

WOJCIECH CIEPŁUCHA\*

## DWELLING IN CONCRETE

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### ZAMIESZKIWANIE W BETONIE

#### Abstract

Beauty relates to what has been formed, shaped, and not to an architectural building. The form itself is not yet an architectural building, but only that which is aesthetic. Assuming that the form has been created, the creator is at the verge of that which is formed on the one hand, and an architectural building on the other. The act of giving meaning to form will be called transmutation. Many transmutations make up a dwelling. The more sensitive we are in transmuting the matter of which the form is built, the more we dwell.

*Keywords: dwelling, concrete, transmutation, act, form, sensitivity, item*

#### Streszczenie

Piękne odnosi się do tego, co już uformowane, ukształtowane, a nie do budynku architektonicznego. Sama forma nie jest jeszcze budynkiem architektonicznym, ale dopiero tym co estetyczne. Zakładając, że forma jest już stworzona, twórca stoi na progu. Z jednej strony jest to, co uformowane, z drugiej strony budynek architektoniczny. Czynność, która polega na nadaniu formie znaczenia, nazwiemy transmutacją. Wiele transmutacji składa się na zamieszkiwanie. Im wrażliwiej transmutujemy materię, z której jest zbudowana forma, tym bardziej zamieszkujemy.

*Słowa kluczowe: zamieszkiwanie, beton, transmutacja, aktowość, forma, wrażliwość, rzecz*

### 1. In search of the meaning of things

The concrete structure of the building determines the place that one will dwell in. But when can one say that the place is dwelt in? Is it enough to pour concrete into the formwork and voilà – the purpose of dwelling is realized? Let us then look for measures to help us achieve the goal. Franz Brentano describes it this way, “When the goal is set and the only matter left is choosing the means, we will say, choose the means that really lead to accomplishing the goal. When it comes to choosing goals; we will say, choose a goal

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that you can reasonably believe is truly achievable. But this answer is not enough – one must rather flee from many achievable things, rather than strive for them. Choose from the achievable things that which is the best! This is the only correct answer.” Further on, Brentano considers what exactly “the best” is. He considers what this is that we call “good”, and how do we gain knowledge of whether something is good, and better than something else?<sup>1</sup> Brentano distinguishes physical and mental content. Physical content reveals itself to us, one can hear it, be in it, etc.; we can extract mental content from its representation. We will say that this performance is good, that we like it, or not, and that it excites emotions, tension, or not. Brentano says, “There is no listening without what one hears, no belief without what one believes in, no expectation without what one expects, no striving without what we strive for, no enjoyment without what we enjoy, and so on.” In addition to sensory perception, we refer to representations intentionally. “What, then, is the case in which I not only present something to myself, but I also judge it? The presentation is then accompanied by another intentional relation to the presented item, the relation of approval or rejection. One who mentions God expresses a representation of God, one who says: ‘God exists’, expresses faith in God”<sup>2</sup>. We can also relate to items emotionally: “(...) from the simplest inclination or aversion induced by the thought itself, to the conviction of well-founded joy or sadness (...)”<sup>3</sup>.

While in the intentional relationship there was approval or rejection, in the emotional relationship there is love or hate. Here, there are three phenomena, or as Brentano puts it: “three classes”: representation, intentional relationship, i.e. judgment, and emotional relationship. In the last two classes, one can distinguish opposites, in the case of the first class, one can’t. “I can present contrasting things such as black and white. But I can’t juxtapose the black with itself, although I can judge it by means of juxtaposing ways, depending on whether I accept it or not, and I can also emotionally refer to it in a juxtaposing way, depending on whether I like it or not”<sup>4</sup>. Juxtaposition can be deemed right or wrong.” In each case of the second class, however, one of the two juxtaposing relations – acknowledgment or rejection – will be right, and the other wrong, as stated long ago by logic. Naturally, similar also applies to the third class. Of the two opposing modes of behaviour – loving and hating, acknowledging and rejecting – only one is right in each case, and the other – wrong”<sup>5</sup>. What is good and what is bad, and what is the notion of truth and falsehood? “Something (*etwas*) is called true when the acknowledgement towards it is right. We call something good when the love we feel towards it is right. That, which is to be loved with right love, which is worthy of love, is good in the broadest sense of meaning”<sup>6</sup>.

In the representation itself, one can’t prove whether something is true or false; one has to judge it, i.e. acknowledge it, or not. We refer to a thing intentionally, we commune with it and use it. As individuals, we decide on the truth or falsity of things in an act of choice – by accepting or rejecting it. In the act of choosing, we perform a transmutation of matter. The material takes on meaning. It is not merely a substance any more. It is an object, a form with

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<sup>1</sup> F. Brentano, *The source of moral cognition*, p. 16–17.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 19.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 20.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 20.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 21.

a function given to it by the user. We can cut down a tree and use the wood for kindling fire, or to create a comfortable armchair. If we extract glass from a window pane, rotate it at a 90° angle, and place it on two even blocks of wood, we create a table. If we place a cup of tea on the back of a chair, we make it a small, handy table. Concrete poured into formwork can be considered a wall or roof. The proximity of walls, or lack thereof, can be considered a window or door. A metal sheet put on a standing seam can be considered a roof or wall. *Cur non?* The item reveals itself to us, and we decide about its use. We can talk about dwelling if we acknowledge the things we spend time with.

However, is the thing we consider true also good, or even the best, for us? “Since everything is pleasing either for its own sake, or because of what it can do, preserve or assert, the good is divided into the primary good (*das primär Gute*) and the secondary good (*das sekundär Gute*), i.e. that, which is good in itself, and what is good for the sake of something else, as it is especially in the case of useful things”<sup>7</sup>. We judge based on the reception of our senses, compare judgments with what we already know, and express our opinion. The clearer the image is, the more accurate the judgment, and what follows, the more accurate the decisions. After many encounters with things, we discover what is good for us and what is not. We instinctively find appreciation for certain things, while others repulse us. Adolf Loos says, “Humanity loves everything that ensures its comfort and hates everything that wants to break it from the usual and safe position, and what worries it (...)”<sup>8</sup>. Don’t we look for places we want to stay in? If we find things that are good for us, they will support us. Let us then try to dwell among the things that are good for us.

Being emotionally linked to a thing, we hate it, or fall in love with it. Emotional relation is inherent in the process of dwelling. “Then, let us note that when we find love such that, its object is not only loved, lovable, but also its absence and its opposite are hated and hateful, and that also the one is worthy of love and the other is worthy of hatred, thus one is good, the other – bad”<sup>9</sup>. The process of cognition, judgment, and emotional bonding to the thing is the act of dwelling.

Dwelling is accompanied by a sense of belonging to items. They who do not cognize, to whom things do not unravel themselves, will never dwell well. That’s because the lack of one’s attempt to dwell and understand what the authors have created in the interpretation of nature is the lack of presence in things, in the space of things, in the world.

The process of discovering things is influenced by the thing itself, the thing designed by the designer. The process of discovering things is influenced by the thing itself, and by our sensibility. Umberto Eco writes, “In the terminology of communication theory, the principle that a form is a function means that the form of an item is not only to enable its function, but also to denote it in such a clear way that the function is not only facilitated, but more attractive as well, and moreover, to suggest movements that are most appropriate to realize it”<sup>10</sup>. A good design facilitates its cognition; we want to dwell among good designs.

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 21.

<sup>8</sup> A. Loos, *Loos*, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> F. Brentano, *The source of moral cognition* , p. 25.

<sup>10</sup> U. Eco, *Semiotic Landscape* , p. 287.



III. 1. Wolf Vostell, *VOAEX*, Malpartida, Spain, 1976, Source: flicker.com

III. 2. Hermann Pitz, *Wedding Therese*, Berlin, Germany 1984, Photo by Wojciech Ciepłucha

## 2. *Ощущать* – to perceive, to experience, to feel

Often, however, instead of discovering and seeking that which is good for us, we stick to our past or that of others, we borrow truths from others and recognize them as our own. Guillaume Apollinaire writes, “You can’t carry your father’s corpse along with you. One leaves it with other dead and remembers one’s father, remembers him with regret, speaks of him with admiration. When one becomes a father himself, one should not expect one of our children to be willing to burden themselves with our corpses for life. But in vain we would try to tear our feet from the ground that hides the dead”<sup>11</sup>. Learning of good is accompanied by “creative insecurity” and loneliness, because it is only us who are capable of confirming physically or mentally the rightness of things. Loneliness and personal preferences accompany the learning of what is good. Loneliness and individuality are the characteristic of dwelling. If one is alone, then one has the opportunity to know oneself and one’s tastes – nothing interferes with the reception of things, one doesn’t meet the preferences of others; one is left on one’s own. To understand a thing, one needs sensitivity. A sensitively spent time is the time needed for an in-depth discovery of things; sensitivity enhances dwelling. Andrzej Pawłowski writes, “Sensitivity is conducive to sensation and stimulation of imagination”<sup>12</sup>. For Pawłowski, sensitivity is the ability to discriminate, subtlety, tenderness, insight, acuity, sharpness, carefulness, alertness, attention, heeding, ability to respond to change, to differences; caring, delicacy, tenderness, empathy, the ability to feel ...

Let’s pause for a moment and take a look at what an important role sensitivity plays. Ludwig Wittgenstein sees the similarity between “a work on philosophy” and “an architect’s work,” and in a more general sense: between the work of a philosopher and the work of a designer or artist. He writes, *Die Arbeit an der Philosophie ist – wie vielfach die Arbeit in der Architektur – eigentlich mehr die Arbeit an Einem selbst [sei]. An der eigenen Auffassung. Daran, wie man die Dinge sieht (und was man von ihnen verlangt)*. In English: *Work on philosophy – like work in architecture in many respects – is really more work on oneself. On one’s own conception. On how one sees things. (And what one expects of them.)*<sup>13</sup>. Ludwig Wittgenstein uses in his note the words *Auffassung*; Janusz Krupiński carefully analyses his note<sup>14</sup> and comments that the word has an “idiomatic character”; he writes: “In a general sense, the meaning of *Auffassung* is a way of referring (to something). (I consider the feeling of creativity a way of referring, in which a creative act is fulfilled, the essence of creativity).” Janusz Krupiński further writes that “in the theory of art by Kazimir Malevich the category of ‘feeling’ plays a central role. One can point out the correspondence between Wittgenstein’s concept of the importance of working on *Auffassung* in architectural design, and Malevich’s conviction about the role of *ощущение*. In the English translation the word “feeling” was translated to German as *Empfindung*.” Krupinski further writes, “[Malevich’s] suprematism proclaims “supremacy”. Of what? Of feeling. The greatest importance of creativity is precisely *ощущение* (in Russian: *ощущать* – to perceive, to experience, to feel). In Russian, among the synonyms of *ощущение* is also *чувство* (*чувствовать* – to feel). This feeling, sensation – from sensual perception to emotional sensibility, sensibility of heart. The

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<sup>11</sup> G. Apollinaire, *The Cubist Painters*, p. 9.

<sup>12</sup> A. J. Pawłowski, *Zagadnienia kształcenia plastycznego dla potrzeb wzornictwa przemysłowego [Issues of artistic education in industrial design]*, p. 3.

<sup>13</sup> J. Krupiński, *Filozofia kultury designu [Philosophy of design culture]*, p. 109.

<sup>14</sup> For reference, see p. 110–113 of this book.



- III. 3. Christ & Gantenbein, *Rozbudowa Narodowego Muzeum w Szwajcarii*, Zürich, Schwitterland 2016, Photo: Wojciech Cieplucha
- III. 4. Peter Zumthor, *Kolumba Museum*, Köln, Germany, Photo by Wojciech Cieplucha
- III. 5. Le Corbusier, *Pavillon Le Corbusier*, Zürich, Schwitterland 1960, Photo by Wojciech Cieplucha



reason for the creation of the so-called utility items, the factor influencing their shape, is, according to Malevich, not their functions, but “functional feelings,” for example, the “seat function.” He writes: “The chair, the bed, the table are not ‘deliberately formed items’, but the form of artistic feeling; as a result, the basis of the generally accepted view that all everyday items are the result of practical considerations, is a false assumption”<sup>15</sup>. In the case of a chair, even the sitting person’s feeling of the chair would be a derivative of his attitude to sitting, e.g. the relationship between the body and the chair. In view of the above, the form does not result directly from the function, but from the relation of man to this function. I would say: to the way it is felt”<sup>16</sup>. Acts contribute to naming things as they are. If one sits on the bed more often, does this make it a chair? If one lies on the table more often, does it get a new meaning and is a bed in the sense: I am comfortable when I lie and sleep there?

In *sensitive* dwelling, we feel a lot, and these feelings lead us to new needs. Emotional bond with a thing is fundamental, is the foundation of creativity, understood as that which is good, which we can consider right and which meets our needs. “A work of art is always an offspring of its time, often the cradle of our feelings,” Wassily Kandinsky writes the opening lines of the introduction to *Spirituality in art* – “Every stage of the development of culture produces its own art, which will never be repeated again. Attempting to revive the rules of the past period almost always produces things aborted. Nowadays, we can’t feel like the ancient Greeks and live their inner lives. Efforts to restore, e.g., the Greek sculptural canon will result in works similar to Greek, but always soulless. Such imitation is more likely apishness. The behaviour of a monkey is seemingly human – it sits, it holds a book in front of it, flipping the pages, pulling troubled faces – but there is no inner meaning in all of that”<sup>17</sup>.

All that does not hide our feelings and future possibilities will be morally dead. In psychology, a theory was developed, which says that, “In the mind, sensory processes are organized based on homogeneous and structured configurations (*Gestalt*), in accordance with the holistic principle that “the whole is more than the sum of its parts.” The melody is more than the sum of the sounds, all the more so that it can be played in another tone or key, while still remaining the same melody, even though with different acoustic components”<sup>18</sup>. A wall is more than concrete poured into formwork, and a building is more than the sum of the partitions. It is not enough that the walls are there, and that’s that; it is not enough to put one brick on another, or just say: “Yes, I live here, I dwell in the place.” “The French philosopher [Maurice Merleau-Ponty – ed.] describes the world as an area of experience through which “I” gets to know oneself. It is in relationship with the world that we give meaning to our existence and establish our individual identity. The world is the source and the area of meaning, recognized as situation. At the same time the world can’t be understood beyond the meanings given to it by man, or outside the relation which founds the self-discovery of an individual on the recognition of the world. This involves the term *reversibilite*, reversibility”<sup>19</sup>. In dwelling, we encounter the world at all times. As Maurice Merleau-Ponty said, “How could a painter

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<sup>15</sup> K. Malewicz, *Suprematism*, [in:] *Artists about art. From van Gogh to Picasso*, p. 398.

<sup>16</sup> J. Krupiński, *Filozofia kultury designu [Philosophy of design culture]*, p. 113–114.

<sup>17</sup> W. Kandyński, *On Spirituality in Art*, p. 23.

<sup>18</sup> U. Nicola, *Philosophy*, p. 552.

<sup>19</sup> M. Gołębiewska, *Sensotwórcza rola ciała w samopoznaniu według Maurice’a Merleau-Ponty’ego [Sensory role of the body in self-discovery according to Maurice Merleau-Ponty]*, *Teksty Drugie* 2004, 1–2, p. 237–251.

or poet talk about something other than his meeting with the world? What does abstract art say, if not about a way in which it denies or rejects the world? Its rawness, the intrusiveness of surfaces and geometric forms, still preserves the scent of life, if but shameful or full of despair. Painting re-orders the prosaic world, it offers a quasi-burnt sacrifice of things, just as poetry destroys common language. But in works to which we like to return, disorder is always an order of different sort. A new system of equilibrium requires just that shock and the mere relations between items are overthrown in the name of their real relations<sup>20</sup>.

### 3. Transmutation

In dwelling, we use items. Dwelling fills the form of architecture. Dwelling is acting on the surrounding things; it is moving things from one place to another, turning on the monitor, preparing a meal, hanging a picture on the wall, carrying a bucket of water, tapping the hot water in the shower, opening the door, turning on the lights, blocking the windows, watering the flowers. It is these behaviours and activities that make up dwelling. Every day, by moving, hanging, painting, nailing, drilling, shelf hanging, we transmute the building material – concrete – into a dwelled in facility, a thing that acquires new meaning. It is us, the users, who give it meaning. We intentionally refer to things made of the building material, concrete. The building structure is subject to a process of transformation, from a form that shields us from changing atmospheric conditions to a dwelled in form. We decide what the element of the building structure will be, whether it will support the bookcase or hang above our heads, or partition us from another room, or protect us from the rain, or create an internal garden, whether we can go under it, whether it will have a hole for a window or door, whether it will be vertical or sloping, sturdy or rickety, what colour it will have, what shapes it will form, and where it will be. Step by step, spot by spot, we fill in our surroundings with dwelling.

Sometimes it seems to us that everything around us is known to us. If we forget the beautiful wine glasses hidden behind the closed cabinet door, estrange ourselves from plates stacked in the top kitchen cupboard, light only one gas burner just because we are used to it, then we do not dwell. Unused items are foreign to us, we forget about their purpose, they are abandoned in a way. When we fail to fill in space with our behaviour, we fail to attempt dwelling.

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<sup>20</sup> M. Merleau-Ponty, *Proza świata, Eseje o mowie* [*The Prose of the World. Essays on Speech*] p. 196.



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