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What is a Good Space for Thinking? Philosophy, Architecture, Schooling

Abstract: The intersection of philosophy and architecture opens up a question that is of crucial importance to understanding school spaces and the activities that occur there. That is, what defines a good space for thinking? The answer is divided into two parts. The first part examines the spaces that philosophers themselves describe as necessary for thinking and the ways in which these spaces become inherent to their “life and thought” as such. The second part emphasizes the space in preschools and schools as modern institutions and as ideological state apparatuses governed by “power” and “ideology” realized in the hidden curriculum. Through the problematization of these two answers, the essay opens up a third avenue of possible understanding: The definition of a good space for thinking refers to architecture as an event, space as “dislocation” and “heterotopias,” and the related “ethics of suspension.”

Keywords: philosophy and architecture, deconstruction and dislocation, architecture as an event, preschools and schools as modern institutions, schools without corridors, hidden curriculum, ethics of suspension.

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The history of thinking is full of architectural plans. Foundations, buildings, constructions, and Derridarian “deconstructions” abound, destruction and a new construction at the same time. But, above all, there are “structures”; contemporary philosophy in France, which somehow became the most influential “image of thought” in general, got its name from it: “structuralism”. The name stems out of the word \textit{structura}, and signifies that which will be constructed: a kind of a plan for our future dwelling, a possibility of inhabiting the dwelling, and a possibility of thinking. At the same time, the ambivalence of such a naming, coming both from the ambivalence of the name and the ambivalence of the phenomenon itself, has to be exposed. As Michel Foucault expressed very clearly in one of his early interviews: \textit{Who could be a more anti-structuralist than me?} (Foucault 1994).

The significance of space in the history of thinking should not be reduced to a problem of metaphor as rhetoric figure, for better describing or illustrating a problem which is at stake. On the contrary, one should discover how spatial “metaphors” form an integral part of a text, its train of thinking, and of thought as such. “Metaphors” are not something substitutional, additional, or merely illustrative. What appears as an external and a non-essential link, or simply an educational device, at first glance, may only seem to be that while, on the contrary, it reveals itself as something else as soon as we go beyond the first glance.

Speaking about modern philosophy, the first “case” to be mentioned is Descartes (1957) himself. In his “Discourse on the method”, which was a crucial influential text for all modern thinking, Descartes says: “Before we start building a new house to replace the one we live in, it is not enough to tear the old house down and supply stones, wood, concrete and other construction materials […], we have to provide a new home to dwell in while the construction is in process.” (Ibid., pp. 50–51) As we have to provide a temporary dwelling while the real home is under construction, Descartes says: “I have tailored a kind of temporary morality, composed only of three or four principles.” (Ibid.) The very provisional character of the construction contributed to the fact that Descartes’s morality remained almost un-discussed for the next two centuries, and to the fact that morality could never become “as certain as geometry” (Le Doeuff 1980, p. 101). Precisely
this is philosophically imaginary: a house, bringing something heterogeneous and alien into Descartes’s discussion. It is a contrast stemming out of the distinction between “the house on sand” and “the house on a rock”, between provisional and firmly founded, the distinction that causes depreciation of morality, without having sufficient grounding for it in Descartes’s text (ibid., p. 125).

The same Descartes then sits in his home gown in front of the fire place, where in that comfortable dwelling he writes his famous “Meditations”. But philosophers in their “arrogance”, abstracting their voices, speaking instead of others and in place of others, do not reflect on anything which they in advance proclaim as irrelevant. So, the body, the house, and all of the moments of Descartes’s thoughts, considered as something external and unimportant to thinking, were swiftly pushed into “non-philosophical” biography or autobiography (Cavell 1994, p. 3). Nevertheless, Descartes himself says quite the opposite: I not only inhabit my body, but also in my dwelling. The dwelling, the house where I abide, is the manner in which my body and soul interact (Le Doeuff 1980, p. 128).

Is this not Descartes’s theme par excellence and not something temporary, provisional and marginal? It is Descartes’s notorious dualism of body and mind, which seems actual all the more today, so we can find it in the very heart of the contemporary feminist philosophy critique (Bordo 1999). No less is this true for architecture: new searches are intended to surpass the contrast between res cogitans and res extensa, between the thinking matter and the extended matter: searches for the relation between mind and body, senses, and, last but not least, the hands: from the “eyes of skin” to the “thinking hand”, the fusion of which can be followed in Pallasmaa’s architecture and his philosophy (Pallasmaa 2005, 2009).

**Building, dwelling, thinking**

At the other end of the timeline of modern thinking, there is Heidegger on his wood-path walks, Holzweg. After his conversations with the locals, after the key detour, die Kehre (which is a detour on his way and also a turn in his mind), he returns to his shelter in the mountain cottage; all of this is not irrelevant to his philosophy. From the mountain cottage to the house of being: to build, to dwell, to think! It is Heidegger’s basic orientation when he starts thinking about thinking as such (Heidegger 2003, p. 154). Building comes first!

Heidegger was almost the first to seriously consider architecture in his philosophy, without reducing it to a model or a metaphor for “more serious” matters. It is Heidegger who somehow burdened us with the load of rethinking the term “to dwell” (Goetz 2002, p. 34). His famous question, “What is thinking?” (Heidegger 2003, p. 137), must be considered as rudimentary and parallel to the question “What is dwelling?”

Heidegger dwells and thinks: of rivers, of the beautiful Ister (another name of the river Danube), which he includes in his influential lessons. On the American side of a great geographical and thinking division, there is Thoreau, and he “thinks of ponds”. Both belong to the very basic subject matters of philosophy (Cavell
2005, p. 213). Heidegger’s rivers prepare the soil for processing and inhabiting and, contrary to under a moving and nomadic lifestyle, for “dwelling”. Hölderlin’s Danube, philosophically praised by Heidegger, represents a somehow special and privileged destiny (ibid., p. 225) for the German spirit and language. The rivers are creating dwelling places for men to live-so this is where we shall build. Rivers represent “unity of resident place and journey”; they show us how dwelling becomes “familiar” and “homely” (ibid., p. 229). So, there is a place for a house and for a philosopher inhabiting it. He is present and absent at the same time; the one who thinks is everywhere and nowhere while thinking, is somewhere in-between, and, in so as much as possible, “at home” (Goetz 2002, p. 28).

Thoreau had a small country house by the Walden pond, which he dealt with from the moral and from the anthropomorphic point of view; like Descartes’s house, it was not only something provisional. In this house, the body and its needs melt with the protecting shell of the house “with its light blanket, embracing me like a cotton candy,” says Thoreau (in McClung 2007, p. 184). Walden is a name for a special forest lake, while the buildings Thoreau describes are only extensions of nature: “only a small step from the tree trunk, still abided by a bear” (ibid.). They are houses with no kitch-like decorations, with sustainable materials, and delimitation between inner and external surfaces: “All this beautiful architecture I know, gradually rose from the inside to the outside, from the needs and the character of the one, who dwells in it and is its only builder—from unwanted truthfullness and nobleness and without any consideration of the appearance” (ibid., p. 183). To dwell in the beauty of life and its splendour, it is architecture, performing as externality of the human—constant, and not provisional-moral nature.

If we look closely, the “dwelling” is somewhere in between: neither nature, nor culture, neither in nor out, neither reality nor illusion (ibid., p. 188): a plan for human existence in the world in which it is possible to “think” destabilizes all the binary oppositions. “What truly counts as good can be a tree hollow, a cottage, a farm, an old manor, a Palladian villa, a prairie house, or a glass tower.” (Ibid.)

Yet there are enormous differences between places where a philosopher, a thinker by profession, can think at all. Heidegger is a thinker of diverse wood paths and sideways. Kant strolls, always following a strict schedule after finishing work in his ascetically furnished room-and always on the same path, called the alley of the philosopher for this reason. Nietzsche, who is a personification of the crucial break with Kant, and who cannot be placed into Heidegger’s ontological difference (which gathers all the many paths of various differences into one), on the other hand thinks amidst the city hustle and bustle. All these are not only tiny anecdotes from great philosophers’ lives, but are directly included in the way the philosophers practice and “make” philosophy.

Nietzsche himself invented something new in this context. Nietzsche (1968) undertook to write a biography “Ecce homo” in the first person singular, about himself and for himself. He links anecdotes from his life and aphorisms as his thinking “units”, so that he hybridizes them. Anecdotes fall on the side of thinking, aphorism on the side of life. Philosophy becomes a crossroads of the “life aphorisms”, “thinking anecdotes” and “formulas”, and directs him on the path of his
“Gay Science” (1974), which brings about a new beginning for his most important part of life.

Dislocation: the inside/the outside

Architecture is the first of arts. Architecture is not an art in the same sense as the other arts: one does not enter a statue or a picture. Architecture, on the contrary, is a space which we can enter or exit; it is an activity of separating the inside from the outside. This particular division represents the way in which architecture itself produces space. Through dividing, architecture creates spaces which are separated from each other, and thus “displaced”. The spaces are moved away from themselves. Architecture is movement: from the inside into the outside. The space itself is a kind of dislocation (Goetz 2002, p. 28), which enables forming of borders. The border is something very uncertain and at the starting point of ambivalent.

It is not yet clear whether all the history of thinking indeed represents a series of notes to Plato, as it is popular to comment. Nevertheless, it is Plato that leads us to this basic feature of space: its ambivalence. One cannot reach it if one is being limited to metaphors, which too quickly represents reduction of architectural parts of philosophy. We are also no longer on the territory of parable, such as the notorious Plato’s cavern from the “Republic”, in which chained prisoners are “safely” dwelling in chains and confined, so they can only look upwards, to ideas, to a supersensible world “out there” and “up there”. For Plato, it is obvious which is the only possible orientation of thinking.

Plato’s hora, from his dialogue “Timaeus,” is a different space and a different dislocation. Hora is a space, but not an abstract space; it is an “invested”, a filled space, “a territory, occupied by somebody, a country, an inhabited place, a marked seat, a position on a scale, a location, a defined position, a territory or a region” (Derrida 1993, p. 58). Plato tried to define hora by a series of metaphors: hora is like a mother, a uterus, a receptacle carrying a child, hora is “that from where”. But these comparisons are something other than metaphors: hora is like another dimension, a shelter of the being, from where all the sensible things come from. More precisely, hora is “here” and “there” at the same time: “among the sensible and the intelligible”, on both sides of the divide. As such, hora crosses over and brings about subversion of Plato’s fundamental ambivalence of the world of ideas and the sensible world. Hora is fundamentally defined by indefiniteness and ambivalence. The term itself can actually be understood as a synonym for ambivalence as such; it is a grey zone, beyond the logic of non-contradiction, beyond the binary oppositions between mythos and logos, the sensible and the intelligible. It also reaches beyond the difference between the original meaning and the dislocated, transferred and differed meaning of the metaphor.

Hora is hybris, some kind of mixture, a “third gender”, neither sensual not intelligible-is the one and the other. Hora is not logos, and is neither a myth; it avoids and neglects the classical philosophical differentiation. Hora is, last but
not least, feminine and masculine; though it seems to naturally incline towards feminine (ibid., p. 29). Yet this appearance itself is an illusion. *Hora* is gender beyond gender, is a metaphor beyond metaphor. Plato’s *hora*, deconstructed by Derrida through twisting and turning of binarisms, overturns the very possibility of metaphor in philosophy by reaching beyond the fundamental differentiation between the original meaning and the metaphor, for which there shall no longer be possible to find the original meaning. *Hora* only appears as multiplicity of metaphors representing the alleged original. But the philosophical reading “does not mean that one cannot reach the original and the true meaning without all these deviations, it means that the opposite between the real and the figurative comes across a limit without losing its value” (ibid., p. 100).

*Hora* is a kind of “otherness”, an “other”, another place, directly linked to space. Space is something primarily ambivalent and it is exactly what Derrida embarked on together with the architect Peter Eisenman. The “embodiment” of their cooperation is the project “Chora L Works” in the famous Parc de la Villette in Paris. During a stroll in this park, one experiences a space without foundations, once above and then again below, beyond any hierarchical organization. Thus, the project “realizes” fundamental ideas of deconstruction as a new thinking strategy, removing predefined goals and divisions: work, rest, intimacy, learning, recovery, aesthetic comfort, religious feelings etc. The deconstruction acts in the architectural territory as such and is built in its constructions. Architecture is not a metaphor, but rather a materialization of turned around binarisms in creation of new grey-zones until the absolute indivisibility.¹

**From open space to hidden curriculum**

Ambivalence is built into the very idea of postmodern architecture. Frederic Jameson (1990), in his well-known “Postmodernism”, exposes an example that clearly shows “provisional” and “lack of foundation” in contemporary thinking. It is the California hotel Westin Bonaventure. In this architectural project, the ambivalence is actually “realized”; its main design is based on transition, in the grey-zones of eliminated borders. In such a space, orientation represents a problem: one enters through three entrances, is lost in labyrinths of halls, passes numerous reflective surfaces, opaque stairways and elevators, to finally descend on escalators to … the hotel reception desk! The city “out there” is kept at distance by glass surfaces, as with “the reflective sun glasses, which do not allow your interlocutor to see your eyes” (ibid., p. 34). It actually is not the outside “for when you try to see the external hotel surfaces, you cannot see the hotel itself, but only the curved images of all that surrounds it” (ibid.).

It is the architecture of the time that François Lyotard (1984) described as *The Postmodern Condition* in his notorious report on the state of mind of thinking: instead of truth as a criterion, there is multiplicity of dispersed values and

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discourses. We are living in an age that brings the end of the power of knowledge and the end of “the age of professors”. The postmodern architecture is based on new principles of decentralization, too. The starting point is deconstruction of *spaces* and deconstruction of *power*. Both decompose hierarchies: decomposition of hierarchical space goes hand in hand with decomposition of the hierarchical teaching “from above”.

Such dispersion of space and decentralization of body can represent something liberating. Yet it does not mean that one is free of the power itself, neither in everyday life nor in school. Even non-transparent space with an opaquely placed body can enable control, and is perhaps no less oppressive as the space of “modern” buildings. To avoid new traps, one has to question the contradiction between modern and postmodern, firm and fluid, binary and freely floating. It would be misleading if we now totally accepted the other side of the ambivalence: instead of fundament and firmness, only radical foundation-free and provisional thinking, in which *anything goes* (as is the formula of an influential Feyerabend pamphlet “against method” (Feyerabend 1975), or escape into Derrida’s infinite complementing and “dislocating”.

In order not to get lost in a simple negation and to be transposed to the other side in a foreseen scheme, from “the firm” to “the fluid” or from “the fundamental” to “the provisional”, we have to clearly set borders for deconstruction. As we had to expose previously that architecture is not only a metaphor of thinking, and further on show that architecture should not be reduced to direct realization or *in building of philosophy*, we now have to add that we should not be trapped in the networks of great narratives of postmodernism about the end of ideologies and power relations.

On the one hand, there are foundations and corner stones, fundament and firmness, Descartes’s house on a rock and house on sand: defective corner stones, transitivity and the “provisional”. Neither the one, nor the other as such is pre-determined as actual or conservative. It is neither actual nor surpassed per se. The meaning is attributed to either in a constellation of forces wishing to get hold of them. Foucault would call it a diagram of forces, realizing itself in individual networks of the power relations (Foucault 1995, p. 205). On the one side there are virtual *dispositives*, on the other their actualizations.\(^2\)

The same goes for the opposition between the traditional and the “open” schools (Saint 1987). *Open-plan* schools were built in the England’s post-war period and are founded on transitiveness between the inner and the outer space. They are low buildings with many doors, directly connecting school classrooms with the nearest yard, garden, playground or wider outer space. Nearly every classroom enables exit to some fresh air. This is, of course, important: it is important not to feel closed and limited in the classroom; however, the openness of the space is not enough. Appropriate organization of time and space is needed-suitable curriculum implementation and supporting role of adults (Rakovič 2004, 2011), so that openness in preschool and school becomes real “power”.

\(^2\) So, for instance, it is not clear in advance whether the introduction of locked lecture rooms at the Faculty of Arts is something that is self-understood or even appropriate for our time.
This is a problem grasped by the term *hidden curriculum* (Bregar Golobič 2004, p. 16). Hidden curriculum is on the side of preschool and school ideology as practice, and as revealing itself as obviousness: we act so without knowing it. Therefore, the “disguise” of hidden curriculum is something that could be grasped at first sight. However, seeing it, means we cannot dispose of it, as we cannot get rid of ideology by pointing at it.

Openness of space is no more than precondition. Space of freedom is freedom of space, where the freedom is yet to be “realised”. Space must be “invested” and filled in. It means that alongside changing school space, we have to change the view of space (Barši 2004, p. 108). It means looking without seeing; which is exactly what hidden curriculum is, a shadow of curriculum, engraved in the school space, doubling the official curriculum and its contents. It is given, seemingly neutral, yet un-neutral in its neutrality (Bregar Golobič 2004, p. 32). It is detected with a shout: This is so obvious! Daily routine, practices, rituals, drills – behind them lays the extraordinary. The “hiddenness” of the hidden curriculum does not mean depth and unattainability, but rather “shows itself on the surface, is the *surface itself*” (ibid., p. 23).

**School is neither a home nor a monument**

Thinking is an art of building, and architecture is the first of arts. All other arts and all other creativity preconditioned by a space. Painting, music, dance, they all need architecture as the “first space” and as a paradigm of space as such. Architecture is space for all other spaces, techniques and creativity (Goetz 2002, p. 20). We must know, though, that the mark “the first” does not represent hierarchy or teleology. We have to understand it in Hegelian spirit: there is no higher, no lower, no original and no derived. “As the *first*, there is *architecture*” says Hegel in the “Lectures on Aesthetics”: “material of the first art is that, which is unspiritual on itself, hard material, which is possible to design only according to the laws of gravity” (Hegel 2009, p. 20).

“The first” simply means a necessary precondition; means that the living thing has to build its dwelling first” (Antonioli 2005, p. 14). Architecture is such a “beginning”: “Perhaps the art starts with an animal, at least with an animal, drawing a territory and making a house (both are correlated, or sometimes mixed within the same called habitat)” (Deleuze and Guattari 1991, p. 174) From this point it is possible to draw everything else, life as such: “With the system territory-house, many organic functions are transformed: sexuality, reproduction, aggression, nutrition, but this transformation does not yet explain the phenomenon of territory and house, quite the contrary.” (Ibid.) So architecture evolves around natural state of art and natural state of man. We know for each, if not from the age of the Enlightenment, then certainly from Rousseau, that it is conceptual
fiction or logical assumption. Architecture seems something natural at a first glance, because one has to dwell somewhere.\(^3\)

The art starts with an animal and with the facts, that the animal defines and measures its territory. An animal builds its dwelling: a cavern, a burrow or a house; it rumbles in it, or sings its artistic creations. Architecture is a natural state of art, but its own “naturalness” is a paradox. Architecture is the first and natural and is, at the same time, escaping the very opposition of nature and non-nature; at the same time, it is nature and is téchne, product, effect.

*Nature* is a kind of state, standing opposite to culture, téchne and artistic creation. The very same “nature” is a cultural product and something historically made. Thus, it is on the side of natural as given and at the same time cultural as produced. Precisely through this simultaneity, it crosses the fundamental opposition, the key issue point for all the Antique philosophy: *phýsis* versus *thèseis*. An animal-architect and “becoming-animal” of the art itself; this is natural in art, what is also always already “human” and “spiritual”-on the side of created (Antonioli 2005, p. 14). Instead of “natural” territory on one side and “cultural” house on the other, there is crossing of both: territory-house. A body or “carnal”, extending into a house, and the house, opening into the universe-these are the three elements of the “first of arts”: flesh, house and *universe* (Deleuze and Guattari 1991, pp. 170–171). “Not only an open house communicates with the landscape through a window and through a mirror, even the most closed house is open to universe.” (Ibid., p. 171)

One has to make a distinction between *architecture as dwelling*, house or territory, and *architecture as monument*. The first we abide: it is the home fireplace, family economy, place of birth and death, opening up to the universe and “closing” into flesh and body (ibid., p. 169). On the other side, there is architecture as a monument and work of art. But if one wants to take architecture seriously, one has to take seriously a further fundamental distinction within allegedly “artistic”: it is a difference between architecture and monument, which, just as Hegel, deals with Egyptian pyramids, gothic cathedrals and magnificent fruits of royal power, and between architecture as an encounter we have to consider with enthusiasm, and which potentially promises new creations. Such a “monument does not commemorate, does not celebrate anything past, but rather trusts the ear of future with persistent feelings, embodying an event: always already renewed human suffering, resentment, started battles all over again.” (Ibid., p. 167) The monument, renewing an event is, on the side of “reality of virtual”, form of a thought – on the side, of a *plan* and future, because it is, like Nietzsche’s philosophy, untimely, intended to “the day after tomorrow”.

It is *architecture as event*: a becoming, conditioned by emptying of space and by dislocation. As an animal leaves its territory and makes it elsewhere,
it is “dettiorralization” as well as “reterritorialization of space”. Actually, it is a territory itself that is already the first form of deterritorialization; natural environments deterritorialize in a “territory”, which becomes a space of creation and of *becoming*. A territory is neither a natural givenness nor a closed system, dis-connected to the outside. A territory is a product, a construction, a creation (Antonioli 2005, p. 17).

Somewhere in between the one and the other, between a “dwelling” and an “event”, there is a *school classroom*. School is not a monument; there is nothing it commemorates, there is nothing it tries to make eternal and raise on the stage of invaluable achievements of science and art. School is a place for learning and thinking, assuming the well-being of children. However, the welfare of dwelling is not the same as the home fireplace. We are now speaking about a real metaphor: feel at school as you *feel at home*. It would be too soon to make an extension of home at preschool or at school, and then rely on cosiness, (be it prescribed or spontaneous, to mitigate or even eliminate the “institutionality” of the modern institutions, like schools and factories, prisons and clinics (Foucault 1995, p. 209)) and “hiddenness” of hidden curriculum as the overall visible foundation order of an institution.

This is precisely a problem of power, “realized” by architecture of the panopticon: power is not easily eliminated. It is seen and invisible at the same time. Power has to be imagined as a parallelogram of forces, as lines of force and as a resultant, rather than a substance, a center, a holder: not as something in the hands of a monarch, a social class or a teacher (Foucault 2008, p. 139). When such a dispersed and decentralized power, because of resistance, withdraws somewhere, it strikes back somewhere else. Therefore, we must consider tactics and “draw maps”; so, in his courses, Foucault says: I’m not conveying new knowledge and new representations of the world, I’m handing you maps; all this is of key importance for portraying Foucault as a street warrior (Deleuze 1990, p. 140). The maps will show, where the power is and from where it withdrew, where it needs to be struck and where struck even harder! We cannot remove it only by opening up space and introducing “open-plan” schools (Saint 1987).

*Power:* it primarily means that our bodies, as they place and replace themselves in space, are not pre-given. Power is primarily and foremost a relation—a relation between forces, a relation between bodies, and a relation between forces, bodies and spaces; it would be best described as a *body-space*. Bodies are produced in the medium of power and on the basis of power. The architectural “model”, which is actually the “thing itself”, is a famous panopticon, which Foucault found at Bentham. Panopticon is a model of the prison with a central tower in the middle and cells in a circle around it. With this simple architectural design, the position “to see” is separated from the position “to be seen”, the structure of the

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4 Architecture is characterized by drawing plans, and by a kind of encoding, which has to be related to decoding, and opening up the territory into the universe; it develops from house-earth to city-universe (same source).

5 The significance of “open-plan” schools is shown in comparison with the traditional schools in Slovene history (Hrausky 2008, p. 14).
building itself being a guarantee that the prisoners will live in a state of a constant “to-be-looked-at ness”. The mechanism works regardless of the fact that there might actually be nobody in the central tower. The power is visible and un-controllable, its produces effects automatically (Foucault 1995, p. 201).

The very structure of the space, in the central tower and at the periphery, hidden and exposed, the seen and the unseen, produces its effects automatically. It results in a constant feeling of being controlled and constantly surveyed. Finally, a presence in the central tower becomes unnecessary – what is important is the feeling of exposure: “It is an important disposition for it produces automation and de-individualization of power. Its principle does not lie as much in a person as it does in a specific, harmonious rearrangement of bodies, surfaces, light, gazes [...]. Therefore it is not important who executes power.” (Ibid., p. 202)

Here and there, in the centre and at the periphery, hidden and exposed, seen or not seen: the design of space, the division as such produces effects. It is what Foucault sets against each other: “discipline-mechanism” and “discipline-blockage” (ibid., p. 209); mechanism is on the side of the seen, blockage on the side of the docile. But in Foucault’s analysis, there is no basic difference between the mechanism and the “blockage” of power, between their configurations in dispositives, spread around by newly built prisons and schools, which became compulsory in the time of French revolution.

To summarize: school is neither a home nor a work of art, it is a modern age institution. The concept of power is of key importance for understanding of how school functions. Power in the modern age is something founded on a primary possibility “to be seen”. The gaze was a considered the most noble of the senses for knowing, the superior sense and most highly appreciated path to knowledge.6 Never clearer was the blind spot of such convictions seen than in the Enlightenment. Then it became clear that the superior ideal was an opposition of itself: instead of seeing everything and making it transparent (which was a dream of the great educator Jean-Jacques Rousseau), we find ourselves in Bentham’s panopticon, where power is everything. Such is in fact the realization of the Enlightenment phantasms: “Panopticon is not to be understood as a dream building: it is a diagram of power mechanism, drawn to its ideal form; [...] its effects could as well be presented as a pure architectural and optical system: in fact it is a figure of political technology, which can and must be separated from every specific use.” (Ibid., p. 205)

It should not be forgotten that panopticon is an architectural realization of the gaze of power and, at the same time, the “thing itself”; beyond the architecture of the panoptical machine there is no power, consequently realized by the architectural model. Panopticon is a virtual dispositive, and its actualization the merging of a principle and a case. School, however, is neither a home nor a monument; it is an institution of the modern age. Therefore, it is of crucial importance to answer the question: how to make “architecture as encounter”, producing an event, out of such a hidden curriculum-controlled state of affairs.

There is no exit from power relations, the only possibility is dislocation.

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6 On the gaze in connection with other senses in architecture: Pallasmaa 2005, p. 75.
A place for thinking

Theoretical dispositive is: firstly – school is a modern age institution, an institution of Foucault’s subtle “discipline and punish”; secondly – school is an Althusserian “ideological state apparatus number one”, which means an institution acting mostly and predominantly with ideology, and in which preschool and school interact with the family and become the problematic “second home”. Thirdly – school is potentially a space, founded on the principle of dislocation enabling encounters and enabling events bringing something new: place, good for thinking.

The school classroom is a special place. It is a place defined by an architect: separated with walls, connected with corridors, divided into a place for rearranging groups according to age, intended for learning and thinking. It is much better if the space has no corridors, as developed in Slovenia by the inventive school space architect Emil Navinšek (Brški 2008, p. 20). This space can be described as neutral. It is not neutrality of hidden curriculum, hiding just the opposite, but neutrality in its special meaning.

Neutrality of a classroom does not mean neutralizing space. It does not mean that here everything is possible. It does not mean that the differences are eliminated. If one tries to eliminate differences, it is as big a problem as not seeing and recognizing differences. A school classroom is a classroom of differences, not coming from the outside, not class differences. They are differences created in the classroom itself. They are differences between thinking and an opponent of thinking. The first opponent of thinking is not an error external to thinking, but nonsense in the core of thinking as such (Deleuze 1962, p. 120). Stupidity means that we are not capable of locating real problems and seeing them where they are. Just as Flaubert’s “Bouvard and Pecuchet” or “Dumb and Dumber”: even when they see what to do, they fail to do so-they “see” only a new nonsense.

A school classroom produces differences, but they relate to thinking and not to social identity and subjective positions. School is an institution of the modern age, but also an heir of the Enlightenment; for these reasons a school classroom is the right place for temporary elimination of identity. In politically correct and multicultural oriented society, it seems taken for granted that children are exposed in their individual identities, which in extreme cases means that children come to preschool or school dressed in national costumes. They are too much embedded in their specifics, and that is precisely what school space needs to protect them from. So they are locked in their firm and predetermined identities, somehow like New Zealand children locked in their Maori images and customs. Multiculturalism, a cultural logic of late capitalism, points to all these constructed and false identities and creates an illusion of possible co-existence beyond social antagonism: “in the age of Kinder Surprise”, which as a paradigmatic object of today fills the emptiness of our wish (Žižek 2003, p. 5).

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7 It is important that it is designed jointly by the users and the architects (Bregar and Barši 2009). The significance of Navinšek’s work was especially pointed out at the international conference “School and Sustainable Architecture” (2007) in Ljubljana.
But the school classroom, on the contrary, is a special place in which class position (social class differences) is not excluded or neglected or simply ignored, but is put in brackets. It is suspended. School classroom can become a temporary and provisional home for thinking. In such a classroom, there is no need to tell anyone who one is or what one’s views are. There is no urge to tell “it all” (which Foucault explores as a problem of “pastoral power”) and make it all transparent, as Rousseau wished (Foucault 2008, p. 15). The school classroom is, in this respect, opposition of religious spaces (Goetz 2002, p. 61). The very suspension of identity and not strengthening of “positive self-image” is a condition of the possibility for thinking to begin.

School is a modern-age institution in all the described senses of the word, yet it is also an asylum and a shelter. School is a place where we can hide and temporarily exclude outer pressures. In this sense, the minute we enter a school classroom, we are nowhere. We are in an empty space where there perhaps will be the possibility to think. There is no necessity, but there is a possibility, which “opens space” for an encounter and an event. The school classroom is a place where it is possible to put thinking in movement. Thinking is an encounter, from which something new can arise; but thinking is also violence, without which we cannot start thinking (Deleuze 1977, p. 13).

Encounter and violence: violence is always “outside”, and encounter is “in between” (ibid.). It is one of the main moves of Nietzsche’s new philosophy and his “new image of thought” in comparison with Kant’s dogmatic image: thinking only needs an impetus, a toss of a cube, so that it can start running, so we can start to think. Neither a method nor any methodical rules, not even against method suffice; what is necessary is enthusiasm and activity of selective forces: what is needed is violence (Deleuze 2002, p. 193). But this is not simply violence or the will to power as a simple domination of one force over the other. It is a constellation of forces, a whole complex and conglomerate-an entire dispositive in which, we know by now, reactive forces and power relations can prevail, but in which there is also a possibility of violence that helps us to think.

The problem arising from all this actually still has to be detected. It is a problem of the way in which it would be possible to start thinking as well as of how the one and the other are connected with the “space for thinking”. It would be utopian to find a place which enforces thinking as much as the panopticon model enforces domination. An architectural model, which is a model of power and can act entirely, automatically actually exists. But it is not possible to find, invent, or even discover a “model” of space, which would automatically force us to think, because it would be in contradiction with the very definition of thinking as such!

Perhaps the “space for thinking” could be best described as heterotopia, analyzed by Foucault in some detail in his late discussions (Foucault 2007, p. 214). Heterotopia is not a utopia, not some inexistent, fictitious and potentially liberating place or space. Heterotopia is a dislocated space, is somewhere else, is an essential dislocation. It is at the same time space on the side of a body-an uncontrolled body, a utopian body in which we are, just as in our “own” body, always outside, always dislocated, never “at home”. Without a body I cannot move, I am already
“in”; at the same time, my own body is an outer space and dislocation (Foucault 2009, p. 9). The body is a “zero point of the world”, with no space, impossible to locate and is also that from which all other places and positions arise. A body is the main actor of all bodily utopia and spatial heterotopia (ibid., p. 14); it is always “elsewhere” and it always opens new possibilities for that, which was during long history of philosophy, so cruelly taken away: for thinking.8

Roland Barthes, one of the greatest educators of our time, in his seminar, thought about an ideal place like this: we first have to be aware, that school is no micro cosmos, reflecting the macro cosmos of the outer world (Milner 1984, p. 63). A class is neither a big family nor a small society. A classroom is a place for thinking, but, besides, it has to be a place of desire and comforts. To create such a space means to separate, to remove and to tear apart. To create a space means to move into another time-means to spend time differently (Goetz 2002, p. 160), to change conditions of hidden curriculum. To make time run differently at preschool and at school, a special space is needed. It is a closed, sheltered, protected place. It is a place characterized by its ethics of suspension: “A clear product of a school space is a change in those ‘passing through’ and who inhabit it provisionally.” (Ibid., p. 161)

Where are we, when we think? Thinking means travelling—but travelling on a spot. When we think, we are everywhere and nowhere. But to make thinking happen, we have to find the right “place for thinking”. Nietzsche “came to think” from the mountain and from his Sils Marie, away from forest paths and sideways, to reflect upon his time in the industrial Torino and in the port of Genova-all the way to a place of which he was convinced that his “living and thinking” was actually possible. It is a monumental Venetian Piazza, San Marco. What does this tell us? School architecture is not a monument and there is nothing monumental about it, but this does not mean that “the local” and “the spatial” do not belong to thinking, as glamorous though it may be! As thinking is also violence, which necessitates protection rather than mitigation or elimination, and opening of a space, so can an open square become a home for thinking where thinking remains to be perspectivistic (just like, in history of thought, Nietzsche’s thinking was).9 If we look from a bird’s-eye perspective, we will have to be angry at the power of the “higher” from our “slavery” perspective, from below, but if we climb up the Venetian Campanille, a new, potentially less stupid and less low perspective, a spatial flight and a thinking event, a new perspective and a new dislocation is met: a space, perhaps “good for thinking”.  

On this very spot, we can conclude: Spaces we create for children and spaces children create for themselves in preschools and schools remain inscribed forever in the “identity” of adults (Hall and Kofkin Rudkin 2011, p. 110). We build them into ourselves; they build ourselves, and with this open a possibility of a “free spirit” education. By trying to “open” this possibility precisely as a possibility, we have probably done all within our power.

8 On utopia of the body, space and architecture: Grosz 2001, p. 131.
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References


