by Benjamin's awakening, and obviates Soleri's entropy. It is not, however, a prescription for the imposition of pristine order, nor of any particular ethic or aesthetic, yet it is both ethical and aesthetic. It calls only for creations that are of, and in relationship with, their contingent situations. Kenosis makes-room for the potential messiness of creation and the often clumsy entanglement of relationality, as well as the important aesthetic contribution derived therefrom. It also promotes forgotten, discarded, and endangered elements, not as the pawns of fashion or trend, but as resources for re-membering and re-creating, by which they are redeemed and more highly valued.

Creations that emerge from a domain permeated by kenosis are, thus, always 'new' and 'novel', in the sense that they are uniquely attentive to a unique situation. A domain permeated by kenosis is one in which creativity is approached with the open mindset of a child – free of inhibition, prohibition, and the need for exhibition to validate oneself and one's work. It is one in which creating is undertaken as childlike play – free of the compulsion to dominate or oppose, and from which creations emerge in full consciousness, attendant to situation, and transcendent of commodity fetish. Becoming

⁶³ Benjamin refers to such obsession as "phantasmagoria," while Marx uses the term "commodity fetishism." See *ibid.*, 117.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 110-111, 117-118 (my emphasis). This Benjaminian notion aligns with that of Vattimo, discussed earlier, suggesting that the recognition of violence – the becoming conscious of it – is the first step in its rejection. The same case can be made with regard to the 'violence' of commodification and fetishisation. Awakening to such violence is the first step toward rejecting it.

⁶⁵ Soleri, *The Bridge Between Matter and Spirit is Matter Becoming Spirit: The Arcology of Paolo Soleri*: 70-73.

childlike in order to create does not call for infantilism, but ironic maturity. In architecture, a kenotic approach to creativity calls for radically different paradigms and practices – perhaps their ‘end’ or ‘end-ing’ – but still fails to advocate specific processes. Although kenosis may be processional, in that it proceeds forth, it eludes formulation into process because it proceeds forth indeterminately. Nonetheless, the kenosis that animates cosmic and evolutionary creation also informs and influences human creation. In so doing, it informs the creating that is architecture, and ongoingly promotes its transformation.

Creators

A transforming architecture, however, is not to be seen as an independent happening. It occurs against the backdrop of a transforming world. In fact, it occurs amidst a world transforming through secularisation, which, as posited by Gianni Vattimo (and discussed in Chapter 2), is ultimately a world transforming kenotically. A transforming architecture thereby necessitates a kenotic world view, one in which the aesthetisation of culture and the pluralisation of lifestyles present an opportunity for an aesthetic way of being, one allowing the free exercise of creativity, without the violence of self-assertion.⁶⁶ Such aesthetisation, arising out of secularisation, is an opening-up that transcends professional declarations of aesthetic privilege and sovereignty, and obviates opposition. Earlier, I argued that a globalised barrage of modernity – with its oppositional forces – works to disintegrate Heidegger’s union of building and dwelling, and therefore acts as a barrier to kenosis. That modern barrage, however, is not secularisation (as is often portrayed), despite its emergence in secularisation’s midst. If the barrage of modernity is a barrier to kenosis, it cannot also be kenosis; that is, it cannot be secularisation. While secularisation produces the modern pluralism and complexity to which Vattimo refers, and to which Venturi admonishes architecture to respond (see Chapter 4), it does not, of itself, produce opposing and competing differences, or the various forms of violence arising therefrom. Indeed, it is not secularisation, but *inattention* to secularisation – by way of its being overlooked, neglected, or otherwise resisted with various forms of self-consciousness and self-assertion – that spawns categories of opposition. Vattimo pleads, in connection with religion and culture, as I do in connection with architecture, for the “progressive elimination of walls,” for the “progressive reduction of all rigid categories that lead to opposition.”⁶⁷ Kenosis, manifested in a secularising world, is an empowering

⁶⁶ These themes are introduced in Chapter 2, drawing, in part, on Prosman, “Secularization as Kenosis.”

⁶⁷ Vattimo, “Toward a Nonreligious Christianity,” 45-46. Vattimo acknowledges that his is “also the message of hermeneutics, of Gadamer, and of so much of contemporary philosophy,” but he directs his particularly Christian view of kenosis back at Christianity itself. Amongst categories that lead to opposition, Vattimo includes “property, blood, family [and] the excesses of absolutism.”

permeation with the capacity to reduce and remove such barriers, and thereby progress continued transforming.

In a transforming, secularising, and aestheticising world, it is logical to inquire as to those who would be its 'designers', or, in a broader sense, its 'creators'. The pluralisation and secularisation of kenosis challenge contemporary definitions and categorisations. Judeo-Christian notions of humanity as "created co-creators" suggest that all of humanity effects, affects, and is affected by the aesthetisation of life on earth.⁶⁸ Furthermore, growing environmental awareness has come to highlight the interdependent relationship between humanity and its habitat. Is it the case, then, that *everyone* is a creator? Paolo Soleri suggests not.

The notion that, regardless of our personal limitations, we are all 'creators', has generated the inflationary concept of 'everything goes', or 'my opinion is as good as yours'. It plays into the hands of mediocrity, and we all pay for it. Now, even the environment pays for it.⁶⁹

Soleri's caution about relativism, and preference for exclusivity when granting 'creator' status, is shared by many, yet secularisation and consequent pluralisation and globalisation all point to the inevitability and promise of inclusivity. Viewed kenotically, the apparent discord is reconcilable, because kenosis is simultaneously inclusive, demanding of self-restriction, protective of self-identity, and, as a result, able to accommodate the premise of all humanity as creators, without countenancing relativism. Such is a view of creators, not in the limited sense of aesthetic authors, but in the broader sense, as those who enable the appearance of something other than the status quo,⁷⁰ or those who participate as creative actors – in the Shakespearian sense – where "all the world's a stage."⁷¹

Such a view can be given some sense of structure by an ecclesiastical model whereby a meant-to-be inclusive assemblage, participating in an ongoing kenotic event, is able to distinguish its parts, their relationality, and the consequent dynamism, without diminishing, or placing into opposition, any of its parts. In this model, *all* are the church's 'priests' and 'ministers', though some are set aside, or ordained, for particular service, and some serve in para-clerical capacities. If applied to architecture, the model suggests

⁶⁸ Building on the earlier work of Philip Hefner, the Christian theology of this contention is explored in Doncel, "The Kenosis of the Creator, His Creative Call and the Created Co-Creators," 5-13.

⁶⁹ C. Kohlhasse, "Paolo Soleri – Architect," The Planetary Society, sponsored by NASA, NASA/JPL, J. Paul Getty Trust, National Endowment for the Arts, US Department of Education, White House Millennium Council, <http://mmp.planetary.org/artis/solep/solep70.htm>.

⁷⁰ This is a notion explored more comprehensively in H.A. Simon, *Sciences of the Artificial*, Third ed. (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1996), 111. According to Simon: "Everyone designs who devises courses of action aimed at changing existing situations into preferred ones." Viewed kenotically, the aim would be to respond to situations so as to make them what they need to be, which may indeed be other than what is merely 'preferred' by any of the situation's elements.

⁷¹ W Shakespeare, "As You Like It," in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G.B. Evans (Boston: Houghton, 1974), Act II, Scene VII.

that all of humanity can be seen as 'lay' creators, aestheticising existence with each negotiation of being that is undertaken. Although Soleri is correct that manifold creators will necessarily vary in aesthetic attentiveness and ability – from disinterest to genius – none are without aesthetic impact, just as none possess self-sufficient aesthetic prowess. Some, with special interest and competency, may be seen as intermediating 'para-creators', even as those with enhanced aesthesia and skills in manifestation may be recognised as 'ordained' or 'vocational' creators. In a permeance of kenosis, such distinctions are not the elevation to positions of power or privilege, but the yielding to increased servitude. This is a context, however, in which servitude has no connotations of weakness but, paradoxically, identifies an increased capacity to affect kenosis – to *become human*. Within a contingent, plural, and open society, *all* are creators, in both their *self*-ness and in their *other*-ness. They are aestheticians of lifestyle and culture, and *all* can choose to be so, kenotically, in reciprocal response to the aesthetic experience that is kenosis. It is through such choice that creativity is made manifest.

As inclusive as it may seem, the suggestion that all of humanity are creators is still insufficient, as long as the suggestion refers only to those in a situation who effect or affect that which is being created. Such reference excludes – or at least fails to specifically include – those others who are *affected by* such creation, and are therefore equally amongst a situation's creators. A responsive creative event gathers-in and makes-room for, at the time of creation, such others who will be shaped by the created thing as a result of their receptivity, use, and experience of it, and who will go on shaping or re-shaping the created thing in ensuing creative events. It is as sociologist Thomas Gieryn suggests, that in "the play of agency and structure ... we mold buildings, they mold us, we mold them anew."⁷² Similarly, the creative act already comprises the non-human, and therefore voiceless, *other things* of the situation. Such things include those affecting the situation, those to which creators respond, as well as those with which creators effect a response. The latter may even extend to other things that are part of another situation altogether, which, by virtue of their extraction for use in the subject situation, also alter their original situation and initiate a new need for response there. Furthermore, the created thing, even before its creation, is already amongst the situation's pertinent other things because, by its creation, the created thing affects situations to which ensuing creative events must respond. All of a situation's others and other things – not least those seen as irrelevant or lacking the power to accord themselves a place in the creative act – are of critical importance. They comprise the complex relationality to which creating is called to be attentive. The exclusion of any,

⁷² Gieryn, "What Buildings Do," 65, 35. Here, Gieryn restates and expands the well-known words attributed to Winston Churchill: "We shape our buildings and afterward our buildings shape us."

whether intentional or not, is particularly problematic in architecture, since architecture is the creation of *things*, using *other things*, for the use – or perhaps only perception, which is nonetheless ‘use’ – by a situation’s *others*.

If architecture fails to make-room for and gather-in the full plurality of a situation’s others and other things, then such others and other things are victims of a kind of violence. They become subject to the prevailing participants, viewed merely as assets or resources, either compliant or made to be so. In the case of others who are users and perceivers – perhaps architecture’s most enduring, if not long-suffering, participants – their lack of participation in the creative event can result in bystander status, which does violence to them and to the creative act from which they are absent (as discussed earlier, in connection with Rural Studio). In the case of other things, their exclusion can prevent the kind of mutual self-emptying and opening-up that is said to have occurred between Kahn and brick, between Salk and concrete, and between Pei and Islamic essence. The violence thereby done may defy scientific measurement, but it is knowable in aesthetic experience. More fundamentally, and of greater potential violence, such exclusions can sanction neglect and ignorance of – or worse, antipathy toward – the cosmic and evolutionary elements of the earthly environment; precisely the environment that must accommodate and provide the resources for all of humanity’s creative activity. Viewed kenotically, then, a failure to include – to empty, open-up, make-room for, and gather-in – can be seen as a failure to create.

Relationality

When all are seen as creators, attention properly turns to the relationality of all such creators in the context of a transforming architecture. Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre – who introduced the idea of critical regionalism – understood that transformation is reliant on relationality, observing that “no new architecture can emerge without a new kind of relations between designer and user, without new kinds of programs.”⁷³ Their reference to designer and user is readily extended to include the whole range of a building’s creators, just as their reference to ‘programs’ can be extended to include all shared events and experiences of creating, by which relations are established. Secularisation, as kenosis, not only fosters plurality but also accommodates the necessary inclusivity and complex relationality arising therefrom. It is in attempts to achieve and enforce unity through exclusion that the instability of oppositional forces and potential violence are to be found. Contrastingly, kenosis finds all of a situation’s creators

⁷³ The ‘new architecture’ that Tzonis and Lefaivre contemplated was that arising out of their early notions of critical regionalism (before Frampton). Their observations were published in an essay entitled, “The Grid and the Pathway”, excerpts of which appear in Frampton, “Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance,” 20.

mutually committed, especially because of their differing interpretations. It recognises that all participants are servant interpreters, called to be open and attentive to the creative event through which a situation and its call for response is invited to approach, emerge, and be given appearance. It recognises that some participants, by virtue of skill or talent, may emerge as servant leaders in the event, and others may already be servant leaders in whatever 'human institution' it is that might deploy a building, if that is what the situation calls for. It recognises that while all are participant creators, in service to the situation, not all provide the same service at the same time. In their kenotic commitment, the binding of these participants can be seen as a pact of mutual openness and challenge, one which is self-renouncing and thereby self-strengthening, covenantal rather than contractual, and vulnerable rather than assertive. Founding such a pact are the engagements that define relationality.

Engagements

In Chapter 5, I discussed the kenotic call for 'conversations' amongst self, others, and other things, which, in architectural terms, was primarily seen to suggest conversations between architect and client/user, and between architect and a building's materiality – a correct and, for some, challenging suggestion, but nonetheless a relatively simple portrayal. Kenosis, in fact, points to greater complexity. Through a kenotic lens, it is possible to see creating – including that of architecture – not merely as select players having *conversations*, but as an always incomplete happening, one which finds manifold creators in manifold *engagements*, responding to manifold situations; a complex happening that periodically stops to become temporarily materialised (or 'frozen', as Goethe suggests⁷⁴) in some kind of form. Although such engagements are as contingent and indeterminate as the situations that prompt them, they are consistent in that they always involve *all* of the selves, others, and other things that comprise each situation. Engagements – far more than conversations – demand trust and intensity, especially when unprocessed and unrestrained. Indeed, they require letting-go, or releasement. (Distinct from relinquishment, releasement *increases* the potentiality of the creators, their creating, and their creation, which is of eminent practicality in architecture.) And, although these interdependent and entangled engagements cannot be seen as serial, those with others and other things are advantaged by an initial, readying engagement with self.

Kenosis is foremost *self-emptying*, a making-room in one's self for the gathering-in of a situation's manifold elements. It is also inherently challenging to all notions of

⁷⁴ I refer, again, to Goethe's suggestion that architecture is "frozen music," in Eckermann, *Conversations with Goethe in the Last Years of His Life*, IV: 282.

sufficiency (importantly, not just that of the other, but also and especially that of the self). Consequently, the engagement with self, necessarily undertaken by *all* creators, is one that poses questions such as: *What do I think I already know, and to what extent am I prepared to be emptied and filled, to be attentive to that which I do not know and the inevitable challenges arising therefrom?* Emptied of self, there is room for the situation. As seen in Chapter 3, Louis Kahn says something similar when he advises that a thing's design is not determined by the designer's wants or wishes, but, instead, is mandated by the "order of things." And he goes on to say that "everything an architect does is first of all answerable to an institution of man, before it becomes a building."⁷⁵ Although Kahn thus posits a kenotic approach to design, his thoughts can be extended. First, his advice must apply not only to those creators who might currently be named 'architects' but to all of architecture's creators, as earlier defined. Second, all such creators, their creating, and their creations are accountable not merely to an "institution of man" – nor merely to the situation of that institution – but to the entirety of the situation in which the institution is found, and where it may manifest as building. This more expansive situational view incorporates the complex relationality amongst the subject institution and all of the situation's other institutions, and they with all of the situation's other attributes, features, and forces (its boundaries and horizons). In such a view, the creators' self-emptying initiates the creative happening and simultaneously triggers the engagements by which situatedness can be gathered-in.

Although a commonly-held experience of self-engagement may find creators in some kind of *relation*, they come into *relationship* through their engagements with – their opening-up to – one another. It is by such engagements that situatedness is gathered-in, and without which a response-to-situation can only be attentive to the creators' self-logics, or prejudiced interpretations, and the potential opposition they establish with the interpretations or logics of others. A kenotic engagement with others and other things sees self-logics as amongst the bounds of an open domain in which collective interpretation can emerge, not as tools of debate or proselytisation. Calling for self-emptying, while preserving self-identity, kenosis does not call for change to or disregard of individual interpretations. Instead, it reveals the merits of their abeyance, and their hybridisation with others' interpretations, when responding to situations of complex relationality. Kenosis calls on all creators of situational response to be open to counterintuitive – indeed, meditative – thinking, perhaps along the lines of the following: *The response that this situation is calling for may be other than that called for by any of*

⁷⁵ Norberg-Schulz, *Architecture: Meaning and Place*: 201. Kahn is referring to institutions such as education, government, religion, arts, etc. He suggests that "the street is probably the first institution of man, a meeting-hall without a roof," and sees the city as "the place of assembled institutions." (Given its context, Kahn's use of the term 'man' must be read as meaning 'the human species', or 'humanity'.)

the interpretations offered by its individual elements, and may be quite contrary to what I thought was my interpretation. But because it is the product of mutual exchange and influence amongst all elements of the situation, of which I am one, and because it is attentive to all of those elements – as it must be since it is the situation's calling – this response is already mine, and I am ever-transforming as part of this ever-transforming situation.

Such reasoning might be seen as a form of compromise, which is an incorrect view, or merely as the invocation of hermeneutics, which is an incomplete view. Indeed, a response arising out of reasoning like this is clearly not compromise if that term is used to convey its customary meaning: “a settlement ... by mutual concession,” or the making of “concessions at the expense of one's integrity or original plans.”⁷⁶ Heightened attentiveness to the entire situation does not lead to acceptance of the ‘lowest common denominator’, and is therefore not concessionary. Undoubtedly, however, such reasoning and response are hermeneutical, though not only that.⁷⁷ They arise from the self-questioning of personal prejudice, and emerge through conversation-like engagements with others and other things, always recognising the potential merits of the others' interpretations. Engagements embrace the ‘play-fulness’ of understanding, in the sense that ‘play’ grants room for give-and-take, but not in the sense that such give-and-take leads to the already dismissed notion of concession. Effected is what Gadamer calls *Horizontverschmelzung*, or a ‘fusion of horizons’.⁷⁸ Indeed, there is much of kenosis in hermeneutics and much of hermeneutics in kenosis. That becomes apparent as Paul Kidder describes the notion of transformation in Gadamerian hermeneutics:

... such a transformation cannot happen in the abstract, or by simply cultivating feelings of openness and sympathy. The change comes about in the process of developing relationships and interacting in the places where different horizons hold sway. The word ‘fusion’ captures some of the sense of what occurs in the transformation, but the English word is limited if it suggests that the two horizons are simply bonded together. What in fact happens, to the extent that there is success, is that a third reality emerges, something that is born of the two horizons, but is equally the product of the new experiences and relationships that have formed. The fusion is never complete, for there is no end to the discoveries that one can make about another ...⁷⁹

⁷⁶ *Macquarie Dictionary*: s.v. “compromise”.

⁷⁷ In this and the following references to hermeneutics, I draw in part on notions presented in J. Malpas, “Hermeneutics,” (Lecture at the University of Tasmania, School of Architecture and Design, Launceston, Tasmania, AU, 20 September, 2013).

⁷⁸ Kidder, *Gadamer for Architects*: 43. Although Kidder translates the German term as “fusion of horizons,” the literal translation is *melting of horizons*. The suggestion I go on to make is that neither English word – fusion or melting – sufficiently describes the event (as Kidder acknowledges in connection with “fusion”), which is actually one of kenosis and may be better described in kenotic terms.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

Though certainly not a prescribed process, hermeneutics does encompass the process of developing relational interaction – engagements – wherein transformative fusing may occur. The ‘success’ of the process is uncertain. But if and when it occurs, and a ‘third reality’ emerges – perhaps better seen as arising from the kenotic notions of hybridisation or radical contextualisation, rather than from fusion – it is precisely in that occurrence that kenosis and hermeneutics are seen, most vividly, as conjoined. It is in this third reality, emerging from the engagements of self, others, and other things, that abstraction is made practicable. Nonetheless, such practicability is fleeting since, once a third reality emerges, it only effects further openings-up to the situations that its emergence is already altering. These hermeneutic conversations, these engagements that occur in the permeance of kenosis, are ongoing. In architecture, it is the ongoingness of such engagements that sees all buildings become hermeneutical artefacts, almost immediately upon completion of construction (Walter Benjamin’s “ruins of the present” or “archaeology of dreaming”). As seen in Chapters 3 to 6, some built artefacts instantiate kenosis by virtue of kenotic engagements during the event of creating. Some prove capable of kenotic engagement in their own right, as creations. Some do both. And, it must be said, much of architecture does neither.

Dynamics

Engagements are the basis of relationality; indeed, the basis of complex relationality amongst situational elements. But in what dynamic is such relationality held? Kenosis suggests looking to that which is, by its nature, kenotic – nature itself. Therein, elements are not opposed, as much as they are entangled; each retains unique identity in a pluralistic and incomplete ‘whole’; local phenomena are addressed locally, but seen in light of non-local realities; and both indeterminacy and measurement are in play.⁸⁰ Discussing kenosis and nature, philosopher Holmes Rolston (1932-) notes that elements can “bubble up ‘from below’” even when “controlled ‘from above,’” making it “hard to say which level is prior and which is subordinate.” It can only be said that each element must “operate within the interdependencies, resources, and constraints of its situation,” which means that “the survival of the fittest turns out to be the survival of the sharers.”⁸¹ Not surprisingly, such relationality in the naturally-kenotic world models that envisaged in the humanly-constructed world of Vattimian secularisation (as kenosis): a pluralistic, entangled, and aesthetic world of manifold situations, calling for manifold responses. It thereby also models the relationality toward which humanity is called as it creates such a

⁸⁰ A comprehensive exploration of such themes, from the perspective of Christian kenotic theology, is found in Simmons, “Toward a Kenotic Pneumatology: Quantum Field Theory and the Theology of the Cross.”

⁸¹ H. Rolston, III, “Kenosis and Nature,” in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, ed. J.C. Polkinghorne (Grand Rapids, MI and Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans, 2001), 49-53.

world. Entanglement affirms a sense of complexity and ‘chaos’, without invoking anarchy.⁸² It affirms the diversity of creator skills, roles, and leadership, which can be brought into play. And it affirms the creators’ vulnerability and interdependence, much like the elements of nature. But since humanity, unlike nature, includes the potential for morality, it also affirms the creators’ volitional abeyance of self-interest, the limiting of self in order to admit others.⁸³ Marked by mutual trust and releasement, entangled creator engagements can be seen as spontaneous, improvised, and responsive dance – kenotic dance⁸⁴ – taking place on the dance floor, or in the domain, that is Plato’s chora and Heidegger’s clearing. In such dance, some participant creators may appear to ‘lead’, while others appear to ‘follow’, but that arrangement is never fixed and always subject to inversion, as the situation evolves. Indeed, a situation’s already participating other things – its extant things, its resources, its nature – may also ‘lead’ the dance, when that is what an attentive response warrants.

In the course of their engagements, all ‘types’ of participants are able to move – constantly and repeatedly – to the positions of other participants, partially becoming the other (even while retaining self-identity), and thereby becoming yet another type; a type that no longer *belongs* together with either its original or new type but, nonetheless, *together* belongs with all types.⁸⁵ Formed through these kenotic engagements – the hybridisation or radical contextualisation to which I have already referred – is what Heidegger calls a “unitary primordial structure.”⁸⁶ It is “worked out through the articulation of the complex interplay between a number of different elements.”⁸⁷ Not imposed or enforced from outside the situation, it is an “*internal* articulation of the elements,” which sees primacy and priority shift from element to element.⁸⁸ Power pulsates amongst and between the participant selves, others, and other things, by which they are constantly transforming but never completely transformed. In this concept of power, entrenched hierarchies are abandoned but hierarchical tension is not. The power of hierarchy to make-possible is, in fact, strengthened by the contingent forces that subject hierarchy to inversion, rotation, and other dynamics, sometimes spontaneously. Kenosis can thus be

⁸² It is in complexity that Vattimo finds cause for hope. He contends that the media-driven postmodern society, “the society of communications,” does not lead to a more ‘transparent’ society but to one that is “more complex, even chaotic,” and “it is in precisely this relative ‘chaos’ that our hopes for emancipation lie.” See G. Vattimo, *The Transparent Society*, trans. D. Webb (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 4.

⁸³ The notion of humanity’s ability to choose kenosis is explored more fully in Rolston, “Kenosis and Nature,” 61-64.

⁸⁴ In Chapters 3 and 4, I have already explored the notion of ‘kenotic dance’ in the works of Louis Kahn and I.M. Pei, respectively.

⁸⁵ See note 14, and the discussion surrounding it.

⁸⁶ Heidegger, *Being and Time*: 123 (H. 131).

⁸⁷ J. Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place: Explorations in the Topology of Being* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2012), 88.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 83 (my emphasis).

seen as that which both accommodates and perpetuates indeterminacy, that which maintains dynamic equilibrium in a wildly pulsating constitution – a kenotic dance.⁸⁹

What is it, then, that bounds and limits this kenotic dance floor, this domain of secularisation? Vattimo insists that no legitimate interpretation can represent “an ideology that wants to unify [the pluralistic world] at all costs in the name of a sole truth, which some academic disciplines would have the task and capacity of knowing,”⁹⁰ because such representations would undermine the very pluralism out of which interpretation emerges. It would seem that something must therefore guide the never-ending hermeneutics and ground interpretative legitimacy. If kenosis (via secularisation) were ‘complete’ and fully permeating the relationality between humanity and the world in which it dwells, humanity would have already become fully human, negating the need for a hermeneutic limiter. But since kenosis animates a state of always becoming, humanity is always still becoming human; that is, transforming and growing in human-ness. Human response to kenosis manifests reciprocally only by volition, in a giving-over to the aesthetic experience that ongoing kenosis presents. To explain the impetus for such volition, Vattimo turns once again to Christian theology and proposes that the impetus lies in *caritas*, or love; what he calls Christianity’s “sole, supreme principle,” and “the norm of secularization.”⁹¹ His proposition might appear problematically metaphysical and indistinguishable from his previous forbiddance of “sole truth,” were it not for his further explication.

This ‘ultimate’ meaning, precisely by virtue of its being *caritas*, is not really ultimate and does not possess the peremptoriness of the metaphysical principle, which cannot be transcended, and before which all questioning ceases. Perhaps the reason why nihilism is an infinite never-ending process lies in the fact that love, as the ‘ultimate’ meaning of revelation, is not truly ultimate.⁹²

Thus, *caritas*, charity, and love are that by which kenosis and kenotic relationality are “guided, limited, and endowed with meaning.”⁹³ These traits alone, however, are not sufficient to fully represent or define kenosis. Indeed, self-assertion – the antithesis of kenosis – can be carried out in the pursuit of each, and when love is equated with justice, the violent enforcement of justice can occur in love’s name.⁹⁴ *Caritas*, charity, and love foster kenosis, as do Levinasian ethical responsibility and Derridan hospitality. All are essential boundaries of the kenotic domain, which allow it to empty and open-up to

⁸⁹ This notion of dynamic equilibrium can be seen as that which Plato describes as ‘disequilibrium’. See discussion in Chapter 2, as well as Plato, *Timaeus and Critias*, trans. D. Lee and T. K. Johansen, Penguin Classics ed. (London: Penguin Group, (1965) 2008), 52-53.

⁹⁰ Vattimo, *After Christianity*: 5.

⁹¹ Vattimo, *Belief*: 64, 88.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 64-65.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁹⁴ The notion of enforced justice is explored in de Lange, “Kenotic Ethics: Gianni Vattimo, Reading the ‘Signs of Time’,” n.p.

happening. Each is kenotic, and each is an aspect of kenosis, but kenosis is not reducible to any. "Kenosis is not a means of ransom, but ransom itself."⁹⁵ It is in the domain of kenosis that humanity (and, in the Christian narrative, also divinity) emergently becomes more human, as relationality is increasingly marked by *caritas*. That is not to suggest, however, that kenosis is 'ultimate', when *caritas* is not. Echoing, but also extending Vattimo, kenosis is not ultimate precisely because it is kenosis, always the animator of incomplete becoming, bounded and dynamically balanced in the vulnerability that is *caritas*, charity, and love.

A reliance on love, to mediate the spontaneity and contingency of secularisation, is seen by some as vulnerable and dynamically imbalanced. One critic, Frits de Lange, finds Vattimo's kenotic view of love (in the sense of *agápe*) to be "asymmetrical," in that it appears to focus on self-sacrifice. He sees something unidirectional, quite opposite to other concepts of agapic love, which relate to justice and emphasise the symmetry of "impartiality and reciprocity."⁹⁶ I would suggest, however, that de Lange's interpretation is mistaken, first, in equating self-emptying to self-sacrifice and, second, in its failure to recognise the essence of kenosis: its paradox. As I posit, throughout this discourse, kenotic self-emptying in no way demands or effects 'sacrifice' of self, especially not in the sense of forfeiture, surrender, or destruction. To the contrary, the self-emptying of kenosis is concurrent filling and in-dwelling. Paradoxically, kenosis is also plerosis and skenosis. In a sense, it is symmetrical, precisely because it is asymmetrical; it is impartial and reciprocal, precisely because it is not. Kenosis is the beauty of the vulnerable, unnecessary, and unsolicited opening-up to the other (even the Levinasian other, seen as unworthy) to which the beauty of a vulnerable, unnecessary, and unsolicited reciprocal response is made, and out of which the dynamic of mutual exchange and influence arises. The instantiation of kenosis is that which instantiates kenosis. Indeed, it might be said that, through kenosis, love produces the beauty that produces the beauty of love reciprocated in kenosis. Such is neither the relational imbalance of asymmetry, nor the inertia of symmetry; rather, it is the dynamic equilibrium of an ongoing kenotic dance. If kenosis were unidirectional, it could not be kenosis; it could only be some kind of love or charity or *caritas*, each of which can go unrequited. Thus, it is love's vulnerable entanglement in the kenotic dance that is its strength.

While love and its synonymous traits may be seen as worthy limiters of interpretation, there remains a question as to why love might be chosen over violence; that is, over what Vattimo describes as "the silencing of all questioning by the

⁹⁵ Vattimo, *After Christianity*: 120.

⁹⁶ de Lange, "Kenotic Ethics: Gianni Vattimo, Reading the 'Signs of Time'," 65-66.

authoritative peremptoriness of the first principle,⁹⁷ or the assertion of sole truth(s). It is such assertion that gives rise to relational imbalance. Guiding the choice, Vattimo reiterates his invocation of love but goes further, suggesting that secularisation – and, with it, globalisation and multiculturalism – sees the weakening of religious dogma and increasing agreement on fundamental human values,⁹⁸ not least the value of questioning. That which attempts to silence questioning, and thereby impede kenosis, is exposed as violence, and cognition of violence initiates its rejection.⁹⁹ Thus, in an event of transformation, kenosis fuels secularisation while secularisation produces heightened awareness and willingness to name the violence of imbalanced relationality. Or, seen through architecture, the hermeneutic engagements of architecture's creators – subject to *caritas*, or love – expose, name, and empty those categories of opposition that distort relationality and work to silence questioning. In so doing, they maintain dynamic balance and nurture ongoing transformation.

Vattimo's promulgation, in philosophy, of love as the interpretive limiter in a world of complex entanglement, is not dissimilar to that of Alberto Pérez-Gómez, in architecture, who posits that an architecture "built upon love" can counter the distorted relationality of materialism and technological preoccupations, with which architecture so often finds itself responding to such a world. Amongst his conclusions, Pérez-Gómez promulgates love in two of its multi-layered facets, one facet clearly invoking kenosis, but the other more ambiguous. He suggests that "an appropriate architecture for the present world, beyond the utopias of progress and universal civilization, may seek the embodiment of *compassion* and *seduction* through beautiful form and responsible program."¹⁰⁰ It is not difficult to see his advocacy of compassion as being Vattimian, and thereby kenotic. *Compassionate* architecture presumably would be open and highly responsive to its situation. The nature of *seductive* architecture is less clear. If taken to mean merely a capacity to attract or draw-in, the notion of seductiveness is benign, even commendable. But a problem arises, insomuch as seductiveness can also be seen as the assertion of some preconceived concept or formal expression, strategically *designed*

⁹⁷ Vattimo, *Belief*: 65n18.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 99-102.

⁹⁹ A useful analysis of this aspect of Vattimo's philosophy is found in de Lange, "Kenotic Ethics: Gianni Vattimo, Reading the 'Signs of Time'," 50. And, although Vattimo is not primarily speaking of physical violence, certainly that is perhaps the most visible manifestation of attempts to silence questioning. It is therefore worth noting psychologist Steven Pinker's study, which concludes that "violence has declined over long stretches of time, and today we may be living in the most peaceable era in our species' existence. The decline, to be sure, has not been smooth; it has not brought violence down to zero; and it is not guaranteed to continue. But it is an unmistakable development, visible on scales from millennia to years, from the waging of wars to the spanking of children." He does not argue that humanity is "innately good," but rather that humans "come equipped with motives that can orient them away from violence and toward cooperation and altruism." In other words, they come equipped to embrace what Vattimo calls *caritas* – and, with that, kenosis. See S. Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined* (New York: Viking, 2011), xxi, xxv.

¹⁰⁰ A. Pérez-Gómez, *Built Upon Love: Architectural Longing After Ethics and Aesthetics* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2006), 213 (my emphasis).

to seduce its perceivers for the sake of seduction or titillation.¹⁰¹ Certainly, a compassionate (kenotic) approach to design promotes a seductive solution, one in which seductiveness proceeds *from* compassion. Such is an outcome of releasement. There is, however, an important difference between a compassionate and kenotic letting-go, which delivers seductive results, and a strategic intention to seduce.¹⁰² (I would suggest that it is the difference between Kahn's Salk Institute and Libeskind's Jewish Museum, respectively.) When strategic, seductiveness can undermine relationality, and an architecture of love could be expected to eschew such a strategy. Perhaps an architecture of kenosis avoids the ambiguity, since it is always already built on love, compassion, and the propitious aspects of seduction.

Participation

What and how is it that a seemingly motley but belonging-together and power-filled collective of dynamically engaged creators can practically create? Since kenosis defies process-isation, such questions cannot be answered with any how-to discussions, at least none that sustain their applicability in the manifold situations to which architecture is called to respond. These are questions to be opened-up to. They require a willingness to engage in a constant working-out of answers, and an understanding that such answers are applicable only to specific spatial and temporal situations. Hence, what appear as answers demand still further openness to ever-shifting situations and the questions they raise. To see the practicability of such abstraction, it may be useful to broadly consider

¹⁰¹ Amongst many examples accumulated in more than forty years of architectural practice, two particular instances are brought to mind by this discussion. In one case, during the design phase for a new building at a major Australian university, which would primarily house a multi-faith sacred space, I was told by the university's facility manager that the chancellor was expecting a "really sexy façade." Notwithstanding the term's indefinability, the stated expectation did not arise out of any sense of appropriateness to the situation. It arose out of a strategic desire to acquire an instantly seductive 'icon', one which might directly promote the university's desired image of progressiveness, and indirectly strengthen the recruitment of both students and faculty. Mere appropriateness was not seen as potentially 'seductive'. In another case, I was conducting an informal seminar on the potential relationality of symbols and furnishings in Roman Catholic liturgy, for noted Modernist Romaldo Giurgola and his team of architects, as they prepared to commence the design of a new cathedral. During the presentation, I noticed that Giurgola was sketching something, and, when the presentation drew to a close, he presented the group with his sketch, which, unrelated to the meeting's topic, portrayed a sectional detail of an imagined roof light monitor – for the cathedral whose ordering and form had not yet been conceptualised. Referring to the sketch, he said, "I've always wanted to do this but, until now, we've never had the technology." Indeed, the light monitor he sketched became a central feature of the realised cathedral's roof and interior space. It seems that Giurgola had long been seduced by a particular light-emitting architectural configuration and, at last, technological means converged with opportunity such that the configuration could be executed. Its emergence was not primarily inspired by liturgy but, rather, by its anticipated architectural seductiveness. In fact, it is the preconceived light monitor that largely determines the cathedral's final liturgical ordering, not vice versa. Despite its grounding in Modernism, this is not an instance of 'form follows function', but one where function clearly follows the strategic assertion of (seductive) form.

¹⁰² Earlier in his book, Pérez-Gómez is less ambiguous on this subject, saying that "the writer, like the lover and the architect, must *aim to seduce*, even if the attempt means a loss of control and a challenge to communication." My argument suggests the opposite. If the creator (architect, writer, lover) is willing, *without aim*, to give up control through self-emptying and opening-up to the other, it may be that the other will be drawn-in (seduced) to volitionally respond with reciprocal kenosis. In other words, it is intentional but unstrategic letting-go that may effect seduction, rather than intentional seduction that may necessitate letting-go. See Pérez-Gómez, *Built Upon Love: Architectural Longing After Ethics and Aesthetics*: 68 (my emphasis).

an instance in which architecture emerges amongst the possible responses to a situation, and, then, to explore the possibilities by which participants can create. Although moving toward specificity, such consideration can only be seen as illustrating a working-out, not as prescribing a methodology.¹⁰³

It is important, however, to note that architecture cannot be presumed to be an 'appropriate' response-to-situation. Kenosis asks for openness toward the situation itself. Although every situation presents the possibility of responsive change, not every situation necessarily calls for a response beyond that of the situation's encounter (which already effects a kind of change). The situation may be calling for nothing to be *done*. It is through attentiveness that the need for response and, then, the response itself, is worked-out. Openness toward each situation precludes presumptions about the response that may emerge, including presumptions that architecture is necessarily constitutive of the needed response. There can be no exploration if the destination, or the 'find', is already known, especially if such knowledge is privileged. If architecture is pre-determined to be the response-to-situation, there is no room – no opening – for those participants whose current interpretation does not include that determination. The working-out of a situation invites all of its creators to participate, understanding that all interpretations contribute to the revelation of "what should be done,"¹⁰⁴ even when such interpretations are different or conflicting, and especially because they are. It is worth considering Gadamer's view of participation as "a strange word."

Its dialectic consists of the fact that participation is not taking parts, but in a way taking the whole. Everybody who participates in something does not take something away, so that the others cannot have it. The opposite is true: by sharing, or by participating in the things in which we are participating, we enrich them; they do not become smaller, but larger. The whole life of tradition consists exactly in this enrichment so that life is our culture and our past: the whole inner store of our lives is always extending by participating.¹⁰⁵

Imagining

Assuming that architecture emerges as part of the response that the situation calls for, it is unlikely that all of a situation's participant-creators – particularly if large in number –

¹⁰³ Although kenosis defies process-isation – that is, its reduction to an absolute methodology – I am not suggesting that kenotically focused processes cannot be developed for deployment in particular situations. But such development would necessarily be part of the situation's working-out, rather than a pre-determined set of rules that propose to reduce or eliminate the need for such working-out. Even then, any processes that are worked-out must necessarily remain open to further working-out. For nearly twenty years, I have explored various means of animating design discernment amongst large groups, and have deployed measures that attempt to effect an opening-up, not only to broad participation, but also to the uniqueness of each situation. In many cases, such measures have accompanied a longer-standing practice of conducting on-site design charrettes. (See also note 114). Such practices have incrementally approached, and not infrequently produced, kenotic-like events, but require continual working-out.

¹⁰⁴ This is another expression used by Charles Guignon to describe the response that the situation, itself, is calling for. See Guignon, *On Being Authentic*: 167.

¹⁰⁵ H-G. Gadamer, "The Hermeneutics of Suspicion," in *Phenomenology and the Human Sciences*, ed. J.N. Mohanty (Dordrecht, Boston, Lancaster: Martin Nijhoff, 1985), 323.

can create fully architectural responses. They can, however, participate in the creating that is building and dwelling. They can dream and imagine architecture, in the manner of a child. In fact, they, alone, can do so with efficacy. In their engagement with self, they empty and concurrently fill with the situation, recognising and becoming receptive to all of its others and other things. In their engagement with, and attentiveness to, those others and other things of the situation (by which, they are likewise attended), they no longer merely look into and interpret the situation. They no longer just dream about the situation. They and the situation are radically contextualised. They awaken in response, and, in that awakening, they create an initial iteration of architectural design. Although not yet formal, or manifested in specialised language, their creation is nonetheless a view of a building, out of which architectural form can emerge. It is a practical manifestation of their imagining, shaped by shared language into some conveyable form – perhaps something heard and seen as ‘word pictures’.

Such creating by the participant-creators precedes and transcends the customary brief (or ‘program’), even though the brief for a building may already be embedded in it. It eschews the brief’s typically strategic methodologies, often some form of: “(1) Establish Goals, (2) Collect and analyze Facts, (3) Uncover and test Concepts, (4) Determine Needs, and (5) State the Problem.”¹⁰⁶ Methodologies of this kind are based in the notion that “programming is problem *seeking*” and “design is problem *solving*.”¹⁰⁷ Such a notion bifurcates the creative event and presents the possibility of selective problem-solving, insofar as the problem-seekers (not uncommonly architects) may, consciously or subconsciously, seek and find primarily those problems they already deem solvable, or for which they already have a solution. Both the bifurcation and the possibility of specious problems are antithetical to a kenotic view of creativity. So is the language of solution-to-problem and its connotations of certitude and permanence, when all that can actually be effected is response-to-situation, as that situation stands at a particular moment. Further restriction is effected when the brief attempts to shape “the whole problem” into categories of consideration such as “Function, Form, Economy, and Time,”¹⁰⁸ a shaping that either restricts the situation to quantitative considerations (essentially client and regulatory needs) or forces qualitative considerations (values, beliefs, conflicting views) into quantitative expression, both of which betray any notion that they describe the ‘whole’ of anything.

¹⁰⁶ W. Peña, S. Parshall, and K. Kelly, *Problem Seeking: An Architectural Programming Primer*, Third ed. (Washington: AIA Press, 1987), 12. Typical of strategic methodologies, these “five steps” seek to reduce and reshape questions as answers.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 15 (my emphasis).

¹⁰⁸ These four terms are as used in *ibid.*, 28-31. In architectural practice, the terms will vary, but the basic issues to which they refer are generally similar. (Vitruvius managed to describe architecture in only three terms, *firmitas*, *utilitas*, *venustas* – or firmness, commodity, and delight – which are inscribed but also amended by the four terms, here, to include modernity’s emphasis on time and money.)

Thus, the creators' initial act – that of imagining – opens-up to all of a brief's typical considerations but recognises that, in their manifold diversity, such considerations defy categorisation and standardisation. It especially opens-up to those considerations that are often dismissed as “too general,” or too underlying, conflicting, negative, lacking, or irrelevant “to be directly useful,”¹⁰⁹ because it is precisely in such dismissals that the beauty of an attentive response may be left concealed. In a sense, by way of their word pictures (or other conveyance), the participant-creators' work-out a prefiguring critical review of the situation as it might be *after* it has been responded to. But, it is not merely some forecast, by the architectural laity, of form and materiality. It is a critical review of the *experience* of such architecture. And, since the creators are intrinsic parts of the situation, it is also a critical review of their eventual behaviour in the newly-changed situation. Hence, it does not constitute the will of the creators but that of the situation. Its working-out asks of the creators that they engage not in calculative or re-presentational thinking, but in meditative thinking.¹¹⁰ The resultant *imaginings* – the advance critical review – can only be created by the situation's creators, and it is therein that more concrete *images* are embedded; awaiting the attention by which they might unconceal.

Before turning from imagining to imaging, it is worth highlighting the unconventionalities in the creative event presented thus far. The creators' initial creation, their synthesis of collective design imaginings – which I have described as an advance critical review of the yet-to-be changed situation – is something akin to that which Thomas Gieryn labels as “a blueprint for human behaviour.” But, whereas a kenotic perspective sees such a blueprint *prefiguring* the changed situation, Gieryn's more conventional perspective, from the building's point of view, sees that blueprint *emerging from* the changed situation. Gieryn acknowledges the mutuality and cyclicity of influence between buildings and behaviour, but prioritises the causal relationship between a building's design and the human behaviour it produces (either by design or default), once the design is realised. Such emphasis supports a traditional portrayal of the “design process,” as that initiated by a client with a need, and advanced by the client's architect. It is a process that produces a “representation of an artifact in graphic, verbal, or numerical form,” which thereby effects the simultaneous “enrollment or enlistment of those allies necessary to move the artifact toward a material form.”¹¹¹ Thus, participants are recruited *through* the design process; that is, through the emergence of architectural design.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 98.

¹¹⁰ Heidegger cautions that “thinking, understood in the traditional way, as re-presenting, is a kind of willing.” See Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking: A Translation of 'Gelassenheit'*: 58.

¹¹¹ Gieryn, “What Buildings Do,” 42. The term ‘blueprint’ is problematic in its connotations of precise prescription and detail. Gieryn, however, uses the term more broadly, connoting a conceptual intention, plan, or design. It is in that sense, and for consistency and continuity of argument, that I deploy the same term.

Without disputing Gieryn's argument, mine inverts the emphasis and suggests an importantly different nuance. Viewed kenotically, it is the situation that identifies and calls its participant creators, who are therefore parts of the situation. And, it is through the participants' open attentiveness and consequent creation of a critical review, or blueprint for behaviour, that the situation is invited to open-up and reveal the response it is calling for. Such a happening is not to be viewed as some sort of introduction, or *pre-design* activity, but as an essential happening in what Vattimo calls the ongoing aesthetisation of culture and lifestyle – which is secularisation as kenosis. In a situation that calls for an architectural response, that call is design's genesis. Design does not begin after the call. It is already underway and *continues*. The happening, however, is not linear. Its starting points are indeterminate, and its 'endings' exist only as temporary cessations for the sake of realising built responses. Certainly, the so called blueprints for building designs, and those for human behaviour, are interrelated and contribute to one another. Nevertheless, a kenotic view of ongoing creation (cosmic, evolutionary, and human) prioritises humanity's reciprocal response to kenosis – in effect, the blueprints for becoming human – and sees the blueprints for buildings as being emergent therefrom.

Imaging

As the kenotic event of creativity continues, it does so in at least two distinguishing ways. First, in the event's non-linearity, creators' imaginings are not necessarily concluded before imaging begins, and imaging is not merely the reaction to a project brief. Instead, amidst ongoing engagements, imaging is an opening-up *of* and attending *to* the imaginings, such that the images they already hold are invited to unconceal. In other words, building design is not something needing to *be done*. In a sense, the building design *already exists* and is emergent, needing only to be worked-out by awaiting and attending. Such existence of design does not, however, suggest its *pre-existence*. Rather, it exists only by virtue of the ongoing working-out initiated by the situation's call. (As discussed in Chapter 3, Kahn's view of a 'pre-existing essence' can be read to suggest that essence is something only needing to be discovered, which tends to discount the need for it to be worked-out.) Second, those creators who, by virtue of talent and skill, are particularly able to await and attend, and thereby likely leaders of imaging, are already part of the situation and the imaginings thereof. Consequently they are not viewed, nor do they view themselves, as privileged 'special-ists' or 'outside experts'. Their leadership is grounded in servitude. And they serve an event that looks back to architecture as something more of the vernacular, something created in response to the situation by those who are integral parts of the situation, and for whom the response is neither intended nor seen as novel, but as intrinsically fitting (and thereby truly novel).

Such hierarchical inversion may be uncomfortable for those accustomed to, or reliant on, seeing 'designers' at the top of the aesthetisation pyramid. But, in a kenotic event, the role of servant leaders is not trivialised, only moderated and paradoxically strengthened, insofar as restriction effects heightened perception and attention. If true to its etymology, education and training in aesthetics – including built aesthetics – would be that which teaches and intensifies sensitive perception (both intellectual and sensate), a skill requiring self-discipline and self-restriction so as to enable the opening-up to, and receptivity of, all that is not self; in other words, to enable kenosis. Indeed, an architectural education can be seen as a kenotic readying, if it is as Jack Hartray idealises:

It is broadly based, directionless, inconclusive, and totally absorbing. It prepares us for little, other than a life of engaged wonderment. But, it also leaves us with the idea that we are makers rather than victims of history, which is a useful belief in a democracy.¹¹²

Hartray's 'curriculum' prepares its students to prioritise *waiting* over *doing*. Notably absent is any espousal of self-assertion or strivings for fame. Even in distinguishing maker (creator) from victim (bystander), it is the notion of egalitarian *participation* that is invoked, rather than the opposition that can plague democratic politics. If not deployed as a means of exploiting power, education and training in aesthetics promises precisely the attunement to situation – the active passivity – which is acutely needed to image creators' imaginings; that is, to serve the emergence of design. Contemporary architectural education may require its own kenosis to meet that promise.

The ongoing emergence of design calls for ongoing engagement, for questioning and listening by all creators, but especially by those who come to lead the imaging of an architectural response (in current practice, architects and client representatives). Engagements continue with self, others, and other things, and the latter rises to particular importance since it is an architectural 'thing' that is emergent. The thing to be imaged will, of necessity, be in relation to (even if not in relationship with) the situation in which it is placed; in all cases locally but, to varying degrees, also regionally, globally, and even cosmically. It will be in relation to Heidegger's fourfold – earth, sky, divinities, mortals – but its capacity to gather-in the fourfold will depend on its openness and attentiveness to the situation, which, in turn, is dependent on the openness and attentiveness shown to the situation by the thing's creators in their ongoing imagining and imaging. Such is true whether the emergent thing is a room, a building, a complex, or a city. It is therefore not unreasonable to argue that emergence is best continued amidst the situation, where all creators – especially those who lead the imaging of a thingly response – can continue to

¹¹² Hartray, "The Liberal Education of Architects," 26.

be undividedly attentive to that situation, in real time and space. Emergent imaging is a happening of the creators' continued engagement, not only with the usual things that comprise context (environs, site, buildings, materiality, furnishings, art, finances, regulations, etc.), but also with the intervals between such things and, perhaps most importantly, with still other things that may deceptively appear to be unrelated and irrelevant. Engagement with these things involves on-going 'conversations' and 'interrogations' (like Kahn's with brick) concerning their desires and capacities to fulfil the creators' imaginings. (The site may not want to be so severely excavated. The situation may not find the designated site capable of achieving the response it is calling for. The fetish of the architect may not be pertinent to the needed response. The existing building may not want to be extended in the manner of any particular '-ism'.) Engagement includes being alert to correspondences and being vigilant against infiltration of the latent, individual desires of particular creators. In-situ engagement allows the spontaneous testing of emergent images against the situation's reality, not merely against remembrances or representations of it.

Contemporary practice typically sees architectural design emerge at the architect's office, amidst exactly such remembrances or representations of the situation. Of course, various design practitioners are likely to have been to the site, perhaps numerous times, perhaps even initiating imaging while on site. In some instances, practitioners might be found employing a practice such as design *en charrette*,¹¹³ but unless such an undertaking is sufficiently sustained – so as to allow enough emergence to occur – and unless it genuinely embraces non-professional participation that challenges the architect's traditional control, it and other 'participative' tactics can prove to be sideshows.¹¹⁴ In most cases, much of a thing's design ultimately emerges at a place

¹¹³ D.S Kelbaugh, "The Design Charrette," in *Companion to Urban Design*, ed. T. Banerjee and A. Loukaitou-Sideris (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 317. The French term *en charrette*, meaning 'on the cart', is a reference to the legend of nineteenth century architecture students at the École des Beaux Arts, in Paris, so intently focused on their projects that they would continue working even while they and their drawing boards were transported to the school, by cart, for final presentations. While it may be that such intensity arose out of procrastination, the term has come to mean any intense period of concentrated effort, especially involving movement to another place. It does not, today, refer exclusively or necessarily to architectural design activities, but can be used to describe events such as workshops, seminars, or data gathering sessions, which are conducted in a condensed timeframe and 'on location'.

¹¹⁴ In the past thirty years, I have conducted 'design charrettes' for the vast majority of my projects – local, regional, and occasionally global. These charrettes have been undertaken with nearly 200 client institutions and consequently involved at least 5000 participants. Duration has ranged from two days to one week, and some circumstances have called for more than one charrette. On-site activities have included the full repertoire of architectural design: photography, sketching, drawing, model-making, and presenting. Every charrette has necessitated the transport of personnel and all needed equipment, from T-squares and triangles to computers and printers. On reflection, many of these charrettes – particularly the early iterations – might be viewed as the 'sideshows' against which I caution, but even they were of value in discovering what 'participation' in architecture can actually mean. With their maturation (and mine), the charrettes have increasingly grown in the direction of a kenotic event, like that which I am attempting to elucidate. But none have achieved their full potential, largely because they have been only momentary departures from otherwise deeply entrenched conventions of architectural practice, and, of course, because kenosis precludes any absolute achievement.

other than that where it will be realised, and where it will be asked to establish relationship. That is problematic enough at the local level, but can become more so when the situation is in another region or another part of the world. Some would argue that being physically present to the situation during design is impractical, but that need not be true when the situation is local. It need be little more than inconvenient when the situation is regional. And it is not insurmountable when the situation is global. Such debate, however, begs the question as to exactly what it is about a situation's calling that points to a more attentive response if the situation is expanded by importing, and attempting to integrate, creators who are not already part of the situation. Certainly, there are situations in which such expansion is warranted, but a kenotic view suggests that the warrant would already be a part of the situation and the response it calls for, rather than a proviso or conceit arising out of architecture's commodification and fetishisation.

Claimed impracticality of in-situ design might also be based on a view that needed technology is located at the architect's place of business. But technology, itself, is making such a claim increasingly untrue, and the claim raises its own questions. First, it raises a question not necessarily related to technology but to the notion that the architect's office is, or should be seen as, the 'axis mundi' of architectural design, a notion that only reinforces the privileged-ness of the architect and the practice of architecture.¹¹⁵ It reinforces the mystification of the office as the place where aesthetic gurus or magicians dwell. When the notion is added that even more mystifying technology is housed there, the office is elevated to a place of aesthetic wizardry, an image that much of the profession is content to tacitly perpetuate. And, at that point, questions concerning technology arise. What is technology's actual role in the emergence of a response-to-situation that emerges from the situation itself? What is its part in both the enhancement and diminishment of human perceptiveness? What is its culpability as a fetishised commodity that effects commodity fetishism? Indeed, such questions invoke Heidegger's admonition concerning technology, from *Discourse on Thinking*:

We can use technical devices, and yet with proper use also keep ourselves so free of them that we may let go of them any time. We can use technical devices as they ought to be used, and also let them alone as something which does not affect our inner and real core. We can affirm the unavoidable use of technical devices, and also deny them the right to dominate us, and so to warp, confuse, and lay waste our nature.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ There is, today, a New York architectural firm that calls itself 'Axis Mundi', in a gesture that does little to dampen the notion of architect, architecture, and this particular architectural firm as being somehow privileged, or to suggest that the focus of architecture is not 'self'. Understood as a 'world pillar', connecting heaven and earth, the term's association with an architectural firm places the firm in a priest-like position, as intermediary between the deity of architecture and the laity that seeks it.

¹¹⁶ Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking: A Translation of 'Gelassenheit'*: 54.

None of this is to say that design legitimately occurs only in-situ, or that it is better effected without technology. Creativity's indeterminacy precludes any such claims. But, importantly, it does say that creative moments in architecture are not unlike other aesthetic moments, in which there is a "willing giving-over" of self to the situation; a concurrent commitment and releasement by which one proclaims, "Yes, I am here and not elsewhere."¹¹⁷ Physical, in-situ presence, of course, does not ensure this sort of "being here" (despite obvious contributions to its likelihood), nor is it impossible to experience such intimacy at distance. The question goes to what sense of presence best avoids the 'absences' incited by non-situational distractions, absences which can spawn desperate (and futile) attempts to coerce or strategise creativity. It asks what sense of presence best renders the situation real, encourages engagement, and thereby invites creativity's appearance by enabling the creators to "stand imaginatively" in the situation¹¹⁸; that is, to "stand under" the situation, and hence under-stand it.¹¹⁹ Such discourse points architecture back, once again, to consider its beginnings, when architecture was indubitably a product of being present to the situation calling for it. That looking back underscores the fact that a kenotic view of receptivity and attentiveness to situation – the sensitive perception that is aesthetics – opens-up manifold questions, implications, and opportunities, each of which challenge architecture as it has come to be practised.

Imaging is not merely the 'drawing-up' of something that has been imagined and described. When open engagements are sustained amongst self, others, and other things, images of the creators' imaginings emerge in the manner of that hermeneutical 'third reality',¹²⁰ as a manifestation of under-standing.¹²¹ Like imagining, imaging requires a kind of dreaming but not a dreaming of new dreams, rather a continuation and further opening-up of those already dreamt. It is in the awakening from these progressing dreams that the aspirational experiences imagined therein – those in the creators' advance critical review – are enabled to appear as images. Appearance comes by way of faithful translation, from the language of imaginings to the language of images. The latter, however, is not so much a different language as it is a language of expanded vocabulary, expanded to include form, materiality, colour, texture, space, light, and whatever other concepts augment communication and perception. Also expanded are

¹¹⁷ Such aesthetic moments are discussed in connection with liturgy – ultimately a celebration of creativity – in McCall, "In My Beginning is My End: Remembering the Future Shape of Liturgy," 26-27.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 27.

¹¹⁹ This meaning of the word 'understand' is as used in Norberg-Schulz, *Architecture: Meaning and Place*: 228. Such usage echoes that of Heidegger in, for example, "The Origin of the Work of Art."

¹²⁰ See note 79 and surrounding discussion.

¹²¹ Norberg-Schulz further explains his view of 'understanding'. "The understanding is made manifest as an image. We could also say that it is embodied or incarnated in the image. When this is accomplished, the image becomes a work of art." See Norberg-Schulz, *Architecture: Meaning and Place*: 228.

forms of expression, to include not only the verbal but also the graphic and electronic. Faithfulness is reliant on all participant-creators – not least those in servant leadership roles – remaining emptied, in ongoing kenosis. Although imaging may be facilitated and led by those with extra-ordinary skills, all creators can remain attentive to the situation by participating in the assessment of images, as they emerge. Such is especially true when the imaging is an in-situ happening. Critical, however, is the framing of an assessment question, so as to ensure that ‘answers’ do not close it down, and that the question itself does not become a barrier to ongoing kenosis. In assessing things aesthetic, the question commonly reduces to some form of: *Do you like this image?* Any form of that question asks assessors to deliver a personal interpretation based on opinion or mere whim. A more fitting question might be some form of: *Are these images faithful to our collective imaginings, and, if not, which imaginings appear unattended?* Answering that question requires each assessor to measure the proposal against the situation as collectively interpreted, and may also require further hermeneutic engagements in the event that imaginings require adjustment. However, if the emergent images are convincingly traceable and attentive to the creators’ imaginings, and if the situation has not already shifted drastically, they can be met by their assessors – who, in fact, are their creators – in what is actually a reacquaintance with some ‘thing’ always already familiar. Evincing kenosis, the most profound reaction from assessor-creators might be a smile of recognition, or a shrug of the shoulders and an “of course,” rather than the superficial but currently prized reaction, “WOW!”

Imagining, then, is dreaming that includes awakening. Imaging is awakening that includes dreaming. They are both parts of the thinking that Heidegger sees not as something to be actively done but as something more passive, a “listening that brings something to view” or, simply, “a bringing-into-view”¹²² – which is nonetheless active. It is important to emphasise, again, that the creative event is not linear or sequential. It is an overlapping, entangled, complex, and ongoing happening. Heidegger elucidates the notion by referencing a letter attributed to Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, which, although later determined to be an incorrect attribution, remains pertinent to Heidegger’s point and mine. The letter describes the manifold happenings to which the composer ‘listens’ and by which musical compositions seem to be brought into view. It concludes:

... afterwards I look over [the composition] with a glance in my mind as if it were a beautiful picture or a handsome man, and hear it in the imagination *not at all serially*, as it must subsequently come about, but *as though all at once*. That is a

¹²² M. Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason*, ed. J. Sallis, trans. R. Lilly, Paperback ed., Studies in Continental Thought (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), 47 (my emphasis).

treat. Everything – the finding and making, now proceed in me in a beautiful, vivid dream. But, the listening to everything all at once is indeed the best.¹²³

For Heidegger, “this ‘looking over’ the whole ‘with a glance,’ and ‘listening to everything at once’ are one and the same.” They are a “concealed unity” by which the situation is attended; by which the called-for response is brought into view. Unconcealment is made possible by the passive activity of attending to the concealment. Heidegger cautions, however, that this is not to be taken as a description of “artistic creation,” a warning which reinforces my earlier scepticism toward notions of ‘creative processes’. Indeed, Heidegger sees the concealed unity as “the essence of the thinking that is entrusted to us humans who are thinking beings,”¹²⁴ which, as I am arguing, is the essence of becoming human, and is animated by kenosis.

Realisation

Although imagining (including listening), imaging (including bringing-into-view), and eventual realisation are not exactly serial, and although the responses they produce are merely responses to temporary ‘freezes’ of the situation’s ongoing-ness, they are nonetheless part of an unfolding. Thus the continued emergence of ever more descriptive images – and eventually a materialised construct – relies on continued faithful translation, as measured against the creators’ original imaginings. And that relies on continued vigilance against what Samuel Coleridge saw as “fancy.” Emphatically distinguishing it from the exalted “imagination,” he states that fancy is “no other than a mode of memory” that “must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association.”¹²⁵ Those who effect ongoing translation (in current practice, the architects, engineers, consultants, and builders, who are ultimately directed by the client, financiers, governmental bodies, and building regulators) are already amongst the creators whose engagements have produced the imagining and imaging of a response-to-situation. Like all servant creators, they are not from ‘outside’ the situation and their particular attunement or expertise, offered in servitude, is not privileging. The obviation of privilege, by the *elevation* of servitude, also obviates those categories of opposition and competition from which violence arises.¹²⁶

What can be seen in all of this is a distortion, if not inversion, of the priorities found in contemporary architectural practice. First, kenosis secularises notions of ‘client’ by

¹²³ Ibid., 67.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*., Chapter XIII, n.p.

¹²⁶ The term ‘violence’, as I use it here, is intended to mean specifically that which does *harm* to the situation. It is not referring to Heidegger’s broader definition wherein ‘violence-doing’ can be seen to encompass all creativity and the situational change it produces; the latter discussed in Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*: 161-172.

desacralising and opening-up participation beyond that granted by power, privileged position, or delegation. In so doing, it cuts across the grain of popular 'participative' processes, often a misnomer for what might be more accurately described as 'informative' (merely informing participants about a happening), or perhaps 'consultative' (adding, to the act of informing, some measure of participant data-gathering or feedback). Particularly when initiated after fundamental determinations have been made, such processes risk being nothing more than entertaining gimmicks, with little actual opportunity for participation, or, worse, tools of pretence and manipulation with which clients (and their architects) elicit 'participant' approval of a preconceived outcome. Second, kenosis also secularises notions of 'architect'. It does so, on the one hand, by desacralising the privilege of that position and, on the other, by paradoxically elevating those ('professional' or not) who are equipped to be especially effective attendants, or servants, to the unfolding of creative events. In fact, such servant-aestheticians may be amongst, or perhaps lead, those who first encounter a situation's call, even before the situation identifies any so-called clients. That radically alters the more typical sequence of events, which, if an architect is involved at all, sees the architect commissioned after the client has made some (at least preliminary) determination that architecture is to be part of the solution to its problem.¹²⁷ It also makes it possible to envisage architecture (as aesthetisation) already underway, long before architecture (as aesthetic construct) is seen to be a needed part of the emerging response-to-situation.

Not surprisingly, the secularisation of 'client' and 'architect' presents a challenge to the customary client-architect ordering, which, today, sees the practice of architecture as client-centric, and necessarily so if business success is a goal of practice. Such centrality manifests in countless firm mission statements, which, in varied but similar ways, express sentiments such as: "Our belief is that great architecture is the creative response to the needs of the client, with a thorough understanding of the particular site."¹²⁸ Notwithstanding the problematics of defining 'great architecture', aspirations like this cater to client approval and, more mercenarily, to the approval of *prospective* clients. They say more about marketing than architecture. They suggest that architecture is primarily in service to the client and the client's brief, as that brief might be applied to the client's site. (The site is commonly defined primarily by legal or title boundaries – not necessarily the limits of the entire situation – and the brief may sanction, even if indirectly, possibilities that exploit and dominate the site.) Beyond the presumed client-architect

¹²⁷ Even when architects are commissioned, early, to conduct preliminary studies of 'feasibility' or lead 'programming' efforts, it is often the case that the feasibility being tested is not so much whether architecture is a feasible response, but what kind of architectural response is feasible, and how that kind of architecture can be feasibly programmed.

¹²⁸ This is the stated mission of an architectural firm in Australia, the identity of which is less important than the larger point that the essence of its mission statement is not uncommon in the profession.

relationship, such mission statements say little about the complex relationality actually at work; for example, that of the client to the others who will be affected by the client's architecture, of the client's architecture to the other architecture that will influence or be influenced by this architecture, and of the client's site to the other sites that comprise the region of which it is a part. In current practice, it is of course true that client needs are frequently altered to conform to arising circumstances, but seldom are client needs founded on circumstances other than those most direct and pressing to the client (some might also say those most self-serving), and seldom does design begin by addressing much beyond those circumstances.¹²⁹ Furthermore, when conformance reaches the point of being enforced, compliance can be reluctant, resisted, and sometimes contested to great lengths. Seldom does kenosis permeate such negotiations. But kenosis does offer an alternative view, one which sees the client and its others, the site and its others, the architecture and its others, and, therefore, the architect and its others, all in service to the situation of which they are already a part. In that view, the needs of the client do not hold sway over the needs of the entire situation, nor could they, because no such prioritisation exists when the needs of all situational elements are the needs of the situation itself. Thus an entrenched relationship, that of client and client needs, architect and architecture, dissolves into the dynamic relationality of situation.

This is a view of architecture from the inside-out.¹³⁰ Unlike so many of the 'creative processes' espoused by modernity's 'creative industries', this view – which kenosis opens-up to those willing to self-empty – does not offer a formula for immediate implementation, and practical practitioners may therefore dismiss its practicality. In one sense, dismissal is warranted, because such a view is not, in fact, implement-able. Ultimately, however, dismissal is rendered irrelevant, because a kenotic view is one of an already ongoing event, neither implement-able nor stoppable, only temporarily ignorable and resistible.¹³¹ In becoming human, humanity inevitably moves toward a kenotic view, one that looks back to the events in which it was created, in order to look forward to its own creativity and the events in which it is creating. Such a view empties and makes ready to create. Indeed, such a view recalls the figure of the Japanese enso (introduced in Chapter 2), simultaneously empty and full. Overlaying that figure with key notions in Heideggerian, Benjaminian and Gadamerian thinking, the enso begins to image an

¹²⁹ As discussed in Chapters 4 and 6, architectural 'sustainability' and 'environmental-friendliness' are often portrayed as being altruistic. Although certain features may be thus motivated, their implementation can be equally – or more so – prompted by direct client benefits, imposed requirements, or a combination of both.

¹³⁰ My use of the term 'inside-out' is indebted, in part, to the performance of a dance work entitled "In," and the description of that piece by its choreographer, Gavin Webber, in "Threefold: Webber / Hill / Huang Yi," ed. Dancenorth and Tasdance (Launceston and Townsville, Australia: Dancenorth and Tasdance, 2014), n.p.

¹³¹ In a similar vein, Heidegger speaks of the 'bidding' of being: "We either hear it or don't hear it. We can prepare for this hearing or neglect this preparation." See Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason*: 69.

inside-out view of creativity (see fig. 7.1). The openness and emptying afforded by kenosis can be seen to facilitate creativity's – and architecture's – 'turning back into itself', as well as the 'awakening' by which creating and creation come to be, in a kind of 'third reality'. This inside-out view sees the creative event as ontologically kenotic.

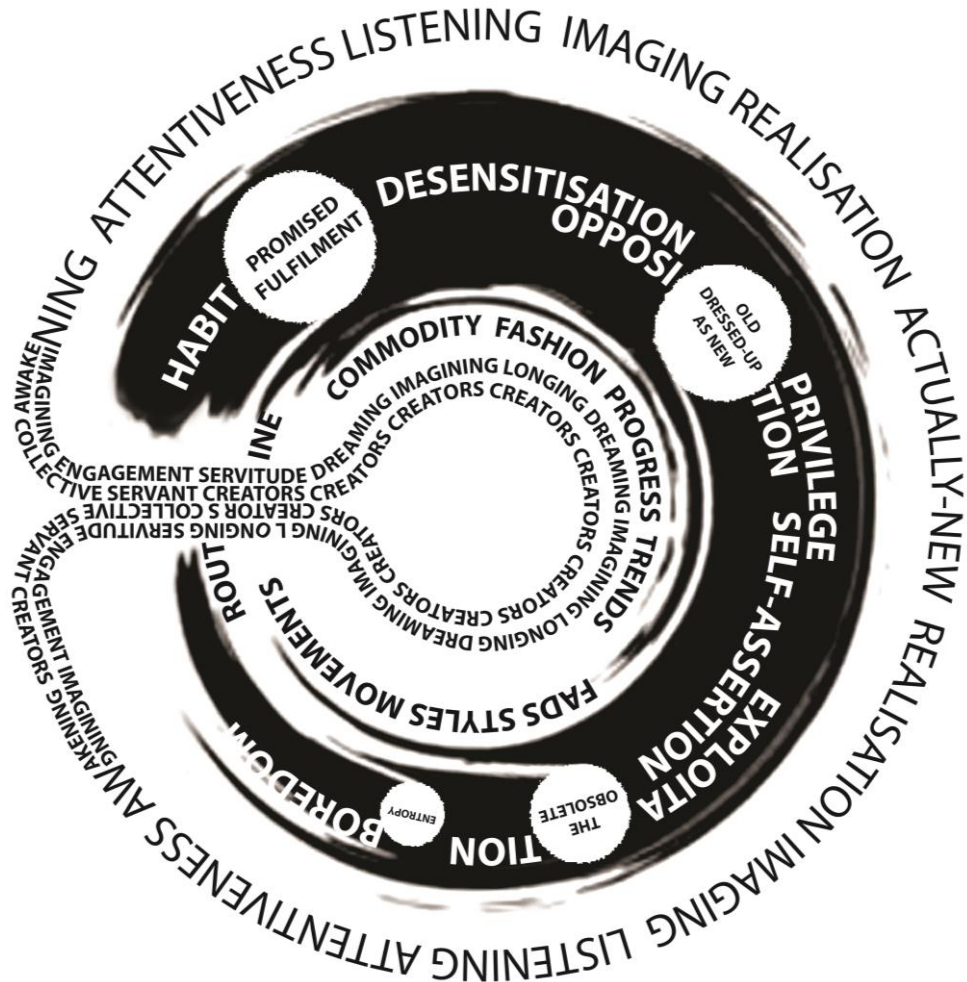


FIGURE 7.1
The Japanese enso as an 'inside-out' view – a kenotic view – of creativity.

FILLED WITH EMPTINESS

Even purged of its barriers to emptying, and paradigmatically emptied to see itself as an open domain in which all are creators and emptying *is* creating, architecture would nonetheless remain 'filled'. It would remain filled with all of its creators, not in spite of, but because of their kenotic view and approach. If, as discussed earlier, a kenotically-unfolding situation is one in which the situation is opening-up and unconcealing the

response it calls for, it is so precisely because its creators are already *of* the situation and reciprocally responding to it with their own kenosis, their own self-emptying and opening-up. And if the situation is calling for a response that includes architecture, similar dynamics see the architectural response also filled by its creators, or, more accurately and in keeping with the paradox of kenosis, *filled* with its creators' *emptiness*. Questions arise, then, as to architecture's grounding, and whether such grounding is necessarily substantive. Can emptiness ground? What might be this emptiness of the creators that fills – and grounds – their architecture? What is architecture if it were to *just be*? The notion of the vernacular provides clues, with its invocation of participation, regeneration, and sustainability. Although such traits are worthy and inherent in kenotic architecture, they are not ontological and, therefore, unsatisfying in themselves. It would seem that there is something more fundamental to an architecture filled with its creators' *emptiness*. In a retelling of early Greek thought, Heidegger points to a deeper insight, saying, "... what speaks to us only becomes perceivable through our response," and "our hearing is in itself a responding."¹³²

At one level, if the creators' response-to-situation is one of self-emptying (rather than self-assertion), it is perceivable that what speaks to them is receptivity and openness toward "a more profoundly thought human being"; that is, an attentiveness to becoming human. Becoming human is grounded in (human) being, which has no ground but "in itself essentially comes to be as grounding."¹³³ The creators' response, their opening-up to becoming human, can therefore be seen to be grounded in the creators' being and characterised in their 'dwelling', particularly when the latter is seen as Heidegger sees it: "the basic character of Being"¹³⁴ and "the manner in which mortals are on the earth."¹³⁵ More specifically, it can be said that the creators' response is grounded in their being *kenotically*; their being emptied and open. At another level, insofar as "building is really dwelling," and "building as dwelling unfolds into the building that cultivates growing things and the building that erects buildings,"¹³⁶ it can be said that the creators' response – materialised as architecture – is also grounded in the creators' being *kenotically*. To be *kenotically* is to be perceptively, sensitively, and thereby aesthetically, or, in Heidegger's view, to dwell poetically.¹³⁷ Thus, the creators' emptiness, and the architecture it fills, is a kind of *poetry*. The poetry discussed here, however, is not that of

¹³² Ibid., 48.

¹³³ Ibid., 48-49.

¹³⁴ See note 33. Although here capitalised (Being), this is the same sense of 'being' used in *The Principle of Reason*, wherein capitalisation is not used to distinguish being from being(s). With the exception of this direct quote, I likewise avoid such capitalisation.

¹³⁵ Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking," 146.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ See note 35.

literature, fantasia, or ornament. It is that which “lets us dwell.”¹³⁸ Or, as John Caputo describes it, “poetry is the instituting of a world, the uncovering of the matrix of meaning in which an historical age lives and dwells.”¹³⁹ This matrix, uncovered by poetry, once again conjures Plato’s chora and Heidegger’s clearing. It is the permeance of kenosis.

Surely, then, what speaks to kenotic creators – whose emptiness is poetic – must become perceivable through a response as perceivable, and intended for multi-sensory perception, as architecture. Indeed, the potentiality of their architecture (the limits from which it ‘begins’) is revealed by that in which its potential rests (its grounding).¹⁴⁰ Therefore, an architecture that rests in its creators’ poetic emptiness is an architecture that can dwell poetically in its situation (though not merely in the physical or stylish sense). More importantly, it is an architecture able to hold the poetic dwelling of its inhabitant-creators (though not merely in the structural or functional sense). Such dwelling is characterised by the emptiness of the “rose” that “is without why” and the “nothing” that “is without reason.”¹⁴¹ It stands in contrast to much of contemporary dwelling, described by Heidegger, in 1951, with words that have grown no less relevant. “Our dwelling today is harassed by work, made insecure by the hunt for gain and success, bewitched by the entertainment and recreation industry.”¹⁴² Buildings that emerge from and accommodate that kind of dwelling are, at best, only dwelling *places*, and, at worst, those that “deny dwelling its own nature when they are pursued and acquired for their own sake.”¹⁴³ As such, they represent an architecture filled with its creators’ fullness, not their emptiness.

Heidegger posits that “poetic creation ... is a kind of building,”¹⁴⁴ and I would suggest that the reverse can also be true. Building can be a kind of poetic creation, particularly if created in the permeance of kenosis. Kenotic architecture is not only filled with poetry, it *is* poetry, and its creators are poets. Although “it is the way of poets to shut their eyes to actuality ... [and] dream,”¹⁴⁵ they also awaken to effect their creation through the building that springs from dwelling. In *What Are Poets For?*,¹⁴⁶ Heidegger describes such poets as “the more venturesome [who] will more strongly in that they will in a different way from the purposeful objectifying of the world.” The will of their awakening

¹³⁸ Heidegger, “‘... Poetically Man Dwells ...’,” 213.

¹³⁹ Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger’s Thought*: 235.

¹⁴⁰ This is a notion discussed more fully in Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place: Explorations in the Topology of Being*: 105.

¹⁴¹ This is in reference to the rose in the Angelus Silesius poem, on which Heidegger draws in Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason*: 41-49.

¹⁴² Heidegger’s comments came in a 1951 lecture, first published in 1954, and later translated into English in Heidegger, “‘... Poetically Man Dwells ...’,” 211.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 215.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 213.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 212.

¹⁴⁶ M. Heidegger, “What Are Poets For?,” in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), 138-139.

and opening-up stands against the will that closes off being – the will of self-assertion – which is only able to “will nothing.” These are poet-creators for whom the nature of poetry, indeed, the nature of architecture, “becomes worthy of questioning” because, as Heidegger sees it, “they are poetically on the track of that which, for them, is what must be said.” Or, as I have been suggesting, they are on the track of a response that is unconcealed in the situation itself, as that which needs to be done. These are poets “in a destitute time,” where destitution is not, however, characterised by hopelessness. In fact, it is precisely the destitution of the time – which, in connection with architecture, I earlier referred to as its modern decadence – that prevents such poets, such poetry, and such poetic architecture from becoming *of* the time; from becoming fashionable and thereby decadent. Thus, it is the destitute time that maintains the poet-creator’s relevance, and it is in the time of such destitution that servitude (kenotic service to situation) is elevated.

What remains is to inquire as to what these poet-creators might build, particularly in reference to architecture. Architecture, emerging kenotically, defies stylistic description because the barriers of ‘-isms’ and ‘-ists’ are already removed and, with them, the language of form and materiality that typically accompanies each. Therefore, there is no checklist of criteria by which to categorise appearance. Instead, kenotic architecture can only be described open-endedly, incompletely, unresolvedly. It is an architecture of simple oneness, which, like the situation of which it and its creators are integral parts, and to which both respond, is a unitary structure (not to be confused with a single building), unconcealed only through an attentive working-out of manifold elements that are, and remain, in complex relationality. Unity is found within the structure’s internal articulation,¹⁴⁷ not necessarily reflected in its outer formality. Its simplicity is neither simplistic nor necessarily ‘clean’ (to use a favourite term of Modernism), but is truly that “on the other side of complexity.”¹⁴⁸ As such, it is open to what Venturi calls complexities and contradictions, and even to imperfection. Grounded in the being of its creators, as characterised by their dwelling, its “fundamental character” is therefore like that of dwelling itself, “sparing and preserving,” an architecture that “safeguards each thing in its nature.”¹⁴⁹

It is possible for this architecture, filled with emptiness, to be ordinary or extraordinary, even spectacularly ordinary, but not banal – either in its ordinariness or its spectacularity. And, in either, it may also be radical. It may manifest in any form

¹⁴⁷ See note 88.

¹⁴⁸ I refer again, as I did in Chapter 4, to the well-known musing of Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., as quoted in DePree, *Leadership is an Art*: 22.

¹⁴⁹ Heidegger, “Building Dwelling Thinking,” 147. Such notions may seem to echo aspects of ‘Critical Regionalism’, as previously discussed, but they actually go much further, inasmuch as each thing’s ‘nature’ can precede or transcend its ‘regionalism’. Moreover, the supposed regional attributes or appropriateness of some thing may have evolved – to the point of commonplace acceptance – through the *denial* of its ‘nature’.

(including distorted and disintegrated), but, not being of any ‘-ism’, it resists stylistic categorisation and dismisses critique based on commodity-driven fetishes. It may be of any scale, of any appearance (including that resembling known styles and categories), and of any degree of grandeur, as long as such characteristics arise from its situatedness. Such architecture is not made novel by eschewing the influence of tradition, or as a result of intentional *un*-relatedness (something quite different to identity) and superficial seductiveness (something quite different to drawing-in). Nor is novelty produced by grasping and exploiting (something quite different to committed attentiveness) or by the pursuit of a devised ‘process’ (something quite different to letting-go). Akin to Heidegger’s poetry, creating an architecture of emptiness is not something *to be measured*, but rather is *a measuring*,¹⁵⁰ a term used again, here, in the same sense discussed in Chapter 4.¹⁵¹ It is a measuring of dwelling – its creators’ and its own – situationally entangled. It is thereby a measuring of the open, incomplete, and unknown realm of being, a measuring-taking that insists on its constant re-taking. In that, it is a measuring of the mystery of human creativity and, therefore, a demystification of that which nonetheless remains a mystery. Such measuring is kenotic, and kenosis is such measuring. Unlike architecture that is aware and assertive of its something-ness, and always seeking to be measured, an architecture arising from the permeance of kenosis – from a measuring – is architecture that “pays no attention to itself, [and] asks not whether it is seen.”¹⁵² Approached from an *arrière-garde* position, it is such architecture that is actually at the front-line of being – the truly *avant-garde*.

END-ING

An architecture filled with the emptiness of its creators – an architecture that can just be – implies an end to much of architecture as it is currently known and practised. Indeed, there is a case to be made that architecture, unable to just be, has already come to an end. Insofar as metaphysics ends in its fulfilment as science and technology, and art ends in its fulfilment as philosophy, it follows that architecture – traditionally being something of both metaphysics and art – likewise ends. Following many other aspects of culture, architecture has increasingly come to share an obsession with the phantasmagoric, or the “mega-visual,”¹⁵³ which is utterly dependent on science and

¹⁵⁰ Heidegger, “... Poetically Man Dwells ...,” 218-221.

¹⁵¹ In Chapter 4, see discussion under the heading, “Readying and Waiting.” As noted, there, this Heideggerian sense of measuring is not that of scientific or quantifiable measurement but, rather, the unconcealment of the concealed.

¹⁵² See note 141.

¹⁵³ This is part of a longer term, “the mega-visual tradition of monopoly capitalism,” used to refer to “anti-aesthetic” and technology-reliant phenomena in P. Fuller, “Aesthetics After Modernism,” in *The Symbolic Order: A Contemporary Reader on the Arts Debate*, ed. P. Abbs (Philadelphia: The Falmer Press, 1989), 138.

technology to determine and realise its graphic, numerical, and material form, and often dependent on technological heroics to achieve each. At the same time, architecture (at least certain sectors of it) has developed a heightened interest in philosophy-reliant interpretation, to the point of prioritising that over the reality of designing and constructing, “substituting a set of readings for the real object” and thereby creating “what [Rosalind] Kraus calls a ‘hermeneutic phantom’.”¹⁵⁴ Such obsessions may appear to be oppositional, one populist and one elitist, but they have in common the potential to detract from architecture’s role in building and dwelling. Together, they present a view of architecture’s end, dissolving into science and technology, on the one hand, and into philosophy, on the other.

Indeed, it could be argued, along the lines with which Danto (building on Hegel) declared the end of art, that an architecture increasingly desperate to describe style, genre, and movement – coining ever-new ‘-isms’ to do so – and therefore also desperate to find narrative meaning, is an architecture approaching its end. Such talk of ‘end’, however, is not talk of ‘death’. Danto does not suggest that the making of art ends, only that its continued making is “without benefit of a reassuring sort of narrative in which it [is] seen as the appropriate next stage in the story.”¹⁵⁵ An end of architecture – whether viewed as approaching or fait accompli – does not suggest an end to building, only the opening-up of its happening. Indeed, architecture still builds. It does not only interpret. Much of what it builds is not phantasmagoria, and much is banal. Thus, claims of its end may be premature, even if presaging. The question raised by this discourse has to do with what kenosis might say of architecture’s end. Although kenosis can be found concretised in architecture, it is not the case that architecture is generally conceived or realised in kenosis. Nonetheless, architecture’s unfolding is kenotic (even when architecture is not). In that unfolding, architecture, as it has come to be institutionalised, can be seen to be in an ongoing state of end-ing.

According to Gianni Vattimo, the unfolding is secularisation and secularisation is kenosis. In his project, secularisation sees an end-ing of Christianity, as it has come to be institutionalised. He presumes the Nietzschean ‘death’ of the metaphysical God, as he writes of “weakening faith”¹⁵⁶ and that which comes “after Christianity.”¹⁵⁷ Yet, he does not suggest the end of religion or religious experience. In fact, he suggests the opposite. Religious experience after Christianity rests in a view of being as dynamic,

¹⁵⁴ J. Albrecht, “Against the Interpretation of Architecture,” *Journal of Architectural Education* 55, no. 3 (2002): 196.

¹⁵⁵ A.C. Danto, “Introduction: Modern, Postmodern, and Contemporary,” in *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1997), 4.

¹⁵⁶ G. Vattimo and R. Girard, *Christianity, Truth, and Weakening Faith*, ed. Pierpaolo Antonello, trans. William McCuaig (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

¹⁵⁷ Vattimo, *After Christianity*.

without the “stability ascribed to it by the metaphysical tradition.” It is therefore able to be seen as wide-ranging, pluralistic, always real, not supernatural – a participative “experience in the world ... in the events of history.”¹⁵⁸ Vattimo thus opens-up religion (in particular, Christianity) by turning it back to its beginnings; back into itself. He turns it back to the incarnation story, that moment in which the divine becomes human through an instantiation of kenosis, and thereby enables the divine to be considered secular. I would suggest that this can also be seen as the moment at which a complex plurality of elements gradually began their formation as a ‘unitary primordial structure’, through an opening-up to the situation and an internal working-out of relationalities. The ‘church’ that began at this moment was not – as yet – a sacralised structure of hierarchies and categories of opposition (though the working-out inevitably involved differing interpretations). And, as the story unfolds, the one element – the one ‘person’ – with the potential to dominate and manipulate the working-out (supposedly from outside the situation), chose instead to assume the position of servant or slave (very much within the situation), in yet another instantiation of kenosis. But, then, as this structure turns from its foundational kenosis, it turns toward power, self-sacralisation, and institutionalisation, ironically doing so to insulate itself from the very secularisation it began. And, it is precisely such secularisation, or kenosis, that ongoingly pressures the structure to re-open-up, to desacralise, and re-embrace its plurality and complexity, even while remaining in unitary primordial relation. In that paradox, Christianity is enabled to move toward fulfilment, albeit in a form that might be largely unrecognisable to its current institutions.

Kenosis can be seen to effect a similar ‘end-ing’ of architecture, by constantly turning it back to its beginnings, back into itself – much as Derrida suggests in the epigraph to this chapter. What begins, in necessity, as the simple oneness of dwelling and building, gradually severs, with shifts toward expertise and its frequent partners, exclusivity and privilege. What begins as the making of things primarily “by nature,” and negligibly “by art,”¹⁵⁹ gradually moves toward the reverse (the rise of art being less problematic than the decline of nature, but becoming grave when art’s rise is at nature’s expense). Architecture moves toward self-sacralisation, insulating itself from the ‘laity’ and secular ‘non-professions’ – both of which are essential to its existence. In so doing, architecture joins other human institutions, which, according to Louis Kahn, lose “the

¹⁵⁸ Prosman, “Secularization as Kenosis,” 185-196.

¹⁵⁹ This distinction is made in reference to that of Aristotle: “[things] which are so by nature are wholes in a higher degree than those which are so by art.” See Aristotle, “*Metaphysica*,” in *The Works of Aristotle*, ed. W.D. Ross (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1940), Book Δ, 26.

inspirations of their beginning.”¹⁶⁰ But, whether or not listened-to and observed, kenosis persistently speaks of beginnings as it calls to open-up; that is, as it calls to challenge entrenched paradigms and practices, “ideologies and xenophobic tendencies,”¹⁶¹ and assumptions as to what architecture is. It turns architecture back to its humanity, and its grounding in humanity’s becoming human – its being. It effects what Heidegger (analysing Aristotle) refers to as an “act of self-unfolding emergence [which] is inherently a going-back-into-itself.”¹⁶² Insofar as that effects the end or end-ing of architecture, it is precisely the end – and potentiality – revealed by architecture’s beginnings: the building that springs from poetic dwelling. That is what is possible for architecture, what architecture (and all creativity) can be when it is not *trying to be*; when it makes room in itself to *just be*.

¹⁶⁰ Kahn, "The Room, The Street and Human Agreement," 34. In the same essay (p. 33), Kahn says that "the room is the beginning of architecture. It is the place of the mind. You in the room ... respond to its character, its spiritual aura, recognizing that whatever the human proposes and makes becomes a life." His description reduces architecture to the simple oneness of a single space, emptied of all but its dimensions, structure, and light, a situation to which humanity responds and, by that response, becomes more human.

¹⁶¹ J. Wines, "The Art of Architecture in the Age of Ecology," in *Sustainable Architecture: White Papers*, ed. D.E. Brown, M. Fox, and M.R. Pelletier (New York: Earth Pledge Foundation, 2000), 13. More fully, Wines states: "The quest for a conceptually liberating approach in architecture, leading to the inclusion and transformation of environmental content, will have to start with a questioning of the profession's insular ideologies and xenophobic tendencies to resist new ideas. The first of these shibboleths would have to be the assumption that architecture is an obligatory orchestration of massive sculptural volumes. Obviously, any building is a composition of physical elements; but this does not have to be seen as an interpretive bias."

¹⁶² Heidegger, "On the Being and Conception of Φύσις in Aristotle's Physics B, 1," 233.

Conclusion: The Grace of Dis-grace

May we give up what is worthy of thought in favor of the recklessness of exclusively calculative thinking and its immense achievements? Or are we obliged to find paths upon which thinking is capable of responding to what is worthy of thought instead of, enchanted by calculative thinking, mindlessly passing over what is worthy of thought?

That is the question. It is the world-question of thinking. Answering this question decides what will become of the earth and of human existence on this earth.¹

Although each includes notions of 'end-ing', neither the Vattimian desacralisation of Christianity nor my proposition of architecture's kenosis leads to a calculable or attainable end state. Unfolding kenosis produces effective moment-to-moment functionality, but it is always set amidst unceasing and contingent movement (a kind of 'chaos') that requires constant thinking and working-out. Vattimo's sketch of Western searching – the search for salvation yielding to perfection and the search for perfection yielding to progress – reveals exactly such movement but without any condition ever being fully found or sustained. Indeed, even progress yields to routinisation, as society – so-called developed and developing society – becomes increasingly addicted to new and often ostentatious routines grounded in calculative thinking. Such addiction is, itself, a routine. And not even routine is an end. But, if routine is no more ultimate than those conditions or strivings that preceded it, to what condition might routine yield? Beyond routine, to what does kenotic unfolding point, particularly in the context of human creativity and, not least, in architecture? As always, kenosis resists definitive answers but is nonetheless revealing, because it resides in that realm where, as Heidegger observes, "... one cannot prove anything, but one can point out a great deal."²

Viewed from the diverse perspectives of preceding chapters, kenosis is revealed as much in what it *is not* as in what it is. Having no end, kenosis is not an end. Consequently, neither is it a goal or strategy to be exploited for advantage. Yet kenosis advantages when its advantage is not anticipated or seen to be assured. Unable to be strategised, kenosis is not something to be effected or implemented, particularly not by the mere deployment of its individual characteristics. Self-deprecation, humility,

¹ Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason*: 129.

² Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*: 22.

acquiescence, and submission do not, in themselves, constitute kenosis. Self-sacrifice is not a kenotic demand, but nor is it the case that the event of kenosis is something easy or risk-free, comfortable or comforting. And in the call to relationality – the call to open-up to others and other things – kenosis is not simply dialogue, diplomacy, or compromise. Indeed, there is much that kenosis would seem to exclude. Yet, by its very nature, kenosis must somehow include, or at least open-up to, that which it seems not to be. That paradox holds the tension and between-ness and struggle, not only of defining kenosis, but also of readying for its potential approach and, then, recognising and appreciating its appearance.

So, what can be said of what kenosis *is*? It is, of course, the active-passivity and passive-activity of emptying, particularly self-emptying and, more particularly, the claimed self-emptying of the divine in Christianity. As emptying, kenosis must also involve emptiness and nothingness, both of which are nonetheless something. In certain ways, kenosis is Pythagorean *kenon*, Platonic *chora*, and Aristotelian *topos*. More directly, kenosis is Lurianic *zimzum*, and Eckhartian (but also Heideggerian) *Gelassenheit*. And, to varying degrees, it is embedded in the Aquinian *Five Ways*, the *way* of Taoism, the *sunyata* of Buddhism, the *yogas* of Hinduism, and the *pillars* of Islam. And, out of the concept of Judaic *shekinah*, kenosis is seen to be the face of a coin whose other side is skenosis. As such, kenosis is an emptying, but, more than that, it is an emptying that is receptive, one that makes-room for skenosis; the concurrent and simultaneous filling or occupation, which, in turn, establishes the potentiality of overflowing and pouring-out. Thus, kenosis is paradoxically its own complement. As informative as such descriptions may be, kenosis can remain abstract – a mere concept – unless seen to be instantiated and made experiential. Architecture is a vehicle for the latter, one by which kenosis can manifest concretely and experientially, even as it remains stubbornly incomplete.

The capacity of kenosis to transcend disciplines, faith traditions, cultures, and time derives largely from its intrinsic connection to creating and creation. Indeed, an account of kenosis reveals the ontology of creativity and thereby presents all creativity as kenotic potentiality. As architecture moves from potentiality to actuality, kenotic opportunity lies in five aspects of the unfolding. First, kenosis is at the *foundation* of every project, calling each to become what it will be and be exactly that – kenotically. But, at a deeper level, there are also those projects specifically and fundamentally called to be kenotic, whose *raison d'être* is kenosis. Second, the *inception* of each project can be kenotic. The creators' attitudes and approaches to the project – their 'creativity' – can be animated by kenosis. Third, the project's *conception* – the act of creating or designing – can be an event of kenosis. Indeed, the resulting concept or design can prove kenotic, as well, but

not assuredly. Fourth, the project's *realisation*, its concluding step in becoming actuality, can produce a kenotic creation. But, even then – in the fifth aspect of unfolding – it remains to be seen whether the realised project has the capacity to kenotically accommodate its *utilisation*. The projects explored in Part Two of this dissertation, which span across the 'isms' of contemporary style, open-up all five aspects of architecture's unfolding. To some extent – though, at times, difficult to see – each aspect of each project is somehow kenotic, simply because each is part of a creation's unfolding. Moreover, each project is some part of a larger unfolding of human endeavour. Beyond that, however, there are distinct and important differences. Certain projects begin with strong kenotic foundations, only to see kenosis wane or face various forms of resistance as the project moves toward actualisation. Other projects appear to offer little instantiation of kenosis until actualised. Still others seem to reveal kenotic character in all aspects of their development, though, as always, such revelation is imperfect and incomplete. In all creativity, kenosis is a given, but, in human creativity, the manner in which the arrival and appearance of kenosis is received, interpreted, and attended is always a variable – as a brief summary of the findings in Part Two demonstrates.

At the foundational level, the kenotic potential of the Church of the Light, in Japan, could scarcely be greater. It is a Christian (and therefore kenotic) church in a non-Christian country, authored by an architect who approaches the project's inception seeking to concretise a 'bridge'; that between the West, with its Christian notion of kenosis, and the East, with its Buddhist/Shinto notion of nothingness. However, as inception yields to conception, and conception to realisation, Tadao Ando's Neo-Modern building speaks more about that which distinguishes kenosis from nothingness than it does their commonality. Moreover, in the project's fixation on nothingness and the resultant attempt to reduce the church to only one primary symbol, its utilisation reveals a less than kenotic accommodation of the multi-layered Christian liturgy – the very activity that is essential to being church and, itself, a celebration of kenosis. In this project, kenosis initially reveals itself but is later withdrawn by the project's own work. Conversely, it is difficult to find foundational kenosis in the government office building at The Hague, known as Castalia, or in the Commerzbank headquarters at Frankfurt, yet both reveal instantiations of kenosis in the course of their respective development. Michael Graves' office building originally emerges from Postmodern Historicism as an assertive architectural 'intruder' on The Hague's skyline, only to gradually become kenotic; a worthy and perhaps necessary 'bridge' between the city's historic district and the even more incongruous high-rise office district that follows Castalia. And, although Norman Foster's high-rise bank building – an iconic milestone of Environmentalism – suffers most of the aggressive and assertive characteristics of its typology, elements of its

conception, realisation, and utilisation see the building emptied of typical high-rise 'efficiencies'. That, in turn, opens-up aspects of the building to spatial and interpersonal relationalities that are both environmentally- and socially-friendly. In the latter two projects, kenosis is initially withdrawn but later emerges, even if limitedly.

The advance of architecture, from potentiality to actuality, is characterised by Louis Kahn as a movement between silence and light, which, in itself, evokes kenotic principles. His work reveals a struggle – an unending dance – of between-ness, not only between silence and light, but also between religion and science, sacred and secular, intuition and knowledge, unmeasurable and measurable. Such are the struggles of modernity unfolding through kenosis. And such are the struggles demonstrated in the kenotic unfolding of the Salk Institute at La Jolla. Founded in Jonas Salk's vision of a scientific community open to others, especially those in the arts and humanities, Kahn's approach to the Institute's design reciprocates with similar openness. He has no eureka moment. Instead, conception is a demonstration of ever-heightening attentiveness to an evolving situation. Amongst many instantiations of kenosis in the realised project, none is greater than the emptying, filling, and pouring-out of the central courtyard; that by which the relationality of the entire situation is established, including that of site, architecture, and the perceivers and users of both. Yet despite – and also because of – its kenotic nature, the project is neither complete nor perfect. Indeed, the same can be said of a remarkably different work of architecture: the Museum of Islamic Art at Doha, by I.M. Pei. Following the Salk by some four decades, this museum's situation also appears founded in kenotic potential; that of opening-up Islamic culture – importantly including its modern sensibilities – to a so-called modern world, and building yet another 'bridge' to span between-ness. Pei takes on the risk of 'cultural translation', understanding the polarity between literalism and faithful paraphrase. His approach is not to assertively translate, but to ready for the translation's approach; to become vulnerable, empty, open, and thereby liberated from the task's inherent risks. The translation that Pei concretises is less important for its architectonics than for what it says of kenosis and creativity. His monumental 'container' ultimately finds its identity in the metaphor offered by one of the items it contains: a Dervish *kashkúl* or 'begging bowl', ironically a very modest container, the potential of which lies not only in emptiness but also in the consequent capacity to establish relationality. Pei and his work – like Kahn and his, before – defy labels, doing so by virtue of an openness and receptivity that precludes positioning within stylistic categories. Each of their works occupies its place in an entangled, multilinear – and therefore uncategorisable – continuum of architectural tradition.

Useful to this discourse, but in sharp contrast to the work of Kahn and Pei – particularly Pei's museum – is a museum designed by Daniel Libeskind: the Jewish

Museum Berlin. Transcending concepts of museum as container, Libeskind's museum claims a kind of singularity in its manifestation of void, an absence made present. Indeed, such a void can rightly be seen as foundational to this museum, since it refers to the void effected by an event of Jewish, German, and world history at the antithetical extremity of kenosis. Indeed, such a void could reasonably be anticipated to instantiate kenosis and take the discussion of kenosis to an even deeper level. At various stages of the project's conceptualisation and realisation, interdisciplinary dialogue, which might itself be seen as kenotic, finds observers and critics citing the void as a primary feature in the creating of an architecture of uncanniness, hope, and laughter – sufficient to face horror. As fitting as such attributes might be to a Jewish museum in Berlin, a closer reading of the Libeskind museum finds that its prioritisation of calculated and self-asserted spectacularity is an impediment to self-emptying receptivity. The building thus produces more of filled presence than present absence. Instead of opening-up questions and maintaining their openness, the built museum proposes answers. It is an 'illustration' mismatched to its 'caption'; the architecture contradicting so many of its claims and ascriptions.

Also in Berlin, but designed and built several years after Libeskind's museum, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, by Peter Eisenman, is the memorial that the museum always aspired to be. It makes many similar claims, is ascribed with many similar attributes, and, in many ways, can be seen as self-assertive. But, in its conceptual and realised abstractness, it presents an openness to its others, invites reciprocal response, and accepts whatever relationship ensues. Accordingly, kenosis is instantiated in ways not seen at the museum. Something of the same is true at the nearby German parliamentary building – the Reichstag – restored and renovated by Norman Foster. With the extreme transparency of its new glass dome, the project presents what might be seen as an ultimate unconcealment, but it does so with ambiguity and contradiction, and not without elements of architectural gimmickry. Yet, kenosis is nonetheless revealed, and creative endeavour is thereby informed. Kenosis manifests and informs most clearly, however, not in any one of the Berlin projects but in the relationality of all three. None is the exemplar claimed or ascribed. In their common context, each relies on the others to hold open the questions of un-mendable pain. In their interdependence, they collectively, kenotically, and paradoxically work toward mending; work that is always incomplete, but never futile, since it is precisely such incompleteness that precludes forgetfulness and, so, preserves memory.

Notwithstanding their various instantiations of kenosis, these projects – like most contemporary projects – are produced amidst the entrenched hierarchies and practices

that comprise and surround architecture, none of which can claim to be inherently kenotic. To some extent, architecture seems inevitably filled by ‘-ists’ and ‘-isms’. Amongst architects and architecture’s various development actors, there is competition for hierarchical positions, not least positions associated with design authorship. And, within architectural design, there are competitive theories, movements, logics, and styles. Maintainable only by exclusion, ‘-isms’ present as barriers to architecture’s kenosis. Indeed, to turn kenotic thinking into an ‘-ism’, and thereby advocate *kenotic-ism* as a movement that can overcome previous movements and ‘save’ architecture from itself, would be to propose yet another exclusivist movement. At any rate, such a proposal is rendered impossible, because kenosis cannot accept the suffix. While ‘-isms’ call attention to their self-ness, kenosis is constantly emptying itself of self-ness and opening-up to an other-ness that is without categories or labels. Indeed, kenosis opens-up architecture to become not what it might be labelled but what it will be, if left to be. A kenosis of architecture is an emptying of so-called movements and styles, a dissolution of categories of opposition, and an elimination of ‘walls’ – an end to that which silences questioning. It does not effect an end to the struggles of creating, because that would end creativity. But it does name and successively weaken the sources of architectural ‘violence’. A kenosis of architecture is dependent on – and already embedded in – the kenosis to which creativity calls humanity. Kenosis turns humanity and architecture back to the questions of being in order to look forward, toward a transforming, secularising, and aestheticising world. In such questions, architecture is asked to consider its being when all are regarded as creators, when all creators engage openly, when the relationality of all creators is hierarchically dynamic, and when all creators awaken and attend to the situation of which they and other things are already an intrinsic part. Architecture is asked to consider its being – not *emptied* of its creators, but *filled* with its creators’ *emptiness*. In so doing, it is asked to face its end-ing by going back to its beginning – and to understand that as a threshold of its potentiality.

Discussion hereby returns to the matter with which this ending chapter begins. In connection with architecture or, more broadly, human creativity, to what does kenosis point? It might correctly, but incompletely, be said that kenosis points to always ongoing unfolding – endings unendingly leading back to beginnings. That might be seen as uninteresting or, worse, as nihilistic, but it does informatively confirm that there are no lasting states; that attempts to label and categorise such states may be convenient for discourse but are, themselves, contributing to routinisation; and that such attempts cling to teleological views. There is, however, much more to the kenotic event, more to which kenosis points. Paolo Soleri suggests that routine can transform into ‘grace’, and he pays

homage to “the artisan, the person capable of transforming routine, the bulk of life, into grace.”³ But the ongoing-ness of kenosis insists that grace is also not an enduring or end state. If kenosis is taken seriously – its questions left open and its mystery respected – then grace must be seen as something that is only experienced from time to time, amidst the unfolding, along the ‘way’. It is a real experience of the moment, and not – as religion might have it – the exclusive purview, promise, or gift of a metaphysical God. Routine emptied of routine-ness is something grace-filled, something filled with humanity and creativity, something becoming whole and perhaps ‘holy’ (if that is not but the same as wholly). Grace does not overcome routine but sees it fulfilled.

It might therefore be said that kenosis points to grace, even if the latter’s appearance is often fleeting. Grace is something of Gadamer’s fusion, Heidegger’s poetic dwelling and thinking, Benjamin’s awakening and child-like play, Vattimo’s elimination of walls, and Guignon’s situational awareness. Grace is that which is experienced when creativity, whether of nature or humanity, responds to a situation with what the situation, in its entirety, is calling for; that is, when the response to kenosis is kenotic. Like the kenosis in which it is embedded, grace is neither a goal nor permanent outcome. It, too, is unattainable by reason or will, only on its own terms. It is a contingent experience amidst ongoing kenosis. As such, the grace of kenosis actually emerges as *dis-grace*, a dis-tancing from, dis-possession of, or dis-interest in grace – certainly its fetishisation. In that distancing, openness to the other and other things includes even those others and other things considered to be disgraced or, in some way, disgraceful or ungraceful. Grace can surely be seen as amongst that which comes to occupy the emptiness that kenosis creates. It is therefore also that which potentially overflows a situation, and pours-out. Thus, grace can be seen as something granted by kenosis at particular creative moments, perhaps those moments that fulfil Susan Sontag’s longing: “In place of a hermeneutics we need an erotics of art.”⁴ At such moments, kenosis transcends mere ongoing-ness. It makes possible what Pérez-Gómez calls architecture “built upon love”⁵; and, then, the sensuous engagement of such architecture through what Pallasmaa describes as the “eyes of the skin”⁶; and, finally, the coming to know of such architecture by what the apostle Paul (author of the Christian kenosis

³ Soleri also suggests that such capability “is often if not always beyond contemporary Western man. Nor has Western man found a substitute, if one exists, for such transformation and such fulfilment. This routine remains as it is, an integral part of our lives (automatism), but the ritual of it has withered away.” See Soleri, *The Bridge Between Matter and Spirit is Matter Becoming Spirit: The Arcology of Paolo Soleri*: vii.

⁴ S. Sontag, *Against Interpretation, and Other Essays* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1966), 9. Specifically in connection with the art of Surrealism, this notion is taken up in M.A. Caws, *The Surrealistic Look: An Erotics of Encounter* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997).

⁵ Pérez-Gómez, *Built Upon Love: Architectural Longing After Ethics and Aesthetics*.

⁶ J. Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses*, Third ed. (Chichester, UK: John Wiley and Sons, 2012).

passage) calls the enlightened “eyes of the heart.”⁷ It is at such moments that kenosis enables the grace-full transformation of the situation and everything in it.

But why does the situation need to be transformed, or, to reprise the shouted question with which this dissertation began, “Why do we have to change anything?” Even the most definitive answer – that we do *not* have to change anything – fails to close the question. In the very asking of the question, the possibility of change is opened-up, and, in its contemplation, change is already underway even if nothing is done, because doing nothing is doing something. Irrespective of the extent or merit of effected change, humanity goes about doing. But, in pointing to grace, kenosis also points to the problem of frenetically and recklessly doing, and of doing ever more; of calculating, grasping at, and clinging to the doing, without exercising or experiencing grace. Alternatively, kenosis suggests a shift, from doing to being and to being grace-fully, which is always and already the most efficacious kind of doing. In contemplating the doing of anything, a kenotic attitude or posture redirects focus away from whether we *have to* respond (usually no) and whether we *can* (usually yes), instead to consider, first, the worthiness of the contemplation and, only when that is established, the worthiness of the doing and, finally, the worthiness of a response effected by such doing. Such contemplative thinking is a means of practised kenosis. To practise kenosis is to open-up Heidegger’s “world-question of thinking” (the epigraph to this chapter) and, in so doing, to enable, animate, and sustain precisely the thinking for which Heidegger pleads. Kenosis invites humanity to invite the approach and appearance of kenosis. It invites humanity to become human; to empty and move toward the fullness of human being. Similarly, it invites architecture and all creative endeavours to empty and just be, to risk letting-go of calculated ‘wow’ in favour of being wowed by grace. As kenosis points to humanity’s more grace-filled being – marked by self-restraint and heightened attunement – it consequently points to a more grace-filled aesthetisation of humanity’s place. Yet, amidst its inviting, suggesting, and pointing, kenosis always leaves open the question of humanity’s response to the situated happenings it permeates; to the unfolding of creative events and, particularly, those of architecture. Unassertively but consistently, kenosis asks whether humanity will recognise such happenings as worthy and respond worthily, with the mindfulness and creativity of emptying – with the kenosis that is human being.

⁷ The passage from which this phrase is drawn (Eph 1:18 NRSV) and, indeed, all of the letter to the Ephesians is attributed to the apostle Paul, but it is more likely authored by one of Paul’s disciples, writing in the apostle’s name, after his death. See Attridge and Meeks, *The HarperCollins Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, 1982.

Epilogue

This dissertation was not meant to include an epilogue – not until the situation of its writing changed and suggested an addendum. Just six weeks prior to my planned submission date, while pursuing the finer details of the dissertation's completion, I was found to have three coronary arteries with ninety percent blockage; a medical situation that called for immediate bypass graft surgery, and one which not only affected my academic situation but also related to it in unexpected ways. Some, who knew of both my medical condition and my thesis topic, light-heartedly spoke about an impending 'arterial kenosis'. It is a compelling metaphor, except that arteries – unfortunately – do not self-empty. (In fact, once bypassed, the already-blocked original arteries soon complete their self-filling.) More pertinent and serious was the discovery that many aspects of this unexpected experience were facilitated and alleviated by my prior thinking about kenosis; for example, through the willing releasement, or letting-go, fostered by such thinking, and through the sense of power opened-up by a state of utter powerlessness. Indeed, kenotic thinking proved effective in obviating much of the fear and anxiety associated with such an event. That alone, however, does not necessarily make my arising medical situation noteworthy. The corroborative view it contributes to my thesis perhaps does.

In this dissertation, I have given consideration to situations that call for creative response, particularly architectural response. In hospital, I was presented with a situation that called for medical response – and with time to compare it to those situations I had previously considered. Given all that I have posited about the merits of responding to situations kenotically, I was struck by the fact that, in virtually all situations calling for medical response, the needs, wants, and expectations of the situation's diverse participants appear so precisely aligned with what the situation is calling for; namely, heightened attentiveness to the entirety of the situation by each and every one of those participants. In the medical context, situational elements stand ready to empty themselves of self, open-up to one another, fill with the situation, and join in the struggle – the battle – to respond as the situation requires. Although certain situations call for medical heroics and extreme practices, even those are situationally responsive. Excepting malfeasance, there is little place for intentional defiance of the situation, for fanciful treatment of the situation as something other than it is, or for assertions that are overtly contrary to the situation's unfolding; its ongoing kenosis. Yet there is ample place – even demand – for creative response to a situation's contingencies, indeterminacies, and need for constant working-out. Situations that call for medical response are, like all

situations, consistently kenotic and, unlike many situations, remarkably consistent in eliciting kenotic response. In that, medical situations model the kind of response that architecture could more fully and consistently provide. What might architecture be if every situation was considered vital, and if the response thereto was considered essential to the entire situation's ongoing-ness?

Not necessarily unique to medicine, but presenting a worthy exemplar, the kenosis in a medical situation is evidenced, at least in part, by its ability to shift thinking from the calculative to the meditative (as Heidegger suggests). Or, more precisely, perhaps it should be said that, in such situations, kenosis enables essential calculative thinking to be meditatively exercised. Matters such as risk factors, mortality rates, complications, and contingencies are seen as neither trivial nor as ends in themselves but, rather, as amongst the elements of heightened awareness, attunement, and openness to that which is worthy of thought. Thus, essential procedural knowledge enhances alertness and responsiveness to that which is non-procedural and not fully knowable but no less essential in manifesting what needs to be done. Certainly, medicine is not without its own questions and, like architecture, may be in need of kenosis. That is a topic that others might wish to research. But, by intervening in my academic situation, a medical situation expanded and, in many ways, corroborated my thinking about kenosis. Although I could have amended the earlier acknowledgements to include thoracic surgeon Professor James Tatoulis and cardiologist Associate Professor Roderic Warren – both of the University of Melbourne – they had *nothing* to do with the preceding pages of this dissertation. Yet by having *everything* to do with this epilogue, they enabled the completion and submission of the entire document. Hence, I acknowledge and express my sincere gratitude to both, as well as to all of the situation's participants, including manifold technicians, nurses, and staff, each of whom unfailingly responded – kenotically – to a situation that challenged me to do the same.

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Appendix One: Primary Project Investigations

The following projects were investigated and analysed, by the author, as case studies. They serve as vehicles for the discussion of kenosis in Part Two of this dissertation (Chapters 3 to 6).

Project	Location	Architect	Date Visited
The Church of the Light	Ibaraki, Japan	Tadao Ando	27 Feb, 2013
The Salk Institute	La Jolla, CA, USA	Louis I. Kahn	14 Nov, 2013
Castalia	The Hague, Netherlands	Michael Graves	02 Dec, 2013
Jewish Museum Berlin	Berlin, Germany	Daniel Libeskind	04 Dec, 2013
Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe	Berlin, Germany	Peter Eisenman	05 Dec, 2013
The Reichstag	Berlin, Germany	Norman Foster	07 Dec, 2013
Commerzbank Headquarters	Frankfurt am Main, Germany	Norman Foster	16 Dec, 2013
Museum of Islamic Art	Doha, Qatar	I.M. Pei	19 Dec, 2013

Appendix Two: Secondary Project Investigations

Although not featuring directly in Part Two of this dissertation (Chapters 3 to 6), the following projects were investigated, by the author, for various aspects of their relatedness to the primary projects.

Project	Location	Architect/Artist	Date Visited
Awaji Yumebutai	Awaji, Hyogo, Japan	Tadao Ando	29 Jan, 2013
Imperial Hotel (partial restoration)	Meiji-Mura Open-Air Museum Inuyama, Japan	Frank Lloyd Wright	31 Jan, 2013
Omotesando Hills (Shopping Centre)	Tokyo, Japan	Tadao Ando	01 Feb, 2013
Watari-Um Museum	Tokyo, Japan	Mario Botta	01 Feb, 2013
Nezu Museum	Tokyo, Japan	Kengo Kuma	01 Feb, 2013
National Museum of Western Art	Tokyo, Japan	Charles-Édouard Jeanneret-Gris (Le Corbusier)	02 Feb, 2013
Fallingwater	Mill Run, PA, USA	Frank Lloyd Wright	22 Nov, 2013
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum	Washington, DC, USA	James Ingo Freed Pei Cobb Freed & Partners	25 Nov, 2013
Mémorial des Martyrs de la Déportation	Paris, France	Georges-Henri Pingusson	29 Nov, 2013
Sankt Fronleichnam Parish Church	Aachen, Germany	Rudolf Schwarz	03 Dec, 2013

Exhibition Hall – Deutsches Historisches Museum	Berlin, Germany	I.M. Pei	05 Dec, 2013
Memorial to the Homosexuals Persecuted Under the National Socialist Regime	Berlin, Germany	Michael Elmgreen Ingar Dragset	06 Dec, 2013
Memorial to the Sinti and Roma of Europe Murdered Under the National Socialist Regime	Berlin, Germany	Dani Karavan	07 Dec, 2013
Old Jewish Cemetery	Prague, Czech Republic		12 Dec, 2013
Jewish Museum	Prague, Czech Republic		12 Dec, 2013
Souq Waqif	Doha, Qatar		20 Dec, 2013
Souk Al-Bahar	Dubai, UAE		21 Dec, 2013