

Knowledge Production at the Borderline Territory: Phenomenology of a Transformative Encounter

LOVORKA PRPIĆ

Faculty of Architecture, University of Zagreb

SESSION V

STUDENT AND TEACHER / TEACHERS' CONTEXTS

KEYWORDS

border, transition, phenomenology, relation, inside-outside

Learning, like creation, takes place in relation. Life happens in the interval of matter. In the magnetic field — space-time interval of change — a new form of life is created. Intention is to explore the incentive for knowledge production dynamics in education of architects through a lens of relational phenomena. Phenomenology of the inside-outside relation in spatial perception of architecture is compared to the one in psycho-analytical dynamics.

In a culture of interconnectedness and change, architectural education is an experimental process. School-laboratory is an organized transient community of self-reflective individuals engaged within an active discovery-oriented atmosphere. Pedagogical approach is a nonhierarchical dialogue, individualized and emancipatory. Method can foster collaboration and/or induce instability; it sustains conflict, failure, and crisis. Reflective practice stimulates personality development in the process of individuation and actualization of potentials. Transformative encounter is an open process, an exchangeable relationship.

Aim is to provide stimulus for a radical interaction between daring subjects responding contemporaneously, instead habitually. Architects-in-becoming must transcend their confining personal and social contexts. A transformative encounter of self with the world brings a change of standpoint — a paradigmatic shift. Learning-unlearning is a vital oscillating dynamic, a breakthrough of personal borders; entering-exiting, inhaling-exhaling.

To paraphrase Salman Rushdie, teaching/learning is a process at the boundary between teacher and student; during the creative act this borderline softens, turns penetrable and allows teacher to flow into the student and the student to flow into the teacher. Concept of the border is intrinsically ambivalent, simultaneously implying two contrasting functions: separation and interrelation. The former is a static domain of belonging (tradition, identity preservation, exclusivity, conflict, degradation). The latter is an active domain of displacement (bridge, transition, permeability, exchange, inclusivity, flow).

Borders are not established in order to separate differences, on the contrary, differences are the very result of creating borders. Spatial boundaries between interior and exterior are the materialization of man's fear of the unknown. Exterior was traditionally considered as threat, so boundaries were established to eliminate uncanny discomfort. In his 1919 essay 'Das Unheimliche' Freud analyzes the paradox of man's fear of the uncanny. Aim toward security never succeeds in eliminating the anxiety that causes it, he claims. The reason for anxiety is suppressed knowledge. The way to regain knowledge is precisely by confronting the unknown — by stepping out of the protective identity frame.

A traveler leaves his place of origin, crossing the border in an act of displacement; thus, becoming an outsider, a stranger, the Other. His position is unstable, so his perception is enhanced. He observes what goes unnoticed by the multitude. His lack of knowledge can generate desire, a passion for knowledge. His nomadic dialogue disturbs the existing discourse, contributing to new understanding.

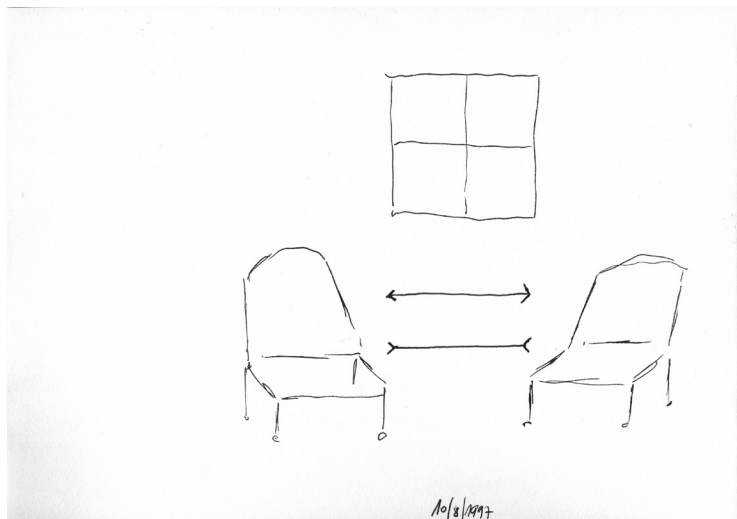
The knowledge-productive borderline territory is a magnetic field between polarities. Not unlike relational psychoanalysis, creating intersubjective osmosis — a field between self and other, between inside and outside. A transitional space between the subjective space of the child and the objective space of the external reality. The inside-outside relation is an overlapping of two worlds, a montage of two juxtaposing cultural references. The process of learning is an analogue of the relational dialectic between the inside and the outside: a nonlinear dynamic of alternating projections and introjections.

This process is phenomenological — an analogue of the complex experience of transition between interior and exterior space. A full sensory and intellectual animation arouses multitude of sensations which reflect layers of our own interiority/exteriority inducing shift in perception. Revitalizing irritation motivates desire to unveil the hidden, generating new understanding. At the same time, it enables a metaphysical transition of personal borders; immersion into one's own interiority in a pursuit for authenticity.

Paul Klee's metaphysical arrow demonstrates duality between man's ideological capacity to move (desire to expand his reach) and his physical limitations (origin of tragedy). Despite the paradox, Klee incites Bauhaus students to be winged arrows aiming high, at fulfillment and goal. Man's desire for a better and more beautiful world is a desire of ethical and aesthetic nature. Manifesting as a spatial and temporal desire/suffering for the unobtainable, this immanent lack has a motivating potential. It can be used as a tool for production of knowledge. The aim is to reach the presence in here-and-now, a gap between past and future.

REFERENCES

- Cache, B., 2000: Pokreti zemlje (Terre meuble. Prijevod: V. Valentić). Psefizma. Naklada Društva arhitekata, građevinara i geodeta, Karlovac.
- Klee, P., 1953: Pedagogical sketchbook (Pädagogisches skizzenbuch. Prijevod S. Moholy-Nagy. Bauhaus, 1925). Faber and Faber, London.
- Mezirow, J., 2000: Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress. Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco.
- Ochsner, J. K., 2000: Behind the Mask: A Psychoanalytic Perspective on Interaction in the Design Studio. Journal of Architectural Education 53(4):194–206.
- Pérez-Gómez, A., 2006: Built upon love: architectural longing after ethics and aesthetics. MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- Schinaia, C., 2016: Psychoanalysis and Architecture: The Inside and the Outside. Routledge.
- Schön, D. A. 1987: Educating the Reflective Practitioner: Toward a New Design for Teaching and Learning in the Professions. Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco.
- Winnicott, D., 2005: Playing and Reality. Routledge.



1: My room, I and Thou, L.P., psychoanalyst, NYC, 1997 (project author: Aleksandra Wagner, psychoanalyst, NYC)



2: A view from the interior or a reason for architecture, Architectural Biennale de Paris, 1985 (teacher: Ivan Crnković)

