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COUNTERREALISATION

Architectural Ideology from Plan to Project

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Preface: Gnomon of Ideology

This thesis constructs a genealogy of contemporary notions of architectural politics, through theoretical and disciplinary premises which have been inherited, consciously and unconsciously, from the 1960s and 1970s. In particular it focuses on currents within Italian political theory and historiography, which have been central to the development of self-reflexive discourses on the political possibilities and cultural agency of architecture over the past fifty years. Despite their prominence, these currents have a highly ambiguous relationship with the discipline to which they became linked. This can be seen clearly in the case of historian and theorist Manfredo Tafuri, whose work established the point of entry by which Western Marxist and Critical Theory perspectives confronted problems unique to the history of architecture. Over time, however, and through complex mediations, Tafuri's work became internalised, its critical challenge integrated into a new institutional formation.

The significance of this reversal can be difficult to assess, both from within architectural discourse proper and from the above extra-disciplinary perspectives, for it falls within a shadow cast by the unique position "architecture" occupies within the larger field of cultural production and its critique. As the disciplinary agency of the architectural institution changed following the shifting conditions of modern development, the valence of architectural politics has changed as well, moving toward an increasingly negative or "critical" relation to the economic register from the late 1960s onward. The thesis constructs a definition of the resulting ideological notion—the "Project"—by which the architectural institution maintains its disciplinary autonomy, while laying claim to continued, or even increased, political agency. Such shifts of architectural ideology highlight the problematic position of critical and cultural practices within the political history of the twentieth and twenty-first century, demonstrating their ambivalence concerning the transition of Western capital into and then out of social democratic "planning."

As a contribution to the history and theory of architecture, the thesis hones the critical and theoretical tools by which the ideological character of contemporary architecture can be understood. It constructs a periodisation that places this material within the larger historical trajectory of the architectural discipline, from the historical avant-gardes, through the Modern Movement, the neo-avant-garde, and the "post-critical," to the present period of re-politicisation. However, it also illustrates the significance of architecture's modern history to the larger debate concerning the political role of cultural production. A crucial figure in architectural discourse, Manfredo Tafuri's larger significance to cultural criticism is expounded in the thesis. Conceptual and methodological results demonstrate the limitations of prevailing notions of "immanent critique," when faced with contradictions revealed by the architectural case. Such contradictions return today with ever greater force when cultural agents, within architecture and without, seek to renew the bases of their agency in the face of political and economic crises without addressing this complex inheritance.

There are many people without whom this thesis could not have been possible, whether in this form or any other. I would like to give thanks first of all to my supervisors: to my director of studies, Marina Lathouri, for holding me to standards of clarity, both conceptual and linguistic, that may have otherwise escaped me; and to Nina Power, for guidance on matters outside the architectural discipline but central to this thesis. Thanks are also due to others at the Architectural Association who gave me guidance and helped me to reflect along the way: to Mark Cousins, Douglas Spencer, the PhD programme as a whole, and to my colleagues Eleni Axioti and Ricardo Ruivo—particularly the latter, for so many lessons in materialism from which my material prospects may never recover. Finally, I would like to thank my family for all their love and support: my mother, Margaret McGarry, and father, Patrick Orr, Valerie and Brian Whitefield, and especially Carly Whitefield. Carly, I promise to attend a film screening some day soon.

This thesis is dedicated to my grandmother, Pamela Hutchins Orr.

ARCHITECTURE LIVES ON

Architecture, which once seemed obsolete, lives on because the moment to realise it was missed.

The above is a paraphrase of the famous line in the early pages of Theodore W. Adorno's *Negative Dialectics*: "Philosophy, which once seemed obsolete, lives on because the moment to realise it was missed."¹ For Adorno, the Enlightenment project of scientific Reason, beginning with Immanuel Kant's critique of dogmatic philosophy, had appeared to make possible the end of philosophy's alienation from life, and the progressive "realisation" of philosophy in the dis-alienation of life itself. This would take the shape of a dialectical overcoming of philosophy: the actualisation of its "Idea" in the political and scientific synthesis of class-less society. That this "moment was missed" is a major theme in Adorno's work, particularly alongside Max Horkheimer in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.² Tragic overtones aside, this failure means for Adorno and Horkheimer an opportunity for philosophy to continue, to "live on," for, in a dialectical reversal, philosophy gains the responsibility of performing a critique of scientific Reason itself, which, unmediated, led not out of barbarism but into worse forms of depravity.

In much the same way, architecture, once "queen of the arts" appeared in the midst of the Modern Movement, to be on the verge of the *realisation*³ of all the ideal promises of avant-garde music, poetry, painting, and sculpture.⁴ What had been architecture's symbolic cultural function had tended increasingly towards technical and social solutions.⁵ From an earlier scientific approach to typology, to later planning and building, modern architecture would realise the production of society on a rational model. However, just as for philosophy, it was not to be—at least not under these terms. When the Soviet Revolution on one hand, and the post-1929 and later post-war implementation of western state planning on the other, cast architecture's "ideology of the Plan" into crisis, a split occurred between practical production shorn of its ideological vanguardism and ideological production deprived of its synthetic mediating functions. In effect, "architecture" was split between realised planning—a building sector involved in massive housing production, infrastructural development, and post-war reconstruction—and an unrealised "avant-garde" remainder. By this rupture the programme for architecture's realisation gained a partial success at the expense of its agents.

¹ Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E.B. Ashton (London: Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2004), 3.

² Theodore W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (London: Verso, 1997 (1944))

³ While this term has a meaning within Marx's political economic theory, I use it to denote a process of disciplinary transformation, rather than of the transformation of value.

⁴ Manfredo Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development*, trans. Barbara Luigia La Penta (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1976), 48.

⁵ Manfredo Tafuri, "Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology," trans. Stephen Sartarelli, in *Architecture Theory since 1968*, ed. K. Michael Hays (Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 1998), 8–9.

As famously identified by Manfredo Tafuri, the above crisis of ideology pointed to this divergence of disciplinary functions, but it was felt by the avant-garde as a loss of the discipline as a whole—a loss of “Architecture” with a capital “A.” Later reborn as the neo-avant-garde, these intellectual elements, having established connections to academia and the “art world,” pursued a revision of the discipline aimed at recovering coherence and self-consistency—an idea of “Architecture” rescued from the outside forces and historical processes which had thrown it into crisis. Apart from mere planning and building, architecture lived on into the 1970s as *Architecture*: an autonomous practice, a language, a “theory,” and in general, a reflexive critique of society, rather than a programme for its production, development, or transformation.

But this uneasy balance too would change as the welfare state compromise gave way to neoliberalism. A set of pro-capital reversals—“supply-side economics,” monetarism, financialisation, globalisation, and so on—ended the era of state planning as it had been known in the West, dissolving real planning along with it. Such a situation proved ideal for neo-avant-garde Architecture for two reasons. First, a newly resurgent capital and a triumphant West, emerging from the Cold War uncontested by political alternatives, brought with them an apparent “end of history.”⁶ This offered Architecture a reprieve from the complex of forces which had historically undercut disciplinary and ideological coherence. The problematic field of “planning” was off the table and architects could pursue disciplinary autonomy uncontested.

Second, it involved a real economic shift. Accelerating into the 1990s, international and globalised capital was again in a position to spend extravagantly on architectural products. The explosion of architecture that brought the world the Guggenheim Bilbao, that introduced the “starchitects” (Frank Gehry, Zaha Hadid, Daniel Libeskind, Rem Koolhaas, and others) to the largest global audience the discipline had ever known, put a definitive end to the academicist melancholia of the 1970s and early 1980s, and to a certain extent revived a kind of optimism associated with the earlier modernist era. As one architect put it, “theory was interesting but now we have work.”⁷ Architects were simply too busy building to be bothered with the “boundary work” of their discipline.⁸ This departure caused a further split between the self-reflexive functions of “theory” and “criticism,” on one hand, and the emerging “wholeness” of a globally manifest Architecture no longer in need of self-justification. While this may suggest a betrayal of the tortured disciplinary searches of previous decades, in truth it represented their larger success. The history of real planning now all but forgotten, the

⁶ Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History?” *The National Interest* 16 (Summer 1989): 3—18.

⁷ Michael Speaks, “Theory Was Interesting ... But Now We Have Work,” *Architectural Research Quarterly* 6, no. 3 (2002): 209–12; cited in Douglas Spencer, *The Architecture of Neoliberalism: how contemporary architecture became a tool of control and compliance* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 50. See also Christian Girard, “French Architects say ‘Basta’ to Theory,” *Architecture New York* 25–26 (2000): 7.

⁸ On the history of “disciplinarity” and its accompanying “boundary work,” see David R. Shumway and Ellen Messer-Davidow, “Disciplinarity: An Introduction,” *Poetics Today* 12, no. 2 (Summer, 1991): 201—225.

sensational forms of the “digital revolution” could present themselves as the historical avant-garde reborn—and this time without the ambivalent “neo-.” The modern discipline *simply was* “Architecture,” and had been, from Constructivism to Zaha Hadid.⁹

Reflecting on the health of the discipline in this moment, one finds a contradiction between historical premises and contemporary results. What happened to the ceaseless crises that had plagued architecture from the 1930s to end of the 1980s? Tafuri’s supposed prophecy regarding the “death of architecture” appeared to be disproved—one needed only point to the Bilbao to recognise architecture’s resurgence.¹⁰ Far from condemning architectural production, it seemed the “end of history” represented a reprieve. The consensual perspective within contemporary discourse recognises no architecture but “Architecture”—an idea of the discipline devoid of the specific character of its historical instability, thinkable now only as the pernicious encroachment of construction managers or the pressure to keep up with digital techniques.

Of course this ideological plateau demonstrates nothing so much as the contradiction between the original avant-garde promise and its neo-avant-garde imitation. For his part, Tafuri had comprehended this “after-life,” stating in an interview that “the return of architecture *per se* can be explained in a number of ways: it coincided with the market—which always requires new architectures.”¹¹ To be sure, this was true for more than cosmetic reasons. Indeed the Bilbao functioned as its own anti-planning proposition, triggering private development through a powerful injection of “culture” into otherwise collapsing post-industrial and post-planning urban districts.¹² Architecture, complicit with the end of planning and no longer preoccupied with critique, simply doubled down on its formal possibilities and lived on.

History, however, had not ended. New crises and contradictions continued to appear: from the G8 protests in 2002, to the financial crash of 2008, to indefinite wars, accelerating geopolitical instability, and the shock political events of 2016. Architects, mostly no longer too busy building, stratified economically within the office, and increasingly feeling the pressures of austerity themselves, have recently undergone a cultural shift away from the heady heights of the 1990s and early 2000s. After several decades in which architectural culture was self-

⁹ For the ideological significance of the “Soviet Avant-garde” in western discourse and historiography, see Ricardo Ruivo Pereira, “Architecture and Counter-revolution: The Ideology of the Historiography of the Soviet Avant-garde” (PhD diss., Architectural Association, 2018).

¹⁰ Diane Y. Ghirardo, “Manfredo Tafuri and Architecture Theory in the U.S., 1970-2000.” *Perspecta* 33 (2002): 39. doi:10.2307/1567295.

¹¹ Manfredo Tafuri interviewed by Pietro Corsi, “Per una storia storica / For a historical history” in “Il progetto storico di Manfredo Tafuri / The Historical Project of Manfredo Tafuri”, Vittorio Gregotti (ed.), special issue of *Casabella*, no.619-20 (1995): 145. There are historical precedents for this economic function in the architectural expressionism of Eric Mendelson. Tafuri, “Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology.” 23

¹² Architecture essentially became a tool for gentrification. On the interplay between real estate speculation and “cultural” programmes, see Wouter Vanstiphout, “The Self-Destruction Machine” in *Real Estates: Life Without Debt*, ed. Jack Self and Shumi Bose (London: Bedford Press, 2014), 57–66.

defined by its “post-criticality,”¹³ the last ten years have seen a return to self-assessment, critique, and outright political polemic. The “starchitects,” while still cutting heroic figures for the public at large, became for the discipline increasingly embarrassing examples of excess, even immorality.

The “post-critical” era was recent and its dubious qualities defined.¹⁴ What is less understood is the ideological function which self-consciously “critical” discourses already entailed prior to their dissipation into “post-criticality.” Decades earlier, architecture had shifted in such a way as to compatibilise criticality with the interests of society as it moved from social democratic compromise into neoliberalism. Simply put, architecture had already defined itself *against* the material and political contestation of capitalist society long before the explicit neoliberalism of Patrik Schumacher or Alejandro Zaera-Polo. Thus, while the contemporary “return of the political” should be celebrated, its dependence upon the neo-avant-garde, upon a post-planning disciplinary paradigm places it *within* a larger ideological consensus. Consequently, the political and disciplinary ambiguity of the references it employs against nominally “neoliberal” opponents, is in need of serious examination. By tracing the problem back to the shifting conditions and shifting terms of architectural production in the era of ideological crisis and the “realised Plan,” I aim to demonstrate the problematic character of what is considered a highpoint in the discipline’s critical and political radicalism.

Significantly, this investigation only becomes possible by adopting conceptual and critical tools that developed in the same period and bear the mark of its ambiguity. I am speaking of Tafuri’s “*critique of architectural ideology*,” which, as ground zero for Western Marxism within architectural discourse, has lived a difficult and controversial life. By interrogating Tafuri’s premises and drawing out the core ideas, it becomes possible to grasp the terms through which a new ideological formation emerged from the crisis of the “ideology of the Plan.”

Thus, what I call the ideology of the “Project,”¹⁵ developed as a response to the serious professional implications of the elimination of “superstructural” mediation, from real planning. The movement of the discipline from the side of the subject to that of the object of the social process¹⁶ put the illusions of architectural “creativity” into question, along with the real professional standing of the architect within the relations of production. In other words, the trajectory of “planning” and its realisation introduced the dire prospect of the architect’s *proletarianisation*: “his [sic] insertion—with no more neo-humanistic delays—within the

¹³ See for example representative essay by Robert Somol and Sarah Whiting, “Notes Around the Doppler Effect and Other Moods of Modernism,” *Perspecta* 33 (2002):72—77.

¹⁴ See Douglas Spencer, *The Architecture of Neoliberalism: how contemporary architecture became a tool of control and compliance*. London: Bloomsbury, 2016.

¹⁵ I am not the first to use this phrasing. Tafuri himself used the phrase, though not in a systematic manner. More recently and more precisely, Joan Ockman has outlined a critique of the ideology of the “project.” See Joan Ockman, “Project or Product? A Critique of the Ideology of the Architectural Project,” *Materia Architectura* 8 (December 2013): 89–93. See 1.2.2 below for discussion on the difficulties of defining the “project.”

¹⁶ Tafuri, “Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology,” 21.

planning programs of production.”¹⁷ The “autonomy” which the neo-avant-garde sought must be understood in material terms as resistance to this process. The disciplinary search for “Architecture” therefore coincides with the search for the “Architect,” in defiance of that subject’s transformation into planning technician at the service of implacable political and economic forces. The figure of the “starchitect” represents the spectacular fulfilment of this goal, an outcome ideologically anticipated by, if apparently contradictory to, the “critical” premises which came before.

The foundation shared by these outwardly different iterations of architectural production is what I call, following Tafuri, the *institutional* character of architecture within capitalist society. This is defined by the mediation of architectural disciplinarity by the political economic basis of the profession. The urge to define the architectural discipline by its cultural autonomy responds directly to the “anxiety” felt by the profession within the context of state planning and rationalised production. As a periodisation, we can therefore identify a structural continuity underwriting the institution of “Architecture” since the collapse of planning ideology: from the politicisation of Aldo Rossi and the “critical regionalism” of Kenneth Frampton, to the scintillating “fish” of Frank Gehry and the opportunism of Rem Koolhaas.

This reduction results from a straightforward historical materialist approach to cultural production within capitalist society, under whose terms little consideration is given to the “immanent” content of their “aesthetics.” Such a reading would stand in marked contrast to major tenets of Western Marxism as they evolved from Georg Lukács, to Frankfurt School Critical Theory, and into the post-Marxism of structuralism and post-structuralism. As a broadly critical assessment of the social history of the architect one could stop at this generalisation. However, if one did, one could scarcely claim an understanding of what makes architectural ideology unique. Without a degree of immanence, not only would it be difficult to defend the characterisation from charges of “vulgar materialism,” but it would be impossible to grasp the nature of the contradictions involved, nor what forms they are likely to take today.

As will be seen, the importance of grasping what makes architecture “unique” points directly back towards the problem of immanence itself, for contradictions within architectural ideology suggest larger contradictions within the history of cultural production, its theorisation, and critique. In order to draw these lessons, a degree of “immanence” must be maintained as part of a dialectical approach seeking to transcend that limit.

This means, therefore, addressing “immanent” differences within a larger institutional unity. We have to understand how an apparent contradiction can occur within the terms of the same ideological formation, how the same ideology can inform both the projects of a neoliberal order and the “counter-projects.” This is the heuristic value of the term “Project”

¹⁷ Ibid., 31.

itself, for while “Project ideology” is the general platform of contemporary “Architecture,” it is the nominal object of only a subset of the institution’s discursive production. For this subset the notion of the “Project,” developed both implicitly and explicitly since the 1960s, invokes the self-reflexive criticality and political engagement of a left opposition within the discipline.

According to such propositions, architecture is political because it is *Architecture*, because its *category* is political. It therefore fulfils its political function, in opposition to the modernist tendency toward practical sublation and political instrumentality, precisely by conserving and *being* itself. It therefore elevates certain notions of disciplinary practice, parts of what could be called the generic “project,” to the essential status of “The Project.” It is the special character of this notion that it exists not to realise anything other than a form of architectural disciplinarity—not to transform society but simply *to be Architecture*.¹⁸ The Project is architecture’s “form of life”¹⁹; its possibility as a design proposition is ultimately no more than existence itself.

As a reflection on the role of its own discipline within aesthetic production, the Project makes a decisive *pivot*: reversing the dialectic of art into life in the “standstill” of *life into art*.²⁰ This constitution leads to frequent melancholy statements with a particularly ironic flavour, captured in Diogo Seixas Lopes’s reflection on Aldo Rossi: “Despite a sense of loss, or defeat, there was still the obligation to express ‘there is nothing to express.’”²¹

In fact, the roots of Project discourse can be traced most clearly to the work of Aldo Rossi, where under highly politicised terms, a revision of modernist architecture coincided with a re-investment in the transhistorical value of “Architecture” as such. References to Rossi and to the “Project” have become a major theme within contemporary architectural discourse, and this thesis wagers that this subset gives a clue to the overarching ideological character of the institution in its contemporary *longue durée*.

As an outwardly critical and oppositional fragment, Project discourse performs an operative ideological function through an avant-guard and a rearguard role. As avant-garde of ideology, the Project renews the disciplinary terms through which architecture’s institutional position, really its class position, can be maintained. Such arguments generally concern the

¹⁸ Describing the Italian ‘Tendenza,’ a loose movement active from the late 60s to the mid 80s, Bernard Huet described the existential basis of their project: “For the Tendenza, architecture’s only justification lies in its very “being”; it is not infused with any content, it has no redemptive value, it can express nothing by itself.” Bernard Huet, “Formalism—Realism,” trans. Brian Holmes in *Architecture Theory since 1968*, 258. Originally published as “Formalisme—réalisme” *L’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui* 190 (April 1977).

¹⁹ The philosophical notion “form of life,” developed by Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben, has proved particularly enticing to architectural discourse. See for example Pier Vittorio Aureli, *Less is Enough* (Moscow: Strelka, 2013); and Camillo Boano, *The Ethics of a Potential Urbanism. Critical encounters between Giorgio Agamben and architecture* (London: Routledge, 2017).

²⁰ Architecture is here only a subset of a larger phenomenon of intellectual production. In “The Loneliness of the Project” Boris Groys has written on the this theme: “Art documentation thus signals the attempt to use artistic media within art spaces to make direct reference to life itself, in other words: to a form of pure activity or pure praxis, as it were; indeed, a reference to life in the art project, yet without wishing to directly represent it. Here, art is transformed into a way of life, whereby the work of art is turned into non-art, to mere documentation of this of life.” Boris Groys, “The Loneliness of the Project,” *New York Magazine of Art and Theory*, 1.1 (2002): 5. Later edited and included in Boris Groys, *Going Public* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2010): 70—83. For Groys, the “project” defines contemporary intellectual production in general.

²¹ Diogo Seixas Lopes, *Melancholy and Architecture: on Aldo Rossi* (Zurich: Park Books AG, 2015), 216.

subjective authority of the architect (whether in ethico-political terms or aesthetic), and the socially necessary autonomy of “Architecture” itself. As rearguard, the Project protects the institution from previous disciplinary crises and previous political challenges by foreclosing the history of architecture’s objectification by properly political subjects and economic processes. Here, left architectural ideology as “Project,” seeks a *counterrealisation* by defining itself against “planning”—architecture’s own historical left position within both Western social democracy and Eastern socialism. Defined in this way, and notwithstanding claims to the contrary, for the Project, “realisation” remains only as the horizon of institutional stability where the sale of the architectural commodity “realises” a profit.

As avant-garde and rearguard—this is how I read Tafuri’s distinction between the two functions of (neo)avant-garde “gentle tortures” near the end of “L’Architecture dans le boudoir”:

The questions that criticism ought to ask at this point are: what makes these "gentle tortures" possible? In what contexts and in what structural conditions are they rooted? What is their role within the present-day system of production? We have responded in part to these questions in the course of our discussion. But we can add, however, that these works are the by-products of a system of production that must, simultaneously: (a) renew itself on a formal level, by delegating to marginal sectors of its professional organizations the task of experimenting with and developing new models (in fact, it would prove useful to analyze the way in which the models devised by the isolated form makers come to be introduced within the process of mass production); and (b) consolidate a highly diversified public, by assigning the role of "vestals of the discipline" to figures bent on preserving the concept and the role of architecture, in its accepted meaning as a traditional object endowed with certain permanent and inalienable powers of communication.²²

Though in such passages Tafuri was clearly aware of the persistence of architectural ideology, he did not go much further, did not specify the precise ideological character of architectural production after the collapse of the ideology of the Plan. As a general proposition, therefore, this thesis attempts to renew the critique of architectural ideology, picking up where Manfredo Tafuri left off. That critique, as Tafuri defined it following Mario Tronti’s example, was a *critique of the left*.²³ This point refers Tafuri’s work back to its conceptual and political references in Italian Marxist theory of the 1960s.²⁴ However, today the political context is substantially different and understanding that difference will be the key to grasping the content of architectural ideology. The history of the Project is the history of a disciplinary search driven by ideological and institutional necessity. The attractiveness of the Project today has to do with a false parallel its constructs between historical “planning” and contemporary tendencies it associates with neoliberalism. Drawing on ambiguous notions from the period of ideological crisis and heightening its own allegiance to “Architecture,” the

²²Manfredo Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*, trans. Pellegrino d’Aciero and Robert Connolly (Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 1990), 283–284.

²³ Manfredo Tafuri and Luisa Passerini, "History as Project: An Interview with Manfredo Tafuri." trans. Denise L. Bratton. *ANY: Architecture New York*, no. 25/26 (2000): 32.

²⁴ This particular theme derives from Mario Tronti’s essay “Critica dell’ideologia.” Collected in Mario Tronti, *Operai e capitale* (Rome: Derive Approdi, 2006), 151—158.

Project positions itself as a political alternative to neoliberalism through the autonomy of architectural form.

Because ideology appears in the guise of such disciplinary polemics, we can further characterise the problem of “immanence.” Architectural ideology’s immanent content revolves around disciplinary implications: how and what architecture should be—polemics not only on its use, but the manner of its self-constitution. The critique of architectural ideology does not pursue a total elimination of architecture as such. Rather, it interrogates the mediation between disciplinarity and social conditions by which the institutional character of a given “architecture” can be known. I therefore define “disciplinarity” by the partial autonomy which a given historical constitution entails, conferring a certain form of agency upon its members. This may involve widely divergent capacities: the ability to read Latin, construct perspectival drawings, manipulate Beaux-arts compositions, devise an optimal floor-plan, interpret French philosophy, and so on. Crucially, disciplinarity is only *partially* autonomous, meaning that the origin and relative value of a given disciplinary form depends upon the connections between its capacities, the larger social context of their application, and its own “embodied” position therein. This is as much the realm of “aesthesis” as it is of functionalist planning, and the problem of disciplinarity points directly to deep questions concerning the nature and differentiation of widely divergent forms of architectural knowledge and agency.

It is on this point that the architectural case provides a unique perspective onto the political stakes of cultural production and its critique. While the partial autonomy of aesthetic practices within modern social conditions has been rigorously thematised by Adorno,²⁵ the relation represented in Critical Theory, between the institutional basis of art and its autonomous practices, misses the consequences demonstrated by architecture. This is because architecture, in its modern history, represents the end of the spectrum of aesthetic practices in which the production processes ideologically mediated are *those that produce the means of production themselves*. Within the capitalist mode of production, architecture therefore carries a deeply structural, an *infrastructural* significance that cannot be ignored despite how distasteful the infrastructure/superstructure division may appear to many today.

In 1965’s “Functionalism Today,” Adorno, though a self-described outsider where architecture was concerned, captures well the uncertain position of the discipline in the moment of its ideological crisis. In the conclusion of the essay, he defines two pressing tasks which confront the architect: “First, with regard to social things; he must account for the position of his work in society and for the social limits which he encounters on all sides.” This, Adorno continues, is a concern especially for “city planning,” “where architectonic questions collide with social questions such as the existence or non-existence of a collective social subject. It hardly needs mentioning that city planning is insufficient so long as it

²⁵ See Theodore W., *Aesthetic Theory* (London: Continuum, 2002).

centres on particular instead of collective social ends.”²⁶ Picking up on an implication of realisation, he notes that the fulfilment of the social possibilities of planning depend upon social and political conditions. Without a properly “collective social subject,” he says, a truly “rational” application would be impossible.²⁷ The second task, however, returns his argument to the essay’s original point of departure, which was to include architectural “function” within an overall thematisation of artistic autonomy: “architecture, indeed every purposeful art, demands constant *aesthetic* reflection,” He continues:

Aesthetics as an integral facet of philosophy awaits a new impulse which must come from reflective efforts. Hence recent artistic praxis has turned to aesthetics. Aesthetics becomes a practical necessity once it becomes clear that concepts like usefulness and uselessness in art, like the separation of autonomous and purpose-oriented art, imagination and ornament, must once again be discussed before the artist can act positively or negatively according to such categories.²⁸

What is revealing about this double approach—revealing also the limitations of Adorno’s consideration of realisation, function, and autonomy—is how it did not foresee the profound contradiction which would soon drive the latter task against the former: architectural reflexivity against the social stakes embedded within planning, aesthetic mediation against social infrastructure.

Thus, the value of the architectural case lies in demonstrating a qualitative split within disciplinary immanence. Architectural “autonomy” is a far more problematic question than the “autonomy” of the work of art in general, for apparently extrinsic problems elsewhere appear immanent to the ambivalence of modern architectural disciplinarity itself. This split formed the basis of the historical trajectory of *realisation*, by which changes in architectural disciplinarity not only challenged the recuperative capacities of insitutionality, but undercut the latter’s professional premises.

Because of this difference, the particular position of architecture within the larger history of modern aesthetic production suggests a challenge to the political and conceptual premises of much Western Marxist and Critical Theory. As we shall see, not only is the notion of “critical architecture” problematic, but it calls into question the relative complicity of aesthetic production and its critique with the institutions of contemporary capitalist society. Opening a larger perspective onto the *strategic* and *tactical* connections between different forms of disciplinarity and the overarching pursuit of social transformation, architecture may re-orient political theory toward a more “orthodox” revolutionary horizon.

For all this, the architectural ideology of the Project provides a useful perspective onto the political stakes underlying general problems of aesthetics, cultural agency, and “critique” itself. Because of architecture’s specific character, bridging in effect professional, cultural,

²⁶ Adorno, “Functionalism Today,” in *Rethinking Architecture*, ed., Neil Leach (London: Routledge, 1997), 18.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

aesthetic, materially productive, and infrastructural functions, the forms which architectural discourse and production take are extremely useful for understanding the complex interconnections and mediations which cut across those registers today. It is because “architecture” says something about these relations, that we should pay close attention to it, if only to transcend its terms toward the larger context of their origin and application.

Therefore, as a contribution to cultural criticism in general, this thesis suggests an understanding of “architecture” as *the disciplinary threshold of “art” upon which the premises of its immanent critique are broken*. By drawing out themes from Tafuri’s work and developing their multivalent significance within contemporary ideology, I hope to challenge the relative comfort into which “criticality” has been relaxing for nearly half a century.

Mise en Scene: The Return of the Political

In December of 2014, the Architectural Association hosted a symposium organised by London's Architectural Exchange: "How is Architecture Political?" This title reflects a generalised politicisation of architectural culture in the years following the 2008 financial crash, a reaction against the predominantly "post-political" and "post-critical" discursive trends which had held sway for decades, and in which, through the global influence of Rem Koolhaas and Zaha Hadid, among others, the Architectural Association itself had figured prominently.

The symposium was organised around the appearance of political theorist and philosopher Chantal Mouffe, whose "agonistic" definition of "the political," and critiques of liberal post-politics, developed over many years of partnership with Ernesto Laclau, provided a departure point for the discussion. In a number of respects the appearance of Mouffe could be considered long overdue. Some twenty years earlier, in her book *The Return of the Political* she had already elaborated a critique of liberal post-politics and self-satisfaction:

Not long ago we were being told, to the accompaniment of much fanfare, that liberal democracy had won and that history had ended. Alas, far from having produced a smooth transition to pluralist democracy, the collapse of Communism seems, in many places, to have opened the way to a resurgence of nationalism and the emergence of new antagonisms. Western democrats view with astonishment the explosion of manifold ethnic, religious and nationalist conflicts that they thought belonged to a bygone age. Instead of the heralded 'New World Order', the victory of universal values, and the generalization of 'post-conventional' identities, we are witnessing an explosion of particularisms and an increasing challenge to Western universalism.²⁹

That "the return of the political" arrived to architectural discourse only decades later, gives a good sense of the mediating factors standing between the architectural institution and politicisation.³⁰ At any rate, following the Great Recession architectural discourse was again prepared to address such issues. Mouffe herself had continued to write along similar lines, and in 2013 published a systematic summary of her political philosophy up to that point, *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically*.³¹ The core argument, which began in 1985's *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* as a philosophical departure from Marxism,³² and became more clearly ontological in *The Return of the Political*, defines society's political horizon by the "dimension of radical negativity."³³ Beginning in ontological fashion with the *being* of "the political" it projects the conditions of possible becoming: "the very condition of possibility of the formation of political identities is at the same time the condition of

²⁹ Chantal Mouffe, *The Return of the Political* (London: Verso, 1993), 1.

³⁰ For instance the relative strength or weakness of the building market.

³¹ Chantal Mouffe, *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically* (London: Verso, 2013)

³² Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 2001)

³³ Mouffe, *Agonistics*, ix.

impossibility of a society from which antagonism can be eliminated.”³⁴ The ontological argument in turn rests upon a characterisation of late capitalist society, a periodisation which takes the obsolescence of Marxism for granted.³⁵ Of course, the target of Mouffe’s polemic is not traditional or orthodox Marxism—which in the West, apart from a few obscure proponents and a fledgling attempt to reinstate “communism” as an idea within philosophy,³⁶ hardly existed enough to be a target. Rather, she aims at the contemporary “triumph” of neoliberalism,³⁷ together with the insufficiency of critiques thereof from liberal political philosophy.

The event in London the following year would provide an opportunity for architectural discourse to draw out these themes and find disciplinary applications. Representing architecture were four influential figures from both sides of the Atlantic: Reinhold Martin, Ines Weizman, Sarah Whiting, and Pier Vittorio Aureli. The event as a whole, but in particular Aureli’s contribution, captured the specific connection between political thought and architecture at stake in the return of “the political” to architectural discourse. There is something very particular and very dense about this connection, suggesting the highly mediated form in which political questions can be articulated in architectural discourse. One sees a process of historical reflection upon previous incarnations of architectural theory and a recuperation of earlier architectural models through which the disciplinary stakes for architecture’s recuperation of politics can be felt.³⁸

Underlying the question “how is architecture political?” lie the stakes for political action *through* architecture and by *architects*. The “how” here refers most concretely to architectural practice. At this point in the discussion, however, the nature of the architect’s agency, political or otherwise, the specific character of architectural disciplinarity, is still an open problem. Dismissing the initial version of the question—“how is architecture political?”—Aureli argued that architecture is always political, due to its unavoidable implication in the

³⁴ Ibid., 5.

³⁵ It is arguably an example of circular logic, given that Mouffe and Laclau have previously stated that the ontological definition of the political was itself necessitated by new beings: “From this point of view, it is our conviction that in the transition from Marxism to post-Marxism, the change is not only ontic but also ontological. The problems of a globalized and information ruled society are unthinkable within the two ontological paradigms governing the field of Marxist discursivity: first the Hegelian, and later the naturalistic.” *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Preface to the second edition, x. With what scientific paradigm do they construct an ontic characterisation of late-capitalism? It appears at bottom that the ontological argument, taken to be axiomatic in Mouffe’s political philosophy, depends upon a sort of empirical characterisation of “globalised” or “information” society. As in most post-Marxism, the force of the periodisation is carried within ideology, rather than theory.

³⁶ See for example Jodi Dean, *The Communist Horizon* (London Verso: 2012); Bruno Bosteels, *The Actuality of Communism* (London: Verso, 2014); and the collected texts in Costas Douzinas and Slavoj Žižek, eds., *The Idea of Communism* (London: Verso, 2010).

³⁷ “One could have hoped that the collapse of the Soviet model would have given a renewed impetus to democratic socialist parties, finally freed of the negative image of the socialist project that their old antagonist presented. However, with the failure of its communist variant, it is the very idea of socialism that became discredited. Far from being given new life, social democracy was thrown into disarray. Instead of a recasting of the socialist project, what we have witnessed in the last decade has been the triumph of neo-liberalism, whose hegemony has become so pervasive that it has had a profound effect on the very identity of the left. It can even be argued that the left-wing project is in an even deeper crisis today than at the time in which we were writing, at the beginning of the 1980s.” *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Preface to the second edition, xiv.

³⁸ This theme will return in the example of Aldo Rossi, (3.2) who himself attempted a recuperation and a repetition of older models, only to be repeated anew today.

hegemonic structures of society.³⁹ Architecture thus represents and reveals the deeply riven and divided character of society through its built form. Reflecting the “agonistic” definition of “the political” given by Mouffe, the specific genius of Aureli’s solution is that it makes no compromise between architecture as such and architecture in political service. Crucially, the political value of form is not something merely imposed upon architecture, but the strategic field of the architect’s own political agency.⁴⁰

Such arguments follow the homology between political philosophy and architecture Aureli developed in 2008’s *The Project of Autonomy*, where Mario Tronti’s “autonomy of the political” finds a parallel in Aldo Rossi’s autonomous architecture.⁴¹ Sublimating the traditional opposition between aesthetic formalism and social commitment, there is here no contradiction: architecture finds commitment through autonomy. Producing an overarching thematisation of this position, with its origins in Italy of the 1960s, and extending its horizons to the contemporary context, would be Aureli’s own “project of autonomy.”

As we shall see over the next chapters, implicated in this gesture are a complex set of historical polemics, conceptual crises, political conditions, and institutional and disciplinary shifts, which correlate notions of architectural disciplinarity to those of political strategy and tactics. To take a crucial example, as Aureli notes, the footing upon which his parallel between Rossi and Tronti, between architectural and political theory, rests, is their shared confrontation with “planning.” Echoing Tronti’s critique of capitalist “planning,” Rossi, according to Aureli, translated the critique into a disciplinary argument: “In the face of capitalism’s total absorption of the technological rationality of planning, Rossi sought to privilege architecture as the most vital field for the theoretical reinvention of the city—architecture, that is, without the mediation of planning.”⁴²

Aureli identifies here a key point of departure—easily the most significant in the last fifty or more years of architectural politics. Rossi’s arguments were of course more complex than this simple characterisation captures; nevertheless, they were absolutely central to the development of later architectural ideology. In order to understand their complexities and Rossi’s proper relevance, the final section of this thesis will be devoted to unpacking Rossi’s theoretical propositions regarding the discipline of architecture and its political agency.

Evidently, the departure in question was stretched across virtually the entire decade of the 1960s and into the 1970s, containing within it further moments of inflection, transition, and reversal, as well as involving other important actors, who, like Tronti himself, or especially Tafuri, often contradict Aureli’s premise. We will return to cover this material in detail.

³⁹ Aureli’s presentation “Can Architecture be Political?” is available on youtube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8dd73Sd0xpU> Accessed 21, September, 2018.

⁴⁰ Pier Vittorio Aureli and Martino Tattara, “Architecture as Framework: The Project of the City and the Crisis of Neoliberalism,” *New Geographies* 1 (Winter 2009): 39. See further discussion **1.4.1**.

⁴¹ Pier Vittorio Aureli, *The Project of Autonomy* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008), 13.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 13.

Suffice it to say for now, that Aureli's description captures the major stakes, while missing the deeper implications. It is therefore important simply to note that the political definition of architecture as it emerged in 1960s Italy involved a disciplinary argument, a definition of "architecture" negatively determined by another disciplinary notion: *planning*. Architecture as an autonomous discipline distinct from "the technological rationality of planning" gained impetus through the cultural role of built form—revitalising its *social mission* even as it renounced a key competency, perhaps the most fundamental, of its social impact to that point.

Some fifty years later, Aureli seeks to reactivate the political agency posited by Aldo Rossi in the 1960s, but what exactly is the disciplinary context for such a reactivation and what are its social contents? What, in other words, are the politics of 'the political' made available through this conception of architecture? What sort of politics return to the discipline through such formulations today? Following both Mouffe's political philosophy and Aureli's architectural theory, they are defined by a clear departure from both the revolutionary, and the reformist tradition as it defined the historic left. Mouffe's agonistics are defined in explicit opposition to revolutionary communism, and in general, rely on a conception of 'radical negativity' which precludes any prospect for a fully planned socialist or communist society.⁴³ The case of reform is more complex. While in *The Return of the Political* Mouffe had explicitly rejected the traditional strategic binary of the left: revolution or reform,⁴⁴ Mouffe's Gramscian approach appears to leave open a kind of reformist politics via "engagement with institutions."⁴⁵ The institutions of capitalist liberal democracy form the basis of a process of radicalisation, extending and ramifying their egalitarian, pluralistic, and liberatory content through an "immanent critique".⁴⁶ While not utopian, the assumption remains that the extremes of "antagonistic" confrontation between enemies can be mitigated and brought down to the level of pluralistic "agonism" through the radicalisation of existing democratic political institutions.⁴⁷ Or, in other words, that capitalist society does not contain antagonisms which are *structurally contradictory at the level of that society's institutions*.⁴⁸ What is nevertheless clear, is that Mouffe's "radicalisation" of democratic institutions is as much a departure from Marxist revolution as it is a departure from the technocratic or economic

⁴³ Mouffe, *Agonistics*, xi. For the departure of "agonistics" from traditional revolutionary socialism, see Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*.

⁴⁴ Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*, 103.

⁴⁵ Mouffe, *Agonistics*, 65.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 133–134.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴⁸ Clearly this assumption is not shared by traditional Marxism, and its problematic character will be seen in the case of the architectural institution in particular.

register of traditional reformism, both of which assume a horizon of structural integration or synthesis, a point of arrival at which antagonism is materially and concretely overcome.⁴⁹

In the architectural case, we can find immediate disciplinary consequences, as both revolution and reform—from the consistent tactical use of reform goals by Western communist parties, to the Soviet Five Year Plans themselves, to the building programs of social democracy and the welfare state—immediately imply the discipline of planning proper. Against this historical legacy, Mouffe’s political philosophy finds a welcome application. Because society is permanently structured by divisions and separations, architecture’s privileged, even deeply *ontological* function according to Aureli, is to construct, reinforce, or make legible these divisions, rather than to transcend them through the material transformation of their basis. Again, in *The Project of Autonomy*, Aureli draws on Rossi’s invocation of a political architecture “without the mediation of planning,”⁵⁰ and in *The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture*, Aureli formalises this opposition through the distinction between the *polis* and the *urbs*, setting “the political” (the architecture of the “*polis*”) directly against “the economic” (the planning of the *urbs*).⁵¹ Drawing on the philosophical notions of Aristotle, Hannah Arendt, and Giorgio Agamben, he makes this move for clear polemical reasons. Urbanisation, the spread of the “Metropolis,” epitomises for Aureli the capitalist and neoliberal domination of the built sphere. Against this apparently uncritical extension of capital’s “managerial paradigm,”⁵² the model of the Ancient Greek *polis* or, later, the medieval central Italian city state,⁵³ serves as a model alternative. Of course, this dualistic critique of “the economic” functions equally to distance “the political” from the crux of Marxist theory, which is the fundamental interconnection of the two—*political economy*—to which the ontological approach to “the political” is effectively opposed.

Here I must make a crucial point. Such schematic political arguments in Aureli’s writings, may not precisely match Mouffe’s conception of radical democracy or hegemonic struggle, nor the subtle construction of her political philosophy; however, one should go beyond the satisfaction of condemning architects for distorting philosophy and theory for their own ends. Such critiques abound within critical writing on architecture.⁵⁴ While they are no doubt largely correct within their own terms, they fall short on the fundamental point. What is really

⁴⁹ The consensual foreclosure of planning, which eventually made its way into the late-twentieth century left, was remarked upon by Ernest Mandel in the 1980s: “But in the last decade there has been a sharp reaction against Keynesian ideas and techniques in the capitalist world, and an unbridled rehabilitation of the market and of commodity production as civilizational values in themselves. This change has had a deep influence on the Left as well.” Ernest Mandel, “In Defence of Socialist Planning” *New Left Review* 159 (September/October 1986), 9.

⁵⁰ Aureli, *The Project of Autonomy*, 13.

⁵¹ Aureli, *The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture*, 2—13.

⁵² Aureli cites Agamben’s term: “‘paradigma gestionale’ (a managerial paradigm).” *Ibid.*, 11.

⁵³ Aureli, *The Project of Autonomy*, 5; see also the contrast between medieval and Renaissance cities in Pier Vittorio Aureli, “Do You Remember Counterrevolution?” *AA Files*, no. 71 (2015): 147–165.

⁵⁴ For a recent example see the essays collected in Lahiji, Nadir, ed. *The Missed Encounter of Radical Philosophy with Architecture*. London: Bloomsbury, 2014.

going on in the architectural use of philosophy has nothing to do with philosophy per se; it cannot be referred to the immanent, disciplinary norms of philosophical discourse. Rather, at issue is the ideological content of philosophical notions as revealed by their instrumentalisation in another discipline. This is a materialist argument, which points out that the philosophical discipline is no more in control of its ultimate social significance than architecture is. By transporting notions across disciplinary boundaries while attempting to remain immanent to their content, forcing them to solve institutional demands which are more explicit and concrete in architecture than in philosophy, architectural discourse reveals consequences latent to the material. Architects do distort philosophy for their own ends; however, those ends have more in common with those of their counterparts in philosophy, than the latter may care to admit, and one can judge the philosophical content in this context.⁵⁵

In Aureli's case, architecture forces a kind of *reductio ad absurdum*, linking concepts of political philosophy to similar notions from the history of ideas, which can then be linked to architectural objects—like the *polis*, *oikos*, and *urbs*—generating highly schematic models for thinking about architecture's political possibilities. In this, architectural ideology provides a kind of litmus test, and it does so by forcing extra-disciplinary discourse to decide a number of questions which for architecture are unavoidable. First and foremost among these is the aforementioned confrontation between infrastructure and superstructure.⁵⁶ How can this duality be construed? Upon what register does the reproduction or transformation of society depend? The history of modern architecture involves the history of modes of production, of forces of development, and of the relations of productions, all mediated by bourgeois cultural agents. As a problem of its own institutional disciplinarity, architecture simply cannot avoid investing one way or another in the infrastructure/superstructure division.

In general, since “the opportunity for the realisation of architecture was missed,” beginning in the 1960s, the architectural institution has decided that its agency is wholly cultural; that society is reproduced either naturally, and thus impossible to transform, or reproduced by culture, and transformable by an act of culture, an act of “Architecture” *on its own terms*. These questions take on a kind of “vulgar” character for architecture, excluding

⁵⁵ To give an obvious example: there is a reason architects in the 1990s used Gilles Deleuze rather than for instance, his long time rival, Alan Badiou. First of all, the latter offers practically no instrumental value to the discipline, being virtually devoid of useful metaphor and imagery, and focusing on aesthetic and scientific problems of the greatest possible abstraction. Second, Badiou's political position, an anti-liberal and anti-essentialist sort of austere Maoism, could only be adapted to a bourgeois culturalist application with great difficulty. By comparison, Deleuze, particularly in collaboration with Felix Guattari, offers an inexhaustible selection of images, spatial and visual metaphors, an ambiguous political radicalism, an explicit preference for certain notions of form and space, and in general an easily appropriated notional lexicon.

Furthermore critiques of architectural distortion also tend to assume that if one understood a philosophical notion correctly, one would have no need to take issue with it. Philosophy, according to this conception, is a consensual field free of polemic or contradiction, a kind of market place of ideas from which the thinker chooses and assembles according to their liking. A well formed philosophical idea is like a quality product—it is either to one's taste or not and the more ideas on the market place the better. An architect selecting a philosophical reference faithfully would therefore be making a polemically neutral decision. It would follow that the only reason philosophical notions become controversial in architecture is because they have been misused, not because one may disagree with them philosophically. In reality, philosophy is much closer to a zero-sum game than otherwise. It is absolutely riven by polemic, thoroughly structured by differences with real stakes, both disciplinary and political.

⁵⁶ For detail on this “dualism see Cristoph Henning, *Philosophy After Marx: 100 Years of Misreadings and the Normative Turn in Political Philosophy*, trans. Max Henninger (Chicago: Haymarket, 2014), 196.

the properly Marxist dialectical point regarding the mutual implication of infrastructure and superstructure. However, because these distinctions underlie political discourse at large, the architectural example obliges by making them explicit, even if at the expense of a schematisation. After the 1950s crises in international socialism, the late 1960s collapse of the welfare-state compromise, and the 1989 fall of the Berlin wall (apart from relatively few obstinate contrarians) political discourse has been defined by its post-revolutionary, post-Marxist, and even post-Reformist character, defined, in theoretical terms, by a dualism of culture and economy.⁵⁷ In economic theory, neo-classicism is completely dominant across the political spectrum—even within contemporary “Marxisms”⁵⁸—and in cultural theory, a one-sided “immanentist” model, excludes political-economic analysis.

Thus, politics returns to architecture in clear opposition to its modernist variants, both revolutionary and reformist, as well as from the major theoretical resources for the transformative understanding of capitalism. “The political”—the ontological irreducibility of “radical negativity”—which in Mouffe functions as the basis for a critique of (neo)liberalism—finds a convenient application in the architect’s hostility to the processes of planning and the institutional consequences they involved. Presented as the basis for a new politicisation of architecture, “the political” expresses rather the institutional necessities which continue to drive architectural ideology. The simple fact that the major social problems affecting London’s built environment, the lack of housing first and foremost, clearly stem more from a lack of planning than the opposite; that for decades throughout the West and beyond, enforced austerity, privatisation, and marketisation have all but eliminated democratic access to “planning,” might suggest that a radical political conception of architectural autonomy has more in common with the premises of neoliberalism than otherwise. By exemplifying these contemporary contradictions, “How is Architecture Political?” expressed above all the ideological character of architectural politics.

Though a relatively contained event, “How is Architecture Political?” functions for this thesis as an exemplary “fragment,”⁵⁹ indicating the terms for a broader problematic. The power of a key text, a conference, or an exhibition to distill general tendencies and contradictions, to express them symptomatically and provide an opportunity for critical diagnosis, is not a new occurrence. Fifty years earlier, in 1964, it was an architectural exhibition that, according to Tafuri, caused him to renounce architectural design in the name of militant historiography. That exhibition, Bruno Zevi and Paolo Portoghesi’s *Michelangelo*

⁵⁷ Something which owes its conceptual force paradoxically to legitimate *Marxist* critiques of ‘vulgar materialism.’

⁵⁸ Henning, 131.

⁵⁹ I am intentionally reversing the significance which this term is usually given. As we shall see in discussing Tafuri’s later work and its reception, the “fragment” is an important notion of “micro-history” and of radical historicism. It is generally opposed to generalisation, as the exception which undermines one’s expectations and conclusions. The irony being that bourgeois historiography *expects to avoid conclusions*. Here I invoke it as departure point, as that which undermines such consensual ambiguity, providing the general terms in which ideology can be grasped. See 2.1.2.

architetto,⁶⁰ at the Palazzo delle esposizioni, in Rome,⁶¹ condensed in a single case all the contradictions, distortions, political and institutional tactics, which Tafuri later examined under the terms of operative criticism, operative history, and the critique of architectural ideology. Reflecting on the pivotal moment in a 1992 interview with Louisa Passerini, he tells the following story:

This was 1964, the same time as the big Michelangelo exhibition opened. That exhibition made me so angry! I understood it as an example of how *not* to do history!

From a subjective point of view, you could say that I resolved my destiny in one night. This is something that has happened often, even in other matters. One tragic night I was miserable because I had to decide between practice and history. I remember I was sweating, waking around, felt ill, had a fever. At the end, in the morning, I had decided, and that was it! I gave up all the tools of architecture and determined to dedicate myself entirely to history. What kind of history I didn't know, but I knew at that moment that it should be history.

Why had the *Michelangelo architetto* made me so angry? First, because Portoghesi supported the academics, and as soon as Zevi arrived in Rome, the exhibition was 'Zevianised.' The two of them mounted this exhibition that amounted to a total deformation of historical truth in order to transmit something to contemporary architects.⁶²

Tafuri has outlined the basic conflict between good faith historical research, and what historical narratives are favourable to architects. Facing this conflict, Tafuri chose a side, a decision that prefigured the disciplinary separation between history and design, which would become a major argument in *Teorie e storia* four years later. In the interview Tafuri went on to explain the nature of the exhibition's operative message. The key point being how the motive force for historical "deformation" involved the suture of political, institutional, and disciplinary stakes:

But what did they transmit? Well, it was 1964. In Florence, the Maggio Musicale had rediscovered expressionism, holding important seminar discussion on music, art, and architecture. This was seen and experienced by one side of the critical-historical and architectural culture as a reaction to the failures of the first centro-sinistra. Zevi, who had personally witnessed the failure of the Legge Sullo, had clearly recognised the defeat and was behind the conception of the Michelangelo exhibition. Michelangelo was presented on a par with the contemporary architect Eric Mendelsohn, as if to say that it is the task of the intellectual—not the masses—to cry out against the pain of the human condition. The protests of the masses, by contrast, were repellent. My position was that history was not an instrument of politics. History is history.⁶³

Two years earlier had seen the election of the first centre-left coalition government, the "centro-sinistra" composed of the Christian Democrats (DC) and the Socialist Party (PSI), under the leadership first of Amintore Fanfani, and then Aldo Moro. During this time, left Christian Democrat minister, Fiorentino Sullo, brought town-planning reform legislation to parliament. This moment and its contextual importance is described in Mary Louise

⁶⁰ Zevi edited the catalogue of the exhibition, which was published by Einaudi: Burno Zevi and Paolo Portoghesi, eds. *Michelangelo architetto* (Turin: Einaudi, 1964)

⁶¹ Andrew Leach, *Choosing History* (Ghent: A&S Books, 2007), 24.

⁶² Manfredo Tafuri and Louisa Passerini, "History as Project: An Interview with Manfredo Tafuri," 30–31.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 31.

Lobsinger's essay "The New Urban Scale in Italy: On Aldo Rossi's 'L'architettura della città.'"⁶⁴ It was a moment of optimism in Italian architectural circles, a time in which architects sought to, and had the expectation of being able to respond to the growing size and complexity of Italian cities.⁶⁵ However, this optimism quickly evaporated as the legislation failed to receive the backing of Sullo's own party.⁶⁶

Faced with this failure, the *Michelangelo* exhibition sees prominent figures of the Italian architectural community *pivot* from one disciplinary path and one associated political narrative, to another. In place of the architect as social servant to popular movements—"the masses"—and their political mechanisms of urban transformation, Zevi and Portoghesi, present the architect as intellectual figure of resistance. Evidently, Tafuri regarded this political position with deep suspicion, but he took immediate issue with its deployment through historical and architectural discourse. One can read, from *Theories and History*,⁶⁷ to *Architecture and Utopia*, to *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*, and beyond, a prodigious effort on Tafuri's part to make this danger plain. Working contemporaneously Aldo Rossi developed new propositions, more subtle and resistant to Tafuri's critique, and premised upon a more radical social commitment, though grounded in a similar political reversal and disciplinary commitment. The ideological character of the Project can be clearly seen when the work of Tafuri and Rossi are brought into tension.

Remarkably, the same discursive phenomena—the distortion of history for contemporary ends and the complicity of academic research, historical and critical, with design—remain nearly unchanged today. More than that, the basic political issue, which concerns the contradiction between the architect as bourgeois cultural agent and "the masses," as represented by politics proper and associated state mechanisms, remains thoroughly and fundamentally the same, despite the difference in moment. This is true at the base level of ideology, notwithstanding the clear political distance separating the liberal centrism of Zevi and Portoghesi, from the post-Marxist radicalism of Mouffe and Aureli.

Against this ideological continuity we must contrast the political conditions of the present. The problematic character of liberal politics, something which had already appeared to Mouffe and Laclau in the 1990s, had appeared even stronger to Slavoj Žižek (among many others) after the financial crash of 2008,⁶⁸ must appear even stronger to us all after 2016. At this point, we must move from a "radicalisation" of liberal democracy to a more fundamental interrogation of political assumptions within the contemporary left.

⁶⁴ Mary Louise Lobsinger, "The New Urban Scale in Italy: On Aldo Rossi's 'L'architettura della città,'" *Journal of Architectural Education* 59, no. 3 (Feb., 2006): 28–38. My discussion continues: 3.2.2.

⁶⁵ Lobsinger, 32.

⁶⁶ Manfredo Tafuri and Pietro Corsi, "Per una storia storica / Fora historical history," 149.

⁶⁷ Manfredo Tafuri, *Theories and History of Architecture*, trans. Giorgio Verrecchia (London: Granada, 1980).

⁶⁸ See Slavoj Žižek, *First as Tragedy, Then as Farce* (London: Verso, 2009).

In a talk at the University of California, Los Angeles in 2016, Alain Badiou reflected on the election of Donald Trump.⁶⁹ He began by recounting the familiar narrative concerning the end of history in which, as he put it, the liberal “strategic vision” claimed unrivalled authority over the destiny of human civilisation. The classical liberal perspective, “that private property is the key of social organisation,” held sway despite escalating inequality and global conflict. What the election of Trump demonstrated, Badiou argued, was the absence of an alternative strategic vision. Instead, there was a false choice within the same strategic vision, that is, between fascistic and “liberal” (in the American political sense) versions of capitalist imperialism. Confronted by these alternatives, a disoriented and frustrated population, often chose the former or refused to choose at all.

Badiou’s critical comments were implicitly addressed to the *left* such as it had appeared. It had been the left’s failure to articulate a true alternative which had made the present political conjuncture possible.⁷⁰ The challenge for the left is therefore to overcome this historical deficit. Whether we have prepared for it or not, the liberal order is in crisis. In order to avoid a disastrous radicalisation of oppressive forces, we must be prepared to undertake a critical self-examination, to redefine the grounds of political opposition. Badiou would go on to present ingredients for a contrasting “strategic vision” under the terms of his “Idea of Communism.” Though his proposal remained political-philosophical rather than political-economic, Badiou’s terms invoke the immediate need to reorient our understanding of contemporary events around a critical awareness of the structural role played by capitalist social relations. Pursuing this structural underpinning further, I argue, can help to define what would be materially “strategic” in an alternative “strategic vision.”

The American election in 2016, to which we should add the Brexit referendum in the United Kingdom, must be seen in context as part of the aftermath of financial crisis. The sub-prime mortgage crisis demonstrated the literal bankruptcy of accepted wisdom regarding the role of production in the economy, and the need to return to Marxist analyses of value production. The assumed autonomy of price from value—a neo-classical conviction as present within free market neoliberalism, as it is within modish post-Marxisms—was called into question when the music ended and not enough value chairs could be found for the banks to sit upon.

Coupled with this theoretical reframing in terms of value and production, comes a political reframing in terms of class, for the economic crisis accelerated the disintegration of the middle class (centrist voting block and liberalism’s universal subject), leading to political instability and a derangement of liberal expectations. It is again evident that, from the mode of production to the relations of production, core Marxist thematics offer a concrete

⁶⁹ Alain Badiou, “Reflections on the Recent Election,” *Verso Blog* (2016). <http://pmc.iath.virginia.edu/text-only/issue.903/14.1helmling.txt> Accessed, 8 February, 2019. Transcript taken from a talk delivered at the University of California, Los Angeles, and sponsored by the program in Experimental Critical Theory and the Centre for European and Russian Studies.

⁷⁰ Likewise, Žižek made this point drawing in turn on Walter Benjamin’s criticisms of the failed left of his own time. Žižek, 73.

contemporary explanatory power and *strategic* foundation for political mobilisation and resistance. When informed by this orientation toward political economy and the role of class, it is clear what tremendous contemporary relevance Marxist frameworks should have in defining what precisely is “strategic” in an alternative “strategic vision.”

And here again we come to the unique character of architecture. Setting aside political distinctions for the moment, I make an appeal to the disciplinary value of my argument. Within architecture's disciplinary terms, the Marxist approach does not distinguish between strategies of reform and revolution. Only the external political direction of the discipline marks the difference. Therefore even if one is not committed to a revolutionary programme, a critique of the ideology of the Project is still required in order to return to the architectural agent the practical goal of reform. In this, as in political practice at large, Marx, more than remaining an indispensable reference on capitalist relations, has only gained in concrete power. Fascism is back; its time to revive its mortal enemy. History is back, and the progressive transformation of society remains to be realised.

Section Preview

The thesis is divided into three sections, with the first devoted to critical methodology, the second to historiographical interpretation, and the third to design theory. Section one, being the most abstract, develops the critical and conceptual tools through which the ideology of the Project can be analysed. Sections two and three examine the different arenas in which it can be found: respectively, the Project as model for critical and historiographical practice, and as theory of architecture and design.

In the first section, *Critique of Architectural Ideology* I will reconstruct the theoretical and political contents of Tafuri's critique of architectural ideology. As preliminary context, the first chapter, "Tafurian Ambiguity" will be devoted to challenges immediately arising from Tafuri's enigmatic position within architectural discourse—being both instigator of a Marxist critical challenge and icon of post-Marxist revision. Having established a perspective on the historian, chapter two extracts the core critical points: 1) the mediation of architecture as institution and discipline; 2) the specificity of disciplinary ideologies; 3) the differing institutional implications of Plan and Project; 4) the political content of architectural ideology as such. Chapter three adds to this a reflection on the theoretical context within Italian Marxism out of which the critique of architectural ideology developed as a critique of the "Plan." The section concludes on the limitations which this disciplinary focus may produce within the overall terms of Tafuri's critique, and how they may be overcome.

Section two, *The Project in Criticism* will move from the theoretical problem of interpretation to consider examples within recent historiography and Tafuri interpretation. Through the seeming ambiguity of the historian's work from the mid-70s onward, the Project migrates from object of criticism to subject, ironically making Tafuri the hero of a new operative criticism: "history as a project." The first chapter details how Tafuri's own writing offered the terms for this reversal, and the second explores how they were taken up and used to construct a narrative account of the historian's overall benevolent "legacy." Chapter three reverses the terms of the section title to find "Criticism in the Project." It demonstrates how criticism, by constructing a notion of "critical architecture" through the Project, has become a source of ideological entrenchment. The chapter will conclude by reasserting how the terms developed in section one provide the means to conceptually extricate criticism from this ideologically complicit role.⁷¹

The third section, *Theory of the Project*, turns finally to the use of the Project within disciplinary theory proper. The first chapter indicates how the Project emerges within polemics over the political character of the discipline. The second chapter sets up the importance of Aldo Rossi, ambivalent counterpart to Tafuri within architectural theory and design. Chapters three and four consider the contradictions within Rossi's theory of

⁷¹ It must be said that a material and institutional extrication is a more difficult proposition, dependent upon the vagaries of marginal disciplinary autonomy.

architecture, which force solutions at the level of ideology to take the place of the proper disciplinary theory Rossi hoped to establish. In his example the particular contradictions between disciplinary and political stakes resolve into the clear outlines of the “Project”: existential sigil of the conflicted intellectual, and institutional solution to the loss of disciplinary and professional coherence.

Finally, in the Conclusion, I will briefly consider several contemporary implications of the “return of the political” as the *return of the Project*. These will be contrasted with what I take to be the correct formula for political engagement in and through planning and architecture.

SECTION 1. CRITIQUE OF ARCHITECTURAL IDEOLOGY

Any attempt to overthrow the institution, the discipline, with the most exasperated rejections or the most paradoxical ironies—let us learn from Dada and Surrealism—is bound to see itself turned into a positive contribution, into a ‘constructive’ avant-garde, into an ideology all the more positive as it is dramatically critical and self-critical.

Manfredo Tafuri, Note to the Second Edition, of *Theories and History*⁷²

⁷² Tafuri, *Theories and History*, xvii

1.1 TAFURIAN AMBIGUITY

The aim of this section is to construct an initial view of architectural ideology, both as a theoretical question—what is it? on what levels does it operate?—and an historical one—how and on what basis has it functioned? what shifts has it undergone? Emerging from this, will be a picture of one shift in particular, a pivot from what Manfredo Tafuri called the “ideology of the Plan,” to what I propose to call the “ideology of the Project.” The real transition from one to the other occurred gradually and unevenly throughout the last century; however, it became an explicit, self-conscious concern in architectural discourse from the mid 1960s to the present. Even so, what we can call the *longue durée* of contemporary architectural ideology is not a homogeneous field. It contains a number of crucial cycles, for instance, the work of architectural neo-avant-gardes from the mid-1960s through the 1970s, and the recent return of terminology and references from that period in the last ten or so years. In these connected historical moments the terms of the ‘Project’ were explicitly elaborated.

With regard to this theme, Tafuri performs a dual role: first as theoretical and methodological guide; second, as case study and example of its complex historical movement. Tafuri is therefore both a model critical subject and model object of critique. Of course, much has been said of the difficulty and complexity of Tafuri’s texts. In part, this is a literal difficulty resulting from what is universally acknowledged to be Tafuri’s convoluted and abstruse writing style. Added to this is the difficulty which arose as a direct result of translation into other languages, and the indirect but probably more significant distortions arising from Tafuri’s reception in widely different national, historical, political, as well as institutional and disciplinary contexts. One cannot approach Tafuri’s writing or ideas without being reminded of this problem; it is probably one of the most defining shibboleths of architectural discourse. Woe to the reader embarking into such territory for the first time.

However, this is not the true difficulty of understanding Tafuri, or, rather, this difficulty is more than a straightforward obstacle to comprehension. For, as noted by Mark Wigley, it involves a central paradox:

His lifelong effort to avoid being pinned down produced an uncomfortable writing style, deliberately elusive forms of argument, self-contradictory pronouncements, and abrupt changes of position. While frustrating, this made him infinitely useful. Paradoxically, the very intensity of his attempt to avoid taking a fixed position allowed him to act as a more or less stable reference point.⁷³

Tafuri’s apparent “difficulty” became *operative*; a functional characteristic, not to be overcome, but to be valued in itself. The impenetrability of the historian’s work came to be like the smooth surface of a pearl: layers of reflection and interpretation hiding something entirely different, something sharp, indigestible, even dangerous: the critique of architectural ideology. Ambiguity, complexity, difficulty, obscurity, the institution’s defence mechanism is

⁷³ Wigley, Mark. “Post-Operative History,” *ANY: Architecture New York*, no. 25/26 (2000): 49.

built of stratified coats of recrimination and interrogation, misinterpretation and polemic, but at last the pearl emerges beautiful and redeemed—for all its monadic and apparent uselessness, a treasure to be cherished, proof of architecture's self-reflexive power.

The challenge is therefore a double one. First one must understand the critique of architectural ideology—a task difficult enough for architects and theorists who exist already within the discipline's assumptions. This can be achieved by reading the fundamental texts from the late 1960s to the early 1970s: *Teorie e storia*, “Per una critica dell'ideologia architettonica”, and *Progetto e utopia*. Then one must understand “Tafuri,” the proper name for the immanent contradictions resulting from the critique being made from a position which, in the end, remained internal to the institution itself. These contradictions can be detected in the key essay “Il ‘progetto’ storico,” where the critique of the institution begins to shift into a self-reflexive critique of historiographical disciplinarity. Thus, as a conceptual question alone, one might speak less of understanding “Tafuri” than of understanding the critique of architectural ideology. Its conceptual framework can be grasped, and indeed must be grasped, with a level of autonomy from its major contributing author. This is the first interpretive requirement. By comparison, to understand “Tafuri,” is to understand an historiographical complex through which long-standing contradictions in the institutions of cultural and political theory can in turn be grasped. But the latter cannot be accomplished without the former, and indeed serves as an effective, if difficult illustration of it. In other words, without grasping the conceptual and political outlines of the critique of architectural ideology it is impossible to understand the *ideological* role Tafuri's ambiguity came to play: his double function as both critic of the institution and a pivotal figure in that institution's ideological adaptation.

In this section, the discussion will be limited to the first question, with section two, taking on the ambiguity of “Tafuri” within architectural discourse. To accomplish the latter task, reading Tafuri's texts alone would be insufficient, though it should of course be the starting point. One can detect the work of architectural ideology in the way the secondary literature constructs a hierarchy of arguments and an overall narrative concerning the development of Tafuri's hypotheses, a “maturation”⁷⁴ from the critique of ideology to other critical and methodological recommendations. Because this narrative is retrospective, section two will pay special attention to interpretations of Tafuri made posthumously and in recent years. Initially, however, one must be able to construct a basic periodised and schematic grasp of the major arguments concerning, first, architecture as an institution, second, history (and/or theory) as the means to understand it, together with third, an idea of the institutional stakes attached to each moment, and the terms through which they can be deployed.

⁷⁴ Framing Tafuri's late production in terms of “maturity” is a motif which can be found throughout the secondary literature. See for instance Anthony Vidler, “Disenchanted Histories: The Legacies of Manfredo Tafuri,” *ANY: Architecture New York*, no. 25/26 (2000): 31; and Andrew Leach, 171.

Having achieved an overall image of Tafuri's significance, it might be tempting to stop there, to be satisfied with a critique of the operative use of Tafuri in architectural discourse. This would be to ignore the stakes underlying Tafuri's work, stakes which are more complex and far reaching than the form in which they appear in architectural discourse to begin with. In purely architectural terms, Tafuri is not so very difficult to understand, assuming one is able to overcome the basic institutional and ideological necessity of *not* understanding him. In the larger field of cultural and political theory, however, it is rather more complicated. Unfortunately, at a certain point one has to address the limits of Tafuri's critique of ideology itself, something which can be achieved only by tracing the extra-disciplinary theoretical references Tafuri employed, and understanding the contradictions in their political and historical context. By working back and forth between extra-architectural theories in their original context and their function in the different historical, disciplinary, and institutional context of architecture, one begins to understand the overarching shift in valence to be less a problem of wilful distortion, than of an ambivalence immanent to the material. Because of this ambivalence, over the course of history tools for the critique of ideology eventually come to serve an ideological function, not only in architecture, but in cultural and critical theory as a whole.

As a next step toward understanding this process, we should expand slightly on the discursive influence of Tafuri's writing and upon the range of architecture theory in general. This will help us to grasp what makes the critique of ideology programmatically unique. Evidently the problematic ambiguity described extends beyond his work to the larger range of architectural discourse as it developed from the late 60s onward, arguably defining the field of "architecture theory" in its canonical sense. Notwithstanding his explicit challenge to earlier "theories" in *Theories and History*, Tafuri became the exemplary and first architectural "theorist" in the sense which the term later took on. K. Michael Hays's canonical collection *Architecture Theory since 1968*, a collection which Hays intended not only to exemplify the field but to define its "concept,"⁷⁵ began with Tafuri. Together with the larger spectre that is '68, Tafuri can be thought of as a kind of "vanishing cause": there is architecture theory *since* 1968 and *since* Tafuri. For Hays, writing in the early 90s, the appropriateness of beginning with the 60s and with 1968 in particular was self-evident. It was from that point, he claimed that "architectural culture" became the primary and self-conscious object of the discipline's production. Rather than being a kind of "precipitate that saturates from top down everything in its domain," architectural "culture" needed from the 60s on to be "constantly constructed, deconstructed, and reconstructed through more self-conscious theoretical procedures."⁷⁶ In other words, architecture's institutional ideology no longer rode a consensual aesthetico-social milieu. What it had previously taken for granted,

⁷⁵ K Michael Hays, "Introduction" in *Architecture Theory since 1968*, xii.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, x.

in essence, its own constitution as institution and discipline, had now to be deliberately produced, through what became a process of more or less internal negotiation and debate. This notion of self-reflexive interrogation clearly draws upon major themes from Tafuri's work, present in everything from the critique of operative history to the notion of the "historical 'project,'" For Tafuri this critical imperative was a necessary response to the limitations and ultimate failure of the Modern Movement and the ideology on which it depended. It was a new disciplinary turn forced upon architecture by contradictions both external and internal.

The heyday of architecture theory and critical reflection presented by Hays, contrasts favourably to the "post-criticality" already developing at the time of publication. In *The Architecture of Neoliberalism*, Douglas Spencer gives the following account:

Architecture has travelled some distance, since the 1970s, to accommodate itself to the present-day pragmatics of doing business. Strategies of disjunction, sorties into philosophy, film and narrative, and raids on the early-twentieth-century avant-garde have been set aside as the discipline has sutured itself more securely to the means and methods of the market. Where some had sought out a radically new conception and practice of architecture, the discipline now constrains its ambitions to market penetration and its purpose to the provision of product innovation for the 'only game in town' – the 'real' of capitalism.⁷⁷

In such accounts, "architecture theory" is presented as the final obstacle to the successful implementation of neoliberalism within architecture, a kind of "madness" or "demonic" possession which had finally to be exorcised in order for the discipline to pursue its operative goals.⁷⁸ Of course, as Spencer clearly demonstrates,⁷⁹ this was the stated position of much architectural discourse in the "post-critical" era, which, in the form of anti-theory theory and anti-criticism criticism,⁸⁰ actively opposed itself to previously constituted "architecture theory." However, that polemic must be understood as *internal* to the architectural institution, rather than somehow signalling the collapse of an external critical challenge. This becomes clear only if one extends the analysis to earlier shifts and reversals in the valence of "criticality," and indeed in the disciplinary definition of architecture itself. Spencer makes a forceful and convincing critique of architecture's post-political practices; however, I would argue that the roots of this tendency are more complex and ambiguous, extending deeper into those architectural discourses which explicitly claim their own criticality. Earlier attempts to "test the limits" of the discipline, as Spencer put it,⁸¹ have to be understood in the historical

⁷⁷ Spencer, 47–48.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 50, 60.

⁸⁰ This obvious contradiction makes one immediately think of anti-government politicians of the neo-conservative and neoliberal sort.

⁸¹ "The managerialist turn in architecture, now concerned with making things work and pay within the scope of existing arrangements rather than with testing the limits of these, speaks of the discipline's proximity to the post-political that operates, as Slavoj Žižek has argued, through the apparatus of managerialism." Spencer, 48.

context—understood as early steps toward *extending the institution*, rather than fundamentally challenging it.

When one examines architectural production from the 1970s and 1980s, one is forced to recognise that capitalism was *already* the “only game in town.” But this was not necessarily true from the beginning. The essay “Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology” published by Tafuri in its original Italian in 1969, starts Hays’s collection off with a very strong and politically charged critical challenge. In contrast to the militant and broadly Marxist character of that essay, the rest of the collection presents a field of “theory,” which can be defined according to the familiar, if imprecise categories of structuralism, phenomenology, and post-structuralism, each of which, when taken up by architectural discourse, took on a particular character. Reflecting in the 1990s, Hays described this cross-disciplinary importation, as a process of discursive production through “transcoding”: “rewriting systems of thought assumed to be properly extrinsic or irrelevant into architecture’s own idiolect.”⁸² “Theory” therefore plays a fundamentally double role, referring to *external* theories—political economy, structuralist linguistics, psychoanalysis, etc, which have their own disciplinary specificities—as well as their internalisation as a new discursive field *within* architecture. The case of Chantal Mouffe discussed above, would be a recent example.

Tafuri led this process, having himself begun introducing extra-disciplinary “theories” into his writing, beginning already in *Theories and History*, with references to semiotics, Critical Theory, and Marxism, but increasing after the mid 1970s, where psychoanalysis, Foucauldian genealogy, and eventually deconstruction come to play a role.⁸³ Anthony Vidler, has dubbed this function Tafuri’s “theory effect”: Tafuri, of course had insisted on the fundamental importance of history “yet his ceaseless search for methods of analysis drawn from structuralism, psychoanalysis, semiology, and poststructuralism created a ‘theory effect’ that proved for architects as powerful a lure as historical reference, one apparently shielded from the pitfalls of eclecticism by “scientific” authority.”⁸⁴

Tafuri was therefore an early force in the development of what has come to be known as “architecture theory,” in the canonical sense later produced by Hays’s collection. Under these terms, “architecture theory” defines new processes of institutional and disciplinary renovation, often drawing upon Tafuri’s arguments, while branching away from some of their more limiting consequences.

Here one must insist that not all “theories” are structurally or critically equivalent in how they frame architecture and architectural production. Apart from the basic distinction between theory internal or external to the accepted notion of the discipline, there is the strategic social level, that is, theory internal or external to the architectural *institution*. Some theoretical

⁸² Hays, x.

⁸³ As we shall see, the precise character of this role—whether or not Tafuri actually endorsed these tools—is subject to debate.

⁸⁴ Anthony Vidler, *Histories of the Immediate Present* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008), 13–14. See also Jean-Louis Cohen, “The Italophiles at Work,” trans. Brian Holmes, in *Architecture Theory since 1968*, 508–520.

fields, such as political economy, are better than others at capturing this level, even if those others are equally external to what could traditionally be considered the architectural discipline. Put simply, there is a difference between a “structural” theory of architecture, and a “structuralist” architecture theory. The history of theoretical discourse, as represented by the entries in *Architecture Theory Since 1968* as well as by Hays’ introductions to each essay, presents the gradual shift from one into the other. Terms central to the critique of architectural ideology did remain present well into the 1980s—even experiencing a resurgence in that decade with the intervention of the Revisions group.⁸⁵ However the theoretical, and indeed the political, context in which these terms appeared had changed significantly.

Beginning with Tafuri’s critique of architectural ideology, Hays’ collection outlines a general shift of Marxian terms away from their political economic referents and toward an abstract “structuralist” sense. In general, Hays curates and accompanies the shift of the critique of architecture *as institution* into a continuous self-renovating and self-reflexive critique and construction of architecture *as discipline*. Along the way, key selections, like those of Mario Gandelsonas and Diana Agrest, Henri Lefebvre, Bernard Tschumi, Jorge Silvetti, Georges Teyssot, Alan Colquhoun, and Kenneth Frampton give a kind of incremental depletion of Marxian meaning, while reusing concepts from the critique of ideology (most obviously the term “ideology” itself). Figures like Louis Althusser and Bertold Brecht appear frequently, confirming the Marxian provenance of the theory, though becoming increasingly independent of political context. This process appears to remain true to the critical aura of the original critique—even ‘radicalising’ it by purifying it further of political myth and utopia. Through semiotics, structuralism etc, the critique of ideology appears to continue in “Architecture Theory,” but in reality, the *institutional* perspective was disappearing. With that disappearance, the political valence changes. This gradual but irrevocable transformation was succinctly described by Ellen Mieskins Wood in the following terms: “It seems clear that post-Marxism was just a short pit-stop on the way to anti-Marxism.”⁸⁶ Seen within the political-historical context of the late-twentieth century West, this shift appears only too natural.

However, “architecture theory” is not composed entirely of such material. In contrast, other selections, like that of Colin Rowe, give Hays the opportunity to affirm his continuity with Tafuri/Marx against liberal conservatism. But the result is a false choice, whether between structuralism and phenomenology or between radicals and conservatives. This is because, as I have already argued, the underlying institutional basis is common to the field as a whole. Hays himself suggests this in the introduction to the collection, and it underlies his general conception of “theory” as disciplinary boundary work:

⁸⁵ See Joan Ockman et al., *Architecture Criticism Ideology* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1985).

⁸⁶ Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The Retreat from Class: A New ‘True’ Socialism* (London: Verso, 1986), xii.

...the importance of the period in question, from 1968 to 1993, is not one of competing styles or group allegiances (Marxism versus formalism, structuralism versus phenomenology, or the like) but rather of the collective experience of an objective situation to which diverse responses emerged, all attempting to provide maps of the possibilities for architectural intervention, to articulate the specific limiting conditions of architectural practice.⁸⁷

All the selections share the same basic assumptions—what we can understand as their shared institutional basis. Architecture theory was/is, as Hays affirms, a “mediating practice.”⁸⁸ From the perspective of this thesis, it is a matter of understanding the ideological function of that mediation, grasping architecture theory as a practice that, by mediating extra-disciplinary and extra-institutional theory, internalises the critique of architectural ideology, and transforms it into a new disciplinary and eminently “architectural” practice.

The discursive field called “architecture theory” was a response to two conditions: first, the crisis in the disciplinary vocation of the architect following *realisation* and the collapse of the modernism; second, the Marxian provocation contained in Tafuri’s critique of architectural ideology. Architecture theory exists as the sublimation of a critical theorisation of architecture’s institutional character within bourgeois society, and an internalisation of that critique as a self-reflexive Project. As a general characterisation therefore, one can say that architecture theory, in so far as it remains within institutional mediation, was, and continues to be, a primary site of architectural *ideology*.

Thus, the periodisation which began the introduction above, that opposed post-critical architecture to the heyday of critical architecture in the 1970s, already misses the true post-critical turn, which for architectural discourse, occurs precisely in the moment in which criticality becomes a self-conscious value *for architectural discourse*, which, to reiterate, sublimates and transfigures the critique of architecture as bourgeois institution.

Ultimately, this is only an example of a much larger phenomenon, which can be seen across virtually every theoretical field in which Marx’s work made an impact—particularly political economy and philosophy. Christoph Henning’s *Philosophy After Marx: 100 Years of Misreadings and the Normative Turn in Political Philosophy*, details the influence which Marx’s arguments had on later works—both those claiming a Marxist lineage and those which explicitly departed from or challenged Marxian positions.⁸⁹ According to Henning, that influence had a *determining* effect, whether in the obvious case of ‘faithful’ Marxian political economy in the following years, or, much more commonly, as a negative determination, in the case of distorted readings and ideological opposition. Therefore, misreadings of Marx are not simply in error, but are necessary ideological compensations, distortions *forced* by the material and the social stakes involved.

⁸⁷ Hays, xiii.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, x.

⁸⁹ See also the studies collected in Jernej Habjan and Jessica Whyte, eds. *(Mis)readings of Marx in Continental Philosophy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014)

The parallel is clear.⁹⁰ Like Tafuri, it is not simply a matter of Marx's difficulty, but of the actual stakes tied up in comprehending his arguments and following their consequences. In the case of Tafuri, it is through the institutional framing of architecture that the social and class context enters, while in the case of Marx, it is the core content. Because of this complex effect, one cannot dismiss misreadings or distortions as simplified notions of "false consciousness," let alone simple error. Rather, one should approach them with the aim of uncovering the truth *immanent* to the distortion. Likewise, in order to really understand the function and content of architectural ideology, one must approach it *immanently* as well as historically.

For Henning this means going after the problem, not only in purely historical terms, but in philosophical, theoretical, and historiographical terms as well. This thesis takes its cue on how to approach Tafuri's critique of architectural ideology and its reception from Henning's approach to Marx's critique of political economy and its reception. Borrowing terms from Karl Mannheim, Henning defines his method as an "immanent functional interpretation":

This study treats the texts it discusses as something extrinsic, since it does not prematurely relate them back to a social base. But it does not engage with these texts in a purely immanent way, either. Rather, it examines them in order to learn something about a certain theoretical function, thus engaging in an 'immanent functional interpretation'. Texts are analysed with an eye to the function they have performed within the reception of Marx, the Marxist tradition or critiques of Marx. To what extent do they need to be seen as performing the function of *avoiding* Marx, and what alternative 'worldview' do they convey? The texts are not analysed for their own sake, but with an eye to contemporary social philosophy and the reasons for the meagreness of its offerings. In other words, the present work is by no means merely historical; it is strongly oriented toward the present.⁹¹

It is an approach which grants a kind of reality to the terms of its object, but grasps that reality in the function it performs. Henning treats his textual objects in their own terms, but not "for their own sake." Rather, the fundamental basis for comprehension and analysis is the consequences they effect in the present. For Henning it is the present of social philosophy; for this thesis, it is the present of architectural politics. The ideological function can be found immanent to this discourse, but only understood with reference to the original implications of their referent, whether Marx or Tafuri, and finally the contemporary stakes for the deployment or avoidance of that referent.

This approach should be contrasted to the more common immanent criticism, in that it is dealing with a mediation of the perspective of criticism itself. Henning is not only treating cultural texts, but theoretical texts which interpret the terms of Marxian criticism itself, which define a discursive field of their significance. Henning's immanent functional interpretation is therefore a kind of immanent criticism *of criticism*.

⁹⁰ Of course it is not a strict parallel, since Tafuri himself drew from and effectively was "philosophy after Marx."

⁹¹ Henning, 10—11.

As already stated, in the architectural case, “immanence” points to the disciplinary substance of ideology: what architectural discourse says about “architecture.” The immanent functional interpretation of Tafuri’s reception, aims to demonstrate the ideological mediation of the critique of ideology itself within architectural discourse. Thus, one cannot understand architecture theory without beginning with this context—it is architecture theory *after* Tafuri and as an avoidance of what was specific to Tafuri at that point—much as, Henning argues, neo-classical economics or Max Weber and Georg Simmel’s social philosophy follow Marx’s critique of political economy, or, to give a connected example, Martin Heidegger’s *Being and Time* follows Lukács’s *History and Class Consciousness*.⁹² In this sense, notwithstanding significant differences in the meaning of architecture “theory” and the “theories” in the title of Tafuri’s *Theories and History*, the opposition between operativity and its external assessment, is the same. “Architecture theory since 1968,” has always been an *operative criticism*.

There are, as has been said many times, many Tafuris; indeed, as, some would argue, there have been multiple iterations of Marx.⁹³ This does not prevent a particular Tafuri or a particular Marx from determining the reception. Which is to say, there surely was a more philosophical young Marx, distinct from the scientific Marx of *Das Kapital*. In world history, however, the latter Marx has been decisive—negatively determining even the appreciation which the young Marx would later garner in the West. For the architectural institution and its discourse, the Tafuri to be avoided is of course the one that produced a critique of that very institution. By comparison, it is the immanent ideological function of most other Tafuris, and, indeed the pursuit there of,⁹⁴ to overcome the critique of architectural ideology.

That critique is split across a number of publications, beginning with *Theories and History*, where Tafuri produced a critical understanding of how architectural discourse makes *operative* use of history, and indeed of criticism itself—which we can call the immediately pre-Marxian Tafuri. Then there is the Marxian Tafuri proper of the aforementioned essay “Towards a Critique of Architectural Ideology,” the short book *Architecture and Utopia*, and a handful of publications in and around the turn of the decade into the early 70s. The critique of operativity, in *Theories and History* is a clear prefiguration of the critique of ideology in Tafuri’s work in the next years after his move to Venice. Already in the earlier book, Tafuri’s

⁹² For the relation of neo-classical economics to Marxian political economy see Henning, 122—123, 129 and 131. For the complex relation between German sociology and Marx, see the chapter “Marx in German Sociology”, 181—241. For the dependence of Heideggerian existentialism on Lukács’s theory of reification, see the 1967 Preface to Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*. trans. Rodney Livingstone (London: The Merlin Press Ltd., 1971), xxii; see also chapter 3: “Dialectics Without Identity” in Susan Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics: Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, and the Frankfurt Institute* (New York: The Free Press, 1977), 43—62.

⁹³ Louis Althusser famously argued that “Marx’s world did not comprise a continuous whole.” He identified an “epistemological break” separating the later critique of political economy from the earlier philosophical work. See Louis Althusser, *For Marx*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: Verso, 2005), 33. For Althusser this meant the latter Marx should be considered theoretically decisive, while for much Western Marxism, the opposite lesson has been drawn.

⁹⁴ As we shall see, Marco Biraghi makes an explicit point about this search, and it forms a part of his own ‘Project’. Marco Biraghi, *Project of Crisis*, trans. Alta Price (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2013), xii. Teresa Stoppani has made a similar argument, see Teresa Stoppani, “Unfinished Business: The Historical Project after Manfredo Tafuri,” in *Critical Architecture*. ed. Janes Rendell et al. (London: Routledge, 2007), 28.

formulations, depend upon references from within the Marxian sphere of cultural theory, such as Walter Benjamin, Theodore W. Adorno, and Georg Lukàcs. Thereafter, Tafuri would make direct reference to Marx, and replace the disciplinary specificity of architectural “operativity” with the more general “architectural ideology.”

The ideological reasons for avoiding this problematic are fairly obvious, and can be given in straightforward material terms: the perpetuation and/or renegotiation of architecture’s privileged position within capitalist society and the latter’s division of labour. For the architectural institution such as it is under capitalism, *operativity is a necessity*. Understanding this point means grasping the ideological character of architectural discourse and production and the social functions it serves, while bracketing its claims to the contrary. However, precisely what is operative in a given moment is subject to change and to complex mediations. Operativity is, in a manner of speaking, a two-way street: the operativity of the institution lies in what is operative for its social milieu. By the mid-1970s it no longer seemed to Tafuri that architectural ideology could serve the existing milieu.⁹⁵ While this might have meant a collapse in architecture’s earlier operative function for capitalist society at large—that is, architecture as “planning”—it certainly did not mean that architecture would no longer pursue its own operative interests—its necessity to *live on*—nor that it could not thereby discover a new social function. In fact, far from marking a collapse, this moment functioned as a *pivot* in architectural ideology toward a new operative role.

Much of *Theories and History* detailed the precarious moment in which architecture then found itself, balanced between a crisis in planning, and a shift to the ambiguous values of critique and autonomy. *Architecture and Utopia* continued to frame that transitional moment for the architectural institution; however, I would argue, it did so without fully grasping the potential operativity of the situation, without foreseeing the coherence of a new post-planning ideology. In the famous essay, “L’Architecture dans le Boudoir,”⁹⁶ directed at an emerging neo-avant-garde in Italy and the American East Coast, Tafuri took up a position somewhere between ambivalent satirist and critic of ideology.⁹⁷ Written several years after *Progetto e utopia*, the essay continued to assume the uselessness of architectural ideology, which its move “into the bedroom” implied. As we shall see, this limitation is directly connected to the historical conception of architectural ideology as an ideology of the “Plan” specifically, rather than something more mutable. The aim of this thesis is to define the terms through which a mutation did in fact occur, and the ideological formation, the Project, which emerged.

⁹⁵ Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*, x.

⁹⁶ Manfredo Tafuri, “L’Architecture dans le Boudoir: The Language of Criticism and the Criticism of Language,” trans. Pellegrino d’Acerno and Robert Connolly, in *Architecture Theory since 1968*, 146–173. Originally published in *Oppositions* 3 (1974).

⁹⁷ In his introduction to this text, Hays describes without reflecting critically upon it, the transformation of Tafuri’s perspective from a strong critique of ideology based upon political economic categories, to an abstract Foucauldian genealogy of “words”, “objects” and their ossified meaning, to a final quasi-acceptance of the neo-avant garde’s position as legitimate. See Hays’ Forward to “L’Architecture Dans Le Boudoir,” 146–147. As we shall see, this reading does not really do justice to the substantial continuity evident particularly in the essay’s latter pages.

Before arriving at these later turns and reversals; however, we begin by setting up the problematic as Tafuri originally framed it. While Tafuri's production from 1968 to 1973 was primarily concerned with a critique of planning ideology, it also contains the conceptual groundwork for grasping the pivot in the disciplinary function of architecture then underway, and in which "Tafuri" himself would come to play a significant role.

1.2 TAFURI FOR MILITANTS

The phrase, “critique of ideology” is a common one in Marxist theory—going back, as Tafuri says, to *The German Ideology* of 1845⁹⁸—but Tafuri’s use depended on references both more historically and more geographically proximate. In particular, Tafuri followed its use by Mario Tronti, in the latter’s “Critica dell’ideologia” of 1965. It is a debt which Tafuri himself recognised⁹⁹ and has been identified by Anglophone interpreters such as Andrew Leach, though Tafuri makes no explicit reference to Tronti’s essay in either “Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology” or *Architecture and Utopia*. As Leach noted, Tafuri’s use of the phrase, like so much of his theoretical material, was abstracted from its original context in political economy, and directed toward architectural problems. After noting the connection to Tronti, Leach distances the historian from the Marxist theorist: “Yet Tafuri’s critique is fundamentally disciplinary rather than political, holding both architecture and historiography to higher standards, conducting an incessant interrogation of the bases of historical knowledge in architectural culture.”¹⁰⁰

By noting Tafuri’s disciplinary application of an otherwise political critique, Leach has identified a core ambiguity which this thesis aims to address. What are the political stakes of disciplinarity? Leach’s point is no doubt true to an extent. It appears particularly true if one considers Tafuri’s themes from a hindsight position that subordinates their Marxian background and Marxian influences to the later de-politicised terms available via a selective reading of *La sfera e il labirinto*. As I will outline in section two, this is the predominant position of recent Tafuri interpreters, Leach included. In this chapter, however, I will demonstrate how Tafuri’s critique, as a “critique of architectural ideology,” focused on the mediation of political and social questions *through* the disciplines of architecture and historiography. The key points of the critique of architectural ideology, as developed by Tafuri, do concern the social character of architecture under capitalism and its role in the latter’s development. What makes the critique so powerful, however, and this is where Leach was correct, was the manner in which Tafuri connected a materialist critique of architecture’s economic and class character, to an immanent critique of architectural production, particularly its theory, history, and criticism. Already mentioned in the introduction it is this connection, the interdependence of what, following Tafuri, I will define as architecture’s institutional and disciplinary character, which I will now highlight.

⁹⁸ Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*, x. See Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology: including Theses on Feuerbach and Introduction to Political Economy* (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 1998).

⁹⁹ Tafuri and Passerini, 32.

¹⁰⁰ Leach, 158.

1.2.1 Interpretive Key: Institution and Discipline

In order to reconstruct these hypotheses, we will need to develop their textual context further. However, it will not be necessary to undertake anything like a complete review of Tafuri's writings. This chapter aims to extract and outline a relatively unified problematic, which Tafuri produced over a period of several years, beginning with *Theories and History*, and concluding, more or less, with *Architecture and Utopia*. Even though only separated by a few years, by resolutely connecting the arguments of these texts, I go against the grain of prevailing opinion in the larger field of Tafuri's reception and interpretation.

For the purposes of setting up the analysis, I can point to Tafuri's own statements of intent, at least as they were laid down in the two notes—one to the second Italian edition of *Theories and History*, published in 1970, the second to the fourth edition of 1976. These notes were reproduced in the English translation as it appeared in 1980. In each case, the note gives an “interpretive key” to the text,¹⁰¹ essentially defining the thematic and polemical continuity between *Theories and History* and two later works dating from after his move to Venice: “Per una critica dell'ideologia architettonica” (“Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology”), published the year before the second edition and *Progetto e utopia*, published three years before the fourth edition.¹⁰² Between the first edition of *Teorie e storia* in 1968, and the second in 1970, lies Tafuri's introduction to the group of Italian Marxist theorists, historians, and philosophers surrounding the journal *Contropiano*. This new academic, social, and political context contributed to a clear radicalisation of Tafuri's earlier arguments according to the terms of the ‘critique of ideology’ laid down in Tafuri's contribution to *Contropiano*: “Per una critica dell'ideologia architettonica” (1969). In the “Note to the second edition,” the continuity is given an explicit, unambiguous, and even militant definition, leaving no mistake about Tafuri's commitment to the argument. For the fourth edition, six years later, Tafuri gives it only as a kind of historiographical evidence—that is, without committing himself to it, letting the reader judge it favourably or not.¹⁰³ The significance of Tafuri beginning to distance himself from these works—and in particular their association—will be examined later. Here I will undertake a close reading of the earlier note, which, I argue, gives the most coherent and militant representation of Tafuri's early concerns. It should again be noted that other interpretations, such as that of Andrew Leach, have pursued the opposite approach, singling out and excluding this short text as a politicised

¹⁰¹ Tafuri used the phrase “interpretive key” in both texts: “Note to the 2nd Edition,” in *Theories and History*, xvi and “Note to the 4th Edition”, xxii. In the latter he explained that, given the confused reception of the work, he preferred to offer an explanatory note, rather than undertaking a revision of the text as a whole.

¹⁰² See appendix 2.2.

¹⁰³ “The position of the reader is of course different. But the link between *Theories and History* and the more recent *Progetto e utopia* is still a direct one: the first is only the *prologo in cielo* of the second. So I offer the the more sever of my critics the chance to strike all along my intellectual itinerary: but I feel it is my duty—to myself above all—to offer this interpretive key, also because any naïvety in this volume will have the value of unmistakable historical truth.” Tafuri, xxi—xxii.

aberration.¹⁰⁴ It is a difference of reading that, as we shall see, points to more than a methodological or historiographical difference of opinion. Rather, it suggests the two contradictory sides of Tafuri's significance described above. I have chosen to explicitly privilege one of these sides, wagering, as in the case of Marx discussed above, that the other is determined by it.

It was of course a constant concern of Tafuri himself that his work receive the correct interpretation. Right at the outset of the "Note to the second edition," Tafuri acknowledges the difficult reception the first edition received. Without defining the extent of his changed perspective over the two intervening years, Tafuri, gives, in two paragraphs, perhaps his most uncompromising statement of principle. It contains many of the ingredients that I wish to highlight, and is worth quoting in full:

I realise now, roughly two years after the publication of the first edition of the present volume, that too many things in it were left unsaid and that many among those said were incomplete. The following point has to be made clear: these pages are only a first step towards the acknowledgment of what architecture, as an institution, ["l'architettura, in quanto *istituzione*"] has meant up to now. First in the anticipation of ideologies and in begging the questions, then as a process directly involved in modern production processes and the development of capitalist society.

I re-emphasize this conceptual element in order to avoid misunderstanding: I am speaking of Architecture, of *all* architecture, as an institution ["stiamo parlando dell'Architettura, di *tutta* l'architettura (come istituzione, appunto)"]. With the following consequence (carefully ignored by the sugary official 'Marxism'—from Fisher to Goldman and Della Volpe, by the Marcusean school—from Mitscherlich to his followers, by the 'vulgar' sociology of Hauser, and by the recent groping in the dark of America's 'progressive' architects): *just as it is not possible to found a Political Economy based on class, so one cannot 'anticipate' a class architecture (an architecture 'for a liberated society'); what is possible is the introduction of class criticism into architecture.* Nothing beyond this from a strict—but sectarian and partial—Marxist point of view. Any attempt to overthrow the institution, the discipline ["rovesciare l'istituzione, la disciplina"], with the most exasperated rejections or the most paradoxical ironies—let us learn from Dada and Surrealism—is bound to see itself turned into a positive contribution, into a 'constructive' avant-garde, into an ideology all the more positive as it is dramatically critical and self-critical. ["tanto più positiva quanto più drammaticamente critica e autocritica"]¹⁰⁵

After mentioning the confusion to which the first edition gave rise, he proceeds to contextualise *Theories and History* as a "first step" in a larger programme. That programme

¹⁰⁴ Leach, 193–194. See my further discussion: 2.2.3.

¹⁰⁵ Tafuri, *Theories and History*, xv. "Alla distanza di circa due anni dalla stesura del presente volume ci accorgiamo che troppo cose in esso sono tacite e che, fra quelle dette, molte sono incomplete. Perché questo va subito chiarito: la pagine che seguono non sono che il primo capitolo di un'operazione di riconoscimento di ciò che l'architettura, in quanto *istituzione*, ha sino ad ora significato, prima come anticipazione ideologica o pura petizione di principio, poi come processo direttamente inserito nei moderni processi di produzione e sviluppo dell'universo capitalistico.

Insistiamo sul concetto, affinché nessuno possa leggere in modo equivoco il libro: stiamo parlando dell'Architettura, di *tutta* l'architettura (come istituzione, appunto). Il che implica una conseguenza, che l'edulcorato «Marxismo» ufficiale—dal Fischer al Goldmann al Della Volpe—, la scuola marchiana—dal Mitscherlich ai suoi allievi—il socialismo «volgare» dello Hauser, o i recenti annaspanti degli architetti «progressisti» americani o europei tendono accuratamente a nascondere: *come non è possibile fondare un'Economia Politica di classe, ma solo una critica di classe dell'Economia Politica, così non è dato «anticipare» un'architettura di classe (un'architettura «per una società liberata»), ma è solo possibile introdurre una critica di classe all'architettura.* Nulla al di là di questo, dal punto di vista—settario e parziale—di un Marxismo rigoroso. Ogni tentativo di rovesciare l'istituzione, la disciplina, lasciandosi andare alle più paradossali ironie—il caso di Dada e del Surrealismo insegna—è destinato a vedersi a sua volta rovesciato in contributo propositivo, in avanguardia «costruttiva», in ideologia tanto più positiva quanto più drammaticamente critica e autocritica." Tafuri, "Avvertenza alla seconda edizione," in *Teorie e storia dell'architettura* (Bari: Laterza, 1976), ix.

aims to come to grips with what architecture “as an institution, has meant up until now.” Here we can recognise the *longue durée* approach to architectural modernism in *Theories and History*. It is an approach which begins effectively with Filippo Brunelleschi and ends with Tafuri’s own contemporaries.¹⁰⁶ He divides that long trajectory into two moments: a first, avant-garde moment, in which the architectural institution “anticipates,” and a second, in which it participates directly in the former’s realisation. These two moments do not neatly map to a chronological periodisation. In a sense, anticipation begins in the Quattrocento, and ends in the 1930s, while realisation begins already in the Enlightenment¹⁰⁷, falling into crisis in Tafuri’s own time. In “Toward a Critique...” and *Architecture and Utopia*, the distinction is emphasised in a different form. There, the avant-garde performs a productive role as an “anticipator” and generator of “planning ideology,” but the architectural institution never succeeds as participant in the realisation of the “Plan.”¹⁰⁸ This failure, the “uselessness”¹⁰⁹ of its ideology and its exclusion from realisation, puts the architectural institution into crisis.¹¹⁰

The key conceptual point Tafuri emphasises, drawing the problematic together, is the framing of architecture: “of *all* architecture, as an institution.” Defined in this way, what we think of as architectural agency becomes inseparable as a practice from its social, historical, and ultimately economic *function*. In other words, “architecture” occupies a determinate position within the structure of capitalist society, despite the great variety in the forms of its production.

As an illustration of this point, Tafuri will reject purely political or cultural explanations of the crisis of the Modern Movement that abstract architecture from its structural context within capitalism:

It is interesting to look at how modern historians have attempted to explain the crisis of modern architecture. They place the beginnings of the crisis in the years around 1930, and generally consider its exacerbation to continue to this day. Nearly all the initial “blame” for the crisis they lay at the feet of the Fascisms of Europe on the one hand, and Stalinism on the other. In so doing, they systematically ignore the introduction, throughout the world, immediately after the economic crisis of 1929, of a new and decisive factor: the international reorganization of capital and the establishment of anti-cyclical planning systems.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ “From the moment Brunelleschi institutionalised a linguistic code and a symbolic system based on a superhistorical comparison with the great example of antiquity, to the time when Alberti, feeling dissatisfied with the mythical historicism, began to explore rationally the structure of the code and its syntactical and emblematic values: in this period, the great attempt of modern history to *actualize* historical values as a translation of mythical time into actual time, of archaic meanings into revolutionary messages, of ancient ‘words’ into civil actions, burnt itself out. It may seem paradoxical, but already the Brunelleschian operation had achieved, as a result, not so much the rooting into history of architectural planning, but, rather, its *dehistoricisation*. It is important to understand this point, because it results in the conditioning of architectural research during the entire historical span from the Quattrocento to the threshold of the contemporary age.” Tafuri, *Theories and History*, 14–15. Tafuri, *Teorie e storia*, 24.

¹⁰⁷ Tafuri, “Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology,” 6.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 6, 48–49.

¹⁰⁹ Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*, x. Tafuri, *Progetto e utopia*, 4.

¹¹⁰ Tafuri, “Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology”, 32.

¹¹¹ Tafuri, 28.

As the structural context changes, so must architecture. This materialist perspective forms the consistent basis of the critique of architectural ideology. However, the definition of the “institutionality” implied by “architecture *as an institution*” is less explicit. In his largely critical essay on Tafuri, Tomas Llorens remarked on the polyvalent character of the term “institution,” which suggests at the same time the most quotidian definition of architecture as “profession,” as it implies, particularly in the manner Tafuri used it, a deeper statement regarding the production of architectural “ideas.”¹¹² I do not take this to be a problematic ambiguity. By defining architecture as an institution, Tafuri makes a materialist point about the conditions in which architecture exists: it exists *within* the capitalist mode of production, and must be considered in that fundamental context. Therefore, this polyvalence is actually the definition of a relation. In so far as architecture is a profession within a class society, the production of architectural “ideas” must be understood to involve class ideology. This point corresponds to a *non-immanent* critique, what Henning described as a properly historical point, referring architecture back to its “social base.”¹¹³ In institutional terms, architecture’s function is to produce ideology specific to that social base, being a professional subset of the bourgeoisie. However, as Llorens astutely noted, “institution” is hardly a fundamental concept of classical Marxist theory, belonging rather to a new trend which, open to influences from other philosophical and theoretical fields, sought to give more weight to cultural, or “superstructural” phenomena:

On the other hand, it has not been common, within the Marxist tradition, to talk of ‘institutions’ as the basic constituents of society (or of its superstructure)... However, a certain trend within western Marxism developed in the late 1960s, and tended to enlarge the concept so that it also embraced other superstructural phenomena, such as religious beliefs, art doctrines, and the basic concepts or categories of scientific thought. This approach reflected the impact of traditions extraneous to Marxism: structuralism, because of its concern for the law-like aspect of cultural phenomena; Durkheimian sociology and anthropology, because of its emphasis on the specificity of social phenomena; and psychoanalysis, because it considers psychological consciousness as the result of an all-embracing polarity between ‘inner’—natural—impulses, and ‘outer’—artificial—norms. All these traditions have in common the assumption of a strong ontological dualism between reality and appearance, and the more or less neo-kantian principle that reality can only be approached as an *a priori*.¹¹⁴

The questions are highly relevant, and, as a characterisation of his overall production, Tafuri’s proximity to this tendency cannot be ignored.¹¹⁵ Nevertheless, within the period and the terms that are our focus, a relatively precise position can be found that does not fall prey

¹¹² Tomas Llorens, “Manfredo Tafuri: Neo-Avant-Garde and History,” in “On the Methodology of Architectural History” ed. Demetri Porphyrios. *Architectural Design* 51, no. 6/7 (1981): 86.

¹¹³ Henning, 11. Llorens also recognises this Marxian “functional” definition: “There are several senses in which it can be said that concept and ideas are ‘institutions’, or, to be more precise, that they partake of the nature of institutions. In a sense this statement can be related to the Marxist principle that ideas are to be understood ultimately by the role they play in forming social reality.” Llorens, 86.

¹¹⁴ Llorens, 86.

¹¹⁵ Nor in some case can it be easily decided. There is debate for instance between interpreters who read a significant Foucauldianism in later works, and others who maintain that Tafuri remained ambivalently Marxist. See for example Georges Teyssot’s comments in an interview with Paul Henning: “One Portrait of Tafuri: An Interview with Georges Teyssot.” *ANY: Architecture New York*, no. 25/26 (2000): 12.

to such dualism. Llorens continues, closing in on Tafuri's specific milieu in 1969, after his move to Venice:

Around and after 1968, leftist intellectuals tended to amalgamate these different approaches with Marxism in order to arrive at 'methods' for the discovery of the hidden political meaning of cultural phenomena that were apparently not political (or for the discovery of the hidden political meaning of phenomena whose political appearance was deceitful, like the conduct of social democratic and communist parties).

This is the intellectual atmosphere which constituted the background to Tafuri's change of position.¹¹⁶

We will return to the complex relationship between the Marxist theory of that time, and the major political "institutions" of the left. For now, it is crucial to highlight that the use of "institution" maintains a certain continuity with the classic forms of Marxian critique of ideology, while also introducing a more immanent concern, drawing critique away from political economy, and toward "culture," or at least its mediating influence. Building on the definition given in the introduction above, "institution" should be understood in the following way: the material basis of architecture together with its social functionality. In other words, architecture as institution combines architecture as professional industry, as technical practice, and as producer of ideology. Architecture as institution, by imputing a social-functional role, already begs the question regarding the precise character of that role—something which it would be helpful to distinguish by a separate concept. In this way we can hold "institution" closer to its Marxian connotation, while expanding the "immanent" perspective and dealing with it as a different, though deeply connected problem: disciplinarity.

To treat architecture immanently, means to treat it in *disciplinary* terms, to treat it as a particular field with a degree of autonomy or particularity unique to its practices. Of course, like "institution," "discipline" and "disciplinarity" have their own diverse theoretical uses, the most famous being in the work of Michel Foucault.¹¹⁷ Such non-Marxist histories of disciplinarity have focused on the determining force of social factors other than the political-economic. A Foucauldian history of academic disciplines, for instance, foregrounds the social basis of scientific knowledge, drawing on the work of other historians and philosophers, such as Friedrich Nietzsche and Georges Canguilhem. In contrast, the epistemological arguments of Gaston Bachelard,¹¹⁸ taken into Marxist theory by Louis Althusser and later by Alain Badiou,¹¹⁹ define a specifically "Subjective" scientificity which is *not* socially determined, but which has a political power when directed toward social questions—as Tafuri put it:

¹¹⁶ Llorens, 86.

¹¹⁷ For a detailed discussion of the history and diverse uses of the term, see Shumway and Messer-Davidow, "Disciplinarity: An Introduction."

¹¹⁸ See also Gaston Bachelard, *The New Scientific Spirit*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984).

¹¹⁹ For the trajectory that leads from Marx to Bachelard, through Althusser, to Badiou, see Bruno Bosteels' "Alain Badiou's Theory of the Subject: Part 1, The (Re)commencement of Dialectical Materialism?" *Pli: Warwick Journal of Philosophy*, 12 (2001): 200–229; and "Alain Badiou's Theory of the Subject: Part 2, The (Re)commencement of Dialectical Materialism?" *Pli: Warwick Journal of Philosophy*, 13 (2002): 172–208.

“‘political’ activity—even if indirectly political.”¹²⁰ This usage actually draws “discipline” closer to the ‘institutional’ perspective described above, something which can be supported by the history of “disciplinarity” as being itself a form of institution. Such a history, however, because it consistently imputes a social determination to scientific knowledge as such, tends often toward a relativistic history of knowledge, sharply distinguishing it from the mainline of Marxian theory.

The roots of this form of analysis, which in many ways includes Horkeimer and Adorno’s critique of Enlightenment Reason mentioned above, extend into nineteenth century vitalist philosophy. Cristoph Henning outlines the contrast between this perspective and that of Marx:

Marx did not consider the scientific analysis of the present as it had developed up until his own time to be free of errors (he exposed and corrected them in a concrete way), but he held that scientificity itself (‘thought’) was *unaffected* by the crisis. Idealist vitalism, however, attempts to give greater ‘depth’ to theory and loses the ability to distinguish between theory and reality. For this reason, it sees crisis in reality as affecting all of theory as well; this inevitably leads to the ‘crisis of philosophy.’¹²¹

On this distinction rest the delicately balanced meanings of “ideology,” “theory,” “critique,” and in the case of the present analysis, “institution” and “discipline” as well. If one accepts a crisis in scientificity itself, critique of ideology becomes impossible, depending as it does upon the theoretical distinction between, ideology and science.¹²² The field of Marxist epistemology is a rather difficult and complex one,¹²³ so in order to cut closer to our specific object, I will simplify the point: by distinguishing “institution” from “discipline” I want to emphasise the relative autonomy of the latter from the former, thus avoiding a relativistic conception of knowledge in general. At the same time as this necessitates an immanent dimension of the critique, it preserves the disciplinary position of Marxism itself from collapsing back into the ideological object of its analysis—keeping my own historical and theoretical tools dry, as it were.¹²⁴ Furthermore, it opens a perspective onto qualitative distinctions within architectural disciplinarity, by which, as we shall see, the Project can be distinguished from the Plan.

As suggested in the introduction, these distinctions are not possible through a classic Adornian immanent critique. Nevertheless, the latter does provide a similar conceptual frame

¹²⁰ Tafuri, *Theories and History*, 236.

¹²¹ Henning, 247

¹²² Before himself moving in an arguably relativist direction, Althusser put this distinction in radical terms. See “Part Six: On the Materialist Dialectic” in Louis Althusser, *For Marx*, 161—218.

¹²³ Besides Henning’s invaluable *Philosophy After Marx*, more specific references for Marxist epistemology, particularly in the French context, can be found in Dominique Lecourt, *Marxism and Epistemology: Bachelard, Canguilhem and Foucault*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: NLB, 1975); and Pierre Macherey, *In a Materialist Way*, ed. Warren Montag and trans. Ted Stolze (London: Verso, 1998).

¹²⁴ Of course one is forced to acknowledge the that even this disciplinary autonomy is still subject to institutional mediation, for instance its practice within bourgeois academia. As will be amply demonstrated, from the 1970s onward such tools become increasingly waterlogged to the point of disintegrate.

for the distinction between institution and discipline. In “Aesthetic Autonomy and the Crisis of Theory,” Peter Osborne gives the following summary:

There are, then, three quite distinct senses implicit within Adorno's work in which modern art may be said to be 'autonomous'. It is autonomous: (1) theoretically (as the privileged site of a distinct, theoretically specifiable, form of experience);(2) socially or institutionally (in so far as the norms and practices of the institutions of the art world provide the institutional conditions for the realization of this theoretical autonomy in a distinct form of social experience: aesthetic experience), and (3) immanently (in so far as the logic of production of the individual work actually conforms to that of the production of an object capable of producing, within the viewer, an 'autonomous' aesthetic experience).¹²⁵

The first, “theoretical” and third, “immanent,” corresponding to what I define as disciplinarity, with the second given already as institutionality. It is not yet clear, however, in what manner these levels interact, nor what sorts of contradictions may emerge. In “Functionalism Today” Adorno suggested that the conditions imposed upon architectural production by its social context were particularly imposing, though he did not elaborate.¹²⁶ My critical approach toward institutionality, places significant weight in its ideological functions, and this dimension is brought out in David Cunningham’s reflections on the methodological connection between Tafuri and Adorno: “Architecture as Critical Knowledge.”¹²⁷ He gives the following summary of Tafuri’s approach:

A critical reflection upon architecture qua architecture must thus start not from an empirical analysis of built form, extending from ancient to contemporary, but from a historical account of what is entailed by its specifically modern status as an institution, which opens up an irreducible non-identity with regard to the actual material practices to which it relates. This is less about a ‘pessimistic’ judgement upon the socio-political potency of current architectural possibility as such, than it is about an account of the evolving ideological role that has historically generated the modern idea of the ‘architectural’ itself.¹²⁸

Critically assuming this “non-identity”¹²⁹ allows us to perceive how the discipline is mediated by its institutional footing in social and material reality—for example, by its status as professional labour and its place in the larger relations of production—as well as the semi-autonomous social potential in a given disciplinary tendency. As we shall see, this structural “non-identity” becomes particularly problematic when the discipline itself takes on a

¹²⁵ Osborne, “Aesthetic Autonomy and the Crisis of Theory,” 41.

¹²⁶Theodore W. Adorno, “Functionalism Today,” 15.

¹²⁷ David Cunningham, “Architecture as Critical Knowledge” in *Critical Architecture*. ed. Janes Rendell et al. (London: Routledge, 2007)

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹²⁹ The principle of “non-identity” can also be located in Adorno’s immanent critique. Susan Buck-Morss describes his approach in these terms: “Adorno not only wanted to demonstrate the untruth of bourgeois thinking; he wanted to show that precisely when the bourgeois project—the idealist project of establishing the identity of mind and material reality—failed, it expressed, unintentionally, social truth, thus proving the preeminence of reality over mind and the necessity of a critical, dialectical attitude of *nonidentity* toward it—proving, in short, the validity of dialectical, materialist cognition.” Susan Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics: Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, and the Frankfurt Institute* (New York: The Free Press, 1977), xiii. My argument is that the architectural case provides a further structural characterisation of how this non-identity functions.

“critical” form, leading to further questions regarding the nature of “criticality.” For Cunningham, the ideological character of the work as “architecture” should not rule out the presence of countervailing critical functions within it. I argue, however, that “critical” functions have become a central part of “Architecture’s” ideological constitution to begin with, and therefore fully support its institutionality.¹³⁰

As a general conceptual point, we can say that, as institution and discipline, architecture produces ideology in a specific way out of specific materials. These materials in turn can involve potentials impossible to fully realise within a given mode of production and therefore contradictory within a given institutional form. As we have already seen, the partial realisation of architectural disciplinarity as “planning” undercut its institutional character as Architecture. This again is the partial autonomy of the disciplinary level. As a discipline, rather than institution, architectural technique, practice, knowledge, theory, discourse, etc., take on a specific content which, more than merely symptomatic of material underpinnings, mediates between them and the larger social and technical field. In turn, this field has to be apprehended as a complex one in which contrary tendencies and countervailing interests reside. These dynamics in turn suggest other social and historical contexts in which disciplinary potential might be released. Architecture’s disciplinarity is thus rather more ambiguous than its institutionality, even, as demonstrated by the theme of realisation potentially contradicting it.

Returning to Tafuri’s writing, we can find another passage on this theme with which to conclude. In a rare change of the text itself, Tafuri includes in the second edition of *Theories and History*, a new passage not present in the first. It comes in the final pages and repeats the major themes I have attempted to highlight:

If, today, architecture is not able to call anyone to freedom, if its own freedom is illusory, if all its petitions sink in a quagmire of ‘images’ at best amusing, there is no reason why one should not take up a position of determined contestation towards architecture itself, as well as towards the general context that conditions its existence.

In that case historical activity, totally indifferent to *positive action*, becomes ‘criticism of architectural ideologies’ and, as such ‘political’ activity—even if indirectly political. It must then be recognised, by those that intend to force the institutional role given the intellectuals from Illuminism onwards, that to find out what architecture is, *as a discipline historically conditioned and institutionally functional to, first, the ‘progress’ of the pre-capitalist bourgeoisie and, later, to the new perspectives of capitalist ‘Zivilisation’*, is the only purpose with any historical sense.¹³¹

¹³⁰ See 2.4.1.

¹³¹ Tafuri, *Theories and History*, 236.

This text, which replaced a rather more ambiguous one,¹³² summarises the critical position Tafuri intended to synthesise out of his early texts, joining the historical and historiographical concerns of *Theories and History* to the more expressly political concerns of “Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology.”¹³³ As we can see, it is directed toward the intersection of disciplinarity with political and social concerns. This answers Andrew Leach’s point with which we began. “Institutionality” and “disciplinarity,” defined in this way, are the two essential concepts through which the political critique of ideology maintains its stakes as a critique of *architectural* ideology. We now turn to the two disciplinary categories which have defined this ideology in its modern forms: Plan and Project.

¹³² “La critica in tal modo, pone ostacoli avanzati all’architetto, sfidandolo a superarli. Ma si badi bene: tali ostacoli non sono «inventati» dal critico, bensì scaturiscono dalla sterilizzazione continua che egli fa del presente. In quanto profondamente storicizzata, la critica può recuperare inoltre, per l’architettura, la sua dimensione specifica: quella del futuro. Ed è chiaro che riconducendo nell’alveo storico i fenomeni dell’architettura contemporanea, la critica si trova a dover contestare l’antistoricismo che, nelle pagine che precedono, abbiamo riconosciuto come il grande problema irrisolto dell’arte moderna.” Manfredo Tafuri, *Teorie e storia dell’architettura* (1968), 272. On the difference in meaning see 2.1.1.

¹³³ In fact, the passage retains a certain ambiguity, since it is unclear precisely what sort of institutional agent it is addressing.

1.2.2 Disciplinary Categories: Plan and Project

*“The language of architecture is formed, defined and left behind in history, together with the very idea of architecture.”*¹³⁴

Before entering any further into the analysis, a note on terminology is necessary followed, inescapably, by several examples. This thesis is particularly invested in two disciplinary categories—“Plan” and “Project”—which are taken to schematise the ideological form and range of architectural disciplinarity under capitalism. In order to move from an abstract consideration of disciplinarity and institutionality into a more concrete consideration of the particular disciplines at stake—in order to further trace the lines of Tafuri’s critique of ideology as well as its limitations—it will be necessary to employ these terms. Since, however, they are not without complications, an extended interlude is required. The interdependence of methodology and results makes it difficult to address this terminology prior to a thorough presentation of the associated theoretical questions; however, that presentation in turn rests upon my interpretation of the terms, giving rise to a typical hermeneutic circle. In this section, I will endeavour to cover these key terms in as closely framed a manner as possible. Themes and questions which arise but are not resolved, will be addressed in detail in the chapters that follow.

Common enough words in architectural discourse, “plan” and “project” each carry a great number of associations. The former, for example, has many potential meanings, ranging from the technical, as in the “floor plan,” the theoretical, “free plan,” up to the disciplinary, as in “urban planning,” and above all the most general sense of strategy: to plan. Add to this an interdisciplinary significance, such as “economic” or “state planning,” and linguistic differences, evident in translation, where “planning” can be given as the English equivalent for “pianificazione” or “progettazione.” When one considers that the above are all subject to historical change, it becomes easy to imagine such terms could be the focus of entire monographic studies. Tafuri’s own terminology presents a combination of all of the above. In his translator’s preface to *Interpreting the Renaissance*, Daniel Sherer put it thus: “To a great extent the challenges presented by this kind of writing are determined by the complex synthesis Tafuri forged between the divergent vocabularies of critical theory and architectural design.”¹³⁵

When one considers that the above are all subject to historical change, it becomes easy to imagine the tremendous complexity historiographic analyses might be subject to. I absolutely

¹³⁴ Tafuri, *Theories and History*, 228.

“Il linguaggio dell’architettura si forma, si definisce e si supera nella storia, insieme all’idea stessa di architettura.” Tafuri, *Teorie e storia*, (1968), 262.

¹³⁵ Daniel Sherer, “Translator’s Preface,” *Interpreting the Renaissance: Princes, Cities, Architects* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), xxiii.

follow this historicising premise; nevertheless, like Tafuri, and following established practices of historiography,¹³⁶ this thesis uses theoretical concepts, periodisations, and generalisations to pose questions of that history and to carry arguments. Therefore, notwithstanding this potential complexity, I associate to “plan” and “project,” a definite significance, enabling me to characterise a shift in architectural ideology from an investment in one to an investment in the other. They function as ideological categories, terms which are used to generalise a particular constellation of disciplinary, institutional, and class interests within a particular historical context.

That context may be defined according to various factors. Using the most basic terms of political economy one can define modern society according to the existence of the capitalist mode of production—a context with a difficult to determine duration, but a determinate character. In this sense, both “plan” and “project” are modern categories. Zooming in, one can distinguish a period in which the architectural institution played a particular role in that capitalist society, and a point at which that role ceased to be possible. As we shall see, this is the periodisation used by Tafuri to designate the era in which architecture was defined by an “ideology of the Plan” (“ideologia del Piano”).¹³⁷

Tafuri did not characterise a form of architectural ideology to succeed the collapse of planning. In fact, shortly after the initial argument was made (1969) and extended (1973), Tafuri ceased to describe the problem in such categorical terms.¹³⁸ However, if one maintains the premise, then it becomes possible to characterise architectural ideology according to the new position into which it has adapted, which I call the ideology of the Project.

However, as one must assume, these terms have not been chosen at random. There is something about their function and existence within architectural discourse, complex and multifaceted as it might be, to suggest this broader significance. For the “plan,” this significance begins in the generic use of the term within modern architectural discourse, but as “Piano” and “pianificazione” in Tafuri’s Italian, it only takes on its proper meaning in an extremely precise context. As we shall see, Tafuri used the term with the significance it had taken on in the pages of *Contropiano*—that is, to denote practices of capitalist state and economic planning framed by Marxist critique and analysis.¹³⁹ This interpretation is fairly well established within Tafuri interpretation. It was foregrounded in particular by Gail Day in

¹³⁶ See for instance Reinhart Koselleck’s fundamental essay “On the Need for Theory in the Discipline of History” in Reinhart Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History*, trans. Todd Samuel Presner (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 1–19.

¹³⁷ Tafuri, “Per una critica dell’ideologia architettonica,” 72.

¹³⁸ See for instance the following passage in “The Historical ‘Project’”: “Architecture itself, in as much as it is an institution, is anything but a unitary ideological block: as with other linguistic systems, its ideologies act in a highly nonlinear fashion. So much so that it is legitimate to suspect that the very criticism of architectural ideology—as it has been conducted up to now—has only reckoned with the most obvious and immediate aspects of that ideology: the refusals, repressions, and introspections, which run through the body of architectural writing.” Tafuri, “The Historical ‘Project’”, 5. See my further discussion of this text and its disputed significance: **2.1.2.**

¹³⁹ Tafuri was particularly indebted to Antonio Negri’s essay “La teorie capitalistica nel ’29: John M. Keynes” published in the first issue of *Contropiano*. See Tafuri, “Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology”, 28; Antonio Negri, “La teorie capitalistica nel ’29: John M. Keynes,” *Contropiano* 1 (1968): 3–40; Antonio Negri, “Keynes and the Capitalist Theory of the State, Post-1929” in A. Negri, *Revolution Retrieved: Writings on Marx, Keynes, Capitalist Crisis, and New Social Subjects (1967–83)* (London: Red Notes, 1988), 5–42. See **1.3.**

her book *Dialectical Passions*,¹⁴⁰ as part of her larger commitment to explicating Tafuri's Italian political context for Anglophone discourse.¹⁴¹ Tilo Amhoff has provided a helpful outline of its application in the essay "Architecture as Ideology of the Plan," showing that the form of modern planning ideology can be subdivided and further periodised.¹⁴²

Following "Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology," and *Architecture and Utopia*, Amhoff gives a three part periodisation: first, the Plan as "reform of the city,"¹⁴³ second, the Plan as "reorganisation of building production," and third, the Plan as "reorganisation of capitalism."¹⁴⁴ Each stage is represented by a key example: respectively, Marc-Antoine Laugier, Ludwig Hilberseimer (one could also use Le Corbusier, or the Bauhaus), and *Progetto 80*—a long term planning initiative of the Italian Ministry of Development. At the first stage, the Plan functions as an ideological "veil," concealing the antagonisms and contradictions of the city under a naturalised image. At the second stage, the Plan takes on the real transformation of the architectural institution:

According to Tafuri, Hilberseimer was suggesting that with the new capitalist modes of production the architect as designer of specific objects, as someone who was giving form to the architecture of the city, had become obsolete. Instead the only suitable role for an architect would be that of the organizer of the cycle of production within the city.¹⁴⁵

At this point the Plan no longer conceals contradictions, but attempts to transcend them. By the third stage, the example for which Amhoff finds in *Architecture and Utopia*, the Plan has been taken out of the hands of the architect altogether, and delivered to economists, town planners, and government ministries. With this final movement towards concrete development, the end of what I call architecture's (partial) *realisation*, the "ideology of the Plan" falls into crisis.

If we expand our perspective to include Tafuri's arguments concerning the Renaissance, I argue that we can include a prior stage as well. Here the key figure is Filippo Brunelleschi, who, by recuperating antiquity, projected a new image for the early modern city, initiating "the great attempt of modern history to *actualize* historical values as a translation of mythical time into actual time, of archaic meanings into revolutionary messages, of ancient 'words' into civil actions...."¹⁴⁶ As we shall see momentarily, the meaning of "planning" in *Theories*

¹⁴⁰ Gail Day, *Dialectical Passions: Negation in Postwar Art Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 117.

¹⁴¹ See also the excellent essays Gail Day, "Manfredo Tafuri, Frederic Jameson, and the Contestations of Political Memory," *Historical Materialism* 29, no. 1 (2012): 31–77; and Gail, Day "Strategies in the Metropolitan Merz: Manfredo Tafuri and Italian Workerism," *Radical Philosophy* 133 (2005): 26–38.

¹⁴² Tilo Amhoff, "Architecture as Ideology of the Plan," (paper, *The International Conference Architecture and Ideology*, Ilija Milosavljević Kolarac Foundation, Belgrade, Serbia, Sept 2012)

¹⁴³ It must be admitted that the meaning of "reform" is rather vague here, given the "veiling" function Amhoff suggests.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 3–4.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁴⁶ Tafuri, *Theories and History*, 14–15.

and History, is rather nebulous. Tafuri would later supplement this reading with a greater focus on the particular political and economic functions of Renaissance architecture,¹⁴⁷ and there can be no doubt that the architectural institution, that is, architecture as an intellectual profession, defined itself at this early stage.¹⁴⁸

Because of this diversity in the significance of the “Plan” within the larger era of its institutional investment, it can be difficult to maintain a clear characterisation of it as an ideological fixation. Tafuri’s analysis developed over time, giving a slightly different significance and suggesting slightly different periodisations of “planning” and the “Plan” from one text to the next. One could even insist on distinguishing the “Plan” from “planning,” restricting the formula to the “ideology of the Plan” and remaining as close to the terms of “Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology” as possible. I believe that if one restricts the discussion in this way, one risks severing *Theories and History* from the later more explicitly Marxist analysis;¹⁴⁹ further, one risks losing the fundamental theoretical point, which holds that the “ideology of the Plan” has a *disciplinary* significance. That is, it represents a conception of the architectural institution, of the work of the professional architect in relation to society; it means real architectural practice, “planning” of one form or another. If the “Plan” becomes an overly abstract notion, it no longer functions as a characterisation of *architectural* ideology, as a platform of the architectural institution. There is a disciplinary and ideological continuity between Laugier’s “planning,” (“urbanistica”)¹⁵⁰ and Le Corbusier’s “Plan” (“Piano”), despite significant differences. Finally, as will be demonstrated in the next chapter, to emphasise “Plan” at the expense of “planning” one misses the general meaning of the latter which actually played a significant part in Italian workerist critiques.

Therefore I characterise the above stages as a progression, a development of the ideological function of the architect within the development of capitalist society overall. This progression has a specifically dialectical character, in which there is a reciprocal mediation between “planning” as disciplinary model and the bourgeois institution with its basis in capitalist society. Through this mediation, the character of “architecture” changes, together with capitalist society, until the key moment in which the latter internalises the planning discipline. At this point the progression collapses and the architectural institution is forced to

¹⁴⁷ See Manfredo Tafuri, *Venice and the Renaissance*, trans. Jessica Levine (London, MIT Press, 1989) and Manfredo Tafuri, *Interpreting the Renaissance*.

¹⁴⁸ For a treatment of the class character of Renaissance architecture, see Pier Vittorio Aureli, “Do Your Remember Counterrevolution?”

¹⁴⁹ This separation comes with significant consequences, chief among them a rapprochement between history/criticism and architectural design. See section **two**.

¹⁵⁰ Tafuri, “Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology,” 7; and “Per una critica dell’ideologia architettonica” 34.

pivot toward a different disciplinary model—one no longer tethered to the general processes of development from which it has been essentially excluded.¹⁵¹

Returning to Tafuri's own terminology, we find that in general "Pianificazione" defines the horizon of convergence between architectural practices and the general development of capitalist production and capitalist society. Tafuri outlined it as follows:

The Plan ["il Piano"] embraced by the leading architectural movements (the term "avant-garde" is no longer applicable), starting with Le Corbusier's *Plan Voisin* (1925) and the stabilization of the Bauhaus (around 1921), contained the following contradiction: starting from the building sector, architectural culture discovered that only by linking that sector to the reorganization of the city could preestablished goals be satisfactorily met. But this was equivalent to saying that, just as the demands presented by the avant-gardes had pointed to the visual communications sector most directly entrenched in the economic process (i.e., architecture and industrial design), so the planning ["planificazione"] formulated by architectural and urban theorists likewise pointed toward something other than itself: to wit, toward a restructuring of production and consumption in general—toward a *plan for capital* ["*Piano del capitale*"], in other words. In this sense, architecture—starting with itself—mediated between realism and utopia. The utopia lay in stubbornly continuing to hide the fact that the ideology of planning ["pianificazione"] could be realized in building production only by making clear that the true Plan ["Piano"] could only take shape beyond this sector; and that, indeed, once the Plan ["Piano"] came within the scope of the general reorganization of production, architecture and urban planning would become its objects, not its subjects.¹⁵²

It was a horizon only, rather than a point of convergence, because the architectural "plan" remained ideological, in the sense that it was mediated by a utopian insistence on the subjective agency of architecture and urban planning disciplines—the agency of superstructural intervention. Furthermore, this "utopian" insistence must be understood to have an institutional basis, for it was the insistence on the agency of *the architect*. It was ideological not in the mere sense of being incorrect: utopian naiveté was deeply *interested*. Thus, when the "reality of the plan" ("realtà del Piano")¹⁵³ takes shape, that ideological role became superfluous:

"Architecture as the *ideology of the Plan* ["ideologia del Piano"] is swept away by the *reality of the Plan* ["realtà del Piano"], the moment the plan came down from the utopian level and became an operant mechanism.

The crisis of modern architecture begins at the precise moment when its natural target—large industrial capital—makes architecture's underlying ideology its own, setting aside the superstructures. As of that moment,

¹⁵¹ It is important to note that, while less significant in Tafuri's earlier periodisations, Giambattista Piranesi later became a crucial reference point. In addition, Tafuri reads dialogues in Piranesi's *Parere* as directly foreshadowing the institutional crisis of the twentieth century. See Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*, 44–46.

¹⁵² Tafuri, "Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology," 20–21.

"Il Piano individuato dai movimenti architettonici di punta—il termine avanguardia non è ora più adeguato—dalla formulazione del *Plan Voisin* di Le Corbusier (1925) e dalla stabilizzazione del Bauhaus (1921 circa) in poi, contiene questa contraddizione: partendo dal settore della produzione edilizia la cultura architettonica scopre che è solo legando quel settore alla riorganizzazione della città che gli obiettivi prefissati possono trovare soddisfazione; ma ciò equivale a dire che come le esigenze denunciate dalle avanguardie storiche rimandavano al settore delle comunicazioni visivi più direttamente inserito nei processi economici—l'architettura e il *design*—così la pianificazione enunciata dalle teorie architettoniche e urbanistiche rimanda ad altro da sé: ad una ristrutturazione della produzione e del consumo in generale; in altre parole ad un *Piano del capitale*. In tal senso l'architettura media—partendo da se stessa—realismo ed utopia. L'utopia è nell'ostinarsi a nascondere che l'ideologia della pianificazione può realizzarsi nella produzione edilizia solo indicando che è al di là di essa che il vero Piano può prendere forma; anzi, che una volta entrato nell'orizzonte della riorganizzazione della produzione in generale, l'architettura e l'urbanistica saranno oggetti, e non soggetti, del Piano." Tafuri, "Per una critica dell'ideologia architettonica," 57.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 72.

architectural ideology has exhausted its own functions: its obstinate insistence on seeing its hypotheses realized will become either a springboard for going beyond backward conditions, or a troublesome disturbance.¹⁵⁴

My use of the category “Plan” follows Tafuri’s. It is a term that captures the historical parallel or confluence between architectural practices and the requirements of capitalist development. Further, I characterise as “planning” the disciplinary investment made by this ideology, emphasising that “planning” is a *disciplinary* characterisation of those architectural practices and the manner in which they function, not a general term for the relationship between architecture and capitalist society. Architecture’s disciplinary investment in “planning,” while ideological and frustrated historically, nevertheless contained a tendency toward structural engagement, a movement away from purely superstructural representation and toward material transformation—what I call “realisation.” While destined to become the “object” rather than the “subject” of the plan, architecture as planning—because of its move away from the symbolic architectural object and towards the scale and systematic character of production—yet came closest to a position in which the structural relations of society (the class subjects and material forces) could be apprehended. In this sense, the partial autonomy of what we might call “planning disciplinarity” contains important strategic value. Modernist planning, though it remained ideological, was tendentially materialist.

However, with the collapse of planning ideology, the architectural institution moves toward a different disciplinary investment. I use the category “Project” to define a new set of disciplinary practices, which become marginally functional within capitalist society after the “Plan” became a reality, gaining in strength through the relative disappearance of “real planning” up to the present. Like planning before it, the Project became the theme of an active disciplinary theory. This was largely possible because the word was ready to hand within professional and non-theoretical architectural discourses.

Picking up on this extended significance of the term, a recent critical reading has been made by Joan Ockman. In her 2013 essay, “Project or Product? A Critique of the Ideology of the Architectural Project,” Ockman links the architectural profession’s investment in the division between intellectual and manual labour to both the philosophical and professional meanings of the “project.”¹⁵⁵ By construing their work as a “project”—“suggesting a sovereign act of creation or ‘immaterial labour’ that envisions and plans the production of material substance”¹⁵⁶—the architect mystifies the real processes of production in which that work is embedded. Because Ockman gives historical examples that range from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century, the “project” so defined cannot be readily separated from the era

¹⁵⁴ Tafuri, “Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology,” 28–29.

¹⁵⁵ Ockman’s framing is consistent with Tafuri’s invocation of the opposition between intellectual and manual labour in “L’Architecture dans le Boudoir.” See Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*, 288.

¹⁵⁶ Ockman, “Project or Product? A Critique of the Architectural Ideology of the Project”, 89.

of planning ideology developed by Tafuri—though it does appear to extend beyond the moment of historical crisis Tafuri identified.

While this critical definition is a useful one—capturing the ideological importance of the division between intellectual and manual labour—I have a different meaning in mind. In my use, the “Project” identifies a moment in which the architectural discipline registers and reacts against the ambivalence of intellectual labour itself *as labour*. Planning ideology, which was indeed marked by an “ideology of the architectural project” as Ockman defines it, still introduced a tendential rapprochement between intellectual and manual labour within the larger perspective of social production in general. This was its historically specific instability. In contrast, Project ideology arrived as a retroactive defence against this instability and a pivot toward autonomy. While it is true that this move still manifested itself in an institutional strengthening of the division between intellectual and manual labour, it also introduced a new mystification of labour and production in general. Because of this latter characteristic, Project ideology can exist—in fact, *symptomatically* exists—even where the division of labour is nominally contested.¹⁵⁷

Before going into greater detail, it would be helpful to return to Tafuri’s own uses of the term, where we will find again the difficulty of distinguishing plan from project. Indeed, there is a significant complication in choosing the term “project” to contrast with “plan.” While the “project” has a history of generic application in English language architectural discourse, a history of use in other disciplinary contexts, such as philosophy, and most important, an increasingly specific charge in English language architectural theory today, the latter is thoroughly conditioned by earlier uses of the Italian “progetto.” Here is the paradox: the Italian term, used frequently and influentially by Manfredo Tafuri, can be translated into *either* the English “project” *or* “plan,” depending on a number of factors. In Italian “il progetto,” has a broad meaning referring to the preparatory acts of design and planning. In addition to architectural and engineering applications, it can refer to any sort of planned undertaking or plan for the future. As Marco Biraghi put it in the English preface to *Project of Crisis*, “*Progetto*, often translated as “design,” is more broadly used in Italian, and can mean project, plan, and even architecture. It can also imply a projection or an intention.”¹⁵⁸ By contrast, the Italian “pianificazione,” has a more acute meaning, referring to a specifically technical act, often of state or economic planning. As described above, when Tafuri defined architectural ideology as an “ideologia del Piano,” it was this latter sense that was intended—captured effectively by the English translation: “Piano” for “Plan.”

However, one would be greatly mistaken to assume that every appearance of “plan” or “planning” in an English translation of Tafuri, marks the use of “piano” or “pianificazione” in

¹⁵⁷ Examples of this phenomenon are discussed in section three (3.1 and 3.4) and in the conclusion.

¹⁵⁸ Biraghi, *Project of Crisis*, xi.

the original;¹⁵⁹ on the contrary, it is quite likely the original was “progetto” or “progettazione.” This is particularly true of Tafuri’s writing before he came into contact with *Contropiano*, before “Per una critica dell’ideologia architettonica.” Throughout *Teorie e storia*, for instance, “progetto” and “progettazione” predominate—later translated as “plan” and “planning.”¹⁶⁰ In most cases Tafuri is employing the term in the sense in which this would be a fairly literal translation. However, given the use of “pianificazione” in architectural discourse around planning in the early 1960s, for instance in Aldo Rossi’s writing on the *nuovo dimensione*,¹⁶¹ it would seem that Tafuri was using “progetto” and “progettazione” to speak of a general continuity between “planning” and architectural design, rather than the technical discipline of urban planning per se.

The meaning becomes more specific where it appears that he is marking a conceptual point of his thesis: “It may seem paradoxical, but already the Brunelleschian operation had achieved, as a result, not so much the rooting into history of architectural planning [“progettazione”], but, rather, its *dehistoricisation*.”¹⁶² Coming in the midst of an important passage in the first chapter, “Modern Architecture and the Eclipse of History,” in which Tafuri sets up a sweeping characterisation of architectural modernity and its historicist antinomies, “progettazione” suggests something specific to his argument if not yet precisely defined. Later in the chapter, he returns to the point: “The great task facing the ideology of the Modern Movement seems to be, then, definitely renouncing history as a source of prospects and values for the future: not a rejection of history but finding its right place in planning [“progettazione”].”¹⁶³ Again, “progettazione,” given as “planning,” names the particularity of modern architectural practice within the “eclipse of history,” Tafuri presents. It is largely a temporal sense that Tafuri is communicating, the disposition of architectural “projects” toward the future and the contradictory representations of history that follow.

Closely connected to this, is Tafuri’s methodological argument concerning history proper—the writing of history. The associated meaning of “progetto” and the English “planning” becomes the basis of Tafuri’s definition of operative criticism, “*criticism as project*” (“*critica come progetto*”)¹⁶⁴:

¹⁵⁹ For one, “piano” can simply mean “level,” “floor,” or “floor plan.”

¹⁶⁰ In what follows I refer to the Italian first edition (1968) unless otherwise noted.

¹⁶¹ See Aldo Rossi, “Nuovi problemi,” in *Scritti scelti sull’architettura e la città: 1956—1972*, ed. Rosaldo Bonicalzi (Milano: clup, 1988), 175–192. Tafuri himself was present in these debates, having not yet given up architectural design and urban planning.

¹⁶² Tafuri, *Theories and History*, 15.

“Può sembrare paradossale, ma già l’operazione brunelleschiana ha come risultato non tanto un radicamento nella storia della progettazione architettonica, quanto piuttosto la sua *de-storicizzazione*.” Tafuri, *Teorie e storia*, 24.

¹⁶³ Tafuri, *Theories and History*, 63.

“Il grande compito che si pone all’arte contemporanea sembra dunque quello di riuscire a rinunciare definitivamente a chiedere alla storia le prospettive ed i valori per il futuro: non rinuncia alla storia, quindi, ma individuazione della sua giusta collocazione nella progettazione.” Tafuri, *Teorie e storia*, 92.

¹⁶⁴ Tafuri, *Theories and History*, 133; and Tafuri, *Teorie e storia* (1968), 163.

What is normally meant by *operative criticism* is an analysis of architecture (or of the arts in general) that, instead of an abstract survey, has as its objective the planning [“«progettazione»”] of a precise poetical tendency, anticipated in its structures and derived from historical analyses programmatically distorted and finalized.

By this definition operative criticism represents the meeting point of history and planning [“progettazione”]. We could say, in fact, that operative criticism *plans* [“progetta”] past history by projecting [“proiettandola”] it towards the future. Its verifiability does not require abstractions of principle, it measures itself, each time, against the results obtained, while its theoretical horizon is the pragmatist and instrumentalist tradition.¹⁶⁵

Operative criticism collapses two practices which ought to be kept separate. “Progettazione” must be kept out of the historian’s practice, if the historian is to reflect to architecture the reality of its crises—or, better, pinpoint their ideological crux.¹⁶⁶

In the above cases we must remember that the English translation, *Theories and History*, was published only in 1980, fully twelve years later than the original, and after the publishing, both in Italian and in English, of major texts in which these terms played fundamental roles. Who could miss the ambiguous translation of the title “*Progetto e utopia*” into “*Architecture and Utopia*”? One must therefore treat the translated terms with a degree of caution, as they are likely to reflect different conceptual milieus. Particularly significant in this regard, was the 1977 essay “Il ‘progetto’ storico.” Translated and published in *Oppositions* one year before *Theories and History* appeared, this essay performed a kind of *rapprochement* between the two sides of the temporal and methodological divide in the earlier book: “la progettazione” and “la storia.” Significantly, the title of the essay was translated differently, to reflect the different argument: “The Historical ‘Project,’” rather than “The Historical ‘Plan.’” In the definition of operative criticism, “progettazione” is given as “planning” while in the later essay (published earlier) “progetto” becomes “project.” At this point, I argue, “progetto” becomes an unmistakably important term in Tafuri’s thinking, wholly distinct from its earlier generic meanings, or connections to modernist practices and temporality. It then becomes even more important to secondary interpretations and representations of Tafuri, since it offers a way beyond the militantly critical terms separating the discipline of history from that of design. This departure in Tafuri’s argument holds tremendous significance. I will limit my commentary here, because it will occupy much of the analysis in section two.

Of course, between the original *Teorie e storia*, and the essay “Il ‘progetto’ storico,” lie other significant texts, including practically the entire critique of architectural ideology. There

¹⁶⁵ Tafuri, *Theories and History*, 141. “Ciò che comunemente si intende per *critica operativa* è un’analisi dell’architettura (o del arte in generale), che abbia come suo obiettivo non un astratto rilevamento, bensì la «progettazione» di un preciso indirizzo poetico, anticipato nelle sue strutture, e fatto scaturire da analisi storiche programmaticamente finalizzate e deformate.

In tale accezione la critica operativa rappresenta il punto di incontro fra la storia e la progettazione. Anzi, si può ben dire che la critica operativa *progetta* la storia passata proiettandola verso il futuro: la sua verificabilità non risiede in astrazioni di principio; essa si misura volta per volta con i risultati che ottiene. Il suo orizzonte teoretico è la tradizione pragmatista e strumentalista.” Tafuri, *Teorie e storia*, 165.

¹⁶⁶ The difference between these two critical goals defines the difference between the first and second edition.

are two notable passages in *Teorie e storia*, one concerning “planning” and the other the “project,” which foreshadow that material, and from which conclusions can be drawn from the original Italian text alone. First, a remarkable passage, also in “Modern Architecture and the Eclipse of History,” in which Tafuri actually uses the English: “*design*” and “*planning*.” The passage begins, though, with the Italian “progetto,” which is then replaced:

Diffused artistic quality takes the place, then, of the artistic *unicum*, architecture cancels itself out in its dispersal into the urban project, [“progetto urbano”] history’s contradictions find peace in the *Nirvana* of the final struggle of man against nature: Mondrian’s propositions are in many ways prophetic and full of hidden meanings.

Isn’t modern *design* based on the theoretical principle of the diffusion of artistic quality into the world of life? And hasn’t the way *beyond architecture* through *planning* [“*superamento dell’architettura nel planning*”], meant as an open project [“progettazione”] of changeable topological conditions (no longer of *space*, at least in its Classical sense), been, up to now, a continually repeated slogan as a last act of faith in the *design* itself, [“*fede nel design stesso*”] in spite of the fact that its price is, obviously the death of architecture?¹⁶⁷

This passage describes the ambivalent process I name *realisation*. Beginning with “il progetto urbano” Tafuri, describes how in Mondrian, perhaps the most extreme example of the problematic,¹⁶⁸ the architectural act enters into a process of destabilisation. Tafuri is employing the thesis of the “diffusion of artistic quality into the world of life” (“diffusione dell’artisticà nel mondo della vita”). Though he begins with “progetto urbano” he uses the English terms “design” and “planning” to give this thesis a greater conceptual specificity at the level of disciplinarity. The English “design” and “planning” highlight the internal disciplinary complexity which remains implicit in the generic Italian “progetto,” but is clearly marked in English—particularly the difference between “planning” and “architecture,” which can both be implied by “progetto.” Tafuri uses “design” and “planning” to define an intermediate disciplinary situation through which the diffusion of artistic quality passes on its way beyond the architectural frontiers of “art” altogether. “Design,” likely referring in part to “industrial design,” given Tafuri’s footnoted reference to Herbert Read’s *Art and Industry*,¹⁶⁹ is perhaps the most generic term available. It designates this unstable, specifically modern architectural tendency, in which literally anything can be simultaneously aestheticised and reduced to technical specifications. It is the point at which architecture reaches subsumption within an all-embracing meta-disciplinarity, that in turn dissolves into technical specialisation.

¹⁶⁷ Tafuri, *Theories and History*, 37–38. “L’*artistica diffusa* si sostituisce quindi all’*unicum* artistico, l’architettura si annulla e si disperde nel progetto urbano, le contraddizioni della storia si pacificano in un *Nirvana* come stadio finale della lotta dell’uomo contro la natura: le proposizioni di Mondrian sono per più versi profetiche e dense di reconditi significati.

La diffusione dell’artisticà nel mondo della vita non è forse il principio teorico su cui si fonda il moderno *design*? E il *superamento dell’architettura nel planning*, inteso come aperta progettazione di mutevoli condizioni topologiche (e non più, dunque, di uno *spazio*, almeno in senso classico) non è, a tutt’oggi, uno slogan cui si aggrappa di continuo come ultimo atto di fede nel *design* stesso, malgrado che il suo costo sia, palesemente, la morte dell’architettura?” Tafuri, *Teorie e storia*, 56.

¹⁶⁸ Tafuri, *Theories and History*, 36.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 71. See Herbert Read, *Art and Industry: the principles of industrial design* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966).

These are the art-historical and art-theoretical terms in which Tafuri framed the problem prior to his contact with the latest Marxist critiques of capitalist planning. Here “planning,” already designating modern architecture’s disciplinary dynamic, has yet to take on the dominant economic and political meaning which it will several years later. It also has yet to be posed as a form of architectural ideology, a proposition which, as we have seen, defines the mediated connection between disciplinarity and capitalist society. My interpretation begins with this connection. The sense in which I speak of architecture’s “ideology of the Plan” or “planning ideology” combines the meaning of the above passage, with that expressed in “Per una critica dell’ideologia architettonica.” “Planning” refers, first, to the disciplinary tendency by which architecture would cease to be an aesthetic or cultural practice, becoming entirely concrete, politically as well as technically, and effectively ceasing to be “architecture.” I have called this trajectory “*realisation*,” and include here the real social functions planning fulfils: the technical and economic development of society—whether capitalist, or socialist.¹⁷⁰ Second, as an “ideology of the Plan” it is a dialectical process in which the institution’s disciplinary mediation remains caught between the traditional role of aesthetics and the potentials of realisation. The social role of *architecture* under this paradigm, lies not in either end of the trajectory, cultural or technical, but precisely in the dialectical interdependence of the two. Architecture lost that role when the process was annulled by outside forces, whereupon, as Tafuri put it, “ideological prefiguration” became superfluous.¹⁷¹

The other notable case comes in the final chapter, “Tasks of Criticism.” It contains what I take to be the most useful general conceptual definition of “progetto” in the book. The context is as follows. Tafuri begins the chapter by drawing a line between the “instruments of critical and historiographical analysis” covered up to that point, and the still unanswered question of theorising architecture’s linguistic properties.¹⁷² For Tafuri, picking up on the theorisations of the avant-garde, El Lissitzky and Van Doesburg particularly, modern architecture’s communicative properties were inseparable from productive functions: “the close link between artistic communications, the new methods of production and the new systems of reception of the communications themselves.”¹⁷³ Because of this complex interconnection, Tafuri argues that a linguistic theorisation is not possible:

¹⁷⁰ It is important to bear in mind that architectural realisation, though ambivalently successful in some institutional and political respects, remained partial in the larger context. This is because full realisation—following Adorno’s notion with which the thesis began—requires the complete social and technical synthesis of a *communist* (rather than merely reformist or even socialist) society. Following the distinction I will later make between the strategic and tactical functions of architecture, one can see that realisation as such is impossible in strictly architectural terms. See **I.4.1**.

¹⁷¹ Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*, ix. Given as “Prefigurazione ideologiche” in the original. Manfredo Tafuri, *Progetto e utopia* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2007), 3.

¹⁷² Tafuri, *Theories and History*, 227.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*.

The only way to describe the structures of architectural language seems to be through historical synthesis. All the naïve attempts to single out a component from the complex heap of architecture and elect it as a parameter of architectural language, are bound to fail before the impossibility of outlining a complete history of architecture in this way. Neither the functions nor the space of the tectonic elements can be at the base of a semiological analysis of planning [“progettazione”]. In the very moment in which we stress the term *project* [“*progetto*”] in order to designate architecture, it becomes clear that, each time, we should evaluate which new materials have become part of the universe of discourse of architecture itself, what are the new relations between the traditional materials, and which of these materials has a prominent role.¹⁷⁴

Here “*progetto*,” is italicised, set off as a discrete conceptual term—a gesture which is accurately captured in the English translation, where it is not so much translated as reproduced: “*project*.” Though one cannot be sure, it is possible that on this point Tafuri himself or the highly charged uses of the term in publications in the years between the Italian version and its English translation, influenced the translator Giorgio Verrecchia.

In any case, this passage does much to clarify the problem, if not the precise meaning of the term. In fact, far from giving a definition, it points out how the ambiguous sense of “*progetto*”—which is the disciplinary changeability of architecture itself—is the crux of the entire problem. Therefore, I argue, “*progetto*,” is a conceptual place-holder produced within Tafuri’s arguments and analyses to signify the disciplinary instability of modern architecture. In the context of the text, moreover, it presents how that instability was confronted by architects, how the architectural “*project*” involved a necessary self-reflective and self-constituting dimension. The “very moment in which we stress the term *project* to designate architecture”—the moment in which one attempts to define architectural disciplinarity—is the moment in which that disciplinarity is undermined. This discovery is nothing other than the recognition of the paradox underlying architecture itself, for the instability of the discipline was the condition for its modern development.¹⁷⁵

Here we also glimpse part of the contradiction introduced by Tafuri’s later use of the term “*progetto*” to define the practice of history, for if the ambiguity of history mirrors that of architecture, the entire basis of historical research and criticism threatens to collapse, casting architectural and historical practice, operativity and criticality, into “the night in which,” as the saying goes, “all cows are black.”¹⁷⁶ (A good example of why it is crucial to insist on the

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 227–228. “L’unico modo di descrivere le strutture del linguaggio architettonico appare quindi quello della sintesi storia. Tutti gli ingenui tentativi di prelevare una componente da quel complesso coacervo di materiali di cui è composta l’architettura, per estrarlo a parametro del linguaggio architettonico, falliscono di fronte all’impossibilità di tracciare in tal modo una storia completa dell’architettura. Né le funzioni, né lo spazio, né gli elementi tettonici possono essere alla base di un’analisi semiologica della progettazione. Nello stesso momento in cui si pone l’accento sul termine *progetto* per designare l’architettura, risulta chiaro che volta per volta si dovrà valutare quali nuovi materiali siano entrati a far parte dell’universo di discorso dell’architettura stessa, quali nuove relazioni fra i materiali tradizionali siano state istituite, quali di questi materiali viene dato un ruolo preminente.” Tafuri, *Teorie e storia*, 261–262.

¹⁷⁵ Though it is treated in consistently immanent terms, this theme underlies much of *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*.

¹⁷⁶ G.F.W. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 9 (§ 10). Of course, since a form of interestedness is at stake in ideology, the proverb’s original meaning retains a certain relevance. Ellen Meiksins Wood uses this proverb to describe vulgar post-Marxist relativisation of base and superstructure. Larry Patriquin, ed., *Ellen Meiksins Wood Reader* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 217.

Marxist definition of disciplinarity described above—to resist the relativisation of all knowledge producing practices.)¹⁷⁷

At this point, the contradiction is only at the level of methodology. In the final pages of “Per una critica” the ambiguity of “progetto” would be problematised far more forcefully. With the Marxist thematisation of “planning” accomplished earlier in the text, Tafuri reintroduces the “project” as a point of ultimate critical intransigence. While, as discussed above, “planning” was the subject of ideological investment, it never became synonymous with architecture proper. There remained within architecture a space of disciplinary contestation and flux: there were productivist and constructivist avant-gardes, and there were destructive and critical avant-gardes. For Tafuri, Piranesi and Dada are as internal to the history of modern architecture as Laugier and El Lissitzky: the positive avant-garde and the negative avant-garde equally functioned as reflective mechanisms within capitalist development. Highlighting this equality, Tafuri uses the term “project,” where “plan” is too positive. Thus, beyond the “ideology of the Plan,” which in the immanent, disciplinary terms of architectural discourse remains a partial description only, there is the “ideology of the project”:

We must realize one thing: that the entire course of modern architecture and the new systems of visual communication was born, developed and brought into crisis in a grandiose attempt—the last of bourgeois culture—to resolve, on the level of an ideology all the more insidious because it lies entirely within concrete activities and real production cycles, the imbalances, contradictions and delays typical of the capitalistic reorganization of the world market.

Order and disorder, in this light, cease to be in opposition to each other. If we interpret them according to their true historical significance, it becomes clear that there is no contradiction between constructivism and “protest art,” between the rationalism of building production and informal subjectivism or Pop irony, between the capitalist plan [“piano capitalista”] and the urban chaos, between the ideology of planning [“ideologia della pianificazione”] and the poetics of the object.

The *destiny* of capitalist society, in this interpretation, is not at all extraneous to the *project* [“progetto”]. The ideology of the project [L’ideologia del progetto”] is as essential to the integration of modern capitalism, with all its structures and superstructures, into human existence, as is the illusion of being able to oppose that *project* [“progetto”] with the tools of a *different* project [“progetto”] or with those of a radical “anti-project” [“antiprogettazione”].¹⁷⁸

This passage explains why Tafuri’s text was titled “Toward a critique of *architectural* ideology” rather than, “Toward a critique of *planning* ideology.” Tafuri does not have in mind

¹⁷⁷ If this occurs, then we will know that the hour on the sundial of ideology mentioned in the Preface is midnight.

¹⁷⁸ Tafuri, “Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology,” 32. “Perché di questo è necessario convincersi: che l’intero ciclo dell’architettura moderna e dei nuovi sistemi di comunicazione visiva nascono, si sviluppano ed entrano in crisi, come un grandioso tentativo—l’ultimo della cultura figurativa borghese—per risolvere, sul piano [“level”] di un’ideologia tanto più insidiosa quanto più tutta interna alle operazioni concrete, calata nei reali cicli di produzione, squilibri, contraddizioni e ritardi, tipici della riorganizzazione capitalista del mercato mondiale. Ordine e disordine, tale accezione, finiscono di opporsi fra loro. Letti nei loro reali significati storici non v’è contraddizione fra costruttivismo e «arte di protesta», fra razionale della produzione edilizia e soggettivismo informale o ironia *pop*, fra piano capitalista e caos urbano, fra ideologia della pianificazione e poetica dell’oggetto.

Il *destino* della società capitalista, a tale stregua, non è affatto estraneo al *progetto*. L’ideologia del progetto è tanto essenziale all’integrazione del capitalismo moderno in tutte le strutture e sovrastrutture dell’esistenza umana, quanto lo è l’illusione di potersi opporre a quel *progetto* con gli strumenti di una progettazione *diversa*, o di un «antiprogettazione» radicale.”

Tafuri, “Per una critica dell’ideologia architettonica,” 77–78.

a critique of one tendency among others within architectural discourse and production. As outlined in the earlier quotation above, “pianificazione” became most explicit only after the historical avant-garde. But this does not mean Tafuri recommends a return to avant-gardism or an avant-garde critique of planning. Tafuri is explicitly *not* promoting a neo-avant-garde position; a crucial point, because, as will be seen in section three, these were the years in which his contemporaries presented themselves as such. While the critique is partisan politically and theoretically, it is not partisan architecturally. This is also why, as he makes clear in the next lines, Tafuri’s focus is on the ideology of the architectural *left*: “just as there can be no such thing as a political economics of class, but only a class critique of political economics, likewise there can never be an aesthetics, art or architecture of class, but only a class critique of aesthetics, art, architecture and the city.”¹⁷⁹ It is on the left that the social function of architecture is directly tied to a contestation of society and of architecture itself. It is the field of architectural production where the contradictions of the “project” reach their highest intensity.

Today, the architectural left articulates those contradictions, *through the category of the project itself*, a phenomenon which had begun among Tafuri’s Italian contemporaries. Though never concretely theorised by Tafuri the above passage suggests a latent thematisation of Project ideology. However, it was only within the institutional context of the failure of planning, that the project could emerge as a specific disciplinary formulation. My use of the term, “Project,” and of the phrase “ideology of the Project,” reflects this later tendency and therefore contains an added dimension missing from Tafuri. Because the “project” is implicit within Tafuri’s theorisation of planning ideology, being the term which describes what is architectural about that architectural ideology, one could describe the “ideology of the Plan” as the “project of the Plan”—with the term “project” specifying the architectural character of the ideology. In this case the sense which the “ideology of the *Project*” has in my use can be grasped in the formula “*project of the Project*.” In other words, the ideology of the project takes the self-referentiality of architectural ideology to a new level, making it the fundamental point of institutional leverage: an architectural ideology of *Architecture*.

However, the most significant divergence in the meaning of “project” comes from the change mentioned above in how Tafuri himself used the term, and the overbearing influence the later meaning would come to hold within Tafuri interpretation. In this respect, “Il ‘progetto’ storico” far from introducing further critical tools for deconstructing architectural ideology, marks a crucial moment in the development of the new ideological formation which is the subject of this thesis. Tafuri’s uses of the term “progetto” thus lie on either side of the major line of conceptual demarcation: critical and ideological.

¹⁷⁹ Tafuri, “Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology,” 32. “...come non può esistere un’Economia Politica di classe, ma solo una critica di classe all’Economia politica, così non può fondarsi un’Estetica, un’arte, un’architettura di classe, ma solo una critica di classe all’Estetica, all’arte, all’architettura, alla città.” Tafuri, “Per una critica dell’ideologia architettonica,” 78.

As we have seen, even more than the “plan,” the “project” cuts diagonally across linguistic, theoretical, and ideological registers. However, if one can properly frame the stakes it becomes clear that the difference between the English and Italian signification of “project” and “progetto,” is dwarfed by the *ideological* content the “project/progetto” carries in architectural discourse. In fact, the ambiguity of the Italian usage, and the ambiguity of translation in general, is an *integral part* of its ideological currency in English, which is after all the lingua franca of contemporary architectural discourse.

To make a final point of methodology, this example should demonstrate how linguistic and semantic differences can become *objects* of the critique of ideology, rather than remain indigestible obstacles or relativising horizons. Generally in discussions of Tafuri, linguistic issues tend to become polemically charged almost to the inverse degree to which they carry conceptual and political stakes. This is evident in the substantial continuity between Tafuri’s American reception in the 1970s and those interpretations of the past several years, which, while premised upon their revision of the former, actually reproduce their ideological content. If one is able to frame Tafuri’s writing contextually, historically, in disciplinary terms, and so forth, linguistic issues can be transformed into conceptual problems and apprehended as such directly.¹⁸⁰ This chapter has therefore not pursued a philology nor an etymological excavation of meaning. It is an historically grounded theoretical account of specific concepts, ideological notions, and disciplinary categories, supported by historiographical research. Where the linguistic character of a term takes on particular importance, referring either to contextual differences or by carrying ideological subtext, I aim to address it.

It will always be possible to make semantic arguments concerning the multi-valence of certain words. All one can do is to clearly articulate the conceptual content of each word on the basis of the relations it names within particular historical and discursive contexts. While that context differs from place to place, the conceptual terms can be articulated through the *real content of that difference*.

¹⁸⁰ This is a basic methodological point common to conceptual defences against relativism, materialist arguments against idealism, and philosophical arguments against sophistry.

1.2.3 Realisation and its Refusal: the “Death of Architecture”

With this important terminological and conceptual work accomplished, we can begin to use the two terms, “Plan” and “Project” to distinguish different disciplinary mediations for the architectural institution. However, we must be careful not to assume a functional equivalence between them. On the contrary, the history of the Plan had a determining role on the constitution of the Project which followed. This can be seen by examining the effects of *realisation* upon later architectural ideology.

For Tafuri, what makes architecture’s historical role unique is the disciplinary position it held between, on the one hand, avant-garde art, and on the other, the practical techniques of development. Given the chaotic form of the modern “metropolis,” architecture functioned as a means of mediation and reconciliation—a means by which the aesthetic hypotheses of the avant-gardes in painting and sculpture could be tested in reality. Modern architecture’s disciplinarity, defined by Tafuri in terms of its Plan, thus functioned as a crucial point of departure in the “dialectic of art into life”:

To redeem the formlessness of the city of profit-ruled consumption, one must draw upon all its progressive valences. And it is the Plan that the avant-gardes called upon to carry out this maieutic task, before discovering at once that they were incapable of giving it any concrete form.

It was at this point that architecture was able to enter the scene, by absorbing and overcoming all the demands of the historic avant-gardes—and indeed by throwing them into crisis, since architecture alone was in a position to provide real answers to the demands made by Cubism, Futurism, Dada, De Stijl, and all the various Constructivisms and Productivisms.

The Bauhaus, as the decantation chamber of the avant-gardes, fulfilled this historic task: it selected from among all the contributions of the avant-gardes, testing them against the demands of the reality of industrial production. Design, as a method of organizing production more than of configuring objects, did away with the utopian vestiges inherent in the poetics of the avant-gardes. Ideology was no longer superimposed on activity—which was now concrete because it was connected to real cycles of production—but was inherent in the activity itself.”¹⁸¹

As intermediary point between the avant-gardes and the reality of the planned city, modern architecture’s disciplinary content, that which mediates and is mediated by its institutional basis and ideological function, is its tendency toward *realisation*. That its ideological function collapsed as a consequence of the partial realisation of this disciplinarity demonstrates the contradictory dialectic at work under the terms of “planning.”

As a brief example of this ambivalence, we can refer to Le Corbusier, the figure Tafuri identifies most consistently with the Plan.¹⁸² In the concluding section of the *Athens Charter*, the primary barrier to the rational organisation of society and its built form is identified as a structural one. Put in economic terms, Le Corbusier recognises private property to be the chief obstacle: “There are two opposing realities: the scale of the projects to be undertaken

¹⁸¹ Tafuri, “Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology”, 20.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 28.

urgently for the reorganisation of the cities, and the infinitely fragmented state of land ownership.”¹⁸³ And it was one which had already frustrated architectural agency: “For years now, at every point on the globe, attempts at urban improvement have been dashed against the petrified law of private property.”¹⁸⁴ The Charter thus concludes with a call for the “subordination” of private, to collective interests.¹⁸⁵ It consistently recognises the social, political, and economic conditions for planning,¹⁸⁶ but at the same time, it attempts to position the architectural discipline in a privileged position of leadership: “Architecture presides over the destinies of the city”¹⁸⁷; “architecture is the key to everything.”¹⁸⁸

This ambiguity represents clearly the character of architecture’s modernist disciplinarity: “planning” as both an institutional ideology, subjecting structural questions to intellectual anticipation, and a tendency toward *realisation*, subordinating cultural and aesthetic agency to the structural intervention of extra-disciplinary agents and recognising the potential collapse of “architecture” into extra-institutional domains of technical expertise, state-craft, and political mobilisation.

Therefore, if architecture’s institutional role is to produce ideology, what precisely that ideology entails is given only in complex and often ambivalent disciplinary terms that may compromise the very institutional premises. Drawing a connection between the two, Tafuri demonstrated the key mediation at work within architecture’s disciplinary and institutional functions.¹⁸⁹ This point is fundamental for understanding the progressive possibilities inherent in architecture’s modern history, together with their ideological direction, and ultimate fall into crisis. Furthermore, it allows one to grasp the manner in which architecture later reconstructed its institutional position, its role as producer of ideology, through a new disciplinary “project”—one which in many ways articulated a critique of its own prior forms. Through an internal disciplinary purge, the Project actually recuperates a pre-realisation institutional position. Despite appearances, only the disciplinary character of architecture has changed in this pivot, *not* its institutional character. For the latter, the disciplinary pivot was

¹⁸³ Le Corbusier. *The Athens Charter*; trans. Anthony Eardley (New York: Grossman, 1973), 150.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 152.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 154. A point made also by Hans Bernoulli and later, as we have seen, Adorno. See Rossi’s discussion of Bernoulli in the final chapter of *The Architecture of the City* (53—54). This point will be discussed apropos Rossi’s own arguments toward the end of this thesis. See 3.4.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 147.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 148.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 150.

¹⁸⁹ Despite Tomas Llorens’s strong critical arguments regarding Tafuri’s ambiguous use of the term “ideology,” Llorens (88), I believe he misses this point. Without it, Llorens too easily seizes on certain problematic moments—particularly those where Tafuri indulges strategies of “silence”—without either noticing contrary moments or recognising the underlying conceptual power and critical potential of Tafuri’s framework. This, again, is the basic difficulty of assessing Tafuri and his shifting function for the architectural institution. Llorens is critical of Tafuri’s operative contributions to the neo-avant-garde, but appears unwilling to bring Tafuri’s own conceptual apparatus to bear upon its author. This means a tendency to dismiss his works—for instance *Architecture and Utopia*—as incoherent, rather being able to find the proper meaning of their ambivalence. For instance, it is quite possible that, as Llorens argues, Tafuri never truly substantiated the reversal of the historical avant-garde into a positive force for ‘capitalist rationality.’ However, it is a reversal which Llorens’s might otherwise recognise to be ongoing among the neo-avant-garde, where architectural production opposes planning in the same moment that capital sheds the welfare state compromise. This is yet another example of the need to balance “immanence” with function. See 2.4.

tactical, even though within the terms of its ideology it is imbued with the deepest *strategic* significance.¹⁹⁰

We must therefore keep in mind the disciplinary incongruity between Plan and Project as we continue to examine Tafuri's arguments. Returning to the quoted passage from the second edition of *Theories and History*, Tafuri implicitly distinguishes the institutional from the disciplinary dimension through the two major tendencies he recognises: the positive, humanist position of the Italian post-war left, and the negative position of the inter-war avant-garde. In hindsight this difference suggests that between Plan and Project:

I re-emphasize this conceptual element in order to avoid misunderstanding: I am speaking of Architecture, of *all* architecture, as an institution. With the following consequence (carefully ignored by the sugary official 'Marxism'—from Fisher to Goldman and Della Volpe, by the Marcusean school—from Mitscherlich to his followers, by the 'vulgar' sociologism of Hauser, and by the recent groping in the dark of America's 'progressive' architects): *just as it is not possible to found a Political Economy based on class, so one cannot 'anticipate' a class architecture (an architecture 'for a liberated society');* *what is possible is the introduction of class criticism into architecture.* Nothing beyond this from a strict—but sectarian and partial—Marxist point of view. Any attempt to overthrow the institution, the discipline, with the most exasperated rejections or the most paradoxical ironies—let us learn from Dada and Surrealism—is bound to see itself turned into a positive contribution, into a 'constructive' avant-garde, into an ideology all the more positive as it is dramatically critical and self-critical.¹⁹¹

Note here that there is a difference between the sort of mediation at work, the manner in which different ideological positions invest in disciplinarity. On the one hand, architecture cannot overcome its impasse through positive utopian projection—in the vein of the "sugary official" Marxist architects, "anticipating" the architecture of a post-capitalist society. Just as Marx's political economy functions as a critique of bourgeois political economy rather than a science for a liberated, post-revolutionary society, from a "strict" Marxist perspective, one can only critique architecture's bourgeois character under capitalism, not actively overcome it.¹⁹² (Here, Tafuri is putting in Marxian terms, the famous separation of history from design, the "absolute separation of criticism from activity,"¹⁹³ a point to which we will return below.) The latter can only be accomplished as part of an overall transformation of society and its material relations. At the same time, one cannot escape architecture's subservient function by the avant-garde *via negativa*. There, negativity undergoes an inevitable dialectical reversal, becoming a new positive ideology.

This last point, I believe, cannot be emphasised enough. The limitation and even direct reversal of "negativity" and "criticality" into something *operative*, is one of the most

¹⁹⁰ See the introduction to Aureli, *The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture*, ix—xiv.

¹⁹¹ Tafuri, *Theories and History*, xv.

¹⁹² On the ambivalence of Marx's work as science and critique see Derek Sayer, *Marx's Method: Ideology, Science, and Critique in Capital* (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1979).

¹⁹³ Tafuri, *Theories and History*, xviii. See 2.1.2.

fundamental points in Tafuri's argument here, as elsewhere,¹⁹⁴ and indispensable in grasping the larger significance of Tafuri's work to the cultural field, as well as for coming to terms with architectural discourse post-Tafuri. To set it up, Tafuri adds architecture, "the discipline" to architecture, "the institution." "Sugary official" Marxist architecture, what we might call Italian left modernism, tried to overcome the bourgeois character of the institution, but it did not challenge the *disciplinary* character of bourgeois architecture, which, as technical specialisation mediated by humanist values, was taken to be politically neutral.¹⁹⁵ The other approach, which in the note he associates with Dada and Surrealism, but which in the body of *Theories and History* he links back at least as far as Piranesi,¹⁹⁶ functions as a self-critique of the architectural discipline, of the rationality, first of its language and then of its plan. In the passage quoted above, Tafuri explicitly rejects this approach to "overthrowing" the institution. Several pages later the point is made more forcefully; not only is negation an unsuccessful means for revolutionary transformation, it is an explicit tool of bourgeois ideology:

The use of negation: this new value, or, better, this new operating technique, has a constant function in the transformation of the capitalist-bourgeois crisis into models of development. From 1920 to about 1935, architecture was in the forefront in the battle of the dialectical conversion from Negative to Positive. Its crisis comes at the precise moment in which, facing the reality of the *Plan*, the role of foreseeing or ideologically mediating the Plan ceases to exist.¹⁹⁷

The use of negation therefore, far from overcoming the architectural discipline's subservience to capitalist development, converted crisis back into development. A clear example of the famous dialectical "negation of the negation," avant-garde negativity merely negates the crises produced by capitalist development and encountered by bourgeois ideology: "the avant-garde chains itself to the magic role of Midas."¹⁹⁸ However, the avant-garde itself cannot avoid falling into crisis, Tafuri points out, when faced with the "reality of the *Plan*." At this point, architecture's role as producer of meditating ideology becomes superfluous. But architecture encounters this crisis on both fronts, institutional and disciplinary, losing at the same time its institutional role as producer of ideology, and its

¹⁹⁴ "Indeed what are Dada's ferocious dismantling of linguistic materials and its anti-programmatic position, if not sublimations, in spite of everything, of the automatism and commodification of "values" now spread to all levels of existence by capitalist advancements? De Stijl and Bauhaus—the former in a sectarian manner, the latter in eclectic fashion—introduced the *ideology of the plan* into a *design* method that was ever more deeply linked to the city as a productive structure. Dada, through absurdity, demonstrated the necessity of the plan without ever naming it." Tafuri, "Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology", 19.

¹⁹⁵ In addressing his own critics and interpreters, Tafuri seeks to challenge this perspective: "Nevertheless these criticisms have clearly shown that the construction of the volume allows too many arbitrary interpretations: the ways in which architecture, *as a discipline*, is involved in the question of development, the ways in which the city shapes itself as a 'social' manifestation and as machinery of production, even the analysis of the relationship between the avant-garde and architecture, can obviously still be read as abstract scientific contributions." Tafuri, *Theories and History*, xvi.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 26, 28; and Tafuri, *Teorie e storia*, 40. Again, Piranesi's significance grows in 1980's *La sfera e il labirinto*.

¹⁹⁷ Tafuri, *Theories and History*, xvii.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

disciplinary coherence as projector of development. This double-bind defines its “tragic” fate: “Architecture as ideology, as an institution that ‘fulfils’ the ideology, as a discipline in crisis because of the new integrative techniques of the world of production and of anti-cyclical planning: the parable, read with different eyes, usually acquires dramatic overtones in current literature.”¹⁹⁹

What Tafuri did not foresee was how elements of the negative avant-garde would return in the Project as the basis for a new institutional consistency. The lesson learned by the neo-avant-garde was that challenges to architecture’s modern disciplinarity must be able to articulate themselves *as the basis of “Architecture” itself*, fully internalising the anarchy of the metropolis. In this position, the architectural institution finds a new function within post-planning society, as a rearguard. This possibility appears to be missed by Tafuri, when he assumes the complete uselessness and thus *equivalence* of architectural ideology, whether positive or negative. While this may have been true at a certain moment, the weight of *operativity*, of ideological currency, would soon swing in a definite direction.²⁰⁰

The source of this oversight can be found in the context of the political economic theory lying behind Tafuri’s argument. This will be examined in detail in the next chapter, but here we can note the political and disciplinary consequences which Tafuri meant to draw, and how they were received. Essentially, there was a gap between what Tafuri considered to be the historical lesson of the crisis he described, and the ideological lesson drawn by the architectural institution.

This brings us to the significance of the “death of architecture.” Lying behind this threatening yet vague phrase, is a far more concrete historical problematic. However, it really does carry a certain emotive power, for it gives the *prognosis* for architectural production. Essentially it describes the disciplinary outlook and at what point political possibilities diverge from architectural ones.

The “reality of the *Plan*,” which Tafuri defined by the development of “anti-cyclical planning” is a major theme Tafuri took from the *Contropiano* circle he joined after his move to Venice—in particular, Antonio Negri’s work on John Maynard Keynes, “La teoria capitalista dello stato nel ’29: John M. Keynes,” published in the first issue of *Contropiano*. Drawing on Negri in “Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology,” Tafuri shows how the reformist shift effectively ends the avant-garde’s role, for if the crises can be mediated by technical and political means, what need is there for aesthetico-cultural mediation, for utopian visions *or* the “magical role of Midas”?

Further to the left, European communist parties, the French PCF and Italian PCI, and the PSI as well, show themselves to be more and more integrated into a reformist compromise with capitalist development. A situation which became more explicit in the mid-70s with the

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., xvi.

²⁰⁰ It was because of this swing in ideological currency that Tafuri’s later emphasis on Piranesi became suggestive for architectural discourse, and, I would argue, the significance given to *La sfera e il labirinto* in the secondary literature becomes partial.

development of “Eurocommunism” and in Italy, the PCI’s “Historic Compromise” with the Christian Democrats.²⁰¹ For Tafuri, even before the Historic Compromise this developmentalist tendency revealed an acceptance of bourgeois ideological premises by architects associated with the traditional left.²⁰²

Overall, the failure of such approaches, positive and negative, is presented by Tafuri as an historical fact, but it is one which, given the overall polemic of his work, his contemporaries ignored or did not accept. This is what gives Tafuri’s work such urgency and at the same time such ambivalence. From 1968 to 1973, from *Theories and History* to *Architecture and Utopia* he produced a genealogy of a crisis felt throughout the discipline, particularly in the decades following the second world war. In passages like the one beginning the “note to the second edition,” Tafuri directs his contemporaries to the results of that genealogy: they are in historical “checkmate.”²⁰³ Several paragraphs later, Tafuri expands on the difficult position his contemporaries find themselves in:

From this springs, mainly, the effort to contain with artificial devices—which are bound to fail, the fall of architecture towards silence, towards the negation (also artificial) of itself: read in this key, it becomes clear that the analysis of the anti-historicism of the avant-gardes in the first chapter does not amount to a superfluous homage to a worn out idealistic historicism.

But it is also obvious that, today, irony and silence have lost their cathartic power. The perfection of the *sphere* and the infinite polyvalence of the *maze* are equivalent; such pathetic survival expedients show only that architecture can look forward, at most, to the prospect of being entirely absorbed by the private sphere.²⁰⁴

It is not hard to understand the hostility with which many in the architectural institution greeted such words. Written in 1970, before the publication of *Progetto e utopia* and before the publication in English of either it or the essay (“Per una critica dell’ideologia architettonica”) on which it was based, the note anticipates one of the most controversial readings which Tafuri’s work from this period would receive, particular among readers in English: the idea that Tafuri had announced the “death of architecture.” In the reception of Tafuri’s work, the controversial character of this notion is complex and multi-layered,

²⁰¹ Steve Wright, *Storming Heaven: Class Composition and Struggle in Italian Autonomist Marxism* (London: Pluto, 2002), 186. Much Marxist theory from the 1960s to the 1970s, and in particular Italian *Operaist* and *Autonomist* theory, is concerned with a critique of this phenomenon. Discussed in detail the following chapter (1.3).

²⁰² Tafuri, “Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology”, 32.

²⁰³ Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*, 46.

For Tafuri the architectural case is explicitly connected to a larger socio-political deadlock. In a footnote to page 176 of *Theories and History*, Tafuri quotes Gian Carlo Argan at length on the apparent end of historical possibilities: “‘The historicity of human actions [Argan wrote] appears today tormented by a crisis, of which the crisis of art constitutes only one aspect. The entire past appears like a period of which we have reached an end, like a ‘field’ of which we have touched the boundaries, a system whose functional possibilities have been exhausted: seeing the failure of the goal that the process seemed to be aiming at, we hear the ‘checkmate’ of the human enterprise. As if for a sort of defensive attitude one looks everywhere for non-historicistic structural schemes, almost to prove that history has not been and is not now the great structure of human activity and that, therefore, *lucus a non lucendo*, history can follow, by changing the historicistic pattern of its development. This would explain why the problem of the structures rises from the general crisis of the structures in every field of knowledge: not as a problem of the auxiliary insertion of structuralism into historicism, but as the problem of a historicistic structuralism or of a structuralistic historicism.’” G.C. Argan, ‘Strutturalismo e critica’ debate organised by Cesare Segre, in *Catalogo generale 1958–65* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1965), lxi. Tafuri, *Theories and History*, 218, note 13; *Teorie e storia*, 206–207.

²⁰⁴ Tafuri, *Theories and History*, xvi—xvii.

involving, among other things, its paradoxical acceptance in America. In this regard, the note to the second edition, again fulfilling its function as “interpretive key,” contains a clarification:

At this point I feel obliged to mention that my criticism of architectural ideology is not in the least apocalyptic. Desperate nihilism belongs to those who, realising the wearing out of the myths at the base of their personal faith, can see in front of them only irrevocable *destiny*. But the first condition for such a misunderstanding is the identification of particular disciplines—art and architecture amongst the foremost—and of the present institutions with perennial and metahistorical ‘values’. One of the specific tasks of the criticism of ideologies is the destruction of the myth of the perpetual and metahistorical validity of institutions and ‘values’. This activity too is of course transient, tied to the historical conditions of the class struggle, but only through patient and constant activity, all the more valid, the more conscious it is of its own objective, insuppressible ambiguity.²⁰⁵

Setting aside the final lines of this passage for now, we can see that for Tafuri, the dead-end into which architecture had found itself bears no relation whatsoever to Francis Fukuyama’s notional “end of history” to which some would later associate it.²⁰⁶ On the contrary, the end of a particular form of the architectural institution is an example of history’s *continuation*. This also bears on another famous controversy in Tafuri’s reception, to which we will also return: whether or not Tafuri’s sympathy lay with a strategy of silence and refusal, or with one of practical and politically directed action.²⁰⁷ In the note to the second edition, he is absolutely explicit: melancholic renunciation is nothing more than a “pathetic survival expedient,” an act of “desperate nihilism.”

But for Tafuri, at least in this moment of his work, this was not the only option. Here we come to the properly structural perspective, in which the historical lesson attains a strategic significance. At the same time as the dialectic of the avant-garde demonstrated the ideological character, and even direct functionality of aesthetic resistance, it also suggested a step beyond it:

It is time to seriously confront the dialectic between architecture and the avant-garde (during the only period in which it had any meaning: between 1910 and 1930), which is outlined from a limited perspective in this book. It is in this relationship in fact, that one sees most clearly all the positive and active meanings, all the anticipated values shouted by the historical avant-garde, in the very moment in which they recognise the need to suppress themselves, and to advance into subversive and revolutionary praxis.²⁰⁸

In this passage Tafuri makes clear the only possible route for resistance, to move from avant-garde anticipation, into direct political engagement. Political possibilities exist only *beyond* the failure of the avant-garde. This is a key point in Tafuri’s early work, a theme

²⁰⁵ Ibid., xviii.

²⁰⁶ Ghirardo, “Manfredo Tafuri and Architecture Theory in the U.S., 1970-2000,” 38—39.

²⁰⁷ See 3.1.1.

²⁰⁸ Tafuri, *Theories and History*, xvii.

which this thesis aims to resolve and enlarge. While neither the Plan nor the Project are able to overcome the bourgeois institutional character of architecture, the failure of the former at least defines a gap, suggests the extra-disciplinary level at which such a thing might become possible—that is, through the political and material transformation of society as a whole, and in which, I argue, “planning” returns as a necessary function. In contrast, the Project, following the example of the negative avant-garde, rejects this lesson, attempting a purely internal interrogation, politicising and inverting disciplinarity rather than recognising the determining character of the institution.

At this point, we have not yet demonstrated the connection between revolutionary praxis, and architecture’s tendential *realisation* as “planning”—a connection which will require more time to establish, but I would like to highlight here Tafuri’s emphasis on the contradiction between avant-garde anticipation and revolutionary praxis. Not only are the two incompatible, but the latter needed to “suppress” the former. In hindsight, however, we know that from the 1960s onward, the opposite process occurred: the *neo*-avant-garde superseded planning and revolutionary praxis both, and it did so by drawing its own political lesson from the crisis Tafuri described. Though he did not foresee its precise character, we can trace another anticipation of this outcome and its political alibi, in Tafuri’s “Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology.”

1.2.4 Ideology and Social Mission

“The main motive for Post-Modern architecture is obviously the social failure of Modern architecture...”

Charles Jencks²⁰⁹

Tafuri’s adoption of explicitly Marxist terms of reference became incontrovertible in the article he published in the first *Contropiano* issue of 1969: “Per una critica dell’ideologia architettonica.” This is not surprising, since it was through association with the journal that the nascent Marxian content of Tafuri’s earlier work came to the fore. As we saw above, the note to the second edition of *Theories and History* reflected on this development, demonstrating Tafuri’s desire to produce a kind of militant consistency in the interpretation of his work from 1968 to 1970. Three years later, Tafuri published *Progetto e utopia* (1973), a revised and much expanded version of the essay. As *Architecture and Utopia* (1976), the first of Tafuri’s books to be published in English, it would mark the international explosion of the historian’s influence. However, due to its reception outside of Italy, particularly on the east coast of the United States, a number of controversies surround the book. We will return to this problem in the following section. For purposes of clarity and concision, we will take up the argument as it existed in the earlier essay, which, as “Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology” arrived finally in 1998 as the first piece in K. Michaels Hays’ *Architecture Theory since 1968*.

The text begins with one of those powerful statements by Tafuri that take on a kind of lapidary autonomy from the rest of his texts: “To dispel anxiety by understanding and internalizing its causes: this would seem to be one of the principal ethical imperatives of bourgeois art.”²¹⁰ In an essay published in a special edition of *Casabella*, Giorgio Ciucci called this line the “*incipit*”—a latin term meaning the first line of a text (usually a religious text) which stands as a title for whole.²¹¹ In this way, for Ciucci, Tafuri’s *incipit* functioned as a synecdoche for the meaning of the entire essay. Both Ciucci and, in a piece also found in the *Casabella* special issue, Alberto Asor Rosa, gave to the *incipit* a decisive sense.²¹² For Ciucci, it began the essay with an unavoidable confrontation. It “obliged the reader to come to terms, in architecture as well, with that which at the time was called, in *Contropiano*, the critique of ideology (or the critique of the Plan, the ‘counter-Plan’), but which was often understood by architects as a declaration of the ‘death of architecture’.”²¹³ However, both

²⁰⁹ Charles Jencks, *What is Postmodernism?* (London: St Martin’s Press, 1986), 15. Quoted in Peter Osborne, “Aesthetic Autonomy and the Crisis of Theory,” *new formations* 9 (Winter 1989): 47, note 10.

²¹⁰ Tafuri, “Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology,” 6.

²¹¹ Giorgio Ciucci, “Gli anni della formazione / The formative years” in “Il progetto storico di Manfredo Tafuri / The Historical Project of Manfredo Tafuri”, ed. Vittorio Gregotti, *Casabella*, no.619-20 (1995): 13.

²¹² Alberto Asor Rosa, “Critica dell’ideologia ed esercizio storico / Critique of ideology and historical practice,” in “Il progetto storico di Manfredo Tafuri / The Historical Project of Manfredo Tafuri,” 28—33.

²¹³ *Ibid.*

Ciucci and Asor Rosa emphasise the theoretical context. For Asor Rosa, one of Tafuri's *Contropiano* collaborators, it was an argument built on a precise theoretical, even, "scientific" basis.²¹⁴ As mentioned above, the theme of planning took on a greater and more particular significance under the influence of *Contropiano*. In this, one can recognise the very specific direction Marxist theory was taking through the work of Negri, Tronti, and others. This context will be taken up in the next chapter. What I would like to highlight here is the specifically political dimension of architectural ideology.

If we read the opening paragraph in full, we come across a general point concerning how the contradictions of ideology become manifest as a "social mission." The passage foregrounds the contradiction most central to this thesis as a critique of ideology within architectural politics: the contradiction between apparent "social mission" and real political function. As one might assume, this disparity is greatest where the "social mission" appears most opposed to capital and the status quo. It is a fundamental passage, rich in philosophical and political meaning. Like the opening paragraphs of the note to the second edition above, it deserves a close reading.

To dispel anxiety by understanding and internalizing its causes: this would seem to be one of the principal ethical imperatives of bourgeois art. It matters little whether the conflicts, contradictions and torments that create anxiety are absorbed into a comprehensive mechanism capable of reconciling those differences, or whether catharsis is achieved through contemplative sublimation. We recognize, in any case, the "necessity" of the bourgeois intellectual in the imperative significance his "social" mission assumes: in other words, there exists, between the avant-gardes of capital and the intellectual avant-gardes, a kind of tacit understanding, so tacit indeed that any attempt to bring it into the light elicits a chorus of indignant protest. Culture, in its intermediary role, has so defined its distinguishing features in ideological terms that in its shrewdness it has reached the point—beyond all intellectual good faith—of imposing forms of contestation and protest upon its own products. And the higher the formal level of the sublimation of conflicts, the more the structures confirming and validating that sublimation remain hidden.²¹⁵

Opening with the "*incipit*," the passage begins by defining the "ethical" function of bourgeois art. We can read here a familiar theme from Georg Simmel, namely, the psychosocial stress caused by forces of modernisation.²¹⁶ This "anxiety," an effect of industrialisation and the growth of the modern "metropolis" is a negative byproduct effecting that very social-economic class which drove development. According to this argument, bourgeois art's ethical function is to mediate this anxiety rather than deny or reject it. Mediation is accomplished by "understanding and internalising its causes." Note that "understanding" does not lead to a changing or *transforming* of those causes. Rather, the

²¹⁴ Asor Rosa, "Critica dell'ideologia ed esercizio storico / Critique of ideology and historical practice," 31.

²¹⁵ Tafuri, "Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology," 6.

²¹⁶ See Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life," in Georg Simmel, *Simmel on Culture: Selected Writings*, ed. David Frisby and Mike Featherstone (London: Sage Publications, 1997), 174–186. The importance of Simmel is universally recognised in writing on Tafuri. For in depth analysis, particularly of Simmel's impact on the larger Venetian milieu, see Gail Day's "Strategies in the Metropolitan Merz: Manfredo Tafuri and Italian Workerism." See also Tomas Llorens, "Manfredo Tafuri: Neo-Avant-Garde and History." The latter third of Llorens's essay is devoted to Cacciari's use of Simmel, the problems deriving from it, and parallel issues in Tafuri.

underlying processes are made conscious to a degree, in order to then be integrated at the level of ideology.²¹⁷ Tafuri lists two possible routes to this integration: absorption into a “comprehensive mechanism capable of reconciling those difference” (between the technical demands of development and the social demands of bourgeois experience), or catharsis through “contemplative sublimation.” We can read in this distinction an echo of Tafuri’s Benjaminian comparison between the aesthetic technique of the magician and of the operative technique of the surgeon in *Theories and History*.²¹⁸

As a matter of ideological function for Tafuri, these approaches are now equivalent. Nevertheless, in the very next lines, Tafuri pushes the critique further, pronouncing perhaps the sternest diagnosis ever articulated within architectural discourse.²¹⁹ It begins with a subtle philosophical formulation: “We recognize, in any case, the “necessity” of the bourgeois intellectual in the imperative significance his ‘social’ mission assumes...” The use of the category “necessity” (“*dover essere*”)²²⁰ is crucial. What characterises the function of the intellectual’s bourgeois ideology, its *raison d’être*, is its *social* pretence. This pretence rests upon and mediates what he calls a “tacit understanding” with capital, a shared ideological basis which must at all costs remain hidden. The “social mission” functions here in a twofold manner: first, to “anticipate” and “internalise” those processes which the development of capital requires; and second, to mask the real political and economic content of that development, to present the intellectual avant-garde as an *alternative* to capital: “Culture, in its intermediary role, has so defined its distinguishing features in ideological terms that in its shrewdness it has reached the point—beyond all intellectual good faith—of imposing forms of contestation and protest upon its own products.”

We must pay particular attention here to the theme of *necessity*. Both in the first lines of the passage, and throughout, Tafuri refers the ideological function back to different forms of necessity. Tafuri speaks of the “causes” (“*le cause*”) of anxiety which must be understood and internalised, of the “necessity” (“*dover essere*”) and the “imperative” (“*imperativo*”) of the ideological function. The theme of *necessity* was highlighted by Tomas Llorens in another important contribution, “On Making History,” this time to the 1982 Revisions symposium, published as *Architecture Criticism Ideology*.²²¹ It brings us up against a complex of related philosophical notions which will return throughout later chapters of this thesis: critiques of “planning” as *deterministic*, criticality and “the negative” against Marxist “orthodoxy” and “synthesis,” questions of political and architectural *autonomy*, and above all, subjective agency and the architectural *Project*. As a philosophical category, *necessity* is one of the most

²¹⁷ It is an ambiguity shared by *Contropiano*, Adorno and others: that understanding can be both ideological and scientific.

²¹⁸ Tafuri, *Theories and History*, 31–32.

²¹⁹ So stern in fact, that Tafuri appears to have softened the rhetoric for *Architecture and Utopia*. Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*, 2.

²²⁰ Manfredo Tafuri, “Per una critica dell’ideologia architettonica,” 31.

²²¹ Tomas Llorens “On Making History,” in Joan Ockman et al., *Architecture Criticism Ideology* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1985), 24–48.

fundamental and problematic, an obstacle around which architectural ideology constructs notions of political agency and articulates its “social mission.” To anticipate, while ideology is a matter of *institutional necessity*, the Project will be posed, time and again, as a critique of necessity, an existential protest, a free choice or act of will.²²²

This nominal contradiction between ideology presented against necessity, and the necessity of ideology, functions perfectly according to the definition of ideology with which Tafuri began his essay. Thus, the critique of architectural ideology begins from a position outside bourgeois aesthetics, outside architecture. From this vantage, all the paradoxical disciplinary material produced by the institution can be perceived relative to the latter’s position in the relations of production and the *necessities* entailed.

The tacit basis of its position requires of architectural ideology both a dedicated defence of the institution’s basic assumptions as well as the internalisation of critique “beyond all good faith.” This combined stance succinctly characterises, architecture’s “critical theory,” as it were “since 1968.” It demands, in the same breath, that architecture must be subjected to critique, while that critique must remain internal to architecture. This process of internalisation, entailing a disciplinary shift toward “critique,” can be applied to virtually the entire field of architectural production. As Alan Colquhoun characterised it in 1983, even though the field contained many different propositions, the general line presented “the possibility of architectural discourse as a critique rather than as a dogmatism.”²²³

In the next paragraph of the text, Tafuri points to the causes for the development of “criticality” within bourgeois ideology. With the collapse of the disciplinary hold over “planning” that came with the adoption of real planning by capital, avant-garde intellectuals found themselves suddenly without a leading or “anticipatory” role. Rather than “disappear from the stage,” these agents presented their frustration as an intellectual challenge *against capital*. In this manner, and without relinquishing the underlying institutional connection to capital, architectural ideology presents a position apparently free of class characteristics:

If we are to confront the subject of the ideology of architecture from this perspective, we must attempt to shed light on how one of the most functional proposals for the reorganization of capital has come to suffer the most humiliating frustrations, to the point where it can be presented today as objective and transcending all connotations of class, or even as a question of alternatives, a terrain of direct confrontation between intellectuals and capital.²²⁴

In such passages Tafuri anticipates the changing nature of architectural ideology, where it begins to adopt a new perspective and “social mission,” simultaneously claiming the ethical

²²² The discussion of *necessity* will resume at the end of section two, and again at the end of section three.

²²³ Alan Colquhoun, “A Way of Looking at the Present Situation,” in *Collected Essays in Architectural Criticism* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2009), 190.

²²⁴ Manfredo Tafuri, “Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology,” 6. “Having arrived at an undeniable impasse due to the inherent contradictions of capitalist development, architectural ideology gives up its role as stimulus to the structures of production and hides behind ambiguous slogans contesting the “technological civilization.” *Ibid.*, 29.

mantle of a challenge to capitalism, while shifting its terms toward questions of meaning, language, and rationality. However, this architectural criticism still functions within the terms of bourgeois ideology, obscuring the real bases for the collapse of its earlier disciplinary position. We must recall that this earlier disciplinary investment entailed an ambiguous combination of ideological, technical, and legitimately progressive possibilities. In the case of Le Corbusier, it was temporarily possible to maintain both the necessity of the architect's social mission, and the manner in which that mission could only be satisfied in non-architectural terms. The contradiction begins as a disciplinary one, between the technical/social role of the architect and the extra-disciplinary fields capable of delivering on architecture's propositions.

Returning to the passage used as a reference point for Tafuri's use of "Piano" above, we find the following:

The Plan embraced by the leading architectural movements (the term "avant-garde" is no longer applicable), starting with Le Corbusier's *Plan Voisin* (1925) and the stabilization of the Bauhaus (around 1921), contained the following contradiction: starting from the building sector, architectural culture discovered that only by linking that sector to the reorganization of the city could preestablished goals be satisfactorily met. But this was equivalent to saying that, just as the demands presented by the avant-gardes had pointed to the visual communications sector most directly entrenched in the economic process (i.e., architecture and industrial design), so the planning formulated by architectural and urban theorists likewise pointed toward something other than itself: to wit, toward a restructuring of production and consumption in general— toward a *plan for capital*, in other words.²²⁵

As we have seen already, this contradiction immediately puts the leading role demanded by architects into serious jeopardy:

In this sense, architecture—starting with itself—mediated between realism and utopia. The utopia lay in stubbornly continuing to hide the fact that the ideology of planning could be realized in building production only by making clear that the true Plan could only take shape beyond this sector; and that, indeed, once the Plan came within the scope of the general reorganization of production, architecture and urban planning would become its objects, not its subjects.²²⁶

On the verge of realisation, its disciplinarity and institutionality in serious crisis, the contradiction transforms into a *political one*. The underlying ambivalence of *realisation*, which always contained contradictory possibilities, is decided in this moment in such as way to save the architectural institution and to prevent revolution:

Architectural culture, in the 1920s, was not ready to accept such consequences. What it understood most clearly was its own "political" task. It was a question of architecture (read: the planned reorganization of

²²⁵ Ibid., 20.

²²⁶ Ibid., 21.

building production and the city as a productive organism) over Revolution. Le Corbusier articulated this choice very clearly, and it is also implicit in the writings of others such as Mondrian and Gropius.²²⁷

Thus, architecture puts the terms of its survival explicitly in opposition to political transformation—to revolution—offering them as a reformist alternative. Architecture bargains that it can retain institutional agency by fulfilling both its ideological and technical functions in the service of capitalist society by integrating and overcoming its contradictions. History, however, seems to have responded to Le Corbusier's proposal with the forbidding: neither architecture nor revolution.

Confronting the collapse which its forebears had failed to prevent, the neo-avant-gardes strike a different bargain: transforming their anguish into a new “project,” internalising critique as they lay down a new disciplinary *pivot* away from planning. But this break with capital is only an apparent one. In reality, architecture has already set about rebuilding its institutional and disciplinary stability, its “tacit understanding.” The collapse of architecture's ideology of the plan is so thorough as to produce an apparent schism between architects and their own class, but this schism only sustains the institutional mandate of architecture as a necessarily autonomous discipline at the same time as it takes any structural confrontation with capitalist development and the modern city off the table. Thus, with expectations lowered even from the reformist content of Le Corbusier's "Architecture or Revolution," the resulting formula of Project ideology eventually becomes Architecture or *Reform*.²²⁸

In fact, with the social democratic compromise already entering its own crisis at the time Tafuri and others were hunting down its ideologies and contradictions, the significance of their critique takes on a particular ambivalence. Suspended between the era of the realised plan, defined by Keynesian economics and the social democratic state, and the era of Neoliberalism, defined by its monetarism, its abandonment of fiscal measures and state planning, its austerity and political crises, the political valence of the critique of architectural ideology remains problematic and difficult to assess today. What becomes of the critique of architectural ideology, so thoroughly identified with the “Plan,” when planning ceases to be an area of significant disciplinary investment?

As a matter of historical and political context, this challenge is substantial enough, but for “architecture theory,” as it developed in the intervening years, the challenge appears to be practically insurmountable. And here the role Tafuri himself would come to play in later years is decisive. The *pivot* undertaken by the architectural institution, away from planning and toward a new disciplinarity, seems to be matched by Tafuri's own *pivot*: away from the critique of ideology, and toward the “project of history.” In this move, history and criticism will match stride with design, redefining methodological terms to match. In section two, we

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ In other words, architecture as aesthetic or “cultural” alternative to socio-economic reform.

will examine how the reception history of Tafuri's work sorts through these challenges and ambiguities.

Before arriving at the properly historiographical section of the thesis, however, we must finish outlining the specifically political-theoretical themes by which architecture ideology became so thoroughly associated with planning and the "Plan." This will help to set up how, as premised upon a *critique* of the Plan, the Project enters smoothly into criticism itself.

1.3 WORKERIST CRITIQUES OF THE PLAN

We have already seen how Tafuri's critique of architectural ideology was at the same time general to an institutional definition of architecture (architecture in capitalist society) and specific to a disciplinary definition of architecture: architecture as "ideology of the Plan." In this chapter we will examine the largely extra-disciplinary theoretical basis upon which Tafuri developed the latter critique. To reiterate, "planning" refers not only to the specific architectural practices of urban or territorial planning, but to the broader notion of social, technical, and economic planning, of the "Plan of capital." It is a term which captures the parallel between architectural production, processes of development, and their underlying political character—notably both in the capitalist West, and the socialist East.²²⁹

While helpful as an abstract category, in order to be useful this general framing of the "Plan" must be defined in historical context. As we shall see, in Tafuri's use that context was the era of economic reform, variously known as the era of "social democracy" or of the "welfare state," which extended in Italy as in much of Western Europe, from the end of the Second World War, to the mid 1970s, with traces appearing in the United States as early as 1929. This context is indispensable if we hope to understand the contradictions which contemporary architectural discourse has inherited from that period, particularly the 1960s and early 1970s.

Through a complex net of associations, both theoretical and ideological, contemporary architectural discourse carries a largely unconscious hostility toward the politics of the post-war period, despite their otherwise appealing social democratic character, their welfare institutions, and general middle class prosperity. In fact, it is hardly an exaggeration to say that for the last fifty or so years architectural politics have been actively defined *in opposition* to this era, and to its reformist politics.²³⁰ This is certainly not to say that architecture has been revolutionary. On the contrary, architectural politics of the last half century can be characterised by their departure from the range of political-economic problematics reform and revolution had in common—problematics which, in architectural terms, are inseparable from the history of the Modern Movement.

The obsolescence or otherwise unpalatability of these political alternatives was a major premise of the neo-avant-garde. This can be seen, for instance in Colin Rowe's introduction to *Five Architects*.²³¹ In the autopsy of modernist aspiration with which Colin Rowe

²²⁹ Tafuri, "Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology," 49.

²³⁰ This important point developed as a reflection on a brief exchange I had with Pier Vittorio Aureli following a PhD presentation at the AA. In it, I had questioned the architectural institution's capacity to produce "radical" political alternatives to neoliberalism. Aureli challenged me on two points: first, the ambiguity of the term "radical," which he pointed out, had attained the dubious status of a buzzword. Well taken, this led me to reflect on my somewhat euphemistic use of the term "radical," when I really meant "revolutionary." Second, he questioned the premise of my argument, stating more or less, that it was pointless to critique the radical (read: revolutionary) intentions of architecture because architecture was inherently reformist. The point struck me to be a difficult one, and I eventually concluded that as far as the present was concerned, it was quite the opposite.

²³¹ Colin Rowe, "Introduction to Five Architects," in *Architecture Theory since 1968*, 74—84. Originally published in *Five Architect* (New York: Wittenborn, 1972).

constructed ‘reasonable doubt’ in the case of the New York Five, Rowe remarked on how “the central and socialist mission of modern architecture had failed—or alternatively that this mission had become dissolved in the sentimentalities and bureaucracies of the welfare state.”²³² After this point, it was no longer necessary nor tenable to follow the premises of the modernist “social mission.” As Rowe put it, this failure severed the connection between the modernist “*physique*” and its “*morale*,”²³³ justifying a neo-avant-garde carrying out further experiments upon the *physique*, alone, simply dropping the social-political pretence. However, this departure held equally strongly if the terms were reversed. One could explore the modernist *morale* while excluding the functional and technical aspects of the modernist *physique* bearing on the structure of society.²³⁴ This route was pursued by other elements of the neo-avant-garde (notably Aldo Rossi, object of the final section of this thesis) who maintained an apparent fidelity to the left. Alan Colquhoun has remarked on this seeming contradiction:

It is interesting to note that the most coherent critique of modernism in Europe—that of the Italians—came from architects who belonged to the political left and were concerned with the fundamentally social role of architecture. It is true that the Neo-rationalists stressed the relative autonomy of architecture and that they no longer considered architecture as capable of generating a technical, social, or political revolution. But this negative attitude toward architecture’s revolutionary potential was not due to any desire to preserve the political status quo. Rather, it arose out of a loss of faith in technology as a liberating force, in the idea of ‘modernisation’, and in the corresponding elements of a modernist architecture.²³⁵

While Colquhoun restricts their critique to “modernisation,” it entailed, as we will see later on, the exclusion of far more than “technology as a liberating force.” Architectural politics and the notion of architecture’s social “project” emerged from the 60s and 70s premised upon an ethicist dualism, splitting the terms of political-economy, and setting an autonomist political *project*, against the technocratic economism of *planning*.

As we have already covered, the disciplinary notion, “planning,” formed the dominant ideological basis of architectural production from the second half of the nineteenth century (or in more abstract terms, as far back as the Enlightenment, or even Brunelleschi) until its crisis in the interwar period.²³⁶ After that, planning ideology could only serve, at best, “rear-guard tasks of marginal importance.”²³⁷ Beyond this point, but accelerating after the Second World War in Europe, the architectural institution was forced to remake its disciplinarity on a different basis. In the immanent terms of architectural discourse, how was this articulated?

²³² Ibid., 82.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Incidentally also excluded by the NY5. The form/ethic duality Rowe assumes expresses perfectly the oblivion into which “planning” fell, and the general lack of materialism within such discourse.

²³⁵ Alan Colquhoun, “Postmodernism and Structuralism: A Retrospective Glance” in *Collected Essays in Architectural Criticism*, 243.

²³⁶ Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*, 48–49.

²³⁷ Ibid.

When one examines early “architectural theory” one finds a range of critical arguments bearing on “reformism” through the associated notions of “planning,” “development,” and “technocracy,” a line of discourse perhaps most influentially articulated by Kenneth Frampton.

At this point and for material reasons, architecture begins to be defined *against* planning. Beyond internal debates between, for instance, the opposed schools of structuralism and phenomenology, lies the common opponent:

For the work in architecture theory written before 1977, it is especially helpful to understand the importation and deployment of both structuralist and phenomenological thought as militating against the received models of modernist functionalism and the positivist analyses that had reemerged in the guises of behaviorism, sociology, and operations research in the 1960s. Against these, structuralism and phenomenology each projected questions of “meaning” (it is a prevalent word in the essays presented here) into a structure of sheer relations among architectural elements within a field of signification.²³⁸

It can also be read in the shared hostility toward functionalism of the rival “neo-rationalists” and “neo-realists.”²³⁹ Elements of modernist “planning” form a common opponent that *was* architecture, but could no longer be. Such is the disciplinary pivot in its general form, but our concern is not only with the reflexive character of architecture’s disciplinary constitution. Above all, we are after the political stakes of the shift, the manner in which it meditated architectural politics.

Here we encounter a deeper and more difficult dimension to the problem, for it was not only determined by “limiting conditions” specific to architecture, but also immanent to political theory and indeed, political history outside of the architectural institution. Of course, to take a larger view, the crisis in the ideological role of architecture, was only a part of a much larger historical and political context, but even at the immanent level, we find reflections proper to that larger context begin to cross over into architectural discourse. ‘Architecture theory,’ and Tafuri in particular, synthesised, adapted, and transformed a number of extra-disciplinary arguments and the critiques of reform, planning, and rationality therein. We therefore must look to this other, discursive process of mediation, in order to understand the contradictions proper to architectural politics and architectural ideology.

Insofar as it presented useful tools to architectural criticism, this extra-disciplinary theoretical field can be divided into three major streams: “Critical Theory” of the Frankfurt School, Italian post-war Marxism, or *operaismo* (“workerism”), and French “structuralism.” In the last case, an abstract and highly diverse theoretical field—psychoanalysis, anthropology, and, particularly in the case of Louis Althusser, Marxian political economy—became joined through a common intersection with Saussurean linguistics. For various reasons, including disciplinary eclecticism and Althusser’s loyalty to the French Communist

²³⁸ Hays, xiii.

²³⁹ See 3.3.2.

Party, French theory, apart from the notable case of Michel Foucault, was less directly concerned than their Italian counterparts with presenting a critique of social democracy—though it certainly involved a departure from the Old Left. Italian workerism, more definitively Marxist and employing political theory and sociological research on labour relations and class constitution, began from a position embedded within class struggle and political organisation, but hostile to the reformism of the major left parties and unions. Their arguments, while introducing a number of new ideas and emphases with lasting and influential effects, followed the familiar Marxian lines of a left, or revolutionary, critique of reformism (left critique of the left). In the case of the Frankfurt School—a rather imprecise name because one has to include outliers like Georg Lukács and Walter Benjamin, together with a longer tradition of German Social Philosophy—the case is more complicated.

All the above streams coincide in architecture theory from the late 1960s onward, combining various shared themes to the increasing exclusion of Marxism, class politics, and political economy in general. They can all be readily located among Tafuri's conceptual references. Because it will bring us closest to Tafuri's critique of ideology and to the theme of "planning"—both as a social and political question and as a disciplinary problem for architecture—I will focus on the Italian case.²⁴⁰

There were a number of publications and groups working on these themes in Italy from the early 1960s to the 1970s. Journals such as *Quaderni Rossi*, *Classe Operaia*, *Poetere Operaio*, and the Veneto based *Contropiano*, with which Tafuri was associated. An excellent and detailed survey of this material in English can be found in Steve Wright's *Storming Heaven: Class Composition and Struggle in Italian Autonomist Marxism*. In order to cut closer to our theme I will focus primarily on three texts in which a representative outline of the workerist analysis of planning and reform can be found:²⁴¹ the first, Raniero Panzieri's "Surplus Value and Planning: Notes for a Reading of Capital"²⁴² written in 1957 and perhaps more anticipatory than strictly "workerist," the second by Mario Tronti, "The Plan of Capital"²⁴³; and the last and perhaps most clearly influential on Tafuri, by Antonio Negri, "Keynes and the Capitalist Theory of the State, Post-1929."

²⁴⁰ Much could be said on the influence of German Social Philosophy and Critical Theory, from Weber and Simmel, to Benjamin and Adorno and later Nietzsche, and Heidegger. Indeed much has been said: see the work of Gail Day. Though important consequences will be drawn at the methodological level of "immanent critique," textual investigation of these links lies outside the scope of this thesis.

²⁴¹ I follow the judgement of John Merrington, introduction to Antonio Negri, "Keynes and the Capitalist Theory of the State, Post-1929," in A. Negri, *Revolution Retrieved: Writings on Marx, Keynes, Capitalist Crisis, and New Social Subjects (1967–83)*, 7.

²⁴² Raniero Panzieri, "Surplus value and planning: notes on the reading of *Capital*," in R. Panzieri et al., *The Labour Process & Class Strategies* (London: Stage 1, 1976), 4–25.

²⁴³ The original title was "Il capitale sociale," and the 1973 English translation retains it: Mario Tronti, "Social Capital," *Telos* no. 17 (Fall 1973): 98–121. Later changed to "Il piano del capitale" the essay became a chapter in Mario Tronti, *Operai e Capitale*, 57–83.

1.3.1 Panzieri: Capital as Planner

The theme shared by these essays concerns the use of “planning” by capital, something which, in Marxist discourse, was often thought a contradiction in terms. Steve Wright sets the context in the following manner:

Despite the postwar cycle of accumulation, many within the Italian left continued to see the words 'capitalism' and 'development' as polar opposites. Their view, expressed in the impeccably orthodox terms of the contradiction between relations and forces of production, was of an Italy held back by the stagnant forces of local capital, yet vulnerable to the proclivities of a crisis-ridden international economy. If others in the PCI and PSI rejected such an interpretation, and conceded the reality of Italy's 'miracle', they did so from a starting point which denied the inextricable connections between economic growth and the logic of capital, embracing technological development instead as an autonomous and innately progressive force. One of the most important marks of *Quaderni Rossi's* political realism, by contrast, was to be its rejection of this false dichotomy. 'One could say', Panzieri (1975: 170-1) told a meeting of editors in August 1961, 'that the two terms capitalism and development are the same thing.' Now, however, development meant neither a generic 'progress' nor 'modernisation', but merely the extended reproduction of both the capital relation and the class contradictions which followed in its train.²⁴⁴

In the key essay mentioned above, Panzieri had argued that in the passages on “cooperation” Marx already described a form of “planning” within the factory. Workers’ cooperation in industrial production was not something they brought to the factory, but something applied,²⁴⁵ a form of production *planned* by capital:

In the capitalist mode of production cooperation is the *fundamental* form. Cooperation is the basis for the development of labour’s social productive forces. Cooperation in its capitalist form is therefore the first and basic expression of the law of (surplus) value. We can get a better idea of the law’s characteristics if we follow in Marx’s footsteps and look at cooperation from a social-economic viewpoint. ‘When *numerous labourers* work together side by side, whether in *one and the same* process, or in different but *connected* processes, they are said to *co-operate*, or to work in *co-operation*.’ Starting from cooperation, capital takes command over a *planned labour process*. Planning immediately appears at the level of direct production not in contradiction to capital’s mode of operation but as an essential aspect of capital’s development. Therefore there is no incompatibility between planning and capital, for by taking control of the labour process in its cooperative form (thus realizing its ‘historical mission’), capital at the same time appropriates the process’ fundamental and specific characteristic, which is planning.²⁴⁶

The contradiction in Marx was thus not between planning and capital, but between “order within the factory, and anarchy in society.”²⁴⁷ Furthermore, according to Panzieri, this contradiction is historically specific to the era of capitalist competition, beyond which it need

²⁴⁴ Wright, 36.

²⁴⁵ Panzieri, “Surplus Value and Planning,” 7. Panzieri quotes Marx: “This is where the fundamental mystification of political economy puts in its appearance: Because the social productive power of labour ‘costs capital nothing, and because, on the other hand, the labourer himself does not develop it before his labour belongs to capital, it appears as a power with which capital is endowed by Nature—a productive power that is immanent in capital.” Marx, *Capital I* (Charles H. Kerr & Company, New York, 1906), 365.

²⁴⁶ Panzieri, “Surplus Value and Planning,” 7. A contrasting argument beginning from a similar premise can be found in Ernest Mandel’s “In Defence of Socialist Planning.”

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

not apply. Panzieri attempted to demonstrate the existence of further periods projected by Marx in *Capital*, highlighting Marx's disputed anticipation of a "Monopoly Stage"²⁴⁸ and in particular the section on "Share Capital."²⁴⁹ For Panzieri, however, this is only a hint in Marx of what could not have been foreseen in the nineteenth century: the era of planned capital proper that began in the 1930s and continued up to Panzieri's present.²⁵⁰ In this new era, according to Panzieri, capital had overcome the structural contradictions in the rate of profit that necessitated competition between capitals.²⁵¹ Now capital was capable of taking a rational, scientific approach to society as a whole, with no barriers to its extension apart from political opposition from the working class.²⁵² In this model, capitalist domination takes the form of "technical necessity"—for Panzieri, a most threatening development through which the working class moves from formal, to *real* subsumption under capital.²⁵³

As an aside, we can note how horror at "technical necessity" would become a prevalent theme in architectural discourse after the 1960s, a common undercurrent to many critiques of modernism. But even this more precise connection between technical necessity and labour can be seen, for instance, in Kenneth Frampton's attempt to rescue a humanist form of architectural production using Hannah Arendt's distinction between "labour" and "work."²⁵⁴

Obviously Panzieri and his contemporaries in the workerist milieu did not develop these arguments in a vacuum. As mentioned already, Italian socialist politics in the early 1960s, were defined on the domestic front by the reformism of the two major left parties, the PCI and the PSI, which, emerging from the common front against fascism, had taken up positions in favour of further technical development under capitalism, even against resistance by the workers themselves.²⁵⁵ Internationally, they were confronted by the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956. The latter event produced a crisis in Western Marxists' identification with the Soviet Union, and would become a defining memory for many²⁵⁶ (echoed later by the Soviet response to the Prague Spring in 1968). Caught between domestic Parties amenable to capital, and a foreign Socialism which appeared alien and despotic, the Western Marxist intellectual was truly in a difficult position. The critique of planning dealt a blow against both

²⁴⁸ Henning, *Philosophy after Marx*, 108. For Henning, the monopoly stage was not projected by Marx in *Capital*, but developed later by Lenin. Henning holds Lenin responsible for later ersatz periodisations of capitalist development, from the 'knowledge society' to 'post-Fordism.' Henning, 120.

²⁴⁹ Panzieri, "Surplus value and planning", 16–17.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 21.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 11–12.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁵⁴ Kenneth Frampton, "The Status of Man and the Status of His Objects: A Reading of *The Human Condition*," in *Architecture Theory since 1968*, 362–377. Originally published in *Hannah Arendt: The Recovery of the Public World*, ed. Melvyn A. Hill (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979)

²⁵⁵ Wright, *Storming Heaven*, 8–9.

²⁵⁶ Mario Tronti, "Our Operaismo," *New Left Review*, 73 (Jan/Feb 2012):122.

targets, through the ‘orthodox’ assumption they shared that technical development was politically neutral.²⁵⁷

A version of this critique was made by Aldo Rossi in 1962, when he challenged the depoliticised premises of urban and territorial planning of the *nuovo dimensione*.²⁵⁸ However a counter example can be found in *The Architecture of the City* (1966), where Rossi defends Haussmann’s renovation²⁵⁹ and argues for the progressive inevitability of bourgeois urban development in general.²⁶⁰ Rossi appears paradoxically on either side of this problem, as disciplinary critic of planning, and defender of its historical necessity. In chapter ___ below, we will see how the solution to the paradox depends entirely on Rossi’s own historical and institutional context: if planning has become impossible, architectural agency must be constructed against it.

Panzieri began his essay by taking aim at Lenin’s arguments on the neutrality of technique.²⁶¹ Because Lenin did not consider the manner of production within the factory, that is industrial “cooperation”, to be inherently capitalist or bourgeois, this form remained unchallenged in the Soviet Union, reproducing, according to Panzieri, capitalist domination.²⁶² Panzieri’s argument represented a significant change of political emphasis. For Marx, and especially for Lenin, the crucial political question concerned ownership over the means of production. The capitalist mode of production “rests on the fact that the material conditions of production are in the hands of nonworkers in the form of property in capital and land, while the masses are only owners of the personal condition of production, of labor power.”²⁶³ That was what made capitalism capitalism, the basis of the capitalist mode of production and the key feature of its relations of production. A revolutionary transformation meant, first and foremost, that workers take control over production. For Panzieri, the

²⁵⁷ Wright, *Storming Heaven*, 9.

²⁵⁸ In the second of his points he proposes “L’approfondimento dei rapporti tra scelta politica e scelta urbanistica: nel senso di una coscienza politica del lavoro urbanistico, della capacità da parte dell’urbanista di proporre precise soluzioni, senza cadere nell’equivoco di crederci capace di assorbire in sé -nell’atto della pianificazione -il valore della scelta politica. D’altra parte, l’esclusione del concetto di pianificazione come fatto puramente tecnico e oggettivo, come strumento da potersi usare indifferentemente per qualsiasi soluzione politica. Questo invita alla chiarezza ideologica e alla chiara posizione dell’urbanista verso la realtà presente.” Aldo Rossi, “Nuovi problemi,” 191.

²⁵⁹ Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, trans. Diane Ghirardo and Joan Ockman (Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 1982), 156.

²⁶⁰ Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 154. This ambivalence will be discussed below: 3.4.

²⁶¹ Panzieri, “Surplus Value and Planning,” 5—6.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, 21—22. This argument was developed further by Rita di Leo, *Operai e sistema sovietico*, a book which Tafuri later considered to have produced the final split between his circle and “socialism.” Tafuri and Passerini, “History as Project: An Interview with Manfredo Tafuri,” 46. Rita di Leo, *Operai e sistema sovietico* (Bari: Laterza, 1970).

²⁶³ Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (London: Dodo Press, 2009), 11—12. Concerning the political process, the revolutionary transformation of capitalism into socialism or communism, this text is fundamental. It is, however, also subject to debate. In his essay “Understanding the Critique of the Gotha Programme”, Michael A Lebowitz argues against the narrow interpretation of Marx’s argument concerning the central importance of State ownership of the means of production, which, in his opinion led to continued alienation under Soviet Socialism. For Lebowitz, the two sides of production, its ownership, and the relations themselves, what Panzieri highlights in his discussion of “cooperation”, are connected and part of a total process of revolutionary transformation. In this, Lebowitz echoes part of Panzieri’s critique of Leninism; however, Lebowitz cites Marx to the effect that ownership over the means of production is still central in the transitional movement from Capitalism to Socialism. He also references Lenin himself, arguing that the entire discussion must be put into concrete historical context, rather than discussed in generalities. See Michael A. Lebowitz, “Understanding the Critique of the Gotha Programme,” in *The Socialist Imperative: From Gotha to Now* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2015), 42—74.

emphasis should on the contrary be placed on the organised form of production, the relations of production among workers defined by capital's domination through "planning" (i.e. cooperation). Once the argument is made that Capital has extended its planning mastery over society as a whole, then the capitalist relations of production in general can be defined more or less exclusively according to their planned form, and not according to their class control or ownership. It becomes not a question of who is planning and in whose interest, but of making a critique of planning itself. At this point it becomes possible to define anti-capitalist political practice as a challenge to the form of labour rather than the larger systemic structure in which labour occurs. At this point, for Panzieri, both the reformist approach to development, and the basic programme of socialist revolution appear to be suspect.

It is not hard to imagine which aspects of later political theory this foreshadows. First, the abandonment of political economy, for if capitalist development is no longer subject to internal contradictions, what point could exist in challenging bourgeois economic theory? After the failure of Keynesian economics, this problem becomes particularly acute. Thereafter neo-classical economics, specifically of the neoliberal sort, achieve a clear hegemony. Matching this abandonment is a reciprocal investment in the "autonomy of the political," which, emptied of political economy ultimately means "autonomy of the cultural." In architectural terms, essays like Panzieri's provided a theoretical alibi for staking political practice on challenges to the *disciplinary* content of architecture (as planning), rather than its institutional basis (bourgeois). This, I argue, is the basic premise of the "Project": the hypothesis that it is from the intrinsic content of the work itself that political radicalism flows, rather than from the social context of a systematic structural challenge to capitalist society.

With the historic left and organised labour *really subsumed* under Capital, and no immediate model for revolutionary action, the only thing left for the Marxist intellectual to do was to search out new forms and signs of worker resistance on the ground and in the factory,²⁶⁴ to return to the beginning as Mario Tronti put it, to Marx's own point of departure.²⁶⁵ Tafuri himself reflected on this theme in the 1992 interview with Louisa Passerini:

Two points made by Panzieri remained important to us: first, to return to Marx meant to negate Marx himself, that is, to understand today's world and to try to understand that which seems to be its nemesis: the capitalist system, in its ultimate development, because it is measured at that level, and not in a lower form. This was the first thing. Then there was the central importance of the factory, and therefore of the working man, and also of the worker as subject. In fact, at a certain point we asked who was this subject to whom the ideal of social and urban justice refers? Those most in need, no? Or so it seemed to us.²⁶⁶

²⁶⁴ Wright, *Storming Heaven*, 62. Wright refers to Raniero Panzieri, *La crisi del movimento operaio: Scritti interventi lettere, 1956-60* (Milan: Lampugnani Nigri), 254, 321.

²⁶⁵ Tronti, "Social Capital," 18.

²⁶⁶ Tafuri and Passerini, "History as Project: An Interview with Manfredo Tafuri," 32.

Still, Panzieri and the journal in which he and Tronti published, *Quaderni Rossi*, attempted to maintain a relationship with the historic left. But this difficult negotiation was only to get more difficult in 1962 after the confrontation in Piazza Statuto, which brought workers into open conflict with the unions. *Quaderni Rossi* could not avoid being associated with these “disorders,” and the resulting fallout led to the journal’s breakdown and a final split between Panzieri and Tronti.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁷ Wright, *Storming Heaven*, 58—59.

1.3.2 Tronti: Planning as Politics

One of the chief assumptions in Panzieri's account held that capital had achieved true scientific mastery over the process of its development, and was therefore in a position to extend its "planning" indefinitely.²⁶⁸ This assumption was encapsulated in Panzieri's periodisation, which, beginning with Marx's description of the escalating use of planning by capital within the factory,²⁶⁹ projected ever higher rationalisation across society— with no apparent internal contradictions or failures—arriving at the full socialisation of capital by the reformist welfare state. This, of course, was a serious departure from the central Marxist proposition concerning bourgeois ideology: that capital's perspective could only ever be partial and inconsistent. Without this, Marxism could be construed as a purely political ideology, rather than a theoretical and scientific critique of political economy.²⁷⁰

Tafuri continues the passage quoted above, by turning from class composition, to the critique of ideology:

The emphasis on these facts was the beginning. But onto this were grafted many of Tronti's reflections. I understand him to mean that the whole of leftist thought is imbedded by its own ideological constructions. Tronti had cried the expression 'critica dell'ideologia' [critique of ideology], which advanced the idea that it is possible to do theoretical politics, which becomes in practice the critique of ideology. For us, the critique of ideology was mainly the critique of the Left.²⁷¹

It is not difficult to interpret Tafuri's framing of Tronti in line with Panzieri's argument. If bourgeois economy has achieved the status of objective science, then ideology is a problem *for the left*. Yet it is a rather more complicated problem than this interpretation would imply, for there is a long tradition of "critiques of the Left" within Marxism, and as already mentioned, this thesis is intended as such. The key factor being, of course, that Marxist critiques of the left generally begin from a position of political economy, rather than "theoretical politics." Add to that the mediating role played by architectural ideology in the presentation of an architectural "left," and one confronts a unique situation. In the years to which he referred, Tafuri himself was engaged directly in left politics at the same time as he produced his critique of the architectural institution. However, the precise character of the left position was in a state of profound flux. Elsewhere in the interview, Tafuri refers to the study of the Soviet planning by Rita di Leo:

²⁶⁸ Panzieri, "Surplus value and planning," 11–12.

²⁶⁹ "In effect, the Marxian analysis is intended to show how capital utilises planning at increasingly higher levels of the productive process—from simple cooperation to manufacture and to large-scale industry—in order to strengthen and extend its command over labour power and obtain an even larger access to it." Ibid., 7.

²⁷⁰ A version of this critical premise remained within Adorno's thinking on "function" and "irrationality" in capitalist society. See Adorno, "Functionalism Today," 9. In more concretely Marxist terms, its abandonment implied a departure from fundamental hypotheses, such as the "tendency of the rate of profit to fall" (LTRPF), an absolutely central tool for understanding capital's structural constraints and the conditions in which "reform" can occur. See Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. III (London: Penguin, 1976), 317–375.

²⁷¹ Tafuri and Passerini, "History as Project: An Interview with Manfredo Tafuri," 32.

She wrote for *Contropiano*, but later published a book about the mechanism of the first Soviet Five-Year Plan for the creation of large cities between Siberia and UKK. Her work was based on original documents, and the book was written from the point of view of the architectural historian. She looked at the large integrated system that spanned Siberia and created what in a capitalist system seemed to be an extraordinary thing, something seemingly impossible in 1928 and 1930: the articulation of two large centers, one for mining and the other for steel production. Di Leo's study served to turn the tools of ideological critique back upon its own matrix.²⁷²

For her critiques of soviet planning, Di Leo was expelled from the Italian Communist Party. In the interview, Tafuri goes on to say that the whole episode turned him and his circle against "socialism":

We held a conference here in Venice in 1970 called 'Socialism, City, Architecture.' Asor Rosa talked about the ambiguity of Mayakowsky. We took up this whole ideological matrix, the relationships among artistic and literary avant-garde, principally socialism and revolution, and, on the other hand, the problem of production with respect to architects. We arrived at the conclusion that Stalin exemplified socialism, and therefore, we were against it. The university basically ignored the whole thing until Cacciari decided to bring Heidegger onto the pages of *Rinascita*. The project was blocked for two year, but finally his famous essay 'Heidegger filosofo della tecnica' was published.²⁷³

This is not the place to examine the appropriateness of using Heidegger in a critique of ideology, or a critique of the left.²⁷⁴ I only want to highlight here the deep political ambivalence of these problems in the transitional period from the late 60s to the early 70s. One should read the above quotations as a demonstration of the immense ambiguity which political theory of the period entailed. In addition, Tafuri's reflections in 1992 were coloured by the historical context from which *they* were made, a context even more extreme in its distance from Old Left perspectives, one in which the scientific character of political economy had been effectively foreclosed, and in which the historian had long given up critique of ideology.²⁷⁵

In the mid 1960s, however, that liberal, post-socialist, and post-scientific consensus had yet to congeal. Panzieri's assumption was only partially shared by others in the workerist circle.²⁷⁶ Describing the situation in which an increasingly 'socialised' capital appears to achieve political consensus, Tronti described the impossibility of capital ever reaching pure mastery.²⁷⁷ However, like his partner at *Quaderni Rossi*, Tronti's arguments follow a similar

²⁷² Ibid., 46.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ On the profound irony of Heidegger's growing importance to a certain 'left' from the 1970s onward, I believe Loren Goldner put it best: "One could presumably count such an old humanist as Rosa Luxemburg (had she not been murdered in 1919 by proto-Nazi's, abetted by Social Democrats) as someone else confusedly trapped in 'technological nihilism'; having died a bit too early to appreciate Heidegger as the *real* opponent of Nazism." Loren Goldner, *Vanguard of Retrogression* (New York: Queequeg, 2011), 10.

²⁷⁵ It is tempting to assume this was because there was no longer a left worthy of it. Actually one has to understand liberal thinking of this period as a kind of post-Cold-War rearguard, containing an implicit rather than explicit anti-socialist content.

²⁷⁶ Wright, *Storming Heaven*, 45–46.

²⁷⁷ Tronti, "Social Capital," 16.

critical line concerning planning, and share the same overarching theme regarding the development of capital and the manner in which it internalises, through planning, aspects of society which were previously thought to lie outside of its power.

There is, however, a key difference. Tronti describes this process of socialisation, as one in which the chief object is political rather than scientific: “Capital’s “plan” comes primarily about from the necessity of making the working class function as such within social capital.”²⁷⁸ The phrase “as such” is key. Rather than conquering the space outside the factory by overcoming its internal contradictions and instituting a scientific programme to cover society as whole, capital must recognise the working class for what it is, for its antagonistic, but nonetheless productive role in development. For Tronti, far from representing its “real subsumption” this actually gave the working class a greater effective power within capitalist society—though with surprising and counterintuitive consequences. Tronti’s argument effectively reversed the primacy of labour and capital in the latter’s development, an argument that would become one of the key tenets of workerism as it coalesced. After his break from Panzieri, Tronti’s editorial, “Lenin in England” for the first issue of his new journal, *Classe Operaia* (1964), elaborated this point, claiming that worker’s resistance, rather than capitalist initiative, was the driving force in capitalist development:

We too have worked with a concept that puts capitalist development first, and workers second. This is a mistake. And now we have to turn the problem on its head, reverse the polarity, and start again from the beginning: and the beginning is the class struggle of the working class. At the level of socially developed capital, capitalist development becomes subordinated to working class struggles; it follows behind them, and they set the pace to which the political mechanisms of capital’s own reproduction must be tuned.²⁷⁹

Already in the earlier essay, “The Plan of Capital,” Tronti, had drawn a number of consequences from this insight. First, there was no reason to swing, as Panzieri had apparently done, from one extreme to another: “Today, it is not a matter of rediscovering, after decades of absolute faith in the process of deterioration of capitalism, a similarly absolute faith in the objective rationality of this system.”²⁸⁰ However, there was still reason to be critical of reform, not because it acquiesced to “Technical Necessity” but because it had forgotten the central and *political* importance of the working class. Failing this, the reformists facilitated the political “programme” underlying Capital’s processes of socialisation:

It is an objective requirement of capitalist production, on the level of social capital, to recuperate a real general terrain of the class-struggle. In fact, only through this recuperation can the class-struggle be consciously regulated and organized within the plan of capital. We have already seen how the labor struggle has always objectively functioned as a dynamic moment of capitalist development. Yet, it can be said that only on this level it can be rationally foreseen and utilized in the total process of production of social capital. Thus, the tension

²⁷⁸ Ibid., 9.

²⁷⁹ Mario Tronti, “Lenin in England,” in *Working Class Autonomy and the Crisis* (London: Red Notes/CSE Books, 1979), 1.

²⁸⁰ Tronti, “Social Capital,” 17.

between capital and labor becomes a “legal institution of society,” and all the institutions which guarantee an orderly bourgeois development of particular labor claims can be legally recognized in their full autonomy. The very organizations of workers acquire a decisive importance for the social interests of capital. There is a time in which modern capital cannot do without a modern union, in the factory, in society, and directly in the state. The political integration of the labor party within the absurd antedeluvian forms of bourgeois parliament, becomes itself a secondary moment of mediation, in order to arrive at the true organic integration of labor unions within the programmed development of capitalist society.²⁸¹

Thus, for Tronti, technical cooperation in the factory is not the model for capitalist socialisation. Rather, it is the political organisation of labour, both within the factory and especially without, that gives capital a new means to socialise its production on a larger scale. This means that, for Tronti, capital’s plan is at bottom a *political programme*, rather than a theoretical or scientific one. At one point, he makes a categorical statement to that effect: “there is a politics of planning, but there is no theory of planning.”²⁸² However, Tronti does put forward an interesting argument that suggests the interconnection of the scientific and political registers. Anticipating Negri’s analysis of Keynes, Tronti outlines how, in order to attain a level of political planning, capital was forced to recognise its own partiality and make advances in its scientific understanding:

At a certain level of development of capital it is no longer only the worker but the capitalist himself who must fight against the appearance of its relations of production. He must come to tear the veil from the phenomena in order to catch the essence and the intrinsic nature of its own process. This is the source of the need for science within capital: when capital realizes that it is a social force. At this stage the simple scientific substance of economic relations is no longer sufficient: what is needed are the very economic relations scientifically organized.²⁸³

In order to move, as it were, to the *meta*-level of social organisation, capital had to learn a lesson from the political organisation of the working class—as Negri would later put it, capital had to “read” Marx.²⁸⁴ Tronti’s critique of the reformist tendencies of the historic left, the unions and the two major parties, is that they wilfully participated in capital’s education and then followed its resulting programme. Reform produced only the level of political organisation acceptable and advantageous to capital and nothing more. Later, in “Lenin in England,” Tronti will define this situation as one in which capital has the upper hand at the level of organisation, a paradoxical and tragic outcome of what had appeared to be a working-class success, that is, the imposition of reforms on capital.²⁸⁵ Because this success was rather more dialectical than direct, workers’ demands run the risk of benefiting their

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Ibid., 21.

²⁸³ Ibid., 20.

²⁸⁴ Negri, “Keynes and the Capitalist Theory of the State, Post-1929,” 12.

²⁸⁵ Tronti, “Lenin in England,” 3.

opponent.²⁸⁶ In order to overcome this disadvantage, he argues, the working class needs to make a leap in its own organisation and its own *strategy*.²⁸⁷ The solutions to this impasse Tronti offered contain both what I take to be the fundamental lesson which the Marxist critique of the Plan offers to the understanding of architectural politics, and at the same time, a different lesson perfectly suited to architectural ideology. First, we must finish contextualising Tafuri's critique of the ideology of the Plan. From there we can return to Tronti and conclude section one with a reflection on the overall strengths of these references and the limitations which must be overcome.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 31.

²⁸⁷ "The process of building a unification of capital at the international level can only become the material base for a political recomposition of the working class (and in this sense a positive strategic moment for the revolution) if it is accompanied by a revolutionary growth not only of the class, but also of class organisation. If this element is absent, the whole process works to the advantage of capital, as a tactical moment of a one-sided stabilisation of the system, seemingly integrating the working class within the system." Ibid., 31.

1.3.3 Negri: The State as Plan

The text which most directly influenced Tafuri's critique of the "ideology of the the Plan" was Negri's "Keynes and the Capitalist Theory of the State, Post-1929." Tronti's emphasis on the *political* dimension of 'planning,' on the crucial importance of the political *within* the technical, was shared by Antonio Negri in this essay. Published in 1968 in the first issue of *Contropiano*, to which Tronti also contributed, it contained a longer treatment of the 'planning' theme, and it would be to this essay that Tafuri referred in "Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology" (published in the same journal the following year).²⁸⁸

Negri significantly expanded on one particular argument made by Tronti: that Capital's plan turned on its use of the working class "as such." Developing the context for capitalist planning at length, Negri identified several key historical events. First, was the appearance on the world stage in 1917 of a revolutionary socialist state—an event that marked the transition from one historical era to another, and a significant leap in the coherence and consciousness of the working class. After 1917, Negri argued,

History becomes contemporary. The truth already demonstrated in 1848—the possibility that the working class can appear as an *independent* variable in the process of capitalist development, even to the extent of imposing its own political autonomy—now achieved its full realisation, its *Durchbruch ins Freie* [*trans*: breakthrough into freedom - Hegel. When a historical tendency becomes manifest for the first time.] The land of the Soviets stood as the point where the working-class antagonism was now structured in the independent form of a state. As such, it became a focus of internal political identification for the working class internationally, because it was a present, immediately real, objective class possibility.²⁸⁹

No longer, he argued, could capitalist expansion, the "socialisation of exploitation," be pursued in neutral terms. The existence of an independent proletarian state had added a level of revolutionary self-consciousness to the working classes, both internationally and within each separate national context.²⁹⁰ It had changed the terrain of class relations overall: "At every level of capitalist organisation there was now a deeper, more threatening and contradictory presence of the working class: a class that was now autonomous and politically consistent."²⁹¹

Immediately we can recognise a striking difference between Negri's analysis and Panzieri's. Where, for Panzieri, the common use of planning makes the capitalist west and socialist east closer to equivalent than otherwise, for Negri, it is the appearance of the latter that sets the new capitalist approach to planning in motion. The political level is paramount in Negri's approach to planning.

²⁸⁸ Tafuri, "Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology", 28.

²⁸⁹ Negri, "Keynes and the Capitalist Theory of the State, Post-1929," 8–9.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*

On the other hand, by comparison with Tronti, and despite his portentous use of the word “autonomous” to describe the political consciousness of the working class, Negri recognised other contextual factors besides the class-political. The economic crisis of 1929, a crisis arising from internal contradictions within capital rather than political opposition from the working class, would mark the next breaking point. However, in the intervening years capital already began introducing planning at a certain level. The immediate response to 1917 was what Negri called a “technological path of repression,” which, exemplified by Taylor and Ford in the United States, sought “to isolate the Bolshevik vanguards from the class and expel them from their hegemonic producer role, by means of a massification of the productive process and deskilling of the labour force.”²⁹² This technological approach, a manipulation of the planned “cooperation” described by Panzieri, had been favoured by Capital, and was its first instinct again; however, according to Negri, in the new post-1917 situation, it would prove not only insufficient, but potentially disastrous:

The capitalist class soon realised that this reorganisation would open up an even more threatening situation in the long term. Not only would capital have to contend with the enlarged reproduction of the class that these changes would inevitably bring about; it would have to face its immediate political recomposition at a higher level of massification and socialisation of the workforce. The October Revolution had once and for all introduced a political quality of subversion into the material needs and struggles of the working class, a spectre that could not be exorcised.²⁹³

In this, Negri follows Tronti’s line of argument: increased socialisation leads to the increased potential power of the working class, rather than its internalisation or “real subsumption” within capital. This ominous force of resistance would be met head on by capital following the stock market crash in 1929:

The great crisis post-1929 was the moment of truth, a rebounding on capital's structure of the previous technological attack on the working class, and the proof of its limitations: the lesson of 1917 now imposed itself by this "delayed reaction" on the system as a whole. The working-class political initiative of 1917 with all its precise and ferocious destructiveness, controllable only in the short run, now manifested itself in a crisis of the entire system, showing that it could not be ignored or evaded. The earlier attempts to avoid the problem, to ignore the effective reality of the working class's specific political impingement on the system, now boomeranged on the system itself. The crisis struck deepest precisely where capital was strongest and where technological conversion had been most thorough (in the USA).²⁹⁴

With the “technological path of repression” proving insufficient at best, capital was forced to develop a qualitatively new planning approach to its socialisation, what Negri called the “state as plan.”²⁹⁵ Bringing to an end its *Laissez faire* era, the crisis of 1929 forced

²⁹² Ibid., 10.

²⁹³ Ibid., 10.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 11.

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 12.

capital to develop a new level of state intervention. Negri is careful here not to suggest that the partnership between capital and the state was a totally new phenomena, that capital had never previously made use of the state. Rather, he argues that a new kind of state intervention develops to deal with the new challenge: “What was new, and what marks this moment as decisive, was the recognition of the emergence of the working class and of the ineliminable antagonism it represented within the system as a necessary feature of the system which state power would have to accommodate.”²⁹⁶ And here we return to a theme from Tronti: in coming to terms with class antagonism, capital is forced into a level of social consciousness which it had hitherto done without:

Paradoxically, capital turned to Marx, or at least learned to read *Das Kapital* (from its own viewpoint, naturally, which, however mystified, is nonetheless efficacious). Once the antagonism was recognised, the problem was to make it function in such a way as to prevent one pole of the antagonism breaking free into independent destructive action. Working-class political revolution could only be avoided by recognising and accepting the new relation of class forces, while making the working class function within an overall mechanism that would “sublimate” its continuous struggle for power into a dynamic element within the system. The working class was to be controlled functionally within a series of mechanisms of equilibrium that would be dynamically readjusted from time to time by a regulated phasing of the “incomes revolution”. The state was now prepared, as it were, to descend into civil society, to continuously recreate the source of its legitimacy in a process of permanent readjustment of the conditions of equilibrium. The new “material basis of the constitution” became the *state as planner*, or better still, the state as *the plan*. For soon this mechanism for re-equilibrating incomes between the forces in play was articulated in the form of periodic planning. The model of equilibrium assumed for a plan over a given period meant that every initiative, every readjustment of equilibrium to a new level, opened up a process of revision in the constitutional state itself. In other words, the path to stability now seemed to depend on the recognition of this new precarious basis of state power: the dynamic of state planning implied acceptance of a sort of “permanent revolution” as its object—a paradoxical *Aufhebung* of the slogan on the part of capital.²⁹⁷

Tafuri identifies these same themes—temporal integration of the future as part of the present and the integration of antagonistic forces—in the work of Le Corbusier, referring particularly to what he considered the “most advanced theoretical hypothesis of modern urbanism,”²⁹⁸ the Obus Plan for Algiers:

It is significant that almost all the economic objectives formulated by Keynes in his *General Theory* can be found, in purely ideological form, at the basis of the poetics of modern architecture. The foundation of Keynesian interventionism is the same as that of the poetics of all modern art: “To free oneself from the fear of the future by eyeing that future as present” (Negri). And in a strictly political sense, this also underlies the urban planning theories of Le Corbusier. Keynes comes to terms with the “party of catastrophe,” and aims at coopting its threat by absorbing it at ever new levels; Le Corbusier notes the reality of class in the modern city and takes its conflicts to a higher level, giving shape to the most advanced plan for integrating the public, whom he

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 12–13.

²⁹⁸ Tafuri, “Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology” 26.

involves as operator and active user of the urban mechanism of development, now rendered organically “human.”²⁹⁹

By emphasising the importance of “integrating” antagonistic forces, Tafuri picks up on Negri’s distance from Panzieri. For Negri, the introduction of capitalist state planning was not an easy or natural solution. It required a number of key factors to coalesce in order to become possible. As a reflection on architectural history, this may help to explain the enormous temporal disparity between the era of the Plan—which extends back hundreds of years to the beginnings of capitalist society and with it the modern architectural institution—and the relatively new era of the Project. The periodisation is entirely dependent upon the relative global development of capitalism, the status of its profit rate, and the balance of class forces, nationally and internationally. The Project only becomes a viable disciplinary investment, a viable ideology, when these factors reach a tipping point, producing a specific political-economic situation that allows “planning” to precipitate (however partially) into reality, displacing its ideological mediation.

Following on Tronti’s argument, the new era of state planning is for Negri not simply a society wide extension of capital’s long standing technical approach to dominance within the factory. On the contrary, it requires capital to break with such tools, to absorb something alien to it in the form of working-class self-consciousness, becoming capital’s own self-consciousness. That capital’s heightened awareness remained partial and “mystified” was something Negri, again like Tronti, was sure to remind his reader. However, it appears that this limitation again comes down to a mystification that is more political than it is theoretical or scientific. Capital’s partiality reappears, not chiefly as an ideological distortion of political economy, but through a social narrative regarding the “common good.”³⁰⁰ Capital is forced to balance between ethical justifications and scientific partial explanations, between accepting the reality of social contradictions and defining itself as the continuous overcoming of the same:

In this interplay between mystification and critical awareness of the new relation of class forces, the science of capital once again revealed the necessary co-presence of contradictory elements. As always, it was forced to carry out the laborious task of analysis and apologetics, to steer the narrow path between critical awareness of the precariousness of the existing framework and a determination to achieve stability.³⁰¹

The resulting description parallels Tafuri’s analysis of architectural ideology, where critical self-interrogation coincides paradoxically with ideological re-calibration, and the unity Tafuri defines between positive and negative avant-gardes. As he says of bourgeois

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 28.

³⁰⁰ Negri, “Keynes and the Capitalist Theory of the State, Post-1929,” 13.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

culture: “the higher the formal level of the sublimation of conflicts, the more the structures confirming and validating that sublimation remain hidden.”³⁰²

Stepping back for a moment, we can place this phenomenon in the context of the transition from Plan to Project. The ideological importance of this “critical self-consciousness,” however partial, increases significantly after the collapse of the ideology of the Plan. While that development remains several historical steps beyond Negri’s own argument, it is significant to note that, for Negri and Tafuri, capitalist planning and planning ideology already entailed a degree of criticality. This, of course, is the proper meaning of *reform*: the reform of capitalist society is its critical adjustment and improvement. From Tronti’s revolutionary Marxist perspective of course, this quasi-dialectic is far from sufficient, collapsing the negative moment of politics into the positive synthesis of compromise. What follows the failure of reform and critical reflection upon that failure is something like criticality as an end in itself: *the refusal of any positive, productive synthesis beyond critical analysis*. This is Adorno’s formula for “negative dialectics,” as it is, certain differences notwithstanding, for Massimo Cacciari’s “negative thought.”³⁰³ This apotheosis of criticality, its function within architectural ideology and the resulting limitations in architectural politics, is a general theme of the Project, which as we can see carries forward and radicalises tensions within the the “Plan.” In this there is a qualitative difference in the form of “criticism” which moves from a moment of the dialectic, into its end. While the latter is intended to function as a safeguard against ideological “synthesis,” it actually becomes functional as a meta-synthesis of the intellectual’s institutional place within neoliberal capitalism. It becomes clear at this point that the institutional level, the extra-disciplinary, non-immanent, and material level, is the place of a higher synthesis.

Returning to Keynesian reform, we find of course that it had its own paradoxes. Negri noticed something strange about Keynes’ Plan, a certain inconsistency between, on one hand, his recognition of the inherently contradictory and conflictual class relations which the new model of planning takes into account, and on the other, a strange utopianism, a confidence that the Plan will ultimately overcome the very conflicts which drive it. This political optimism is evident first in Keynes’ economic arguments, which in places borrow from pacific social democratic readings of the Marxian labour theory of value³⁰⁴:

With his reduction of monetary theory to the theory of production and with his analysis of both the political necessity of this reduction and the controlled forms within which it was to be realised, Keynes attempts to represent an end-situation which could be attained "without revolution": a situation in which profit and interest are reduced to zero, and in which the monetary relation (this being the sphere of autonomy within capitalist power) would disappear, since money would be reduced to a mere accounting unit, simply a general symbol of equivalence between commodities produced, and thus all reasons for preferring money would disappear. Thus

³⁰² Tafuri, “Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology,” 6.

³⁰³ See especially Massimo Cacciari, *Krisis: Saggio Sulla Crisi Del Pensiero Negativo da Nietzsche a Wittgenstein* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1976).

³⁰⁴ Negri, “Keynes and the Capitalist Theory of the State, Post-1929,” 30—31.

social interest, stripped of intermediary and subsidiary elements, and the law of value would come to govern the entirety of development. Capital becomes communist: this is what Marx termed the communism of capital.³⁰⁵

The root of this argument can be traced, not to a technical point of economic theory, but to ideological necessity. That it can present itself as a project for the common good, as a “social mission” is an ideological necessity of the Keynesian plan—as Tafuri will later say, it is for the architectural institution. On this point ideological requirements come into conflict with theoretical and economic ones. The suggestion that reform would really be able to achieve a utopian society, though with marginal support from social democratic theory, contradicts Keynes’ primary theory of effective demand—that part of the theory which was premised on a recognition of the working class “as such,” and which Negri argued constituted the fundamental power of the entire Keynesian enterprise:

What is more interesting is the fact that Keynes' conclusion here is in open contradiction with other significant parts of his system—in particular as regards the theory of effective demand. His assertion of a social interest untouched by class contradictions, by struggle, by power relations between two counterposing classes, negates that theory. Not only is the social reality described earlier now mystified, but there is also a contradiction in his science, because he had constructed his law of development precisely on that reality whose existence he now denies.³⁰⁶

By identifying this contradiction in Keynes, Negri touches on the key contradiction of reform as a whole. That is, reform as an inherently unstable combination of progressive political action on the part of the working class and economic necessity on the part of capital. This concoction requires a degree of ideological mystification together with theoretical investment by both capital and labour. Ultimately, as demonstrated by its historical failure, it is a solution with a limited lifespan, one which satisfied the necessities of the working class *and* capital only contextually and in the short term.

The contradictions inherent in reformist planning are reproduced by the partial character of some of its critiques—which, theoretical and political questions aside, reflect the limitations of their historical context. Panzieri’s near categorical rejection of planning, the unwarranted manner in which he granted to capital a coherent economic theory, and his overall condemnation of “technical necessity,” missed both the political dimension of reform—which Tronti recognised to be a measure of a certain level of workers’ efficacy—as well as the underlying contradictions which remained within capital’s processes of valorisation. Where Tronti’s essay was rather ambiguous on what internal contradictions plagued capital, given that it was really the working class that drove development, Negri’s essay is more balanced in its interpretation of political and economic factors in the development of planning and reform. However, apart from his examination of Keynes’ theories concerning supply and

³⁰⁵ Ibid., 31.

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 31–32.

demand—theories which, according to Negri still refer to working class political pressure³⁰⁷—Negri does not detail structural contradictions within capital of an economic nature. Of course, this is the historical specificity of workerism, its defining theoretical gambit was the determining importance of political factors over economic ones. For Panzieri this gambit was necessitated by the idea that reform demonstrated capital's total dominance. On the other hand, for Tronti, reform indicated the effectiveness of working class mobilisation—though with the important caveat that, without a new level of organisation, that energy would benefit only capital. Here Tronti sits on the edge of a theoretical idea which, once developed explicitly, will lead him to a one-sided notion of political autonomy and then to a series of contradictory and unsuccessful political stances ranging from principled sectarianism, through pragmatic entrism, to the eventual messianism of his work with Michael Hardt.³⁰⁸ Following Tronti's argument concerning the importance of working class politics for the development of state planning, Negri added to it a more direct consideration of bourgeois economic theory. But it was there, in Keynes' theory of the state, that Negri again encountered the unavoidable contradictions between planning as technical practice, and planning as social mission. In this complex combination, neither science, nor politics, nor ideology could be dispensed with.

Demonstrating how useful architecture could be as a window into such problems, Tafuri's depiction of architecture's ideology of the Plan reproduced many of these points, contradictions included. As an example, we can take Tafuri's argument that ideology was "useless to capitalist development,"³⁰⁹ an argument that appears to echo Panzieri's thesis that capital is in full scientific control of its plan. Tafuri, of course, was referring to "ideology of the Plan" specifically. Since, if we did not know before, after 2008 we certainly should, that capital is *not* in full control of development, we should understand that the function of ideology is far more flexible—that there is no reason why architectural ideology cannot become "useful" again by opposing certain forms of development when they no longer serve, further suggesting the tactical flexibility of its disciplinary investments. This again is the limitation in Tafuri's argument that suggests the need to identify a form of ideology to supersede the Plan, carrying architecture beyond the crisis into a new era of productivity.

This brings us to a difficult point, the overall ambiguity of Tafuri's critique *as a critique of ideology*. Because of the context in which it was articulated and the terms available to it, there are a number of political and disciplinary ambiguities that arise. Within architectural discourse, to reiterate a now familiar point, they become legible through processes of

³⁰⁷ "This, then, is how we can sum up the spirit of the theory of effective demand: that it assumes class struggle, and sets out to resolve it, on a day-to-day basis, in ways that are favourable to capitalist development." Ibid., 29.

³⁰⁸ Following the notion of the "autonomy of the working class", Tronti broke from the historic left, the unions and the major parties. However, with the later notion of the "autonomy of the political", and reconsidering his earlier perspective, Tronti, along with others in *Classe Operaia* like Massimo Cacciari, returned to the PCI, though with no better results. Wright, *Storming Heaven*, 59—61 and 71—72. For the perspective, see Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, *Empire* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000)

³⁰⁹ Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*, x.

institutional and disciplinary mediation. In the case of Tafuri's critique, this means a tendency to fuse the notion of architectural ideology to the specific disciplinarity of "planning." Further adding to the confusion is the political orientation of the critique as a critique of the left. In order to conclude this examination of the critique of architectural ideology as a critique of the Plan, we must return to Tronti.

1.4 LIMITS OF CRITIQUE

In the key essay “Critica dell’ideologia,” Tronti went into greater detail concerning the nature of left ideology. He began by remarking on how Marx’s critique of socialism and communism was always a critique of pre-existing or competing versions of these movements: “Pre-Marxist” socialism and communism. However, what struck Tronti, was how, after Marx, the same ideological tendencies persisted.³¹⁰ After summarising the major flavours of utopian socialism—Proudhon, Fourier, Saint-Simon, and Owen—Tronti cuts to the core issue: the labour theory of value. The failings of utopian socialism here are simultaneously political *and* theoretical. Theoretical, because they fail to grasp how the ills of capitalist society are determined, not by unequal exchange, but by the mode of production. Political because only by grasping the social character of the mode of production, can one understand the unavoidable reality of class struggle:

Il modo di scambio delle forze produttive determina il modo di scambio dei prodotti; dal momento in cui si comincia a scambiare individualmente lavoro sociale. Lo scambio individuale corrisponde quindi già a un determinato sistema di produzione associata. E questo—noi abbiamo visto—è niente altro che il prodotto dell’antagonismo fra due classi. Su questa base, *non può esistere perciò scambio individuale senza lotta di classe*. Tutte le oneste borghesi si rifiutano di accettare questa evidenza.³¹¹

The core content of this ideology is its distortion of the objective reality of class struggle. This of course, following our “immanent functional perspective” is a politically motivated distortion, rather than a simple error. However, as an ideology of the left, it nonetheless manifests itself in terms of a “social mission”—one premised on ethical and ideal standards rather than historically concrete *necessity*:

«Libero commercio! nell’interesse della classe operaia; dazi protettivi! nell’interesse della classe operaia; carcere cellulare! nell’interesse della classe operaia»: le parole d’ordine del «socialismo borghese», dal tempo del *Manifesto*, sono cambiate nella forma, ma il metodo è sempre lo stesso finché nell’organizzazione della lotta da parte operaia si partirà non da ciò che risulta più necessario, ma da ciò che sembra più giusto. Proprio rivolta ai rappresentanti operai nel consiglio generale dell’Internazionale, Marx raccomandava: «ciò che voi considerate come equo o come giusto non c’entra per niente. La questione che si pone è sempre la seguente: che cosa è necessario e inevitabile entro un dato sistema di produzione?».³¹²

The stern character of Marx’s reprimand quoted by Tronti: “what you consider to be fair or just has nothing to do with it. The question that must be asked is the following: what is necessary and inevitable within a given mode of production?” is often captured by Tafuri in

³¹⁰ “Andiamo per esempio a vedere Marx alle prese con la *critica dell’ideologia*. Noi diremo un po’arbitrariamente: critica del comunismo e del socialismo. Si tratta naturalmente del comunismo e del socialismo preMarxisti. Ma chiunque può vedere che, dopo Marx, queste «ideologie» non sono molto cambiate.” Tronti, “Critical dell’ideologia,” 158.

³¹¹ Ibid., 146.

³¹² Ibid., 158.

his address to architects and architectural historians. However, because of the added disciplinary ambiguity of his subject matter, it is a difficult line for Tafuri to maintain.

The demand to keep focus on the economic and political reality of the capitalist mode of production, we see the extent to which the Marxist critique of political economy is itself a kind of “immanent” critique. Left ideology renounces this immanence in the name of a different, a cultural or ethical one. In his remorseless characterisations of crisis, Tafuri denies to architects the possibility of overcoming the impasse of planning ideology, whose basis is structural rather than ethical or aesthetic. Yet even when he does so, he paradoxically reintroduced a measure of ethicist defiance. When Tafuri concludes that ideology has become useless, he appears to suggest that whatever happens next will somehow not be ideological, or at least not in the same way. This is where the ambiguity of his position regarding “silence” arises:

It should be stated immediately that the critical analysis of the basic principles of contemporary architectural ideology does not pretend to have any ‘revolutionary’ aim. What is of interest here is the precise identification of those tasks which capitalist development has taken away from architecture. That is to say, what it has taken away in general from ideological prefiguration. With this, one is led almost automatically to the discovery of what may well be the ‘drama’ of architecture today: that is, to see architecture obliged to return to *pure architecture*, to form without utopia; in the best cases, to sublime uselessness. To the deceptive attempts to give architecture an ideological dress, I shall always prefer the sincerity of those who have the courage to speak of that silent and outdated ‘purity’; even if this, too, still harbors an ideological inspiration, pathetic in its anachronism.³¹³

Even though Tafuri understands the institutional basis of architecture within capitalist society, he somehow misses how “silence” can be an ideological proposition for the institutional *near future*—anything but anachronistic. The latter is seen as expressing a choice, a decision taken in good faith, in “sincerity.” Here we see again the contradiction between the necessity of ideology, and the defiance it claims for itself.

Gail Day has noted a similar position in *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*: “He spoke of ‘the limit that separates language from silence’. Tafuri favoured ‘silence’—the ‘absolutely asemantic quality’—rather than ‘noise,’ as the most appropriate response to the metropolitan world ‘without quality’.”³¹⁴ As a foretaste of the following sections of the thesis, we can see how this point opens onto ideological commitments within later interpretation, becoming a point of focus for the development of a left politics of the Project.

The question of “silence” carries a certain polemical charge, giving rise to a small debate in the secondary literature concerning what marginal forms of architectural politics Tafuri

³¹³ Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*, ix.

³¹⁴ Day, Gail. “Strategies in the Metropolitan Merz: Manfredo Tafuri and Italian Workerism,” 32. Day quotes from the final lines of chapter four, “The Adventures of the Avant-Garde” in Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*, 148.

might prefer: “*engagé*” architecture or the architecture of “silence.”³¹⁵ The debate, however, fails to become a major point of contention, since it can be subsumed under the unifying terms of the Project, through which—as we saw for “form” and engagement in the introduction above—“silence” and engagement coincide. Indeed, the disagreement appears paradoxical from a contemporary perspective, since references for both sides are made to the *same architect*, with Aldo Rossi standing for the engaged architect according, for instance, to Georges Teyssot, and the architect of silence for nearly everyone else.³¹⁶ While the contradiction points to an ambivalence within Rossi’s own position, Rossi’s true ideological value lies in his synthetic solution to the opposition.³¹⁷

Tafuri’s ambivalence on this choice was in fact real. However, as a point of the critique of architectural ideology, we should be able to make the correct reading. The difficulty of the choice has to do with its implications for both the institutional and the disciplinary registers. As a disciplinary argument, clearly engagement, “architecture,” with a small “a,”³¹⁸ is superior, for it suggests an attempt to bring the discipline to bear upon its social-material context. As an institutional point, however, we could argue that neither “silence” nor engagement can escape institutional determination. Therefore, perhaps because of its abandonment of disciplinary strategy, silence might appear preferable.

In other words, the difficulty of deciding Tafuri’s position is the same as the difficulty of deciding the value of disciplinary *immanence*. Paradoxically, what appears to be a more stringent materialist critique, by relativising disciplinary approaches, leads straight into existential pathos. On this point Tronti again provides the key, for the critique of left ideology is intended to force a higher strategic understanding of the problem, and this higher strategy brings with it a further reflection on disciplinarity.

In the context of this thesis, Tronti’s arguments provide a key insight into the thresholds of immanence and transcendence by which the political value of architecture might be understood. This only becomes possible by bringing us up against certain themes of Marxist-Leninist political theory, which did not make the transition into Western Marxism, let alone cultural critique.

³¹⁵ “An otherwise assured historian, Joan Ockman stumbled over Tafuri’s views on architectural labor by reading him through the rosy spectacles of Eisenman. Refracted through Eisenman’s distorted lens, in Ockman’s account, Tafuri ends by preferring the purism of the New York Five to engaged work. Yet as early as 1976, Tafuri dismissed architecture as miserable when it presses with maximum pomp; he professed much more interest in architecture with a small ‘a,’ and as examples offered the cooperative building programs of communist-governed Italian cities which gathered workers together with builders but harboured no illusions about ‘resolving’ the housing problem.” Ghirardo, 45–46.

³¹⁶ See For example, Teresa Stoppani, “*L’histoire assassinée: Manfredo Tafuri and the architecture of the present*,” (paper delivered at “The Role of the Humanities in Design Creativity International Conference,” EMTEC, University of Lincoln, UK. 15-16 November 2007), 5; Biraghi, *Project of Crisis*, 115; and Diogo Seixas Lopes, *Melancholy and Architecture: on Aldo Rossi*, 213.

³¹⁷ See 3.1.1, 3.3.3, and 3.4.1.

³¹⁸ Ghirardo, “Manfredo Tafuri and Architecture Theory in the U.S., 1970-2000,” 41.

1.4.1 Tronti's Counter-plan: Strategy and Tactics

We left off our earlier discussion at the impasse of reformist compromise, to which Tronti argued the working class must respond by making a leap in its own organisation and its own *strategy*. In "The Plan of Capital" Tronti's call was for socialism to respond to the situation with a plan of its own, but one that did not forget the real antagonism of the working class under capitalism:

When science itself is objectified within capital, socialism is in turn forced to become again scientific. Insurrection as a work of art only now turns into a science of revolution. Thus, a true workers' planning of the revolutionary process must and can be an answer to the programming that social capital makes of its own development. True, it is not enough to ideally contrapose the plan of capital: it is necessary to know how to utilize it materially. And this is impossible other than by contraposing to the economic program of capitalist development a political plan of labors' answers. Nowadays both capital and labor, each in its own field, see very far and plan in terms of a long perspective. It is a matter of strategy against strategy: the tactic should be left to the bureaucrats of the two camps.³¹⁹

This call for *strategy* as opposed to *tactics* reflected Tronti's emphasis on the theoretical analysis of the situation. At this point, it becomes clear that under Tronti's terms, "theory" (or science) and politics, are so intimately related as to be difficult to separate, even in the form of a dialectical pair. If his arguments were correct, particularly as they were later to develop, then major assumptions of Marxist political theory would have to reassessed.³²⁰ For instance, by defining politics in terms of strategy, Tronti departs from the Leninist definition of politics as tactics. Unlike for Panzieri, however, Lenin remains the key reference for Tronti,³²¹ particularly of course, in "Lenin in England" (1964). There, together with a clearer definition of the "workerist reversal" Tronti elaborated the difference between strategy and tactics. Because, Tronti argued, working class organisation was in a transitory moment in which it had already abandoned the historic left but had not yet developed new forms of revolutionary organisation,³²² reform was a fundamentally ambiguous pursuit caught between tactics and strategy, between politics and scientific theory. But this disadvantage need not persist. Tronti's overarching hypothesis, that the working class drove the development of capital and had forced reform upon it, gave his argument a rather striking optimism about the potential for a revolutionary reversal in the political direction of reform. It appeared to Tronti that only a fine line separates capital's use of reform to its advantage, from the worker's use of reform

³¹⁹ Tronti, "Social Capital," 23.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

³²¹ *Ibid.*; Tronti, "Social Capital," 18. His later reflections in the article "Our Operaismo", refer to Lenin repeatedly as well.

³²² Tronti, "Lenin in England," 2.

to revolutionary ends.³²³ However, the working class could only gain the upper hand in this situation once it had developed a strategic plan for using reform in that way:

From a tactical point of view, too, it is correct that this meeting should take place once the working class has experienced not only struggle, but also revolutionary struggle, and within revolutionary struggle has also experienced alternative models of organisation. At that point, the historic encounter of capitalist reformism with the reformism of the labour movement will really mark the beginning of the revolutionary process. But our present situation is different: it precedes and paves the way for that later stage. From this follows both the workers strategic support for capital's development in general and their tactical opposition to the particular forms of that development. So, in the working class today there is a contradiction between tactics and strategy.

In other words, the political moment of tactics and the theoretical moment of strategy are in contradiction, in a complex and very much mediated relationship between revolutionary organisation and working class science.³²⁴

For Tronti, the problem with the reformist moment as it existed was that the historic left had collapsed this larger strategic perspective, the planning perspective proper, into a tactical compromise with capital, which was then taken to be a "plan" in its own right.³²⁵ In this respect, reformist planning, was neither sufficiently political nor sufficiently scientific. In effect, it failed *as a plan*. We read here a familiar theme from revolutionary Marxist critiques of reform, which are not only political, but scientific, being based in a theoretical understanding of the contradictions in capitalist society, contradictions which, though social are structural and inaccessible to reform. In this sense, the revolution is a 'plan' as well.

One of the strongest themes in Tronti's work, evident in both "The Plan of Capital" and "Lenin in England," is the inextricability of political practice from scientific theory. We have seen how through his critique of reformist planning, Tronti developed an argument for a superior, a revolutionary form of planning. Notwithstanding the unique and controversial content of Tronti's workerist thesis, this theme ties Tronti to Marxist-Leninist "orthodoxy" in significant ways.

We must not fail to note here how close this formulation concerning strategy and tactics comes to the theme of *realisation*. Reform and the planning on which it depends, are for Tronti, techniques whose political value is yet to be decided. At the same time as they represent a moment of recapture by capital, a moment of ideological mystification, they equally present the possibility of revolutionary transformation. The political mediation of planning, which I argue can be applied also to its architectural counterpart, the discipline of "planning," depends entirely on the combined theoretical, i.e. "scientific" and political framework in which it is deployed. Tronti's analysis begins immanent to planning, only to cross to a higher level from which its strategic value reduces to a tactical value. This does not mean however, that Tronti rejects the immanent, what I have called "disciplinary" value of

³²³ Ibid., 2–3.

³²⁴ Ibid., 3.

³²⁵ Ibid., 4–5.

planning as strategy, only that the strategic plan must be produced again at the higher level of Marxist political economy. Thus “planning” is understood within a stratified overall approach to social transformation, with multiple levels of immanence and function, theory and practice.

It would be extremely tempting here to generalise the category ‘planning’ in such a way as to argue that architecture could produce a “counterplan” in its own disciplinary terms. It is fundamental to recall at all times the double character of architecture as institution and discipline. As institution, architecture is determined by its social context, existing on a lower level of the strategic perspective. It will only be able to realise the progressive content of its disciplinarity when its social situation supports it. As long as it is accompanied by a consistent critique of institutional ideology, as long as it operates under the guidance of a larger political and strategic programme, as long as a scientific understanding of the structural contradictions in capital can be brought to bear, then planning will cease to be either utopian or reformist, and the potential for a *revolutionary realisation* can exist. In short, the revolution will need planners, even of the architectural variety.

In my analysis, Tronti’s theoretical proposition gives the most precise definition of what a “counterplan” a *contropiano* should entail, and the position of architectural disciplinarity within it.³²⁶ More broadly, it provides a key to understanding the dialectic of immanence and function within both the critique of ideology and the larger Marxist paradigm of theory and practice.

However, this reading of the “counterplan” is not the only one available. Taking his cue from a different contributor to *Contropiano*, Pier Vittorio Aureli draws a rather different significance, and out of the critique of ideology, a different disciplinary lesson:

Yet this radical critique of ideology was intended to be not an end in itself but the premise to the political counter-plan—the *Contropiano*—to the plan of the capital. Subsequently, the editors proposed a valid counter-plan would consist in the working-class appropriation of the most advanced bourgeois culture within modernity, especially the bourgeois intellectual tradition that Cacciari defined as “negative thought.” For Cacciari, the tradition of negative thought consisted in a line that ran through the work of thinkers such as Friedrich Nietzsche and Max Weber. According to Cacciari, these thinkers showed how bourgeois mentality had already accepted the unresolvable value crisis brought in by the development of modernity (and capitalism), and made of such acceptance not a passive position but an effective *will to power* over capitalist development itself. For the editors of *Contropiano* what was to be done was a reinvention of such a form of power—the negative thought—as working-class political culture.³²⁷

Aureli’s reading of Cacciari leaves “planning” entirely aside, instead it focuses on the tactical flexibility of bourgeois ideology as a strategic approach to be emulated. You could say that tactics are the strategy of the bourgeois class, and ideology its science. For Cacciari,

³²⁶ Tilo Amhoff concludes his paper on Tafuri’s critique of the ideology of the Plan with a similar perspective: “For Tafuri no ‘contros spazio’ was possible. What was required was a ‘contropiano’. The Plan, not design was the site of the political struggle in Italy at the time.” Amhoff, “Architecture as Ideology of the Plan,” 6.

³²⁷ Pier Vittorio Aureli, “Intellectual Work and Capitalist Development: Origins and Context of Manfredo Tafuri’s Critique of Architectural Ideology” (March 2011). Available at <http://thecityasaproject.org/2011/03/pier-vittorio-aureli-manfredo-tafuri/>. Accessed 30 December, 2016

this position gave the bourgeoisie its endless flexibility, its ability to outmanoeuvre working class politics at every turn. This is the significance of “negative thought” itself, the refusal of synthesis, which Cacciari argued characterised the bourgeois “will to power” within the city.³²⁸ Adopting the strategy of the enemy, Cacciari’s solution was entirely cultural and philosophical, for not only did he think scientific bourgeois political economy was impossible, but equally the Marxist critique thereof.³²⁹ In contrast to the subtlety of Tronti’s argument examined above, Cacciari proposed a total identification of strategy with tactics, an abandonment of the strategic level of political economy, and, as understood by Aureli, a full culturalisation of political struggle. This is one example of how anti-Marxism emerged *immanently* from western Marxism: when *strategy became tactics*, political economy became cultural struggle, and class-consciousness dissolved into the universality of the bourgeois subject.

As anyone familiar with Tronti will know, he was not immune to a variant of this tendency, for his work was in a more or less constant state of flux, driven as it was by reflections on the rapidly changing politics of his time—in other words, by tactical necessities. For Tronti, the counterplan soon takes on a definite form—a kind of anti-plan defined by the worker’s refusal to participate in capitalist society as workers, that is, their refusal to work. Following the consequences of his workerist thesis, Tronti will come to define working class strategy as a “strategy of refusal,” resistance against capital’s plan through the worker’s resistance to work itself.³³⁰ Strategy, in this case, immediately becomes a tactic, forcing capital’s plan to “run backward.” It appears to be a particular characteristic of Tronti’s work overall, that highly theoretical arguments lend themselves to truncated political prescriptions, short-circuiting the connection between strategy and tactics to which he devoted so much thought.

Later on, this dialectical interdependence of theory and practice, which in heterodox fashion, insisted on the political half of Marxian political-economy, becomes finally divorced from the economic register altogether with Tronti’s “discovery” of the autonomy of the political. While Tronti’s earlier arguments would have an important impact on Tafuri’s critique of architectural ideology, it would be to this later notion that architectural discourse, particularly the work of Pier Vittorio Aureli, would be drawn.

This shift neatly parallels what I have called the *pivot* in architectural ideology. In disciplinary terms, the ambivalence of Tronti’s critique of reform matches the ambivalence of

³²⁸ Massimo Cacciari, *Architecture and Nihilism*, trans. Stephen Sartarelli (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 22.

³²⁹ Tafuri and Passerini, “History as Project: An Interview with Manfredo Tafuri,” 59.

³³⁰ “To struggle against capital, the working class must struggle against itself as capital. This is the point of maximum contradiction, not for workers, but for capitalists. It suffices to intensify this point, to organize this contradiction, and the capitalist system will no longer function, capital’s plan will begin to run backward, not as social development but as a revolutionary process. Workers’ struggle against work, the struggle of the worker against himself as laborer, the refusal of labor-power to become labor, the refusal of the working masses to allow their labor-power to be used: these are the terms in which the initial division-opposition that Marx’s analysis first discovered in the nature of labor is strategically re-proposed today, following the tactics of research.” Mario Tronti, “Struggle Against Work” [1965] in Mario Tronti, “Selections from *Workers and Capital*,” trans. Timothy S. Murphy. *Genre* XLIII (Fall/Winter 2010): 349.

Tafuri's critique of architecture's ideology of the Plan. One could read in both a meta-strategic reflection on the immanent value and ambivalent function of planning. On the other hand, one could read an abrupt disciplinary departure from planning altogether, for the "autonomy of the political" gives a definite disciplinary twist to that ambivalence, lending itself to an opposition between the economic and the political, between planning and architecture, the latter of which takes on the character of *strategy*.³³¹ As Aureli argues

Foregrounding form might be at odds with most theories premised on the determining role of 'content' such as economy, technology, program and so on. Yet we believe that form needs to be recognized not only as something arbitrarily imposed, or as a symptom of something 'deeper' (superstructural), but more as an attempt of intervention, that has the possibility (and the responsibility) of altering the structure of things.³³²

In this way, ambiguities and problematic questions within Italian Marxist and post-Marxist critiques of the Plan, contributed to both a coherent understanding of architectural ideology as it had existed prior to and within the process of *realisation*, as well as the means to produce a new architectural ideology in its wake. The "counter-plan" as represented by Aureli, is unmistakably a *project of counterrealisation*. It proposes a synthetic solution to the opposition between form and content, autonomy and engagement, excludes the structural dimension revealed by the critique, and appropriates the latter to support the institution.

And here is the key problem: Tafuri defined the object of his critique in the same moment as it disappeared. For Tafuri, critique of architectural ideology was the only viable historical programme, yet ideology in its available form was effectively dead. As a theoretical problem this sets a hard limit on the applicability of his terms, and suggests a reason for the new direction his historiographic theory was perceived to have taken through the late 1970s.

Thus, in Tafuri's critique of architectural ideology, we find the confluence of two otherwise opposed forces: the left critique of reform, and an institution's search for a new ideological role. Because it described the collapse of planning ideology at the same time as it produced the tools to combat it, it began and ended in one motion, becoming, paradoxically, an available starting point for a new architectural ideology. The urgent political stakes of the above critiques of the Plan within capitalism, transform into a new anti-planning "social mission" for Architecture.

If for Tafuri in 1969, architectural ideology was an "ideology of the Plan," in the years since, it has become an ideology *against* the plan. That is, the notion of planning has negatively determined architectural disciplinarity, discourse, and politics ever since. For this reason, the reinstatement of the critique requires a thorough assessment of its own immanent contradictions and ambiguities, the disciplinary mediations which have accrued over fifty years.

³³¹ "Design reflects the mere managerial praxis of building something, whereas the project indicates the *strategy* on whose basis something must be produced, must be brought into presence." Pier Vittorio Aureli, *The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture*, xiii. Emphasis original.

³³² Aureli and Tattara, "Architecture as Framework: The Project of the City and the Crisis of Neoliberalism," 39.

Looking back across Tafuri's critiques of the architectural ideology of the Plan, and its parallels within the "most advanced studies of Marxist thought" of the period,³³³ the following characterisation should be made. The critique of the ideology of the Plan, must be understood as an "immanent" critique in the following sense: it recognises the strategic partial autonomy of "planning," which it does not completely relativise. However, it follows the institutional meditation to the higher political economic context of its application. It therefore moves to the "transcendent" strategic perspective of political economy and political organisation, from which the limits of planning can be seen. At this higher level, the abstract proposition, "planning" returns through the more complex dialectical proposition: *counterplan*.

We can now propose a three stage schema for the political function of architecture: disciplinary, institutional, and political economic. These stages progress 'outward,' as it were, to the *counterplan* as theory and practice.

1) In disciplinary terms, architecture as 'planning' must be understood as the properly strategic level. It is by descending from the superstructural representation to the material structuring and ordering of society, that the architectural discipline became oriented toward social 'reality.' Contra Aureli's arguments, form cannot be considered a properly strategic political position for architecture. Architecture as representation and form, even, as we shall see later in the sense of Lukácsian 'realism' or an expanded 'neo-functionalism,'³³⁴ must be considered a tactical question only, otherwise disciplinarity will revert to avant-gardist ideology.³³⁵ The combination of strategy and tactic can be seen in 'Socialist Realism,' which, built on state owned land, at scale, and according to rational planning, was strategically modernist yet tactically historicist.³³⁶

2) As a political proposition, the architectural discipline as a whole must be treated *tactically*. This means, first, that architecture has become the *object* of political direction rather than its subject, and second, that planning shifts from the strategic to the tactical register. Crucially, this point reflects the critique of architecture *as institution*. While not overcoming ideology in general, it defines the limit of *architectural* ideology.

3) Completing Mario Tronti's argument, the ideological mediation of politics can only be overcome by the strategic vision of a coherent revolutionary perspective informed by a scientific critique of political economy: a *counterplan*. Without this larger strategic vision,

³³³ Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*, ix. Notwithstanding his stringent criticism, Perry Anderson uses the same words to describe Western Marxist thought. Anderson, *Considerations on Western Marxism*, 93.

³³⁴ See 3.3.2.

³³⁵ In this I uphold the basic premise of Benjamin's essay "The Work of Art in the Age of its Mechanical Reproduction"—which is also what makes that text its own militant exception within Benjamin's writing and Critical Theory generally. Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of its Mechanical Reproduction*, trans. J.A. Underwood (London: Penguin, 2008).

³³⁶ This reading was developed by Ricardo Ruivo Pereira in his doctoral dissertation, "Architecture and Counter-revolution: The Ideology of the Historiography of the Soviet Avant-garde."

even the most apparently progressive propositions risk collapsing strategy into tactics, falling into reformist planning or subsuming strategy entirely as projectual autonomism.

This expanded perspective supplies the correct context in which to consider the political arguments underlying the “death of architecture,” as well as their disciplinary consequences. Nevertheless, a correct theoretical definition of architecture’s possible role within revolutionary social transformation says nothing about the social role it actually took, “as institution,” within the changing context of capitalist society. For this we rely upon a deepened conceptual framing of architectural ideology, allowing us to perceive the institutional pivot from Plan to Project.

Because of this limitation, the marginal terms in which Tafuri suggested the possibility of a nascent ideology of the Project, we now turn to concrete examples. In section two, we begin with those that arose within historiography as a product of Tafuri’s own ambiguity. We then move to consider the “operative” links between “criticism” and the Project, that produce the notion of the “critical project.” In section three, we turn at last to the Project as a synthetic theoretical proposition for architectural design proper—the Project in its most emphatic form.

SECTION 2. THE PROJECT IN CRITICISM

Research and unease turn out to be one and the same, then, for those who manage to make their own the innate risk within a history that is really a construction—a project—rather than a simple reconstruction of events exactly as they happened. Nor, in such a risky line of research—whose results are never taken for granted—does irony appear out of place; rather, it is an essential participant.

Marco Biraghi, *Project of Crisis*³³⁷

³³⁷ Biraghi, *Project of Crisis*, 175.

2.1 Tafuri's Project of History

In the previous section we have reconstructed the theoretical underpinnings of Tafuri's critique of architectural ideology. These key points are the following: 1) the mediation of architecture as institution and discipline; 2) the specificity of disciplinary ideologies (here distinguishing between Plan, and Project); 3) the differing institutional implications of Plan and Project (the determination of the latter by the collapse of the former); 4) the political content of architectural ideology (the necessity of its "social mission"); 5) the theoretical context within Italian Marxism out of which the critique of architectural ideology developed as a critique of the Plan; and 6) the limitations which this disciplinary focus may produce within the overall terms of the critique of architecture "as institution."

By drawing selectively from Tafuri's writing, with a particular focus on the second edition of *Theories and History* and the essay "Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology," we have arrived at an understanding of the critique of architectural ideology as a crucial theoretical and methodological proposition in Tafuri's work. This has answered the first interpretive requirement described above³³⁸—to understand what is decisive in Tafuri—but it has not answered the second. Which is to say, we have bracketed from consideration a number of ambiguities in Tafuri's work overall, thereby preventing us from addressing the figure of Tafuri as a fundamental object for architectural discourse. This latter question can only be addressed by taking on the ambiguities directly through an "immanent functional interpretation." Here, references to the secondary literature become indispensable.

We have already, however, encountered several perplexing questions in our investigation of Tafuri's terminology, and seen how significant differences do exist between texts and arguments which otherwise pursue a common problematisation through similar terms. This was true of *Theories and History*, for instance, and it must be said that focusing on the note to the second edition can make it difficult to apprehend the specificity of the first edition, the substantial radicalisation that occurred in the pages of *Contropiano*, and the effort of revision and systematisation present in the "interpretive keys" themselves. Since all the above are firmly connected and associated in the notes, the differences of emphasis, formulation, and even the partial contradictions, can be lost.

So, to be explicit on this point, *there are* significant differences, and they will become decisive within the longer term of Tafuri interpretation. There, differences between the texts provide an opportunity to separate them, and, once separated, the critique of architectural ideology becomes far easier to suppress. For instance, even if one still reads "Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology" or *Architecture and Utopia* it will become more difficult to grasp the substantial commitment to ideologico-critical frameworks that connects *Theories and History* to *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*. The continuity is important because the formulation of "operativity" in *Theories and History* cannot be entirely replaced by the terms

³³⁸ See 1.1.

of architectural ideology that developed in the interval before *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*. Again, this has to do with the conceptual link between institutionality and disciplinarity. This is because the critique of operativity, with less emphasis on political economy, pays greater attention to the *immanent function* of ideology for the architectural institution, regardless of the form that ideology takes. By highlighting the *tactical* dimension of ideology, it provides a key insight into the potential disciplinary flexibility of the institution.

“Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology” gave a form to architectural ideology by defining it as an “ideology of the Plan,” thereby giving the crisis into which the discipline/institution had fallen a much more concrete meaning. However, because of this strong association between the institution and the Plan, it also tended to collapse institutionality into disciplinarity. Collapsed in that way it becomes easy to dismiss “architectural ideology” as a notion which became obsolete with the collapse of the Modern Movement. From this perspective, Tafuri’s critique would have a premature historical limit, and only a retrospective, rather than a contemporary critical function. Reading only “Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology” or *Architecture and Utopia*, it might appear that Tafuri introduced the critique of architectural ideology, at the same time as he concluded its usefulness. For, if architectural ideology is an ideology of the “Plan” and as such, it no longer fills a social role, one can expect that architecture, if it somehow continues to exist, may have ceased to be ideological. This represents another architectural version of the standard “end of history” argument of (neo)liberalism: that the institutions of Western democracy are post-ideological.

Consequently, the effort to define architectural ideology so concretely in one particular historical context risks overall theoretical scope. This can be seen especially on questions of methodology—particularly those concerning the difficult relationship between history and criticism on one hand, and design or “progettazione” on the other. The separation between the disciplines of history/criticism and the discipline of architecture/design in *Theories and History*, was one of Tafuri’s most significant propositions, and it remains one of the most accessible resources for the framing of architecture as institution and discipline. Even more important, it supports an understanding of the role criticism and historiography can play as “operative” contributors to the architectural institution and its ideology.

In the first two chapters of this section, we will see how recent retrospective secondary literature separates the critique of operativity from the critique of ideology, *Theories and History* from “Towards a Critique” and *Architecture and Utopia*, in order to overcome both the critique of ideology and the disciplinary separation of history from design. Once separated, the terms of the *Theories and History* can be associated with elements of later works. For instance, with the distinct force of the critique of operativity in mind, the different framework developed in “Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology” becomes *more* resistant, rather than less, to relativisation via the philological or “micro-historical” models discussed in Tafuri’s work after 1973. Without a clear conceptual grasp on the sequence of arguments from 1968 to 1977’s “Il ‘progetto’ storico”, the methodological

novelties introduced in the early pages of that essay take on a completely outsized significance unwarranted by the balance of argument with which that essay concludes.

We have already seen an example of this difficulty in how Tafuri employed “progetto,” and how it was translated. Beginning with “Il ‘progetto’ storico,” published in English as “The Historical ‘Project’” (1979), and included in 1980’s *La sfera e il labirinto* (*The Sphere and the Labyrinth*, 1987), Tafuri appeared to alter the terms of his critical and historiographical methodology. Grasping the nature of this shift, the distance it did, or did not, produce between the later Tafuri and the synthetic Tafuri of the note to the second edition, becomes difficult if one reads the earlier work as a natural unity. As already mentioned, to cleanly extricate themes from *Theories and History* from the critique of architectural ideology, will become one of the primary goals in the reception and interpretation of Tafuri’s work by later architectural discourse. If it is accomplished, the critical power of *Theories and History*, its potential to unmask the institutional basis of historicist distortion, is fundamentally broken. One must understand the thresholds of argument and ambiguity in the earlier work through which that extrication is attempted, in order to understand “Tafuri,” and one must understand the limitations of later work in order to extend the critique of ideology into the present.

All these challenges arise from later developments in architecture’s disciplinary self-definition, and the separation of history from design allows one to understand this *pivot* in architectural production, to continue to think critically about it even when it defines itself by *self-reflexive criticality*. Put another way, it allows one to think about the disciplinary separation of history from design as a separation of history from the architectural *institution*, regardless of the terms of its *disciplinary self-definition*.

Unfortunately, in Tafuri’s writing, the relative autonomy of architecture’s disciplinarity from its institutionality was a rather underdeveloped theme. This might partially explain why, as a matter of architectural analysis, Tafuri could not grasp the fluidity with which the institution remade its disciplinarity, that is, its *operative mobility* in the years of crisis he described. In this way, I would argue, Tafuri never properly identified the changing character of architectural production, a change in which he himself would later be swept away. This is reflected in those moments where he too readily grants it the melancholic dignity of a tragic, even defiant, final act: “To the deceptive attempts to give architecture an ideological dress, I shall always prefer the sincerity of those who have the courage to speak of that silent and outdated ‘purity’; even if this, too, still harbors an ideological inspiration, pathetic in its anachronism.”³³⁹ Though he recognises the ideological underpinnings, he fails to see in them a search for a new disciplinarity whose ideological value was far from anachronistic. The pathos is accepted—rather undialectically, it must be said—as tragic defiance rather than seen in the institutional context for what it could *become*. Nevertheless it is easy to read the final

³³⁹ Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*, ix.

pages of “L’Architecture dans le boudoir”³⁴⁰ and the concluding chapters of *The Sphere and the Labyrinth* as a whole, as a call to formulate the precise terms under which architectural ideology continued—the terms which, as mentioned in the introduction, this thesis seeks to produce.

Therefore, we will begin this section with a further investigation of these ambiguities within Tafuri’s own writing, followed by an examination of the secondary literature. As Mark Wigley astutely noted, the “real test” of Tafuri’s significance, can be found in the reactions to it.³⁴¹ It should be pointed out that while the dominant representation recovers Tafuri to the side of the architectural institution, it does not have an absolute hegemony. In the American context, the work of the Revisions group marks a strong departure from the depoliticised reception encountered in *Oppositions*, emphasising in particular Tafuri’s historical materialism and critique of ideology.³⁴² K. Michael Hays, while not emphasising these themes, did extend others.³⁴³ More recently, Gail Day has gone even further into the political and theoretical context of Tafuri’s Venetian period, correcting the simplification and contextual ignorance of the Anglophone discussion by taking up the political and theoretical context of *Contropiano*.³⁴⁴ That context was indeed more complex than even the representation articulated by the Revisions group. Indeed, Day is particularly concerned to counter the reading Fredric Jameson produced for Revisions.

Rather than parse the marginal limits of the above, my focus will be on more explicit invocations of the “Project.” Among other essays and texts, several key publications will receive special attention: recent monographs on the historian by Andrew Leach, *Choosing History*, and Marco Biraghi, *Project of Crisis*, and special issues of *Architecture New York*, “Being Manfredo Tafuri” and *Casabella*, “The Historical Project of Manfredo Tafuri.” By examining key examples, the overall trajectory becomes clear: how the Project became an ideological investment within critical historiography, tying the latter to the institution of architecture within neoliberalism. Furthermore, it demonstrates how the process occurred *through* Tafuri, in open contradiction to the properly critical and political content of his work.

From the above methodological and historiographical considerations, we will pass to the reciprocal implications for “Criticism in the Project,” the definition of architectural agency in terms of its “critical” capacities. In the chapter “Limits of Critique II,” this section concludes by returning to overarching methodological themes discussed at the end of section one, and I

³⁴⁰ Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*, 282—286.

³⁴¹ Wigley, “Post-Operative History,” 53.

³⁴² See in particular the introduction by Mary McLeod, *Architecture Criticism Ideology*, 7—11.

³⁴³ I am thinking in particular of such Western Marxist themes as “reification,” which, from reflections on Tafuri, find their way into Hays’ own writing on Modernism. See K. Michael Hays, *Modernism and the Posthumanist Subject* (Cambridge Mass: MIT Press, 1995).

³⁴⁴ I refer again to the essays “Strategies in the Metropolitan Merz: Manfredo Tafuri and Italian Workerism” and “Manfredo Tafuri, Frederic Jameson, and the Contestations of Political Memory.”

will suggest the consequences which my reading of Tafuri might impose upon attempts to link “criticism” to cultural production within the institutional conditions of capitalist society.

2.1.1 “Operativity” and the Separation of History from Design

Through the concept “operativity,” *Theories and History* framed the content of historiographical production in terms of the function it performs for architecture—as he would later say, “as an institution.” In the first edition, however, “operativity” speaks to the interconnection of the disciplinary and institutional levels discussed above, without explicitly defining architecture’s institutional character in Marxist terms. Nevertheless, the first edition does employ the term “ideology”—for instance when Tafuri refers to the value of a criticism external to architectural language: “We have already said that the difference between a criticism from *within* the architectural language and the criticism that makes use of a specific metalanguage consists, mainly, in the different possibility that the latter has to throw light on the ideological systems underlying the various codes and the various works.”³⁴⁵ Later he reiterates the point, emphasising that meaning of ideology: “Operative criticism is, then, an ideological criticism (we always use the term ideological in its Marxian sense): it substitutes ready-made judgements of value (prepared for immediate use) for analytical rigour.”³⁴⁶ Despite such passages, the first edition does not effect a systematic approach to the concept of ideology. The problematic is given a broader philosophical frame, on the model of art history and Critical Theory,³⁴⁷ rather than the Italian workerist Marxism he would soon encounter.

With this later influence, architectural ideology’s class character and institutional function were defined more concretely, both at the level of politics and disciplinarity. Prior to that point, the disciplinary focus of *Theories and History* is condensed in the tensions between practices of “planning” (“progettazione”), history, and critique, playing out first as a general reflection on the contradictions of modern historicism, second as a more concrete disciplinary reflection on “operative criticism,” and finally in the resolute separation of historical criticism from planning and design practice.

In the introduction to the book, Tafuri laid out a critical perspective more or less on the model of Horkheimer and Adorno’s critique of Enlightenment Reason. For Tafuri however, and he finds support here from Roland Barthes, it was not philosophy, but history that was called upon to correct the “Mythologisation of Reason.”³⁴⁸ Following the introduction, the

³⁴⁵ Tafuri, *Theories and History*, 109–110. “Abbiamo già detto che la differenza esistente fra una critica svolta *all’interno* del linguaggio architettonico ed una critica che usi un metalinguaggio specifico, consiste principalmente nella diversa possibilità che questa seconda ha, di illuminare i sistemi ideologici soggiacenti ai vari codici, oltre che alle singole opere.” Tafuri, *Teorie e storia*, 130.

³⁴⁶ “Tafuri, *Theories and History*, 153. “La critica operativa è quindi una critica ideologia (usiamo sempre il termine <ideologico> in senso Marxiano): sostituisce al rigore analitica giudizi di valore già costituiti, validi per l’azione immediata.” Tafuri, *Teorie e storia*, 182.

³⁴⁷ The use of rather vague and sporadic references to Marx in *Theories and History*, is also something it has in common with much Critical Theory.

³⁴⁸ “‘Myth is against history’ Barthes tells us, and myths carry on their mystifications by hiding the artificial (and the ideological artificiality) behind the mask of a fake ‘naturalism.’ If we accept these premises, then the present moment, so totally bent on avoiding, through *new myths*, the commitment of understanding the present, cannot help turning even the researches that, with renewed vigour and rigour, try to plan a systematic and objective reading of the world, of things, of history, and of human conventions into *fashion and myth*.” Tafuri, *Theories and History*, 7.

first chapter, “Modern Architecture and the Eclipse of History” constructs a genealogy of the contradictory dialectic between myth and history, whose roots extend as far back as Brunelleschi and the *Quattrocento*.³⁴⁹ As noted by Andrew Leach, this section of *Theories and History*, further develops the point by transposing a theme from Walter Benjamin—the “crisis of the object”³⁵⁰—into architectural terms, where the crisis of the object points to an underlying crisis or, as Tafuri put it, “eclipse” of *history*.³⁵¹ It is his specific focus on history which differentiates Tafuri’s argument from his canonical sources in *Critical Theory*, and defines the unique and particularly architectural problematic. As we have already seen, this problematic involves the specifically temporal dimensions of prefiguration, anticipation, and realisation. The crisis or “eclipse” is manifest in architecture’s complex and ambiguous uses of history, beginning with the Renaissance recapture of Antiquity and reaching breaking point with the inter-war avant-garde—most explicitly in the case of the Bauhaus, for whom total departure from history became the only move *historically* possible.³⁵²

Far from legitimising such disposals of history, Tafuri demonstrated the contradictory position in which modern architecture found itself. These acts of historical (de)contextualisation, are carried out by architects through their projects, but are given an explicit discursive presentation in the writing of architectural historians and critics, who marshal the force of their discipline to demonstrate, simultaneously, the absolute novelty of a particular work, and its true continuity with the great works of the past.³⁵³ It is this practice, of course, that Tafuri defines by the famous formula for operative criticism, which we have briefly treated already:

What is normally meant by *operative criticism* is an analysis of architecture (or of the arts in general) that, instead of an abstract survey, has as its objective the planning [“progettazione”] of a precise poetical tendency, anticipated in its structures and derived from historical analyses programmatically distorted and finalized.

By this definition operative criticism represents the meeting point of history and planning [“progettazione”]. We could say, in fact, that operative criticism *plans* [“progetta”] past history by projecting it [“prioettandola”] towards the future. Its verifiability does not require abstractions of principle, it measures itself, each time, against the results obtained, while its theoretical horizon is the pragmatist and instrumentalist tradition.

One could also add that this type of criticism, by anticipating the ways of action, forces history: forces past history because, by investing it with a strong ideological charge, it rejects the failures and dispersions throughout history; and forces the future because it is not satisfied with the simple registering of what is happening, but hankers after solutions and problems not yet shown (at least not explicitly so). Its attitude is contesting towards past history, and prophetic towards the future.³⁵⁴

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 14–15.

³⁵⁰ Andrew Leach, *Choosing History*, 92.

³⁵¹ Tafuri, *Theories and History*, 28. The original phrase was “L’eclissa della storia,” Tafuri, *Teorie e storia*, 42.

³⁵² Tafuri, *Theories and History*, 64.

³⁵³ Tafuri showed how the contradiction undermined the very temporal logic of modernism. See “The Uncertainties of Formalism: Victor Sklovskij and the Denuding of Art,” in “On the Methodology of Architectural History,” ed. Demetri Porphyrios. *Architectural Design* 51 6/7 (1981): 73–77.

³⁵⁴ Tafuri, *Theories and History*, 141.

The opposition between design practice, or planning (“progettazione”), and historical criticism translates the question of ideology into one of methodology—putting the problematic in the *disciplinary* terms of critique and historiography. It therefore splits the problem across two levels: a reflection on architectural design, and second, more famously, as a reflection on the disciplinary status of history and criticism. Together, these two levels define the complex role history plays for the production of architecture—operative criticism being that form of architectural production, which “plans” on a discursive level. While chiefly used to define discursive production, in *Theories and History*, operativity is a category related to the temporal practice of “progettazione” in general: both architects and critics are engaged in a search for operative possibilities—for a way *forward*.³⁵⁵

For the historical avant-garde, continuing a process begun in the previous century,³⁵⁶ this search gave rise to contradictory disciplinary possibilities, extreme aestheticisation giving way to concrete solutions. The avant-garde’s focus on the experience of the modern city, its increasing investment in design, led ultimately to the potential collapse of architecture itself.³⁵⁷

This *disciplinary* trajectory, which we have already covered, is precisely what failed when planning became a practical reality, and “faith in design” collapsed. As a whole, *Theories and History* is an attempt to grasp the reasons for that failure, and in particular, the part played by history and criticism. For Tafuri, the tragedy was that history and criticism, if properly separated from design, might have deduced the underlying contradictions. As operative criticism, however, it simply urged architecture over the precipice. For Tafuri, this is a lesson which must be learned by architecture as a whole, but first of all by its critics and historians, for whom the difficulty and complexity of history must become a methodological first principle. Attempts to “plan” history, to “project it towards the future” must be abandoned in order to properly grasp the situation architecture faces.

Thus, within the context of a generic temporal definition of “planning,” the historian takes on a disciplinary distance from architecture itself—the famous separation of history from design.³⁵⁸ But in this absolutely crucial moment of the argument, we have to be very careful about the historical and disciplinary specificity of “design.” In fact, Tafuri speaks of two different moments of separation, the first, as described above, separates history and

³⁵⁵ Despite his critical approach, Tafuri even concludes the introduction with the possibility that a new operative position might yet be found to solve the crisis of his present moment. *Ibid.*, 8.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 149.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 37–38. This argument is repeated in “Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology”: “Art as model for action: this was the great guiding principle of the artistic uprising of the modern bourgeoisie, but at the same time it was the absolute that gave rise to new, irrepressible contradictions. Life and art having proved antithetical, one had to seek either instruments of mediation—and thus all artistic production had to accept problematics as the new ethical horizon—or ways by which art might pass into life, even at the cost of realizing Hegel’s prophecy of the death of art.” Tafuri, “Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology”, 18.

³⁵⁸ Tafuri, *Theories and History*, 109–110.

criticism from the modern act of planning.³⁵⁹ The second separates it from the field of typological, and linguistic research, which, in the 1960s, had become a new direction for architectural practice, one with an ambiguous ideological underpinning.³⁶⁰ Of the new “typological” researches carried out by his contemporaries, for instance, Aldo Rossi and Carlo Aymonimo, he has this to say:

There is a more and more pressing request for a new institutionality of architectural language, with an equally pressing problem of direct communication with the public and of social behaviour towards images and structures. The departure from the criticism of a single section of theoretical research in the classical sense has, therefore, a precise reason.

Taking architecture back to its prime elements and to its ‘zero degree’, introduces, in the survey of the phenomena, an objectivity that satisfies the more and more widespread wish to find not only a logical and verifiable process of form construction, but also constant and permanent principles—outside historical changes—of architecture.”³⁶¹

The crisis in architecture’s role prompted a search for new “institutional” possibilities.³⁶² In this moment, the disciplinarity of architecture, precisely what makes it “*Architecture*” becomes a new object of investment. At the same time, architectural discourse in the process of becoming architecture theory, seeks out its own answers.³⁶³ Rather than join in this new search, Tafuri argues, history must retain its critical distance, precisely because the character of the architectural discipline is in a state of flux:

Even without making the revealing quality of criticism a determining factor, those who recognise the need for a radical clarification can only adopt a demystifying attitude by going beyond what architecture *shows*, in order to examine what it *hides*.

The price of this operation is certainly going to be a deep split between criticism and architecture. But it is as certain that this split is absolutely necessary, at least until the clash between those who use architectural language ambiguously (and we think this is undeniably the case with today’s architects) and those who uncover the real meanings of architectural structures, has completely cleared the ideological and mystified character of the architectural discipline.³⁶⁴

In order to escape its historic failure, architecture sought a trans-historical disciplinarity, a move toward *pure* architecture—an attempt to find an unassailable position beyond the crisis. Here again, historical material becomes a means to project a new future, this time, articulated in opposition to planning. But Tafuri rejects this new “critical architecture” as equally

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 234.

³⁶⁰ Ibid., 163.

³⁶¹ Ibid., 173.

³⁶² At this point in Tafuri’s thinking, “institution” has a rather vague meaning.

³⁶³ Ibid., 172. It is often emphasised that the “Theories” of Tafuri’s title predate what later became “Architecture Theory,” and must be careful to avoid an anachronistic interpretation of that title. This may be true at the level of their specific disciplinarity, but not their institutionality—later “Architecture Theory” being equally operative, though under new terms.

³⁶⁴ Ibid., 176.

ideological. Despite his calls for empirical investigation,³⁶⁵ this is not a judgement premised on specific examples of ideological distortion. Rather, it follows from the underlying, structural critique—the mediation between architecture’s institutionality and its disciplinarity—which I argue was nascent in the first edition. Only a separate historical perspective, one which can independently investigate the “meanings of architectural structures,”—that is, their ideological content—has any hope of clearing up the mystifications. A separate historical perspective, defined methodologically and distinct as a discipline, can *show* what architecture *hides* under its own shifting disciplinary stance.

In the final pages of the first edition, Tafuri presents this opposition as a means to “recuperate for architecture its specific dimension: that of the future.”³⁶⁶ By giving up on a projective partnership and instead performing a relentless historicisation, criticism might allow architecture to function within a non-mythologised historicity. Recognising the critical weakness of this formulation, the passage is replaced in the second edition by the more militant formulation discussed above: “to find out what architecture is, *as a discipline historically conditioned and institutionally functional to, first, the ‘progress’ of the pre-capitalist bourgeoisie and, later, to the new perspectives of capitalist ‘Zivilisation’*, is the only purpose with any historical sense.”³⁶⁷

In the difference between these two versions, lies the ambiguity and eventually the *operativity* of *Theories and History* to later architectural ideology as it emerged within historiography. The earlier formulation suggests that what was missing from Tafuri’s account at the time was a critical awareness of history’s own institutional position vis a vis architecture. For instance, despite such strong statements as we have referenced above, in places, *Theories and History* rather ambiguously positions historical criticism as a kind of academic symbiont upon design practice without problematising the larger social context in which that practice occurs.³⁶⁸ This means that while the critique of operativity makes *Theories and History* an effective reference for the immanent critique of architectural ideology, it is less effective at situating the latter within social, political, and economic conditions.

³⁶⁵ Ibid..

³⁶⁶ “La critica in tal modo, pone ostacoli avanzati all’architetto, sfidandolo a superarli. Ma si badi bene: tali ostacoli non sono «inventati» dal critico, bensì scaturiscono dalla sterilizzazione continua che egli fa del presente.

In quanto profondamente storicizzata, la critica può recuperare inoltre, per l’architettura, la sua dimensione specifica: quella del futuro. Ed è chiaro che riconducendo nell’alveo storico i fenomeni dell’architettura contemporanea, la critica si trova a dover contestare l’antistoricismo che, nelle pagine che precedono, abbiamo riconosciuto come il grande problema irrisolto dell’arte moderna.” Tafuri, *Teorie e storia*, 272.

³⁶⁷ Tafuri, *Theories and History*, 236.

³⁶⁸ “It is not from the historical context that the present tasks are born. (It is not up to the historian to take on the job of sanctifying the historical continuity of the discipline.) Rather the dissection carried out on the body of history must[?] precisely ‘place’ the problems debated at present, recognise their ambiguity, values and mystifications, offer the architect an endless vista of new and unsolved problems, available for conscious choice and freed from the weight of myth. In other words the historian accentuates the contradictions of history and offers them crudely, in their reality, to those whose responsibility it is to create new formal worlds. But at the same time history and criticism set a limit to ambiguity in architecture.” Ibid., 228.

The consequences of this partiality, will become clear when we examine the secondary literature. Tafuri has effectively left the door open for such ambiguous revisions, by postulating that ideological mystifications could be cleared up through historical criticism alone. We know from later arguments that only a material transformation of the architectural institution and its bourgeois social function could effect such a thing. Furthermore, Tafuri appeared willing to subject even this methodology to later judgement. Making the point explicitly, in the final pages he gives later interpreters a kind of license: “In a certain sense, this type of historiographical criticism is waiting to be contested and left behind by historical reality.”³⁶⁹ While the majority of interpretations will pursue one “contestation,” proclaiming its ultimate fidelity, this thesis pursues another.

³⁶⁹ Ibid., 234.

2.1.2 Point of Maximum Leverage

In the development of Tafuri's ideas, many points of inflection, transition, and adjustment can be identified. As a question of interpretation, it is no exaggeration to say that the choice of point and the significance one ascribes to it define the results. It is another "hermeneutic circle" that cannot be avoided, but the stakes for a given interpretation can be defined clearly enough. The true difficulty arises, however, when the point in question refers precisely to the phenomenon of ambiguity itself. Here one comes up against a meta-problem: a question of interpreting a proposition concerning interpretation, and one, moreover, which may point to the relativity of the entire process. One could go on endlessly about the meta-level ambiguities of historicising historiographical theories such as Tafuri's. In order to overcome this difficulty, I will supplement my textual analysis with a reading of secondary texts. As another motto of immanent critique puts it: "first seek out someone with whom to argue; one thereby gradually finds one's way into the question at issue, and the rest will follow of itself."³⁷⁰ As already mentioned, it is by working back and forth from a text to its interpretations that it will be possible to frame the stakes by which the above ambiguities are decided.

In the next chapter we will examine dominant periodisations of Tafuri's work, and the interpretations they make possible. Anticipating that investigation, I will suggest my own inflection point. The transitional moment from which the Project emerges as an immanent possibility, can be found in the essay "Il 'progetto' storico", published in *Oppositions* 17 as "The Historical 'Project'" and appearing again as the introduction to *La sfera e il labirinto/ The Sphere and the Labyrinth*.³⁷¹ With this text, notwithstanding the continuities, a significant crack appears in the framework for historical investigation and critical framing of architecture. However, the full consequences of the text cannot be grasped by reading it alone. As for Tafuri's work overall, the meaning of the text lives both within and without. Only by referring to its function *for later interpretations*, can the fault lines in its propositions be ascertained. In contrast to my argument, this text is generally *not* regarded as a break or departure. Instead, it is traversed as a "bridge"³⁷² between *Theories and History* and the later work on the Renaissance, part of a long process of maturation in a larger and more or less consistent "project," from which the second edition of *Theories and History*, "Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology" and *Architecture and Utopia*, could be safely discounted.

³⁷⁰ G.E. Lessing quoted in Gordon Finlayson, "Hegel, Adorno and immanent criticism," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 22, no. 6 (2014): 1142.

³⁷¹ Manfredo Tafuri, "Il 'progetto' storico" *Casabella* 429 (1977): 11–18. Translated in English as "The Historical 'Project'" *Oppositions* 17 (1979): 54–75. Several years later it appeared as the introduction to Manfredo Tafuri, *La sfera e il labirinto. Avanguardie e architettura da Piranesi agli '70* (Turin: Einaudi, 1980); and *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*. In what follows, unless otherwise noted, I will use the translated version in *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*. There are a number of differences, however, which will be noted as they appear.

³⁷² Leach uses this term specifically. Leach, *Choosing History*, 186.

The themes of architectural ideology, from *realisation* to the Plan, find their last expression in the narrative of *Architecture and Utopia*. It is a narrative that, in a sense, *comes to an end*, even though, obviously, architectural production did not come to an end. I have already suggested a reason for Tafuri's limitation on this point: Tafuri did not conceptualise a shift in architectural disciplinarity—a shift which would carry the institution beyond its exclusion from processes of planning, and into a new ideological role vis-a-vis capitalist society. However, among other moments covered above, when one considers “The Historical ‘Project’” one finds a partial, and, true to type, highly ambiguous recognition of a certain disciplinary recalibration. As an instalment in Tafuri's thought, this text, perhaps more than any other, thus has the potential to be read in widely diverging ways. It balances almost perfectly on the watershed between Tafuri's earlier Marxian period, and the micro-historical and post-Marxian period that would follow. According to the conceptual terms I have developed so far, this periodisation matches the pivot in architectural ideology and Tafuri's discursive value hinges on this point: from critic of planning ideology to protagonist of the project. With the term present in the title “The Historical ‘Project’” provides unmistakable leverage.

Reading it, one is struck by Tafuri's range of references and methodological frameworks. Though often combined and interconnected, they appear to take turns defining Tafuri's programme. This methodological eclecticism, is of course part of the message and problematic of the text, (a good reminder that with Tafuri, one is always dealing with a meta-problem). The first several pages appear to pick up where *Theories and History* left off, containing reflections on historiographical methodology, ‘language,’ and structuralism, tending more and more toward the post-structuralism of Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari. Then there is a clear shift toward Marxian themes closer to “Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology” and *Architecture and Utopia*: architecture and history in the context of production and labour.³⁷³ There are paragraphs which repeat the historical and political context of the architectural crisis as described in those earlier texts,³⁷⁴ and define architectural production in terms of ideology³⁷⁵—though he does prominently frame ideology in the non-Marxian terms of “Nietzschean ‘stones’ and Freudian ‘delirious constructions.’”³⁷⁶ At a superficial level, therefore, one could read “The Historical ‘Project’” as Tafuri's adoption of an archaeological or genealogical approach³⁷⁷ taken from Nietzsche and Foucault, *or* as Tafuri's continuation of the Marxist critique of ideology. At the abstract level of theoretical references, the text clearly contains both. Because the former carry the text's *operativity*, its

³⁷³ Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*. 8–9, 10, 14, and 15–16.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 17 and 20–21.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 17.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

³⁷⁷ Tafuri does not distinguish between the two approaches, though they were developed in different and distinct periods of Foucault's work.

ideological value and its novelty, most recent interpreters simply refer to them and ignore the Marxian continuities. For these interpreters, the essay is worth quoting because it references Ginzburg, Nietzsche, Foucault, and Freud, not because it also contains references to Marx, or repeatedly refers the reader to “modes of production.”³⁷⁸

In the former capacity, two passages in particular stand out. Significantly, both are actually quotations—the first, an introductory quotation of Carlo Ginzburg and Adriano Prosperi, the second of Friedrich Nietzsche. Both relate to methodology—“microhistory” and “philology” or “genealogy” respectively—and, while similar references are made to Foucault, these do not offer the same lapidary rhetoric.³⁷⁹ In any case, Tafuri was rather imprecise here on the difference between archaeology and genealogy, and certainly Nietzsche functions as well as Foucault to ground the latter. I would characterise both methodological recommendations as formalist in nature, problematising historical practice and critique according to a meta-historical, even *epistemological* uncertainty principle. The relativistic dangers of this formalism, were of course known to Tafuri, and in a number of places he explicitly addressed it.³⁸⁰ However, because of the ideological value it offers to later readers, the lasting methodological impression the text gives, remains formalist nevertheless.

In part this is because the chapter *begins* with this material, and only works back to a critical perspective grounded in social, political, and economic context. The quotation from Carlo Ginzburg and Adriano Prosperi’s *Giochi di pazienza*, functions as a long epigraph. It presents historical research as a kind of jigsaw puzzle³⁸¹, in which the results, cannot be separated from the expectations: “For this reason, the fact that everything falls into place is an ambiguous sign: either one is completely right or completely wrong.”³⁸² This reference to Ginzburg, a disciple of the *Annales* school and practitioner of microhistory whose work exerted a strong influence on Tafuri from the mid-70s onward,³⁸³ introduced a different methodological emphasis than that which had preoccupied Tafuri previously. Although, since at least *Theories and History*, Tafuri had devoted attention to the challenges posed by interdisciplinary research, I would argue that he had earlier placed the emphasis on the specific analytical power of that research in the architectural context, rather than on the problematic relativity of interdisciplinarity in general.³⁸⁴ The earlier book is defined by a tentative

³⁷⁸ If anything, the presence of the latter only gives further license, for it suggests a conceptual commensurability between otherwise radically opposed perspectives.

³⁷⁹ In reading secondary work on Tafuri, one continuously “trips” over this Nietzsche quotation.

³⁸⁰ Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*, 2, 9, and 15.

³⁸¹ In the original Italian, this is given as “giochi di pazienza”, literally “games of patience”. It is translated as “game of solitaire” in the *Oppositions* publication of “The Historical ‘Project’” and as “jigsaw puzzle” in *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*.

³⁸² Carlo Ginzburg and Adriano Prosperi, *Giochi di Pazienza: Un seminario sul “Beneficio di Cristo”* (Turin: Einaudi, 1975), 84. Quoted in Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*, 1.

³⁸³ The influence of ‘microhistory’ on Tafuri is the subject of Carla Keyvanyan’s essay “Manfredo Tafuri: From the Critique of Ideology to Microhistories,” *Design Issues* 16, 1 (2000): 3–15. Leach covers this relationship in the section “Research as Open Value.” Leach, *Choosing History*, 206–211.

³⁸⁴ See especially the chapter “Instruments of Criticism.” Tafuri, *Theories and History*, 171–226.

methodological optimism concerning history counterposed by a clear scepticism regarding architectural production proper. Put another way, Tafuri had identified a crisis in the architectural discipline's use of history, at the same time as he suggested a stronger and independent footing for the discipline of history proper. "The Historical 'Project'" by contrast presented a sobered and somewhat melancholy historian, no longer confident in the critique of operativity,³⁸⁵ nor in the disciplinary autonomy of history,³⁸⁶ as previously articulated.

However, again, Tafuri is ambivalent about even this melancholy. With one's hermeneutic tuned to the critique of ideology rather than to post-Marxist methodological formalism, there are many passages that actually strengthen the earlier frameworks rather than cast them aside. For instance, one rarely finds the following passages quoted in the secondary literature.³⁸⁷ Referring to the difference between a purely immanent criticism, and one which returns immanent content to the social-historical context, Tafuri makes the following distinction:

Both approaches are legitimate: it is only a question of the ends that one proposes. I could choose to descend into what we have defined as the magic circle of language, transforming it into a bottomless well. The so-called operative criticism has been doing this for some time, serving, like fast food, its arbitrary and pyrotechnical send-ups of Michelangelo, Borromini, and Wright. Yet if I choose to do this, I must realize clearly that my aim is not to forge history, but rather to give form to a neutral space, in which to float, above and beyond time, a mass of weightless metaphors. I will ask of this space nothing but to keep me fascinated and pleasantly deceived.

In the other case, I would have to measure the real incidence of language on the extralinguistic series to which it is connected. That is, I would have to measure just how the introduction of a measurable conception of figurative space is a reaction to the crisis of the Renaissance bourgeoisie; how the disintegration of the concept of form corresponds to the formation of the new metropolitan universe; how the ideology of an architecture reduced to an 'indifferent object,' to mere typology to a reorganization project of the building trades, fits into the real perspective of an 'alternative' urban administration. The interrelationship of intellectual labor and conditions of production will offer, in such a case, a valid parameter for recomposing the mosaic from the pieces resulting from the analytic disassembly previously affected. To reinsert architectural history within the sphere of a history of the social division of labor does not at all mean regressing to a 'vulgar Marxism'; it does not at all mean erasing the specific characteristics of architecture itself. On the contrary, these characteristics will be emphasized through a reading that would determine—on the basis of verifiable parameters—the real significance of planning choices within the dynamics of the productive transformations that they set into motion, that they slow up, that they try to impede.³⁸⁸

In the last lines, Tafuri defends the formulation I have suggested: the disciplinary content of architecture, its "specific characteristics" are to be situated in relation to their institutional basis, which in turn rest upon the particular structural context of capitalist society. However, this does not eradicate the disciplinary specificity of architecture; rather, it allows one to understand the political and material context in which its "real significance" lies. Of course,

³⁸⁵ Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*, 11.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

³⁸⁷ Keyvanian's essay is a notable exception.

³⁸⁸ Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*. 15. The translation is uncontroversial. See Tafuri, *La sfera e il labirinto*, 21–22. The reference to "send-ups" of Michelangelo, Borromini, and Wright is likely a reference to Tafuri's contemporaries and sometime antagonists, Paolo Portoghesi and Burno Zevi—their *Michelangelo architetto* exhibition in particular.

if historical practice is directed in this manner, then one cannot maintain an equal legitimacy of whichever “ends that one proposes.” Such “legitimacy” would be purely formal, autonomous from any real stakes, anything concretely social or historical. This is the rather obvious core point of any critique of ideology or institutionality, but it requires also a clear analysis of disciplinarity. On the following page, Tafuri puts his finger directly on the key conceptual problem, the moment of disciplinary and ideological *pivot*, from which one could no longer assume the formal neutrality of “historical ‘projects’”:

All this has two immediate consequences: (a) With respect to classical historiography, it obliges us to reexamine all the criteria of periodization; the above-cited dialectic (concrete labor/abstract labor) presents itself under a new aspect only where it triggers a mechanism of integration between an intellectual model and modes of productive development [“si ripropone infatti con caratteri originali solo là dove scatta un meccanismo di integrazione fra prefigurazione intellettuale e modi di sviluppo produttivo.”] And it is the task of historical analysis to recognize such an integration, for the purpose of constructing *structural cycles*, in the fullest sense of the term. (b) With respect to the debate on the analysis of artistic language, the proposed method switches attention from the level of direct communication to that of underlying meanings. That is to say, it obliges us to measure the ‘productivity’ of linguistic innovations and to submit the domain of symbolic forms to the scrutiny of an analysis *capable of calling into question at every instant the historic legitimacy of the capitalistic division of labor*.³⁸⁹

This passage describes pivotal moments in the structural interconnection of architecture and society, and the need to periodise such “structural cycles” (“cicli strutturali”). It goes on to present a situation in which an “intellectual model” (“prefigurazione intellettuale”), even one based on “language” alone (such as one encounters in the neo-avant-garde) may nevertheless coincide with a mode of capitalist development. The theme of concrete vs abstract labour, is not one I have chosen to highlight, since it would require a significant detour.³⁹⁰ It is enough in this context to understand that Tafuri means here the ideological and technical function of the architecture discipline within the capitalist mode of production. In the case of the Project, we would find an “intellectual model” that “prefigures” the transcendence of ideological functions *over* technical development.

Thus, what makes this passage so useful has less to do with the reference to labour and more to do with the mention of periodisation itself, which, in the context of this polyvalent essay, is particularly significant. Through all the uncertainty, the eclectic references, the methodological and conceptual experimentation, and the ambiguous use of “the ‘project,’” the above passage defines the fundamental frame of historical reference: such disciplinary questions, such “projects” whether architectural or historical, always exist in an *institutional* context, which is to say, disciplinarity is always mediated by social relations and political economy. Furthermore, as a periodisational problem, it forces us to come to terms with the

³⁸⁹ Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*. 16; *La sfera e il labirinto*, 22.

³⁹⁰ It could easily lead one down into the intricacies of labour and value theory. Though beyond the scope of this thesis, it would certainly be a very ‘productive’ direction of investigation, given the explosion of post-workerist theories of social and reproductive labour, together with their migration into architectural discourse. See for example the collected essays in Peggy Deamer, ed., *Immaterial Labour, the Creative Class, and the Politics of Design* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

ideological potential within such moments of disciplinary uncertainty. This, in condensed and hypothetical form, is the disciplinary and ideological *pivot* which was immanent to Tafuri's own writing even as he appears to be partially aware of its danger.

However, within the terms of this text, Tafuri was unable to frame a periodisation such as the one I am attempting to construct. This was so for historical reasons already mentioned. Tafuri was writing at a time in which the ideological value of anti- or post-planning, had not yet congealed around neoliberalism. Tafuri remains trapped—on one hand within the Western Marxist double critique of domestic reformism and foreign “really existing socialism”; and on the other, the disciplinary uncertainty of architecture in its moment of crisis. In Marxist theory, for instance in the work of Althusser and his circle, this impasse was often expressed in over-subtle and non-committal reflections on the infrastructure/superstructure division,³⁹¹ while in the Italian workerism we have covered, it tended toward political autonomism. In Tafuri's case we see a similar tendency; however, mediated by the architectural question, this uncertainty again plays into a particular ideological investment in the notion of the project. Unlike ‘planning’, the ‘project’ is characterised by an uncertainty of purpose and result together with a kind of autonomy from ends and strategic goals. I have already characterised the project as “existential,” and further in the text, Tafuri attributes two metaphysical properties to it, first *infinity*:

The theoretical knot that must be confronted is how to construct a history that, after having upset and shattered the apparent compactness of the real, after having shifted the ideological barriers that hide the complexity of the strategies of domination, arrives at the heart of those strategies—arrives, that is, at their modes of production. But here we note the existence of a further difficulty: the modes of production isolated in themselves, *neither explain nor determine*. They themselves are anticipated, delayed, or traversed by ideological currents. Once a system of power is isolated, its genealogy cannot be offered as a universe complete in itself. The analysis must go further; it must make the previously isolated fragments collide with each other; it must dispute the limits it has set up. Regarded as “labor,” in fact, analysis has no end; it is, as Freud recognised, by its very nature *infinite*.³⁹²

The uncertainty of the classic Marxist framework, and in particular, the uncertainty of its *ends*, leads Tafuri to propose a psychoanalytic model for historical work, but there are autobiographical reasons as well. The references to Freud reflect Tafuri's personal experiences with psychoanalysis in the 1970s. Tafuri developed the idea of history as a “psychoanalysis of society,” drawing the theoretical crux of analysis away from Marx and toward Freud.³⁹³ Nevertheless, political economic terms, like “labour” and “production”

³⁹¹ For Althusser's reflections on economic determination, see the chapter “Contradiction and Overdetermination” in Louis Althusser, *For Marx*, 87—128. For a discussion of this problematic, see the chapter “Structural Causality, Contradictions, and Social Formations” in Robert Paul Resch, *Althusser and the Renewal of Marxist Social Theory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 33—82.

³⁹² Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*, 10.

³⁹³ Or as he says, ambiguously, away not from Marx, but from “Marxism.” Tafuri and Passerini, “History as Project: An Interview with Manfredo Tafuri,” 38. At this point in the history of Western Marxism, “Marx” had come to stand less for his work on political economy, and more as a methodological model. It is a perception that goes back to Georg Lukács, but becomes increasingly “culturalist” in later forms. Ironically, Lukács had defined Marxist “orthodox” precisely by this concern for methodological rigour. Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, 1.

remain. In the above passage, Tafuri is again identifying the complex dialectic between infrastructure and superstructure, the need for an immanent analysis on top of a political economic analysis. In this, we remain in continuity with the general terms of a critique of architectural ideology. However, by transporting the problem onto the category “labour,” and by characterising it as a kind of infinite process, Tafuri is defining historical work in such a way as to distance it from its stakes, abstracting its strategic purpose. In other words, Tafuri is formalising and depoliticising historical analysis at the same time as he attempts to ramify its critical consciousness. In effect, by critically considering history as a labour and a production—a perfectly reasonable proposal—Tafuri reduces *history* to its institutionality at the expense of its disciplinary content.

It should be reiterated that this appears to address a weakness of previous arguments. Despite Tafuri’s militant problematisation of architecture as institution, his critique of operative criticism/history, had remained at the disciplinary level. In other words, he failed to note the class character of historiography. However, by then defining the institution by its “infinite” extension, the critical framework immediately collapses. In the context of its later interpretation, such critical reflections appear to have only reinforced disciplinary self-reflexivity, further preventing an analysis at the level of ideology, class, and institutionality.³⁹⁴

Tafuri had always balanced his critical analysis against the difficult question of history’s own calibration. What makes “The Historical ‘Project’” significant, is the way in which that “insuppressible ambiguity”³⁹⁵ approaches a metahistorical value in itself and a disciplinary definition. As a practical proposal, the infinity of the historical project could hardly be less ideological. Added to its infinity is the second metaphysical characterisation, “inactuality”:

History as a ‘project of crisis,’ then. There is no guarantee as to the absolute validity of such a project, no ‘solution’ in it. One must learn not to ask history for pacifications. But neither must one ask it to traverse endlessly ‘interrupted paths,’ only to stop in astonishment at the edge of enchanted forests of languages. One must abandon the path to discover what separates it from the other paths: the practice of power often occupies the unfathomable forest. This is what must be broken, ‘cut,’ traversed, over and over again. We harbor no illusions regarding the power of historical analysis to demystify per se; its attempts to change the rules of the game enjoy no autonomy. But inasmuch as it is social practice—a socializing practice—it is today obliged to enter into a struggle that puts into question its own characteristic features. Within this struggle, history must be ready to risk: to risk, ultimately, a temporary ‘inactuality.’³⁹⁶

Reading this passage, it appears that Tafuri had given up, at least temporarily, on defining the contemporary stakes for analysis. History as a “social practice” or “socialising practice” would then exist in only an oblique relation to what he had earlier defined as its objects,

³⁹⁴ On the value of the infinite project see Boris Groys, “The Loneliness of the Project,” 4.

³⁹⁵ Tafuri, *Theories and History*, xviii.

³⁹⁶ Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*, 13. In the original English publication of the essay, this paragraph contains a number of significant differences. “Project of crisis” was given as “design of crisis” and “inactuality” was given as “unfeasibility.” Tafuri “The Historical ‘Project’”, 67. I believe this difference reflects an increasingly intentional investment in the notion of the “project”, as opposed to simple “design”—a tendency that casts the term in a heightened theoretical and philosophical light. The difference in translation therefore reflects the rise in disciplinary and ideological significance which the term took on from the late 1960s to the present.

architecture as institution and architectural ideology, and its social-historical basis: the evolving capitalist division of labour and the class struggle. Here critical history is informed not even by a notional “*contropiano*.” Again, this points to the clear uncertainty with which Tafuri approached the problem of architectural ideology in a context in which its disciplinary form was in a state of flux. In her postscript to *Architecture Criticism Ideology*, Joan Ockman noted the crucial importance of an extra-disciplinary political condition:

(His) argument appears to depend upon it if the *gioco di pazienza* is not to be taken solely as an attempt to realize the contradictions of a ‘liberating’—but austere—nihilism through the endgame of architectural history. What is needed is further articulation, in the anatomical as much as the linguistic sense, of the precise relations, ideological junctures, between architectural practice, architectural history, and political action.³⁹⁷

Over the longer term, and appearing clearly in hindsight, we see the *operativity* which infuses such ambiguity. Architectural ideology, pivoting away from its role in planning, begins to define itself by its existential autonomy, its meta-historical value and independence from social ends. “The Historical ‘Project’” falls in line with this adaptation almost accidentally, even paradoxically, since it also furnishes an angle from which the adaptation could be critically perceived.

Because of its positive elements, it would be tempting to understand “The Historical ‘Project’” as a step fully in line with the Tafuri’s earlier work. This is the interpretation made by Carla Keyvanian in “From the Critique of Architectural Ideology to Microhistories,” where she argues that the historical project is still a critique of architectural ideology:

Architecture could not, therefore, be “political.” It was, instead, history that would have to become the systematic revelation, and critique, of the ideologies that architecture embodied. It was the ‘historical’ project rather than the design one that had to become ‘capable of calling into question, at every instant, the historic legitimacy of the capitalist division of labor.’ As he still stated very explicitly years later, in 1980 in ‘Il Progetto storico’ (The Historical Project) the introductory chapter to *La Sfera e il labirinto* (The Sphere and the Labyrinth).³⁹⁸

This reading of continuity was also given by Alberto Asor Rosa in his contribution to the retrospective special issue of *Casabella*: “The Historical Project of Manfredo Tafuri.”³⁹⁹ However, when one considers the political and historical context, as well as the disciplinary context of architectural production as it shifted into a new paradigm, one has to reckon with the determining force of the text’s ambivalence. It is as if Keyvanian and Asor Rosa assume that a clear and complete disciplinary separation has been effected by the time Tafuri turns to microhistory. This was clearly not the case, as becomes obvious when, as we shall see in the next chapter, you perceive the significance which Tafuri’s “historical ‘project’” bears for the

³⁹⁷ Joan Ockman, “Postscript: Critical History and the Labors of Sisyphus” in *Architecture Criticism Ideology*, 189.

³⁹⁸ Carla Keyvanian, “From the Critique of Ideology to Microhistories,” 4.

³⁹⁹ Alberto Asor Rosa, Alberto. “Critica dell’ideologia ed esercizio storico / Critique of ideology and historical practice,” 28—33.

architectural institution. There may be explicit theoretical passages that place it in continuity with the critique of ideology, but, ultimately, that's not the function it performs in Tafuri's reception, where its *ideological* value has been decisive.

Thus, no other text appears as representative of the ambiguity and plurality that is "Tafuri." However, as I have argued, that multiplicity takes on a definite significance. In a key passage in this very essay, Tafuri foreshadows the weight which would attach itself to his own name. He quotes Marx:

'Precisely because Napoleon III was nothing,' writes Marx, 'he was able to signify everything, except what in fact he was.... He was the common name for all of the parties in coalition.... The significance of the election of Napoleon III could only become clear when... the multiple meanings of his name were substituted for the one word Bonaparte.' In place of one, then, there are 'multiple meanings.' Only by assuming that hidden plurality as real, can we break through the fetish that attaches itself to a name, a sign, a language, an ideology.⁴⁰⁰

The crucial difference being that Tafuri certainly was *something*, and that is why he must be made to represent everything. In Tafuri's case, the name refers to nothing other than this multiplicity. Its operative value lies precisely in this. In defining the significance of Napoleon III, Marx was not making a formalist warning regarding the complexity of history. After all, the force of Marx's analysis, what makes texts like *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*⁴⁰¹ exemplary, is its class analysis of French society. This historical materialist foundation is what gives it its explanatory power. To be very clear, Marx intended to explain and understand as an active contribution to a revolutionary, transformative programme—not merely to proliferate interpretations as a 'project' without "actuality."⁴⁰² The fundamental antagonism between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie forces the latter to sublimate its long standing internal difference, and makes it possible for a "nobody" like Louis-Napoléon to synthesise the revolutionary and national traditions of France. The multiplicity underlying his name is not a simple plurality, but one which functions in a social context defined by antagonistic forces. The antagonism between the two royalist parties, for instance, Orléanist and Bourbon (Legitimist), which represented conflict between old agrarian capital and new industrial and financial capital was sublimated in order to address the more serious

⁴⁰⁰ Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*, 7. True to the post-Marxian form of the first half of the text, this passage immediately pivots toward a Nietzschean framing of the problem, before pivoting back to Marx. Such passages erode the materialist—which is to say political economic—basis of Marx's arguments, transforming "ideology" into a general and abstract category.

⁴⁰¹ Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977)

⁴⁰² This is as true of his political economy as it is of his history. On the explanatory value of Marxian analysis, see Henning, *Philosophy After Marx*, 2.

antagonism between capital and labour.⁴⁰³ Likewise, the hostility with which the Republican middle classes regarded the monarchy fell away as the new Emperor remade the political power of that class through his own person.⁴⁰⁴ This is how Marxist history and critique of ideology function. Rather than formalistically replacing totality with multiplicity, they replace one signification, one “word,” with the real signification. For Marx, the true name of Napoleon III, though a name composed of diverse groups at a particular historical conjuncture, was “capital”.

It is precisely this methodological clarity, this understanding of history and critique of ideology that is in question in Tafuri’s essay. Even as it introduces the welcome problematisation of history itself as a socially and historically conditioned discipline/institution, the essay presents a conceptual knot capable of subsuming the critique of architectural ideology and the critique of historiography, by relinquishing the crux of problematisation. One word comes to signify the coalition of *all of the disciplines of architecture*—theory, history, criticism, and design—from the mid 1970s onward: the Project.⁴⁰⁵ Under the terms of the Project the institutional character of architecture disappears from view. Marco De Michelis once neatly summarised this turn, un-ironically describing Tafuri’s “project” as ideological:

This is the struggle in which Tafuri engaged his historical ‘project’—not for the historicist reconstruction of the facts exactly as they occur, but for the construction of an ideological constitution for contemporary architecture, the only constitution that could justify, even if contradictory, the resistance against the *mise en abîme* itself.⁴⁰⁶

As a “project of history” and a “project of crisis,” historical analysis becomes a participant in ideological renovation.

As we shall see in the following chapter, in the reception of Tafuri’s work, his significance is consistently both multiple and singular: it is the multiplicity of “projects” that redeems the singularity of “architecture.” The challenge of course, following Tafuri’s own recommendations, is to break apart, to “cut” this knot of signification, and to reinstate the

⁴⁰³ The process of unification of superficially opposed parties had begun several years earlier in 1948–49, as royalist factions in the bourgeoisie united to oppose the bourgeois Republicans: “This bourgeois mass was, however, *royalist*. One section of it, the large landowners, had ruled during the *Restoration* and was accordingly *Legitimist*. The other, the aristocrats of finance and big industrialists, had ruled during the July Monarchy and was consequently *Orleanist*. The high dignitaries of the army, the university, the church, the bar, the academy and of the press were to be found on either side, though in various proportions. Here, in the bourgeois republic, which bore neither the name *Bourbon* nor the name *Orleans*, but the name *Capital*, they had found the form of state in which they could rule *conjointly*.” Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, 28. See also Karl Marx, *Class Struggles in France 1848–1850* (New York, International Publishers: 1964): 88–89. In the end, both the Republicans and the royalists would be absorbed into common front of Capital that was the Second Empire.

⁴⁰⁴ Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, 112–113.

⁴⁰⁵ In conversation with myself and Ricardo Ruivo, Mark Cousins once remarked that “the ‘project’ was the “common front” of concepts.” I use the word “category” here because it generalises the conceptual content, making it self-referential, rather than purely relational.

⁴⁰⁶ Marco De Michelis, “Manfredo Tafuri and the Death of Architecture,” in *This Thing Called Theory*, ed. Teresa Stoppani, Giorgio Ponzio, and George Themistokleous (London: Routledge, 2017), 9–20.

proper significance of Tafuri's work: the site where the institutional and social character of architecture was most rigorously problematised.

In this essay, history "as a 'project'" was presented as a critical reinforcement of historical methodology. However, in its reception, it was immediately appropriated as an offer of reconciliation between criticism and design. In recognising this phenomenon in the past and foreshadowing its increasing significance in the future, no words were clearer or more stark than Tafuri's own from *Theories and History*:

The criticism that has entered the structure of artistic language is putting obstacles in the way of a full comprehension of the crisis. It slightly draws back the curtains, leaving the scene behind in darkness and winking with complicity at the public that is watching this comedy of indecisions. Here you have the reason why in history one constantly witnesses the misappropriation of 'critical writing' by architecture.⁴⁰⁷

From history as challenge to "*critica come progetto*"⁴⁰⁸ to history itself "*come progetto*"—the disciplinary innovation, what demonstrates the departure from planning ideology and arrival at a new ideological constellation, is how criticism offered itself up under a properly architectural metaphor: the *project*. Tafuri's duality, his critical self-consciousness and his immanence to this pivotal moment, perhaps the most peculiarly significant phenomena in the history of architectural discourse, would provide the opening for a rapprochement between criticism and practice. From this point on, Tafuri could be ascribed a project but not a critique of ideology. The architectural institution and its discourses gained thereby a tragic yet charismatic hero and lost a critical adversary.

⁴⁰⁷ Tafuri, *Theories and History*. 127–128.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 133.

2.2 THE ARC AND THE LABYRINTH

Leporello *And the Commander? Does he get a say
In this?*

Don Juan *Why, do you think he might be jealous?
I doubt it. No. He is a man of reason,
And has calmed down a great deal since he died.*⁴⁰⁹

Tafuri's untimely passing in 1994 after a long illness came at the end of a period in the historian's production that saw a greater focus on the Italian Renaissance and early modern period, coupled with a shift in pedagogical approach toward the realities of architectural history education in Italy. The move apparently away from the themes of his early work culminated in his shift of teaching emphasis from theory and historiography to building conservation and restoration.⁴¹⁰ Looking back on this final section of the historian's work, how can one reconcile the earlier polemical engagement with contemporary problems, to the late hermeticism of historical research and conservation work? The loss of an author whose work had always tended toward both polemical confrontation and tragic self-recrimination, caused a new problem for interpretation. And indeed new forms of interpretation were soon to follow.

For present day readers of Tafuri, particularly those who read his major works in chronological order and focus on the book-length texts translated into English, the representation given of the historian by the recent major secondary accounts, can appear perplexing. The overwhelming impression one receives from the first of Tafuri's major works, *Theories and History*, particularly under the terms powerfully set in the note to the second edition, which appears at the beginning of the English translation, is of a more or less Marxist and basically historical materialist approach to the architectural discipline. This impression is only strengthened by *Architecture and Utopia*. Tafuri invokes the strong power of historical practice when informed by political economy to critique and even positively explain an institution with clear ideological tendencies, recurrent problems and contradictions. Aside from one or two perplexing passages regarding "silence," the general impression is of a consistent and systematic critical doctrine.

In contrast, recent secondary texts like Andrew Leach's *Choosing History* and Marco Biraghi's *Project of Crisis*, present the reader with a much more ambiguous Tafuri. Because I take such readings to be symptomatic of contemporary institutional motives, I do not hesitate

⁴⁰⁹ Don Juan with his servant Leporello in Alexander Pushkin, *The Stone Guest*, part of the "Miniature Tragedies" series of 1830. I am using the translated and adapted version by Ricky Vernio (Createspace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014), 37.

⁴¹⁰ Tafuri and Passerini, "History as Project: An Interview with Manfredo Tafuri," 63—67.

to lend them a critical significance worthy of extended treatment. These are the readings which architectural theorists and historians from the post-Marxian, even *post-Tafurian*, discursive era consider useful. Their texts present a melancholy image of the historian whose tools have turned against him, swallowing a spoonful of his own medicine. As a consolation however, this time the medicine is not of the strong and deliberately unpalatable political-economic variety (which could hardly be considered ‘medicine’),⁴¹¹ but a more subtle and even pleasantly bitter-sweet variety. Now the historian is faced with the unavoidable complexity of history, the labyrinth of its paths, the haunting of its fragments, the ambiguity of any composition precisely *as a composition*, and thus the impossibility to produce a “true understanding” of the past. But this does not mean Tafuri has replaced the death of architecture with the death of history—far from it. In a twist which will become increasingly familiar, both Leach and Biraghi remain sanguine on the health prospects for the historical as well as the architectural discipline.⁴¹²

This reversal, presented rather as an enrichment in the secondary literature, will appear strange, if not outright contradictory, until our intrepid present-day reader comes across the essay, “The ‘Project’ of History,” discussed in the previous chapter. In the essay’s title, the very emblem of architectural production “the project,” is, in inverted commas and with a certain irony, applied to the practice of the historian. That application becomes less and less a matter of ambivalence and irony in the hands of secondary sources, becoming more and more a positive emblem for Tafuri’s practice. For his part, Leach recognises this tendency among other interpreters even as he sets out to follow it:

The concept of the ‘project’ is particularly important in Tafuri’s work; its significance duly pervades the various fields of his reception. Few can agree on the way that readers today ought to understand his ‘legacy’ (or legacies), but there is consensus that any understanding will involve a ‘project,’ even if there is widespread disagreement on matters of detail. Indeed, the spectre of the ‘project’ stands, time and again, before attempts to engage directly with Tafuri’s thought, guaranteeing a highly personal distance between the historical, critical or theoretical analysis of his writing, as well as immunity for those who would try to bridge this distance through speculation upon something that we must accept as ultimately unrecoverable. We cannot know Tafuri’s project, it follows, but we know that he had one, and we know that it shaped his life and work.⁴¹³

By the end of Leach’s book, the “project” will become *the* category for grasping Tafuri, the word inscribed above the portal to Tafuri’s innermost thoughts—an enigmatic sign that both forbids entry and offers a short-cut.

⁴¹¹ As we shall see, Leach replaces Marxist terms of reference with psychoanalytic ones, transforming history from a militant and politically conditioned practice into a therapeutic one. Andrew Leach, *Choosing History*, 272

⁴¹² From Biraghi: “This is not a limitation, however; the richness of the historical-critical act renders it fundamental, makes it a *vital* phenomenon.” Leach goes so far as to call this interminability “reassuring.” Biraghi, *Project of Crisis*, 12. Leach, *Choosing History*, 183. For those of us who take the Preface to the second edition of *Theories and History* seriously, this can only be read in terms of historiography as an ‘institution’, as a self-interested defence of their position in the academy relative to the larger relations of production. This is what it means to treat such formulations as “intellectual labour” and “the author as producer” rigorously and consistently.

⁴¹³ Leach, *Choosing History*, 249.

As we have seen, the distance separating the project (“il progetto”) as it appeared, for instance, in *Theories and History* to denote operative criticism (“critica come progetto”); in “*Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology*,” where it described avant-garde ideology; and “progetto” as it reappears now—precisely defines the disciplinary pivot at stake. Like Leach, I recognise the centrality of the term; however, it is my concern to understand its ideological character, the manner in which it constructs both a new disciplinary conception of architecture, and with it, an institutional function.

Thus, I do not at all accept the terms with which Leach attempts to place Tafuri’s inner motivations beyond the scope of analysis, beyond the scope, as he puts it, of “judgement”.⁴¹⁴ This is the most elementary mystifying function of the Project, to replace historical and concrete questions with existential, nigh ineffable ones. To relinquish a critical engagement with motivations is to renounce both the political question—setting the discussion apart from whatever stakes it might have bourn and may bear today—and the historical question, for motivations and their underlying stakes are the product of particular contexts and conditions. Without addressing motivations, what space exists for the critique of ideology so easily identified in Tafuri’s programmatic texts of the late sixties and early seventies? In this manner, the Project effectively cancels the critique of ideology, replaces the problematisation of architecture as institution with the apotheosis of architecture as discipline.⁴¹⁵ The Project moves from subordinate notion of institutional ideology to existential category of human meaning.

But did not Tafuri himself instigate this reversal, taking on the “project”? Here we hit on the properly historiographical nature of the problem. Interpreters of Tafuri with an interest in narrativising this pivot are able to find it already immanent to his arguments and autobiographical statements. In this manner, the notion bleeds across multiple levels of interpretation, producing a transformed and ethicised methodology which is both depoliticised and dehistoricised. With a certain consistency one must grudgingly admire, the late Tafuri becomes the ultimate historiographical tool for undoing the arguments of the early Tafuri. The circumscription of a particular architectural problematic, the treatment of architecture as institution according to its material conditions in capitalist relations of production, and of course, the programmatic separation of historical critique from design projection—all are relativised under the overarching generalisation of the Project.

Thus, to understand the pivot in architectural ideology, we must work not only along historical and political lines, but also historiographical and methodological lines as well. One of the first steps must be to clearly distinguish this “early” Tafuri, defined in the previous section by the critique of architectural ideology, and the “late” Tafuri, defined by a new

⁴¹⁴ Ibid., 271. Passages like this in the final chapter of Leach’s book must strike any reader the least familiar with Marxist and psychoanalytic theory as particularly bizarre. In a book which throughout gives at least a minimal credence to such theory, along with connected notions such as ‘the death of the author’, this imputation of personal and inner truth, of a guiding ‘project’ transparent to its subject and expressing her or his essence, is rather baffling.

⁴¹⁵ This was a major theme in Rossi’s theory. See 3.3.1.

ideological operativity and the Project. As a secondary problem, we must also determine the limits of the distinction, the lines of continuity cutting across the texts and their hypotheses. But this periodising distinction can be affirmed in the other direction as well; it does not only exist under the critical terms in which I have defined it. It can also be construed as a process of growth, a deepening and complexifying of the historian's self-understanding. In other words, historiographical periodisation has its own ideological role to play in the disciplinary pivot. To what extent, then, and in what form, does the distinction between early and late exist within the ideological terms of historiographical discourse, a narrative arc representing Tafuri's maturation or development?

Building on a reading made by Gail Day in her essay on the debate between Jameson and Tafuri,⁴¹⁶ I argue that Tafuri's work is the privileged carrier—to a lesser extent through its own development and a greater extent in the eyes of a majority of its interpreters—of a *conversion narrative* within architectural discourse. The form of such a narrative, described by Kristen Ross in her book *May 68 and Its Afterlives*,⁴¹⁷ sets out the liquidation of modern, revolutionary politics, the transformation without remainder of organised and class-based mass movements, associated theoretically with Marxism and politically with Socialist and Communist Parties around the world, into autonomous and representational politics, in turn associated with Western liberal-capitalist democracy. The “conversion narrative” tells a story of personal transformation and enlightenment. Ross describes the conversion narrative of French political activists and public intellectuals who turned from former political militancy and solidarity with anti-colonial revolutions, to the defence of the West's “civilising” mission:

The post-May conversion narrative as form is but an extreme version of the retrospective bourgeois narration of the nineteenth-century novel described by Sartre. A narrator looks back from a great distance on the turbulent events of his youth. ‘There was difficulty to be sure, but this difficulty ended long ago . . . the adventure was a brief disturbance that is over with. It is told from the viewpoint of experience and wisdom; it is listened to from the viewpoint of order.’⁴¹⁸

In Tafuri's case, the narrative has a similar political content, defining Tafuri's maturation by his passage from militant Marxism to liberal historicism. While the very notion of a conversion implies a move from one position to another, nevertheless, the shift itself may remain implicit, or, more subtly, may be displaced from the proper terms to a secondary shift within the narrative construction of the arc. In Tafuri's case, where the political conversion proper is generally treated on the surface as a *fait accompli*—the collapse of Marxian terms of reference as self-evident as the fall of the Berlin Wall—the periodisation “early” and

⁴¹⁶ Day, “Manfredo Tafuri, Frederic Jameson, and the Contestations of Political Memory,” 33.

⁴¹⁷ In the chapter ‘Anti-Third-Worldism and Human Rights’ Ross describes the ‘conversion narrative’ of French political activities and public intellectuals, who turned from a their former position of militant solidarity with anti-colonial revolutions, to one of defence for the ‘civilising’ role of the West. Kristin Ross, *May '68 and Its Afterlives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 165.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*

“late”, refers chiefly to a shift in the historian’s attention, his choice of objects. It is the shift we marked earlier: from the debates of his contemporaries, historicised through analyses of modernism and the avant-garde, Tafuri’s move to detailed work on the early modern period, and particularly, the Italian Renaissance and Baroque periods.

Before taking on this problem, it would be helpful to reconstruct the chronology in which Tafuri’s work was received, particularly in the Anglophone context. Many of the later interpretive propositions bear a complex relation to this early period of reception, and when we examine their order, we immediately perceive the mediating interference of historiographical and theoretical content.

TABLE: Publishing and Translation Chronology (selected texts only)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Italian</u>	<u>English</u>
1968	<i>Teorie e storia</i>	
1969	“Per una critica...”	
1970	(<i>Teorie</i> 2 nd Edition)	
1971	“Il socialismo realizzato...”	
1972		
1973	<i>Progetto e utopia</i>	
1974		“L’Architecture dans le boudoir”
1975	“Architettura e storiografia”	
1976		<i>Architecture and Utopia</i>
1977	“Il ‘progetto’ storico”	“The Dialectics of the Avant-Garde...”
1978		
1979		“The Historical ‘Project’”
1980	<i>La sfera e il labirinto</i>	<i>Theories and History</i> (notes to 2 nd , 4 th ed.)
1981		
1982		
1983		
1984		
1985	<i>Venezia e il Rinascimento</i>	
1986	<i>Storia dell’arch. italiana</i>	
1987		<i>The Sphere and the Labyrinth</i>
1988		
1989		<i>Venice and the Renaissance</i>
1990		<i>A History of Italian Architecture</i>
1991		
1992	<i>Ricerca del rinascimento</i>	
1993		
1994		
1995		<i>Ricerca</i> (preface and 1 st chapter)
1996		
1997		
1998		“Toward a Critique of Arch...”
1999		
2000		
2001		
2002		
2003		
2004		
2005		
2006		<i>Interpreting the Renaissance</i>
2007		
2008		
2009		
2010		
2011		
2012		
2013		
2014		
2015		
2016		

As we have already noted, the reception of Tafuri's works, particularly in America, did not proceed according to the chronological order in which they were written. First to receive an English language reception, was the essay "L'Architecture dans le boudoir: The Language of Criticism and the Criticism of Language," published by *Oppositions* in 1974. In 1976, *Progetto e utopia*, already three years old, was translated and published in English as *Architecture and Utopia*. In 1979, *Oppositions* published "The Historical 'Project',"—published by *Casabella* two years previously, and destined to become the introduction to *La sfera e il labirinto*. In 1980 *Teorie e storia* was finally translated and published in English as *Theories and History of Architecture*. The same year, *La sfera* is published, only to be translated into English in 1987.

The Anglophone audience begins their acquaintance with Tafuri's writing, without theoretical or methodological introduction—without the "interpretive keys"—directly in the midst of the debate concerning the neo-avant-garde, and in a journal produced in large part by and for that neo-avant-garde—indeed, lead by one of the "knights of purity."⁴¹⁹ From there, despite critical passages in the text mentioned above, one would have had difficulty pulling back to the broader historical perspective, deeper theoretical framing, and ultimately political sense constructed in *Teorie e storia*, "Per una critica dell'ideologia architettonica," and *Progetto e utopia*.⁴²⁰ Nevertheless, *Architecture and Utopia*, the only book-length text published in English before 1980, would receive much attention. Given the lack of theoretical and political context for understanding the text, that attention would have problematic results, particularly in connection to that familiar theme, the "death of architecture."

In 1979, the Anglophone reader is introduced to Tafuri's shifting methodological arguments in "The Historical 'Project'," and only after another year would the original methodological arguments concerning the writing of history become available, at long last, in *Theories and History of Architecture*. Thus, the reception of *Architecture and Utopia* is coloured by the *Oppositions* debate around "L'architecture dans le boudoir," the reception of *Theories and History*, with its crucial argument concerning the separation of history from the design project, is anticipated by Tafuri's tentative and at least partly ironic, collapse of the very same distinction in "The Historical 'Project'." Finally, further complicating matters, the English translation of *Teorie e storia*, was of the fourth edition, including notes to the second and fourth, which, as we have seen, radicalised its content. Thus the American reception is affected by a paradoxical de-politicisation, and re-politicisation, from which the ambiguities of Italian debates have been subtracted.

After *Storia dell'architettura italiana: 1944—1985*, published in 1986, Tafuri turned his attention away from the architecture of his contemporaries, and generally away from the

⁴¹⁹ For an account of the mediating influence of *Oppositions* on Tafuri's reception, see Joan Ockman, "Venice and New York." *Casabella* 619–20 (1995): 56–65.

⁴²⁰ The original version of the argument, developed in "Per una critica dell'ideologia d'architettura," would not be published in English until 1998, a full twenty-nine years late.

historical avant-gardes as well, returning to the deeper roots of architectural modernity found in the Italian Renaissance. A number of publications, books, and exhibitions resulted from this new focus, the most notable being *Ricerca del Rinascimento* (1992), published as a whole in English, *Interpreting the Renaissance*, only in 2006. One of the chief points of contention in the periodisation of Tafuri's production, is how to understand this return to the Renaissance in Tafuri's late work. Opinion is split, first, over whether or not this represents a real break; second, if it does, then whether or not that break is a problem, or if not, in what does the continuity of Tafuri's argument consist? Deciding this last question proves to be impossible without referring to earlier points of division and continuity within the overall periodisation of Tafuri's work. In this way, for example, constructing continuity between *Ricerca del rinascimento* and the much earlier *Teorie e storia*, requires the production of a break between *Teorie e storia* and *Progetto e utopia*, against the terms of the second and fourth editions.

In his piece in the special issue of *Architecture New York*, Anthony Vidler provides a schematic overview of the predominant periodisation of Tafuri's work as he sees it. It is worth quoting at length:

In the United States the received mythology of Tafuri's life, based on the erratic and nonchronological translation of his work, tends to divide it (perhaps in an unconscious Hegelian formalism) into three phases: the architect-turned-historian attempting to stake out a territory as both a historian of mannerism and humanism, and a critic of postwar architecture in Italy (Ludovico Quaroni), while avoiding the engaged polemics of the older generation (Bruno Zevi, Ernesto Rogers) and his own contemporaries (Aldo Rossi); a central period of Marxism and critical historiography in Venice, stimulating a "school" of thought that rejuvenated the tired commonplaces of social-realist Marxism with a combination of Nietzschean nihilism (Massimo Cacciari) and culturalist politics (Asor Rosa); and a third period in retreat from the political engagement of the 1970s and '80s, a withdrawal to a pure historical and scholarly work that resulted in the last two volumes of essays on Venice, the Renaissance, and problems in research. From the point of view of the "American" Tafuri (and, it must be said, for many of his former colleagues in Venice), this last period of apparent withdrawal represents a problem—either institutionally, in the sense that it led to disputes over the direction in which to guide a recently founded Institute of Architectural History, or intellectually, in the sense that many who had been entirely engaged by positions stated in *Theories and History*, *Architecture and Utopia*, and *The Sphere and the Labyrinth* lost interest when the discussion turned back in time to apparently obscure 15th- and 16th-century debates in local politics, philology, and philosophy.

Inevitably, a generation in the U.S. nurtured on the late '60s slogans of architecture as ideology, "no solutions in history," and strictures against "operative" criticism and history, and fed by intellectual tours des forces that intercalated the montage theories of Eisenstein, the pattern language of Piranesi, and the alienated voices of avant-gardists crying in the hollow void of capitalist absorption, has found it hard to engage with equal fervor the complicated and archivally based arguments of prelates and lords in the 15th-century Veneto.⁴²¹

Vidler makes a number of interesting claims and propositions here. The apparently misguided periodisation is a result of the "erratic and nonchronological" order of publishing. However, it is not clear how the distinct threefold periodisation he describes could arise from the chaos. Perhaps it represented a kind of overly schematic compensation on the part of

⁴²¹ Vidler, "Disenchanted Histories: The Legacies of Manfredo Tafuri," 29-30.

Anglophone interpreters. It is fairly clear how Vidler thinks the erroneous break from the Venice period to the Renaissance operates, but it is far less clear how the earlier break, which might separate *Theories and History* from *Architecture and Utopia*, is articulated. Vidler will attempt to correct the periodisation by uniting the later to the earlier sections in a particular way. This move, common to a number of other interpreters, particularly those writing in the twenty-first century, effectively suppresses the militant force of the critique of architectural ideology. Under these terms, as we shall see, the complex and crisis ridden “labyrinth” of Tafuri’s “arc” is smoothed into a more or less consistent “legacy.” First, however, we should follow Vidler’s suggestion, and look to the manner in which the late “break” is considered in the secondary literature.

2.2.1 Last Will and Testament

The position Vidler describes is fairly hard to pinpoint in any major American author's publications. However, among those who perceive a clear shift in Tafuri's perspective, Georges Teyssot, in an interview with Paul Henninger published in the same special issue of *ANY*, provides a good example of a critical but contextual diagnosis:

Yes, in the last part of his life, I would say starting in 1982 or 1983, he more and more focused his activities on the second agenda of instrumentality, writing on the architecture of the Renaissance. That was what I called the new conservative (but not reactionary) Tafuri. I must say that this shift, at least in my opinion, was a highly problematic one. But the whole department of History of Architecture at Venice went through a major transformation after 1980. Cacciari was no longer the in-house philosopher, and went instead into 'actual' politics, later becoming a successful mayor of Venice. Francesco Dal Co moved into the editorial business, creating a marvellous collection of volumes and catalogues at a famous publishing house in Milan. Tafuri returned to the Renaissance scholarship that he had practiced before in the 1960s. The heroic period had ended.⁴²²

This literally "conservative" tone is easily detectible in Tafuri's interview with Luisa Passerini, again published by *ANY*, where the historian speaks at length on the challenges facing Italy's historical buildings.⁴²³ At this point, Tafuri's chief pedagogical concern was that his students receive adequate training in architectural restoration, rather than in "history" per se—let alone theoretically and politically complex problems of historiography. For this Tafuri, the "heroic period" was certainly over.

In contrast to Teyssot, British historian of the Italian Renaissance, Howard Burns, writing in the special issue of *Casabella*, "The Historical Project of Manfredo Tafuri," found in Tafuri's late work nothing more than a continuation of Tafuri's long standing concern for the history of the Renaissance.⁴²⁴ This more or less neutral recognition of continuity, by a non-architect, is the starting point for more elaborate arguments by those with a more pressing interest in constructing and presenting Tafuri's "legacy." Rafael Moneo's essay in the same special issue of *Casabella* is exemplary. The title of Moneo's piece "The Ricerca as Legacy," positions the final book as the summation of Tafuri's overall contribution to architectural knowledge. Of course the *Casabella* publication as a whole carries the memorial burden to consider Tafuri's legacy, but Moneo's text is particularly explicit in this regard, setting up the late Tafuri as a culmination rather than conservative departure:

⁴²² Teyssot and Henninger, "One Portrait of Tafuri: An Interview with Georges Teyssot," 11.

⁴²³ "The tower of Pavia collapses, and then everyone forgets about it after a year or so, since it amounted to no more than a sensational headline, and soon everything will fall because, for various reasons, the world of architectural culture grows ever more distant from architecture itself. At this point, my goal is to bring it into the closes proximity with the brick, the plaster, the cladding, the *peperino*, a recognition of the difference between one or another kind of *peperino*..." Tafuri and Passerini, "History as Project: An Interview with Manfredo Tafuri," 67.

⁴²⁴ Howard Burns, "Tafuri e il Rinascimento / Tafuri and the Renaissance," in "Il progetto storico di Manfredo Tafuri / The Historical Project of Manfredo Tafuri," 115.

I read the *Ricerca del Rinascimento* as if it were a last will and testament, a legacy. Not so much because I was aware that Manfredo Tafuri had written the book knowing it to be his last, as because the reading suggested that in the *Ricerca* Tafuri reaches the destinations of that ascetic itinerary which can be seen when we contemplate, in the perspective of his absence, the landscape of his vast work as a whole. There is no doubt that *Teorie e storia dell'architettura*, *La sfera e il labirinto*, *Architettura contemporanea*, *Venezia e il Rinascimento* are important episodes in his career which, not by accident, culminates with the *Ricerca*. Therefore I would like to view the *Ricerca* as a horizon on which his work as a historian and theorist achieves its fullest significance, because in this we can observe the fulfilment of that purpose which lay behind all of his works: to explain, through his writings, what architecture is, and what it has been in the past.⁴²⁵

It is no accident that *Progetto e utopia* is conspicuously missing from the list of “important episodes in his career,” but Moneo does not ignore it outright. In another passage, he notes the function of *Progetto*, as a “turning point,” a brink from which Tafuri turned back to the “architecture of antiquity.”⁴²⁶ Thus, the significance of the “*Ricerca* as legacy,” must be held in contrast to the significance of *Progetto e utopia*, which in turn becomes a kind of warning or limit case:

In my opinion, in this way, of approaching architecture in the later works of Tafuri, there is an entire proposal of critical/historiographical method. For this latter Tafuri—it appears—superstructural reductions are meaningless. It doesn't help us to better understand a work of architecture—and how it came into being—by widening the visual field, seeing it against the backdrop of a universal history in which the most renowned historians have sought to identify a teleological (if not providential) meaning. Ideology, the projection of its worldview on the work, can be seen in the concrete work, in the building itself, as soon as we focus our gaze, with that ‘merciless’ attention which Tafuri recommended in *Teorie e storia*, and which is so evident in the *Ricerca*. But here the ‘history’ becomes ‘histories’: each of which can be seen as an example of the ‘making’ of architecture.⁴²⁷

The significance of the late Tafuri is precise: it presents the renunciation of the critique of architectural ideology—that practice which reached its strongest expression in “Per una critica dell'ideologia architettonica” and *Progetto e utopia*—as the final lesson and bequest of Tafuri to his readers. Against the reduction of architecture to ideological superstructure, against the assessment of architecture as an institution of capitalist society, against the analysis of architecture from a position of methodological and critical distance addressed to the fundamental material/political structures of society, the late Tafuri, according to Moneo, vouchsafes back to the architectural work the universe of its significance. In a separate contribution to the same issue of *Casabella*, Carlo Olmo made a similar argument, drawing

⁴²⁵ José Rafael Moneo, “La Ricerca come lascito / The ‘Ricerca’ as legacy,” in “Il progetto storico di Manfredo Tafuri / The Historical Project of Manfredo Tafuri,” 133.

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*, 135.

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*

the connection back to Tafuri's writing on Quaroni even before *Teorie e storia*.⁴²⁸ Thus, it is a new perspective which is at the same time an old perspective: the critical "focus" developed in *Teorie e storia*, and, as Olmo argues, even earlier. But it is not assigned to any theoretically grounded historical register. At the same time, the work of history, presented through the unified "*storia*" in the title, becomes "'histories': each of which can be seen as an example of the 'making' of architecture." This last phrase draws an argument from "Il 'progetto' storico," the inflection point for the separation of history from design. To produce a history of architecture is after all, according to Moneo, itself an architectural act, a "making," a *project*.

To reiterate, this legacy explicitly excludes all understanding of architecture *as an institution*. Not only is it no longer possible to "reduce" architecture to its ideological function in concrete social and historical contexts, but architecture itself, architecture *as such*, becomes a general category occupying a position above historical analysis. Architecture appears as 'Architecture,' a category of making in general. Thus, history no longer presents a challenge to the architect, rather, architecture presents a challenge to the historian, architecture replaces history as meta-category of judgement. Now the historian must accommodate the architect: "observing architecture through the eyes of its architect."⁴²⁹ The difference between this formulation, and the critique of architectural ideology which we have developed in the previous section could not be clearer. Moneo's reading draws together arguments from *Teorie e storia*, *La sfera e il labirinto*, and *Ricerca del Rinascimento*, to the explicit exclusion of the critique. The Marxist, historical materialist perspective is abandoned, and with true relief:

Tafuri undoubtedly looked at the present, with melancholy, from afar when he examined the work of the architects of the past. This melancholy—generated, perhaps, by the farsighted description of the present in the pages of *La sfera e il labirinto*—did not—fortunately constitute an obstacle for Tafuri in his pursuit of a way of seeing how rich in new, promising methodological indications: he bestows, in the course of the chapters of the *Ricerca*, the lesson of how to see the '*complexio oppositorum*'. In Tafuri's *Ricerca* we can clearly see how the comprehension of architecture implies both the acceptance of the 'union of opposites' and a detachment from any global or synthetic vision of history. For me, this constitutes a true gift, an inheritance.⁴³⁰

This is the conversion narrative in one of its most explicit, and, one has to admit, eloquent, forms. Tafuri becomes a kind of saintly figure. Through his struggle and sacrifice, the burdens of ideological contradiction are made bearable, even beautiful. Tafuri becomes

⁴²⁸ "The project, and not only the building is a complex tool with which one can read the layers of values deposited by society, culture, religion, beliefs and specialized knowledge; only architecture conserves these layers over time, without possible changes of meaning. An architecture, whether imagined or built, is not a social mirror, neither in *Ludovico Quaroni e lo sviluppo dell'architettura moderna in Italia*, nor when Tafuri recommends a separation of conservation and restoration. The autonomy of the work resides in its uniqueness, not necessarily in its presenting itself as an innovation: a uniqueness first of all as document and if one likes as 'monument'. A uniqueness implying another essential consideration, if one intends to read the *Storia*."

In the *Storia*, Tafuri uses conventions, technologies, beliefs and specialized knowledge as instruments to decipher a work, rather than to decode symbolic or economic strategies of the *elites*. The different techniques of inquiry and the interest for the context are not exercises in erudition or social history: they represent the only possible way to explant[**sic**] the enigmas contained in a work of architecture." Carlo Olmo, "Una storia, molti racconti" in "Il progetto storico di Manfredo Tafuri / The Historical Project of Manfredo Tafuri," 79.

⁴²⁹ Moneo, "La Ricerca come lascito / The 'Ricerca' as legacy," 135.

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*, 141.

the bourgeois hero of his own *incipit*, and architecture emerges from its trials redeemed. It is of course a contradiction that the weight of Moneo's argument is born by historical and biographical narrative—assumed to be revelatory and irreversible—even as it apparently eliminates other historical constructions of the “grand” or “teleological” type.⁴³¹

Contrary to the interpretation of the late Tafuri as conservative, and beyond the simple recognition of a continuous object driven interest, Moneo describes a Tafuri coming finally into the full significance of his project, and leaving it as a “last will and testament” to architectural culture.

⁴³¹ This contradiction is endemic to the post-modernist “break.”

2.2.2 Charming Betrayal

Don Juan *Commander, be so kind as to arrive
Tomorrow at your widow's place, where I
Will be, and stand and watch the door
While she and I have dinner. Will you come?*

The statue nods.

Don Juan *Oh, God.*⁴³²

Moneo's essay is striking, its message obviously partial; however, its underlying presentation of Tafuri's trajectory is common also to more nuanced interpretations. In *Project of Crisis*, Marco Biraghi overcomes the apparent split between the earlier Tafuri, engaged critically with the architecture of his contemporaries, and the late Tafuri, by neatly re-using a proposition of Tafuri's own concerning the inextricability of history and criticism:

More than the work of other historians, and despite his involvement in a variety of subjects and periods, Tafuri's work possesses a coherence, supported and illuminated by a lucid line of thinking. Accordingly, there is no contradiction between Tafuri the Renaissance historian and Tafuri the contemporary critic, only the greatest possible integration of the two.⁴³³

But this statement, while appearing initially to carry a certain Tafurian "wisdom," only begs a number of questions: what kind of criticism, what kind of history, and what kind of integration? In an interview with Richard Ingersoll, titled "There is no criticism, only history," originally published in 1986 by *Design Book Review*, then republished in the *Casabella* special issue, Tafuri clearly subsumed the function of criticism under that of history.⁴³⁴ The original argument over the relation between history and criticism can, of course, be found in *Teorie e storia*, where Tafuri developed his general argument concerning the historical basis of any proper critical analysis of architecture as distinct from operative criticism. Therefore, "integration" is a rather ambiguous term to describe what is a clearly defined, and in a certain sense, hierarchical relation.

⁴³² Pushkin, *The Stone Guest*, 40.

⁴³³ Marco Biraghi, *Project of Crisis*, xi.

⁴³⁴ Manfredo Tafuri interviewed by Richard Ingersoll, "Non c'è critica, solo storia / There is no criticism, only history," in "Il progetto storico di Manfredo Tafuri / The Historical Project of Manfredo Tafuri," 96–99.

In part this ambiguity can be attributed to the overall frame or perspective Biraghi adopted. *Project of Crisis* is subtitled “Manfredo Tafuri and Contemporary Architecture,” and Biraghi defines its focus around the connection between Tafuri’s work and the architecture of his contemporaries as well as what might be called our own (the text culminates with a study of Rem Koolhaas). This frame would seem to privilege the earlier “committed” and “engaged” Tafuri in the division of the historian’s life and work we began with above, while forcing a difficult bridge to later architecture, through the period of Tafuri’s apparent disengagement.

In Biraghi’s hands, the terms for this critical engagement are carefully curated. One must take great care when “integrating” history and criticism, and for Biraghi the manner of this integration is far from neutral. Biraghi does not devote much consideration to the periodisation of Tafuri’s work or the construction of an arc or trajectory. His version of the conversion narrative is carried implicitly within the argument, particularly through the selection of references. It is what might be called a tacit rather than direct historiographical argument.

Biraghi’s interpretation relies heavily on terms taken from “Il ‘progetto’ storico,” and *La Sfera e il labirinto* as a whole. Throughout *Project of Crisis*, these connected texts are the most frequently cited by a remarkable margin. Biraghi never explains this privilege nor proposes explicitly to focus on their terms of reference as opposed to others. This imbalance in Biraghi’s references is so striking that, following the spirit of microhistory, it suggested philological investigation. Between one quarter and one third of all references in the book are to *La Sfera e il labirinto*. It is cited forty-eight times in the introduction, compared to fifteen references to *Teorie e storia*, and only one reference to *Progetto e utopia* or “Per una critica dell’ideologia architettura.” The latter reference concerns the “critique of architectural ideology,” yet in the connected endnote, Biraghi directs the reader, unsurprisingly, beyond these texts, to the “further development” of their arguments in *La sfera*.⁴³⁵

The majority of references to *Progetto e utopia* and “Per una critica,” can be found in chapter one: “Critique of Utopia.” The chapter treats these texts as its object, but ultimately applies to them the later interpretive frameworks. As the title of the chapter suggests, the theoretical content of the critique of ideology shifts from a critical perspective on the institution of architecture, based in historical materialism, to an abstract critique of “utopia.” This is one example of the uneven integration of criticism and history, where the notion of “utopia” gains a certain autonomy from the historical/material construction of its institutional and disciplinary context. Mid-way through the chapter, Biraghi uses a reference in *Progetto e utopia* to Piranesi’s “negative utopia,” to pivot from the terms of that book to those of *La Sfera*, replacing for instance, political economy with “language”, and casting the entire problem under the terms of architectural symbolism and “silence.”

⁴³⁵ Biraghi, *Project of Crisis*, 16 and 195, note 67.

Apart from the other sections of *The Sphere and the Labyrinth* already discussed—the ambivalence of “The Historical ‘Project’” and the critical reflections in “L’Architecture dans le Boudoir”—it would be useful to briefly mention the attention the book devoted to Piranesi. Subject of the first two chapters and reference point for the book’s title and jacket image, the increased attention given to Piranesi reflects Tafuri’s specific focus on the avant-gardes. We have already seen how in *Theories and History* Piranesi functioned as an early model of the negative avant-gardes,⁴³⁶ by the early 1980s, Piranesi becomes available as a reference to the neo-avant-gardes. Though Tafuri’s treatment of Piranesi at times positions the architect’s work within the modern thematics of planning—the so-called “machine-universe”⁴³⁷—Piranesi’s investigations were primarily, if not entirely, invested in the problem of “language,” and it is this theme which Tafuri places at the fore of his analysis. Because a preoccupation with language was shared by Tafuri’s own contemporaries within the counterrealisation, Piranesi becomes a kind of ideal historical model, a particularly operative reference for the neo-avant-garde capable of establishing a kind of historical continuity from the Modern Movement could be excluded as an aberration.

This may not have been Tafuri’s intention, but Piranesi’s relevance to architectural discourse at the time cut both ways. Picking up on this Piranesian thematic throughout his own book, Biraghi’s chapter culminates in the declaration of Piranesi’s bourgeois heroism, in a quotation taken from *La Sfera*.⁴³⁸

Admittedly, the chapter does contain a number of more straightforward passages summarising arguments from *Progetto e utopia*, and concludes on Tafuri’s recommendations for architects to either become politically active or to dedicate themselves to a technical “counterplan.” However, these terms never enter into Biraghi’s interpretive framework, floating as un-digested fragments except when heavily mediated through later conceptions. Beyond this chapter there are fewer than ten references to *Progetto e utopia* and “Per una critica” (combined), many of which explicitly adapt their terms to the later work, or reject them outright.

Nevertheless, this “inclusive exclusion” draws our attention to a significant characteristic of Tafuri interpretation, with respect to which Moneo was an exception. Secondary presentations of Tafuri’s work do not generally attempt to exclude the Marxist period or the critique of architectural ideology altogether. Instead, they seek its subsumption within the later, more evolved terms (whether, structuralist, psychoanalytic, philological or otherwise) while harnessing the latent Marxian connotations of such phrases as “mode of production,” “labour,” or “counterplan.”

⁴³⁶ Tafuri, *Teorie e storia*, 40.

⁴³⁷ Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*, 33.

⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*, 36.

Even more directly affirmative representations of the Marxist Tafuri, cannot avoid this tendency. In the above mentioned essay by Carla Keyvanian, for instance she presents her goal as follows:

The aim of this paper is then to better articulate and historically contextualize Tafuri's passage from the critique of ideology to a model of architectural history that I will propose as a fruitful one: a model that has a cross-disciplinary approach and for which philology is a fundamental methodological tool. At the same time, I will show that this passage does not represent an abandonment of his intention to write a politically committed history (provided we understand this as meaning "concerned with the contemporary"), but rather a shift in the tactics employed to achieve this aim.⁴³⁹

Though, as the above perusal of Biraghi's endnotes demonstrates, there is no reason philology cannot be adopted as a "tactic,"⁴⁴⁰ from a Marxist perspective political commitment cannot be translated as "concern with the contemporary." Just as when Biraghi invoked the integration of history with contemporary criticism, the question remains, precisely what stakes underlie "the contemporary" and through what critique can they be addressed?

A major theme of Biraghi's book is "betrayal," chiefly the betrayal of Tafuri by architects in whom he placed a certain faith, or who appear to represent an aspect of the historian's "project" but do not live up to its strictures. We will see precisely what significance attaches to architects' betrayal in the the final chapter of this section; for now, we should note that betrayal has a very precise meaning in the case of historiography. The consensus secondary interpretations suppress the critique of architectural ideology in favour of the Project, but, like Don Juan inviting the statue to the rendezvous, cannot resist the urge to include the former anyway. It is an act of bravado which secures the authority with which the conversion narrative can be told. Thus the betrayer of the militant Tafuri invites the same to join the narrative, to play a role in the seduction, simultaneously raising the stakes while assuaging the historiographical conscience. Given the overall political context one could hardly expect the long dead figure, whether of Marx, of Tafuri, or even the hoary proletariat itself, to actually make the rendezvous?

Thus even the conception of Tafuri as a critical historian "engaged" with contemporary architecture, is still fundamentally ambiguous, and can be constructed so as to avoid or downplay the *institutional* horizon of that engagement. By doing so, it becomes possible to bridge the historical distances that might otherwise have suggested shifts in disciplinary ideology and the material basis of the institution. It would, of course, be neither possible nor ultimately even desirable to exclude the Marxist register altogether, yet the inclusion is always subject to revision and conversion, whether more surreptitious as in Biraghi's case (though difficult to hide in the notes), or rather more direct, as in Andrew Leach's *Choosing History*.

⁴³⁹ Keyvanian, "From the Critique of Ideology to Microhistories," 3.

⁴⁴⁰ In fact, within the larger theoretical terms of this thesis, Keyvanian's characterisation of this method as a "tactic" is impeccable.

2.2.3 Choosing Historiography

Before addressing issues specific to this thesis, it must be said that Andrew Leach's *Choosing History* is a valuable resource for Tafuri research in English. Its approach is scholarly and rigorous and its interpretive biases are disclosed openly. Leach devotes a substantial portion of the book to the periodisation of Tafuri's work, dedicating the first section to chronology. As a thematic problem in the latter section, his starting point for periodisation is the distinction described above between earlier commitment and later detachment. Leach, like Biraghi, and other writers of the 2000s, considers this division inappropriate. In order to correct it, he will make a number of moves, which overall produce a *conversion narrative* and soften the critique of architectural ideology.

First, like Moneo, he will link the later work to the earlier as exemplified by *Teorie e storia*. Then, again like Moneo, he will separate the arguments of *Teorie e storia* from those of *Progetto e utopia*, privileging the former:

The problem of Tafuri's politics and his 'engagement' is central to the hemispheric character commentators tend to perceive in his bibliography, dividing his intellectual work into periods early and late, engaged and circumspect. We can appreciate this basic theory of the historian's tasks [the critique of architectural ideology] in the full range of Tafuri's historiography and comfortably position it within a Marxist world-view. But how ought we to distinguish between those of his writings preoccupied with the socio-political aspirations with which he and his collaborators evidently feel some sympathy (or nostalgia)—historical studies that extend the precepts of *Progetto e utopia* into specific domains of enquiry—and those that enter the more distant, dusty, disengaged world of the early modern era and its artefacts? There is little evidence to suggest that earlier generations of his readers could appreciate neither the larger implications of his disciplinary thought, nor the kinds of connections bridging these only apparently distinct lines of his historiography. However, after the thorough endorsement and widespread uptake of *Progetto e utopia* over several decades its has doubtless become more difficult [to] return to the basic premises and interactions that lie at the heart of his earlier book, *Teorie e storia*. What do we observe when we reconsider Tafuri's writing from the starting point of this book, rather than *Progetto e utopia*? Dogmatically (and perhaps therefore also too artificially) sticking close to the historiological themes of history's relationship to the past, and of the historian's responsibilities, tasks, and tools, we can observe a different image being raised in relief, one that allows for a more complex view of architectural ideology and its bearing upon historiography.⁴⁴¹

Leach maintains that there is no substantial distinction between the Marxist terms of reference, the political commitment, and the subsequent researches, whether of closer or more distant historical era, and that earlier readers would have understood this (presumably earlier Italian readers, or at least readers not associated with *Oppositions*). Yet according to Leach the overweening influence of *Progetto e utopia* created a barrier to that more subtle understanding, suggesting instead an artificial and over-politicised distinction between commitment and circumspection. Leach allows here the general terms of the critique of architectural ideology, and the political commitment underlying it, though he does charge it with "nostalgia"—something which, to this reader at least, seems like projection. However,

⁴⁴¹ Leach, *Choosing History*, 141.

as he begins to separate *Teorie e storia* from *Progetto e utopia*, apparently in order to bring the reader closer to an appreciation of the continuity of Tafuri's work, he necessarily removes the Marxist terms of reference from consideration.

As the final lines of the above passage indicate, Leach remains interested in a form of the critique of architectural ideology, which he will develop using the psychoanalytic theory available, if not definitive, in *La sfera*.⁴⁴² The continuity he constructs between early work, exemplified by *Teorie e storia*; middle, *La sfera e il labirinto*; and late, *Venezia e il Rinascimento* and *Ricerca del Rinascimento*; depends upon the removal of *Progetto e utopia* from that continuity. In particular, it requires Leach to sever the critical terms of *Teorie e storia* from an explicitly Marxist political and theoretical interpretation. As we have already described, that *interpretive key* is given directly to the reader in the prefatory note to the second edition. In his chapter "Weak History," Leach tries to assert a meaning for Tafuri's critical methodology beyond its concrete material and political application. He describes the development of Tafuri's methodological arguments from *Teorie e storia*, through its multiple editions, to the 1975 essay "Architettura e storiografia,"⁴⁴³ with its greater emphasis on language and structuralism, culminating in the more "micro-historical" perspective of "Il 'progetto' storico."⁴⁴⁴ What progressively emerges from Leach's interpretation is a formalist conception of historical criticism, autonomous from the material, political, and even simply *historical* context of its application: "Tafuri's enduring target may be the exposure of the hold of capitalist ideology over knowledge and social structures, but the true test of the methodological legitimacy of his strategies is their validity beyond the historically specific tasks to which he assigns them."⁴⁴⁵

This is a paradox of the "historical project" that, in order to achieve formal "legitimacy" it must be autonomous from the forces, contexts, and necessities of history itself. Those forces can only be grasped through a complex, indeed, dialectical, combination of historical and theoretical reflection—one moreover, which cannot exist apart from its material conditions. Leach here attempts to separate the methodological question from the combined historical, theoretical, and political terms in which Tafuri developed it. In concrete historiographical terms, this means overcoming a number of obstacles—chief among them, the prefatory note to the second edition of *Teorie e storia*. Leach devotes an extended aside to this obstacle, which he treats with admirably honest scepticism:

An aside: In his forward to the second (1970) edition of *Teorie e storia*, Tafuri describes the book as an acknowledgment of what architecture, as an *institution*, has meant up until now.' Implicated in 'modern

⁴⁴² This places Leach close to the "architecture theory" curated by Hays.

⁴⁴³ Manfredo Tafuri, "Architettura e storiografia. Un proposto di metodo," *Arte veneta* XXIX (1975): 276–282.

⁴⁴⁴ Leach, *Choosing History*, 187.

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 192. As evident from the distinct value I take the critique of operativity to hold as compared to its particular application to the ideology of the plan, I partly agree with Leach here. Leach, however, appears to read this difference as licence to forgo critique of institutionality, perhaps political economy as a whole.

production processes and the development of capitalist society,' architecture must, he argues, be open to the perspectives of a class critique. He suggests that identifying those 'obstacles contained in the discipline' is an important moment in constructing a critique of modern architecture. To this, he asserts, we must add an 'urgent second "political" reading of the entire history of modern architecture'. He defends his call as being not 'in the least apocalyptic', but rather part of an analysis of architectural knowledge in terms of the institutions and 'values' that allow for that institution's perpetuation. This is central to the book: 'the confirmation of the *availability* of institutions.' The deformations we find in the second edition of *Teorie e storia* map Tafuri's engagement with Negri's pupils and the *Contropiano* community. We could easily overlook this re-framing of *Teorie e storia*'s significance, but we do well to note its function as a bridge between Tafuri's thinking before his arrival in Venice. Two editions later, the forward once again reflects changes in Tafuri's institutional environment and intellectual setting: 'What seems most valid ... is the effort to show how ineffectual are the brilliant gymnastics carried out in the yard of the model prison, in which architects are left free to move about on temporary reprieve.'⁴⁴⁶

This argument, which explicitly decides the significance of the historiography, decides what is or is not a "distortion," should be lauded for its open presentation. From Leach's perspective, and, it must be said, from Tafuri's own perspective late in his career, this period of his work was indeed an exceptional and incongruous one. Unlike Biraghi, who either passes over these ruptures or surreptitiously smooths their problematic characteristics, Leach takes on the challenge of contextualising them.⁴⁴⁷ However, just as for Biraghi and Moneo, Leach's major periodising move is to develop the continuity of late Tafuri with *Teorie e storia*—whether in terms of its objects—for instance, the Renaissance—or, at a deeper level, through the methodology, excluding *Progetto e utopia* and the critique of ideology in general. This move reverses the earlier periodisational privilege Giorgio Ciucci noted, which had always given predominance to a united *Progetto e utopia* and *Teorie e storia*,⁴⁴⁸ and it has been more or less successful. Indeed, when one reads through the secondary literature on Tafuri, it is striking that the majority of recent authors consistently privilege "Il 'progetto' storico" and *La sfera*, as *their* interpretive key for understanding Tafuri, and in particular, understanding his "project" as such.

Thus, Leach produces a new periodisation, with *La sfera* and "Il 'progetto' storico" at its head, which simultaneously unites the later work under the terms of the "project," and takes up the earlier arguments in a new form. From the perspective of this interpretation, "Il 'progetto' storico" marks a fundamental step in the evolution of Tafuri into his "mature" form,⁴⁴⁹ a step which retroactively reveals the project Tafuri had pursued all along. From an examination of the content of the essay, Leach reminds the reader to

...step back and appreciate the essay as a whole, to acknowledge its crucial place within Tafuri's *oeuvre*. In it, we find both continuities and discordances with the theoretical position of *Teorie e storia*, which had to this

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid., 193–194.

⁴⁴⁷ Indeed, it is revealing that there are far more "crises" addressed by Leach in *Choosing History* than by Biraghi in *Project of Crisis*. In the latter crisis is more of a mood than a concrete problem.

⁴⁴⁸ Ciucci, "Gli anni della formazione / The formative years," 13.

⁴⁴⁹ Leach, *Choosing History*, 170–171.

time carried the most import as an analysis of architecture's historiography informing his own practice and that of the historian's working around him. Even despite our ability, today, to historicise the essay as Tafuri's first explicit encounter with the spectrum of French and German writers who gave form to post-structural theory—and noting the misunderstandings and clumsiness that mark some of his observations—in the abstract position it proffers we observe Tafuri consolidating the most enduring of his earlier ideas and most stable of his positions while vigorously reappraising his own theorisation of historiography to date. The essay thus contains a revised set of principles that colour work that he undertakes from the end of the 1970s.⁴⁵⁰

Leach notes that if “Il ‘progetto’ storico” is understood in this way, then the periodisation into early and late must be revised. Rather than marking the end of Tafuri's research into contemporary architecture and the avant-garde, the essay, along with *La sfera*, form a kind of “bridge,” crossing to a new period, while at the same time retroactively forming a path extending back from the later to the earlier work:

Curiously, it was (is) commonly understated as a post-factum reflection on his writing to date rather than as something projective that would inform his work henceforth: the correct status largely brought to bear upon the wrong material. Writers have rarely used this piece to unlock the theoretical vitality of the philological dimensions of architecture historiography that Tafuri explores with new earnestness from the start of the 1980s; in contrast, for many it is the sunset of his engagement with the contemporary, *La sfera e il labirinto* his swansong to the avant-garde. A more productive assessment of ‘Il “progetto” storico’ regards it as a bridge between the form of enquiry that brought together the disciplinary and methodological interrogation of an historical framework spanning from the fifteenth to twentieth century and a reflection on the disciplinary and methodological challenges posed by the very material of history, the historian's evidence and its adherent problematics.⁴⁵¹

Leach's periodisation is thus far closer to the truth than the superficial division according to Tafuri's apparent interest in his contemporaries. “Il ‘progetto’ storico” functions so well for the institutional narrative, because it really did offer a departure from the earlier methodological theory, while at the same time consolidated certain of its characteristics. Looking at the development less as Tafuri may have “really” intended it, and more as it functioned for later interpretation, “Il ‘progetto’ storico” should be understood, not only as the last of the committed Tafuri, but as potentially the *first* of the conservative Tafuri, though the nadir of that figure would follow at some distance.⁴⁵²

Returning to the theme of this section as a whole we should remember that this interpretation and presentation of Tafuri's work and its importance functions as a conversion narrative, with an immanent dimension. Intrinsic to the conversion narrative is its capacity to produce a political trajectory which, while amounting to a break—a conversion—nevertheless purports to remain faithful to the earlier political sensibility. Typically this amounts to a passage from youth into maturity. The misplaced certainty of youth gives way to

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., 185. It is unclear what aspects of Tafuri's observations Leach took issue with.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid., 186

⁴⁵² As already remarked, the final pages of Tafuri's interview with Luisa Passerini contain a number of depressing and more or less abject reflections on the status of Italian historiography and conservation. See Tafuri and Passerini, “History as Project: An Interview with Manfredo Tafuri,” 63—67.

ethical circumspection; youthful radicalism gives way to mature restraint. Thus, while Leach detaches *Teorie e storia* from *Progetto e utopia*, he also constructs a continuity between *Progetto* and the later work, such that the earlier content is not merely excluded from the Tafurian “project”, but included in a more “mature” methodological form:

In both *L'Armonia e i conflitti* and *Venezia e il rinascimento*, Tafuri's mature handling of extra-evidentiary insights keeps the historical field open, preventing any attempt at ‘truthful’ conclusions or the kinds of simplistic appreciation of a widely shared bourgeois anxiety that colours the analyses of *Progetto e utopia*.⁴⁵³

What were these “extra-evidentiary insights,” these perilous steps from the path of philological rigour? Nothing less than the conceptual framework upon which any work of history depends, both for its sense and for its relevance.⁴⁵⁴ This “mature handling” amounts then to a *change* in conceptual framework and also a change in the uses to which it can be relevant. On the same page Leach continues, now employing as his conceptual framework therapeutic terms derived from psychoanalysis:

From the late 1970s, Tafuri evidences a more refined view of history as both the analytical subject and the context of analysis. One cannot practice historiography a-historically, just as not cannot treat history without accounting for its production. The ‘health’ to which the historian aspires on behalf of the present—that is, its representation of the past as history—also implicates the historian. Neither the historian nor the psychoanalyst (following the analogy of the setting) can know what form of past burden the analysis will expose; neither can they anticipate the ideal conditions for a return to a ‘normal’ capacity to function in daily life. This corresponds directly to Tafuri's assertion that the historian's tasks do not include resolving the future for architectural practice. To accept a position within history, as historians must do, is to accept that one can never conceive of the past as a whole and thereby either reconstruct or judge it. Nonetheless, this does not relieve the historian of the burden of tangling with their own analytical or historiographical ideologies as they shape the reconstitution of the past in the present as history. They inevitably introduce discordances in the manner that historical artefacts are made available for historical analysis.⁴⁵⁵

The drift of the conversion narrative is clear, particularly in the manner Leach constructs the institutional stakes of historical analysis. While, of course, the historian's concern is not to resolve the future for the architectural practice, nevertheless, the historian's “project” is sympathetic to the “health” of the architectural discipline—whatever that may be. “Health” and “normalcy” are, of course, abstract and depoliticised terms for discussing what we have hitherto understood to be an institution of capitalist society—particularly considering, as has often been pointed out by Tafuri (and repeated indefinitely by Marxists and non-Marxists alike) crisis *is* a “normal” condition for capital.⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁵³ Leach, *Choosing History*, 170–171.

⁴⁵⁴ I refer again to Koselleck's “On the Need for Theory in the Discipline of History.”

⁴⁵⁵ Leach, *Choosing History*, 171. Note that in such passages “production” stands as a generic term similar to “making”, but with a residue, completely unsubstantiated, of implied materialist critique.

⁴⁵⁶ It can be argued that Adonian “immanent critique” also depends upon such notions. On Adorno's critique as “homeopathy” see Finlayson, “Hegel, Adorno, and Immanent Criticism,” 1162.

Clearly, no longer is “architecture itself” in question. In Leach’s presentation of this “mature handling,” architecture appears to be accepted as a natural function of human life—even if temporarily distorted by the conditions of modernity. Leach elsewhere refers to this consensual definition as “architectural culture.”⁴⁵⁷ Psychoanalytic notions, which Tafuri really did begin to introduce in the mid to late 70s, inspired by his own first course of psychoanalysis, have a clear formalising effect upon the methodological framework of history, an inescapable result of translating concepts from one field of application, psychology, to another, society.⁴⁵⁸ In this translation, *concepts* become metaphorical notions, and notions take on the metahistorical character of *categories*. Thus, in complete harmony with the form of the conversion narrative, the personal history, the biography or *autobiography*, stands in for the history of society.

This is not to say that Tafuri’s life is irrelevant as a context for his work. (I have already defended such analysis from the stultifying reverence for personal “projects”). Personal history of the psychoanalytic variety must be distinguished from “scientific autobiography.”⁴⁵⁹ The latter, as Tafuri described it in an earlier interview with Françoise Very, grounds a work of history in the real, polemical, and institutional contexts of its production:

I believe that criticism becomes scientific from the moment when it includes autobiographical data, and when one is aware of this. In my view, *Teorie e storia* is more important than any other of my books because it binds my personal experience to the histories of individual and collective crisis in a sort of complex knot.⁴⁶⁰

“Scientific autobiography” produces a “complex” but, I would argue, fundamentally *dialectical* relation between the history of society and the position of the historian within that society. It stands in sharp distinction from the extrapolation of psychic “health” to the analysis of society at large—let alone the hazy notion of a “transference” of historical critique to the historical analysts themselves.

Earlier in his text, Leach appears to take up *Teorie e storia* in the terms Tafuri described above. But this contextualisation is far from neutral, since, by “historicising” the text, Leach relativises and thus attempts to overcome a fundamental part of Tafuri’s argument—the *separation* of history from design:

⁴⁵⁷ Leach, *Choosing History*, 272.

⁴⁵⁸ In his late interview with Passerini, Tafuri presented his ideal methodology, an impossible standpoint, from which the historical lever could move the world: “It was not by chance that while I was finishing my first psychoanalysis, I gradually conceptualised the idea of history as psychoanalysis of society. There followed the heated debate about whether history could be analysis or not. The conclusion was that everything could be an instrument of change—in my field and in general. So even Marxism, not Marx, needs to be shaken from its foundations. ... The project was to challenge everything that was consolidated on the left and everything that could be called ‘scholastic’ This was the idea; the question was how to effect what was essentially a cultural operation—which I saw as fundamental to historiographical thought—using the tools specific to the discipline of history and maintaining as much philological accuracy as possible.” Tafuri and Passerini, “History as Project: An Interview with Manfredo Tafuri,” 38.

⁴⁵⁹ In section three, we will examine Aldo Rossi’s particularly ambiguous invocation of “scientific autobiography.”

⁴⁶⁰ Manfredo Tafuri interviewed by Françoise Very, “I mercati della cultura / The culture markets” in “Il progetto storico di Manfredo Tafuri / The Historical Project of Manfredo Tafuri,” 37. This interview can be filed under “militant.”

It is important for Tafuri's construction of the historian figure and its relationship to the architect that architects and historians share a corpus of architectural knowledge; their differences are a consequence of treating this knowledge with approaches leading to significantly different ends. This makes most sense when we recall Tafuri's own disciplinary formation and observe its stamp upon the projective image of the historian that *Teorie e storia* advances: trained in architecture, he turned the disciplinary and professional knowledge towards the pursuit of this new historian's goals. Capable of entering a complicit relationship with the architect, the architectural historian elects not to do so. Recognising this correlation, we ought also to account for the historicity of Tafuri's schema. While he presents this version of architectural culture within a judgement of architecture's status in the contemporary world, it is no more universal in its application than the architectural principles his historian would subvert.⁴⁶¹

One should of course historicise Tafuri's arguments; interpret them within their specific conditions and polemical context. We have already seen how Tafuri himself recommended as much. However, one should again historicise the interpretations—in this case, Leach's. He assumes that the context of the separation argument no longer applies in the same terms. In this moment, Leach recognises, in effect, the changed disciplinary content of architectural ideology. Tafuri's separation argument was for Leach premised on a disciplinary problematic—the historian as opposed to the modernist “*planner*.” Because architectural culture is no longer defined by “*planning*,” there is no reason the historian and architect cannot reunite under the terms of the “*project*.” Of course, Leach does not present his argument in these terms. Rather than concretely and historically defining architecture as a social institution with shifting investments in certain disciplinary notions, Leach argues, under the terms of a paradoxical historicism, that Tafuri's arguments are defined by the historical context, while as an abstract methodological “*project*” free of the same.

In general, Leach excludes the institutional level of analysis, which is to say, he drops from consideration the social, political, economic, and overall structural context of architectural production. As a blunt historicisation, the context in which the architectural institution found itself in Tafuri's time, that is, *capitalism*, appears to be ongoing. On the other hand, the disciplinary investment of the architectural institution, and the immanent content of its ideological production, have changed, and Leach's consequent aversion to institutional critique is immediately understandable.

The separation between criticism and architecture emerges from Leach's account purged of its fundamental antagonism, that which, in Tafuri's Marxist period, was grounded in conceptual and *political* militancy. The resulting “agonism without antagonism” recalls various positions we have already encountered within political theory, from Keynes' integrative approach to social contradiction,⁴⁶² to Chantal Mouffe's radical democracy.

To play the game of historicisation, Leach's arguments can be dated to a recent period, placed in a specific geo-political context, and further defined by a specific class perspective,

⁴⁶¹ Leach, *Choosing History*, 116–117.

⁴⁶² Negri, “Keynes and the Capitalist Theory of the State, Post-1929,” 31–32. See my discussion: **1.3.3**.

for which the conflicts integral to capitalism were either not apparent, in abeyance, or even producing favourable results. Leach's own disciplinary context as a critic and historian is internal to the institution of architecture; the reasons for his attempts to repair the link between history and design, straightforward.

2.2.4 The Rendezvous

Don Juan *I summoned you, and I am glad to see you.*

Statue *Then take my hand.*⁴⁶³

This brings us back again to the fundamental importance Tafuri as a figure carries for architectural discourse and the architectural institution. One must tell the conversion narrative using Tafuri, because the critique of the architectural institution exists most prominently here. Within the narrative, specific moments of argument and analysis must be made to fit an arc, periods of work separated or connected, ideas arranged in a specific order. The construction of such a trajectory produces a notion of Tafuri's lessons for the present as an idea of his "legacy." Because the stakes for the present remain tied to architecture's position within capitalist society, that legacy must address, implicitly or explicitly, the theoretical framework for considering 'Architecture' as an autonomous discipline or category, rather than an institution.

In Leach's book, just as for Moneo and Biraghi, we are left with a continuous development, broken only by the "deforming" influence of *Contropiano*. Overall, this periodisation allows the historian's "project" to be reunited with the architectural project under the benevolent, if clearly ideological umbrella "architectural culture." Leach uses psychoanalytical to de-historicise and de-politicise the critique of architectural ideology. "Architectural culture" becomes a kind of meta-historical subject, connected yet autonomous from the mode and relations of production—connected in the sense that without the historian's help, the architect might inadvertently stumble into a dead-end vis-a-vis what projects are historically possible for the institution at any given time; autonomous in the sense, first, that 'Architecture' and the 'project' are themselves assumed to be a more or less stable and meta-historical categories, and second, that the architect is taken to be above political or class partiality. In this clear move, the critique of the discipline and institution by a politically conditioned history, is transformed into ideological projection and support, by a companionable and institutionally connected critic.

Despite this, the interpretation cannot relinquish an element of political radicalism. Tafuri cannot be completely absorbed back into institutional operativity, but must remain a site of ambiguity. It is through his challenging character that the figure of "Tafuri" enriches the "social mission" of architectural criticism and historiography. Thus, a particular mark of Project ideology is that it cannot wholly accept the truth of its own position. It cannot help inviting the statue to the rendezvous, because it is through such gestures that the appearance

⁴⁶³ Pushkin, *The Stone Guest*, 53.

of social respectability—ruse of the libertine—is maintained. When the statue finally arrives, the Don cannot resist taking its hand. Intellectual bad conscience, the desire to brazen his way past the Statue, is his undoing. This intellectual bad conscience points to the inability of contemporary ideology to do without a Marxian reference, a left pedigree, even though it dealt that forbear the fatal blow and indeed continues to stifle its potential re-emergence. Without this reference it would lose its charm, its aesthetic and political autonomy and thus its ideological and institutional function.

As a final example, we can refer to Pier Vittorio Aureli's interpretation of Tafuri's departure from *Contropiano* through the "historical project." Here the problematisation of history would be "so radical" as to supersede even the political goal of social transformation:

This problematization was so radical that we might conclude that the true aim of Tafuri's critique was not so much that of the *will to power*, in the traditional form of party politics (which, in the end, remained the goal of the editors of *Contropiano*), but more a *will to understand*, a will to deeply disentangle the historical processes through which intellectual subjectivity was made.⁴⁶⁴

The political implication of the Project reverses the axiomatic eleventh of Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach*.⁴⁶⁵ In Aureli's hands Tafuri's lesson becomes, we have hitherto only attempted to change the world, the point is to find a place within it:

Above all, this *will to understand*, which Tafuri never expected to be satisfied, was only used as a trigger for his research, and it was implicitly aimed at what Fortini would have called the recuperation of the *totality* of intellect, or, in other words, the possibility of transgressing the disciplinary specializations and expertise imposed by the political economy of neo-capitalist work and production. Tafuri demonstrated this transgression not in direct statements about interdisciplinarity or transdisciplinarity (two forms of intellectual work that Tafuri would have seen as the most advanced forms of ideological mystification within which capitalism administrates cultural production) but by the wide spectrum of his analyses that combined politics, aesthetics, political economy, and architecture into one *critical* project aimed at defining the *totality* of his *Beruf* as intellectual.⁴⁶⁶

Through the synthetic practice of the Project, historical complexities and contradictions become the material of a new intellectual vocation, a "Beruf,"⁴⁶⁷ that replaces the dialectic of theory into practice with a professionally operative "dialectic at a standstill."⁴⁶⁸

Therefore, returning to the rough problem of periodisation with which we began—the division of Tafuri into periods early/committed and late/conservative—we see that the fundamental basis for periodising Tafuri's work, for distinguishing breaks and continuities, is not his choice of objects, but his underlying theoretical and methodological frameworks. That

⁴⁶⁴ Pier Vittorio Aureli, "Intellectual Work and Capitalist Development: Origins and Context of Manfredo Tafuri's Critique of Architectural Ideology."

⁴⁶⁵ Karl Marx, *The German Ideology: including Theses on Feuerbach and Introduction to Political Economy*, 571.

⁴⁶⁶ *ibid.*

⁴⁶⁷ The use of the German to give existential depth to what might otherwise be simply given as "job," is a precisely symptomatic.

⁴⁶⁸ This theme will be taken up in the next chapter.

break exists most prominently between history as the “critique of architectural ideology,” developed in a relatively brief period from the end of the 1960s to the mid-1970s, particularly through association with *Contropiano*, and history as a Project which is first suggested in “Il ‘progetto’ storico” in 1977, taking on greater and greater significance thereafter.

In contrast then to the passage from Anthony Vidler quoted at the beginning, the Marxist or historical materialist reader would have absolutely no problem reading, for example, *Venice and the Renaissance*, since the complexities of civic institutions and forms of architectural and artistic patronage in an early-modern merchant oligarchy lend themselves immediately to a materialist understanding. To the Marxist reader with the least familiarity with the early development of capitalism, “prelates and lords” are familiar figures. Likewise, to the Marxist reader familiar with the history of the avant-garde, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth* offers a reiteration of the lesson that avant-garde formalism presents only false choices.⁴⁶⁹

For the *architect*, however, the problem is far more complex. Even more so for the American architect. The early Anglophone reception of Tafuri’s work was coloured by a neo-avant-garde co-optation, but it was also coloured by the strong political arguments of *Architecture and Utopia* and the second edition of *Theories and History*. It is worth noting that this radicalisation persists for English readers, since, unlike for their Italian counterparts, no newer editions have been published with the note to the second edition removed.⁴⁷⁰ Nevertheless this Marxist emphasis went unsupported by an understanding of the ambiguities of Italian politics, for instance, the reformism of the PCI and PSI,⁴⁷¹ the critique of ideology as a left critique of the left and of the Plan within it. Without grasping the subtleties of Tafuri’s publication history, or of his context, Anglophone reception had a tendency toward simplified and radicalised representations—an aversion to ambiguity. However, apart from a few notable exceptions, when those historiographical and national contexts are restored by more rigorous or otherwise subtle interpretations, we encounter “parodic poetic imitations”⁴⁷² a full-blown weaponisation of ambiguity. To understand this dialectical phenomenon, and the institutional forces which drive, it is to understand the aura Tafuri’s name continues to carry for “architecture culture.”

⁴⁶⁹ The title itself, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth* names a prominent example of such a false choice.

⁴⁷⁰ The Italian edition of 1988, for instance, does not feature it.

⁴⁷¹ A question which few North Americans could answer: when is a communist not a communist?

⁴⁷² Wigley, “Post-Operative History,” 53.

2.3 CRITICISM IN THE PROJECT

Some of the more radical recent practices have recognized that history can provide a source of form while avoiding any facile mimesis. In consequence they may achieve results that are both unique and unexpected more effectively than those who merely repeat the strategies and forms of the present. From this perspective it is plausible to suggest that a renewed attention to history can only enrich architecture's claim to a possible artistic autonomy, as long as one respects the rights of discontinuity, which now as always are closely connected with the power of invention.

Daniel Sherer, "The Architectural Project and the Historical Project"⁴⁷³

We have outlined the broad historical trajectory in which the architectural institution *pivots* from one disciplinary investment to another. We have seen the political, social, and economic contexts which condition this shift, together with the mobile theoretical conceptions that give it its "immanent" character. In the previous chapter we have seen examples of the ideology of the Project within "criticism" and historiography. As such we have seen the manner in which Tafuri's texts and arguments have been reconstructed in the form of a narrative arc. While the object of that narrative was to neutralise the fundamental challenge Tafuri at one time posed to the architectural institution in general, in the above examples the challenge was treated as if it were internal to historiography alone—as if the "historical project" answered a question posed by historians to themselves. That question was the separation of history from design, and it became the opportunity for a kind of methodological renovation: disposing of the old junk—critique of ideology, political economy, and class analysis—or its incorporation among more modish references into a sort of methodological "industrial chic."⁴⁷⁴

The reason for this focus has been twofold: first, because the perspective of this thesis needs to be clarified by contextualising the "projectual" ambiguities which exist immediately within the critical and historiographical perspective, preventing a clear assessment of its object; and second, because the ideology of the Project emerges largely as a mediation of the critique of ideology. That is, it emerges through the deliberate self-reflexive arguments of "architecture theory" directed outward into architectural production and design. Overall therefore, the Project emerged as a solution to a crisis in the same moment in which, and largely *because*, the crisis had been apprehended within criticism.

Without first defining the outlines of this problem, ridding criticism of its internal ambiguities, it would be difficult to construct a rigorously external vantage point and to problematise in the Project what appears internally to be a benevolent disciplinary strategy.

⁴⁷³ Daniel Sherer, "The Architectural Project and the Historical Project: Tensions, Analogies, Discontinuities" *Log*, no. 31 (Spring/Summer 2014): 118.

⁴⁷⁴ A recent trend in interior design matching the ironic fetishisation present throughout much post-industrial gentrification.

This chapter further expands upon the ambivalence of “criticality” within the context of the Project, by highlighting the crossover between criticism and design. For obvious material reasons, the primary site of ideological investment is the primary modality of the profession: architectural *design*. Because of this, it is not hard to understand that the internalisation of the Project within criticism has no other goal than the positioning of criticism as an avant-garde of Project ideology within the larger design oriented institution. In this function it is little different from the operative critics of the Modern Movement featured so prominently in *Theories and History*. The significant innovation which does exist has to do with what is new to Project ideology as such. While for the ideology of the Plan, the task of criticism was to “*plan* past history by projecting it towards the future,”⁴⁷⁵ the ideology of the Project involves the definition of a specifically self-reflexive autonomy contrary to the “instrumentalist tradition” of the Plan. The basic proposition of the Project, to a certain extent its very concept, is the coincidence of criticism with operativity. Therefore criticism succeeds as a producer of ideology to the precise extent in which it can internalise the Project, reciprocally internalising itself within design. The Project in criticism therefore has as a primary goal the elaboration of criticism *within the Project*: the presentation of a self-reflexive horizon within which both discursive and design departments of the institution can function productively.

As I have already suggested, this was the general function of “Architecture Theory” in its heyday from the beginning of the 1970s to its decline in the 1990s. The previous chapter demonstrated how in the case of recent Tafuri interpretation, this search for operativity turns back explicitly to the notion of the “project” and its fruitful association with criticism in the historian’s later work. We will now examine how these points can in turn be leveraged to produce new operative arguments concerning design.

Arguments concerning the critical power of the architectural “project” range from the more circumspect, to the more openly ideological. A good example of the former, is the book *Critical Architecture*, which gathered material from a conference of the same name held at The Bartlett School of Architecture, in 2004.⁴⁷⁶ Jane Rendell, one of the organisers of the conference and editors of the collection, describes their proposition:

From the early stages of developing the conference to the numerous letters written in response, it became clear to us as organisers that the papers presented at the ‘Critical Architecture’ conference had challenged a view closely held by the architectural community in the United Kingdom and elsewhere, that the terms ‘design’ and ‘criticism’ should be divided—design should take place through the production of buildings, while criticism should be performed by critics who ‘judge’ buildings by writing essays. ‘Critical Architecture’ questioned this assumed division between design and criticism and proposed instead that, as forms of architectural critical practice operating within an interdisciplinary context, their relationship could be rethought.⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷⁵ Tafuri, *Theories and History*, 141.

⁴⁷⁶ Jane Rendell et al. eds. *Critical Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2007).

⁴⁷⁷ Jane Rendell, “Introduction,” in *Critical Architecture*, 1.

The distinction as it is given above, between design-architects and critic-writers, has what we might call a “pre-Tafurian” character, in the sense that the specificity of the problematic relation between criticism and design, and indeed the role of history therein (its *operativity*) is unaddressed.⁴⁷⁸ Evidently the “architectural community” is a large body composed mostly of professional architects with little to no discursive, academic, or theoretical production. An accurate representation of the architectural community’s “closely held views” would certainly have to reckon with their pre-Tafurian character.⁴⁷⁹ At the same time, I have already argued extensively that the architectural discipline “since 1968” has been defined by the association of “Architecture” with criticality, whether or not the average architect pays any attention to such discursive issues.

The nature of Rendell’s propositions and that of the other authors included in the publication, immediately demonstrate that the problem in 2004 is in a sense equally post-Tafurian as it is pre-Tafurian. The book is divided into several sections, the first of which “Criticism/Negation/Action” is composed of theoretical texts. The first three of these, Andrew Leach’s “Criticality and Operativity”, Teresa Stoppani’s “Unfinished Business: The Historical Project after Manfredo Tafuri,” and David Cunningham’s “Architecture as Critical Knowledge,” all deal directly with the historian.

Leach’s text is in continuity with the arguments of his book *Choosing History* (published the same year). He makes a liberal, non-Marxian reading of the disciplinary separation argument, in which as we have seen, critical historians and architect-designers conduct a softened antagonism for the health of their shared “architectural culture.” He follows this, however, with an astute point to the effect that in the real history of architectural research Tafuri’s methodological and institutional recommendations for the separation of history from design have not produced any substantial results—apart from the brief example set by Tafuri’s own Venice programme.⁴⁸⁰ To the Marxist reader, this observation might lead to questions concerning Tafuri’s other assumptions—to reflect on the limitations of even the more radical separation in so far as it was still meant to function within an academy institutionally dependent upon architectural production within capitalist society. Instead, Leach approaches the problem from the opposite direction, suggesting a marginal role for critical *design* in the face of largely “post-critical” “architectural culture” overall. For Leach, in the first decade of the twenty-first century, the apparent dearth of criticality in the architectural discipline as a whole forms the polemical condition for his recommendations concerning what critical possibilities might be out there.

⁴⁷⁸ In another passage Rendell suggests “to think design and criticism together is productive, and demands that we call into question the definitions and assumptions that underpin both modes of activity.” In the context of a critique of architectural ideology, the ambiguity of the term “productive” is clear. *Ibid.*, 4.

⁴⁷⁹ There are even academic attempts to generalise this critical ignorance, for instance via an obtuse reduction of architectural concerns to “the building.” See José Arguez, ed., *The Building* (Zurich, Lars Müller, 2016).

⁴⁸⁰ Andrew Leach, “Criticality and Operativity,” 18.

We have already seen a more radical and comprehensive version of this argument in Douglas Spencer's *The Architecture of Neoliberalism*. One must certainly take a sympathetic view toward such arguments that attempt to face down a hostile, post-critical, even anti-intellectual, architectural milieu, seeking to return to an earlier, more socially and intellectually engaged paradigm; however, I have attempted to demonstrate the problematic character of the tools available therein. For one thing, it is the very limitations of the disciplinary paradigm itself, the structural thinness of its conception of "criticality" which so easily disintegrates when the design market again offers architects the role of commercial publicist. Even more significant, however, is the structural ambiguity of "criticality" within the history of architecture's own disciplinary dialectic: functioning too easily as a rearguard defence of architectural ideology against the destabilising trajectory of *realisation*.

2.3.1 Operative Criticism for the Critical Project

The critical writing of the English translator of Tafuri's "last will and testament,"⁴⁸¹ Daniel Sherer, provides a strong example of this process, showing how "criticality" can be transformed into directly productive support for contemporary design ideology. Like Moneo, or Aureli for that matter, Sherer's arguments are provocative, but they demonstrate the core operations common to more critically circumspect propositions as well.

Again, step one is the establishment of a polemical context within which the Project can function as a critical alternative. In the 2014 essay "The Architectural Project and the Historical Project: Tensions, Analogies, Discontinuities," published in *Log*, Sherer defines the polemic as a recurrence of Tafuri's critique of Modernist historicism, necessitated by the technical determinism of the "digital." He then establishes a reciprocity between the distancing operations of the project of history, and the possibility of a similar strategy for contemporary design:

This need for distance has assumed a new importance now because of a spate of recent arguments about the role of digital technology, many of which not only ignore this need, but disregard the very idea of historical distance itself. In this way they reify the present in an attempt to monopolize the future. Marshalling teleological models, these arguments reproduce Crocean and Hegelian assumptions about history, as if these have not been discredited for over half a century. I am thinking in particular of the assertions of the architect Patrik Schumacher, an avowed Hegelian determinist as far as parametric design and its potentialities are concerned, and, to a lesser degree, the arguments regarding digital agency put forward by the historian Mario Carpo, which undercut the author/architect's productive forces and design ideas.⁴⁸²

The critical premise is strong enough. It only becomes acutely ideological as it pivots to the disciplinary stakes where, their *institutional* character revealed, Sherer identifies a threat to architectural authority. Thus distinguished from the historical determinism of the digital, the Project offers a means to reinforce the professional agency of the architect. Sherer defines his operativity in the following terms:

My purpose in examining these ideological distortions is to isolate critical approaches to history capable of exposing them, thereby offering new openings for the dialogue between the architectural project and the historical project. These approaches entail new possibilities for contemporary practice. Chief among these is the attempt to open an epistemic space for the unexpected and the unforeseeable in the unfolding context of the project. And this is precisely what the multiple reliance on sketch, model, and digital representation, as opposed to any exclusive focus on new regimes of computation, implies: a way out of the aesthetic defeat caused by the overwhelming success of a particular kind of rapid technological development.⁴⁸³

Sherer's "critical" propositions here have less to do with social questions, and more to do with the *formal* success of architectural production. He is concerned that, while digital

⁴⁸¹ I am referring to Moneo's characterisation. See 2.2.1.

⁴⁸² Sherer, "The Architectural Project and the Historical Project: Tensions, Analogies, Discontinuities," 119–120.

⁴⁸³ *Ibid.*, 117.

representation offers architects an enormously productive tool, it might lead to a “planning” of the exception: “the reduction of the exceptional form to a conventional horizon of expectations, rather than enabling it to break through this horizon.”⁴⁸⁴ Only the creative power of the architect is capable of producing a truly exceptional form: “For the exception to remain exceptional, the computer must cede part of its jurisdiction, part of its purely technical power of anticipation, to the formal idea.”⁴⁸⁵ These recommendations recall the famous “knight’s move” of the historical avant-garde, which, as Tafuri himself already demonstrated, entailed its own contradictions.⁴⁸⁶ This time, however, rather than the retroactive employment of history to justify an act whose very value was its lack of historical justification, now history must be brought in at the beginning, to supply the inventor with an eclectic range of aesthetic materials. The architect must not be restricted to digital production, but nor, Sherer argues, careful to avoid simple historicism, must the architect fetishise traditional drawing. They must blend techniques, avoiding the Scylla of digital determinism, and the Charybdis of nostalgia. Here Sherer draws directly upon the work of architects which he takes to be exemplary, first and foremost Preston Scott Cohen:

Clearly, the tenuous synthesis of both tendencies, the historical command of typological form and the technical mastery of digital codes, is present in the work of very few contemporary practitioners, and is it is this that stands out and is exceptional nowadays.

This synthesis is particularly evident in the most recent work of Cohen, which is emblematic of what I have called the historicity of the modern, which is also the historicity of type in relation to the evolving role of digital instrumentality. What is more, the argument for historical resonance, for a polyvalent historicity of form, can be said to reinforce the claims of the autonomous author/architect more than those associated with a nostalgic fixation on drawing.⁴⁸⁷

Again, the argument is made in the name of a professional authority, which Sheerer defines by its aesthetic powers:

...to privilege the digital at the expense of everything else that contributes to architecture means that one must also downplay, at least to some extent, the formal result. Such overemphasis on computational *techné* oversteps the bounds of a critical view that, if it were more historically informed, would also have to give equal attention to aesthesis. What the various presentist arguments about the digital overlook is the need to strike a balance between technical means and formal/aesthetic ends: and that is precisely the “corrective” that, each in its own way, the approaches of Holl, Baldeweg, and Cohen may be said to offer.⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid., 120.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid., 124.

⁴⁸⁶ See Tafuri, “The Uncertainties of Formalism. It has been argued, however, that, despite his structural critiques, Tafuri finally did seek something like the radically new form. See for instance Tyrus Miller, “The Historical Project of ‘Modernism’: Manfredo Tafuri’s Metahistory of the Avant-Garde,” in “Modernism Revisited,” ed. Aleš Erjavec and Tyrus Miller. *Filozofski Vestnik* 35, no.2 (2014): 101.

⁴⁸⁷ Sherer, “The Architectural Project and the Historical Project: Tensions, Analogies, Discontinuities,” 134.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid., 134–135.

Sherer's operative arguments, his championing of Cohen (with Holl and Baldeweg to a lesser extent, but he may as well be talking about Frank Gehry,⁴⁸⁹ or even, despite his polemic contra Schumacher, Zaha Hadid) is ultimately an attempt to shore up the professional authority of the architect as "creator" against forces which might otherwise submit disciplinary autonomy to technical determination. This argument is made as an immanent reflection on architectural disciplinarity: a critique of planning as *professional strategy*. Making a parallel between digital and techno-determinist arguments and the "teleology" of the Modern Movement, Sherer, identifies what he sees to be an immanent danger—an echo of *realisation*—to the architectural institution. The role of operative critic within the Project becomes the safeguarding of professional agency by promoting the value of the "unexpected,"⁴⁹⁰ which flows from the architect's aesthetic "power of invention."

We will see in the final section of this thesis to what extent the "architect as artist" becomes the last bastion of the Project, when all other "social missions" fail. By invoking the role of type, however, Sherer suggests more than "aesthesis" alone might be at stake. This particular essay remains concerned with the productive power of the architect as artist—criticality referring to a marginal distancing operation that lifts the architect above technical necessity (here "technical" referring to both the broad philosophical theme as well as literal disciplinary technique).⁴⁹¹ However, in a previous essay, 1991's "Re: The Politics of Formal Autonomy,"⁴⁹² notably also devoted to Cohen, he lent "criticality" a more substantial social content. In fact, he goes as far as to claim that Cohen's work expresses a critique of ideology, striking a blow against the commodification of architecture, through the suburban house type. Ignoring the most fundamental points of Tafuri's critique of architectural ideology, namely, that it is a critique of *architectural* ideology, Sherer argues for political agency through formal autonomy:

Situated on the boundary between form and image, aesthetic autonomy and social determination, contemporary architecture would appear to be in a unique position among cultural practices to articulate ideological critique. Under present cultural conditions, however, architecture has come to serve as an administrative instrument, a vehicle for the reigning ideology of commodification. Nevertheless, architecture can imply social critique by staking a claim to formal autonomy.⁴⁹³

The combination of such notions as "administrative instrument," with more concrete problems such as commodification, recall again the intellectual's anachronistic and

⁴⁸⁹ Are not Gehry's crude paper models rendered expertly through the most advanced techniques not the perfect expression of creative authority enhanced rather than confined by "the digital"?

⁴⁹⁰ In his translator's preface to *Interpreting the Renaissance*, Sherer characterises Tafuri as an opponent of teleology, and seeker of the unexpected. Daniel Sherer, "Translator's Preface," *Interpreting the Renaissance: Princes, Cities, Architects*, xvi.

⁴⁹¹ Cohen, he says occupies the "radical middle." Sherer, "The Architectural Project and the Historical Project: Tensions, Analogies, Discontinuities," 135. It is an apt phrase.

⁴⁹² Daniel Sherer, "Re: The Politics of Formal Autonomy," *Assemblage*, no.15 (August 1991): 99–102.

⁴⁹³ *Ibid.*, 99.

disoriented hostility toward the welfare state, whose properly critical roots we examined earlier. Sherer goes on to use two of Cohen's works, a house on Longboat Key and one on Siesta Key—both projects for single-family luxury homes in beach communities off the Gulf Coast of Florida—to illustrate his point:

If Cohen's work implicitly engages such aesthetic criteria as "beauty," "aura," and "distance," it always does so ironically, by internalizing a critical stance toward the aesthetics of the formal project within the project itself. The houses are exercises in formal and historical non-identity. If they problematize their own appearance, they also suggest the inadequacy of the reigning social techniques of mimesis, identification, and commodity fetishism. Cohen's houses redirect these mimetic techniques toward a critique of a particular commodity form, the suburban house. In this his work resists social and ideological conditions of homogeneity not by attempting to cover them over with historical images and external references, but by struggling against these conditions at the formal level.⁴⁹⁴

Sherer defines a profoundly minimal, and distinctly anti-Tafurian threshold for the critical project as resistance to commodification. How many times has Tafuri reminded his readers that such "negative" gestures have only positive functions? That these projects are unmistakable luxury commodities, whose internally directed "critique" is part and parcel of their added value as "Architecture"—amounting to decidedly less than nothing in real terms—appears self-evident. That they are lifted above the "ideological conditions of homogeneity" is precisely what constitutes their particular commodity fetishism.

Furthermore, the assertion that commodification is a "reigning ideology," rather than a real process of the capitalist mode of production in which whatever design one chooses, "critical" or otherwise, will equally partake, demonstrates how Sherer's "critique" has become divorced from the most basic structural premises. Must one assume that the walk-in closet off the master bedroom of the house on Longboat Key was an ironic gesture intended to remind the owner of how sadly pervasive such ideology is?

The architect's "social mission," defined by its criticality, is revealed to be in direct contradiction with its real social function. Set within the larger historical context of the architectural discipline, and in particular the divergence of the Project from real planning—in effect, the divergence of such "private residences" from the large scale construction of housing (the divergence of "Architecture" from the instrumentality of mere building)—one gets a sense of the profound political irony suffusing "critical architecture."

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid., 101.

2.3.2 Charming Betrayal II

In Marco Biraghi's *Project of Crisis*, we also find resistance to commodification as the essential stake for "critical architecture." This theme returns us to the question of "betrayal"—now the ambiguity of the architect's Project as betrayal or fidelity to the "critical" "project of crisis." In his presentation of Tafuri's relationship with contemporary architecture, Marco Biraghi is particularly interested in two cases, Louis Kahn, and Rem Koolhaas, to each of whom he devotes a chapter. Biraghi thematises both relationships around the ambiguity of betrayal and fidelity—Kahn's self-betrayal, then betrayal of the historian, Tafuri, who believed in him;⁴⁹⁵ Koolhaas' fidelity to Tafuri's comprehension of the "productivity of 'crisis,'" but betrayal of Tafuri's "Modernist" ambivalence.⁴⁹⁶ Connecting these historically disparate cases, Biraghi inserts the ambiguous position of the neo-avant-garde architects of the 1970s relative to the Modern Movement and the historical avant-gardes.

First, in the case of Louis Kahn, Biraghi refers to a split in Tafuri's assessment, a split which occurs in a relatively short span between the early essay "Storica di Louis Kahn", 1964,⁴⁹⁷ and 1968's *Teorie e storia*. In the earlier text, according to Biraghi, Tafuri places a certain degree of faith in the possibilities of Louis Kahn's anti-consumerist approach. However, in the later work, Tafuri appears repelled by Kahn's embrace of "consumability":

To return to the central argument of Tafuri's critique: if, from the moment consumability embodies the triumph of capitalist ideology, it is an enemy to be fought (a common enemy, theoretically speaking, of both Kahn and Tafuri) then, Kahn's fault lies precisely in his betrayal of this common cause, if not (more extremely) in his becoming a veritable traitor and joining the enemy's side—transforming the architectural project into a consumer good, or, in other words, into merchandise. Kahn's unkept promise, then, is the unmasking of capitalist ideology and a critique of the architectural ideology that necessarily comes along with it. For Tafuri, Kahn could operatively have produced as much as Tafuri did on a theoretical (or even historical) level. But faced with such a supreme task, Kahn ends up being fatally naïve, or at least deplorably disinterested, disengaged. Kahn ultimately surpasses and consequentially criticizes the modern movement's ideological rigor, but merely in order to empty it of any ideal significance or influence. He substitutes it instead with manipulable forms and messages, realizable utopias.⁴⁹⁸

I obviously disagree with Biraghi on what the "central argument of Tafuri's critique" is. Because of the framing Biraghi chooses, Kahn's "failure" is attributed to a fault of character rather than to the structural possibilities of the discipline. From the perspective of this thesis, Kahn was of course in full fidelity to "Architecture" given the material context in which it was possible to be so. Of course, just following these two moments of Tafuri's engagement

⁴⁹⁵ Biraghi, *Project of Crisis*, 66.

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 165–166 and 189–190. In the final pages of his book, Biraghi develops his own, rather counterintuitive conceptions of Modernism and Postmodernism: the former characterised by ambiguity and inner conflict, the latter by uncomplicated optimism.

⁴⁹⁷ Manfredo Tafuri, "Storica di Louis Kahn," *Comunità* 117 (1964).

⁴⁹⁸ Biraghi, *Project of Crisis*, 66.

with Kahn, lies precisely the militant period whose conceptual tools Biraghi inclusively excludes. From that perspective, again only one or two years later, the failure described in *Teorie e storia* takes on a resolutely structural character. In fact, already in *Teorie e storia* the historical possibilities for architecture in the post-war period had been seriously and indeed *structurally* problematised. In Biraghi's analysis, on the other hand, the possibility of Kahn fulfilling his promise to realise a critical reflection on the Modern Movement appears to be an open question for architects of *Biraghi's* present to consider. His reading of Kahn/Tafuri is clearly operative in the sense that it presents to contemporary architecture an historiographical route to redemption.

In the next chapter of his book, Biraghi considers the position of the neo-avant-garde relative to their forebears in the Modern Movement. Again the theme is betrayal, but it is not clear at first in which direction the betrayal operates:

Adopting the syntax of the avant-garde (or significant parts of it), freed from the semantic and historical implications, would seem to set the work of Eisenman, Hejduk, Graves, Gwathmey (with Siegel), and Meier on the other side—or rather, on this side—of the crisis of the modern movement and its illustrious attempts to move forward. Or rather: it would set their work in continuity with it, but at the same time in a position detached from its failure.⁴⁹⁹

The New York Five, resuming the “syntax” of the historical avant-garde, now formalistically “freed” of semantic content, disconnect themselves from the historical failure of their predecessors' attempt to *realise* the architectural plan. One could say (though Biraghi does not) that they repeat the Modern Movement to the precise degree to which it was a failure, though remaining, somehow, “detached” from that failure. Socially, politically, and indeed *historically* speaking, the betrayal would appear to be on the side of the neo-avant-garde.

In the introduction to *Five Architects*, which we have briefly covered above, Colin Rowe addressed the same problem, and began with a distinctly defensive stance:

We are in the presence of anachronism, nostalgia, and, probably, frivolity. If modern architecture looked like this c. 1930 then it should not look like this today; and, if the real political issue of the present is not the provision of the rich with cake but of the starving with bread, then not only formally but also programmatically these buildings are irrelevant. Evidently they propound no obvious revolution; and, just as they may be envisaged as dubiously European to some American tastes, so they will seem the painful evidence of American retardation to certain European and, particularly, English judgments.⁵⁰⁰

Trusting to his rhetorical abilities, however, Rowe's defence is a remarkable and casuistic performance. The moral rectitude of the five architects is examined from every angle. One imagines the faces of his readers, depending upon their allegiance, passing from dejection to

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid., p.93

⁵⁰⁰ Colin Rowe, “Introduction to Five Architects,” in *Architecture Theory since 1968*, 77.

hope and back, cringing as Rowe takes each side in turns, drawing out the suspense. In the final pages Rowe asks, what possible routes are left to architecture after the “central and socialist mission of modern architecture had failed—or alternatively that this mission had become dissolved in the sentimentalities and bureaucracies of the welfare state”⁵⁰¹? (The production of quality housing and infrastructure being too menial, he is clearly referring to “Architecture” here). He then lists a profusion of disjointed and unconvincing partial movements and styles, from Miesian neo-classicism to something called the “Shingle Style.” The Five Architects emerged in this climate of architectural uncertainty in which no clear answers had been offered. Consequently, Rowe argues, we should “not be too ready to impute charges of irresponsibility.” In an act of noble historiographical sacrifice, it is the social aspirations of modernism which are laid to rest so that the formalism of the architects of the present may be redeemed.

Biraghi goes even further, and he again calls on Tafuri’s ambivalence:

“For Tafuri, it is ‘too easy to conclude that such architecture constitutes a ‘betrayal’ of the ethical ideals of the modern movement.’ Too easy, indeed, to such a degree that it is less difficult to affirm the exact opposite: ‘Such architecture records rather, the mood of *those who feel betrayed*, and essentially reveals the condition into which those who still want to make ‘Architecture’ find themselves forced.’”⁵⁰²

The phrase “those who still want to make ‘Architecture’” expresses, with perfect pathos, the essential character of ideology. As the representatives of “Architecture” in a world dominated for decades by real planning, mere architectural, “bread,” their feelings of betrayal represent what is precisely ideological in the history of modernism: the betrayal of architecture *as ideology*, by the realisation of architecture as planning. Furthermore, to answer Rowe, in hindsight clearly their actions were far from institutionally “irresponsible.” With the collapse of real planning, beginning in the 1970s, it was a well placed investment in formal autonomy and authorial prerogative. A decade or two later, and economic conditions sent the now globalised “cake” market into the stratosphere.

One recalls again Marx’s famous line from *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*: “the first time as tragedy, the second as farce.”⁵⁰³ Do the court-architects of postmodernism’s Second Empire require our sympathy? Biraghi’s quotations are taken from *La Sfera e il labirinto*, and he is able to neatly dodge the deeper social and political reality, casting “betrayal” purely through the interior hopes and desires of the architects, who, unsurprisingly, “still wants to make ‘Architecture.’” Using Tafuri, Biraghi again opens the possibility for a critical reflection, by architects and through “Architecture,” on the failures of the Modern Movement, without addressing the fundamental institutional and political character of that

⁵⁰¹ Ibid., 82.

⁵⁰² Biraghi, *Project of Crisis*, 100. Tafuri quotation is from *La sfera e il labirinto*, 370.

⁵⁰³ Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Luois Bonaparte*, 10

failure. As we saw in section one, this puts the notion of “critical architecture,” in open conflict with the politics and building production of social democracy in the very moment in which they were superseded by neoliberalism.

Given Biraghi’s interpretation above, the betrayal he later charges Koolhaas with, appears paradoxical. According to Biraghi, Koolhaas transformed features of Tafuri’s critique into new opportunities for architectural practice, realising a new range of architectural possibilities precisely where Tafuri had identified its most pressing crisis: “What Tafuri sees as an endpoint—one that cannot be revisited any further, and was patent proof of failure—Koolhaas views as a germinal moment, the dawn of a new world of possibilities for architecture and architects.”⁵⁰⁴ Did not Koolhaas succeed in finding new ways for architects to keep making “Architecture”? Unfortunately for Biraghi, this achievement came at the expense of Tafuri’s vital ambiguity: “This is tantamount to bypassing the crisis, or, better still, turning it into a new point of departure, a new beginning. If, for Tafuri, New York fully represents Koolhaas’s ironic ‘Capital of the Perpetual Crisis’ (an inescapable crisis, which cannot be surpassed—an innate status quo), a new, unexpected fruit blossoms in the very heart of that crisis.”⁵⁰⁵

At all times, the Project, whether within criticism or as “critical architecture,” must maintain the ideological pretence of contesting contemporary conditions.⁵⁰⁶ Biraghi implies some sort of strong difference between Tafuri’s “project of crisis,” and Koolhaas’s, since the latter affirmed contemporary conditions *through* their contradictory aspects. However, by even defining Tafuri’s work in such terms Biraghi has already given up the perspective from which a true distinction might have been possible. Koolhaas’s crime was that he revealed the Project’s true meaning: the “project of crisis” is ideological like any other, the only difference being its *tactic*.

This returns us to the theme of the previous section. In the final pages of his epilogue, Biraghi appears to partially recognise his own contradiction. He states that the question of interpreting Tafuri depends upon the “viewpoint” one adopts.⁵⁰⁷ This is certainly true. He then takes up three successive possible views. First he says, Koolhaas, though “not his ‘legitimate’ heir” is still “the person who most effectively appropriates Tafuri’s discourse on the productivity of crisis—going beyond all its limits and making it act, and react, in the present day.” Then, on the contrary, he argues that “from a strictly modern viewpoint” the “Tafurian construct cannot be seen as a precursor to Koolhaas—rather, Koolhaas, to state it more exactly, deeply betrays it: a betrayal that in many respects parallels Kahn’s betrayal, as

⁵⁰⁴ Biraghi, *Project of Crisis*, 165.

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 172.

⁵⁰⁶ “It is equally evident that crisis as a form of reality can be underwritten by the current champions of what he calls a ‘disenchanted acceptance of the real, to the point of cynicism’ (which perhaps can count Venturi as their forerunner, and Koolhaas as their main champion today), except when used for advantageous, speculative, and noncontradictory operations: in other words, operations aimed, at once and without contradiction, at theory and business.” *Ibid.*, 177.

⁵⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 189.

well.” Finally, he overcomes the contradiction through a third perspective by which Tafuri appears to betray himself:

Indeed, it is precisely the modern viewpoint—insofar as it is, at least potentially, ‘his own’—that Tafuri aims to critique. One should try to observe Tafuri’s construct from his own point of view—the viewpoint according to which plunging the real into crisis means continually plunging oneself into crisis.⁵⁰⁸

Tafuri’s self-betrayal becomes his ultimate self-fidelity. Consequently, there would be no point in maintaining or enforcing any critical proposition Tafuri made, since the practical goal of his work as “project of crisis” was to cast all such fish back into the sea of ideology and then to dive headlong after them. Even if this perfect expression of Tafuri’s ideologically operative ambiguity was not intended as such, it is a welcome conclusion to Biraghi’s book. Critical architecture’s “betrayals” and “fidelities” are finally revealed to be two sides of the same ideological coin.

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 189—190.

2.4 LIMITS OF CRITIQUE II

Yet what is it to which we make recourse in order to draw the line between critical and non-critical philosophy? Surely there is no fixed concept of critique that allows us to do this unambiguously and without distortion. Nevertheless, we would venture that critique always seems to arise from the need to draw a line between, on the one hand, forms of knowledge, culture or politics alleged to have become inadequate and, on the other, forms of knowledge, culture or politics considered to possess a liberating, emancipatory or future-oriented force.

Karin de Boer and Ruth Sonderegger, Introduction, *Conceptions of Critique*⁵⁰⁹

As expressed by Biraghi's melancholy treatment, at the limits of Tafuri's work and beyond its theoretical and historical diagnoses, lies the somewhat more ephemeral, and indeed literally existential, question of "mood." We have already seen how the function of architecture under capitalism, along with bourgeois culture in general, involves the neutralisation of "anxiety." However the work of critique appears to present its own neuroses. Tafuri's apparent melancholia, a condition seemingly endemic to Italian architectural culture of the period, presents further ambiguities, further problems and opportunities for interpretation.

In his contribution to *Architecture Criticism Ideology*,⁵¹⁰ Fredric Jameson put the problem in the simple terms of "optimism" versus "pessimism."⁵¹¹ Associating Tafuri's *Architecture and Utopia* with Theodor Adorno's *Philosophy of Modern Music* and Roland Barthes's *Writing Degree Zero*, Jameson takes issue with the structural "closure" of their analyses:

Let me first single out a fundamental organizational feature which these three works share, and which I am tempted to see as the ultimate precondition to which they must painfully submit in order to practice dialectical thinking: this is the sense of Necessity, of necessary failure, of closure, of ultimate unresolvable contradictions and the impossibility of the future, which cannot have failed to oppress any reader of these texts, particularly readers who as practicing artists—whether architects, composers, or writers—come to them for suggestions and encouragement as to the possibility of future cultural production.⁵¹²

He appears particularly concerned with the bleak message sent to practitioners of the above fields: architecture, music, and literature, who, he says—demonstrating his dissent from Tafuri's critique of operative criticism—"come to them for suggestions and encouragement." His conceptual recourse for overcoming this closure, in order to again take up an optimistic and encouraging association with "cultural" producers, comes from Antonio Gramsci. In his text Jameson connects critical aesthetic theory of the "pessimistic" variety, to

⁵⁰⁹ Karin de Boer, and Ruth Sonderegger, eds., "Introduction" in *Conceptions of Critique in Modern and Contemporary Philosophy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.), 1–9.

⁵¹⁰ Fredric Jameson, "Architecture and the Critique of Ideology," in Joan Ockman et al., *Architecture Criticism Ideology* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1985), 51–87.

⁵¹¹ Jameson introduced the distinction as a frivolity: "It would be silly, or even worse, frivolous, to discuss these positions in terms of optimism or pessimism." *Ibid.*, 58. Nevertheless they remain, in inverted comas, the terms of his polemic.

⁵¹² *Ibid.*, 57–58.

the old materialist emphasis on “Necessity.” Against this deterministic tendency within Marxism, Jameson recommends the Gramscian potentiality of counter-hegemonic “enclaves” and “imaginaries,” which complicate the traditional binary between materialism and idealism:

It will therefore no longer be ‘idealist’ in the bad, old sense to suggest that counterhegemony means producing and keeping alive a certain alternate ‘idea’ of space, of urban, daily life, and the like. It would then no longer be so immediately significant (or so practically and historically crippling) that architects in the West do not—owing to the private property system—have the opportunity to project and construct collective ensembles that express and articulate original social relations (and needs and demands) of a collective type: the essential would rather be that they are able to form conceptions and utopian images of such projects, against which to develop a self-consciousness of their concrete activities in this society (it being understood, in Tafuri’s spirit, that such collective projects would only practically and materially be possible after a systemic transformation of society). But such utopian ideas are as objective as material buildings: their possibilities—the possibility of conceiving such new space—have conditions of possibility as rigorous as any material artefact.⁵¹³

Whether or not it would be “‘idealist’ in the bad, old sense,” Jameson still fails to reckon here with the specificity of architectural ideology—the historical relationship between architecture and capitalist society. Architectural notions (like “space” itself) developed within that context. In effect, Jameson’s partial autonomy assumes the full rather than partial autonomy of architecture as a *discipline*—with its own proper ideas, techniques, and imaginary—from architecture as an *institution*. However, the “conditions of possibility,” for the discipline, enforce a rigorous mediation upon the very nature of that “imaginary.”

Jameson’s intervention in the Tafuri debate, and in particular the manner in which he characterises Tafuri’s pessimism, has been challenged from other quarters. Making her case for the “engaged” Tafuri, Diane Ghirardo includes Jameson among the Anglophone readers who failed to understand the specificity of Tafuri’s political position, and the room for manoeuvre he intended to leave.⁵¹⁴ As Ghirardo notes, that room exists at the level of practical and immediate actions—architecture with a small “a”—rather than utopian projection.⁵¹⁵

Gail Day uses Jameson’s argument as the entry point into a deeper and much more detailed analysis of Tafuri’s political and theoretical context—her text, “Manfredo Tafuri, Frederic Jameson, and the Contestations of Political Memory,” being probably the best and most detailed work on Tafuri’s political context available.⁵¹⁶ For Day, the question of Tafuri’s

⁵¹³ Ibid., 72. A similar position on the value of the “utopian factor” was given by Adorno: “Functionalism Today”, 16—17.

⁵¹⁴ Ghirardo, “Manfredo Tafuri and Architecture Theory in the U.S., 1970-2000,” 41.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid.

⁵¹⁶ Certainly it is in English, but I would not be surprised if there were no comparable work in Italian either. The only serious issue I would take with Day’s work is that it takes for granted the relationship which recent Italian architectural discourse bears to this history. For instance, Day does not address any issues within Aureli’s presentation of the same material, though it contradicts her own. Day, “Manfredo Tafuri, Frederic Jameson, and the Contestations of Political Memory,” 73, note 166.

“mood” or the general prognosis for architecture’s future, is inextricably bound to the real political events and experiences of his time and place:

It is certainly the case that Tafuri considers a fundamental social transformation the precondition for the proper effectivity of cultural ambitions. However, this does not amount to a conception of capitalism as a ‘total system’ in the sense Jameson suggests: as a ‘closed’ or ‘closing’ iron-cage—that is, understood through the lens of the second-generation Frankfurt School. Nor does it mean that Tafuri believes ‘nothing is possible’ in the meantime. Quite the contrary: despite the disagreements among those intellectuals associated with workerism (whether they remained inside or outside the PCI), the evidence of struggles in Marghera-Mestre and beyond demonstrated the immediate effectiveness of collective action in reclaiming and refiguring the spatial and temporal coordinates of social reality: communities were being reshaped through struggle. His argument has the horizon of social revolution and he questions projects which evade that longer perspective. Tafuri’s fundamental concern is with the loss of that horizon, and he systematically challenges cultural ambitions that imagine they might circumvent the demands and difficulties of advancing social transformation. Finally, we might note that his concern is with the loss of—or failure to learn from—social and political memory.⁵¹⁷

Day presents Tafuri’s conditioned prognosis for architecture, much like Ghirardo, with a small “a,” together with his larger concern for *political* practice proper. All this amounts, in Day’s version of historiographical critique, to a question of “political memory.” The argument serves to return disciplinary questions—the relative potential of a given disciplinary strategy—to institutional mediation, and political economic context.

The theme with which we began, the question of “mood,” condenses this complex contradiction of memory, history, architecture, politics, into the terms of an optimism and pessimism which must itself be further characterised. Are we referring to *cultural* optimism, *political* optimism, or a combination of the two? The lesson of “political memory” is that in the architectural case, these two propositions tend toward contradiction. For Tafuri, at least in his period of militancy, the real horizon of social transformation could only be approached by overcoming culturalist pretences. The path of architectural ideology, however, proceeds in the opposition direction, where optimism for “Architecture” begins with *political* pessimism.

At this point it should be clear that Tafuri’s position was not comparable to the other “pessimistic” examples Jameson gives. Adornian pessimism, for instance, was far more intransigent in its rejection of political possibilities—cultural or otherwise. While Tafuri arguably maintained the value of a non-aesthetic disciplinary approach within the larger political struggle to transform society, Adorno did not even recognise the struggle, and could therefore not countenance the tactical relation between a disciplinary practice and the larger political context.

In “The Question of Praxis in Adorno’s Critical Theory,” Gordon Finlayson has provided an account of what might be called Adorno’s own “political memory.”⁵¹⁸ What Finlayson

⁵¹⁷ Ibid., 48.

⁵¹⁸ Gordon Finlayson, “The Question of Praxis in Adorno’s Critical Theory,” in *Critical Theory and the Challenge of Praxis*, ed. Stefano Giacchetti Ludovisi (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2015), 51–68. Finlayson uses the historical disagreements between Adorno and militant German students as the context of his analysis. This context is also covered in the introduction to Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics*.

characterises as Adorno's "austere negativism" begins with the assumption that, following the horrors of the war and the Final Solution, "administered" society has become wholly evil.⁵¹⁹ In such a situation, social transformation can only occur all at once or not at all.⁵²⁰ Finlayson points out that, in the historical context, Adorno was correct to think revolution was not a possibility,⁵²¹ however, I disagree with Finlayson's conclusion on Adorno's stance: "...it responds to a social situation where revolution neither occurred nor threatened. Nothing further need be said about the nefarious influence of Hegel, the retreat into academia, or the consolations of avant-garde art."⁵²² This abrupt closure assumes that a transient political situation cannot bear persistent consequences within theory, and furthermore, that those consequences do not redound upon the larger conception of historical possibility in general. As already discussed in the cases of Tafuri and Leach, the problem is to assess the historical longevity and applicability of a given proposition.

At issue in the formulation of "immanent critique," as an approach both to cultural production and to social transformation, is the definition of limits. Adorno's political position rejected outright the "immanent reform" of society as a gradual process,⁵²³ but it also implicitly rejects the *tactical* reform of society.⁵²⁴ In the architectural case, this has obvious consequences, for it transforms political pessimism into a preference for aesthetic autonomy, for *silence*, which, despite its "mood" implies its own optimism. In this way Adorno's "political memory" seems to lead directly into the immanent closure of aesthetics, where contradictions exist but never reflect upon the instability within their own institutional mediation.

Despite the readings made by Day and Ghirardo, it should hardly surprise, that in Tafuri's own case, "political memory" was highly ambiguous. This means that in the context of the secondary literature, it becomes quite difficult to extricate the above points. The critical rigour with which he rejected bourgeois "anxiety" in "Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology" arrives finally as a reflection on his own limitations and failures in the late texts and interviews—a kind of romantic nihilism. In Massimo Cacciari's powerful eulogy to his friend and long-time collaborator, the existential pathos of Tafuri's life and work becomes a poetic model for the universal tragedy of the modern subject, caught between the resolute renunciation of meaning, and the irrepressible hope for redemption.⁵²⁵ We can recognise here

⁵¹⁹ Ibid., 60. On "austere negativism," see also Finlayson, "Hegel, Adorno and Immanent Criticism," 1157.

⁵²⁰ Finlayson, "The Question of Praxis in Adorno's Critical Theory," 61.

⁵²¹ Ibid., 62–63.

⁵²² Ibid., 63.

⁵²³ Ibid., 61.

⁵²⁴ In fact, from an immanent perspective tactics cannot not exist.

⁵²⁵ The funeral oration for Manfredo Tafuri took place February 25, 1994, in the Tolentini cloister at the Istituto Universitario di Architettura in Venice, and was included as a "document" at the end of the *Casabella* special issue. Massimo Cacciari, "Quid Tum" in "Il progetto storico di Manfredo Tafuri / The Historical Project of Manfredo Tafuri," 168–169.

a familiar theme from the work of Walter Benjamin, filtered through Cacciari's own thinking, which, strongly influenced by Benjamin, as well as by Wittgenstein and Heidegger, combines philosophical reflections on politics and aesthetics, with those on nihilism, technology, and theology.⁵²⁶

One philosophical notion for the contradictory equipoise Cacciari invokes is "dialectics at a standstill," and it has an important function within Benjamin's historical perspective as well as in the larger methodological context of Adorno's *Negative Dialectics* and "immanent critique."⁵²⁷ As we have discussed, in the latter approach, critical understanding is achieved by moving through the ideological object of criticism, rather than by simply discounting it from the outside. The danger presented by the notion of "standstill," is that one can remain locked within immanence, within the impasse of ideology. One can easily perceive here how such an approach might interfere with or contradict *institutional* critique.

In terms of its social basis, the ambiguity of "dialectics at a standstill" is deep seated. Steven Helming, in his essay "Constellation and Critique: Adorno's Constellation, Benjamin's Dialectical Image"⁵²⁸ describes how Adorno recognised the deeper origin of Benjamin's idea, and indeed the phrase "dialectics at a standstill" itself, in the nineteenth century existential philosophy of Soren Kierkegaard. This was apparently no contradiction for Adorno, for whom immanent critique assumes this passage through the object of criticism. Helpfully, Helming places both "immanent critique" and "dialectics at a standstill" in historical context, from which the political stakes can be seen:

Thus can a Marxist critique recuperate, "immanently," the arch-bourgeois Kierkegaard, as himself an immanent sufferer, exemplar, critic and diagnostician of all the superstitions and humors ("melancholy") that compound the bourgeois ideology and Lebenswelt. But more to the present point is that the critical practice of Adorno generally presents what might seem the paradox or contradiction of an insistently historicizing program, realized in a critical practice that is virtually never motivated by historical argument in the form of historical narrative. Hence the relevance of the formula "dialectics at a standstill," which has become almost a slogan for Western Marxists and others for whom the forward momentum of nineteenth-century progressive (liberal) and/or revolutionary (Marxist) narratives of eventual (of course, diversely) happy endings have stalled in the steady-state nightmare of the twentieth century, where, as Adorno and Horkheimer starkly put it, "mankind, instead of entering into a truly human condition, is sinking into a new kind of barbarism". For a world at such an impasse, "dialectics at a standstill"—a non-narrative dialectic—is the only kind of dialectic that answers to our condition.⁵²⁹

⁵²⁶ See for example the following works published in English: Massimo Cacciari, *Architecture and Nihilism*; "Eupolinos or Architecture." trans. Stephen Sartarelli, *Oppositions* 21 (Summer 1980); Massimo Cacciari, *The Unpolitical: On the Radical Critique of Political Reason*, ed., Alessandro Carrera, trans. Massimo Verdicchio (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007); and Massimo Cacciari, *Posthumous People: Vienna at the Turning Point* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996). Marco Biraghi takes up the terms of this last book of Cacciari's, in the epilogue to *Project of Crisis*.

Notwithstanding Tafuri's knowledge of the conflict between Benjamin and Heidegger, this associated perspective can be seen increasingly to colour Tafuri's own work after *Progetto e utopia*. Passerini, Luisa, Manfredo Tafuri, and Denise L. Bratton. "History as Project: An Interview with Manfredo Tafuri." *ANY: Architecture New York*, no. 25/26 (2000). p.55

⁵²⁷ See the double chapter "A Logic of Disintegration," in Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics*, 63—95.

⁵²⁸ Steven Helming, "Constellation and Critique: Adorno's Constellation, Benjamin's Dialectical Image," *Postmodern Culture* 14, no. 1 (2003). <http://pmc.iath.virginia.edu/text-only/issue.903/14.1helmling.txt> Accessed, 7 November, 2017

⁵²⁹ *ibid.*

“Dialectics at a standstill,” originally the product of “Arch-bourgeois” existentialism, thus functions as a model for “immanent critique.” Yet the historicisation of that moment stalls out in the apparently critical perspective of *aesthetics*, becoming, after the war, the philosophical domain of various “theories”—critical, cultural, art, and architectural.

Architecture is a key terrain here, since from the process of realisation in which it acted as “decantation chamber” of the larger artistic avant-garde, to the counterrealisation of a transhistorical “Architecture,” and anticipation of the neoliberal architect, it cannot escape a kind of “future orientation.” I read the Project as an example of the true *motion* of “dialectics at a standstill.” It functions as a kind of paradoxical thought that joins together the will to form and the refusal to *progress*—the necessity of production and the resolve that change is either impossible or undesirable. It is the act of political renunciation as institutional tactic, professional hope, and ideological “social mission.” In this sense pessimism becomes demonstrably worse than “quiescent”;⁵³⁰ it is the ideological obverse of a properly institutional *optimism*.

It is true that Tafuri’s position relative to these aspects of criticism and “anxiety” can be difficult to assess. They are, as Tomas Llorens demonstrated, far easier to deduce in Cacciari’s reflection on the “metropolis” and “negative thought”:

...there is in Cacciari a fundamental ambiguity about how to approach the cultural phenomena he studies; namely, whether he takes them as *symptoms* of the fate of bourgeois culture, or as analytical explanations of such a fate. In other words, Cacciari seems to have set out to analyse the concept of ‘metropolis’ as ideology—that is as ‘false consciousness’—and then, having found at its core the schema of ‘negative thought’, he concludes that there is no true alternative, and therefore places his own search for truth under the aegis of that same schema. There is an element of self-contradiction here which cannot but affect the conclusion drawn from the analysis. This is also, as we shall see, the same difficulty underlying Tafuri’s analysis of architecture as ideology.⁵³¹

In Caccirari’s propositions, which began as a contestation of bourgeois ideology, but eventually capitulate to their opponent’s superior “thought,” political pessimism becomes the very lifeblood of the Project. By its sustenance the prospect of redemption becomes at the same time a solipsistic fantasy and a religious faith. For Llorens, these problems, particularly obvious in Cacciari, extended to Tafuri as well, and, as we have already seen, his critical observations point to real problems in the latter’s conceptual positions. As unsatisfied by such wholesale rejections of Tafuri as I am by his pacified acceptance, I have attempted to demonstrate how these difficulties and ambiguities might be understood and overcome. I

⁵³⁰ I refer to the words of Perry Anderson, quoted by Finlayson (52). The full quotation reads “Method as impotence, art as consolation, pessimism as quiescence: it is not difficult to perceive elements of all these in the complexion of Western Marxism. For the root determinant of this tradition was its formation by defeat—the long decades of set-back and stagnation, many of them terrible ones in any historical perspective, undergone by the Western working class after 1920.” Perry Anderson, *Considerations on Western Marxism* (London: Verso, 1979), 93.

⁵³¹ Llorens, “Manfredo Tafuri: Neo-Avant-Garde and History,” 88.

therefore reject the equation of Tafuri's "analysis of architecture as ideology" with Cacciari's "negative thought," or with the pure immanence of "dialectics at a standstill." But this difference depends upon the same conceptual points I have emphasised in order to posit the existence of an "ideology of the Project." Both Jameson and Llorens appear to miss these in Tafuri's writing. Nevertheless, Llorens takes the opposite approach to Jameson, radicalising Tafuri in the proper direction.

In "On Making History,"⁵³² a text published alongside Jameson's in *Architecture Criticism Ideology*, Llorens cuts to the philosophical heart of the problem. At length, and again beginning with Adorno's immanent criticism of bourgeois aesthetics, he describes the fundamental hostility bourgeois ideology bears toward the category of Necessity. Beginning in the Enlightenment, bourgeois understandings of scientific and ethical autonomy, exemplified by Kantian philosophy, were premised on the aesthetic value of "purposiveness without a purpose." The precise meaning of this formula within Adorno's approach can be difficult to assess. In "Functionalism Today" (which, it must be remembered was directed toward an architectural audience) Adorno insisted on the *immanent* character of necessity internalised by "purposiveness without a purpose": "The difference between the necessary and the superfluous is inherent in a work, and is not defined by the work's relationship—or lack of it—to something outside itself."⁵³³ Departing significantly from this immanentist approach Llorens demands a return to confrontation with historical Necessity. While not explicitly discussing the neo-avant-garde architecture of the time, Llorens' arguments point to the fundamental connection, the "tacit understanding" between bourgeois ideology and aesthetics—between the real expansion of the capitalist mode of production and bourgeois ideology's apparently "critical" ideals.

We can find the same argument, this time in explicitly political terms, in a polemical text devoted to the complicity between post-structuralist philosophy and neoliberalism. In the introduction to *Vanguard of Retrogression*, Loren Goldner draws a distinction between the philosophical terms of the Old and New Left. Traditional working class politics, he argues, were defined by a drive to "transform necessity," to change the fundamental structures of capitalist society—wage labour, the value form, and so on, while the New Left, which he provocatively terms "middle-class radicalism" ignored this material dimension, seeking "freedom without the transformation of necessity."⁵³⁴ The latter phrase expresses the precise political valence of "architectural autonomy." As an ideology, an *institutional necessity*, it defines itself against the category of necessity and against political transformation.

Through critique of architectural ideology and an immanent functional interpretation of architectural discourse, I have attempted to demonstrate how, contrary to its own immanent

⁵³² Tomas Llorens, "On Making History," 24—47.

⁵³³ Adorno, "Functionalism Today," 7.

⁵³⁴ Goldner, *Vanguard of Retrogression*, 8.

terms, certain forms of “criticality” can become ideologically and institutionally *functional*. This means that, while certainly possessing “future-oriented force,” in the critical terms of this thesis, criticality *as such* cannot be considered inherently liberating, or emancipatory.

Yet by remaining within a critical perspective, have I not demonstrated the essential value of the object of criticism, tying critique of ideology back inexorably to its starting point? In the final investigation of this chapter, I will suggest what I take to be the overarching lesson concerning “criticality” we can draw from Tafuri’s methodology.

2.4.1 From Second Reflection to Meta Reflection

Returning to the publication *Critical Architecture*, our last foil will be found in David Cunningham's "Architecture as Critical Knowledge." By giving a concise outline of several important philosophical implications in Tafuri's work, this essay offers valuable insights into Tafuri's position relative to Critical Theory and Marxist aesthetics. In comparison to Leach and Biraghi, the presentation of Tafuri is far closer to my discussion in section one of this thesis. Cunningham begins by asserting the class-political terms of Tafuri's challenge, together with a corrective on the disciplinary interpretation of the "death of architecture."⁵³⁵ All the major ingredients of a militant interpretation of Tafuri are here, allowing Cunningham to emphasise the fundamental importance of the critique of ideology and the need to consider "Architecture" as both an institution and notion of capitalist modernity. He then provides helpful background on the Kantian origins of "criticality," and moves toward the Hegelian-Marxist transformative dialectic of criticism/theory and practice. "It is from this Hegelian-Marxist understanding of critique," he continues, "that Tafuri derives his own critique of architectural ideology."⁵³⁶

Notwithstanding these points, an interesting and subtle reflection on the dialectical interconnection of autonomy and function,⁵³⁷ and a particularly clear representation of Tafuri's embargo on "critical architecture," Cunningham nevertheless maintains a conception of "critical architecture" balanced on the proverbial razor's edge:

Formally, it is not, then, a question of magically resolving architecture's own contradictions, a reconciliation under duress that could only ever occlude the violences of its own social condition. It is a question of *pursuing* the contradictions themselves—both practically and theoretically—as a means of critically articulating a social content which is always in danger of being submerged. Such danger means that autonomy has to be constantly *renewed* through an immanently self-critical dynamic generated by its productive tension with the heteronomous. Without such a dynamic of renewal, propelled by its own social conditions of 'alienation,' autonomy does indeed become aestheticism, in a form that is itself, ironically, open to 'functionalisation' in the service of capitalist development.⁵³⁸

This Adornian proposition concerning the potential for aesthetic practice to render social contradictions conscious and legible, brings Cunningham surprisingly close to the "project of crisis" outlined by Marco Biraghi. Even though Cunningham recognises the external basis required by any proper critique of architecture as an institution, he nevertheless gives back to

⁵³⁵ David Cunningham, "Architecture as Critical Knowledge," 31.

⁵³⁶ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁵³⁷ *Ibid.*, 34–36. This passage recalls an essay by Mario Gandelsonas, "Neo-Functionalism" published in *Oppositions 5* (Summer 1976). However, where Gandelsonas is concerned only to open the definition of function to include signification, Cunningham demonstrates, following Adorno, a more subtle dialectic between function and autonomy, thus going beyond the simple relativisation of "function." I will discuss Gandelsonas' argument as well as Cunningham's in the context of Aldo Rossi below: **3.3.2**.

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*, 36–37.

architecture, at least in principle, the capacity of self-reflexive criticism, to “thread-the-needle” as it were.

True to his depiction of Tafuri, Cunningham recognises that by allowing this threshold of architectural criticality, he is subverting an axiom of Tafuri’s argument, though only in order to develop the conditions of that argument further. He claims “this does not so much *refute* Tafuri’s prohibitions on a critical architecture as posit a fragile and tenuous practice that might render visible the social contradictions that would define any such critique.”⁵³⁹ He concludes his text with a useful characterisation of Tafuri’s role in architectural discourse:

None of this is to deny what is most compelling in Tafuri’s critique of architectural ideology. Rather, it is to suggest a different way of reading Tafuri himself, against the grain. In this sense, we would see his writings as what Adorno calls a ‘second reflection’; a conceptual mediation that would be itself impossible without the *first* critical reflection provided by the historical–cognitive content of certain architectural practices themselves, which thereby give us a unique knowledge of our social relations and formations under capitalism. If nothing else, in this way Tafuri’s own criticism is re-conceived in terms, not of a melancholic mastery over modern architectural history, but of an essential dialectical relation with it; a relation without which, indeed, no critique would be possible at all.⁵⁴⁰

Characterising Tafuri’s writing as a “second reflection” is helpful, since it recognises the extent to which *ideology is a precondition for the critique of ideology*. However, it is a description which misses the key element this thesis has attempted to retrieve from Tafuri. His work, at least as Cunningham represents it and within the synthetic militant period I have highlighted, was more than a second reflection; it constructed a third or “meta” reflection on the architectural field as a whole. Or, to be more precise, in attempting a second reflection, it *was forced to produce a third* by the resistance of the architectural material. The consequences of this reflection have to be taken up at their highest level, that is, at the level of *theory and history* and not just of criticism—even if they are inevitably submitted to a certain historicisation.

The ability to thematise a pivot in architectural ideology depends on this meta-level. While Cunningham recognises a “first reflection” for his own critique in “the romantic revival of ‘hopes in design’ recently resurrected by a certain Deleuzianism,” Cunningham does not find there a means to push his own reflections to the meta-level of architecture as institution. My argument, following Tafuri and Tronti, is that this extra level of conceptual problematisation is only possible if one examines left ideology. Thus taking up the Project, this thesis certainly operates on the premise that architectural production provides valuable insight into social and ideological contradictions; however—and this is the crucial point—it does so *through* the contradiction between its “social mission” and social function. Ideology is revealed precisely where architects believe they are being most critical. The contradiction

⁵³⁹ Ibid., 37.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid., 38.

itself occurs at a meta-level, for “Architecture’s” “immanently self-critical dynamic” is revealed to be the *motor of its ideology*, precisely that which must be challenged if the discipline is to find progressive political applications. Thus, the instructive value of architecture overall is how it reveals the fundamental contradictions within political and critical agency via “cultural” disciplinarity.

Consequently, what I take to be Tafuri’s decisive lesson functions on the same conceptual plane as Adorno’s own previous “meta” reflection on the relation between cultural practice and critical theory. More than that it appears to challenge it. I argue that Tafuri’s critique of architectural ideology, when conceptually clarified and appropriately radicalised, takes the terms of immanent criticism to their own immanent limit. The Project is that object through which the claims of cultural criticism can be transcended to the higher level of their material problematisation. Just as Adorno considered his approach to be an immanent criticism of Hegel’s,⁵⁴¹ this meta-reflection upon architectural production within modernity demonstrates a Marxist criticism of Adorno.⁵⁴²

Just as we have seen in architectural and workerist critiques of the Plan, the constitution of Critical Theory was premised upon a particular polemical context: an opposition simultaneously to Western positivism and Soviet “totalitarianism.” From this particular choice, emerges a truncated consideration of the dialectic of theory and practice. For philosophy to “live on” suggests that Adorno and Horkeimer take philosophy to be the meta-strategic level from which the tactical application of Reason can be judged. Thus a strategic approach to transforming the social conditions of capital would be impossible. The premise of immanent critique is that no higher strategic level exists from which to consider the problem. This can be seen as a result of the disappearance of political economy from consideration, as well as the collapse *within* theory as without, of the real thresholds of transcendence into practice.

One should therefore question the institutional implications for Critical Theory itself. The Adornian position assumes a critical practice wedded, as in Leach, to the horizon of “architectural culture.” In this manner, while the architect threads the needle, the critic stands by to take up the results, or judge the success of the attempt: “What the work demands from its beholder is knowledge, and indeed knowledge that does justice to it: the work wants its truth and untruth to be grasped.”⁵⁴³ The ambiguity of this characteristic, and especially the manner in which Adorno highlights it *and* advances it as part of his “immanent critique,” suggest the impossibility of ever escaping the ideological universe of the work through the terms of “criticism” alone. In Cunningham’s reflections on the history of “criticality” within Kantian philosophy and the dialectics of Hegel and Marx, he appears already to suggest the

⁵⁴¹ Finlayson, “Hegel, Adorno and Immanent Criticism,” 1155.

⁵⁴² This may suggest an answer to the question posed by de Boer and Sonderegger: the line between critical and non-critical philosophy cannot be drawn immanently, but depends upon a larger historical and social contextualisation by which the role of tactics may be judged.

⁵⁴³ Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (London: Continuum, 2002), 15.

existence of this limit and the need to surpass it. This much should be clear, the Project as “critical architecture” does not want its truth and untruth (which are the same thing) to be grasped. After completing our examination of the Project in this section, we will return to these considerations in the conclusion of this thesis.

SECTION 3. THEORY OF THE PROJECT

Individual man is incapable of creating form; therefore, so is the architect. The architect, however, attempts the impossible again and again—and always in vain. Form, or ornament, is the result of the unconscious cooperation of men belonging to a whole cultural sphere. Everything else is art. Art is the self-imposed will of the genius. God save him his mission.

Adolf Loos, *Sämtliche Schriften*⁵⁴⁴

⁵⁴⁴ Adolf Loos, *Sämtliche Schriften*, I, ed., Franz Glück (Vienna/Munich, 1962), 393. Quoted in Adorno, “Functionalism Today,” 11.

3.1 THE PROJECT AND SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

Before focusing in on the early development of Project ideology in the work of Aldo Rossi, it would be helpful to contextualise briefly how the Project sits in relation to more publicised recent examples of “political architecture.” So far our examples have been restricted to a specialist literature focused essentially on the border between criticism and design. Hence, the “social mission” of the Project has been defined by its “criticality.” But what of more directly activist examples? What for instance, of 2016 Pritzker prize-winner, Venice Biennale director, and overall figure-head of, if not the return of the political, certainly the return of the “social,” Alejandro Aravena? Figures such as this certainly define the popular perception of contemporary architectural re-politicisation. To what extent then can we locate Project ideology in Aravena’s production? Furthermore, how might we characterise the political character of his work? It turns out that, in so far as the Project is absent, avowedly “left” architectural discourse refuses to count him as one of its own.

First it must be said that Aravena’s firm, Elemental, has produced a diverse range of projects, from the cultural centres more typical of “contemporary Architecture” to the housing projects for which he gained a particularly notoriety. We will restrict our brief consideration to the latter. In the famous project “Half a house” for Quinta Monroy,⁵⁴⁵ Elemental designed precisely that, half-houses, but at scale—replacing a substantial quantity of “low-income” housing destroyed by earthquake. Without the funding to provide full houses to the ninety-three families by any of the “known solutions,”⁵⁴⁶ Aravena solved the problem through architectural “innovation”: half-houses were built including the minimum domestic infrastructure, to be eventually completed by the inhabitants as their means allowed.

Though not the first of its kind to pursue this “incremental” approach,⁵⁴⁷ the project was lauded as a triumph of socially motivated architectural innovation, catapulting Aravena to global prominence. This can be seen by a quick search of publicity: “Half a House Builds a Whole Community,”⁵⁴⁸ “Alejandro Aravena, the Shape of Things to Come,”⁵⁴⁹ “Alejandro Aravena: public intellectual, social agent and skilful form-maker,”⁵⁵⁰ or this article from the

⁵⁴⁵ Alejandro Aravena and Andrés Iacobelli, *Elemental: Manual de Vivienda Incremental y Diseño Participativo/Incremental Housing and Participatory Design Manual* (Ostfildern: Hatj Cantz Verlag, 2012), 81—193.

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁵⁴⁷ Camillo Boano and Francisco Vergara Perucich, “Half-Happy Architecture” *Viceversa* 4 (2016): 73.

⁵⁴⁸ Arianna Zilliacci, “Half A House Builds A Whole Community: Elemental’s Controversial Social Housing,” *ArchDaily* (24 October, 2016). <https://www.archdaily.com/797779/half-a-house-builds-a-whole-community-elementals-controversial-social-housing>. Accessed 20 August, 2018.

⁵⁴⁹ Rowan Moore, “Alejandro Aravena, the Shape of Things to Come,” *The Guardian* (10 April, 2016). <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/apr/10/architect-alejandro-aravena-pritzker-prize-elemental-housing-iquique-constitucion-tsunami-defences>. Accessed 20 August, 2018.

⁵⁵⁰ Anthony Burke, “Alejandro Aravena: public intellectual, social agent and skilful form-maker,” *ArchitectureAU* (22 August, 2017). <https://architectureau.com/articles/alejandro-aravena-public-intellectual-social-agent-and-skilful-form-maker/>. Accessed 20 August, 2018.

New York Times: “Alejandro Aravena, The Architect Rebuilding a Country,”⁵⁵¹ which features the caption, “Good-looking, charming and a celebrity in his native Chile, the surprise winner of this year’s Pritzker cares more about solving social problems than exercising his artistic chops.”

This public perception of Aravena as paragon of the new socially minded architect, is not, however, shared by critical discourse within the architectural community, nor, arguably by those familiar with the Chilean situation. In Camillo Boano and Francisco Vergara Perucich’s “Half-Happy Architecture” the continuity between Aravena’s “incrementalist” projects and the neoliberal context of the country is detailed:

Profit, not quality, is the aim of neoliberalism, which is why the way in which Aravena develops social housing is just perfect: half houses obtained with public funding to activate cycles of capital accumulation and urbanize so to prepare the field for soon-to-come, better profitable real estate developments. Without touching the Chilean neoliberal rule (harsh as the Atacama desert), Aravena has invented a neoliberal method to produce social architecture, which has been broadly accepted and praised.⁵⁵²

So far the critique is precise and effective, but as the text continues, Boano and Perucich pass from this political-economic critique to the architectural critique proper. While they challenge the scale of Aravena’s approach and the poverty of its results, their polemic is aimed more squarely at the disciplinary implications. Reviewing his book *Los Hechos de la Arquitectura*, they take issue with his instrumentalism: “The feeling one gets while reading the book is that architecture is more a solution to a problem than an expression of a cultural and social mode of inhabiting space and cities, or a cultural manifestation of people, or a technological exploration.” They argue that this approach recalls the modernism of Le Corbusier, and suggests a continuity between twentieth century architectural practices and those of the twenty-first:

Social housing, Aravena demonstrates, can be a good way to include the less privileged in the banking system, by providing land tenure and promoting entrepreneurialism at a small scale. Therefore, social housing is becoming a pathway to debt, which results vital for the reproduction of the capitalist landscape. If so, the Pritzker Prize allows us to think on what stage of post-modernity we live in, if any.⁵⁵³

From this provocative point, they go on to predict a stratification of architectural production into rich and poor, returning by way of the twentieth century tendencies to a nineteenth century situation. But was it not precisely the maligned architectural modernism of figures like Le Corbusier which gave partial solutions, heavily ideological as they may have been, to class equality in architecture? They therefore fail to distinguish examples of

⁵⁵¹ Michael Kimmelman, “Alejandro Aravena, The Architect Rebuilding a Country,” *The New York Times Style Magazine* (23 May, 2016). <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/23/t-magazine/pritzker-venice-biennale-chile-architect-alejandro-aravena.html>. Accessed 20 August, 2018.

⁵⁵² Boano and Perucich, “Half-Happy Architecture,” 62.

⁵⁵³ *Ibid.*, 63.

“instrumentality” according to their tendential applications and historical context, resulting in a facile and anachronistic reduction of modernist architecture to the ends of neoliberalism. This text, like so many others we have seen, intends to critique architectural neoliberalism, however its theoretical and historical tools consistently leverage a critique, not of neoliberalism, but of twentieth century social democracy and the architects who were its ideological vanguard. As we saw in section one, this erroneous parallel functions through the key categories of “instrumentality,” “technical necessity,” and the “economic.” Of Half a house, Boano and Perucich proclaim: “It looks more like a proposal by Peruvian economist Hernando de Soto than a project deserving the most influential award for architects.”⁵⁵⁴

While in places the authors make strong critiques of Aravena’s neoliberal premises, rather than his instrumental solutions,⁵⁵⁵ they cannot resist making the polemic *disciplinary*, making it a question of “Architecture” rather than of politics. Aravena’s true crime appears not to be his neoliberalism, but his lack of a *Project*. It must said that, in the terms of this thesis, Aravena’s “Half-a-house,” with its distinct lack of cultural avant-gardism, may appear closer to exemplifying an otherwise elusive neoliberal ideology of the plan, than an ideology of the project. If so, it is a plan which exists entirely within the distinctly Thatcherite scale of domestic home-ownership,⁵⁵⁶ spreading outward through processes of gentrification, and the economic function of real estate debt within neoliberal capital. As less than a planned solution (being literally half a solution only) it directly forces an unplanned market supplement. As a planned non-plan, it is therefore wholly in keeping with the proper character of neoliberalism, which as Spencer demonstrated, even though dismantling state and economic planning, always entailed a strategic role for the state in enforcing and controlling the process of marketisation.⁵⁵⁷

Despite a generally astute critique on this level, Boano and Perucich do not wade into such complexities of political economy. Instead, they conclude the essay by taking issue with Aravena’s *architectural* timidity. It is a line they admit to sharing with Patrik Schumacher,⁵⁵⁸ a critic of Aravena from the right. Thus, dropping political-economic terms from their polemic, they pit architectural agency against technocratic instrumentality: “What is needed is to critically reclaim a political emancipatory *project* of architecture against a technocratic, biopolitical and arrogant one.”⁵⁵⁹ This can only be done, they argue, by removing architecture from this particular conception of social engagement and seeking out a “renewed autonomy.” At this point the ideological construction should be completely familiar.

⁵⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁵⁵⁶ If this is the case, then the British pavilion at Aravena’s biennale, “Home Economics”, curated by the above mentioned “Fulcrum” would be a corresponding “counter-project.”

⁵⁵⁷ Spencer, *The Architecture of Neoliberalism*, 13.

⁵⁵⁸ Boano and Perucich, “Half-Happy Architecture,” 71.

⁵⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 76. Emphasis original.

Boano and Perucich give it their own conceptual twist, however, through the philosophy of Giorgio Agamben.⁵⁶⁰ A recently discovered resource, Agamben's operativity for Project ideology functions through the notion of "inoperativity"—a contradiction that, by this point in the thesis, should surprise no one:

An inoperative architecture consists of an ethical shift of deactivating its communicative and informative function, in order to open it to new possible uses, new possibilities. A new political architecture is not about mobilization, organization, civil society and aggregation—at least [not] solely—,but a [sic] contra-hegemonic discussion that is not insurgent nor populist, but a sort of call for a renewed autonomy. It is a *destituent* mode of thinking and practicing architecture and urbanism: an attempt to develop a subversive *ethos* to the dominant ontology of enactment or praxis infused with the arrogant ego of creative power to produce and control spatial realities. Maybe it is not a front to report from. But this is another story to tell.⁵⁶¹

All the ingredients encountered up to this point are here, with a few new flavours added. Contemporary left architecture defines its politicality *through* the category of "Architecture." The Project renounces practical engagement as ethically suspect, and invests its "social mission" into the subjective autonomy of the discipline. While this appears at surface level to remove architecture from complicity with capital, it has two directly complicit functions: first, it further enriches the specifically institutional ideology of the architect as autonomous professional—this is the avant-garde ideological function of Left Project discourse; second, by reflexively denying a role to planning, it ratifies the economic premises of neoliberal politics—its rearguard function. All the insightful criticisms of Aravenna's neoliberal characteristics are wasted when converted into *disciplinary* propositions for capital "A" "Architecture." Boano and Perucich make an excellent critique of the tactical ends of Aravenna's architecture, but they are more concerned to oppose his architectural *strategy*. This means that they lock the political discussion within the architectural institution, turning critique into the purely ideological alternative of the "*project*."

In this pivot from political economy to architectural politics, the essay demonstrates how ideological necessity functions even under terms such as "inoperativity." In this, a "subversive *ethos*" reveals itself to be a precise example of bourgeois ideology as Tafuri described it in the opening lines of "Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology," and Tronti described it in "Critica dell'ideologia."

We thus encounter the Project right at the heart of contemporary debates around neoliberalism, urban planning, and the return of the "Political." The Project becomes the rallying point for a radical position within the field, flanking the "social" architecture of Aravenna, and defining the *disciplinary* opposition through which architectural politics are to be judged: ethical/cultural Project against economic/instrumental Plan.

⁵⁶⁰ On the connection between Agamben and architecture, they cite a then forthcoming book by Boano, which has since been published: Camillo Boano, *The Ethics of a Potential Urbanism. Critical encounters between Giorgio Agamben and architecture* (London: Routledge, 2017).

⁵⁶¹ Boano and Perucich, "Half-Happy Architecture," 78.

3.1.1 Le Silence Engagé

Boano and Pericich's invocation of "inoperativity" takes us back to the debate concerning whether or not Tafuri considered "silence" to be an appropriate response by architecture to the crisis of ideology, or whether he recommended engagement through architecture with a small "a." The debate often revolves around the connection between Tafuri and Aldo Rossi, the counterpart to the historian within design and architecture theory. For both figures, the choice appears difficult to decide, though the opposition is clear enough, for while the two had shared a similar political milieu in the early 1960s, a clear methodological and political split would soon develop.

According to Teyssot, Tafuri's apparent falling out with Rossi had to do with his new commitment to *Contropiano*, a circle with a more rigorous commitment to political theory and praxis, than that previously shared by Tafuri and Rossi in the early 60s. Teyssot describes the break between the two:

Up to 1967, Tafuri was a liberal connected to Italia Rostra (a conservation group), to the industrialist Adriano Olivetti's press, including the periodical *Comunità* and the architectural journal *Zodiac*, and to Zevi's *L'architettura cronache e storia*. From around 1967, when he moved to take a tenured teaching position in Venice's I.U.A.V., Tafuri became increasingly political, aligning himself with the hard line of Mario Tronti, Alberto Asor Rosa, and Massimo Cacciari, who were assuming an active voice within the Italian Communist Party (PCI). Rossi took this conversion more or less as a betrayal. The accusation was not so much, 'you killed architecture' as 'you're killing my *engagé* architecture. You are killing the architecture of Aldo Rossi.'⁵⁶²

We have already seen how, with "Per una critica" and *Progetto e utopia*, Tafuri had begun to take a more radical stance, taking aim at the mainstream left of Italian architecture. The militancy of his new position is defined by his critical framing "of Architecture, of *all* architecture, as an institution," and by the workerist political perspective of his new circle.

Though he does not name them among the targets listed in the preface to the second edition of *Teorie e storia*, one can extend the critique of "sugary official 'Marxism,'"⁵⁶³ to include the Catholic and utopian socialists of the group Teyssot describes. However, one should be careful to distinguish between the particularity of Rossi's developing stance, and the range of political positions Tafuri targeted. These covered a variety of tactics, but, as Day described them, amounted to more or less the same strategy:

(W)hat he traced—from the INA-Casa projects and Olivetti's bourgeois humanism of the 50s, and the Vanoni Plan of 1954, through to the work of GESCAL and Progetto 80 in 1970s—was the recurring illusion in the 'myth of equilibrium'. The myth crops up in various forms: Catholic, social-democratic, realist, technocratic, or simply as a quotidian desire for peace or retreat from capital's turbulence.⁵⁶⁴

⁵⁶² Teyssot and Henninger, "One Portrait of Tafuri: An Interview with Georges Teyssot," 10

⁵⁶³ Tafuri, *Theories and History*, xv.

⁵⁶⁴ Day, "Manfredo Tafuri, Frederic Jameson, and the Contestations of Political Memory," 54.

In other words, Tafuri's critique of contemporary engagement architecture followed the lines of Negri's critique of Keynesian planning. What makes Rossi unique here and allows for the overlap between the terms of "silence" and "engagement," was Rossi's departure from the reformist approach, and identification of political problems with "Architecture" itself. Because of this, in the secondary literature, Rossi is able to function as the ideal foil to Tafuri — the model architect who subverts the historian's more intractable conclusions.⁵⁶⁵

Rossi appears to be able to do this because he exploits the gap between institution and discipline. By raising disciplinarity to full autonomy, Rossi allows the institution to appear within its own disciplinary horizon as the social necessity of architecture to be itself. As a reflection on the results of realisation, this position allows silence to appear as the proper mode for architectural engagement.

This proposition seems to match a blind spot within Tafuri's critical arguments, certainly not helped by occasional favourable references to "silence." It seems obvious in hindsight, given the dialectical character of the problem, that such a statement of preference as Tafuri makes in the preface to *Architecture and Utopia* must eventually produce distortions of an operative character.⁵⁶⁶ From within the historical frame of the collapse of planning ideology, Tafuri did not perceive the productive characteristics that the ideologies of autonomy and "silence" might produce for bourgeois ideology as capital shifts from Keynesianism to neoliberalism.

Thus we can observe a line of argument within the secondary literature, seeking to build upon this preference for "silence," while constructing through it a new, Projectual, definition of engagement. For example, Marco Biraghi treats the key ambiguous passage from the preface in detail:

If 'ideology is as useless for capitalist development as it is harmful from the laborer's point of view'; if utopia, as an operative reversal or opposite of ideology, as a 'construction of destiny' conceived 'in the name of development' (and therefore in its modern version of 'capitalist-industrial utopia,' in contrast with earlier bourgeois utopias) is, in turn, useless and harmful to both; then from an intellectual point of view, through the 'tools of knowledge,' we are consistently left with nothing but silence as an alternative to direct involvement in the political struggle. For Tafuri, acting out this disenchantment becomes a critical but not operative situation.⁵⁶⁷

⁵⁶⁵ Or to decide their sense. The following passage from Teresa Stoppani's "*L'histoire assassinée: Manfredo Tafuri and the architecture of the present*" demonstrates how the Tafuri/Rossi couple allows the architectural institution to appropriate critique, tactically adapting it to fit new operative functions: "For Tafuri, Rossi's early 'architectural practice', both in his projects and in his writings, had been a search for those primary forms 'that are exiled from the urban space, but intend to speak of their exile, to propose a theory of the city as locus of collective memory.' This search for form and research through form is what Tafuri had clearly identified as a critical work internal to architecture. In this sense the estrangement, the silence, the abstraction, the suspension of life in Rossi's early projects can be read as a stubborn construction by architecture of an enforced distance that is necessary for the project to perform its critical act. The congested amassing of forms in Rossi's drawings and paintings and the distillation of silent forms in his early built projects produce the same critical distance that Tafuri constructs in his 'historical project.'" Stoppani, Teresa. "*L'histoire assassinée*," 8

⁵⁶⁶ Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*, ix.

⁵⁶⁷ Biraghi, *Project of Crisis*, 31

Biraghi, quite rightly recognises that “silence” is really an “acting out” of “disenchantment.” Of course, this still leaves the more serious question unanswered: what could the institutional value of “silence” be? If one is able to ask that question then one can understand that there is in principle nothing standing in the way of disenchantment becoming an *operative* situation, given the right context. “Silence” allows the architectural institution to pivot through a self-critical and reflexive interrogation of its disciplinary investment in planning, toward a post-planning disciplinarity. Premised upon the architect/intellectual’s distance from the real grounds of political struggle, it achieves a certain criticality *within its class*, registering protest at the exclusion of the discipline from expanding development. As soon as the expansion slows or begins to reverse, architecture is already in an operative rearguard position.

Later in his book, Biraghi takes up the original reference for what might be called ‘the act of silence,’ bringing together the famous quotation from Karl Kraus, and the silent architectures of Aldo Rossi and Mies van der Rohe:

If Kraus’s position gives voice to that which Rossi cannot say—evoking such a position through the silent world of forms and images—then such a voice speaks for Tafuri as well. This position and voice do not substitute Tafuri’s, but rather anticipate them, providing a canonical and infinitely variable precedent. Tafuri’s conclusion is, therefore, valid well beyond Rossi: ‘If fact and act have the world, then there is nothing left but to let them speak and to preserve, in silence, the great values about them—and Kraus, Loos, and Tessenow all agree on this point—‘one cannot speak,’ at least not without contaminating them.’ Mirrored in this sentence, in addition to those authors already mentioned, Tafuri sees a reflection of Mies: ‘Fatti’—‘facts and acts’—possess the language of existence with which the language of signs must not be confused, for fear of declining into a ‘betrayal’ of both ‘facts and acts,’ and ‘values.’⁵⁶⁸

As should already be clear, despite what appeared at one time to be the uselessness of its ideology, architecture, as an institution, still performs “acts” for there is still a market for architecture in capitalist society. The question is not whether or not it acts, but how it can negotiate a basis for participation, and on what level. We turn now to a close examination of this ideal reference of Project discourse, Aldo Rossi, where the contradiction between institutional necessity and disciplinary autonomy, political pessimism and cultural optimism, reached their purest form.

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid., 115–116.

3.2 ALDO ROSSI

Crisis and critique were thus inseparable from each other. Aldo Rossi set the foundations for his work, practice, and theory under this sense of urgency. He embraced multiple interests and concerns that would soon coalesce afterwards, into a single corpus soon to be acclaimed in Italy and abroad. This notoriety derived from an attempt to respond to problems of context—social, economic, and cultural—wherein architecture had to define its role. Riddled with doubts, derived from the sudden transformation of society and the terrain it inhabited, architecture should nevertheless reclaim disciplinary autonomy and authority. Finally, this constituted a matter of choice.

Diogo Seixas Lopes, *Melancholy and Architecture: On Aldo Rossi*⁵⁶⁹

Having examined the phenomena of Project ideology within historiography, within criticism, and within contemporary polemics, our genealogy turns to the original conditions in which the trajectory emerged, conditions which take us back *before* 1968—even before “architecture theory,” to a primordial soup of urban and territorial planning, typological research, and other as yet indeterminate “instruments of criticism.”⁵⁷⁰ It was a time before the Marxist critique of the Plan crossed over into architectural discourse, before Tafuri’s critique of architectural ideology. This was the context in which Aldo Rossi emerged as a leading proponent of what would become known as Neo-rationalism, *La Tendenza*, or “autonomous architecture,” but can be more generally defined as the Project.

As such, one of Rossi’s most significant contributions was the beginnings of a new periodisation, a separation of new architectural possibilities from the contradictory and confused field that emerged out of the slow death of the modern movement. This new direction was to be sought, first of all, through a revision of modern architectural history and the Modern Movement itself. As Alan Colquhoun noted, apropos Rossi’s work in the 1960s:

The turning points of architectural history, represented by the Enlightenment and the earliest years of the Modern Movement, were approached with renewed interest as periods that could still provide analogies and models for the present situation. For the first time we see the project of revising the Modern Movement from a perspective that is no longer inside the Modern Movement itself.⁵⁷¹

Drawing upon examples from within the Modern Movement, Rossi performed a revision of architectural disciplinarity in such a way as to construct a theory of architecture that excluded its historical instability. The ambiguity of this revision is crucial to the sense which the term “project” itself takes on, being a word commonly associated with modernism, both in Italian and in English—one recalls here Jürgen Habermas’s “Modernity—An Incomplete

⁵⁶⁹ Lopes, *Melancholy and Architecture: on Aldo Rossi*, 11.

⁵⁷⁰ I am referring to the chapter of the same name [“Gli strumenti della critica”] in which Tafuri inconclusively attempted a survey of methodologies and approaches among his contemporaries. *Theories and History*, 171—225; and *Teorie e storia*, 199—260.

⁵⁷¹ Alan Colquhoun, “Postmodernism and Structuralism: A Retrospective Glance,” 243. Colquhoun includes here Giorgio Grassi as Rossi’s co-innovator.

Project,”⁵⁷² and, as detailed in already, Tafuri’s extensive use of the term, “progetto” to describe modernist “planning” in *Teorie e storia*. Through the revision, aspects of modernism, including the term “project” take on a specifically “postmodernist” character, recuperating the “social mission” aura of modernism, while excluding disciplinary investments that no longer functioned.

This is the precise moment at which the disciplinary pivot takes on an intentional form, becoming conscious of its position in the historical trajectory of the architectural institution. The term “project,” in so far as it invokes an intentional act, defines this self-consciousness: it is the architectural project to produce “Architecture” (the object and the subject of the project are the same).

However, as Rossi’s production developed from the 1960s into the 1970s this relatively open ended process of revision transformed into a rather more ambivalent *repetition*⁵⁷³—repetition of historical models and repetition of his own projects (repetitions of repetitions). By the early 1980s, when Rossi published *A Scientific Autobiography*,⁵⁷⁴ attempts at disciplinary renewal had given way to full-blown resignation:

I now believe that the beginning and end of things have been most important for me, and they have acquired much clarity: there is a close relationship between my initial search to reestablish the discipline of architecture and my final result of dissolving or forgetting it. It seems to me that modern architecture, as it originally presented itself, was a set of vague notions dominated by a secondhand sociology, a political deception, and a suspect aestheticism. The beautiful illusion of the Modern Movement, so reasoned and moderate, was shattered under the violent yet definitive collapse caused by the bombings of the Second World War. And I sought what was left not as though it were a lost civilization, but rather by pondering a tragic photograph of postwar Berlin where the Brandenburg Gate was still standing in a landscape of ruins.⁵⁷⁵

Should we accept this self-assessment, which would force us to reckon with an unbroken trajectory of Rossi’s production—the unity of its premise and result, “beginning and end”? We have already seen in the case of Tafuri how a retroactively constructed narrative arc can reduce the implications of a previous moment to the terms of a later conversion. For Tafuri, while the arc thus constructed undermined the proper terms of his critique, it nevertheless demonstrated a weakness within it, and the necessary contextual limits of his starting point. In Rossi’s case, because the search occurred from the side of the architectural discipline, ideological mediation played a major role from the start. Consequently, I propose to treat the late Rossi as a much stronger demonstration of the tendential character of the early Rossi than the late “conservatism” of Tafuri offered in his case. In order to understand the totality of

⁵⁷² Originally given as the Adorno Prize lecture in the city of Frankfurt, 1980. Jürgen Habermas, “Modernity—An Incomplete Project” in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays in Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (Seattle: Bay Press, 1983): 3–15.

⁵⁷³ Mary Louise Lobsinger “That Obscure Object of Desire: Autobiography and Repetition in the Work of Aldo Rossi,” *Grey Room*, no. 8 (Summer, 2002): 38–61. As explained in a note, the essay condensed research and arguments from Lobsinger’s dissertation: *Antinomies of Realism: Italian Architecture circa 1954–1972*. Lobsinger, 57.

⁵⁷⁴ Aldo Rossi, *A Scientific Autobiography*, trans. Lawrence Venuti (Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 1981)

⁵⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 82.

Rossi's significance, to understand the implications of "beginning and end," we have to understand the determining force of institutional necessity within the disciplinary search that drove the transformation of his position over time.

Hence we are dealing with a rather complex subject involving multiple layers of historical, disciplinary, and "autobiographical" revision, through which we hope to extract an understanding of the early phases of Project ideology. In her 2002 essay "That Obscure Object of Desire: Autobiography and Repetition in the Work of Aldo Rossi" Mary Louise Lobsinger examined the complex set of revisions, recuperations, and, especially, *repetitions* at play in Rossi's production. Making tactical use of the "parameters" of psychoanalysis, Lobsinger suggests a reading of Rossi's production:

Given these parameters, Rossi's repetition might be interpreted rather literally as a means to master unresolved aspirations from the past or to retrieve ideas from the past. In either view the symptom signals a compensation for a loss or lack of fulfillment experienced in the present. Still, repetition might indeed be a productive ritual: repeating might take once-held ideas and beliefs whose historical formation has been surpassed and bring them into the present in a new form. These ideas may not function well in the present if they remain in their original conception, but by means of the "compulsion to repeat" they are updated, reconfigured, and made useful to the author-architect. If the aim underlying all of the above is, in Freudian terms, a wish fulfillment, then it seems plausible that the objective of Rossi's repetition is the fulfillment of an unrealized desire.⁵⁷⁶

The passage clearly recalls the problematic "desire" of the American neo-avant-garde discussed above. However, in Rossi's eminently Continental case, the repetition/revision of modernism involves much more complex political and social themes. Because Lobsinger begins, as it were, from the end of Rossi's production, the theme of repetition takes on a particular edge—the architect's attempts at wish fulfillment charged with the tragic air of futility. Lobsinger attempts to define the significance of his late melancholic "autobiography" and the complex relation it bore to early attempts at a scientifically grounded and politically committed theory of architectural production.

She argues that there is an internal conflict between Rossi's search for a "realist" social-political basis for the architectural discipline, and the necessarily subjective element of architectural creativity.⁵⁷⁷ Lobsinger traces this problem back to the theory of "type," which became influential in Italy in the early 1960s, offering architects a framework for disciplinary renewal.⁵⁷⁸ Crucially, however, type was more than a simple design tool; it provided a notion through which historical and contemporary architecture, together with politics and even metaphysics, could be brought within a synthetic disciplinary theory and disciplinary practice:

⁵⁷⁶ Lobsinger, "That Obscure Object of Desire," 42.

⁵⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 45.

Type was called upon to perform both as an explanatory tool and an interpretive device. As an analytic tool, type enabled the objective documentation of material changes within the city over time. As interpretive device, the materialist notion of type was linked to the metaphysical realm and to theories of perception. Thus type was both a conceptual device and of practical applicability. The conjoining of the idea of type and its practice had a political dimension; that is, it was viewed positively as the near equivalent to the Marxist ideal of theory into praxis.⁵⁷⁹

Again, the combination of interpretive and practical aspects is fundamental. It is through this double edge that the architectural discipline appears to approach the “metalinguistic” ideal of Marxist “theory into practice.” We will later see how in Rossi’s own arguments, the nature of this “materialism” is questionable, and not only because of the ambiguous admixture of the “metaphysical” or “epistemological.”⁵⁸⁰ Lobsinger is not arguing for a perfect match, only for the political currency which the disciplinary theory of “type” appeared to carry, and how, for Rossi, it suggested a potential translation of Lukácsian “realism” from literary to architectural production.⁵⁸¹

This is not the place to examine the profoundly ambiguous influence of Lukácsian aesthetics within Western Marxism, post-Marxism, and indeed anti-Marxism.⁵⁸² The problematic significance of “reification” would in itself offer a powerful vantage from which to examine the role of ideology within left critiques of architectural modernism and the “Plan.” However, in the space available, this thesis has privileged the theoretical context of Italian workerism over that of post-Lukácsian Critical Theory and Heideggerianism. I also do not propose to foreground the question of “type” per se, but to examine key theoretical terms of his writing: architecture as “man-made-thing” the city as “total architecture,” “urban artefacts” and “primary artefacts,” architectural “quality,” historical “value,” and “politics as choice.” In *The Architecture of the City*, Rossi’s direct reflections on “type” are quite restricted. He identifies “type” as fundamental,⁵⁸³ but, unlike terms such as “urban artefact,” it hardly figures in his conceptual arguments.

I would however, like to suggest the contradictory character of an architectural “realism.” To anticipate, Rossi’s theory refers less to concrete social “types” than it does to the category of “Architecture” itself. This is both what makes Rossi’s work different from previous Italian “neorealisms” of the 1950s and early 1960s, and how institutional/disciplinary mediation makes architectural practice irreducible to literary “realism.”

For Lobsinger, rather than a contradiction within the terms of realism itself, Rossi’s essential contradiction occurred between realism and subjective creativity. She identifies how

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁸¹ Ibid., 47. Bernard Huet has also argued for an interpretation of Rossi as a “realist,” even a socialist realist. Bernard Huet, “Formalism—Realism,” 259.

⁵⁸² On this, see the chapter “Georg Lukács as Mediator” in Henning, *Philosophy After Marx*, 277—293.

⁵⁸³ Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 41.

Giulio Carlo Argan's theory of "type" already involved a difficult mediation between the creativity of the architect-subject, and the supposed objectivity of "type" within architectural history and disciplinarity.⁵⁸⁴ Rossi inherited such questions, leading to contradictions that could not be overcome, only "repeated."⁵⁸⁵

This reading appears to support a proposed tendential unity of Rossi's production. However, while Lobsinger recognises the presence of such overall contradictions, she has elsewhere argued that Rossi's early work must be considered separately from the later.⁵⁸⁶ This distinction is intended in part to prevent the too easy reduction of Rossi's thinking to the formalism of the American east-coast neo-avant gardes—a reductive reading which was facilitated by Peter Eisenman himself in the pages of *Oppositions* in 1976.⁵⁸⁷ Again we see the unmistakable similarity between the complex and problematic reading which both Rossi and Tafuri received. Just as the historian's were, Rossi's key texts were translated and published in English out of order, confusing their respective meanings. *The Scientific Autobiography* was published in both Italian and English in 1981, while *The Architecture of the City*, published in Italian originally in 1966, appeared only in 1982. Predictably, Anglophone interpretations were not rescued from confusion by in-depth knowledge of the books' respective contexts. As Lobsinger argued, this was particularly significant in the case of the earlier and far more abstract *The Architecture of the City*, which appeared in American academia "autonomous" from its background—political, discursive, and disciplinary.⁵⁸⁸

⁵⁸⁴ "Type was useful to architects because it had the capacity to bring together the sociohistorical moment and the absolute past. Since architectural types had been passed down through centuries by means of treatises, it was 'legitimate to postulate the question of typology as a function of both the historical process of architecture and also of the thinking and working processes of the individual architect.'" Lobsinger, 46. Argan quotation from Giulio Carlo Argan, "On the Typology of Architecture," trans. Joseph Rykwert, *Architectural Design* 33, no. 12 (December 1963): 564.

⁵⁸⁵ Lobsinger, "That Obscure Object of Desire," 56.

⁵⁸⁶ Lobsinger, "The New Urban Scale in Italy: On Aldo Rossi's 'L'architettura della città,'" 28.

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid. See Peter Eisenman, *Oppositions* 5 (Summer 1976): 1.

⁵⁸⁸ Lobsinger, "The New Urban Scale in Italy," 28.

3.2.1 Polemics, Old and New

Lobsinger details this original context in order to return to *The Architecture of the City* some of its critical potential. Unlike the reductive impression of Aldo Rossi as theorist of architectural autonomy, Lobsinger argues that *The Architecture of the City* was first of all concerned with producing a rigorous methodology for the study of urban phenomena—an “urban science.”⁵⁸⁹ Furthermore, it was a contribution to a debate, already half a decade old, over the uneven and problematic “territorial” expansion of the Italian city that accompanied the post-war economic boom. This debate took shape around the key notion of “*la nuova dimensione*”:

At a seminar on urbanism held in the spring of 1959, Giuseppe Samonà coined the term *la nuova dimensione* or ‘the new dimension’ to describe the dynamic between the city, its socio-economic formation, and the surrounding countryside. In Italian architectural literature of the early 1960s, the term referred to the various forces propelling urban growth and its ungainly distribution. For some, *la nuova dimensione* evinced an uneven and pathological development, while for others, it singled the organic emergence of a new city form.⁵⁹⁰

Polemical camps coalesced around contrasting evaluations of these developments, one lead by Aldo Rossi, the other by Giancarlo De Carlo:

De Carlo characterized the city region rather ambiguously as a ‘multiplicity of interests that differentiate themselves within a territory,’ or more plainly put, urbanism exhibiting the behaviour of a self-organizing system. As such, the city would be permanently in a dynamic state, its growth and form determined by changes in economic and social forces over time. He compared the interpretation of the city region conceived as an open structure to the traditional city described negatively as a hierarchical, static, and closed structure.⁵⁹¹

How might we characterise Rossi’s counter position? It is Lobsinger’s argument that, for Rossi’s part, it was a question of developing tools to expand the social, economic, and technical analysis of the city against empiricist enthusiasm for new urban phenomena on the one hand and administrative techniques on the other.⁵⁹² However, pinpointing the nature of Rossi’s polemic is a difficult and highly charged problem for the following reason: what is revealed in Lobsinger’s historical contextualisation is the clear parallel between those debates which occurred around Italian urbanism in the 1960s, and debates occurring now in the twenty-first century. Rossi’s polemical adversaries, proponents of *la nuova dimensione*, appear to be early Italian examples of what Douglas Spencer described as the architecture of neoliberalism, whose preferred categories, “spontaneity,” and “self-organisation,” echo those of neoliberal theory:

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid., 28–29.

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid., 31.

⁵⁹¹ Ibid., 32.

⁵⁹² Ibid.

What was championed, only half-ironically, by Jeff Kipnis in 1993 as the ‘New Architecture’—also known, variously, as projective, post-critical or Deleuzian, an architecture of folding, complexity or parametricism, the architecture of Greg Lynn, Zaha Hadid, Alejandro Zaera-Polo, Farshid Moussavi, Reiser + Umemoto, Lars Spuybroek, latterly Rem Koolhaas, to name some of its more prominent practitioners—is in thrall to the same notions of liberty as are propounded in neoliberal thought. Both parties profess their hatred of hierarchical planning and their enthusiasms for spontaneous ordering and self-organization.⁵⁹³

These categories reappear in the critique of Aravena just discussed. Boano and Perucich likewise traced the roots of Aravena’s neoliberalism back to discourses in the 1960s, where “self organisation” played a role:

It is worth recalling that the autonomy of incrementalism in housing production is largely indebted to the work of whom [sic] in the 1960s highlighted the level of freedom and the emancipatory value of self organisation and self building. Namely John Turner (1972) uncovered the effectiveness of self organisation practices in the peri-urban *barriadas* of Lima and the extensive range of tactics and innovations that urban poor had to offer. Informality and poverty were started to be seen as a site of potentiality to learn from, rather than a mere problem to solve.⁵⁹⁴

Because of this parallel, and the charged nature of the historical moment, Rossi’s position offers contemporary architectural discourse an alternative or counter position to “the architecture of neoliberalism.” Crucially, it is a recognisably *Architectural* alternative, an alternative that is *internal* to the architectural discipline as it has been conceived and consensually defined since the collapse of the Modern Movement. More than that, it is an alternative that is *politically alternative by virtue of its Architecturalism*—its disciplinary investment in “Architecture,” against the interdisciplinary and technophilic rhetoric of the neoliberal camp, or the pragmatic instrumentalism of Aravena’s “social” project. Pier Vittorio Aureli put this most clearly when he positions Rossi alongside Mario Tronti as theorists of autonomy, architectural and political, to be recuperated in an overarching anti-capitalist “project of autonomy.”⁵⁹⁵ It is no exaggeration to say that Rossi is the key historical figure, through which the contemporary “return of the political” is explicitly or implicitly articulated.

In the conclusion to her essay, Lobsinger goes as far as to suggest, though couched in careful circumspection, that Rossi’s work from this period might serve as a helpful reference, a critical resource to counter recent trends that echo his old adversaries:

I believe that there are some parallels to be drawn between the preoccupations that galvanized *la nuova dimensione* and current modes of describing emergent urban conditions and its search for alternatives to motivate design invention. Notions such as the plan as process, the privileging of systems, and infrastructure, thought to liberate form and enable open and non-predictive evolution of urban potentials, are comparable to the current description of the attributes of urbanisation sponsored by complex adaptive systems. Given this, perhaps there is something to be learned from Rossi’s critique of *la nuova dimensione*.⁵⁹⁶

⁵⁹³ Spencer, *The Architecture of Neoliberalism*, 1.

⁵⁹⁴ Boano and Perucich, “Half-Happy Architecture,” 69.

⁵⁹⁵ Aureli, *The Project of Autonomy*, 13, 21.

⁵⁹⁶ Lobsinger, “The New Urban Scale,” 36—37.

While Lobsinger is very careful not to suggest the viability of such a thing, the potential for a more direct “repetition,” for, to put it in Tafurian terms, an operative use of Rossi in the present, is unmistakable. Indeed, when one examines the current spectrum of architectural polemic this is precisely what one finds. What then is at stake in such a repetition? Which Rossi is to be recuperated, and how? Are there not, as Lobsinger argues, lessons to be drawn from Rossi’s early production which are free from the “architectural autonomism” with which he was later associated? Can we extract from Rossi’s overall trajectory a notion of “urban science” critically immune to both neoliberal and left architectural ideology?

Again the situation is almost exactly parallel with Tafuri’s. Here as before, there is the danger of further ideological mystification via nuanced historiographical revision. Such narratives claim to address or surmount simplistic or reductive interpretations; however, insofar as they are driven by clear institutional necessity, invested in recuperating or prolonging the Project, and inasmuch as the Project itself entails an instrumental ambiguity—we must remain extremely wary. Certainly in the case of Tafuri, such corrections have replaced simplification born of misunderstanding, with confusion and ambiguity born of necessity.

Lobsinger makes no such ideological gestures; however, I do believe she misses the precise nature of Rossi’s disciplinary contradictions, and thus an important continuity between *The Architecture of the City* and the later *A Scientific Autobiography*. This problematic is not fully covered by the reading of internal contradiction she produces apropos repetition (quoted above). This is because the contradiction does not exist between an otherwise consistent objectivism and an opposed subjectivism. On the contrary, all the contradictions are already implicated in the attempt to construct a new scientific disciplinarity, an “urban science” in Rossi’s early texts. Something like architectural autonomy, even in the vulgar sense which the phrase came to carry, really is at stake in the earlier book. This again comes down to the specific institutional context of that disciplinary search—the requirements it places upon possible solutions.

This can be perceived fairly clearly, if Rossi’s production, from start to finish, is examined through critique of architectural ideology. I propose to accomplish this in four steps: 1) continuing the present discussion, to establish Rossi’s early context, disciplinary and political, in the years preceding *The Architecture of the City*; 2) to characterise the institutional underpinnings of Rossi’s early “disciplinary search”; 3) to assess the specifically political implications, the nature of his “social mission”; and 4) to present what I take to be the overarching trajectory of Rossi’s Project, including the apparent pessimism of *A Scientific Autobiography*.

3.2.2 Early Context: Political and Disciplinary

The framework for interpreting architectural ideology, requires that we define the manner in which institutional necessity translates into disciplinary arguments and formulations. Historically speaking, Rossi existed in more or less the exact institutional context of which Tafuri spoke, one defined by a crisis in architectural institutionality brought about by the undermining and fracturing of its disciplinary role. However, if we look at the historical moment more closely, beginning in the early 1960s, and we focus in particular on Italy, we see that the boundaries between architecture and planning, though in the process of congealing, remained relatively unstable. This returns us to the context immediately prior to the events due to which Tafuri “chose history.” As Lobsinger notes, this political context is crucial:

From a political standpoint, 1962 is perhaps most significant for the fact that the first postwar center Left government took power with promises of reforming the laws for land development and the hope of dismantling the state-centered bureaucracy for regional governments. It was this short-lived opening to the Left that encouraged architects to speculate upon urban strategies in conjunction with administrative procedures that could solve existing urban problems and enable the transition to a more democratic society.⁵⁹⁷

This government, a coalition between the Italian Socialist Party (PSI), and the Christian Democrats, would not, however, produce the desired reforms. Tafuri has spoken in several interviews of the importance of this moment:

All that happened as a result of the first center-left government showed weakness: in 1960 town-planners prepared a town-planning code, and in 1964 the Christian Democrats disowned their minister Fiorentino Sullo, who had brought the town-planning law to Parliament. Since 1964, we are practically in a state of anarchy as far as the territory: today’s cities are unlivable. At this point, operative history was a closed chapter.⁵⁹⁸

For Tafuri, the failure of town-planning reforms signalled the end of “operative history”—something which we have to interpret here as meaning the end of criticism’s disciplinary investment in planning, for certainly it did not mean the end of “operative history” per se. In a separate interview with Luisa Passerini, discussed already in the thesis introduction above, Tafuri identifies this moment more as a transition than a conclusion, a moment where Italian architectural culture turned away from planning and in general away from a social and political engagement with society at large, toward a recuperation of architectural form, and the agency of the intellectual. Andrew Leach’s summary is precise:

To his eyes, Zevi and Portoghesi had bent the figure of Michelangelo, shaping it to conform to a contemporary agenda: the endorsement of organic modernism as a true inheritance of Michelangelo’s ‘Mannerism’ as, in turn, an appropriate architecture of contemporary (DC) Italy. In addition, their Michelangelo

⁵⁹⁷ Lobsinger, “New Urban Scale,” 32.

⁵⁹⁸ Tafuri and Corsi, “Per una storia storica / For a historical history,” 149.

was an artist who had risen above the ignorant masses, corresponding to the beliefs underpinning debates centred on the INU.”⁵⁹⁹

For Rossi, it appears that this political failure also had a disciplinary and ideological consequence. Recall the quotation from *A Scientific Autobiography* above.⁶⁰⁰ Rossi reflects on the beginning and end of his disciplinary search. Intimately connected to the lost promises of modernism, Rossi dates the failure of those social aspirations to the Second World War. This periodisation has an unmistakable institutional significance, for, while avant-garde, *architectural* aspirations may have ended, certainly planning, infrastructure, and housing production did not. Throughout much of Europe—for instance in the United Kingdom with the “Post-War Consensus”—it was only after the war that the era of social democracy and the “reality of the plan” began. If Lobsinger is correct, then this ideological investment in the Modern Movement against its realisation, was posited retroactively from the later position of defeated, melancholic autobiography. In the historical moment of 1962, however, this result was not inevitable, and as she argues, we must read in the earlier Rossi an openness which his disciplinary search entailed. The “close connection of beginning and end” that he later posits, therefore excludes this transient middle, an historical and extra-disciplinary point upon which Rossi’s architectural expectations depended. In the terms of this thesis, this would mean withholding judgement on the disciplinary nature of Rossi’s ideology—“planning” or “project.” I think this is certainly possible to an extent; however, my interpretation depends upon the specific expectations for architecture which then existed. A substantial ambiguity remains in precisely what social and historical conditions existed and which disciplinary propositions Rossi was after.

Thus, while “urban science” was certainly a major question in *The Architecture of the City*, it is a phrase in need of serious clarification. What sort of science would it be? How does it differ from the usual framing of the discipline of urbanism? Going back to the earlier essay, “Nuovi problemi,” foregrounded by Lobsinger and Rossi’s key contribution to the debate around *la nuova dimensione*, we can better grasp the outlines of his disciplinary commitment. Rossi noted how, owing to increasing specialisation and technical development, neither the practice of architecture, nor the practice of urbanism, rested on stable foundations. It was only in the latter, urbanism, that debate could occur because it is there that, as techniques progress, contradictions develop.⁶⁰¹ This is not to say, Rossi adds, that architecture is irrelevant. Rather, it appears that only by the mediation of urban questions can the proper agency of the architectural discipline be clarified. “Urban science” operates in the interdisciplinary terrain in which the precise function of architecture has been momentarily

⁵⁹⁹ Leach, *Choosing History*, 24–25.

⁶⁰⁰ Rossi, *A Scientific Autobiography*, 82.

⁶⁰¹ Aldo Rossi, “Nuovi problemi,” 177.

obscured, if not lost, serving to mediate extra-disciplinary domains—sociological, economic, and political.

Crucially, however, it is defined by the manner in which it seeks an *architectural* point of arrival, rather than a dispersal into interdisciplinarity. “Urban science” functions as a methodological argument *against* the direct application, for instance, of sociology and statistics to the city. Rossi—and one should include here also others on his side of the debate, such as Carlo Aymonino—is after a sort of core reality principle of the city,⁶⁰² a point at which “urban science” effects a synthesis of the above domains of knowledge. This, to anticipate, is realised in *The Architecture of the City*, as a “theory of architecture” premised upon the study of “urban artifacts.”

In 1962, however, before Rossi’s attempt at systematic presentation, his thinking remained rather abstract. To get a better sense of what he was proposing we can look to the practical context. The object with which his early methodological and conceptual speculations appeared most concerned was the *centro direzionale* (directional centre). In fact, as Lobsinger points out, Rossi’s contribution to the debate on urban planning and *la nuova dimensione*, “Nuova problemi,” was published in an issue of *Casaballe continuità* dedicated to the CD.⁶⁰³ As Lobsinger explains,

The *centro direzionale* referred to a planning program that played a role similar to the American Central Business District (CBD) in the restructuring of large city centres. Various examples of the CD, as it was termed, proposed a concentration of services and businesses to be located at a juncture between the historic centre and the city’s periphery. The program answered the need to reorient urban development and traffic away from overburdened historic centers, while in theory it would link isolated areas of the periphery to the center and facilitate the orderly development of the city’s extended territory.⁶⁰⁴

Crucially, the CD defined a place of mediation in which the ambiguity of the disciplinary situation might be resolved: “The *centro direzionale* was bound up with town-planning issues of zoning and economic planning, but for architects, it also levelled a critique at town-planning techniques since it offered a model that moved beyond mere policy to architectonic organization.”⁶⁰⁵ Included in this “architectonic” organisation was a particular density and formal coherence that, while created at a distance, related the *centro direzionale* to the historic city centre. In general, therefore, it was a type that related new problems in the territorial organisation and development of cities, to the urban and architectonic qualities of

⁶⁰² “Da tutte queste nuove affermazioni, studi, progetti sta forse nascendo una nuova visione della città, la possibilità di stabilire un nuovo modello spaziale che - verificato su basi più ampie di quelle fin qui seguite, e radicato in un nuovo metodo di lavoro (che ricerchi per prima cosa il carattere scientifico dell’urbanistica) - risolve, in una più organica visione dell’importanza delle nuove strutture e dei rapporti città-territorio, le contrapposizioni tradizionali tra città e non città, città e quartiere ecc., imprimendo un corso deciso alla realtà.” Rossi, “Nuovi problemi,” 182–183.

⁶⁰³ *Casabella Continuità* 264 (June 1962)

⁶⁰⁴ Lobsinger, “The New Urban Scale,” 31.

⁶⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

historic city centres, effectively bridging the gap between pre- and post-industrial urbanism, along with the gap between architecture and planning.

The same year as “Nuovi problemi” appeared Rossi took part in a competition for a *centro direzionale* outside Turin. We can read the distance as well as the underlying continuity between the early and late Rossi, in the difference between the unbuilt CD for Turin (1962), and the later built CD in Perugia (1988). While the latter is expressly autonomist in its formal and historicist references, clearly belonging to the late “analogical” Rossi, the former is no less invested in architectural form as such. In a 1972 text, using the Torino project as an example, Rossi summarily defines the necessary “authentic relationship” (“rapporto autentico”) between the form of an architectural project and the context of the city—that within the terms of its own design (“progettazione”) the architecture must refer to the general character of the city.⁶⁰⁶ In the case of Turin, this meant finding an architectural expression that reflected the city’s characteristically uniform city block, even if it were to be projected onto a site outside the grid proper. However, beyond this “authentic relationship,” the CD offered the opportunity to begin thinking about urban infrastructure and programatic complexity in architectural terms.⁶⁰⁷

⁶⁰⁶ “Come esiste un rapporto autentico, circostanziato, con la città in cui costruiamo? Esso esiste solo nella misura in cui l’architettura riporta a motivi della sua stessa progettazione i caratteri generali della città.” Rossi, “Architettura e città: passato e presente” in *Scritti scelti sull’architettura e la città: 1956–1972*, 475. Documentation for this project is often absent from collections of Rossi’s work. See Alberto Ferlenga, ed., *Aldo Rossi: architetture 1959–1987* (Milan: Electa, 1987), 28.

⁶⁰⁷ This, we should note, was an approach which would find full expression in the work Rem Koolhaas and OMA. I am thinking of projects like OMA’s Zeebrugge Sea Terminal (1988), or especially Euralille (1989), and theoretical propositions like Koolhaas’s theory of “Bigness.” Rem Koolhaas, ‘Bigness: The Problem of Large’, in *S,M,L,XL*, ed. Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1995). Douglas Spencer presents a good critique of the neoliberal characteristics of “Bigness,” see Spencer, *The Architecture of Neoliberalism*, 95–97.

3.3 THEORY OF THE PROJECT

If we extend our view forward from the debates around *la nuova dimensione* to *The Architecture of the City*, we see that in the next years of his writing, Rossi's disciplinary search moved beyond "urban science," or perhaps deeper into its underlying stakes. By 1966, there are at least three areas in question: urban science, theory of architecture, and "teoria della progettazione." This phrase can be translated variously as "theory of design" or "theory of the project": Lobsinger gave the latter,⁶⁰⁸ while Luigi Beltrandi has given the former.⁶⁰⁹ In what follows I will translate "teoria della progettazione" as "theory of design," saving "theory of the Project" for the overall result of Rossi's multifaceted approach.⁶¹⁰ To anticipate, this extra term, Project, is necessary as a final disciplinary notion through which the contradictions of the "urban," the "architectural" and the "design," as well as the "collective" and the "individual" can be, if not resolved, made ideologically *productive*. The meaning of the Project is actively produced in texts such as these, as it was in Tafuri's "Il 'progetto' storico." It is less a question of translation, therefore, and more a question of conceptual definition: the "theory of design" becomes a "theory of the Project" at the point in which it synthesises the contradictions of "urban science," "theory of architecture," and "theory of design," producing an overall disciplinary notion through which ideological coherence can be achieved. The Project, rather than overcoming these contradictions, poses a continuous deferral through which architecture *lives on as "Architecture."* This is my characterisation of the same compulsion to repeat diagnosed by Lobsinger.

More than "urban science," I argue, *The Architecture of the City* is concerned with producing a theory of architecture as the basis for a practically oriented theory of design—though the latter would not be delivered in the space of the book. It is tempting to interpret Rossi's focus on urban structures as a problematisation of the architectural scale or of the architectural discipline in general; however, as stated above, it consistently functioned as a mediating field through which to reconstitute a specifically "Architectural" disciplinarity. Tafuri would later remark on how the urban studies of Rossi and Aymonimo sought a return to architecture through the forms and features of the city, rather than its dissolution,⁶¹¹ and this can also be seen in terms like "urban artefact," which Rossi inserts into the intermediate

⁶⁰⁸ Lobsinger "That Obscure Object of Desire," 58, note 36.

⁶⁰⁹ Aldo Rossi, "Architettura per i musei / Architecture for Museums," ed. Chiara Occhipinti and trans. Luigi Beltrandi ("Materiali di ricerca su Aldo Rossi," Fascicolo 1, Politecnico di Milano, October 2013) <http://www.chiaraocchipinti.net/immagini/publications/booklets/2013%20vitale/01%20-%20architettura%20per%20i%20musei.pdf>. Accessed 23 September, 2018. Throughout the text, the disciplinary term, "progettazione" (7) is translated as "design," (25). Progetto is used only to refer to a singular work of architectural, as in "progetto del Pantheon," (11) and translated as "project": "the project of the Pantheon" (29).

⁶¹⁰ One could alternatively distinguish between a "theory of the project" and a "theory of the Project," but the results would be more confusing than advantageous.

⁶¹¹ "When Aldo Rossi compares the town to a great architectural manufactured product and looks for the elements to verify its meanings, or when Aymonimo sets the basis for a planning ["progettazione"] in which typology and morphology are confronted, the dissolving of the phenomenon *architecture* in its context is rejected in favour of the recovery of the specific meanings of the town *place*." Tafuri, *Theories and History*, 62.

space between “urban science,” “theory of architecture,” and “theory of design,” as a kind of conceptual model toward which the design project will ideally tend. In the preface to the second edition of *L’architettura della città* (1969), Rossi gave the following summary of this perspective:

To consider the city as architecture means to recognize the importance of architecture as a discipline that has a self-determined autonomy (and thus is not autonomous in an abstract sense), constitutes the major urban artefact within the city, and, through all the processes analyzed in this book, links the past to the present. Architecture so seen is not diminished in terms of its own significance because of its urban architectural context or because a different scale introduces new meanings; on the contrary, the meaning of the architecture of the city resides in a focus on the individual project and the way it is structured as an urban artifact.⁶¹²

A better sense of Rossi’s intentions in regards to the design project proper can be found in a separate essay of the same year: “Architettura per i musei” (“Architecture for Museums”). There, the theory of design is characterised by the uneasy combination of two strategic lines: first, the scientific ideal of a fully “transmissible” and rational architectural discipline (not yet characterised as a “realism”), and second, the aesthetic ideal of subjective invention and interpretation: architecture as a work of art. The “theory of architecture” holds the burden of underwriting this theory of design through an enlarged definition with enlarged social value: “I mean ‘architecture’ in a positive sense, as a creation inseparable from life and society, a great deal of which is a collective happening.”⁶¹³ Significantly, the theory of architecture depends upon this collective dimension, making architecture inextricable from the city as the basis of its production and its significance: the “city as a man-made object” as a “total architecture,”⁶¹⁴ as a “work of art,”⁶¹⁵ and as “*chose humaine par excellence*.”⁶¹⁶

As one can see, the ambiguity of the “subjective element,” the individual architect’s creativity in design, is deepened by the collective character of the city as a work of art, even before it poses a problem to the rationality of the discipline. From the outset, contradictions are rampant, developing within the imputed subject of architectural production: individual vs collective; in the object of architecture: singular (architectural project) vs multiple (city); in the character of architecture: scientific vs aesthetic and universal (the category “Architecture”) vs particular (real buildings); as well as between each of the above. As already mentioned, the solution, rather than resolving the contradictions, defers them to an implied meta-disciplinarity which becomes the emergent significance of the Project. It is through, first, the positing of a collective subject of the city, and then its subsumption within the singular subject of the architect, that Rossi’s theory carries its particular value for left

⁶¹² Rossi, “Preface to the Second Italian Edition” in *The Architecture of the City*, 165.

⁶¹³ Aldo Rossi, “Architettura per i musei”/“Architecture for Museums,” 27.

⁶¹⁴ Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 63.

⁶¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁶¹⁶ Rossi, “Architettura per i musei”/“Architecture for Museums,” 27.

ideology; while it is through the subsumption of the historical value of the city within the new project—apart from any programme for planning or development—that it poses general ideological value to the institution, as a post-planning disciplinary investment.

Before we examine this “theory” and its major ideological functions in the greater detail of *The Architecture of the City*, we can get a better sense of the disciplinary and institutional context from “Architettura per i musei,” in which Rossi addressed what he saw as the pressing need for the above theories. The essay was transcribed from a lecture within a series given in 1966 to the course at the IUAV run by Giuseppe Samonà. It was published two years later in the collection *Teorie della progettazione architettonica*,⁶¹⁷ together with an array of essays and texts produced by other young architects and professors, including Manfredo Tafuri.⁶¹⁸ In a later introduction, Chiara Occhipinti notes how Rossi’s contribution stood out by approaching the modern problems of territorial, urban, and infrastructural design through a return to ancient objects of architectural history, such as the Pantheon.⁶¹⁹ Contextualising the essay within Rossi’s own work, Occhipinti suggests that it can be read as a supplement to the third chapter of *Architettura della città*, “The Individuality of Urban Artifacts: Architecture,” which contained what elements of a theory of design Rossi included in the book. “Architettura per i musei” attempted to pursue this line further, crossing from a theory of architecture to a theory of the design (“teorie della progettazione”).⁶²⁰ This goal is immediately clear in the text proper, which begins by addressing the pedagogical context of architectural education. Rossi posits that a theory of design (“progettazione”) is the first necessity of an architectural school, and should take precedence over other types of research.⁶²¹ He goes on to suggest how such a thing should be pursued:

At the risk of appearing naïve, I propose to trace a truthful and appropriate theory of design, in other words forming a theory of design [“teorie della progettazione”] as an integral part of a theory of architecture.

To talk about a theory of design [“teorie della progettazione”] I have to say first what I think architecture is. I shall give some definitions of the term “architecture”; I shall then go on to say by which criteria architectural design [“progettazione architettonica”] should be inspired, and what are its relations with architectural history. I

⁶¹⁷ Guido Canella et al. *Teoria Della Progettazione Architettonica* (Bari: Dedalo libri, 1968).

⁶¹⁸ Chiara Occhipinti, “Introduzione al testo” in “Architettura per i musei”/“Architecture for Museums,” 5.

⁶¹⁹ *ibid.* We should note here that the title of this book “Teorie della progettazione” is, from the perspective of this thesis, highly ambiguous. Without conducting a thorough study of the collected essays, I would hypothesise that the best translation of the title would be “Theory of Architectural Design”—assuming that the generic “design” best captures the ambiguous disciplinary context in which the authors worked. However, Rossi’s text in particular should retroactively be described as a nascent “theory of the architectural *project*.”

⁶²⁰ *ibid.*

⁶²¹ This perspective remains central to contemporary architecture’s neo-neo-avant-gardes. In a 2016 interview Patrik Schumacher remarked on how, even though he opposed Pier Vittorio Aureli’s ideas and results, he nevertheless respected his approach: “I respect Pier Vittorio, not because I share a commitment to ‘architecture-in-itself’—I do not—but because I respect that he is a designing architect that teaches design on the basis of a theoretical position that encompasses both an account of society and a conception of architecture’s role within it. While his conceptions are fallacious, his practice has at least the right kind of ingredients required for an ambitious architectural practice.” See Patrick Schumacher, interviewed by Martti Kalliali, “Total Freedom” Medium (14 November, 2016) <https://medium.com/after-us/total-freedom-5ee930676b65>. Accessed, 11 September, 2018.

shall end by saying what I consider to be the essential terminology of architecture, the city, history, the monument.⁶²²

Rossi establishes the connection between the theory of design and the theory of architecture in a kind of reciprocal manner. In order to present the former, he must first substantiate the latter; however the theory of design is ultimately only a part of the larger theory of architecture. He then expands upon the relationship between theory and design, claiming that while in his own work they are hard to separate, an emphasis on theory rather than production, marks the work of great artists. Furthermore, there are historical moments in which the need for theory takes precedence. For Rossi, his present was such a moment:

It is in certain periods, like ours, that one senses the need of building up a theory which is then taken up as the basis of the creative process, as the basis for what one is doing. I know that for many there is no need for a theory: a part of the Modern Movement has stated that theory had been overcome by method and that modern architecture has to be found in method.⁶²³

Adorno's "Functionalism Today," written at roughly the same time (1965), concludes with a similar point, though with less obviously polemical stakes: "Whether you like it or not, you are being pushed daily to considerations, aesthetic considerations, which transcend your immediate tasks."⁶²⁴ Stepping back for a moment, we can perceive how such passages give a strong sense of what is at stake. When Rossi addressed the IUAV, arguing for the institutional necessity of theory (both theory of design, and theory of architecture itself), distinguishing between theory and method, and proposing a departure from the programme of the Modern Movement, he is foreshadowing the next fifty years of architectural academia and architectural discourse overall. Not only does he portend the development of "Architecture Theory" but also polemics over the institutional value of "theory," its later decline in the 1990s and even later instigations for its return. What Rossi is really calling for here is a theoretical engagement with "Architecture" itself: the need for the institution to reestablish a disciplinary coherence through reflexive self-consciousness, rather than assuming the productivity of methods whose ultimate disciplinary character is unstable or in doubt. In this moment, "theory" is posited as a centripetal force against the ambiguous, centrifugal force of "method"; it suggests a way back into the core content of "Architecture":

⁶²² Rossi, "Architettura per i musei"/"Architecture for Museums," 25. "Io mi propongo, a costo di essere messo fra i più ingenui, di tracciare in qualche modo una teoria della progettazione vera e propria; o meglio una teoria della progettazione come momento di una teoria dell'architettura.

Quindi per parlare di una teoria della progettazione io vi dirò in primo luogo che cosa intenda per architettura, quindi cercherò di dare delle definizioni dell'architettura, dirò poi a quali criteri si deve ispirare una progettazione architettonica e quali siano i suoi rapporti con la storia della architettura e infine quali considero essere termini concreti dell'architettura; la città, la storia, i monumenti." *Ibid.*, 7.

⁶²³ Rossi, "Architettura per i musei"/"Architecture for Museums," 26. "Dirò ancora, per l'importanza che do a un corso di teoria della progettazione, che personalmente non ho mai distinto tra un prima e un dopo, tra un pensare l'architettura e il progettarla, e che ho sempre pensato che gli artisti più importanti si siano soffermati piuttosto sulla teoria che sul fare, e che in alcune epoche, come la nostra, si senta l'esigenza di stabilire una teoria considerata soprattutto come fondamento del fare, come un inizio di certezza per quello che stiamo compiendo. So che da parte di molti non si vuole una teoria: parte del movimento moderno ha affermato che la teoria era superata dal metodo e che la stessa architettura moderna era nel metodo." *Ibid.*, 8.

⁶²⁴ Adorno, "Functionalism Today," 18.

Now, I ask myself, how is it possible to formalize all this, how can one arrive at a theory of design from a series of terms that form the basis of an architectural theory? Architecture has to be brought back to itself. I refer to all those statements and arguments that wish to establish whether architecture is an art or a science: of these many create false problems for they have no solution. On the other hand, one must not explain architecture on borrowed knowledge external to it.⁶²⁵

The ingredients of this “theory” achieve coherence through the unity of architectural knowledge itself, which cannot be reduced to the norms of either art or science, nor assessed from an outside perspective. Yet what mechanisms exist within architecture proper to produce or assess such a coherence? It seems to rest simultaneously upon the permanent principles of “Architecture”—discovered presumably by the theory thereof—and what he calls the “subjective element,” a kind of irreducible ingredient within the architectural project that cannot be systematically separated from either the personal talent or the “autobiography” of the architect. The latter element foreshadows much of *A Scientific Autobiography*, and, connects to problems we will soon encounter in *The Architecture of the City*. Already the “subjective element” threatens the very premise of a *theory* of design, which must be both rational and transmissible if it is to form the basis for reproducing the architectural institution.⁶²⁶ However, the institutional value of this element, surfacing as we have seen in contemporary debates about digital technology, cannot be doubted. What rational bases for a “theory of architecture” balance this subjective current? Here too we encounter contradictions. In order to overcome them, Rossi will have to implicitly reorder the methodological hierarchy. The theory of design, rather than forming “an integral part of a theory of architecture” will have to internalise the latter, becoming a theory of the Project, by which the design act performatively posits its own disciplinary premises. Tracing the contradictions in *The Architecture of the City*, it becomes clear why this later synthesis was required.

⁶²⁵ Ibid., 30.

⁶²⁶ The scientific ideal of “transmissibility” is something Rossi attributes to the architectural theory of the Enlightenment. Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 54–55.

3.3.1 Theory of Architecture

Seeking a theory of architecture in *The Architecture of the City*, we are forced to reckon with the near metaphysical abstraction of Rossi's initial premise. Rossi begins the introduction with a reciprocal definition (for reasons that will become clear I hesitate to apply the term "dialectical" to Rossi, although others do not⁶²⁷) whereby the city is to be understood as architecture, and architecture as characteristic of the city:

The city, which is the subject of this book, is to be understood here as architecture. And by architecture I mean not only the visible image of the city and the sum of its different architectures, but architecture as construction ["costruzione"], the construction of the city over time. I believe that this point of view, objectively speaking, constitutes the most comprehensive way of analyzing the city; it addresses the ultimate and definitive fact in the life of the collective, the creation of the environment in which it lives.

I use the term architecture in a positive and pragmatic sense, as a creation inseparable from civilized life and society in which it is manifested. By nature it is collective. As the first men built ["costruiti"] houses to provide more favourable surroundings for their life, fashioned an artificial climate for themselves, so they built ["costruirono"] with aesthetic intention. Architecture came into being along with the first traces of the city; it is deeply rooted in the formation of civilization and is a permanent, universal, and necessary artifact.

Aesthetic intention and the creation of better surroundings for life are the two permanent characteristics of architecture. These aspects emerge from any significant attempt to explain the city as a human creation. But because architecture gives concrete form to society and is intimately connected with it and with nature, it differs fundamentally from every other art and science.⁶²⁸

Joining the aesthetic register to the technical-practical, architecture both represents and actively is the "collective" development of human society. Recall the unity of art and science posited in "Architettura per i musei." Here Rossi, defines the specificity of architecture by its elevation to a point above such distinctions. It is not merely a historical thing, but a *categorical* thing: "a permanent, universal, and necessary artifact." The history of architecture would therefore be coextensive with the history of human civilisation. It is the unique practice through which human existence mediates its own social and natural bases. Throughout the book Rossi returns to this point, emphasising the profound and central importance of architecture to the "human condition":

Sometimes I ask myself why architecture is not analyzed in these terms, that is, in terms of its profound value as a human thing that shapes reality and adapts material according to an aesthetic conception. It is in this sense not only the place of the human condition, but itself a part of that condition, and is represented in the city and its monuments, in districts, dwellings, and all urban artefacts that emerge from inhabited space.⁶²⁹

The theoretical work of the book goes toward substantiating an architectural analysis of this kind, constructing a definition that includes this transhistorical, even anthropological,

⁶²⁷ See for example Lobsinger, "That Obscure Object of Desire," 50; and K. Michael Hays, *Architecture's Desire* (London: MIT Press, 2010), 29.

⁶²⁸ Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 21.

⁶²⁹ *Ibid.*, 34.

core as its centre of mass, around which the collective and individual subjects of architecture revolve. However, such arguments are at risk of going too far, of placing architecture beyond any concrete disciplinarity, thereby contradicting the institutional premise: that architecture is practiced by *architects*. Rossi's theory of architecture threatens to transform the object of professional practice into a matter of philosophical speculation.

Consequently, the source of value offered by architecture as "*chose humaine*" presents its own problems, for it is a product of the social and historical totality of the city, and, as Rossi admits, cannot be easily replicated or produced in a new design project.⁶³⁰ This is clearly Rossi's material problem: how to stabilise architecture's institutional position in the aftermath of the tragic failure of the Modern Movement by reintegrating into contemporary architectural production the "value" of historical architecture—historical not merely in the sense of being pre-industrial, but in the sense of containing real social investment, and "value" in the sense of political economy. It concerns architecture's productivity within capitalist society—how architecture produces value, particularly exchange value. Rossi's problem is, first, to translate the impossible to reproduce value of historical architecture into the metaphysical value of "Architecture," then to realise the latter in the exchange value of the new architectural commodity, the design. The only way this is possible, will be through the project's value as *ideology*.

⁶³⁰ Ibid., 29.

3.3.2 Function and Autonomy

Rossi is at all times concerned to distinguish architectural productivity from the production of straightforward *use values*. As we have already established, the historical function of the architecture institution, the basis of its productivity within capitalist society, lay in more than simple technique; it involved ideological mediation. Directly responding to the crisis later identified by Manfredo Tafuri, Rossi's disciplinary search has this mediating function at its core, understanding that without it, architecture would dissolve into technical specialisation. However, because of the crisis in architecture's ideological constitution, Rossi is forced to seek a mediating role on the paradoxical grounds of disciplinary autonomy. This is the institutional meaning of his relentless polemic against functionalism: "Thus, one thesis of this study, in its effort to affirm the value of architecture in the analysis of the city, is the denial of the explanation of urban artifacts in terms of function. I maintain, on the contrary, that far from being illuminating, this explanation is regressive because it impedes us from studying forms and knowing the world of architecture according to its true laws."⁶³¹ And again: "The question 'for what purpose?' ends up as a simple justification that prevents an analysis of what is real."⁶³²

Those "true laws," "what is real" in architecture, can only be established by bracketing function from consideration. Whatever architecture is, it is not determined by use as such. Rossi's object, as already established is a change of course away from the disciplinary themes of modernism, and towards a more substantially "Architectural" consistency, a fullness of architectural meaning lacking from functional considerations:

So conceived, function, physiological in nature, can be likened to a bodily organ whose function justifies its formation and development and whose alterations of function imply an alteration of form. In this light, functionalism and organicism, the two principal currents which have pervaded modern architecture, reveal their common roots and the reason for their weakness and fundamental ambiguity. Through them form is divested of its most complex derivations: type is reduced to a simple scheme of organization, a diagram of circulation routes, and architecture is seen as possessing no autonomous value. Thus the aesthetic intentionality and necessity that characterize urban artifacts and establish their complex ties cannot be further analyzed.⁶³³

Despite such passages, Rossi's position relative to what might be considered an expanded notion of functionalism remains debatable. Rossi himself couches much of his polemic as a critique of "naive functionalism."⁶³⁴ Lobsinger argues that *The Architecture of the City* "elaborates a concept of function that includes broadly construed criteria such as societal,

⁶³¹ Ibid., 46.

⁶³² Ibid.

⁶³³ Ibid.

⁶³⁴ Ibid., 46–48, 167.

psychological, and historical”⁶³⁵ while also arguing that Rossi sought architectural autonomy as a critical departure from “canonical Modernism.”⁶³⁶ In “Neo-Functionalism,” Mario Gandelsonas argued that both Rossi’s neo-rationalism and Venturi’s neo-realism could be united under the terms of a “neo-functionalism,” adding communicative and symbolic function to the purely technical terms of modernism, and thereby overcoming the false-choices that split architectural discourse.⁶³⁷ He suggests that such a position would offer a unified platform for architectural production:

The idea of such a neo-functionalism is opposed to the respective neo-rationalist and neo-realist positions in the sense that they have developed isolated fragments of the original doctrine and, in this way, have eliminated the complex contradictions inherent in functionalism. A neo-functionalist position would neither eliminate nor solve these dialectical contradictions but rather would assume them as one of the main forces which keep alive the development of ideas in architecture. Thus the concept of neo-functionalism would exclude neither the neo-realist nor the neo-rationalist notions, but rather add and develop the fundamental dimension of meaning, thereby reconstituting all dimensions of the original doctrine.⁶³⁸

In the abstract, it is a very attractive proposition. However, it is an idealised representation of architectural “concepts,” and how they work, assuming that the most general synthesis of architectural propositions somehow overcomes the motive forces that drive architectural discourse as ideology. Hence, while Gandelsonas uses the term “ideology” he does not give it the meaning established in this thesis. First of all, he does not connect architectural ideologies to political-economic context, does not, for example, interpret modernist functionalism as part of an “ideology of the Plan” or of its realisation. This makes it possible for him to unambiguously reject post-war reconstruction as functionalism’s “regressive” turn, rather than its (perhaps ambiguous) real social contribution, and posit the neo-avant-garde as a new progressive force, rather than institutional entrenchment.⁶³⁹ He assumes that architectural ideologies are progressive at their point of origin, rather than assessing their progressive or regressive value as a function of their socio-economic premises and results. This means that he does not understand them to be “functional” in any structural or historical sense. Rather he proposes neo-functionalism as an internal perspective:

A neo-functionalist position abandons the pendular movement (which is not real change) that has characterized the passage from one ideology to the next, now represented by functionalism, now by neo-rationalism and neo-realism. Such an association tends, through the underlying idealism inherent not only in

⁶³⁵ Lobsinger, “The New Urban Scale,” 29.

⁶³⁶ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁶³⁷ Mario Gandelsonas, “Neo-Functionalism” in *Oppositions Reader*, ed. K. Michael Hays (New York: Princeton University Press, 1998): 7–8. When I first read this essay as a design student, I remember being extremely frustrated by the ease with which it subsumed polemical differences I took to be extremely meaningful. Even though my perspective has shifted radically since then, making me a far more sympathetic reader, the frustration remains. It is just really not as simple a problem as he presents it. One cannot discuss the ‘function’ of architectural production without considering the institutional mediation of ‘architecture’ itself.

⁶³⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁶³⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

functionalism but in most architectural ideologies, to eliminate or neutralize contradiction. Rather, such a position proposes the development of the progressive aspects of functionalism, an action which implies the effective transformation of its idealistic nature, building a dialectical basis for architecture.⁶⁴⁰

Contrary this outwardly elegant solution, which certainly appears to offer a coherent meta-theory of architecture, one has to take seriously the dialectic between architectural propositions and the underlying institutional basis of their survival. According to this dialectic, the fundamental problem for architectural ideology in the latter third of the twentieth century, was its ability to present itself precisely as an autonomous practice, that is, to substantiate architecture itself as a discipline capable of critical reflection on the processes of development from which it had been excluded.⁶⁴¹ It was only through that stance, that it would be able to find a properly *functional* role in neoliberal, post-Keynesian and post “Planning” society. There is thus a “real change” at stake in this pendulum swing, both in disciplinary terms, and in their political significance. Gandelonas’ proposed theoretical position, which he asserts leaves ideology behind, would actually foreclose an understanding of how ideology functions, what material forces determine its content, why architectural ideology takes on a particular form in a given moment, and what substantial changes occur in it over time.

We can put this problem in terms of the difference between strategy and tactics. “Neo-functionalism” proposes an entirely *tactical* definition of the architectural discipline. From a concretely external perspective where architecture is object rather than subject, this would appear to be appropriate—architecture fulfils the functions given to it by historical conditions. However, it does not capture the immanent character of ideology, which translates professional self-preservation into an imputed subjective freedom. On the other hand, Gandelonas’ “neo-functionlism” is presented as a theory, a *strategy* for architects. This paradox causes two problems: first, it misses the mediation by which an institutional tactic contradicts the subjective strategy (social function contradicts “social mission”); second, as an internal perspective, it fails to mark the historical and qualitative difference *between* functions, which, by the same mediation, come into contradiction (the Project against planning). We must be able to grasp the complex interactions between disciplinary functions, institutional tactics, subjective “strategy,” and the larger political economic context, if an interpretation of architecture in terms of “function” is to have any real meaning.

From a materialist perspective, nothing could be easier than to say that everything has a function; materialism may not even be a prerequisite, as Rossi himself says, “values are

⁶⁴⁰ Ibid., 8.

⁶⁴¹ I am referring again to Tafuri’s “incipit,” Tafuri, “Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology”, 6. But this perspective can also be found in partisan interpretations of Rossi, for example in Diogo Seixas Lopes’s *Melancholy and Architecture: on Aldo Rossi*: “Crisis and critique were thus inseparable from each other. Aldo Rossi set the foundations for his work, practice, and theory under this sense of urgency. He embraced multiple interests and concerns that would soon coalesce afterwards, into a single corpus soon to be acclaimed in Italy and abroad. This notoriety derived from an attempt to respond to problems of context—social, economic, and cultural—wherein architecture had to define its role. Riddled with doubts, derived from the sudden transformation of society and the terrain it inhabited, architecture should nevertheless reclaim disciplinary autonomy and authority. Finally, this constituted a matter of choice.” Diogo Seixas Lopes, *Melancholy and Architecture: on Aldo Rossi*, 11.

knowable only as functions of one another.”⁶⁴² However, acknowledging this, we would have yet to learn anything about our particular object, architectural ideology, or its material context. Such ideology is always functional, but depending upon context, not always *functionalist*.⁶⁴³ In this sense, and the case of Rossi will bear this out, architectural ideology already proceeds *through contradiction* rather than against it. Theoretically consistent positions have no institutional value if they do not support the identification of the discipline with its material conditions of possibility. As a general Marxist point, the notion that architecture should overcome its ideological difficulties and take hold of a coherent “neo-functionalism” is equivalent to the false notion that the bourgeoisie might overcome its ideology in order to rationally take hold of its situation. This point was grasped by Adorno, in the essay on functionalism to which we have already referred: “The limits of functionalism to date have been the limits of the bourgeoisie in its practical sense.”⁶⁴⁴ One must understand that ideology *is* its rationality, and it involves contradictions which cannot be immanently overcome, nor transcendently manipulated.⁶⁴⁵

Therefore, in no way could architectural ideology simply drop the pretext of “autonomy,” for it is there that the entire institutional mediation operates. We can refer to David Cunningham’s essay, which, again following Adorno, identifies the necessary dialectic of function and autonomy. The latter “is not a straightforward choice, to be accepted or otherwise, but rather defines a ‘situation’ that art must work with under the conditions of capitalism.”⁶⁴⁶ As part of the basic value functions of capitalist production, these conditions assume aesthetic autonomy as the precondition for the exchange value of the “artistic” commodity.⁶⁴⁷

Given these essential institutional conditions, it is not particularly surprising that despite its elegance, “neo-functionalism” never became a popular theory or operative disciplinary strategy for Western architecture. Of course, apart from this institutional context perhaps nothing would stand in the way of a coherent neo-functionalism. One could make the argument that at some point a similar thing existed in the Soviet Union—even there,

⁶⁴² Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 167.

⁶⁴³ This is not to say that there cannot occur a crisis in the functional value of an ideology within a certain context. Tafuri of course argued that with the “reality of the Plan,” ideology became “as useless for capitalist development as it is harmful from the laborer’s point of view.” The pivot from planning to project was precisely an attempt to re-activate the functional value of architectural ideology, following such a crisis. But that did not make the project any more “functionalist,” nor suggest that “functionalism” would have any functional value.

⁶⁴⁴ Adorno, “Functionalism Today,” 9.

⁶⁴⁵ As we know, even the relative internalisation of Marxist critique within Keynesianism, functioned *through* the ideological contradictions which remained, never arriving at a dialectical internalisation of the working class.

⁶⁴⁶ Cunningham, “Architecture as Critical Knowledge,” 34.

⁶⁴⁷ Here Cunningham quotes Peter Bürger: “Only an art that has become (relatively) autonomous can be harnessed. The autonomy of art is thus simultaneously the precondition for its later heteronomy. Commodity aesthetics pre-supposes an autonomous art.” Cunningham, 35. Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 113, note 8. See also Peter Osborne, “Aesthetic Autonomy and the Crisis of Theory,” 39.

however, one would miss the immanent disciplinary difference between *strategic* planning and *tactical* form.⁶⁴⁸

We can readily see how in pursuit of a functional ideology for architecture, Rossi was in partial control of this subtlety. Taking the example of Illuminist architecture, he points out the difference between a functionalist definition of symbolism—which would satisfy Gandelsonas’ “neo-functionalism”—and the manner of symbolism Rossi seeks:

I often think, from this point of view, of the meaning of symbolism in architecture—and among the symbolists, of the ‘revolutionary architects’. The present theory probably permits the most sensible explanation of symbolism, for to think of symbolism solely in terms of how a particular symbol actually served an event is simply a functionalist position. Rather, it is as if precisely at the decisive moments of history architecture repurposed its own necessity to be ‘sign’ and ‘event’ in order to establish and shape a new era.⁶⁴⁹

This is among the most conceptually significant passages in the book for the way it cuts to the precise problem for ideology. Using an historical example, Rossi articulates, from the side of architecture, how the mediation of disciplinarity and insitutionality functions. As a critique of ideology, we could say that, indeed, symbolist architecture served the bourgeois revolutionary events of their day, but this does not get to the immanent content of the ideology itself, to the particular problem *for architecture*. According to Rossi, the symbolism of the “revolutionary architects” did not only attempt to serve the event, it attempted to *be* the event,⁶⁵⁰ to produce an historical significance for architecture within the larger social process, serving the event through the mediation of architecture itself. Together with the absence of industrial technique from eighteenth century architecture, this is why Illuminism would later serve as a fundamental reference for Rossi and the neo-avant-gardes, for whom, *contra* Bernard Tschumi, no events were forthcoming.⁶⁵¹

Being unable to propose simple use values—technical or symbolic—and requiring a meta-argument concerning institutional autonomy, in what will Rossi argue does architecture’s productivity reside? His solution has two parts. *The Architecture of the City* deals with the first: to locate a source of value within the timeless principles and formal mechanisms of the city, to establish, as we have already seen, architecture’s claim to a night-metaphysical value principle. The second involves developing ways to leverage this knowledge into new projects. In “Architecture for Museums,” aware of the difficulty, he attempts to distinguish the two levels:

⁶⁴⁸ See my discussion in the thesis conclusion.

⁶⁴⁹ Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 114.

⁶⁵⁰ Bernard Huet remarked on the existential stakes of Rossi’s milieu: “(T)he Tendenza sought to reconstruct the architectural “discipline.” It opposed the functionalism of modern architecture with an “enlightened” rationalism in which form implies architecture as an instrument of knowledge. The irreducible specificity of architecture and its disciplinary autonomy reside in its capacity to produce “typical” forms of general and popular import, requiring precise knowledge: a “trade” or *métier*. For the Tendenza, architecture’s only justification lies in its very “being”; it is not infused with any content, it has no redemptive value, it can express nothing by itself.” Huet, “Formalism—Realism,” 258.

⁶⁵¹ Nor it must be said, would the bourgeois subject have an interest in there being such events.

But, if architectural principles are permanent and necessary, how can they then become the history of different and real architectures? I think one can only say this: that principles in architecture, insofar as their foundations are concerned, have no history, they are fixed and unchangeable; but solutions are constantly changing, and so do the answers that architects give to these real solutions. I had better make a distinction between the difference in character of the questions and answers.

One has to distinguish between the city and the architecture of the city as a collectively made object, and architecture for its own sake, architecture as a technique, as an art form that is ordered and passed on in a traditional way. In the first instance it is a collective process, slow and traceable over a length of time, in which the whole of the city, society and humanity with all its different forms play a part. In this way the urban evolution, the changing face of the city, is a slow and indirect process which needs to be studied by following its laws and peculiarities. Think about the different layers that constitute a city in its coherence and to those reactions that create new elements.⁶⁵²

In *The Architecture of the City*, Rossi attempts to bridge this divide through the notion of the “urban artifact.” It is a notion which unifies the collective processes of valorisation and the individuality of the architectural product, distilling from the scale of the city, a scale for the design project.

⁶⁵² Rossi, “Architettura per i musei”/“Architecture for Museums,” 28.

3.3.3 Urban Artifacts and the Project

We have seen how in Rossi's introduction this problem begins at the largest possible scale: the totality of human civilisation as represented by the transhistorical "city." In the first chapter, "The Structure of Urban Artifacts," he begins by narrowing the scale, moving down from the city as "total architecture" to "urban artifacts": "certain more limited but still crucial aspects of the city, namely urban artifacts, which like the city itself are characterized by their own history and thus by their own form."⁶⁵³ The first example he gives is the Palazzo della Ragione in Padua, a medieval hall that underwent numerous transformations, collapses, and renovations. Visiting such a place, Rossi says, "one is struck by the multiplicity of functions that a building of this type can contain over time and how these functions are entirely independent of form. At the same time," he continues, "it is precisely the form that impresses us; we live it, we experience it, and in turn it structures the city." This seeming paradox, points to the complex dependence of architectural value on historical time:

Where does the individuality of such a building begin, and on what does it depend? Clearly it depends more on its form than on its material, even if the latter plays a substantial role; but it also depends on being a complicated entity which has developed in space and time. We realise, for example, that if the architectural construction we are examining had been built recently, it would not have the same value. In that case the architecture in itself would be subject to judgement, and we could discuss its style and its form; but it would not yet present us with the richness of its own history which is characteristic of an urban artifact.⁶⁵⁴

Constituted over time, this "richness," a form of value, which includes, Rossi reminds us, "spiritual value," can only be grasped through the difficult terms of "*quality*," through which the urban artefact's characteristic meaning appears.⁶⁵⁵ At this point, Rossi reflects on historical studies which characterised urban artefacts as works of art. He then muses on the possibility of a scientific survey of urban artefacts according to their artistic meaning. These rather vague passages lead him to a key argument that returns the discussion to the difficult problem of bridging architecture's valorisation problem, its collective (social) and individual (professional) bases:

The question of the city as a work of art, however, presents itself explicitly and scientifically above all in relation to the conception of the nature of collective artifacts, and I maintain that no urban research can ignore this aspect of the problem. How are collective urban artifacts related to works of art? All great manifestations of social life have in common with the work of art the fact that they are born in unconscious life. This life is collective in the former, individual in the latter; but this is only a secondary difference because one is a product of the public and the other is for the public: the public provides a common denominator.⁶⁵⁶

⁶⁵³ Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 29.

⁶⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid., 30.

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid., 33.

As an explanation for the aesthetic character of architecture and the city, this definition comes as close to posing the problem of ideology as possible without doing so. That the forces productive of “social life,” just like aesthetic production, must be located behind social appearances, that the individual unconscious is always conditioned by a larger social unconscious, all these suggest that the true significance of the work of art is not immanent to its content, that the reality principle of the social world lies on a different stratum. On the following page, he brings the analysis one step closer: “City and region, agricultural land and forest become human works because they are an immense repository of the labor of our hands. But to the extent that they are our ‘artificial homeland’ and objects that have been constructed, they also testify to values; they constitute memory and permanence. The city *is* in its history.”⁶⁵⁷

At this point Rossi all but equates urban value with ideological value—the aesthetic “quality” of the city as that which clothes the political economic structures of society in aesthetic form, transforming the conflictual, antagonistic, and shifting mode of production into collective “value,” “memory,” and “permanence.” This formulation anticipates what we will later see is the significance of Rossi’s arguments concerning “political choice.” As an operative proposition, he has yet to demonstrate the mechanisms for actually producing this value in a new design. In fact, the clearest mechanism to do so would again return us to the ideology of the Plan: architecture’s synthetic role within planning and development. Since such a possibility has been foreclosed, since the city will not be transformed at that scale, at least not under the influence of “Architecture,” another solution is required—one which relies upon a different productive principle, somehow reintegrating new architectural production with old.

A first possible solution is the idea of “controlling primary artefacts” which emerges out of a discussion of urban permanences and monuments. “Primary artefacts,” by definition “possess a value ‘in themselves,’” but are not reducible to monumentality alone. Significantly, they possess a more concretely productive power:

But primary elements are not only monuments, just as they are not only fixed activities; in a general sense they are *those elements capable of accelerating the process of urbanization* in a city, and they also characterize the processes of spatial transformation in an area larger than the city. Often they act as catalysts. At first their presence can be identified only by their function (and in this respect they coincide with fixed activities), but they rapidly take on a more significant value. Frequently they are not even physical, constructed, measurable artefacts; for example, sometimes the importance of an event itself ‘gives place’ to spatial transformations of a site.⁶⁵⁸

This notion immediately recalls the CD, *centro direzionale*, discussed above. As an aside, I think it is no exaggeration to say that again Rossi has anticipated a great deal of later

⁶⁵⁷ Ibid., 34.

⁶⁵⁸ Ibid., 87.

architectural production. Such arguments here are in clear continuity with those of Tschumi for instance, but more generally point to those major cultural projects, art galleries, concert halls, and so forth, as the mainstay of “Architecture” under neoliberalism. In other words, we could find that the “truth” of his “urban science,” is demonstrated by, and the value of Rossi’s argument as avant-garde institutional anticipation is realised in, Frank Gehry’s Disney Concert Hall.

Rossi will insist again that the formal power of primary elements is independent of function: “The permanence of this form or its value as a reference is entirely independent of both the specific function for which it was designed and its coincidence with the continuity of urban institutions.”⁶⁵⁹ However, Rossi appears to be returning to the same dangerous disciplinary territory, suggesting that form is autonomous even of the architectural discipline. The book is littered with such statements: “*Urban artefacts have their own life, their own destiny.*”⁶⁶⁰ At the same time as he appears to have found an incontrovertible source of architectural value, it immediately threatens to exceed disciplinary agency. Attempting to introduce some mechanism of control, Rossi insists that this process cannot be left to its own devices, but must be controlled at particular scales through precise interventions, if an “effective continuity” is to be maintained.⁶⁶¹

In the third chapter, Rossi offers a general solution. It is at this point that the theories of architecture, of urban science, and of design, find a synthetic solution in what I call Rossi’s theory of the *Project*. The only way for the new design to carry the weight of an “urban artefact,” to appear within the city as a determining permanence, is for it to self-reflexively posit the value of “Architecture” itself—not simply the aesthetic value of an architectural work, but the categorical value of “Architecture” as such, the universal *chose humaine*, with which we began:

It seems to me that to formulate a building *in the most concrete way possible*, especially at the design stage, is to give a new impulse to architecture itself, to reconstitute that total vision of analysis and design on which we have so urgently insisted. A conception of this type, in which the architectural dynamic prevails in the form powerfully and fundamentally, responds to the nature of urban artifacts as they really are. The constitution of new urban artifacts—in other words, the growth of the city—has always occurred through such a precise definition of elements.⁶⁶²

The need for a theory of architecture can only be fulfilled by the architectural project presenting itself as such, as a self-constituting work of “Architecture.” It is this premise of his theory, which makes it difficult to characterise his work as a “neo-functionalism,” or, as we shall see shortly, a “realism.” It is why Rossi does not distinguish between his own “thinking

⁶⁵⁹ Ibid., 92.

⁶⁶⁰ Ibid., 101.

⁶⁶¹ Ibid., 96. The inherent social value of urban “continuity” is as dubious as “freedom of choice,” which Rossi posits on the same page.

⁶⁶² Ibid., 118.

about architecture and the designing of it” (“tra un pensare l’architettura e il progettarla”).⁶⁶³ The Project, by positing this overcoming of its particularity, instantiates the transcendental value of form posited in the theory:

This theory arises from an analysis of the urban reality; and this reality contradicts the notion that preordained functions by themselves govern artifacts and that the problem is simply to give form to certain functions. In actuality, forms in the very act of being constituted go beyond the functions which they must serve; they arise like the city itself. In this sense, too, the building is one with the urban reality, and the urban character of architectural artefacts takes on greater meaning with respect to the design project.⁶⁶⁴

Rossi will later define this process through the notion of “analogy,”⁶⁶⁵ but, as hinted at earlier, it is the solution which gave the essay, “Architecture for Museums” its name. The title is adapted from what Rossi calls the “manifesto” of Paul Cézanne: “*I paint only for museums*. In this statement Cézanne clearly declared the need for a painting style, following a logical and rigorous development, and placing itself inside the logic of painting verified in museums.”⁶⁶⁶ Here, in order to substantiate the theories of architecture and design, to stabilise the inherently transitory historical character of the architectural discipline, Rossi fuses architectural practice to its institutional self-consistency—its ability to manage its own disciplinary boundaries and substantiate its social autonomy. In order to establish a disciplinary coherence, architects must produce not only architecture, but “Architecture.”

We should note parenthetically that the entire history of the neo-avant-garde in architecture as in art can be defined by the conspiratorial pseudo-dialectic between institutional critique and institutional verification.⁶⁶⁷ These elements were of course also present in the historical avant-garde, but with the following significant difference: previously, for social and historical reasons, the dialectic was unstable, threatening, if not delivering, the destruction of the museum and the realisation of art in life—a process in which, as Tafuri argued, architecture had a central if tragic role.⁶⁶⁸ With the neo-avant-garde, taking its cue from the disappearance of historical conditions, rather than their intense presence, this instability is gone. Architecture explicitly defines itself, as demonstrated by Rossi’s characteristic argument, as that which is *not realised*. The stalled dialectic of the neo-avant-

⁶⁶³ Rossi, “Architettura per i musei”/“Architecture for Museums,” 26, 8.

⁶⁶⁴ Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 118.

⁶⁶⁵ “This overlapping of the individual and the collective memory, together with the invention that takes place within the *time* of the city, has led me to the concept of *analogy*. Analogy expresses itself through a process of architectural design whose elements are preexisting and formally defined, but whose true meaning is unforeseen at the beginning and unfolds only at the end of the process. Thus the meaning of the process is identified with the meaning of the city.” Rossi, American Introduction to *The Architecture of the City*, 18.

⁶⁶⁶ Rossi, “Architettura per i musei”/“Architecture for Museums,” 35. “«io dipingo solo per i musei». Con questa frase Cézanne, in modo chiarissimo, dichiara la necessità di una pittura che prosegue un suo sviluppo logico rigoroso e che si pone all’interno della logica della pittura che, appunto, viene verificata nei musei.” Ibid., 22.

⁶⁶⁷ The presence of this dialectic was recognised by Adorno. See Peter Osborne, “Aesthetic Autonomy and the Crisis of Theory,” *new formations* 9 (Winter 1989): 40—41. However, remaining within “immanent critique,” neither Adorno nor Osborne drew from this a conclusion quite as harsh as the above.

⁶⁶⁸ Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*, p.48

garde expresses perfectly the political logic of the (neo)liberal “end of history,” which can be detected precisely in the endless novelty generation of institutions whose structural order (the art market) remains essentially uncontested.

Such is the function of the Project as disciplinary ideology. However, the self-reflexive disciplinary solution at the level of “value” threatens to subsume all that makes the architecture of the city a “collective process”—which incidentally, was also a core basis of its value as ideology. This contradiction is defined by Lobsinger as that which repetition seeks to transcend:

By means of repetition Rossi is able to quell the unreconciled and to desire totality while acknowledging its impossibility. Repetition permits the coexistence of contradictory aims, an adherence to the realist denial of subjective expression for objective totality and the acquiescence to the subjective within the creative process and in architecture.⁶⁶⁹

Lobsinger highlights a key dimension of the Project; nevertheless, the particular character of architecture as institution suggests a contradiction already within the notions of architectural “realism,” “collectivity,” and “objectivity.” The opposition between objectivity and subjectivity, which may be experienced by the architect as a crisis of culture and of the discipline, points really to the partiality of the architectural subject within the objective totality: the class basis of architecture.

We can better apprehend the limitations of an architectural “realism,” by examining what form of social reality Rossi considered to be representable through architecture. We turn now to Rossi’s remarks on the connection between class, architecture, and the city, where it becomes evident that the architectural “real” can be nothing other than the function of ideology itself.

⁶⁶⁹ Lobsinger “That Obscure Object of Desire,” 56.

3.4 POLITICS IN *THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE CITY*

Rossi's political arguments in *The Architecture of the City*, were, it should be no surprise, highly ambiguous, even outright contradictory. A single paragraph of the introduction makes the difficulty plain:

The last part of this book attempts to set forth the political problem of the city; here the political problem is understood as a problem of choice by which a city realizes itself through its own idea of city. In fact, I am convinced that there should be many more studies devoted to the history of the idea of the city, that is, to the history of ideal cities and urban utopias. To my knowledge, undertakings in this area are scarce and fragmentary, although some partial studies exist in the fields of architectural history and the history of political ideas. In effect, there is a continuous process of influence, exchange, and often opposition among urban artifacts, and the city and ideal proposals make this process concrete. I maintain that the history of architecture and built urban artefacts is always the history of the architecture of the ruling classes; it remains to be seen within what limits and with what concrete success eras of revolution have imposed their own alternative proposals for organizing the city.⁶⁷⁰

Separated by musings on the need for more philosophical and literary research, Rossi makes the claim, first, that the city itself is the subject of political choice, and that choice is made on the basis of ideals, only to then declare, second, that the real history of the city is the history of the ruling class. This passage immediately suggests the contradiction between the "ideal idea of city" and the real historical city—in other words the ideological character of the "city" and its "architecture." If the results are determined by class, then in what sense can one speak of an "ideal" or of a "choice"? This also casts a serious shadow on Rossi's ubiquitous statements regarding the "collective" subject of the city, a collective which is revealed to be strongly partial, a class, rather than the universal or trans-historical "humanity."

One could read these statements against the premise of the entire book, and in particular as contradicting the notion of politics as "choice." However, Rossi's further statements on the subject are rather too ambiguous to allow such a direct confrontation. He will go on not only to uphold this class characterisation, but to define a perspective in which political choice nevertheless coincides with architectural agency. How is this possible?

Containing the bulk of explicitly political reflections, the final chapter, "The Evolution of Urban Artifacts," is also almost certainly the most interesting. The majority of its analysis would confirm the image of Rossi as proponent of a materialist "urban science," covering the determining impact of political and economic forces (speculation, expropriation, private landownership) citing the analysis of modernists like Hans Bernoulli, and then, citing Friedrich Engels, reflecting critically upon the Bernoulli's own "romantic socialist" limitations. Toward the end, Rossi returns explicitly to contemporary Italian polemics, to the themes of "Nuovi Problemi," and to the question of the "New Urban Scale." Thus it is no surprise that in suggesting the value of Rossi's work to contemporary debates, Lobsinger

⁶⁷⁰ Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 23.

recommends that new readers of *The Architecture of the City*, ignore the introductions and enter through this chapter first.⁶⁷¹ However, after this analysis, the concluding pages abruptly change course, returning to the theme of “politics as choice.” This throws the institutional question, what precisely the political role of the architect might be, back into frame in a way that undercuts the bulk of the earlier material. Rossi will maintain that none of the above political economic forces really bear on the “*quality*” of the urban artifact,⁶⁷² which, as we have seen, is the source of architectural “value” Rossi seeks.

Beginning with the economic register, Rossi considers what effect land ownership has upon the city, and whether or not a qualitative difference can be brought about by changes at that level. He believes it to be possible at the overall scale of the city, but appears less sure of the implications for “urban artifacts”:

Several theorists have asserted that state ownership of property—that is, the abolition of private property—constitutes the qualitative difference between the capitalist city and the socialist one. This position is undeniable, but does it relate to urban artifacts? I am inclined to believe that it does, since the use and availability of urban land are fundamental issues; however it still seems only a condition—a necessary condition, to be sure, but not a determining one.⁶⁷³

It is on this point, that the question of “choice” depends, distinguishing between the structural character of the city overall, wherein economics play a determining role, and the autonomous, specific structure of “urban artifacts.” He continues: “Ultimately, however, behind and beyond economic forces and conditions lies the problem of choices; and these choices, which are political in nature, can only be understood in light of the total structure of urban artifacts.”⁶⁷⁴

Stepping back for a moment, we can better grasp the stakes for this argument, if we position it within the larger trajectory of architectural ideology: the crisis in planning ideology, and pivot toward what would become the Project. Rossi’s ideas concerning “choice,” the way he divides the urban field into two registers, should be understood as an answer to the problem Tafuri discussed several years later in “Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology.” Positing the supersession of architecture’s “ideology of the Plan” in the Plan of Capital, Tafuri distinguishes between the subject of the Plan and its object. Having become the object, architecture and urban planning no longer offer “choices” at that level: “once the Plan came within the scope of the general reorganization of production, architecture and urban planning would become its objects, not its subjects.”⁶⁷⁵ In the first

⁶⁷¹ “Skip the introductions and begin with the last chapter.” Lobsinger, “New Urban Scale,” 37.

⁶⁷² Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 160.

⁶⁷³ *Ibid.*, 141.

⁶⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷⁵ Tafuri, “Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology,” 21.

pages of this chapter, Rossi, though far from reflecting on its material historicity, appears to admit this condition if only to carve out a region of relative autonomy from political economic determination: “urban artefacts,” being autonomous from such reorganisation, still allow the possibility of “choice.” However, earlier in the book Rossi had already restricted the terms in which such choices could be construed:

The relationship in architecture between the collective urban artifact and the individual is unique with respect to the other technics and arts. In fact, architecture presents itself as a vast cultural movement: it is discussed and criticized well beyond the narrow circle of its specialists; it needs to be realized, to become part of the city, to become ‘the city.’ In a certain sense, there is no such thing as buildings that are politically ‘opposed,’ since the ones that are realized are always those of the dominant class, or at least those which express a possibility of reconciling certain new needs with a specific urban condition.⁶⁷⁶

Thus even choices at the level of the building are determined by the class character of the city overall, of the ideologically posited “city.” Whatever “choice” may be at the level of the individual “urban artifact” it cannot contradict or escape the total “collective” determination. Further complicating matters, Rossi appears to suggest that changes in the class constitution of the city do not affect its form. This results from the thesis of “spatial continuity”: that the city is free of qualitative discontinuities. Rossi admits that this is a controversial proposition since “it would deny that there is a qualitative leap from the historical city to the city of the Industrial Revolution.”⁶⁷⁷ It is also because of this thesis that Rossi is able to maintain transhistorical validity of the city of antiquity as model for the present.

We are forced to reckon with the fact that in so far as the city can be grasped through its architecture (the premise of the book), Rossi does not think it can be understood as a product of class relations. Neither changes in class constitution brought about through changes in society’s mode of production, nor reforms motivated by class politics, nor revolutionary ruptures, can produce properly “Architectural” effects. Architecture, in Rossi’s analysis is qualitatively autonomous from class, even though he acknowledges that from an historical perspective, the history of architecture and the city is inseparable from the history of class.

Perhaps surprisingly, the idea that the city did not fundamentally change with the development of the capitalist mode of production or the appearance of the industrial working class, appears to be supported by no less an authority on Marx than Friedrich Engels. In fact, much of the final chapter gives the impression that Rossi is far closer to Marxist orthodoxy than to his Italian workerist contemporaries at *Classe Operaia*. In a number of passages, Rossi argues for the progressive character of bourgeois development—for instance, Haussmann’s Paris,⁶⁷⁸ or the earlier break-up of communal and feudal lands into small

⁶⁷⁶ Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 113.

⁶⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁶⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 156.

private holdings—as progressive and inevitable developments.⁶⁷⁹ Rossi appears to be following something close to the progressive historicism of orthodox Marxism, maintaining the generally inevitable and in any case progressive character of bourgeois development, against the moralising “romanticism” of socialists like Hans Bernoulli or William Morris. Rossi pursues this line, denying that industrialism *per se* was at fault for the housing problems of large European cities.⁶⁸⁰ This leads Rossi to his most emphatically Marxist reflections:

What is mysterious at first glance is to see how most urban historians have been able to reconcile the theses of the romantic socialists with the analysis made by Friedrich Engels. What is Engel’s thesis? Simply this: ‘that the large cities have made the malady of the social organism, which was chronic in the country, acute, and in so doing have illuminated the true essence [of the problem] and the way to cure it.’ {17} Engels does not say that the cities before the Industrial Revolution were a paradise; rather in his indictment of the living conditions of the British working class he emphasizes how the rise of big industry only worsened and made apparent what were already impossible living conditions.

The consequences of the rise of big industry thus are not something that concerns large cities specifically; rather they are a fact that has to do with bourgeois society. Thus, Engels denies that a conflict of this type may be resolved at all in spatial terms, and the proof of his critique is to be found in Haussmann’s projects, the attempts at slum clearance in the English cities, and the projects of the romantic socialists. As this implies, Engels also rejects the notion that the phenomenon of industrialism is necessarily bound up with urbanism; in fact, he declares that to think that spatial initiatives can affect the industrial process is a pure abstraction, and practically speaking a reactionary point of view. I believe that it would be a mistake to try to add anything to this position.⁶⁸¹

At this point Rossi is in clear opposition to the later, anti-industrial radicalism of fellow “rationalists” Maurice Culot and Leon Krier,⁶⁸² while at the same time remaining critical of the Modern Movement. He appears to reject such polemics outright as being premised on a false choice.

Notwithstanding the above, Rossi does add significantly to Engels’ position. The point appears to be that class does not produce specifically architectural effects, does not impact *form*. As an example, Rossi gives Giovanni Antonio Antolini’s *Foro Bonaparte*, a strongly formal proposition for a monumental piazza surrounding and transforming Milan’s Sforza castle. Rossi acknowledges the project’s economic reality, that the new “urban artefact” was to form a commercial district for the developing bourgeoisie; however, he denies that this socio-economic function can be read in the form, and cites examples in which similar ideas were applied within different political contexts.⁶⁸³

⁶⁷⁹ Ibid., 154.

⁶⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁸¹ Ibid., 155.

⁶⁸² See Maurice Culot and Leon Krier, “The Only Path for Architecture” in *Architecture Theory since 1968*, 350—355.

⁶⁸³ Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 146.

Yet for Rossi, this does not mean that form is a-political, only that its politics are not determined by economics or class. We seem to be approaching a definition of “political choice” in terms of *tactics*. Here, despite the above, we can locate the opposite parallel, one with Rossi’s *workerist* contemporaries. To refresh, the idea of the “autonomy of the political,” which holds that political goals can be pursued through a tactical engagement with political institutions alone, was developed by Mario Tronti, in a very particular political context. It arose specifically out of the left critique of reform, of a situation in which the strength of class politics had appeared to have succeeded only in strengthening capital’s position. The “autonomy of the political” suggests that a decisive force is required to translate this class mobilisation into a revolutionary confrontation with capital. As Tronti later reflected,

The whole discussion on the ‘autonomy of the political’— which originated in *operaismo* and spread from there—was about this. Workers’ struggles determine the course of capitalist development; but capitalist development will use those struggles for its own ends if no organized revolutionary process opens up, capable of changing that balance of forces. It is easy to see this in the case of social struggles in which the entire systemic apparatus of domination repositions itself, reforms, democratizes and stabilizes itself anew.⁶⁸⁴

Tronti argued that one could attain strategic political goals by intervening tactically within reformist and bourgeois political institutions, rather than waiting for ideal economic conditions or the force of larger class organisation. Rossi’s argument concerning “choice” also appears to turn on the difference between strategy and tactics, though in this case it is the tactics of the rulers. Characterising the overall development of bourgeois land ownership, he splits the problem between a general law and the particularity of individual cases:

These phenomena had to do, in sum, with the working out of a general law to which all bourgeois states were subject, and as such it was positive. The division of the great estates, expropriations, and the formation of a new land registry system were all necessary economic phases in the evolution of Western cities. What varies from city to city is the political context in which this process came about; and only here, in terms of political choices, are significant differences to be found.⁶⁸⁵

Hence qualitative differences at the architectural level can be found in something like the difference between tactical solutions within individual contexts. We are still left with the difficulty that these solutions are those of the ruling class, but have we not moved closer to something like political “realism” or “neo-functionalism”? The problem turns on the precise character of the subject of choice: “The subjective element in architecture has the same tremendous importance it has in politics. Both architecture and politics can be and have to be understood as sciences, but their creative moment is based on decisional elements.”⁶⁸⁶ Rossi will argue that the “city’s” political choices are made “always and only through its political

⁶⁸⁴ Mario Tronti, “Our Operaismo,” 128.

⁶⁸⁵ Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 154.

⁶⁸⁶ Rossi, “Architettura per i musei”/“Architecture for Museums,” 26, 8.

institutions.”⁶⁸⁷ However, this statement hardly matches the rest of his discourse, where both the “theory of architecture” and “theory of design” require a definition of the architect’s disciplinary agency:

This relationship between a collective artifact, which is necessarily an urban artifact, and the individual who proposes and single-handedly realizes it can only be understood through a study of the technics by which the artifact is manifested. There are many different technics; one of them is architecture, and since this is the object of our study, we must here be concerned with it above all, and with economics and history only to the extent that they are manifested in the architecture of the city.⁶⁸⁸

It is the specific character of these “technics” which, as we have already seen, leads architecture into the “museum.” On this point institutional necessity becomes decisive, for in some significant sense the subject must be the architect.

Before coming to a definite characterisation of Rossi’s position, we should note that the characterisation of political questions in terms of “choice” goes back to “Nuovi problemi,” where it reflects a subtle thematisation of architecture’s connection to politics. In the second of Rossi’s concluding recommendations, he lays out a clear proposition for political awareness, suggesting the need for,

The thorough study of the relationships between a political choice and a choice in town planning [“sclera urbanistica”]: in the sense of a political awareness of the work of town planning [“lavoro urbanistico”], of the capacity on the part of town planning [“da parte dell’urbanista”] to propose precise solutions, without falling into the mistake of believing itself capable of absorbing in itself—in the act of planning [“nell’atto della pianificazione”]—the value of a political choice; which alone can bring about the transformation. On the other hand, the exclusion of the concept of planning [“pianificazione”] as a purely technical and objective fact, as an instrument capable of being used indifferently for any political solution.⁶⁸⁹

The passage in the original Italian concludes with a recommendation for “ideological clarity” and for the urbanist to take a “clear” approach toward the “present reality.”⁶⁹⁰ The passage suggests that urbanism come to a better understanding of its own political implications, and that the urbanist take a clear political position while resisting the temptation to supersede proper political choices with the choices of planning (“pianificazione”). Furthermore, introducing a bit of a complication, “planning” must not be considered a politically neutral tool that awaits this or that political choice. Some form of political

⁶⁸⁷ Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 161.

⁶⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 113.

⁶⁸⁹ From excerpt translated in English: Aldo Rossi, “New Problems,” *Ekistics* 15, no. 87 (1963): 103. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43616058>. “L’approfondimento dei rapporti tra scelta politica e scelta urbanistica: nel senso di una coscienza politica del lavoro urbanistico, della capacità da parte dell’urbanista di proporre precise soluzioni, senza cadere nell’equivoco di credersi capace di assorbire in sé—nell’atto della pianificazione—il valore della scelta politica. D’altra parte, l’esclusione del concetto di pianificazione come fatto puramente tecnico e oggettivo, come strumento da potersi usare indifferentemente per qualsiasi soluzione politica.” Aldo Rossi, “Nuovi problemi,” 191.

⁶⁹⁰ “Questo invita alla chiarezza ideologica e alla chiara posizione dell’urbanista verso la realtà presente.” Rossi, “Nuovi problemi,” 191.

mediation occurs through the discipline of urbanism/planning, and the better appreciation of this dimension should be a priority.

The passage is a good example of what Lobsinger sought to locate under the name “urban science”: an interrogation of disciplinary method in which can be found a combination of Rossi’s early political optimism with a certain disciplinary scepticism—a critical awareness of the limitations of “planning,” and the need for a better disciplinary footing. It is a stance that reflects the political situation discussed above: a moment of potential that obtained between the introduction of the first *centro-sinistra* government and their disavowal of planning reform.

This passage should help us to contextualise Rossi’s later statements regarding political and architectural “choice.” While it seems that Project ideology was nearly absent at this early point, its beginnings can nevertheless be detected. For instance, we can already see in the nascent critique of planning ideology—of the economism, technocracy, and assumed political neutrality of “planning” discussed above—the point of departure for the Project’s critical “social mission” through architecture. Rossi appears to be suggesting the need for a politically informed disciplinarity, not merely the direction of planning by politics. However, temporarily matching Tafuri’s later critiques of the “ideology of the Plan,” Rossi’s recommendations are held in a kind of critical suspension.

One might go even further, and attempt a reading of this passage through Tronti’s definition of the political “counterplan.”⁶⁹¹ According to Tronti’s argument, political choices must themselves be produced within a planned, strategic perspective, though certainly not an architectural or urban one. In “Nuovi Problemi” it is possible to read architecture and urban planning as the *object* rather than the subject of political choice, though through the ambiguity of the disciplinary question this characterisation is less than certain. Rossi’s schematism between planning and “choice” suggests that in political terms at this early stage he was poised somewhere between the “autonomy of the political” and the “counterplan.”

With the change of political context brought about by the failure of the *centro-sinistra* to implement planning reform, the institutional situation changed fundamentally and the political content of Rossi’s disciplinary recommendations resolved into its more familiar shape. By 1966, as part of a “theory of architecture” Rossi is ready to propose a definition of architecture capable of internalising “political choice.”

⁶⁹¹ Tronti, “Social Capital,” 23.

3.4.1 The Project as Will to Architecture

In the last pages of *The Architecture of the City*, under the sub-heading “Politics as Choice,” the preceding arguments of the chapter are synthesised. Rossi remarks on the valuable if flawed contributions of the Modern Movement.⁶⁹² He then remarks perspicaciously on how Engels’ analysis attained a powerful clarity due to its extra-disciplinary position, though, he adds, it fell short of a true study of the city due to the same extra-disciplinary distance.⁶⁹³ Finally, compressed into the final paragraphs, Rossi attempts to defend the political possibilities for architecture and define the terms through which politics becomes “decisive”:

Yet on the basis of all the arguments we have raised here, we not only affirm the relevance of politics but even maintain that it is of primary importance and, indeed, decisive. *Politics constitutes the problem of choices.* Who ultimately chooses the image of a city if not the city itself—and always and only through its political institutions. To say that this choice is indifferent is a banal simplification of the problem. It is not indifferent: Athens, Rome, and Paris are the form of their politics, the signs of their collective will.⁶⁹⁴

The “political choice” appears to be that through which collectively produced architectural “quality” becomes unique to a given city—the quality of that quality, what makes Athens distinct from Rome. It is questionable whether Rossi has adequately developed the terms that allow this difference to be apprehended in both political and architectural terms. However, the crucial turning point occurs in the following lines, where “choice” is referred back to “will.” At this point the “collective” is identified directly by its *will to Architecture*:

Urban architecture—which, as we have repeated many times, is a human creation—is willed as such; thus the Italian piazzas of the Renaissance cannot be explained in terms of their function or by chance. Although these piazzas are means in the formation of the city, such elements which originally start out as means tend to become ends; ultimately they *are* the city. Thus the city has as its end itself alone, and there is nothing else to explain beyond the fact of its own presence in its own artefacts. This mode of being implies a will to exist in a specific way and to continue in that way.

This ‘way’ is what constitutes the beauty of the ancient city, which is always a paradigm for our own urban schemes. Certain functions, time, place, and culture modify our cities as they modify the forms of their architecture; but such modifications have value when and only when they are in action, as events and as testimony, rendering the city evident to itself. We have seen how periods of new events make this problem especially apparent, and how only a correct coincidence of factors yields an authentic urban artifact, one wherein the city realizes in itself its own idea of itself and registers it in stone.⁶⁹⁵

⁶⁹² “Bernoulli, developing his thesis on the relationship between land ownership and the architecture of the city, rapidly arrived at a scientific conception of the city; similarly, but starting from a design point of view, did architect-theoreticians like Le Corbusier, and Ludwig Hilberseimer in the same climate of the Modern Movement. Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 161.

⁶⁹³ *Ibid.*, 161. In this Rossi strongly foreshadowed Tafuri’s later recommendations regarding the disciplinary separation of history from design, the study of the building industry, and of labour relations—with the significant caveat that for Rossi, such an approach is insufficient for architecture. See Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*, xi; and especially the interview with Françoise Very “I mercati della cultura / The culture markets.”

⁶⁹⁴ Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 161–162.

⁶⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 162.

This passage returns the discussion to the overarching premise with which he began: the city as “human creation par excellence.”⁶⁹⁶ It reveals that from the beginning the imputed idea of “urban architecture,” of the “city,” of the “architecture of the city,” and above all of course, “Architecture” itself, is inseparable from an imputed political will. The “collective” political subject becomes inextricable from the discipline, the institution, from “Architecture.”

We are told that the city is the object of a self-conscious political choice on the part of the “collective,” that as such, the ideas of architecture and of the city, of their “form,” are an end in themselves. This point had been articulated earlier in the book as well:

I believe instead that precisely because the city is preeminently a collective fact it is defined by and exists in those works that are of an essentially collective nature. Although such works arise as a means of constituting the city, they soon become an end, and this is their being and their beauty. The beauty resides both in the laws of architecture which they embody and in the collective’s reasons for desiring them.⁶⁹⁷

But we know that this “collective” is nothing other than the dominant classes of a given historical period. In covering Maurice Halbwach’s history of Paris, Rossi even acknowledges that Haussmann’s plan represents “the apparently decisive triumph of the party of order over that of revolution, the bourgeoisie over the working class.”⁶⁹⁸ Yet such enormously influential events are then paradoxically construed as politically neutral manifestations of Enlightenment reason,⁶⁹⁹ or else denied the qualitative status of “urban artifact.”

We must recall that Rossi’s diverse statements are made within the context of a disciplinary search directed toward practical design production. Within the history of modern architecture there is a significant difference between the social terms available from within the process of realisation and those that are available afterward. Thus, the “collective” upon which Rossi’s Project was premised was not of the same character as the “collective” in whose interests The Athens Charter proposed to Plan.⁷⁰⁰ Though we can go back to workerist arguments to demonstrate the suspect nature of reformist social totality, there is an unmistakably structural difference in the two proposals: where the Plan is subject to ideological mediation, the Project is forced to directly construct it.

Thus, the search to define architecture by reference to a transhistorical human subject, while at the same time tying it to the autonomy of the discipline, suggests the contradiction at the heart of architectural “rationalism,” which, as defined by Alan Colquhoun, seeks “that

⁶⁹⁶ Ibid., 57.

⁶⁹⁷ Ibid., 126.

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid., 142.

⁶⁹⁹ Ibid., 156.

⁷⁰⁰ Le Corbusier. *The Athens Charter*, 154.

which conserves architecture as a cultural discourse throughout history.”⁷⁰¹ What results is a conflict between the changing character of human society, and efforts to resist that change, or to mystify its social contradictions. The only evidence for the transhistorical subject is ideologically posited as “Architecture,” and found in the ideal form of Projects, rather than in society itself. As a self-reflexive proposition, that “the collective wills Architecture” *is demonstrated only by the fact that the “collective” is willed by the architect*. The Project as production of “Architecture” becomes the point of convergence between bourgeois class ideology and institutional tactics.

In discursive terms, it is at this point that “theory of architecture” and the “theory of the design” become inextricable, and the paradox must simply be posited as such, becoming what I call a “theory of the *Project*.” Disciplinary “theory” of whatever form, defined against the “method” of the Modern Movement, can only be pursued in the Project, as that practice which unilaterally poses the *possibility of architecture as “Architecture”*—that is, independent any historically or socially verifiable objectivity. In fact, the act of positing Architecture, posits too the social condition for its existence.⁷⁰² As Rossi said apropos Loos’ monument, “Who can distinguish anymore between an event and the sign that marks it?”⁷⁰³

The Project claims for itself a heroic task: “not being able to ‘resolve’ its own intention to resolve, the project is forced to simply manifest itself, surreptitiously, in a mythical manner, to mythicize its own will to power and existence.”⁷⁰⁴ The Project is performative; through its tautological self-enactment, it attempts to realise its own premises: the reality of “Architecture” and of the city as true “collective.” In both cases, the architect functions as mediator of an ideological production, the disciplinary tactician of a general class perspective. The impossibility of “Architecture” is the impossibility of ideology as social strategy, and its possibility within the Project is that ideology nevertheless *functions*. Finally we see the political significance: where the possibility of architecture as “Architecture” depends upon the possibility of the ruling class as universal “collective.” The architect’s “social mission,” mediated by institutional necessity is simply the production of class ideology. The hope for the discipline contained in this proposition, is that capitalist society needs an ideological representation of itself as transhistorical “collective,” which, provided through the autonomous Project as commodity, solves the *value* problem.

Because of its performativity, however, it will find its ideal place not in the “city,” but in the “museum” as support for transhistorical consistency: “a continuous instant in which

⁷⁰¹ Alan Colquhoun, “Rationalism: A Philosophical Concept in Architecture,” in *Collected Essays in Architectural Criticism* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2009), 175.

⁷⁰² Andrew Benjamin has ascribed to this “gap” the opposite political significance. See Benjamin, Andrew. “Allowing Function Complexity: Notes on Adorno’s ‘Functionalism Today,’” *AA Files* no. 41 (Summer 2000): 43–44.

⁷⁰³ Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 106.

⁷⁰⁴ Massimo Cacciari “Nichilismo e progetto,” *Casabella*, 483 (September 1982): 51. Quoted in Vittorio Gregotti, “L’architettura del compimento / The architecture of completion,” in “Il progetto storico di Manfredo Tafuri / The Historical Project of Manfredo Tafuri,” 2–9.

thought and memory are coextensive.”⁷⁰⁵ In this ideal solution, both the museum, and architecture, are guaranteed institutional autonomy, removed from the determining forces of society at large.

It seems clear that in *The Architecture of the City*, Rossi does not propose anything like a “realist” architecture, in the Lukàcsian sense.⁷⁰⁶ First of all, this is because for Rossi, class cannot be represented architecturally, nor can material relations, or social contradictions. As he says, “In a certain sense there is no such thing as buildings that are politically ‘opposed,’ since the ones that are realized are always those of the dominant class.”⁷⁰⁷ Because of this limitation, which we must credit Rossi for recognising, architectural agency must be bracketed in such a way as to reduce its political choices to the purely tactical. However, even at this level, as recuperation of “Architecture” and the “collective” these tactics address social *permanence*, contradicting their very premises. A “realist” Project is a contradiction in terms since the “real” of the Project is the ideological necessity of “Architecture” itself. Rossi may have loved the “socialist realist” architecture of the Soviet Union,⁷⁰⁸ but he seemed to think that the fact of its production in a socialist context was of all things the least significant.

The image one has of Rossi after reading *The Architecture of the City* is of a committed socialist, possibly a communist, with a rigorous understanding of the political and economic forces at work in the city, a skepticism for romantic anti-industrialism, and a grasp on the limited social agency of the architectural discipline. Yet despite these qualities he is driven to contradiction, to put his faith simultaneously in the continuity of an idealised and transhistorical “humanity,” and in the voluntarist possibility of “choices”—all in the name of rescuing “Architecture” from the real history of its problematisation.

If we pursue Rossi’s line of argument we arrive at the following conclusion: whatever political choices are available through “Architecture,” they do not bear upon the material reality of the city, do not bear upon its class character, on the political economic structures which determine urban development according to class interests, nor the fundamental material “quality” of the capitalist city as such. Rather they concern the manner in which the above contradictions and antagonisms can be subsumed within an ideologically posited notion of the “city,” of the “collective,” of its “history” represented by the permanence of “institutions,” primary among them “Architecture” itself. This is the true significance of Rossi’s original proposition regarding the uniqueness of architecture:

⁷⁰⁵ Colquhoun, “Rationalism: A Philosophical Concept in Architecture,” 175.

⁷⁰⁶ Nor, it must be said, owing to the disciplinary contradictions specific to architecture, can it be considered “realist” in the Adornian sense in which Beckett could be considered such. Osborne, “Autonomy and the Crisis of Theory,” 42.

⁷⁰⁷ Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 113.

⁷⁰⁸ Rossi, *A Scientific Autobiography*, 40, 74.

Aesthetic intention and the creation of better surroundings for life are the two permanent characteristics of architecture. These aspects emerge from any significant attempt to explain the city as a human creation. But because architecture gives concrete form to society and is intimately connected with it and with nature, it differs fundamentally from every other art and science.⁷⁰⁹

What makes architecture unique, different from every other art and science is its capacity to give “concrete form” to ideology. “Architecture as such,” is a disciplinary *strategy*, and an institutional *tactic* that gives concrete form to ideology in general.

⁷⁰⁹ Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 21.

FIRST AS TRAGEDY, THEN AS FARCE, THEN WHAT?

Perhaps the laws of the city are exactly like those that regulate the life and destiny of individual men. Every biography has its own interest, even though it is circumscribed by birth and death. Certainly the architecture of the city, the human thing par excellence, is the physical sign of this biography, beyond the meanings and the feelings with which we recognize it.

Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*⁷¹⁰

These final lines of *The Architecture of the City* provide a clear precedent for the terms of the later *A Scientific Autobiography*, tying the problem of “Architecture” to the trajectory of the individual subject. In the case of Rossi’s own work, it is a trajectory which demonstrates not the laws and life of a city, but the laws, contradictions, and limitations that regulate disciplinary self-constitution.

Though I define its ideological character differently, I support Lobsinger’s general thematisation of *repetition*:

I propose to interpret Rossi’s repetition as a symptom sponsored by his attempt to reconcile at least two opposing aims. The first of these involves the recognition that the unrealized ideals embodied in his youthful embrace of realism still prevail. The second involves his realization that a scientific approach to objective architectural reality denied that which cannot be suppressed in the creative process: the self and subjectivity. There is a strong ideological conflict between these aims, since adherence to the first disavows a place for the self and the kind of subjectivity that wells forth through intuition, associations, and memories.⁷¹¹

The diagnosis of this symptom as a manifestation of Project ideology—repetition as ideological practice—requires, in addition to Freudian interpretive tools, their Marxian counterpart: “immanent functional interpretation.” What I have attempted to demonstrate through a reading of “Architecture for Museums” and *The Architecture of the City*, is the impossibility of a “realist” architectural Project. Repetition is not the product of an opposition between objective social reality and subjective “intuition,” not a problem of disciplinary method, but of its mediation by institutional necessity.

Within the trajectory of Rossi’s production, late propositions regarding “intuition, associations, and memories,” the architect’s decision to cease interrogating the architectural “real,” but instead to “think of a certain lighthouse, of a memory and of a summer”⁷¹² demonstrate not the difficulty of attaining that “real” but rather its true character. The meaning of the subjective element, in the end, is the intransigence of the professional subject of architecture (the architect) regarding their place in the relations of production. The *Project* performs a synthetic mediating function, producing the “total architecture”—the city as

⁷¹⁰ Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 163.

⁷¹¹ Lobsinger, “That Obscure Object of Desire,” 53.

⁷¹² Aldo Rossi, *A Scientific Autobiography*, 24.

collective “work of art”—as the ideal of professional production. Critically assessing Rossi’s projects could never be as simple as merely reflecting on the failure of the individual project to achieve the status of the collectively produced “urban artifact,” for there is no “urban artifact” except as horizon for the Project.

Many potent elements of Rossi’s Project found new form in later theory and later projects, and the present moment has aligned in such a way as to suggest a new operativity. However, in “biographical” terms, Rossi’s Project had a limited lifespan—the contradictions of his particular solution eventually undermining its operativity. Rossi himself was aware of this, giving up on the possibility of achieving the disciplinary coherence he had sought at the same time as he recognised that the only solution to the “misery of modern culture” could be sought outside of architecture. This is why the poverty of Rossi’s later work coincides with a paradoxically more concrete political perception. Rossi’s later thoughts on the impossibility of architecture expose the possibility of politics: “It is no longer possible to do anything about it: to modify the misery of modern culture, a great popular movement is necessary, and the misery of architecture is the expression of this knowledge.”⁷¹³ The late Rossi finally moves in his architectural theory to an extrinsic position outside of disciplinary ambiguity, nearly arriving at his own critique of architectural ideology.

Therefore the ideological difference between de-politicised and heavily politicised neo-avant-gardes, between those who simply “still want to make ‘Architecture,’”⁷¹⁴ and those who in addition want that “Architecture” to overcome the political limitations of the Modern Movement, is defined by the profundity of the latter’s contradictions, to the point that, in Rossi’s case at least, they may eventually enter conscious reflection. For architecture’s contemporary left, one hopes that such self-consciousness can be attained more swiftly and coherently through external critique of ideology, than by again renewing the process of repetition from its politically flawed starting point. The failure of the historical avant-garde was tragic, the neo-avant-garde a farce. What comes next? As Lobsinger described it

In repeating, the subject does not experience a welling up of the past but rather the activity seems fully determined by events in the present. In repetition, something historical is brought forth in another form despite the fact that both the activity and causal event appear ahistorical. Repetition is an attempt to totalize within a symbolic fragment or activity, and in totalizing—here think of Rossi’s architecture—it binds and makes it silent and ahistorical.⁷¹⁵

We have seen the diverse ways through which the Project developed as an explicit discourse and a general ideology. I have attempted to emphasise its problematic “immanence” to Marxist theory and the political history of the left: from the critique of social democracy, reformism, and the Plan, to the historical Project, the critical Project, and the

⁷¹³ Ibid., 3.

⁷¹⁴ Biraghi, *Project of Crisis*, 100

⁷¹⁵ Mary Louise Lobsinger “That Obscure Object of Desire,” 44.

Project as a theory of “Architecture” and theory of design. In the last example, we have seen how contradictions within his “disciplinary search” and “social mission” drove Rossi toward a final resignation. But we have also seen how in that final moment the nature of the problem appeared to resolve into its correct structural character. Rossi’s late melancholia can be sympathetically characterised by a simultaneous cultural pessimism *and* political surrender. He offers neither reformist solutions nor radical counter-projects, but, awaiting revolution, he resigns himself to the pathos of private aesthetic reflections.

While the 1980s suggested no such social transformation was on the horizon, today the prospects are less certain. What value then does a contemporary repetition of Rossi’s model offer? Does it offer to repeat this final insight or forever suspend it? What is the value, in 2018, of an exhibition such as Daniel Sherer’s *Aldo Rossi: The Architecture and Art of the Analogous City*?⁷¹⁶ The exhibition’s text offers this explanation:

Renewed attention to the works showcased in the exhibition casts an unexpected light on the architectural present and its roots in theory and practice from the late sixties to the eighties. A glance at Rossi now opens new doors to a radical critique of this era by stressing the deep temporality of architectural type, the principle of analogy linking built form to the world of objects at different scales, and unique perceptions of space that only architecture can offer.⁷¹⁷

The ideological value of this “radical critique” should be plain, but do such conceptual “new doors” really offer the literal production of new architecture? What concrete operativity does it present? As ideology, the contemporary Project appears to renew the value of Rossi’s example as a means to suspend rather than overcome the difficult challenges that confront the institution. Likewise, the historical Project and the Project of crisis divert historical and critical perspectives away from a proper understanding. Clearly there is a difference between the ideological function of the Project in the 1960s and 1970s, and its contemporary return. While the historical Project of the neo-avant-gardes presented an anticipatory ideology for neoliberal “Architecture,” and a rearguard ideology for the discipline, the contemporary Project offers essentially only the latter. Sherer is far more obviously, to quote Tafuri, a “vestal of the discipline,” than producer of “new models.”⁷¹⁸ The Project today is a refusal to face the historical position of architecture within contemporary society. It is a repetition of a repetition, an attempt to redeem a failed redemption, to escape the history of architecture into the museum institutions of “art,” or else into a purely ideological role within academic discourse.

Real architectural graduates are facing an ever more reduced and stratified professional field, while, politically speaking, recent crises have opened onto new social democratic and

⁷¹⁶ *Aldo Rossi, The Architecture and Art of the Analogous City*, exhibition curated by Daniel Sherer at Princeton University School of Architecture, February 5–March 30, 2018. <https://www.e-flux.com/announcements/173776/aldo-rossi-the-architecture-and-art-of-the-analogous-city/>. Accessed 17 September, 2018.

⁷¹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷¹⁸ Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*, 283–284.

nascently “socialist” movements, suggesting a modicum of political optimism may be permissible. Tafuri’s comments to Françoise Very in 1976⁷¹⁹ are even more pressingly true now: to unite these conditions into a politicised “architecture” requires first of all that class stratification within the discipline must, through worker organisation, be brought to bear upon its institutional character. But in order for this to happen the ideological pretences of the architect as cultural-political agent must be exchanged for a militant understanding of the architect’s social conditions and the social conditions for “architecture.”

Encouragingly, recent years have seen renewed attempts to organise architectural workers within the office, and, within discourse, to thematise architectural production as “labour.”⁷²⁰ However, because of its underlying disciplinary ambiguity, the mediating power of architectural ideology is difficult to overcome. Too easily perceptions of architectural proletarianisation, embedded within even the character of intellectual labour, are translated by architecture theory and criticism into new ideological retrenchments, adding contemporary twists to the Project.

As an example, Peer Illner’s “For Me, Myself and I: Architecture in the Age of Self-Reflexivity”⁷²¹ presents a symptomatic reversal. The analysis begins with a simplistic but nevertheless progressive nostalgia for the architect as technical professional (ie planner). This past is looked at with longing from the present of highly commodified, and expressly “cultural” Starchitecture, with its stark class division within the office. Then Illner invokes Hegel’s master-slave dialectic and Marx’s dialectic of class-consciousness, to suggest that the evils of present architectural work may offer the conditions for a new political mobilisation. So far, we are comfortably within a Western Marxist approach, however, just as we saw with Boano and Perucich’s critique of Aravena, the Project twist was not long in coming.

The point of transformative consciousness, of political leverage, is not the architect’s enlightening exposure to the material realities of the city, but to the *cultural* poverty of housing. Thus the architect does not fight for a higher wage or for the production of more and cheaper housing, but for the *architectural value of “dwelling”*: “If in the question of social housing, today’s architects are themselves put at stake, they must encounter building as fundamentally related to dwelling. This opens up an avenue for rethinking the entire field of architecture.”⁷²²

⁷¹⁹ “Think for the moment what an enormous transformation this means for the job market. It’s the transformation of the writer, Balzac, into a journalist, i.e., the greatest of revolutions. Balzac could not have gone on strike on his own, whereas journalists on the *Courier della Sera* or the *Messaggero* can effectively influence the political conditions of their work. On the other hand you have the atomized writer, who is of no use whatsoever. The reunified architect corresponds to this massification of abstract labour which, in the final analysis, interest us as a political weapon. I don’t believe such architects would constitute an unproductive tertiary sector, but a productive one.” Tafuri and Very, “I mercati della cultura / The culture markets,” 45. As recognised also by Diane Ghirardo, this interview contains Tafuri’s clearest and reflections on how architecture should be politicised. See Ghirardo, “Manfredo Tafuri and Architecture Theory in the U.S., 1970-2000,” 41.

⁷²⁰ The work of Peggy Deamer and the Architecture Lobby are prominent examples.

⁷²¹ Peer Illner, “For Me, Myself, and I: Architecture in the Age of Self-Reflexivity,” in *Real Estates: Life Without Debt*, ed. Jack Self and Shumi Bose (London: Bedford Press, 2014), 51—56.

⁷²² *Ibid.*, 54.

This paradoxically turns the architect away from the disciplinary nostalgia for planning with which Illner began and away from the very pressing need for its contemporary application among an urban population in which architects newly find themselves. Instead the architect searches out a new autonomy:

Relating Heidegger's equation of building and dwelling to Marx's account of the class relation, we could argue however that dwelling "becomes thinkable again at the point of the complete subsumption of life under capital. When architects are forced to abandon their abstract position as planners, and enter the brute conditions of urban survival, there is a chance for a *prise de conscience*; rather than executing client orders, the architect could start questioning her relation to building and dwelling.⁷²³

What began as a quasi-Marxist analysis of the potential for class consciousness on the part of proletarianised architectural workers, ends with a reinvestment in the professional status and cultural agency of traditional architecture: "Today's architectural labour crisis might sow the seeds for such a collective emancipation precisely where building is taught and takes place, in the profession of architecture itself." Rather than understanding and radicalising the disciplinary and class split within the architectural institution, the architect finds one last promise of redemption, one last morsel to feed their cultural optimism. Illner invokes Hegel's master-slave dialectic only to demonstrate how, in the end, our political architect identifies with the *master*, with Frank Gehry or Peter Zumthor rather than some forgotten worker in a municipal planning office. We might call this inversion the "slave-master" dialectic. It is a betrayal more than a rejection of the class consciousness so nearly won, an irresistible urge to turn away from a truth too difficult and too *expensive* to bear: that the reduction of the cultural intellectual to mere worker brings them closest to political agency.

From progressive to reactionary—in philosophical terms, this about-face is keyed to a shift of reference from Marx to Heidegger, a false dialectic which transforms materialism into existentialism and political militancy into the aesthete's self-satisfaction.⁷²⁴ In Illner's essay, the bourgeois character of architecture's "social mission"—the resolution to remain on the wrong side of class politics while claiming to represent a left or working class perspective—reaches one of its purest expressions.

A similar reversal of the significance of proletarianisation can be found in Pier Vittorio Aureli's writing on Tafuri. There the "historical project" converts the Marxist "transformation of necessity" into the intellectual's "will to understand."⁷²⁵ Additionally, much of Aureli's

⁷²³ Ibid., 55.

⁷²⁴ We should recall here that this is far from a novel reversal. For Heidegger, as with previous reactionary philosophers of the same lineage like Rudolf Eucken, and contemporary inheritors of their "self-help" perspective such as Jordan Peterson, the starting point is always the social ills of modern capitalist society originally and most thoroughly diagnosed by Marxism. Reactionary philosophy, as with reactionary political movements generally, is notoriously dependent on premises established by the left. For an extensive analysis of this dependency, see the chapter "From Marx to Heidegger" and its sub-section "Rudolf Eucken as Precursor" in Cristoph Henning's *Philosophy after Marx*.

⁷²⁵ Pier Vittorio Aureli, "Intellectual Work and Capitalist Development: Origins and Context of Manfredo Tafuri's Critique of Architectural Ideology."

recent work has considered proletarianisation according to a pre-industrial social imaginary. Contemporary class stratification within the architectural office points, not to the discipline's context within the larger relations of production under modern capitalism, but to a distinction *internal* to the history of the institution. Contemporary phenomena point to an original sin: the supersession of the medieval guild by the Renaissance intellectual professional.⁷²⁶ Political conditions for architectural agency therefore depend upon a return to medieval models and institutions: the power of “ritual,” the Franciscan “rule,” the monastic cloister, and the ascetic's cell.⁷²⁷ Within this “feudal socialism”⁷²⁸ is an emphasis on the personal moral responsibility of the individual whose own “way” or “form of life” becomes the basis of political resistance.

Perhaps concrete professional operativity can be found here, for, while planning and overall housing issues remain off limits, these arguments conveniently translate into a valorisation of the domestic scale⁷²⁹ at the same time as “flexible” rent economies drive up the market for interior renovations. While it is certainly not an overt strategy, the institutional implications suggest the architect as consultant on the existential authenticity of the “airbnb.”

Living in peripheral tenements, working long hours on low pay with little prospect of advancement, architectural workers seemingly ought to focus on the metaphysical value of their poor accommodation, or identify with dubious philosophers, thirteenth century monks and masons rather than develop a sense of solidarity with those all around them. It is through the latter that the architectural worker might grasp the contradictions within the architectural institution and be able to articulate a properly political opposition to the conditions of neoliberal capitalism, both immanently and extrinsically.

This contradiction between the cultural, professional, and political prospects of the architect as intellectual worker is a useful example of a general contradiction within the contemporary left. In a 2001 preface to 1985's *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe reflected on the distance traveled since the New Left emerged from the Old. They considered whether or not detrimental effects had arisen from the supersession of political economic struggle by cultural struggle:

Are we, today, in an opposite conjuncture to that which provided the background of our reflection, based as it was in criticizing the Left for not taking the struggles of the 'new movements' into consideration? It is true that the evolution of the parties of the Left has been such that they have become concerned mainly with the middle

⁷²⁶ See Pier Vittorio Aureli, “Do You Remember Counterrevolution?”

⁷²⁷ See for instance, Pier Vittorio Aureli, *Less is Enough* (Moscow: Strelka, 2013); Pier Vittorio Aureli and Maria Shéhérazade Giudici, eds., *Rituals and Walls: The Architecture of Sacred Space*, Research by AA diploma unit 14 (London: Architectural Association, 2016);

Douglas Spencer has written several critiques of this material. See for example, “The Limits of Limits: Schmitt, Aureli, and the Geopolitical Ontology of the Island,” *New Geographies* 8 (2016) and “Less than Enough: A Critique of Aureli,” in *This Thing Called Theory*, eds. Teresa Stoppani, Giorgio Ponzio, and George Themistokleous (London: Routledge, 2016), 283—291.

⁷²⁸ See the chapter “Feudal Socialism” in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (London: Verso, 2016), 50—71.

⁷²⁹ See the publication attributed to Pier Vittorio Aureli and Martino Tataro's office, *Dogma: The Room of One's Own: The Architecture of the (Private) Room* (Milan: Black Square, 2017).

classes, to the detriment of the workers. But this is due to their incapacity to envisage an alternative to neoliberalism and their uncritical acceptance of the imperatives of 'flexibility', not to a supposed infatuation with issues of 'identity'. The solution is not to abandon the 'cultural' struggle to go back to 'real' politics. One of the central tenets of Hegemony and Socialist Strategy is the need to create a chain of equivalence among the various democratic struggles against different forms of subordination.⁷³⁰

Laclau and Mouffe's corrective (now itself nearly two decades old and only growing in significance) appears reasonable enough. They balance an awareness of contemporary reversals with the properly progressive goal of uniting political struggle across social and economic registers. The problem is the following: contradictions within this field must still be recognised and addressed. "Culture" is *institutional* within capitalism. This means that "cultural struggle" tends to be mediated by professional interest.⁷³¹ The contradiction between cultural and class politics is not the fixation of a recalcitrant "vulgar materialism," but a concrete historical by-product of the capitalist relations of production. Bourgeois society has a material stake in the privileging of cultural politics against economic politics. I have attempted to demonstrate this fundamental point through critique of architectural ideology, for it is a field in which these contradictions have a more obvious necessity. The Project demonstrates the profound political ambivalence of "culture," even to the extent of problematising many of its critical practices.

It is hoped that this aspect of the history of architecture contributes to the larger historical materialist understanding of modern society. Because of contextual constraints in the latter decades of the twentieth century—and not only in architecture—this understanding was difficult to construct. The apparent deadlock into which social democracy had led the working class and the apparent mastery of the future which the "Plan of capital" represented, suggested that the era of economic struggle had ended, and a new era of cultural struggle begun. For architecture, having become either objectified by, or excluded from, structural decision making, this perspective coincided conveniently with institutional necessity. This is the context in which the ideology of the Project emerged, but it did not disappear when the contradictions of social democracy gave way to neoliberalism.

Now, as various crises shake the neoliberal order, the historical materialist perspective must be renewed. Project ideology is again becoming explicit as a left discourse, self-consciously taking up the terms it carried fifty years ago in open contradiction to the political, economic, and historical contexts of its past and its present. Today the Project contests neoliberalism by burning social democracy in effigy, eliminating the progressive content which both it and its left critique historically carried, and forcing architecture into deep alignment with neoliberal premisses even as it affects a radical cultural opposition. This strategy is worse than useless, for it contributes to a disastrous contradiction between progressive culture and progressive economics. At the larger political scale, contradictions of

⁷³⁰ Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, xiv.

⁷³¹ It is not for nothing that Marxist theory has struggled for so long over the ambivalent role of the "intellectual."

this kind have allowed the far-right to capitalise on an underlying crisis of consent, fuelling ever more regressive cultural backlashes met by ever new retrenchments in the neoliberal order. Within its sphere, architectural ideology from Plan to Project illustrates the institutional forces and the political stakes involved. New attempts to construct a contemporary left perspective on architectural production cannot afford to forgo understanding them.

Above all, the history of “planning” and of the “project” demonstrates two facts: first, the fundamental importance of “economy” within “political economy”—in this way architectural disciplinarity must maintain a technical interest in “infrastructure,” including a grasp on what economic factors determine architectural “quality.” Second, that while “Architecture” is not a political subject, architects may become political subjects within the labour relations of their institution and engage how those relations mediate disciplinary polemic. Hopefully this combined proposition answers the lost connection described by Tafuri at the end of his long interview with Passerini: the connection between “competence and politics.”⁷³² Let the long counterrealisation be at an end, and, together with extra-disciplinary political movements, a new progressive trajectory begin.

⁷³² Tafuri and Passerini, “History as Project: An Interview with Manfredo Tafuri,” 69.

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