Jan Wadowski*

Architecture – the hallmark of humanity

Each civilisation is defined by its attitude to time. A way in which time is understood also determines a way of life. Time is incessantly shaped by us; in our modern times, it is more often done through communication and the speed of information transfer. We can also form space which is 'crystallised time' [3, p. 411]. As Leibniz put it, this constitutes 'order of co-existence' of things. Civilisation models its space-time thanks to architecture because *Man is a spatiotemporal creature* [9, p. 154]. 'Spatiotemporal' nature of man means that man builds his own culturally determined experience of dimensions. It is reflected in man's plans and designs.

According to Kopaliński, architecture is *a domain which organises and shapes space in order to satisfy human needs; science of designing and erecting buildings*[1]. Of course, the definition of 'need' is not clear-cut inasmuch as we can have needs which are 'down-to-earth', for example, protection from cold or 'sublime', for instance, a possibility of having a place of worship. In other words, if we wish to think about designing and erecting a shelter that is also beautiful, we need advanced cognitive abilities as well as skills of transforming reflections and visions into a material realization.

Our actions largely depend on how we perceive man, i.e. which human features we treat as obvious and unquestionable aspects of humanity and which we consider as distortion or even dehumanization. Therefore, when discussing needs we cannot forget that a given approach results from a more general and perhaps unreflective background in which some specific contexts of human experience are contained such as birth, corporality, awareness, love, work etc. [1, p. 218]. Obviously, this background also includes a particular theory of man. Even when we talk about 'death of man' and 'post-human' things, we understand humanity and humanism in a particular way searching a new space-time for us in the architecture of future, perhaps having in mind more virtual and network architecture [7, p. 232]. As we can see, our needs evolve and are subject to change, especially in the era of pressure from advertising and environment.

Architecture is created according to human needs. However, a philosopher may ask: who creates these needs? What is the structure of the subject of needs which lead to architectural actions? In other words: who is man? In our modern times, we have numerous concepts creating various truths about man. Most of them are reductionistic concepts. Perceiving man only through the prism of his needs constitutes reductionism in itself. A man is a person and man's truth is also personal [10, p. 107]. 'Internalised' and personal nature of truth is inextricably linked with human dignity and development of freedom[2].

Hence, particular decisions are conditioned by a general, culturally determined understanding of the sense and essence of a human life and its priorities. Architecture also developed depending on the understanding of humanity. Buildings and urban plans reflected the way in which people understood the sense of human life on Earth, man's place, role and destiny after death. A philosophical approach to architecture can tell us a lot about ourselves and our 'internal architecture' and thanks to it we can ad hoc create new concepts of the problem of good and evil.

Needs result from the entire existential human structure, from the level of human awareness and culture which determines their measure and proportions. The level of addressing needs which are determined biologi-

* Institute of Humanistic Sciences Philosophical Anthropology and Ethics, Wrocław University of Technology
[1] Cf.: Kopaliński W.: *Słownik wyrazów obcych i zwrotów obcojęzycznych*, Warsaw, 1985, p.36

[2] However, arbitrariness becomes a worse constraint than moderation and culture of space, which in our country is often devastated and homogenized.

cally, culturally and by our civilisation depends also on the access to possibilities as regards materials, technologies, constructional skills etc. Explicit shapes of human needs, social structure and man's ways of thinking are also exhibited in architecture and its styles. In my opinion, however, most of the human needs are the effect of the level of man's awareness which, although conditioned by biology, creates various needs through culture; from the point of view of survival, these needs seem unnecessary as they result from 'a transcendence factor'. We could even say that the existence of somebody who only thinks about biological needs does not deserve to be called human. There exists a domain of needs, forgotten in our times, which requires designing 'house of humanity', not only 'machine for living'. This domain is becoming more and more visible through various civilisation diseases such as suicides or depressions. Architecture can play a significant part here fulfilling therapeutic and prophylactic function. First of all, however, what we need is an integral attitude towards man comprising mainly the need for a sense of life, also referred to as a neotic dimension [4, p. 15n].

Man is an autotelic value; he is a value in himself. He defines the level and manner of satisfying natural and artificial needs within the area of a given culture. Culture developed a certain theory of man and his good as well as the model of autotelic sense[3]. For example, culture of civilization of the Mediterranean Sea basin is based on the privational concept of a need which is mainly expressed in dialectics of lack and frustration and removing them by the fulfilment. *The essence of a need is determined by a distance between man and the world* [6, p. 126]. However, in the Greek culture as well as in Christianity there appears a contemplative and reflective factor pointing to the possibility of being liberated from an excessive pressure of material needs.

There are no doubts that ancient Greece and Judaism-Christianity had a significance influence on our western understanding of man. The Christian concept of man, especially crystallized in the Middle Ages, placed man as part of Transcendence, drawing on Greek thinking, but introducing specifically original elements connected with theological and teleological understanding of a human being. For instance, in the Greek concept emphasis was placed on rationality and participation in the triad Truth-Good-Beauty whereas Christianity underlined the importance of moral transformation and 'spiritual man' [St Paul].

Complexity of human needs results from the fact that man is a creature with features which are diametrically opposed to each other. As I already mentioned, an understanding of man is conditioned by the criterion which we assume as the most general one. Some researchers present man in the model of structure – which is so close to architecture – where basic and secondary features are exposed. The structure of elements which form a human construc-

tion usually had a hierarchic character and the issue of which properties are fundamental (again a reference to the spatial understanding) and which are marginal was widely discussed throughout centuries. 'Spatial' concept of man seems to be in accordance with our manner of learning about the world which is arranged into structures and models.

In other words, if we wish to create architecture in accordance with man and his possibilities, it ought to be based on the integral vision of a human being that needs contact with nature and another man as well as with Transcendence. However, architecture may deprive man of freedom, dignity, etc. mainly because of the fact that the process of designing is based on reductionism. Therefore, it seems that architecture requires not only elements of cultural anthropology, but also anthropology in the philosophical dimension.

Philosophical anthropology which was developed by the 20th-century researchers (Scheler, Plessner, Gehlen) rejected the scientific tradition that considered man to be an abstraction by starting with a specific biological entity existing in the history and society[4]. In a sense, it proclaimed a modern concept of man, describing his extra-cultural specific features. It rejected super-naturalistic theses, including the concept of soul and man as an image of God and it centered on biological purely animal features although retaining, as in Scheler, a spiritual category, which is a factor deciding about the difference between man and animal [8, p. 83]. Human openness to the world, which man possesses inherently as an immaterial factor, makes man adjust the environment to his own beliefs and needs [2, p. 63].

On the other hand, existentialism in philosophy pointed to the fact that man first of all exists, experiences his life here and now, in a particular place, namely in the specific space. However, man is a dynamic existence rather than a closed monad – a subjective, conscious and relatively open system. Architecture enables modelling changeable flows of experiencing being 'here' (Heidegger's *Da-sein)*. In our times, as a result of quick civilisation changes, we exist in various 'contexts of dehumanisation' manifestations of which can be noticed more and more often. Physical toxicity is accompanied by informational, social, mental or even spiritual toxicity. Modern architecture reflects nomadic culture and the model of a workaholic and consumer who is devoid of identity. A single-commercial lifestyle trend seems to be a suicidal way both biologically and socially as well as culturally, while architecture is adjusted to these lethal trends of civilisation.

Since practice of life cannot wait endlessly for detailed sciences or philosophies to come up with final definitions, it follows ideas which are experimentally proved beyond doubt, i.e. the most common ones. However, in this way we often forget about the strongest need for integrity and

---

[3] Cf. for example, Levinas E., *Całość i nieskończoność*, translated by M. Kowalska, Warsaw 1998, p. 118n.

[4] Cf.: Buksiński T., *Antropologia w napięciu między filozofią a naukami humanistycznymi*, [in:] M. Sikora (eds.), *Człowiek między filozofią a teologią*, Wrocław 2009, p. 62.

the feeling of the sense of life, which is part of every man in each culture [11]. The need for sense is the deepest need and thanks to architecture – not only the sacral one – we are able to satisfy it through modelling the environment. In many domains man can gain orientation in time, while it is by architecture that we are able to gain orientation in space or even more, by forming space man creates a new experience of space-time and his place in the universe having a literal influence on the feeling of happiness and the sense of life.

Interestingly, in the concepts of universalistic ethics that we are bound to need more because of globalisation processes, there appears a category of *common space of moral expectations, needs, models, and directives which is repeated in all epochs and among diverse peoples* [5, p. 197]. It is characteristic that the metaphor of space is used here as an ethical category – all people, residents of one planet, participate in a certain set of values which are an expression of our common good. Hence, architecture, in the process of producing physical space, can perform a symbolic role by expressing a desire for an ethical space that is common for everybody, a trans-cultural place (or perhaps better – sanctuary [9, p. 218]) of meeting. On the basis of this place, we can determine a supporting structure of activities of the people who create a new global culture. This structure should be based on the idea of the common good. In reference to architecture, it means that the architect's profession is a special vocation of social trust, therefore, ethical standards of architect's work ought to be set into such notions as freedom, dignity, solidarity, truth, love, beauty [5, s. 204n]. In the context of architecture, the category of beauty seems particularly significant as the idea of beauty becomes a priority. Józef Lipiec even demands that the rule of creating beauty be classed as a moral norm. *The more we care about beauty, the more prospects of realization of good there are* […] [5, pp. 222–223]. *If we desire somebody's good, we give good gifts to this person.* Can we imagine a better realisation of humanity than creating a project which allows people to

pursue fullness? If we agree with Lipiec that, apart from tolerance, the idea of safety is also very important, both of these ideas can be immediately applied in architectural realisations. Tolerance refers to the act of recognising that all people (from the manager to a cleaning lady) possess a feature of humanity, therefore, they are subjects [5, p. 201]. In architecture, we can see a very strong connection of the classical triad of transcendental values: Truth, Good and Beauty. The construction must be real, otherwise, it shall not fulfil its function; it should also be beautiful to offer people also other values, apart from mere shelter; at the same time, it constitutes goodness for the particular group of persons, be it a family, church community or any other community.

A community, in turn, requires institutions which shall enable synchronising the life of its members. Architecture very strongly emphasises the role of public institutions which are exhibited and cared for by everybody. It is a behavioural expression of how man understands sense and values. We could say that it is constructions in general, both in their external and internal aspect, that most accurately render anthropological sense (or nonsense), be it a fundamental one for a given culture (temple, cemetery) or also of secondary importance (connected with work and consumption). As for the epochs such as our present times, the things that shall be regarded as sacrum may correspond to those which were considered as profane (for instance, entertainment).

Architects not only reflect the mentality of an epoch, but they also create it. They create space of life and death by building places of work, entertainment, worship or sickness. Each place of social life is modelled by the convention of time measured by watches and also by the convention of space – a place that 'orders' to work or 'permits' to rest. In our nomadic epoch that is full of liquidity such places lose their meaning inasmuch as their users, those who move incessantly, change. Isn't this liquidity the last step of the suicidal absurd of an empty existence reduced to a quantitative dimension symbolised by money?

References

[1] Boehme G., *Antropologia filozoficzna*, Warsaw 1998,

[2] Buksiński T., *Antropologia w napięciu między filozofią a naukami humanistycznymi*, [in:] Sikora M. (eds.), *Człowiek między filozofią a teologią*, Wrocław 2009,

[3] Castells M., *Społeczeństwo sieci*, tłum. zbior., Warsaw 2007,

[4] Klamut R., *Cel - czas - sens życia*, Lublin 2002,

[5] Lipiec J., *Prolegomena etyki globalnej*, [in:] Sekuła J. (eds.), *Idea etyczności globalnej*, Siedlce 1999,

[6] Levinas E., *Całość i nieskończoność*, transl. M. Kowalska, Warsaw 1998,

[7] Rewers E., *Post-polis. Wstęp do filozofii ponowoczesnego miasta*, Kraków 2005,

[8] Scheler M., *Stanowisko człowieka w kosmosie*, [in:] *Pisma z antropologii filozoficznej i teorii wiedzy*, transl. S. Czerniak i A. Węgrzecki, Warszawa 1987, p. 83

[9] Skolimowski H., *Filozofia żyjąca. Eko-filozofia jako drzewo życia*, Warsaw 1993

[10] Tischner J., *Nadzieja szukająca prawdy*, [in:] Michalski K. (eds.), *Człowiek w nauce współczesnej*, Paris 1988,

[11] Zohar A., Marshall I., *Inteligencja duchowa. Najwyższa z inteligencji*, transl. P. Turski, Poznań 2001

Architektura – znamię człowieczeństwa

W architekturze wyrażone zostają podstawowe odniesienia człowieka do świata przyrody, do siebie samego i innych ludzi. Człowiek jest istotą, która – w przeciwieństwie do większości

gatunków – tworzy własne środowisko życia, czyli cywilizację; jej zasadniczym elementem (równie istotnym, jak myślenie czy symbolizacja) jest kreowanie konstrukcji architekto-

nicznych   posiadających różnorodne przeznaczenie (dom, świątynia, miejsce pracy, cmentarz itd.). Spełniają one nie tylko rolę ochronną, ale umożliwiają rozwój w obszarze kultury. Aktywność taka przyczynia się do zmian w środowisku naturalnym, często nieodwracalnych. Człowiek, dążąc do przetrwania, musi jednak ochronić siebie i swoje dzieci. Cel ten najlepiej osiąga się przez zarządzanie i organizację społeczną; powstawały więc budowle pożytku publicznego, gdzie projektant i budowniczy tworzyli dla wspólnego dobra. Czy dzisiaj, w dobie silnej tendencji do jak największych zysków z inwestycji, nie zapominamy o dobru ludzkim (indywidualnym i społecznym)?

Doceniając fundamentalną rolę architektury w rozwoju cywilizacji, powinniśmy zastanowić się nad przewidującą optymalizacją wznoszonych przez nas konstrukcji – w celu zachowania homeostazy biologicznej i cywilizacyjnej.

Key words: ethical principia in architecture, good, beauty, homeostasis

Słowa kluczowe: principia etyczne w architekturze, dobro, piękno, homeostaza