



# **ARCHITECTURE FOR THE COMMON GOOD**

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*To  
My wife Silke,  
and our children,  
Tristan and Alea*

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*NON MIHI SOLUM* — Not for myself alone.

**“You can put down a bad book; you can avoid listening to bad music; but you cannot miss the ugly tower block opposite your house.”**

—Renzo Piano 1998 Pritzker Architecture Prize - Laureate Acceptance Speech

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## Abstract

This doctoral thesis examines the philosophical dimensions of architecture, arguing that the persistent *turpification*—an unethical uglification—of the built environment undermines both individual and collective well-being. Drawing on Martin Heidegger’s concept of building as dwelling, it proposes that architecture should foster (d)well-being, a meaningful attunement of humans to their surroundings. Christian Norberg-Schulz’s *genius loci* (spirit of place) and Karsten Harries’ community ethos further illuminate how architecture can enhance a sense of belonging and shared identity.

Since architecture is an unavoidable presence, it is inherently public and thus political—shaping human experience and influencing societal well-being. This raises a fundamental question: What constitutes well-being? Following John Finnis, this thesis argues that well-being arises from human participation in the incommensurable basic goods of human flourishing. The failure to design with this in mind has resulted in an architectural landscape dominated by uninspired, dehumanizing structures. For instance, the juxtaposition of bland boxes against Malta’s rich Baroque heritage exemplifies this crisis, where poor planning, economic greed, and short-sightedness contribute to the erosion of architectural integrity.

The thesis develops an alternative model of architectural judgment inspired by analogies with legal reasoning. It argues that architecture must be practised through public reason-giving, proportionality, and fiduciary responsibility, combining professional expertise with the situated knowledge of communities. Rejecting both technocratic autonomy and rigid design codes, it proposes a model of co-responsible deliberation through which architects, policymakers, and citizens jointly interpret what places disclose and what flourishing requires.

Ultimately, this thesis argues that architecture is an act of intergenerational love—an enduring gift from those who build to those who are not yet alive. A meaningful and beautiful built environment is not only a present responsibility but a legacy for future generations, shaping the world they will inherit.

## Preface

*“Firstly, architecture is a service, in the most literal sense of the term. It is an art that produces things that serve a purpose. But it is also a socially dangerous art, because it is an imposed art”*

- Renzo Piano, 1998 *The Pritzker Architecture Prize Laureate Acceptance Speech*



FIGURE 1 THE SIMPLICITY AND ELEGANCE OF A TYPICAL MALTESE FAÇADE - BABY-BLUE DOOR. PHOTOGRAPH: MALTADOORS

This thesis arises from a sustained philosophical concern with the meaning of building and dwelling in contemporary contexts, and with the question of whether architecture can be

understood as bearing responsibility toward the common good without being reduced to prescription, technical mastery, or aesthetic dogma. The inquiry proceeds phenomenologically, attending to how architectural meaning emerges through lived experience, historical continuity, and shared practices, rather than through the application of externally imposed criteria. Throughout the work, particular care is taken to distinguish interpretation from evaluation, and to resist the temptation to derive determinate norms from philosophical reflection. What follows therefore seeks not to offer solutions or models, but to clarify the conditions under which architecture may be understood as meaningful, responsible, and oriented toward human flourishing in a plural and contingent world.

### **Why The Common Good?**

In December 2020<sup>1</sup> I published a book in my native language (Maltese) entitled *Reflections about the Common Good*.<sup>2</sup> I have spent two years researching<sup>3</sup> and I have found very little literature investigating the connection between the common good and aesthetic experience.

A useful distinction may be drawn between pristine beauty and poietic beauty. Pristine beauty refers to the unaltered beauty of the natural world—landscapes, horizons, light, and silence—that precedes human intervention and confronts us as given. Poietic beauty, by contrast, arises through *poiesis*, the human capacity to bring something into being: music, painting, literature, and architecture. Yet this distinction is not absolute. Poietic beauty often incorporates elements of pristine beauty within the creative act itself, as is evident in biophilic design, urban landscaping, and architectural practices that intentionally integrate vegetation, natural light, water, and organic forms. In such cases, *poiesis* does not overwrite the given but works with it, allowing natural elements to be re-situated within cultural and civic contexts.

:

- How do pristine and poietic aesthetic experiences differ in their impact on human perception and emotional response?

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<sup>1</sup> Alan Xuereb, *Reflections about the Common Good* (Malta: BDL, 2020) <<https://alanxuereb.eu/>> [accessed 6 April 2025].

<sup>2</sup> Lawrence Zammit, “Reflections on the Common Good,” *Times of Malta*, 2021 <<https://timesofmalta.com/article/reflections-on-the-common-good.852518>> [accessed 16 March 2025].

<sup>3</sup> It is important to clarify that the book primarily addresses the concept of the common good within the context of the Maltese political arena. It does not explore aesthetic experience in general, nor does it specifically address architectural matters. The sole reference to the environment is found on page 151, where it is mentioned in relation to environmental and developmental issues.

- To what extent does the categorization of aesthetic experiences into pristine and poietic influence artistic creation and appreciation?
- What are the key factors that distinguish pristine aesthetic experiences from poietic ones, and how do these factors affect overall aesthetic value?
- How does the recognition of two primary types of aesthetic experiences (pristine and poietic) influence the development of aesthetic theory and criticism?
- In what ways does the distinction between pristine and poietic aesthetic experiences shape cultural attitudes towards beauty and art?
- How do individual preferences for pristine or poietic aesthetic experiences relate to broader psychological and sociological factors?
- What are the implications of categorizing aesthetic experiences into pristine and poietic for environmental conservation and urban planning?
- How does the interplay between pristine and poietic aesthetic experiences contribute to the evolution of artistic styles and movements?
- To what extent does the categorization of aesthetic experiences as pristine or poietic affect their perceived authenticity or value in different cultural contexts?
- How can the understanding of pristine and poietic aesthetic experiences be applied to enhance the design of public spaces and improve overall quality of life?

While this study may not address all of these questions explicitly, it aims to offer a comprehensive framework that will guide the reader.

Furthermore, the distinction between pristine and poietic aesthetic experiences can be linked to the common good in several ways. Recognizing the value of natural aesthetic experiences encourages conservation efforts, which benefit society through the preservation of ecosystems

and biodiversity. This understanding also informs better urban planning decisions, creating more liveable and enjoyable spaces for communities. In addition, both pristine and poetic aesthetic experiences contribute to cultural identity and heritage, fostering a sense of shared history and collective pride. Access to diverse aesthetic experiences, whether pristine or poetic, can improve overall public health by reducing stress and promoting emotional well-being. Also, exposure to various aesthetic experiences enhances critical thinking, creativity, and appreciation for diverse forms of beauty, contributing to a more well-rounded society. Likewise, both natural landscapes and man-made artistic creations can drive tourism and economic growth, supporting local communities and national economies. Shared aesthetic experiences, whether in nature or human-created environments, can bring people together and strengthen social bonds. Balancing pristine and poetic aesthetic experiences in urban and rural planning can lead to more sustainable and harmonious development practices. The interplay between pristine and poetic aesthetics can inspire technological advancements and artistic innovations that benefit society. Finally, appreciating diverse aesthetic experiences from different cultures and environments fosters cross-cultural understanding and global cooperation. This brought me to realize how there has to be a deeper connection between aesthetic experience and the common good.

The common good is a theme I have been interested in since my Philosophy of Law lectures back in 1989. Echoing John Finnis's Natural Law Theory, my conclusion was that the best way to describe the concept of the common good is to see it, in simple terms, as a balancing act between individual well-being and the well-being of that *collectivity*. In this line of thought, then, given that according to Finnis aesthetic experience is a basic human good, it contributes to the well-being of the human individual, and in so doing, it ought to inevitably contribute towards the well-being of the *collectivity*. So if one were to see the philosophy of architecture as a branch of aesthetics, it would stand to reason that architecture, being an unavoidable presence,<sup>4</sup> has an impact on the well-being of individuals and on that of *collectivities*.

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<sup>4</sup> During a presentation I delivered to the Department of Philosophy in April 2024, Dr. Mette Lebech remarked that 'architecture' is not the only unavoidable presence. She quite correctly pointed out that even speech is. One could also add 'thought'. Indeed even Heidegger recognises this since as he explains in his own words '[b]uilding and thinking are, each in its own way, inescapable for dwelling' from Martin Heidegger, *Building Dwelling Thinking*, 1951, p. 338. In the original: Martin Heidegger, *Bauen Wohnen Denken: Vorträge und Aufsätze*, Klett-Cotta, 2022 p. 186: "*Bauen und Denken sind jeweils nach ihrer Art für das Wohnen Unumgänglich*". The only difference one can perhaps put forward between 'architecture' and 'speech' or 'thought' is that to subsist architecture needs an external action involving human intervention or 'making' (as *poiesis*) on the surroundings. Whilst thought is 'inescapable' it remains undisclosed and only if one decides to disclose such activity in the form of speech or writing, or in any other way (such as facial expressions, bodily movements or art) such disclosure takes place. Architecture or (building) is similar to this disclosure. However, given its size and physical permanence its presence becomes 'unavoidable' for a longer period of time and for larger audience.

Returning to my book,<sup>5</sup> it is noteworthy that the period immediately following its publication coincided with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. This unprecedented global event has undeniably altered our perception of reality. The experience of being confined to aesthetically pleasing environments, as opposed to those that are not, has unequivocally demonstrated the significant impact such surroundings have on an individual's well-being.<sup>6</sup> Martin Heidegger is widely recognized for having conducted the majority of his philosophical work at his cabin in the Black Forest, a setting that significantly influenced the development and character of his thought. It is also safe to presume that such surroundings did contribute to his overall well-being as a human. In fact, we are told by Sharr that for Heidegger, 'it was significant that places of daily occupation are intertwined with the lives of those who use them'.<sup>7</sup> Nonetheless, whilst nature should be present everywhere, there is an important role to be played by the built up environment.<sup>8</sup> It is not by mere chance that this research advocates for biophilic design, proposing it as a viable solution to the pursuit of architecture for the common good.

In this sense, then, architecture becomes more than just aesthetics, shelter and/or function. The essence (*Wesen*) of architecture then becomes phenomenologically the way that architecture

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<sup>5</sup> André P. DeBattista, "Book Review: Reflections on the Common Good," *Times of Malta*, 2021 <<https://timesofmalta.com/article/book-review-reflections-on-the-common-good.917152>> [accessed 16 March 2025].

<sup>6</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted people's mental health and well-being, with increased anxiety and depression reported globally. However, for those with access to natural environments, green and blue spaces have become crucial for maintaining everyday well-being (Karolina Doughty, Huixin Hu, and Joann Smit, "Therapeutic Landscapes during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Increased and Intensified Interactions with Nature," *Social & Cultural Geography*, 24.3–4 (2022), 661–79 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2022.2052168>>). The pandemic has highlighted the importance of local parks, gardens, and green spaces for physical and mental health, leading to increased access and appreciation of natural surroundings Pazit Levinger and others, "Older People and Nature: The Benefits of Outdoors, Parks and Nature in Light of COVID-19 and beyond— Where to from Here?," *International Journal of Environmental Health Research*, 32.6 (2021), 1329–36 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09603123.2021.1879739>>).

<sup>7</sup> Adam Sharr and Simon Unwin, "Heidegger's Hut," *Arq: Architectural Research Quarterly*, 5.01 (2001) <<https://doi.org/10.1017/s1359135501001063>>.

<sup>8</sup> It must be acknowledged that aesthetically pleasing architecture exerts a positive influence on both individuals—fostering feelings of protection, trust, and serenity—and on the broader community, contributing to economic vitality, tourism, and environmental quality. Conversely, poorly designed or visually unappealing buildings tend to have detrimental effects, often associated with psychological distress and the socio-spatial phenomena of urban decline and ghettoization.

endures as presence (*anwesend*).<sup>9</sup> A sort of *essencing*<sup>10</sup> which translates into an enduring presence.<sup>11</sup>

## A Phenomenological Analysis

In conducting such an analysis, a fundamental challenge arises in the philosophical unpacking of the phenomenon of architecture, both *internal* and *external*. Specifically, the dilemma lies in whether to treat architecture as an ontological state of affairs or as an ontic state of affairs.<sup>12</sup> It is posited that privileging one aspect over the other would result in a partial analysis. Human reality, in general, and architecture, in particular, necessitate the consideration of both aspects simultaneously to be understood intelligibly and meaningfully. As Heidegger asserts, being human is characterized by 'being in the world,' which implies an embeddedness and inseparability from the world.<sup>13</sup>

This distinction<sup>14</sup> between the *internal* and *external* aspects is important and at the same time, problematic.<sup>15</sup> As already hinted the restrictive use of this dichotomy may at the end be

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<sup>9</sup> The concept of architecture as an enduring presence aligns with the phenomenological approach described in Rachel Kallus and Hubert Law-Yone, "What Is a Neighbourhood? The Structure and Function of an Idea," *Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design*, 27.6 (2000), 815–26 <<https://doi.org/10.1068/b2636>>, suggesting that architecture's essence lies in its ability to create a sense of place and contribute to collective memory. This perspective adds depth to our understanding of architecture beyond its physical and functional aspects, emphasizing its role in shaping human experience and perception of space over time.

<sup>10</sup> The concept of "essencing" in architecture, which translates into an enduring presence, can be understood through various aspects of design, materials, and cultural significance. In terms of architectural design, the idea of creating an enduring presence is closely tied to sustainability and longevity. Public architecture plays a crucial role in this regard, as it often serves as a focal point for urban sustainability. European cities have demonstrated that public architecture can secure sustainability by providing spaces where citizens can gather and enjoy programs, while also preserving historical value and cultural memory (Soomi Kim and Hyun-ah Kwon, "Urban Sustainability through Public Architecture," *Sustainability*, 10.4 (2018), 1249 <<https://doi.org/10.3390/su10041249>>).

<sup>11</sup> See on this point: Lawrence Berger, *Dasein as Attention: The Metaphysics of the Effort of Presence*, *PhD Dissertation New School for Social Research*, (2016), p. 61 et seq. One has to say that Heidegger may not prefer this notion of enduring presence. But this will be discussed further on.

<sup>12</sup> Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place* (The MIT Press, 2012) <<https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/9780262016841.001.0001>> [accessed 14 February 2025].

<sup>13</sup> Marcella Horrigan-Kelly, Michelle Millar, and Maura Dowling, Understanding the Key Tenets of Heidegger's Philosophy for Interpretive Phenomenological Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 15(1), 2016, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406916680634>

<sup>14</sup> And not separation.

<sup>15</sup> See: Robert Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (Cambridge University Press, 2000). As Sokolowski says 'we distinguish between a thing and its appearances, a distinction that has been called by Heidegger the "ontological difference," the difference between a thing and the presencing (or absencing) of the thing'.

surpassed. There are different approaches<sup>16</sup> that one may take in order to comprehend what architecture actually is, and later, normatively speaking, what architecture ought to be.<sup>17</sup>

As Sokolowski points out if we were to try to describe or explain the world from the ‘natural attitude’, we would tend to take it as a ‘large entity or as the sum of all entities’.<sup>18</sup>

The idea in this research is to have a phenomenological analysis<sup>19</sup> of what architecture is and then move forward towards a more natural law analysis of how architecture may be for the common good. The path chosen here is to try to combine all these questions into one synthetic but hopefully coherent analysis.

In this sense Hamlin explains :

We may, then, define architecture as the art which seeks to harmonize in a building the requirements of utility and of beauty. It is the most useful of the fine arts and the noblest of the useful arts. It touches the life of man at every point.<sup>20</sup>

As hinted, Martin Heidegger has a distinguished place in challenging the *schema* of content and the form of architecture.<sup>21</sup> Consequently, three of Heidegger’s works are of great

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<sup>16</sup> For example one may consider architecture as a language. See Charles Jencks, “Semiology and Architecture ,” in *Meaning in Architecture*, ed. by George Baird and Charles Jencks (New York: George Braziller, 1969).

<sup>17</sup> On this point one may want to consider Saul Fisher, “Philosophy of Architecture,” <https://Plato.Stanford.Edu/Archives/Win2016/Entries/Architecture>, 2016 <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/architecture>> [accessed 13 December 2024]: ‘We might see social forces as primarily shaping architecture or else architecture as primarily shaping social forces. Proponents of architecture as “shaper” suggest that architecture provides a means of organizing society, a core Modernist claim but also a thesis of broader currency. Detractors counter that we cannot shape society through the built environment—or we ought not do so. What rests on directionality is how we parse not only theoretical relations but also practical consequences and perspectives concerning a host of social phenomena. To take one example, how we gauge and address the possibilities that architecture offers relative to social inequality is likely a function of whether architecture contributes to, or instead reflects, social classes and social hierarchies. We might wonder whether architects can design so as to promote class equality—or solidarity, justice, autonomy, or other social phenomena as we might foster’.

<sup>18</sup> Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, p. 50.

<sup>19</sup> On this point see: Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, p. 8: ‘The term most closely associated with phenomenology is “intentionality.” The core doctrine in phenomenology is the teaching that every act of consciousness we perform, every experience that we have, is intentional: it is essentially “consciousness of” or an “experience of” something or other’.

<sup>20</sup> Alfred Dwight Foster Hamlin, *A Text-Book of the History of Architecture* (Longmans, Green and Co., 1928), p. xxi.

<sup>21</sup> The most important works for this research are *Poetry, Language, Thought*, translated by Albert Hofstadter, Harper Colophon Books, New York, 1971.

importance here.<sup>22</sup> Namely, *The Origin of the Work of Art* (1935), *The Thing*, (1951) and *Building Dwelling Thinking* (1954).<sup>23</sup> This is not an comprehensive list.<sup>24</sup>

Professor Adam Sharr summarises the importance of these three Heideggerian works for architecture in the following passage:

Arguably, these essays of 1950–51 [‘Building Dwelling Thinking’, ‘The Thing’ (1950); and ‘. . . poetically, Man dwells . . .’ (1951)] mark his furthest orbit from bookish philosophy, his most vehement rhetoric in favour of unmediated emotion. This is the period in Heidegger’s work that philosophers cite least. However, although he wrote about architecture at other times in his life – notably in the 1935 text ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’ (translated 1971), as well as in *Being and Time* of 1927 (1962) and ‘Art and Space’ of 1971 (1973) – the three 1950–51 essays are arguably the most architectural of his writings precisely because it was here that he made amongst his most forthright claims for the authority of immediate experience.<sup>25</sup>

The research will not attempt a chronological examination of the aforementioned works. Instead, the approach chosen throughout is thematic.<sup>26</sup>

One of the major intelligibility obstacles with Heidegger’s works is that they are often cryptic and the terminology he uses is very idiosyncratic.<sup>27</sup> Besides this, his ideas are intertwined and interdependent, making any examination of his general thought treacherous unless one connects it to some specific part(s) of his works.<sup>28</sup>

Probably, the most important themes, dealt with in this research, in the context of Heidegger’s works are the notion of ‘dwelling’ itself, that of ‘place’ and with it that of ‘home’, that of ‘the fourfold’ and with it that of ‘gathering’, all falling under the broad category of *essence*. Moreover, the themes of ‘thing’, ‘work of art’, ‘truth’, all falling under the category of *presence*, shall be examined one by one.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Is architecture, then a ‘thing’, *qua* work of art, in the Heideggerian sense? Or, is it just shelter? Perhaps, it is a combination of these fused complexly together.

<sup>23</sup> Listed here in chronological and not hierarchical order.

<sup>24</sup> In fact, *Being and Time* has also a role to play as do other works which will be mentioned especially in the context of ‘being-in-the-world’.

<sup>25</sup> Adam Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects*, p. 4.

<sup>26</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe* I. Abteilung: Veröffentlichte Schriften, 1914-1970 Band 5 *Holzwege* Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt Am Main, Deutschland, p.5.

<sup>27</sup> Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects*, p. 20.

<sup>28</sup> On this point see a very interesting article: Marcella Horrigan-Kelly, Michelle Millar, and Maura Dowling, “Understanding the Key Tenets of Heidegger’s Philosophy for Interpretive Phenomenological Research,” *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 15.1 (2016) <<https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406916680634>>.

<sup>29</sup> Reference to contemporary critiques of Heidegger will also be made in order to help create an authoritative analysis. Mainly those critiques put forward by Julian Young, Jeff Malpas and Adam Sharr amongst others.

## From Holes To Homes

Architecture has probably been around for as long as humans left their caves as dwellings. Humans have presumably needed shelter and wanted a place to call home. A safe place, that is, where they can go back to, after all the gathering and the hunting.<sup>30</sup> In this sense dwelling started before building. The origin of architecture can be placed back in the Neolithic period, *circa* 10,000 B.C., as this is about when humans stopped living in caves. When people began living together in permanent dwellings, particular forms of understanding and action were facilitated.<sup>31</sup> Architecture reflects these new kinds of social organisation and these new ways of life. Furthermore, architecture required the development of strategies of construction and initiated changes in humans' perception and understanding of the concept of place.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> To recover physically, mentally; to share their experience and knowledge acquired in the form of stories; to reproduce; raise their offspring; pray to their gods; and so on and so forth. This was their way to live a holistic good life. Even if nowadays we view this type of life as primitive and unsophisticated, humans still behave more or less the same way. Humans go back home for shelter to recover, to feel safe and unwind. To share their day-at-work experiences to reproduce and raise children.

<sup>31</sup> Nabil Ali, "From Cave to Village: Social Structure and the Development of an Architectural Landscape," *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 72.1 (2016), 77–101 <<https://doi.org/10.1086/685266>>.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*



FIGURE 2 HAND PRINTS IN PETTAKERE CAVE AT LEANG-LEANG PREHISTORIC SITE, MAROS, INDONESIA, PHOTOGRAPH: CAHYO, CREATIVE COMMONS

As one can see in Figure 5, dwelling in the aforementioned sense may mean something different to a particular individual or community, to a particular culture in a particular time. However, the difference is not *essential* but *technological*. These cavemen had the time and the inclination to record what was happening around them and to them, and to somehow pass on that knowledge of their lives, their art, their communal state of affairs,<sup>33</sup> their beliefs to future generations. They probably thought this was ‘meaningful’. It is also arguable that this hand-printing was a way to embellish and give cultural meaning to this dwelling, in the same fashion we nowadays build a monument to remind ourselves and future generations of an important event or person – to symbolise something or/and someone who left a mark.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> On “community as communion” in architecture See: Rowan Wilken, “The Critical Reception of Christian Norberg-Schulz’s Writings on Heidegger and Place,” *Architectural Theory Review*, 18.3 (2013), 340–55 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/13264826.2013.875614>>.

<sup>34</sup> One theory is that the stencilled hands may have more symbolic meanings, such as protecting a house, expressing a person’s connection to the place, or attempting to communicate with the spiritual realm. – For a more in depth analysis of this see: M. Irfan Mahmud and others, “The Hand-Print Tradition of the Community from Maros Karst,” in *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research* (Paris, France: Atlantis Press, 2022) <<https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.220408.013>> [accessed 16 March 2025], wherein it is stated: “The

Moreover, the same authors tell us that:

As soon as man rose above the state of rude nature, he naturally began to build more commodious habitations for himself, and some form of temple for his god. Such early forms are given under the heading of Prehistoric Architecture.<sup>35</sup>

This was certainly the case of the Ħaġar Qim (and Mnajdra) Temples in Malta (Figure 7). They were built more than a thousand years before the pyramids and thousands of years before the first Western temples, churches and cathedrals, but still their existential purpose remains more or less the same. They most definitely were places of worship and as such, communal meeting points. One realises that these sites are ‘places’ in the Heideggerian sense, as we will see later on.

The UNESCO Committee established under the World Heritage Convention tell us that:

The temple builders used locally available stone of which they had a thorough knowledge. They used hard coralline limestone for external walls and the softer globigerina limestone for the more sheltered interiors and decorated elements.<sup>36</sup>

This same type of stone is still used today to build different types of constructions. This type of stone was used for the new building of the Maltese Parliament in Valletta and is still sometimes used for terraced houses, maisonettes, and the like (Figure 8).

Such buildings would perhaps respond to what Hamlin encapsulates in the following:

A history of architecture is a record of man's efforts to build beautifully. The erection of structures devoid of beauty is mere building, a trade and not an art. Edifices in which strength and stability alone are sought, and in designing which only utilitarian considerations have been followed, are properly works of engineering. Only when the idea of beauty is added to that of use does a structure take its place among works of architecture. We may, then, define architecture as the art which seeks to harmonize in a building the requirements of utility and of beauty.<sup>37</sup>

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mabbedda’ bola tradition gives us the possibility to find out evidence of three cultural statements concerning prehistoric culture based on the analogy of the ritual process of making hand- prints practised by the Maros people: (1) existential expressions; (2) gender aspects; and (3) the message of family meaning”.

<sup>35</sup> Fletcher, *A History of Architecture*, p.4.

<sup>36</sup> UNESCO World Heritage Centre, “Megalithic Temples of Malta,” *UNESCO World Heritage Centre* <<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/132/>> [accessed 16 March 2025].

<sup>37</sup> Hamlin, *A Text-Book of the History of Architecture*, p. xxi.

There is in more than one way a sense of lack of respect, of basic courtesy when something completely new is planted into the surroundings without much care to what is already there (See Figure 6). The *genius loci* as Norberg-Schulz<sup>38</sup> would have it and to which a whole chapter is devoted, does not only imply respect to the natural spirit (or ethos) of the natural habitat losing its status as virgin land and being transformed into something meaningful. It also should apply to what a place already is. So, in other words the *genius loci* of a built up area might be different, but nonetheless important, when one comes to rebuild or develop that place.

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<sup>38</sup> The term "*genius loci*" encapsulates the unique character and identity of a specific location, emphasizing the need for architects to be attuned to and express this spirit in their designs.



FIGURE 3 MERCURY TOWERS (ZAHA HADID) - ST JULIANS MALTA 2024 - A LACK OF COURTESY TOWARDS PREVIOUS ARCHITECTURAL LEGACY. PHOTOGRAPH: ALAN XUEREB

The *genius loci* then is an ongoing relationship based on meaning and understanding, on significance of 'what's there already' before intervening. As we will see Norberg-Schulz draws

on phenomenological thinkers like Martin Heidegger to articulate how individuals experience and relate to their built environment. He emphasizes the importance of understanding a place in its cultural and historical context, considering the tangible and intangible elements that contribute to its identity. Through this multidimensional exploration, he advocates for an architecture that goes beyond mere functionality and incorporates a profound understanding of the human experience within a given space.

Later on then as will be explained we move to Karsten Harries, a notable philosopher of architecture, introduces the concept of ethical architecture, arguing that it holds responsibilities beyond mere functionality or aesthetics. According to Harries, architects must consider the moral implications of their designs, acknowledging the profound impact that buildings have on individuals and society.<sup>39</sup>

The connection between *genius loci* and Harries's ethical architecture becomes evident when recognising the intrinsic link between a place's spirit and the ethical considerations guiding architectural choices. *Genius loci* challenges architects to respect and respond to the unique qualities of a site, promoting a harmonious integration between the built environment and its surroundings.<sup>40</sup> Harries builds upon this by asserting that ethical architecture involves a conscientious engagement with the social and cultural contexts in which buildings exist.<sup>41</sup>

By embracing *genius loci*, architects can create spaces that not only aesthetically please but also contribute positively to their surroundings. Harries's ethical architecture complements this by underscoring the ethical dimensions of design decisions, advocating for a built environment that prioritises the well-being of individuals and communities.<sup>42</sup>

In summary, the synergy between *genius loci* and Karsten Harries's ethical architecture lies in their shared emphasis on a holistic understanding of the built environment. Architects who appreciate the spirit of a place and integrate ethical considerations into their designs contribute to spaces that are not only visually appealing but also ethically grounded, fostering a deeper connection between architecture and the communities it serves. This will hopefully lead us to

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<sup>39</sup> Karsten Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture* (MIT Press, 1998), p. 9.

<sup>40</sup> Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli, 1980).

<sup>41</sup> Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, p.150.

<sup>42</sup> Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, p. 29.

shedding some light in the last chapter about a type of architecture for the common good, the latter being understood, according to this research, as the coordination of individual well-being and the well-being of the collective. The main, but by no means the sole, backdrop of this analysis will be Malta.

### **Why Malta?**

Choosing Malta as one of the various examples mentioned in this research was a natural choice. Initially, it is pertinent to mention that Malta is my place of birth. Consequently, I know it fairly well. Furthermore, Malta, with its rich history and diverse cultural influences, presents a distinctive setting for architectural exploration. The Maltese started building before history itself starting being recorded (Figure 7).<sup>43</sup>



FIGURE 4 HAĠAR QIM-IS A MEGALITHIC TEMPLE COMPLEX FOUND ON THE ISLAND OF MALTA (3600-3200 BC) QRENDI, MALTA; IT IS ONE OF MALTA’S UNESCO-LISTED MEGALITHIC TEMPLES. PHOTOGRAPH: HAMELIN DE GUETTELET CREATIVE COMMONS

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<sup>43</sup> The Unesco World Heritage site describes the Haġar Qim temples as:“They rank amongst the earliest free-standing stone buildings in the world and are remarkable for their diversity of form and decoration. Each complex is a unique architectural masterpiece and a witness to an exceptional prehistoric culture renowned for its remarkable architectural, artistic and technological achievements.” Moreover, see also: Eleanor M. L. Scerri and others, “Hunter-Gatherer Sea Voyages Extended to Remotest Mediterranean Islands,” *Nature*, 2025, 1–7 <<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-025-08780-y>>.

The island's architectural landscape reflects the layers of its past, including Phoenician, Roman, Arab, Norman, and Baroque influences, among others. The coexistence of these diverse elements contributes to the *genius loci* of Malta, creating a unique sense of place. Moreover, all these influences appear to have blended into each other fittingly. Not as much may be said about the newer buildings being erected in the past decades.

One can observe the integration of historical and cultural features in Maltese architecture, such as the use of local limestone, traditional balconies, and the adaptation of vernacular elements (Figure 8). Architects in Malta often face the challenge of balancing modern design with the preservation of historical identity, reinforcing the importance of understanding and respecting the *genius loci* of each site, independently of whether it is built-up or not yet built-up.



FIGURE 5 LOMBARD BANK, SLIEMA BRANCH, SLIEMA MALTA - BUILT IN MALTESE STONE

Malta, unfortunately, offers as well, a concentrated example of what I call *turpification*<sup>44</sup> something more than just ugliness: An uglification process that is objectively so widespread

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<sup>44</sup> From the Latin “*turpis*” meaning ugly, unsightly; foul, filthy. Attributed to Ennius by Cicero in ‘*M. Tvlli Ciceronis De Natvra Deorum Ad M. Brvtvm’ Liber Primvs*, (97) “*Simia quam similis turpissima bestia nobis!* How

and systematic that it is nearly immoral in its brutality and lack of respect,<sup>45</sup> courtesy or care of what was gifted to the community by previous generations with a sense of pride and love. Of course, the other side of the argument is that the needs of a fast growing economy and population call for quick changes and development. The issue then is whether what is built may be such as to respect dwelling and its manifestation as building. The struggle between individualism and collectivism can be seen here. Part of this *turpification* is due to a strong sense of individualism, exemplified by the advent of architects wanting to create something original and different. This was partially aided by capitalism as more businesses started wanting to stand out in order to increase their visibility and ensuing profits (Figure 9).

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similar to us is that most vile beast, the ape!” < [Cicero: De Natura Deorum I \(thelatinlibrary.com\)](#) > [accessed 19 August 2023]

<sup>45</sup> Peter Dingli, “Letters to the Editor – March 31, 2025,” *Times of Malta*, 2025 <<https://timesofmalta.com/article/letters-editor-march-31-2025.1107384>> [accessed 11 April 2025], “Malta’s architecture has been a topic of debate for years, with many lamenting the rise of soulless, uninspired buildings that are eroding our island’s unique character.”.



FIGURE 6 CORINTHIA MARINA HOTEL, ST JULIANS, MALTA RESPECTING THE OLDER ARCHITECTURE IN THE BACKGROUND WITH ONLY ONE ISSUE THE MARKETING OF COMPANIES STANDING OUT IN ORDER MAXIMISE THEIR EXPOSURE AND PROFITS.  
PHOTOGRAPH: ALAN XUEREB

## Conclusion

All things considered, philosophy can, through interpretation and extension, create something new by reinterpreting existing concepts and pushing the boundaries of thought. Philosophers often take established ideas or frameworks—whether from ethics, metaphysics, politics, or science—and rethink them in new contexts, leading to innovative perspectives. For instance, thinkers like Nietzsche, Sartre, and Foucault extended classical philosophical concepts, such as morality, freedom, and power, into radically new directions, creating entirely fresh schools of thought like existentialism and postmodernism. Martin Heidegger himself is renowned for both interpreting and extending existing philosophical traditions. He is particularly known for his profound impact on phenomenology, existentialism, and hermeneutics.<sup>46</sup> Through critical reflection and reinterpretation, philosophy does not merely analyse what exists but also imagines new possibilities, offering original frameworks for understanding the human experience. In this way, philosophy generates novel insights and ideas that can transform how we live, govern, and interact with the world, making it a creative force in human intellectual history.

Alan Xuereb, 2025 Tawern, Germany.

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<sup>46</sup> Lee Braver, *Heidegger on Thinking* (Cambridge University Press, 2024).

# CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

“*Die Welt, in der ich mich befinde, geht mich an.*“<sup>1</sup>  
“The world, I find myself in, affects me.”

## The Main Claim

The main question asked in this research is: can architecture ever be for the common good? That question itself creates a gamut of other questions. One of which is: to what branch of philosophy does such title pertain? The answer to this question may be summarised in the following passage:

A far-reaching philosophy of architecture extends beyond even a broadly aesthetics-based assessment, to include considerations of ethics, social and political philosophy, and philosophical reflections on psychology and the behavioral sciences.<sup>2</sup>

The main goal then is to respond to this question taking into consideration the fact that architecture is an *unavoidable presence*, one which evidently has an impact on the community where it stands, since whatever is around one, affects one. If this is true then, architecture<sup>3</sup> affects the lives of the citizens living in that community, inescapably making it the subject of political activity. It will be argued that the goal of architecture is (or ought to be) dwelling<sup>4</sup> whilst the goal of politics is (or ought to be) the common good<sup>5</sup>.

This will mean that there are three main issues that need to be addressed in order for the question posed at the outset of this chapter, to be answered, albeit partially and certainly not

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Grundbegriffe Der Aristotelischen Philosophie* (Frankfurt am Main : Vittorio Klostermann, 2002), p.51.

<sup>2</sup> Saul Fisher, “Philosophy of Architecture,” <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/architecture>, 2016 <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/architecture>> [accessed 13 December 2024].

<sup>3</sup> Together with a number of other elements like landscape and the environment amongst others.

<sup>4</sup> The premise here is that dwelling is not intended simply as the noun but also as the verb. Also that in order to be dwelling and not just lodging, it should bring about a type of well-being, which will be explained in some detail, and which can be summarily described by the neologism ‘(d)well-being’.

<sup>5</sup> Understood in this research as essentially being a coordination problem, mainly between individual well-being and collective well-being.

exhaustively, (a) what is architecture?<sup>6</sup> (b) what is the common good? (c) how does the latter relate to the former?

### **The Structure of the Research**

There were different methods available to conduct this research. One method would have been starting with the chapter analysing the common good and framing the subsequent chapters within the parameters of that chapter. However, that would have laid the burden of common good on the research, in such a way as to straight-jacket architecture within those parameters. Whilst as discussed above, phenomenology and Neo-Thomism are not necessarily at loggerheads with each other, the latter does not sufficiently tackle architecture, whilst the former does.

So the preferred mode opted for was to have a fundamentally phenomenological discussion about architecture, with a revision and extension of Heidegger's concepts of 'dwelling' and 'work of art' leading the charge, and then, equipped with the conclusions of that analysis, adapting and applying them to the political philosophy concept of the common good. Bearing in mind that everything humans do has a political dimension.

The research will have five chapters including the current one. As seen this chapter serves as an introduction to the main claim and also to some issues dubbed as 'preliminary'. These issues will set the background and also address some fundamental conceptual obstacles that, like any other research permeate this one. Hopefully, with such preliminary issues reconciled at the outset the research will proceed to a fundamentally phenomenologically informed stance with regard to architecture, framed within these two abovementioned dimensions. It will be only in the last chapter that the common good will be analysed and tied in with the previous chapters.

This concluding twist will come after having constructed arguments pointing towards bridging architecture, in its two dimensions, to well-being - understood as the holistic flourishing of the human being in both the ontological and ontic sense. This holistic flourishing includes a certain 'heightened self-awareness'<sup>7</sup> and as well as 'harmony between one's feelings and one's judgments (inner integrity), and between one's judgments and one's behaviour (authenticity)'.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Since we are arguing that it is not only a utilitarian or aesthetical activity.

<sup>7</sup> Holst, 'Finding Oneself Well', p. 13.

<sup>8</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 448.

The next chapter, will deal with the Heideggerian notion of architecture as leading towards dwelling in much more detail, and will also in its second part, deal with architecture as a work of art.

All this will be developed further in Chapter 3 – Architecture and the spirit of Place - *Genius Loci*, wherein the phenomenology of architecture as expounded by Norberg-Schulz will aid in stressing the connection between the man-made world and the natural world. The existential purpose of building (architecture) is therefore to make a site become a place, that is, to uncover (or unconceal) the meanings potentially present in the given environment. The spirit of the place. According to Haddad, Norberg-Schulz identified,<sup>9</sup> a “new approach to the problem of architectural space”, attempting to “develop the idea that architectural space may be understood as a concretization of environmental schemata or images, which form a necessary part of man's general orientation or ‘being in the world’”.<sup>10</sup>

As already mentioned it is not at all counterintuitive that as soon some ‘thing’ enters the sensory range of other human beings it *de facto* stops being private and becomes communal. As soon as the latter occurs, the relationship with this ‘thing’ becomes then ‘ethical’ in that it is influenced by, and exerts influence on, the ethos of the community. This will be the main concern of Chapter 4 – Architecture and the spirit of Community - *Genius Civitatis*. Harries explains that ‘architecture has had an ethical function, helping to articulate and even to establish man's ethos-our use of the word “edify” still hints at the relationship between building and ethics’.<sup>11</sup> Harries conveys this idea of autonomy mentioned by Valente and Silva when he states that ‘art withdraws from the totality of life and asserts its own autonomy as art for art's sake or becomes mere entertainment and decoration. Moreover, evoking Heidegger, he says that “[t]ime and space must be shaped in such a way that man is assigned a dwelling place, an ethos”.<sup>12</sup> Of all the arts architecture alone is unable to participate in this withdrawal. This is not so different to Finnis’s conception that each and every one of the basic goods of human flourishing (including the good of aesthetic experience) should be ‘valued for its own sake’.<sup>13</sup> If aesthetic experience is so autonomous then it is irreducible confirming its fundamentality in human experience. However, like everything else human, this aesthetic experience needs

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<sup>9</sup> Elie Haddad, “Christian Norberg-Schulz’s Phenomenological Project In Architecture,” *Architectural Theory Review*, 15.1 (2010), 88–101 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/13264821003629279>>.

<sup>10</sup> Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Existence, Space and Architecture*, third edition (New York: Praeger, 1974), p. 7.

<sup>11</sup> Karsten Harries, “The Ethical Function of Architecture,” *Choice Reviews Online*, 34.10 (1997), 34-5479-34-5479 <<https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.34-5479>>.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 88.

context. Harries appears to be against contextualism, when he exclaims that '[b]y its very nature, the aesthetic approach to architecture is opposed to every contextualism'.<sup>14</sup> However he also tells us that 'according to Walter Benjamin the appreciation of the aura of some artifact depends on an appreciation of its embeddedness in its historical context, of its place in the ongoing story of humanity'.<sup>15</sup> Harries later in 2017 whilst participating in a panel discussion has somehow clarified this issue of context. Harries says that "Take the example of a house. The place has significance for any number of reasons. And then you ask, "What's right?" There is no simple answer. It depends on the context in which the question gets raised and then different answers will be given in a different context".<sup>1617</sup> Harries appears to be more interested in the human context rather the material one. His emphasis is on the intangible context of the community.

Harries tells us that:

'we speak of a community's ethos to refer to the spirit that presides over its activities. "Ethos" here names the way human beings exist in the world: their way of dwelling. The ethical function of architecture names its task to help articulate and support a shared ethos'.<sup>18</sup>

In the last chapter, Chapter 5, it will be argued that according to Aristotle 'man is naturally a political animal' (*zoon politikon*).<sup>19</sup> If this is true then, all activities humans commit themselves to within the community are somehow, inescapably political.<sup>20</sup> This will be the tipping point of this thesis – Architecture, Politics and the Common Good.

From this standpoint then one may more comfortably argue that both the essential-internal aspect as well as the external-formal aspect of architecture lead to an individual and collective well-being, contribute not unimportantly towards the common good, which as described in this last chapter, is essentially the coordination of the individual and the collective well-beings.

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<sup>14</sup> Harries, *Lecture Notes*, p. 213.

<sup>15</sup> Harries, *Lecture Notes*, p. 218.

<sup>16</sup> Harries et al., 'Architecture and Philosophy', p. 18.

<sup>17</sup> Scruton, *Beauty*, p.12. Roger Scruton comes in aid of Benjamins' idea here, when he explains that 'the great works of architecture often depend for their beauty on the humble context that these lesser beauties provide'.

<sup>18</sup> Harries, *Lecture Notes*, p. 89.

<sup>19</sup> Aristotle, *The Politics of Aristotle: A Treatise on Government* (The Floating Press, 2009), p. 25.

<sup>20</sup> Hermann J. Weigand, *The Magic Mountain: A Study of Thomas Mann's Novel Der Zauberberg*. University of North Carolina Press, 1965. *JSTOR*, [https://doi.org/10.5149/9781469658612\\_weigand](https://doi.org/10.5149/9781469658612_weigand). Accessed 11 Mar. 2023. p.119 "Es gibt keine Nichtpolitik. Alles ist Politik. - There is nothing that is not political. Everything is Politics"

Thus, the issue of *turpification* arises when the rules (written or unwritten) regulating architecture are themselves unadorned with a sense of ‘dwelling’ and/or ‘artwork’ which should be at their foundations.

Finally, the more tangible part of the research conclusions wherein hope is given by the likes of small pilot projects such as that Plessis-Robinson France<sup>21</sup>, in 1989 (Figure 13). After all, architectural design is about humanity’s meaningful existence in nature and where the natural environment fits into the man-made environment.



FIGURE 7 NEW URBANISM IN FRANCE: VILLA MAINTENON LE PLESSIS-ROBINSON, PHOTOGRAPH: GUY COURTOIS, CREATIVE COMMONS ATTRIBUTION

Rather than relying on discrete design methods or stylistic prescriptions, the conclusions of this thesis argue that a more substantial synthesis arises when the insights of Heidegger,

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<sup>21</sup> Following the Second World War, the Communist party gained control of the municipal government and constructed the type of nondescript public housing developments that became prevalent in the outskirts of Paris during the post-war era. In 1989, the 46-year period of Communist governance concluded when 33-year-old Philippe Pemezec was elected mayor, based on a campaign pledging to revitalise the town. Pemezec initiated his revitalisation efforts with aesthetic improvements, such as removing graffiti, introducing floral displays, constructing fountains, and renovating buildings; however, the town also required more substantial changes. The significant shift in political control resulted in an even more pronounced alteration in the character of the town, as Pemezec adopted plans to replace the modernist housing developments with neo-traditional architecture. See Charles Siegel, “Le Plessis-Robinson: A Model for Smart Growth,” *Planetizen Features*, 2012 <<http://www.planetizen.com/node/57600>> [accessed 21 December 2024].

Norberg-Schulz, Harries, and Finnis are brought together to address the examiners' central question: **how should society work together to achieve meaningful architecture for the common good?** These thinkers jointly suggest that this task cannot be fulfilled by aesthetic claims alone—whether framed as “beauty,” “authenticity,” or “harmony”—for such terms risk becoming blunt instruments that obscure the subtle questions raised in the earlier chapters. Heidegger's account of dwelling provides an ontological grounding for how place becomes meaningful; Norberg-Schulz, notwithstanding the structuralist limitations of his early work, foregrounds the interpretative debt owed to what already exists in a place; Harries emphasises the ethical and civic responsibilities of architecture in a pluralistic society; and Finnis clarifies that flourishing is secured only when the **common good**—the ensemble of conditions enabling all members of a community to realise the basic goods—is actively coordinated. Read together, these perspectives shift attention away from predefined design solutions and toward the development of a **shared, publicly defensible practice of architectural judgment.**

Such a practice must take seriously the thesis's account of **(d)well-being**, understood as that state in which individuals living with others experience authentic fulfilment by meaningfully attuning themselves to their surroundings, finding themselves at home, and transforming space into dwelling in accordance with the genius loci and the ethos of their community. Achieving this cannot be left either to the unreviewed discretion of the expert or to the rigid prescriptions of regulation. Instead, it requires a **co-responsible deliberative framework**, one in which professional expertise is exercised through reason-giving that can be scrutinised, contested, and refined, while communities participate not as arbiters of taste but as bearers of situated knowledge about how places are lived. In this mode, architecture becomes a collaborative endeavour rooted in proportionality, transparency, and responsiveness to what a site discloses. It is through this disciplined yet open form of judgment—rather than through predetermined design ideologies—that society can work together to produce meaningful architecture oriented toward the common good and the flourishing of both present and future generations.

### **Some Preliminary Issues**

There are a number of challenging issues surrounding, and one could say, underpinning this research. It is best if one were to address such issues at the start, before moving on to the core discussion of the research.

## **Finnis and Heidegger**

The first, most obvious, issue is that there are problems to connect the two traditions represented by John M. Finnis and by Martin Heidegger since both are important to the successful fulfilment of the research's goal, that is the idea of architecture for the common good, for the reasons explained in the previous paragraphs. The difficulty lies in the fact that Finnis is not the typical neo-Thomist and Heidegger is not the typical phenomenologist.<sup>22</sup>

. By drawing from the natural law's focus on moral principles inherent in human nature and the phenomenological emphasis on lived experience, one could explore how ethical norms emerge from the depths of human consciousness.

This synthesis might involve investigating how our moral intuitions, informed by our phenomenological experiences, align with or challenge the principles proposed by the natural law tradition.<sup>23</sup>

In essence, by intertwining the natural law and phenomenological perspectives, one could offer a more nuanced understanding of morality (and politics) that incorporates both objective ethical foundations and the intricate interplay of consciousness and experience. This could enrich discussions on moral philosophy, offering a fresh angle to address complex ethical dilemmas in a holistic manner.

As a matter of fact the obvious challenge in bringing these two traditions together as Francesco Valerio Tommasi explains is that:

[E]normous differences separate Phenomenology and Neo-Scholasticism, even though each of the two did come to count among the most impressive movements in philosophical thought in the 20th century. Phenomenology takes as its starting point a concern of a radically theoretical nature basically devoid of all historical points of reference; it asserts the need for a philosophical thinking without presuppositions and involves a rejection of all metaphysics.<sup>24</sup> Neo-Scholasticism, by contrast, has a very

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<sup>22</sup> While Husserl focused on consciousness and intentionality, Heidegger shifted the focus to the ontological dimension of human existence, emphasizing the concept of "being-in-the-world", See: Dermot Moran, "Heidegger's Critique of Husserl's and Brentano's Accounts of Intentionality," *Inquiry*, 43.1 (2000), 39–65 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/002017400321361>>.

<sup>23</sup> Additionally, it could delve into the role of intentionality and subjective interpretation in shaping moral decision-making, shedding light on the relationship between universal moral principles and individual ethical choices. On this see also Cyril McDonnell, "The Origins of the Husserl-Heidegger Philosophical Dispute in Twentieth-Century Phenomenology," *Maynooth Philosophical Papers*, 9 (2018), 81–112 <<https://doi.org/10.5840/mpp201810305>>.

<sup>24</sup> This probably needs to be qualified, as summarised by Steven Crowell in his conclusion 'transcendental phenomenology is and ought to be metaphysically neutral; it should leave worldview proposals to the scientists and theologians', see: Steven Crowell, "Grenzprobleme of Phenomenology: Metaphysics," in *Contributions to Phenomenology*, ed. by Patrick Londen, Walsh Philip, and Jeff Yoshimi (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2023), pp. 171–93 <[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-26074-2\\_9](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-26074-2_9)> [accessed 14 December 2024].

precise privileged point of historical reference (namely medieval philosophical thinking, especially that of Thomas Aquinas); it is inspired above all by a religious-denominational allegiance (namely to Roman Catholicism); and it sets as its goal the re-establishment of a substantial and cogent metaphysics<sup>25</sup>

Phenomenology and Neo-Scholasticism, despite their shared significance in 20th-century philosophy, exemplify the polarization of philosophical approaches, with one seeking a presupposition-free foundation and the other anchoring itself in historical and religious traditions. While these philosophical traditions differ in their foundational principles, they both grapple with fundamental questions of human experience and knowledge. The contrast between Phenomenology and Neo-Scholasticism highlights the diverse methodologies employed in modern philosophical inquiry. As will be seen, the case of John Finnis illustrates how modern philosophers may draw from traditional schools of thought while simultaneously developing unique perspectives.

### **John Finnis**

John Finnis is mostly described as a Natural Law theorist. He is then, broadly speaking, a neo-Thomist and thus by implication in the same category of Neo-Scholasticism, which he probably would not accept as a tag since he brings forward a friendly opposition to it.<sup>26</sup> He is also, again broadly speaking, an analytic philosopher. In this sense, Finnis has been described in fact as an Analytical Thomist.<sup>27</sup> Finnis, differently from the Neo-Scholastics derives ‘value’ from ‘practical reasonableness’ and not from ‘fact’, so avoiding the ‘naturalistic fallacy’ as it is called:

[Finnis] seeks to build a version of the natural law that asserts the validity of its normative claims on the basis of the structure of practical reason itself, and thus overcomes the naturalistic fallacy by looking only to normative claims without reducing them to factual assertions.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Francesco Valerio Tommasi, “Phenomenology and Medieval Philosophy,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, ed. by Daniele De Santis, Burt C. Hopkins, and Claudio Majolino (Routledge, 2020), pp. 50–63 <<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003084013-5>> [accessed 14 December 2024].

<sup>26</sup> As will be discussed in Chapter 5.

<sup>27</sup> See: Craig Paterson, “Aquinas, Finnis and Non-Naturalism,” in *Analytical Thomism* (Routledge, 2017), pp. 195–218 <<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315262604-18>> [accessed 14 December 2024] in Matthew S. Pugh, *Analytical Thomism* (Routledge, 2017) <<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315262604>> [accessed 14 December 2024]. p. 171

<sup>28</sup> See Kevin P. Lee, “The Conceptions of Self-Evidence in the Finnis Reconstruction of Natural Law,” *Digital Commons at St. Mary’s University*, 2020 <<https://commons.stmarytx.edu/thestmaryslawjournal/vol51/iss2/4>> [accessed 14 December 2024].

After all, Finnis's theory has been described as offering, at least once, a kind of 'moral phenomenology'.<sup>2930</sup>

This descriptive (fact) normative (value) dichotomy is also found as an internal dispute between Finnis's Thomistic model and that of the Neo-Scholastics.

The key problem with naturalism, for Finnis [...], is its attempt to perform an untenable leap between fact and value, between the descriptive and the normative. Finnis rejects any neo-scholastic approach that breaches this key post-Enlightenment meta-ethical axiom.<sup>31</sup>

According to Finnis, as will be elucidated in Chapter 5, when engaging in practical reasoning about the types of actions that are worthy of choice, we inherently grasp the importance of these values (goods). We pursue them as intelligible foundations that underpin the 'pursuit of all worthwhile human action'.<sup>32</sup>

We will come back to these issues in Chapter 5 but for now, it is sufficient to note that differently from most Neo-Scholastics and Thomists, Finnis does not rely on Eternal Law for deriving his Natural Law Theory.

Natural law qua natural should not be conceptually confused with any form of supernaturally imposed extrinsicism – whether of divine reason (the eternal logos) or of the divine will (divine command theory).<sup>33</sup>

This gives us a conceptual foothold whereby our perception of reality is not conditioned by theology. This does not mean that the metaphysical aspects will not be discussed. The separation of perception from theological influence allows for a more objective examination of reality. It opens up the possibility of exploring alternative explanations and interpretations without being constrained by religious doctrines. However, this approach does not dismiss the

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<sup>29</sup> Jeremy Shearmur, "Natural Law without Metaphysics: The Case of John Finnis," *engagedscholarship@csu*, 1990 <<https://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/clevstlrev/vol38/iss1/9>> [accessed 14 December 2024]. available at <https://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/clevstlrev/vol38/iss1/9>

<sup>30</sup> Finnis's natural law theory has indeed been described as offering a kind of 'moral phenomenology', though this characterization is not without nuance and debate Jonathan Crowe, "Natural Law Beyond Finnis," *Jurisprudence*, 2.2 (2011), 293–308 <<https://doi.org/10.5235/204033211798716871>>.; John Finnis, "'Natural Law,'" in *Reason in Action* (Oxford University PressOxford, 2011), pp. 199–211 <<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199580057.003.0014>> [accessed 15 February 2025].).

<sup>31</sup> Matthew S. Pugh, *Aquinas, Finnis and Non-Naturalism*, ed. by Craig Paterson (Routledge, 2017) <<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315262604>> [accessed 15 February 2025].

<sup>32</sup> Paterson, 'Aquinas, Finnis and Non-Naturalism', p.175.

<sup>33</sup> Paterson, 'Aquinas, Finnis and Non-Naturalism', p.172.

importance of metaphysical considerations in understanding the nature of existence and consciousness.

### **Martin Heidegger**

Furthermore, Martin Heidegger is often described, again broadly speaking, as a phenomenologist.<sup>34</sup>

Relevant, though not conclusive to the resolution of this apparent challenge, is the fact that young Heidegger initially studied to be a Jesuit; a few years later, his *Habilitationsschrift* was devoted to medieval speculative grammar.<sup>35</sup> So Heidegger's intellectual path of development took him from an initial intellectual formation in medieval and Scholastic studies to Phenomenology.<sup>36</sup>

It is true that 'is noteworthy, then, above all how Heidegger's mature thought was to play a decisive role in prompting a thorough crisis<sup>37</sup> of Neo-Scholastic thought'.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Marcella Horrigan-Kelly, Michelle Millar, and Maura Dowling, "Understanding the Key Tenets of Heidegger's Philosophy for Interpretive Phenomenological Research," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 15.1 (2016) <<https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406916680634>>.

<sup>35</sup> Martin Heidegger's early academic journey was indeed marked by a shift from religious studies to philosophy. Initially, Heidegger studied to become a Jesuit priest, reflecting his Catholic upbringing and early theological interests (Thomas C. Hilde, Rudiger Safranski, and Ewald Osers, "Martin Heidegger: Between Good and Evil," *South Central Review*, 16.2/3 (1999), 132 <<https://doi.org/10.2307/3190197>>.). However, he later parted ways with Catholicism, as mentioned in the chronology of events in Hilde et al. (1999): "Parting with Catholicism and Studying the Laws of Free Fall while Falling." Interestingly, while Heidegger moved away from his religious studies, his philosophical work still showed influences from his earlier theological background. His *Habilitationsschrift* (postdoctoral thesis) was indeed focused on medieval speculative grammar, bridging his earlier religious studies with his developing philosophical interests (Hilde et al., 1999). This transition period in Heidegger's academic life coincided with significant events, including World War I, his habilitation, and his marriage (Hilde et al., 1999). It is worth noting that despite this early focus on medieval thought, Heidegger's later work would become primarily concerned with the meaning of Being as disclosure, a theme that would dominate his philosophical career (Thomas Sheehan, *Heidegger* (Routledge, 2017) <<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203790182>> [accessed 10 December 2024]). This evolution in Heidegger's thought demonstrates how his early religious and medieval studies laid the groundwork for his later, more existential philosophical inquiries.

<sup>36</sup> Tommasi, 'Phenomenology and Medieval Philosophy', p. 57: "It is well known that the thesis which Heidegger submitted for his own *Habilitierung* was a work on *Die Kategorien und Bedeutungslehre des Duns Scotus* (1916)"

<sup>37</sup> Tommasi explains this crisis, or part of it as: "In particular, it was Heidegger's critique of so-called "ontotheology" – i.e. thought founded on the nexus between God and Being – that dealt a very heavy blow to the Neo-Thomist model. The Scholastic metaphysical tradition had, in fact, postulated "being" as a primary term – inasmuch it was the most general conceivable term, applicable to all that exists – while at the same time also referring to "God" as just such a primary term, inasmuch as God must be conceived of as eminent over all beings: it was the ambition of Scholastic metaphysics to firmly maintain both the identity of these two orders with one another (God is the being par excellence, and indeed, in a sense, the only entity really worthy to bear this denomination "being") and, at the same time, their difference (the distance between the Creator and His creatures is unbridgeable; were it not, one would inevitably lapse into monism or pantheism)" Tommasi, 'Phenomenology and Medieval Philosophy', p. 58.

<sup>38</sup> Tommasi, 'Phenomenology and Medieval Philosophy', p. 58.

Moreover, as usually happens, in the 1920s and 1930s we see a change of direction in Neo-Scholasticism in which there can be seen to develop a marked interest among Neo-Scholastics in Phenomenology.<sup>39</sup> This rapprochement saw Neo-Scholasticism philosophers like Jacques Maritain, Daniel Feuling, Gottlieb Söhngen, Marie-Dominique Roland-Gosselin taking ‘great interest in Phenomenology’.<sup>40</sup> One has to keep in mind that whilst St Thomas ‘epitomizes the scholastic method’<sup>41</sup> he started a movement which started bearing his name.

As Tommasi clarifies:

The usefulness of Phenomenology for Thomism is perceived to lie rather in the new movement’s methodology than in the concrete results to which Phenomenological analysis had hitherto led.<sup>42</sup>

Initially and understandably, Heidegger’s recreation of Phenomenology in terms of his own ontological scheme seemed, from the viewpoint of Neo-Scholasticism, to be a venture of emphatically ‘ambiguous’<sup>43</sup> worth and benefit.<sup>44</sup>

Tommasi elucidates further on this, concluding that at the end however there was some cross-pollination:

The relationship between Neo-Scholasticism and Phenomenology, which was, as we have said, just beginning to come to maturity in this period, becomes, as it were, twisted into an almost exclusive relationship between Neo-Scholasticism and the thought of Heidegger, with the original Husserlian inspiration being left out of account. A large number of authors aligned with the Neo-Scholastic current now, directly or indirectly influenced by Heidegger, set about achieving some form of reconciliation between Aquinas’s understanding of being as *actus essendi* (this latter interpreted after the manner of Gilson and of other Neo-Thomists of this period) and the “ontology” of Heidegger. These include Karl Rahner, Emmerich Coreth, Bernhard Welte, Theodor Steinbüchel, Bernhard Lakebrink, Gustav Siewerth, Max Müller and Johann Baptist Lotz.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Tommasi, ‘Phenomenology and Medieval Philosophy’, p. 59.

<sup>40</sup> Tommasi, ‘Phenomenology and Medieval Philosophy’, p. 59.

<sup>41</sup> Robert Pasnau, “Thomas Aquinas,” <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2023/entries/Aquinas>, 2023 <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2023/entries/aquinas>> [accessed 14 December 2024].

<sup>42</sup> Tommasi, ‘Phenomenology and Medieval Philosophy’, p. 59.

<sup>43</sup> Tommasi explains that this worth ambiguity lied in having ‘[o]n the one hand it seemed to open up unexpected perspectives for a thought that had always aspired to place the question of the validity of the “question of being” once again on the philosophical agenda without becoming entangled in the “transcendental question” in the sense in which it had been raised by Kant (i.e. the need to pose, before any question of knowledge, that of the conditions of possibility of knowledge). On the other hand, this new Heideggerian philosophy of Being decidedly rejected the possibility of addressing the “question of being” using the concepts of classical (and thus also of Scholastic) metaphysics’. Tommasi, ‘Phenomenology and Medieval Philosophy’, p. 60.

<sup>44</sup> Tommasi, ‘Phenomenology and Medieval Philosophy’, p. 60.

<sup>45</sup> Tommasi, ‘Phenomenology and Medieval Philosophy’, p. 60: these last mentioned philosophers are the so called Transcendental Thomists, for further reading see: John F. X. Knasas, “Transcendental Thomism and the Thomistic

Heidegger's ontotheological<sup>46</sup> critique is used to develop an approach whereby the "theological question", in its narrower sense, can be rethought or completely rejected.

Thus if, on the one hand, Phenomenology was accused, already in the era of its first emergence, of being an attempt to found a "new Scholasticism"<sup>47</sup> and has undergone, in more recent years, what has been polemically described as a "theological turn", (Neo-) Scholasticism itself, on the other hand, has undergone – and this above all in respect of that which remains most alive and vital in it of its speculative side – what we might, in parallel to the younger movement's "theological turn", call a "Phenomenological turn".<sup>48</sup>

Thus, whilst in this research one cannot explain in detail how Scholasticism and Phenomenology intersect and influence each other, it is certainly arguable that these seemingly distinct schools of thought had at least a hundred years of 'rapprochement' as Tommasi calls it<sup>49</sup> and later on as a reciprocal interaction. On this point, this research is certainly not the first attempt to try and bridge these two traditions. Edith Stein, initially a phenomenologist, had this 'encounter with the thought of Thomas Aquinas', as we are told by Lebech.<sup>50</sup> So much so that Stein's philosophy has become to be called 'Phenomenological Thomism':

Phenomenological Thomism can be distinguished from all other kinds of Thomism and phenomenology for at least three interrelated reasons. One, it possesses unique characteristics not to be reduced to any other philosophical tradition, neither

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Texts," *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review*, 54.1 (1990), 81–95 <<https://doi.org/10.1353/tho.1990.0044>>.

<sup>46</sup> On this point see Matthew C. Halteman, "Ontotheology," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1998) <<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780415249126-k115-1>> [accessed 14 December 2024]: "For Heidegger, 'ontotheology' is a critical term used to describe a putatively problematic approach to metaphysical theorizing that he claims is characteristic of Western philosophy in general. A metaphysics is an 'ontotheology' insofar as its account of ultimate reality combines—typically in a confused or conflated manner—two general forms of metaphysical explanation that, taken together, aim to make the entirety of reality intelligible to human understanding. These are an ontology that accounts for that which all beings have in common (universal or fundamental being) and a theology that accounts for that which causes and renders intelligible the system of beings as a whole (a highest or ultimate being or a first principle)".

<sup>47</sup> Francesco Valerio Tommasi, "Edward Baring: Converts to the Real: Catholicism and the Making of Continental Philosophy – Phenomenological Reviews," <https://reviews.ophen.org/2020/02/29/edward-baring-converts-to-the-real-catholicism-and-the-making-of-continental-philosophy-2/> (Phenomenological Reviews, 2020) <<https://reviews.ophen.org/2020/02/29/edward-baring-converts-to-the-real-catholicism-and-the-making-of-continental-philosophy-2/>> [accessed 14 December 2024]: "*Il rapporto prevalente che la fenomenologia instaurò fu quello con la cosiddetta Neoscolastica, ossia con la corrente filosofica e teologica volta al recupero e alla riattualizzazione del pensiero medievale ed in particolare del tomismo, sostenuta con energia dalla chiesa cattolica nel corso del ventesimo secolo e rilanciata in particolare dall'enciclica Aeterni Patris di Leone XIII (1879)*" My translation: "The prevailing relationship that phenomenology established was that with the so-called Neoscholasticism, that is, with the philosophical and theological current aimed at the recovery and re-actualization of medieval thought and in particular of Thomism, energetically supported by the Catholic Church during the twentieth century and relaunched in particular by the encyclical *Aeterni Patris* of Leo XIII (1879)".

<sup>48</sup> Tommasi, 'Phenomenology and Medieval Philosophy', p 62.

<sup>49</sup> Tommasi, 'Phenomenology and Medieval Philosophy', p.59.

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781003084013-5>

<sup>50</sup> See Mette Lebech, "Edith Stein's Thomism," *Maynooth Philosophical Papers*, 7 (2013), 20–32 <<https://doi.org/10.5840/mpp201374>>.

phenomenological nor Thomistic. Two, there are historical occurrences of this kind of philosophical endeavour in the mainstream continental European academic tradition, distinct from all other kinds of Thomism and phenomenology: they are the works of Edith Stein, partially Karol Wojtyła, and a number of lesser-known phenomenologists following in Stein's or Wojtyła's footsteps. As they constitute a separate group of writings, they comprise a distinct historical phenomenon. Three, some historians of philosophy identified these occurrences and the distinctiveness of their method.<sup>51</sup>

Following on from the above, another important figure who tackled the bridging issue limitedly with the aim of building the 'image of man as a unity'<sup>52</sup> was Karol Wojtyła.<sup>53</sup> In his review of the former pope and philosopher, Piotr Jaroszyński concludes that Wojtyła was a philosopher of 'being', who was able to make use of the 'philosophy of Aristotle and of St. Thomas Aquinas along with phenomenological method and his philosophy contributed an original approach that bore fruit in a deeper understanding of man as a person'.<sup>54</sup>

It is evidently beyond the scope and aims of this research to attempt a bridging of the whole corpus of the Thomist and Phenomenological traditions. Instead one may attempt a bridging of specific issues found in both traditions in general and in Heidegger and Finnis more specifically. A convergence point of sorts.

Philosophers like Finnis had developed, perhaps autonomously, positions quite similar to those advocated by phenomenologist, especially with a methodology which depended more on practical reasonableness than on Eternal Law.<sup>55</sup> Finnis's theory claims to be able to establish the norms it puts forward without invoking the supernatural.<sup>56</sup> Finnis's emphasis is more on philosophy than on theology.

Perhaps one could at this juncture mention what Sokowloski states about Thomism and Phenomenology:

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<sup>51</sup> Guerrero van der Meijden, 'What Is Phenomenological Thomism?', p. 2.

<sup>52</sup> Piotr Jaroszyński, "Karol Wojtyła: A Thomist or a Phenomenologist?," *Studia Gilsoniana*, 10.1 (2021), 135–52 <https://doi.org/10.26385/SG.100105>, p. 148.

<sup>53</sup> See: Karol Wojtyła, and Ignatik Grzegorz, Person and Act and Related Essays. *Catholic University of America Press*, (2021), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1khdqkj>.

<sup>54</sup> Jaroszyński, 'Karol Wojtyła', p. 151.

<sup>55</sup> In Chapter 5 this issue will be discussed in some detail in the context of McCall's criticism of Finnis's secular approach to Natural Law. Brian McCall, "¿Qué Tipo de Bien Es John Finnis? Un Estudio Sobre El Bien Personal y Común En «Natural Law and Natural Rights»," *Persona y Derecho*, 83 (2020), 637–68 <<https://doi.org/10.15581/011.83.012>> p.58.

<sup>56</sup> John D. O'Connor, "Natural Law and Ethical Non-Naturalism," *Studies in Christian Ethics*, 34.2 (2020), 190–208 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0953946820962893>>.

[...]phenomenology resembles Thomistic philosophy, which represents a premodern understanding of being and the mind, but it differs from Thomism in that it does not approach philosophy from within biblical revelation.<sup>57</sup>

On this convergence between Thomism, (or more precisely Thomist Scholasticism<sup>58</sup>) and Phenomenology, Sokolowski says:

Indeed, taking the route offered by phenomenology can be of benefit to Thomism: it becomes possible to show how the context assumed by Thomism is itself distinguished from the natural whole we call the world.<sup>59</sup>

As we will see in Chapter 5, Finnis is criticised exactly for not relying on such revelation expressed by ‘eternal law’.

In this sense, Finnis may be considered as a *moral phenomenologist*, as Shearmur labels him:

Rather than trying, [...], to defend an older cosmology or to engage with problems of supposed connections between fact and value, Finnis instead offers us what might be called a descriptive phenomenology of moral action (in an ordinary rather than a technical, Husserlian sense).<sup>60</sup>

Finnis, in fact, has as Shearmur points out an ‘internalist’<sup>61</sup> perception of natural law:

First, for Finnis there is no problem of moving from facts to values, because within his starting-point-the "internal" reflective analysis of action-values are already there to be found.<sup>62</sup>

Both the natural law theory and phenomenology consider ‘reason as teleologically geared toward truth’.<sup>63</sup>

The idea of self-evidence of truths found in these fundamental values may be seen both in Aquinas and Finnis, both of whom feel the normative need to express these values in legal (if not political) terms. This is not in contradiction to the phenomenological tradition, but a complement to it. So much so, Robert Sokolowski states:

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<sup>57</sup> Robert Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 7.

<sup>58</sup> Aquinas shifted Scholasticism away from Neoplatonism and towards Aristotelianism. See Luis Cortest, “Was St. Thomas Aquinas a Platonist?,” *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review*, 52.2 (1988), 209–19 <<https://doi.org/10.1353/tho.1988.0046>>.

<sup>59</sup> Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, p.208.

<sup>60</sup> Jeremy Shearmur, “Natural Law without Metaphysics: The Case of John Finnis,” *engagedscholarship@csu*, 1990 <<https://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/clevstlrev/vol38/iss1/9>> [accessed 14 December 2024], p. 125.

<sup>61</sup> Shearmur, ‘Natural Law without Metaphysics’, p.124.

<sup>62</sup> Shearmur, ‘Natural Law without Metaphysics’, p.124.

<sup>63</sup> Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, p.7.

However, because it considers human reason as ordered toward evidence and truth, phenomenology can also address in an indirect way modern issues in political theory.<sup>64</sup>

Perhaps one of the major difficulties in attempting to bridge these two traditions is that, on the one hand, the language used by Finnis (and Aquinas) is normative - it tells one what “ought” to be done – whilst, on the other hand, Heidegger’s language - besides being obscure, at times circular and idiosyncratic - is mostly descriptive, or some would say interpretative.<sup>65</sup> As already mentioned, this is exactly the big question in this research. The latter analyses architecture, as traditionally pertaining to the aesthetics branch of philosophy, as a phenomenon within the framework of the common good, which pertains to moral-political-legal philosophy. Two apparently disconnected branches of philosophy, which perhaps should be left distinct.

Well, first of all, Heidegger challenges this relegation of architecture to aesthetics. Even if one were to consider architecture as a work of art, Heidegger would reject the analysis of a work of art as simply an aesthetics exercise. He would actually say it is much more than that as we will see. He would say that it pertains to the realm of what is true. He would also say, as will be seen, that its essence is dwelling. So architecture then cannot simply be categorised in a philosophy of aesthetics but more in some other category of philosophy. Without prejudicing what is to come suffice it to say here that whatever stands in the community as this unavoidable presence that architecture is, becomes immediately and inevitably a psychological, social, ethical and political phenomenon. It becomes in other words existential.<sup>66</sup> Treating such a phenomenon merely as aesthetical is to diminish its importance and reducing it to a fraction of its real impact on humans. It is here where Heidegger’s treatment of architecture, even when one considers it as a work of art, becomes not only compatible but conducive to the idea that such a phenomenon needs to be analysed within the context of the common good, not only *qua* a manifestation of the basic good of aesthetic experience - itself fundamental and incommensurable – but also within the context of all the other basic goods of human flourishing. As Thomas Sheehan explains Heidegger’s intellectual path remained ‘protreptic’,

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<sup>64</sup> Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, p. 7.

<sup>65</sup> His descriptive and interpretative approach is central to his philosophical method, particularly in his seminal work "Being and Time" (David Couzens Hoy, “Heidegger and the Hermeneutic Turn,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, ed. by Charles Guignon (Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 170–94 <<https://doi.org/10.1017/ccol0521385709.007>> [accessed 15 December 2024]).

<sup>66</sup> Architecture's significance extends far beyond aesthetics, encompassing psychological, social, ethical, and political dimensions, thus making it an existential phenomenon. As Jones (Paul Jones, “Putting Architecture in Its Social Place: A Cultural Political Economy of Architecture,” *Urban Studies*, 46.12 (2009), 2519–36 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098009344230>>.) argues, architecture is "fundamentally conditioned by the broader political-economic context" and plays a "central role in recent place-marketing strategies," highlighting its complex social production and relationship with cultural elites (Jones, 2009).

wishing only for us humans to know ourselves whilst ‘he urges us to embrace and live out of’.<sup>67</sup> If according to Sheehan, Heidegger wishes this for us, he must have thought that it is good for us.<sup>68</sup> It would not make sense for any philosophy unless it is self-declared evil to wish something short of good for its followers. Heidegger is, at least according to Sheehan, urging us to live well by embracing whatever our existence is. Falling short of articulating it explicitly, he aspires for our well-being. In many respects, Finnis's objective mirrors this sentiment; he desires to discern what constitutes a fulfilling existence for an individual, or the essence of well-being.<sup>69</sup>

However this major distinction and difficulty between the Finnisian-normative and Heideggerian-descriptive-interpretative may be an overreaction. Some sustain that notwithstanding Heidegger's critique of ethics, his use of ethically-inflected language<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Thomas Sheehan, “What, after All, Was Heidegger About?,” *Continental Philosophy Review*, 47.3–4 (2014), 249–74 (p. 36). <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11007-014-9302-4>>.

<sup>68</sup> In essence, Sheehan's interpretation highlights the protreptic nature of Heidegger's philosophy, urging humans to embrace and live authentically by understanding their own essence. This view aligns with Heidegger's concept of “*Alles ist Weg*” (Everything is way), suggesting that human existence is fundamentally about being “on-the-way in essential movement” (Sheehan Thomas, *Heidegger* (Routledge, 2017) <<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203790182>> [accessed 10 December 2024]). However, the diversity of interpretations surrounding Heidegger's work underscores the complexity and ongoing debates in Heideggerian scholarship.

<sup>69</sup> Sheehan's interpretation of Heidegger suggests that the philosopher's aim was indeed to guide individuals towards a form of well-being, albeit one rooted in authenticity and self-understanding (Thomas Sheehan, *Heidegger* (Routledge, 2017) <<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203790182>> [accessed 13 December 2024]). Heidegger's concept of “being on-the-way in essential movement” implies that human flourishing is achieved through a process of becoming what we already are, rather than striving for an external ideal (Sheehan, 2017). Interestingly, this perspective contrasts with the more popularized existentialist interpretation of Heidegger, which often portrays authenticity as a stance of rugged individualism in the face of life's absurdity (Charles B. Guignon, “Authenticity, Moral Values, and Psychotherapy,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 215–39 <<https://doi.org/10.1017/ccol0521385709.009>> [accessed 10 December 2024]). This discrepancy highlights the complexity of Heidegger's thought and its various interpretations. While Heidegger's approach to well-being focuses on self-discovery and authenticity, it shares some common ground with other philosophical perspectives on human flourishing. For instance, the concept of authenticity in existentialism can be viewed as a virtue (Charles Guignon, “Authenticity,” *Philosophy Compass*, 3.2 (2008), 277–90 <<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-9991.2008.00131.x>>), potentially aligning with virtue ethics approaches to well-being. However, Heidegger's emphasis on “becoming what we already are” distinguishes his approach from more prescriptive ethical frameworks, suggesting a unique path to human fulfillment through self-understanding and embracing one's existence. This is exactly why, as will be seen towards the end of this research, Heidegger needs a corrective lens.

<sup>70</sup> Ziarek describes his own book “Inflected Language”, as proposing ‘to rethink the ontological and ethical dimensions of language by rereading Heidegger's work, more specifically his reflection on poetry’. For further reading see: Krzysztof Ziarek, *Inflected Language: Toward a Hermeneutics of Nearness: Heidegger, Levinas, Stevens, Celan* (State University of New York Press, 1994), p. 1. Hatab gives us examples of such ethically-inflected language op. cit. p. 407 states: ‘One interesting connection in this regard is that between *Verstehen* (Heidegger's notion of pre-reflective understanding) and Aristotle's *phronesis* or practical wisdom. *Phronesis* is an inexact, deliberative finesse that guides our actions regarding a desired end (*telos*), that for the sake of which (*hou heneka*) we act. Here the human good involves natural potentialities that we strive to actualize through deliberative choices. This fits Heidegger's sense of *Verstehen*, which is connected with *Seinkönnen* (Dasein's potentiality-for-being), and das *Umwillen* (the for-the-sake-of that animates Dasein's actions)’.

suggests an ‘interpretive ethics of encounter concerning self-interpreting agents in their hermeneutical context and the formal indication of *factual* life as a situated dwelling.’<sup>71</sup>

Hatab perhaps explains it best in this passage:

Heidegger often indicated that this should not be taken to mean a rejection of, or indifference toward, ethics; rather, ethics, again like other ontic regions, has concealed within its mode of thinking a primordial dimension that can open up the way in which Dasein is in the world.<sup>72</sup>

Some of Heidegger’s early writings display some normative commitments as explained by Nelson:

In addition to stating that ontology provided a basis for ethics, a claim Heidegger repeated in speaking of an originary ethos of dwelling<sup>73</sup> in the Letter on Humanism, his writings and lectures of the 1920s display their own normative commitments as he employed some varieties of ethically-charged and inflected language<sup>74</sup>

Furthermore, Nelson explains that throughout the 1920s:

[...]Heidegger used ordinary ethical language in appealing to moral obligations and virtues such as perseverance, loyalty, dignity, courage, and commitment. He did not eliminate but appealed to the exemplary character of various philosophical and other virtues. What can only be described as the virtue of lingering in the question remained a fundamental commitment of his thinking.<sup>75</sup>

So the idea that Heidegger was somehow immune to or uninterested in ethics is fairly exaggerated. Consider this fragment from his *Letter to Humanism*:

If the name "ethics," in keeping with the basic meaning of the word ethos, should now say that "ethics" ponders the abode of man, then that thinking which thinks the truth of

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<sup>71</sup> Eric Sean Nelson, “Heidegger and the Questionability of the Ethical,” *Studia Phaenomenologica*, 8 (2008), 411–35 <<https://doi.org/10.7761/sp.8.411>>, p. 411.

<sup>72</sup> Lawrence J. Hatab, “Ethics and Finitude,” *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 35.4 (1995), 403–17 <https://doi.org/10.5840/ipq199535440>, p. 403. See Being and Time, p. 37 “Dasein's ways of behaviour, its capacities, powers, possibilities, and vicissitudes, have been studied with varying extent in philosophical psychology, in anthropology, ethics, and 'political science', in poetry, biography, and the writing of history, each in a different fashion. But the question remains whether these interpretations of Dasein have been carried through with a primordial existentiality comparable to whatever existentiell primordiality they may have possessed”. The original reads as follows: “*Weil nun aber zum Dasein nicht nur Seinsverständnis gehört, sondern dieses sich mit der jeweiligen Seinsart des Daseins selbst ausbildet oder zerfällt, kann es über eine reiche Ausgelegtheit verfügen. Philosophische Psychologie, Anthropologie, Ethik, »Politik«, Dichtung, Biographie und Geschichtsschreibung sind auf je verschiedenen Wegen und in wechselndem Ausmaß den Verhaltungen, Vermögen, Kräften, Möglichkeiten und Ge schicken des Daseins nachgegangen. Die Frage bleibt aber, ob diese Auslegungen ebenso ursprünglich existenzial durchgeführt wurden, wie sie vielleicht existenziell ursprünglich waren.*“ Martin Heidegger, *Sein Und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1967), p. 16.

<sup>73</sup> We will discuss this in some detail in Chapter 4 with reference to Karsten Harries’s interpretation of Heidegger.

<sup>74</sup> Nelson, ‘Heidegger and the Questionability of the Ethical’, p. 414.

<sup>75</sup> Nelson, ‘Heidegger and the Questionability of the Ethical’, p. 414.

Being as the primordial element of man, as one who exists, is in itself the original ethics. However, this thinking is not ethics in the first instance, because it is ontology.<sup>76</sup>

Hatab tells us that 'Heidegger never claimed that rational or metaphysical models of thought are false or dispensable, only that they are not primordial enough'.<sup>77</sup>

This point is important if one wants to counter the idea that Heidegger did not address the ethical idea of what is good for human beings. If this is not tackled here at the outset it will carry on being a stumbling block to the idea that Heideggerian phenomenology applied to dwelling can and should tell us something about it being in correlation to well-being, and thus (in)directly linked to the common good.

So much so that, according to Hatab:

If we attend in a Heideggerian manner to the existential environment (being-in-the-world) in which and out of which the ethical life arises, such a "pre-ethical" analysis should give us clues for a more adequate ethics[...]<sup>78</sup>

One point that has to be made is that this 'primordial' and 'pre-ethical' approach Heidegger emphasises is not so different from what Finnis called 'pre-moral':

[...]very summarily, we could say that the requirements to which we now turn express the 'natural law method' of working out the (moral) 'natural law' from the first (pre-moral) 'principles of natural law'. Using only the modern terminology (itself of uncertain import) of 'morality', we can say that the following sections of this chapter concern the sorts of reasons why (and thus the ways in which) there are things that morally ought (not) to be done.<sup>79</sup>

These pre-moral principles Finnis mentions above are indeed the requirements of practical reasonableness<sup>80</sup> (itself one of the basic values necessary for human flourishing) and the product of which is 'morality'.

So as one can see both Heidegger's primordiality and Finnis's pre-morality are pointing towards a more appropriate ethical life. These two lines of thought are to say the least not incompatible.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Letter to Humanism*, in *Martin Heidegger, Basic Writings*, ed. by David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), pp.234-235.

<sup>77</sup> Hatab, 'Ethics and Finitude', p. 405.

<sup>78</sup> Hatab, 'Ethics and Finitude', p. 405.

<sup>79</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 103.

<sup>80</sup> One of which is the common good.

<sup>81</sup> Any way as Crowe puts it : "It is suggested that an existentialist perspective holds potential in reinforcing contemporary natural law responses to the so-called 'fact-value distinction'. Such an approach affords a promising methodological structure for investigating the pre-moral foundations for social judgements of ethical significance,

Hatab explains that one of the insights that a Heideggerian analysis can give to ethics is that:

[...]we are not first or finally ethical in an objective manner, by way of some theory or rational demonstration, which operates by reflectively standing back from world involvement. We are first introduced to values by way of training, habits, and institutional influences, i.e., by way of a tradition already in place that gives us our ethical orientation in a prereflective immersion and transmission. Values become part of our nature before we reflect on them, and there is no reason to think that such a prereflective dimension ever can be or should be dissociated from the moral life. Even after maturation and reflection, being ethical will not be free of traditional influences, will not be detachable from our particular existential concerns, and will always require the moments of decision where reflection leaves off and action begins.<sup>82</sup>

We are thrown into a particular community, and raised in it, and we cannot treat our being in the world as some pre-societal reality, and it is probably impossible to act as if we are a *tabula rasa* by the time we start reflecting of about our own value-system.

Nonetheless, the attempt in this research is not to fuse two traditions into one. The idea behind this research is to offer a holistic view of how a phenomenological analysis of architecture that may lead to a number of possible well-being scenarios, some of which may be compatible with the notion of common good. As will be seen, key to this aim is the concept of ‘dwelling’<sup>83</sup> and that of being at ‘home’.<sup>84</sup>

## **Methodological Issues - Bridging Architecture To Philosophy**

The argument of the thesis follows a conceptual progression in which the phenomenological understanding of dwelling articulated by Martin Heidegger is interpreted in architectural terms through the work of Christian Norberg-Schulz and further developed as an account of architecture’s ethical task in the reflections of Karsten Harries, before finally being considered within the normative framework of the common good elaborated by John Finnis. Throughout the thesis, examples within Maltese planning practice, legal reasoning, and public debate are introduced as practical illustrations of the philosophical concerns under discussion.

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thereby providing qualified support for the type of natural law theory advocated by Finnis.” See: Jonathan Crowe, “Existentialism and Natural Law,” <https://ssrn.com/abstract=1340823>, 2009 <<https://ssrn.com/abstract=1340823>> [accessed 15 December 2024].

<sup>82</sup> Hatab, ‘Ethics and Finitude’, p. 406.

<sup>83</sup> See: Michael Wheeler, “Martin Heidegger,” <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/heidegger>, 2020 <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/heidegger>> [accessed 15 December 2024]. “Heidegger sometimes uses the term dwelling to capture the distinctive manner in which Dasein is in the world. To dwell in a house is not merely to be inside it spatially in the sense just canvassed. Rather, it is to belong there, to have a familiar place there. It is in this sense that Dasein is (essentially) in the world”.

<sup>84</sup> Wim Dekkers, “Dwelling, House and Home: Towards a Home-Led Perspective on Dementia Care,” *Medicine, Health Care and Philosophy*, 14.3 (2011), 291–300 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11019-011-9307-2>, wherein he states that: “Talking about home is complex because of the various levels of interpretation (Jeanne Moore, “Placing Home in Context,” *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 20.3 (2000), pp. 207–17, doi:10.1006/jev.2000.0178.).

## Architecture and Philosophy

One other preliminary question to be asked is ‘what do architecture and philosophy have to do with each other?’ Two distinct and old disciplines that apparently have nothing to do with each other. Architecture and philosophy, while seemingly disparate fields, share profound connections that have shaped human thought and the built environment for millennia. At their core, both disciplines grapple with fundamental questions about existence, perception, and the human experience. Architecture, as the art and science of designing spaces, inherently embodies philosophical concepts such as aesthetics, ethics, and epistemology. The way we construct our physical surroundings reflects our understanding of the world and our place within it, making architecture a tangible manifestation of philosophical ideas.

Moreover, the intersection of architecture and philosophy extends beyond theoretical musings to practical applications. Philosophers have long contemplated the nature of space, time, and human interaction, concepts that directly inform architectural design. Conversely, architects often draw inspiration from philosophical frameworks to create spaces that challenge conventional thinking or embody specific ideological principles.<sup>85</sup> This symbiotic relationship has given rise to architectural movements deeply rooted in philosophical thought, such as modernism's emphasis on rationality and functionalism, or postmodernism's exploration of meaning and context. As such, the dialogue between architecture and philosophy continues to evolve, offering fresh perspectives on how we perceive, inhabit, and construct our world.<sup>86</sup>

This is the question that Karsten Harries asks at the beginning of his philosophy of architecture notes, in his words:

But just what do the two, philosophy and architecture, really have to do with one another? To be sure, philosophers are able to write just about anything. But does philosophy really have much to contribute to architecture? And what, if anything, does architecture have to contribute to philosophy?<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Consider for example in Malta: WA Contents, “Richard England Explores ‘Architecture and the Senses,’” *World Architecture Community*, 15 August 2018 <[https://worldarchitecture.org/architecture-news/ehnnf/richard\\_england\\_explores\\_architecture\\_and\\_the\\_senses\\_.html](https://worldarchitecture.org/architecture-news/ehnnf/richard_england_explores_architecture_and_the_senses_.html)> [accessed 18 March 2025].

<sup>86</sup> The relationship between architecture and philosophy has indeed been symbiotic, with architectural movements often reflecting broader philosophical trends. Modernism in architecture, for instance, embraced rationality and functionalism, mirroring the modernist philosophical emphasis on reason and progress (Henry A. Giroux, “Border Pedagogy in the Age of Postmodernism,” *Journal of Education*, 170.3 (1988), 162–81 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/002205748817000310>>.).

<sup>87</sup> Karsten Harries, *Ut Architectura Philosophia? Questioning the Relationship of Architecture and Philosophy*, in “*Philosophy of Architecture Lecture Notes*,” <https://campuspress.yale.edu/karstenharries/courses-and-seminars/>, 2016 < [accessed 11 January 2025], p. 2.

At this stage, suffice it to say then, that amongst other things, architecture is a metaphorical language. Architecture indeed serves as a metaphorical language, communicating complex ideas and cultural values through its forms, spaces, and materials. This concept is supported by several studies in the provided context. The use of architecture as a metaphorical language is evident in the analysis of traditional buildings in the Najd region of Saudi Arabia (Figure 10).<sup>88</sup> The research highlights how the plastic and expressive value of these structures can be translated into contemporary designs, creating continuity of local cultural identity. This translation process involves using architectural elements as metaphors for cultural heritage, demonstrating how buildings can "speak" a language that resonates with local traditions and values. Interestingly, the relationship between architecture and metaphor works both ways. Smith and Bugni<sup>89</sup> discusses how symbolic interaction theory helps us understand how the designed physical environment and the self are intertwined, with one potentially influencing and finding expression in the other. This suggests that not only does architecture serve as a metaphor for cultural and personal values, but individuals also use metaphors to understand and relate to their built environment. In summary, architecture's role as a metaphorical language is multifaceted. It serves as a medium for expressing cultural identity<sup>90</sup>, a means of social constitution and transformation<sup>91</sup>, and a way for individuals to understand and interact with their environment.<sup>92</sup> This metaphorical aspect of architecture underscores its importance not just as a functional necessity, but as a powerful tool for communication and cultural expression.

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<sup>88</sup> Monica Moscatelli, "Rethinking the Heritage through a Modern and Contemporary Reinterpretation of Traditional Najd Architecture, Cultural Continuity in Riyadh," *Buildings*, 13.6 (2023), 1471 <<https://doi.org/10.3390/buildings13061471>>.

<sup>89</sup> Ronald W. Smith and Valerie Bugni, "Symbolic Interaction Theory and Architecture," *Symbolic Interaction*, 29.2 (2006), 123–55 <<https://doi.org/10.1525/si.2006.29.2.123>>.

<sup>90</sup> Monica Moscatelli, "Rethinking the Heritage through a Modern and Contemporary Reinterpretation of Traditional Najd Architecture, Cultural Continuity in Riyadh," *Buildings*, 13.6 (2023), 1471 <<https://doi.org/10.3390/buildings13061471>>.

<sup>91</sup> Heike Delitz, "Architectural Modes of Collective Existence: Architectural Sociology as a Comparative Social Theory," *Cultural Sociology*, 12.1 (2017), 37–57 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/1749975517718435>>.

<sup>92</sup> Ronald W. Smith and Valerie Bugni, "Symbolic Interaction Theory and Architecture," *Symbolic Interaction*, 29.2 (2006), 123–55 <<https://doi.org/10.1525/si.2006.29.2.123>>.



FIGURE 8 RIYADH, SAUDI ARABIA. QAṢR AL-BADI'AH, INTERIOR CREATIVE COMMONS.

Harries poses an inquiry regarding the connection that unites philosophy and architecture, and elucidates the reason for the prominence of architectural metaphors in philosophical discourse. He subsequently provides his own response to this question in the following manner:

We are given a pointer by Martin Heidegger, who in *Building Dwelling Thinking* calls attention to the obvious fact that building serves dwelling, but then in characteristic fashion turns to etymology to unearth beneath the familiar everyday sense of “dwelling” a deeper meaning that is said to have been lost to us[...]<sup>93</sup>

Moreover, one should also explain that architecture is an activity and result of planning, designing, and constructing buildings or built environments. A huge portion of designing consists of unravelling what a good building is. The moment we ask what a good building should be, it becomes a philosophical question, as a building is a vessel for human activities and a symbol of our civilization. If this is true then, there will always be an inextricable link between architecture and human life *qua* citizenship. The underlying premise is that the human being in the civilised world is a *zoon politikon*.

It may then be argued that if architecture is part-and-parcel of the life of a specific society (as well as of a whole civilisation) the two are interdependent, and influence each other in many ways: architecture and society are co-dependent. Consider for example the difference between the architecture erected in spaces occupied by private businesses in the Western world and the lack of them in the Soviet Union.

If this train of thought is carried to its climax, there is in this interdependence between architecture and life a latent question of whether a good building should reflect a good society. Since society by definition is political and architecture is mutually dependent on that society.

A good society is gauged by the well-being of its citizens. It would be irrational (and illogical) to assume that a society be deemed good, when its members are not leading a good life. Good here does not yet mean ‘moral’ but in a more general sense.

Extending this argument further brings us to ask ourselves how should we live our lives and how our society should function before we decide what a good building is. After all, architecture is the handiwork of humans: buildings, unlike nature are not found, but made. So the same existential forces and mechanisms, (such as morality, culture, religion, laws, and the like) that govern a community on an administrative level are broadly speaking, the same ones that govern everything else within it, including architecture. Everything humans do, in this sense, becomes political.

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<sup>93</sup> Harries, *Lecture Notes*, p. 6.

These questions, and many more, have been explored and unravelled by philosophers since the birth of human societies.

Everything perceived by architects is observed through a filter of their world outlook, relating to their philosophy of life. Many things are influenced by who they are as a person, their cultural and intellectual influences, and the impact of the existing and historical effect on the built environment they experience. Though this viewpoint changes over time, there tends to be a trajectory to that viewpoint influenced by their design philosophy's expressions.

### **But Why Martin Heidegger?**

A third concern to be addressed here is why should one turn to a controversial philosopher like Martin Heidegger when analysing architecture philosophically? There are at least two legitimate concerns about Heidegger: the first one is particularly relevant to this research, namely that Heidegger did not really write about architecture. The other legitimate concern is a general one, and relates to Heidegger's political views and his relationship with Nazism and his apparent silence about the death camps.<sup>94</sup> Hatab summarises what is attempted in this research by saying that one can 'distinguish Heidegger the human being from his thought in some way'.<sup>95</sup>

### **Heidegger and Architecture**

It is sometimes legitimately argued that Martin Heidegger did not really have a philosophy of architecture. This appears *prima facie* as being true. There is no proper philosophy of architecture as one would find in Norberg-Schulz and Karsten Harries, just to mention two philosophers of architecture.

However, this claim is only formally true. Perhaps the best way to address this concern is to have a look at what the some intellectual actors in the field of architecture have to say about Heidegger.

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<sup>94</sup> Cheryl L. Hughes, "Heidegger and Levinas: The Problem of Ethics," *Docslib*, 1993 <<https://docslib.org/doc/8849666/heidegger-and-levinas-the-problem-of-ethics>> [accessed 15 December 2024]. On p. 83 she says: 'Thus Levinas is critical of Heidegger's silence on the Nazi death camps. Heidegger's silence is a failure to say what ought to have been, it is a failure to recognize the necessity to speak of good and right and justice after the fact in order not only to recall the horrible inhumanity and injustice but also to remind us of the need for vigilance in the present'.

<sup>95</sup> Hatab, 'Ethics and Finitude', p.403.

A start could be Adam Sharr, who asks and answers the question at hand here succinctly as follows:

Why have so many architects listened? Heidegger challenged the procedures and protocols of professional practice, his standpoint on architecture part of a broader critique of the technocratic Western world. In a post-war era when Westerners seemed to justify their actions with increasing reference to economic and technical statistics, he pleaded that the immediacies of human experience shouldn't be forgotten.<sup>96</sup>

Sharr continues:

Architectural practitioners valued the challenges which Heidegger's work offered to the priorities of the industry in which they found themselves, and indeed to the priorities constituting Western society. Architectural academics, through Heidegger's writing, negotiated productive stories and images about activities of building, its origins and its representations.<sup>97</sup>

In his 'architect's book, written for architects by an architect'<sup>98</sup>, Sharr states:

...it seems folly to pretend that Heidegger did not hold great influence over post-war expert architectural practice and thinking. He did – many influential practitioners and academics paid his work plenty of attention – and legacies of his influence persist.<sup>99</sup>

In a similar fashion, Karsten Harries explains:

Let me begin with the first: What is the bond that ties philosophy and architecture together and gives architectural metaphors such a prominent place in philosophical discourse? We are given a pointer by Martin Heidegger, who in *Building Dwelling Thinking* calls attention to the obvious fact that building serves dwelling...<sup>100</sup>

Christian Norberg-Schulz who is often accused of having misinterpreted Heidegger to a point beyond recognition<sup>101</sup>, states that:

Heidegger did not leave us any text on architecture, yet it plays an important role in his philosophy. His concept of being-in-the-world implies a man-made environment, and when discussing the problem of "dwelling poetically," he explicitly refers to the art of building. An exposition of Heidegger's thinking on architecture therefore ought to be a

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<sup>96</sup> Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects*, p. 2.

<sup>97</sup> Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects*, p.3.

<sup>98</sup> Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects*, p.4.

<sup>99</sup> Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects*, p.4.

<sup>100</sup> Harries, *Lecture Notes*, p. 7.

<sup>101</sup> On this point see Timothy Gould, 'How Not to Get the Word on Architecture: The Effect of Heidegger's Prose on Norberg-Schulz's Theories' *Oz*: Vol. 7. (1985) <https://doi.org/10.4148/2378-5853.1094>, p. 20.

part of our interpretation of his philosophy. Such an ex-position may also contribute to a better understanding of the complex environmental problems of our time.<sup>102</sup>

Moreover, Hendrik Auret states that:

The writings of Martin Heidegger had a profound and multi-faceted influence on 20th century thinking. In contrast to the Cartesian division between subject and object, Heidegger formulated human existence as concerned participation in a concrete world of life. He called this intimate entanglement 'being-in-the-world'.<sup>103</sup>

Also Auret admits that:

Architects rarely see themselves as philosophers, yet Heidegger had a marked influence on architectural thinking and practice. Arguably, the magnitude of his impact may in large part be attributed to the fact that architects were introduced to his philosophy by Norberg-Schulz.<sup>104</sup>

Jonas Holst, a philosopher of history states that:

Heidegger's "Building, Dwelling, Thinking", which he first gave as a conference in Darmstadt in 1951, is one of the philosophical texts which has had most influence on architects in the second half of the 20th century and their way of thinking about architecture."<sup>105</sup>

Even Roger Scruton an analytic philosopher and author of *The Aesthetics of Architecture*<sup>106</sup> admits that:

In the end I came around to see that Heidegger's wonderful essay on "Building Dwelling Thinking" contains deep truths<sup>107</sup> that we analytic philosophers have to rediscover.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Christian Norberg-Schulz, "Heidegger's Thinking on Architecture," *Perspecta*, 20 (1983), 61 <<https://doi.org/10.2307/1567066>>.

<sup>103</sup> Hendrik Auret, *Christian Norberg-Schulz's Interpretation of Heidegger's Philosophy* (New York : Routledge, 2019. | Series: Routledge research in architecture: Routledge, 2018) <<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351232791>> [accessed 29 March 2025], p. 1.

<sup>104</sup> Auret, *Christian Norberg-Schulz's Interpretation*, p. 1.

<sup>105</sup> Jonas Holst, "Rethinking Dwelling and Building. On Martin Heidegger's Conception of Being as Dwelling and Jern Utzon's Architecture of Well-Being," *ZARCH*, 2, 2014, 52–61 <[https://doi.org/10.26754/ojs\\_zarch/zarch.201429332](https://doi.org/10.26754/ojs_zarch/zarch.201429332)>.

<sup>106</sup> Roger Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Architecture* (Princeton University Press, 2021).

<sup>107</sup> On this point it is interesting to note, as does Karl Gustel Wörnberg in his essay, that: 'Scruton claimed that he never liked Heidegger. He was known to say things like: "Looked at critically, Heidegger's ideas seem like spectral visions in the realm of thought; vast, intangible shadows cast by language."' But despite this kind of characterization, he often returned to Heidegger's thought and conceptual apparatus...' Wörnberg says that: 'The concept of 'dwelling' serves as a source for our pre-political loyalties and these loyalties allow a sense of the common good to arise'. See: Karl Gustel Wörnberg, "Scruton and Heidegger on Dwelling," *The European Conservative*, 2022 <<https://europeanconservative.com/articles/essay/scruton-and-heidegger-on-dwelling/>> [accessed 15 December 2024].

<sup>108</sup> Karsten Harries, Roger Scruton, and Christian Illies, "Karsten Harries and Roger Scruton on Architecture and Philosophy," *Architecture Philosophy*, 3.1 (2018), p. 12.

## Heidegger's Politics

The other legitimate concern normally put forward against Heidegger is that of his implication with the German National-Socialist regime. After all, as Hatab points out, 'given his fascist politics together with the deceit and galling silence of the postwar years, the segregation of ethics from ontology can be interpreted as a more heinous division'.<sup>109</sup> This research does not seek to rehabilitate Heidegger in one way<sup>110</sup> or the other but rather to affirm 'that we can distinguish Heidegger the human being from his thought in some way'.<sup>111</sup>

There is of course an undeniable historical truth at the basis of this concern and one has to be prudent when analysing concepts like 'place' and 'Heimat' as we will see in Chapter Two.

With regard to 'place' Malpas says:

Nazism is usually taken as the paradigmatic example in this regard – Heidegger's own involvement with the movement usually being taken to reinforce the connection, both in his own case and more generally. Significantly, however, the assertion of the connection at stake here often depends on a fairly selective attentiveness to historical or biographical detail: thus appeals to place that operate within progressive politics (and there certainly are such) are ignored or seen as already demonstrating the less than progressive nature of such politics, while tendencies within reactionary politics that are antagonistic to place (including forms of nationalism, authoritarianism, and centralism) are overlooked.<sup>112</sup>

But also and more directly:

In Heidegger's case, there is little account taken, for instance, of the fact that the increasingly explicit appearance of ideas of place in his work occurs *after* his involvement with Nazism, and actually seems to figure as a key element in his critique of the nihilistic subjectivism that he takes Nazism to exemplify...<sup>113</sup>

Moreover in the context of 'Heimat' and the Nazi ideal of 'Blut und Boden' Malpas tells us that:

...the thematization of topos in Heidegger's thought, and the emphasis on Hölderlin as opposed to Nietzsche (and so on the resistance to nihilism rather than merely its

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<sup>109</sup> Hatab, 'Ethics and Finitude', p. 403.

<sup>110</sup> As Sacha Golob explains: "The recent publication of the *Schwarze Hefte* exemplifies [his links to Nazism]: these notebooks interweave rambling metaphysical ruminations with a clearly anti-Semitic rhetoric no less repulsive for the fact that it avoids the biological racism of the Nazis." Sacha Golob, "Martin Heidegger: Freedom, Ethics, Ontology," *King's College London*, 2AD <https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/portal/en/publications/martin-heidegger-freedom-ethics-ontology>, p. 1. [accessed 15 December 2024],

<sup>111</sup> Hatab, 'Ethics and Finitude', p. 403.

<sup>112</sup> Jeff Malpas, *Rethinking Dwelling* (Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2021) <<https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350172944>> [accessed 15 December 2024], p. 5.

<sup>113</sup> Malpas, *Rethinking Dwelling*, p. 5.

proclamation), is increasingly explicit as Heidegger moves away from, rather than towards, the engagement with Nazism.<sup>114</sup>

Also that:

Heidegger comments in the ‘Letter on “Humanism”’<sup>115</sup> from 1947, that as he has used it, the term ‘homeland’ (Heimat) is to be understood in ‘an essential sense, not patriotically or nationalistically, but in terms of the history of being’.<sup>116</sup>

In any case, from an academic point of view one cannot exclude a figure like Heidegger solely for his political preferences. One can ‘not agree’ with someone on a set of life choices and still recognise the validity of their work. Last but not least may be Wernher Von Braun who was one of the architects of the Apollo program, was also a Nazi scientist brought to the United States in secret in 1945.<sup>117</sup>

Should our society just *cancel* these important figures and their contributions just because they behaved immorally? Many would answer this question in the affirmative.<sup>118</sup> However, as already mentioned above, this research follows the idea put forward by Hatab that that we can distinguish Heidegger the human being from his thought in some way.

### **Essence and Presence**

There are many ways in which this research could be carried out, and probably, these ways would all be valid, however the preferred method here will be that of analysing architecture from a Heideggerian phenomenological standpoint. This in itself may offer some challenges since in order to clarify architecture’s relationship with the common good one needs to examine its content or essence – what Heidegger would call its *ousia* – and also its manifestation to us,

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<sup>114</sup> Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place: Explorations in the Topology of Being* (MIT Press, 2017), p.122.

<sup>115</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*. David Farrell Krell (Ed.), (1977). New York: Harper Collins p. 217.

<sup>116</sup> Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place*, p.194.

<sup>117</sup> Danny Lewis, Why the U.S. Government Brought Nazi Scientists to America After World War II, *Trending Today*, Smithsonian Magazine, November 16, 2016, on: <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/why-us-government-brought-nazi-scientists-america-after-world-war-ii-180961110/>

<sup>118</sup> Beyond the scope of this research, it is posited that the contemporary rise of far-right movements globally may be partially attributed to the practice of labelling individuals who address pressing issues such as migration and abortion as "conservatives," "xenophobes," "racists," and "fascists." This labelling potentially silences centrist politicians, creating an ideological void as they fear being stigmatized, thereby pushing traditionally centrist and centre-right voters towards the far-right. In smaller states, such as Malta, this phenomenon is further exacerbated by the Labour government's policy of importing tens of thousands of foreign nationals to sustain the economy. Presently, approximately 20% of the population consists of foreigners. The paradox lies in the fact that while the country is dependent on these foreign nationals for its functioning, overpopulation remains a significant concern among the populace. See: Kevin Schembri Orland, “Malta Survey: Majority Not Happy with Population Size, Salaries, Traffic, Power, but OK with Health,” *The Malta Independent*, 13 August 2023 <<https://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2023-08-13/local-news/Majority-not-happy-with-population-size-salaries-traffic-power-but-ok-with-health-services-6736254067>> [accessed 29 March 2025].

since it is being claimed that architecture is an unavoidable presence – what Heidegger would call its *eidōs*.

*Ousia* here is understood in the Greek sense of disposable possessions and goods, property.<sup>119</sup>

Heidegger explains:

*Essentia* is only the literal translation of *ousia*. This expression *essentia*, which was employed for whatness, reality, expresses at the same time the specific mode of being of a being, its disposability or, as we can also say, its at-handness, which belongs to it due to its having been produced.<sup>120</sup>

He then elucidates this:

The basic concept of *ousia*, [...] lays more stress on the producedness of the produced in the sense of things disposably present at hand. What is meant here primarily is what is present at hand, house and yard, the *Anwesen*, as the German has it-property as the present premises-the extant as what is present in that way.<sup>121</sup>

Heidegger qualifies this:

*Ousia*, that which is in the strict and proper sense, is what is in its own self available, produced, present constantly for itself, lying present there, the *hupokeimenon*, *subjectum*, substance. Corporeal things and mental things are substances (*ousiai*).<sup>122</sup>

For Heidegger the distinction between substance and form is foggy:

For one thing *ousia* signifies the produced extant entity itself or also its extantness. But at the same time *ousia* also signifies much the same thing as *eidōs* in the sense of the prototypical pattern which is merely thought of or imagined-what the being already really is as produced, its appearance, what outlines it, the way in which it will show up and look as product, how it will turn out.<sup>123</sup>

However, Sharr tells that Heidegger perceived the ‘essence’ of building and dwelling in authentic attunement to being.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Martin Heidegger, ‘The Basic Problems of Phenomenology’, Revised Edition. Revised Edition ed. Indiana University Press, (1988), p. 108 Project MUSE muse.jhu.edu/book/45767.

<sup>120</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology, Revised Edition* (Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 109. In the original text Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe: Vorlesungen 1923-1944. Die Grundprobleme Der Phänomenologie* (Frankfurt Am Main : Vittorio Klostermann, 1989).p. 153: ‘*Essentia ist nur die wörtliche Übersetzung von οὐσία. Dieser Ausdruck essentia, den man für das Wassein, für die Realität gebraucht, drückt zugleich die spezifische Seinsart des Seienden aus, seine Verfügbarkeit, oder wie wir auch sagen, seine Vorhandenheit, die ihm aufgrund seiner Hergestelltheit eignet*’.

<sup>121</sup> Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 109.

<sup>122</sup> Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 148.

<sup>123</sup> Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 151.

<sup>124</sup> Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects*, p. 112.

Heidegger, in *The Origin of the Work of Art*, explains that art contributes to unconceal truth and that the art itself speaks to us and by so doing it contributes to truth. He also explains that:

The work [of art], then, is not concerned with the reproduction of a particular being that has at some time been actually present. Rather, it is concerned to reproduce the general essence of things.<sup>125</sup>

A work of art captures that general essence and presents it to the observer in a discernible yet subconscious way. Now, Heidegger explains that equipment, such as a pair of shoes, is only half-thing half-work of art:

So the piece of equipment is half thing since it is characterized by thingliness. Yet it is more, since, at the same time, it is half artwork.”<sup>126</sup>

He says that:

Because equipment occupies an intermediate position between mere thing and work, the suggestion arises of using equipment (the matter-form structure) as the key to understanding non-equipmental beings- things and works, and, ultimately, every kind of being.<sup>127</sup>

This quote sums up what Heidegger believes a work of art does.

The equipmental being of equipment was discovered. But how? Not through the description and explanation of a pair of shoes actually present. Not through a report on the process of shoemaking. And not through the observation of the actual use of shoes as it occurs here and there. Rather, the equipmental being of equipment was only discovered by bringing ourselves before the van Gogh painting. It is this that spoke.

This method and process may be applied *mutatis mutandis* to architecture. Heidegger further on in this essay asks that:

[...] where, then, is this general essence and how should it be for the artwork to correspond to or agree with it? With what essence of what thing should the Greek temple agree? Could anyone maintain the impossible position that the Idea of Temple is represented in the temple? And yet in this work, if it is a work, truth sets itself to work.<sup>128</sup>

This question will be tackled in the second part of Chapter Two regarding Architecture: Dwelling and Work of Art.

Suffice it to say for now that there are, of course, different viewpoints about the general essence of architecture. All these viewpoints may be leading into different directions, albeit legitimate

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<sup>125</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), p.16.

<sup>126</sup> Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, p. 10.

<sup>127</sup> Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, p.10.

<sup>128</sup> Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, pp. 16-17.

ones. However, as will be seen, it is being claimed here that the general essence of architecture should comprise (non-exclusively) that of allowing human beings to dwell. Heidegger, explains this quite clearly when he says that building, has dwelling, as its goal.<sup>129</sup>

### **[D]well-Being**

This discussion about dwelling leads us to another thorny issue that has to be dealt with in this preliminary part. It is an undeniable fact that Heidegger does not speak about well-being or about the common good. So one of the major obstacles that this research has to overcome is the fact that there is no conceptual Heideggerian framework to support any form of phenomenological architecture for individual and collective well-being - for the common good.

In the same vein, Heidegger hardly speaks about architecture at all and nonetheless his essays have become a milestone for architectural theory, as aforementioned. His way of going about things is never direct and sometimes appears circular and idiosyncratic.<sup>130</sup>

His emphasis on ‘dwelling’ is crucial to this research, as is his emphasis on ‘being at home’. This research does not purport to find that Heidegger has somehow cryptically hidden some messages for us to interpret his writings as conducive to the common good. The key concept here is well-being more precisely ‘the essence of well-being that makes all kinds of well-being possible’.<sup>131</sup>

However, it is not uncommon, in philosophy, as well as in other disciplines, to supplement some gaps, intentional or otherwise, in a system, and in doing so enriching that same system. As Nelson says Heidegger might be “ethically challenged” but he is not “without ethics.”<sup>132</sup> Heidegger’s ethical prospect is opened up in his ‘ontological questioning of being’ that as Nelson admits ‘usually seems so distant from and other than the ethical’.<sup>133</sup> Short of taking

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<sup>129</sup> Heidegger, *Building, Dwelling, Thinking*, p.323.

<sup>130</sup> As Thomas Sheehan in ‘Language After Heidegger’, *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*, University of Notre Dame, on <https://ndpr.nd.edu/reviews/language-after-heidegger/>, explains in his review (Krzysztof Ziarek, ‘Language After Heidegger’, Indiana University Press, (2013), : ‘First of all, Heidegger maddeningly gives common terms uncommon meanings, and does so without notice — for example, “*Ereignis*” does not mean “event” as it does in ordinary German, and “*Dasein*” doesn’t mean existence. Second, Heidegger was scandalously inconsistent in the ever-changing meanings he gave to his key term “*Sein*” and to its older spelling, “*Seyn*.” And third, the more opaque his language becomes (“the world worlds,” “the nothing nothings”), the less he seems to offer evidence, much less justification, for his apparently far-fetched claims’.

<sup>131</sup> Les Todres and Kathleen Galvin, “‘Dwelling-Mobility’: An Existential Theory of Well-Being,” *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-Being*, 5.3 (2010), 10.3402/qhw.v5i3.5444 <<https://doi.org/10.3402/qhw.v5i3.5444>>.

<sup>132</sup> Nelson, ‘Heidegger and the Questionability of the Ethical’, p. 415.

<sup>133</sup> Nelson, ‘Heidegger and the Questionability of the Ethical’, p.416.

some eclectic<sup>134</sup> philosophical methodology, there is enough secondary literature in order to interpret and perhaps, complement, Heidegger's works in this holistic route towards well-being.

Heidegger, as controversial as he might be, has ironically, revived interest on the left from environmentalists<sup>135</sup> who are interested in his 'view of the relation between man and technology and the earth', as Professor Paddock explains.<sup>136</sup>

Building is not identical to dwelling, but makes it possible for a dweller not only to stay for a while, but to make the world habitable and dwell in the full sense of the word.

### **Building, Dwelling Meaningfully**

Indeed as Holst explains:

The old Nordic word *dvelja* first referred to making such a pause on the way in order to dwell on something or "dväle", as we say in the Nordic countries when taking our time to give our full attention to something.

In the western tradition, architecture has often been seen as covering the basic needs of man, giving him shelter (e.g. house) or having a function (e.g. school), but this is only one of the purposes of building. Architecture is more than just building. It entails a vision of being embedded in a world of endless pathways,<sup>137</sup> less exposed and without going astray, but still in contact with the surroundings – meaningfully, Sheehan would add.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Eclecticism in philosophy is here understood as the construction of a system of thought by combining elements of the established systems of a previous age as explained by Chris McClellan, "Eclecticism," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2003) <<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780415249126-dc120-1>> [accessed 15 December 2024].

<sup>135</sup> Troy Paddock mentions two particular environmental publications that focus on Heidegger. Namely: Ladelle McWhorter and Gail Stenstad, *Heidegger and the Earth: Essays in Environmental Philosophy* (University of Toronto Press, 2009); and Bruce Foltz, "Inhabiting the Earth: Heidegger, Environmental Ethics, and the Metaphysics of Nature," *Choice Reviews Online*, 33.05 (1996), 33-2674-33-2674 <<https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.33-2674>>.

<sup>136</sup> Troy Paddock, "Gedachtes Wohnen: Heidegger and Cultural Geography," *Philosophy & Geography*, 7.2 (2004), 237-49 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/1090377042000285435>>, p. 239.

<sup>137</sup> Holst, 'Rethinking Dwelling and Building', p. 57.

<sup>138</sup> See: Sheehan, 'What, after All, Was Heidegger About?', p. 253: "The subject matter of a phenomenological inquiry is things only insofar as we are in some way meaningfully engaged with them".

Holst tells us that architecture ‘allows the inhabitants to reside in the sense of sitting back and settle’.<sup>139</sup> Dwelling, however, does not only mean to withdraw from the world, but involves withdrawing ‘into the world’ which is experienced in a different light from the inside.

### **Dwelling: Existential Homecoming**

As we will see in Chapter Two, Heidegger, in his later work, became more focused on a kind of ‘existential homecoming that authentically grounds the human potentiality for a peaceful attunement to existence’.<sup>140</sup>

After what has been called the “turning” (*Kehre*), Heidegger concerns himself much more directly with the kind of comportment required that allows Being and beings “to be”. He believed that this had great import for a philosophical project that tries to think Being in a fresh way that is more original than traditional Western Metaphysical frameworks.<sup>141</sup>

However, implicit in this we also find some important clues for a more peaceful attunement to life's everyday vicissitudes. One may express the essence of this quality in the term “existential dwelling”.

Todres and Galvin explain this existential dwelling as :

To dwell is to come home to one's situation, to hear what is there, to abide, to linger and to be gathered there with what belongs there. When such dwelling is able to be fully supported, there may be a mood of peacefulness. But peacefulness is only one possible attunement within dwelling. The essence of dwelling is simply the willingness to be there, whatever this “being there” is like. One can come to dwelling in many ways such as sadness, suffering, concern, attentiveness, acceptance, relaxation or patience. Dwelling is intentional in its attunement in that it allows the world, the body, things, others and the flow of time to be what it is. It is a form of being grounded in the present moment, supported by a past that is arriving and the openness of a future that is calling.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Holst, ‘Rethinking Dwelling and Building’, p. 57.

<sup>140</sup> Todres et al., ‘Dwelling-Mobility’, p. 4.

<sup>141</sup> Heidegger's "turning" (*Kehre*) marked a significant shift in his philosophical approach, focusing more directly on the comportment necessary to allow Being and beings "to be" (G. Harman, “Technology, Objects and Things in Heidegger,” *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 34.1 (2009), 17–25 <<https://doi.org/10.1093/cje/bep021>>.).

<sup>142</sup> Todres et al., ‘Dwelling-Mobility’, p. 4.

One has to leave in order to appreciate what one has left behind. To dwell then, is to “come home” to what is there with oneself and the world, whatever the qualities of that may be.

Todres and Galvin ask the question of how can this kind of dwelling form a ‘core dimension of well-being’?<sup>143</sup> They conclude that what makes dwelling capable to be called well-being is just:

[...]that there is a felt quality to “making room for” and “letting-be-ness” that constitutes a kind of peace, in spite of everything, that is different from the kind of peace that depends on the eradication of limiting conditions. If we were to follow Heidegger's project to speak the possibility of possibilities, we would say that, in existential dwelling, human being is inhering in Being; that is, that such dwelling is not just a psychological state but a description of a relationship of belonging between human being and her/his ground.<sup>144</sup>

There is a paradox to this ‘existential dwelling’. In coming home to what “is there”, there is not necessarily an eradication of suffering, pain and the existential vicissitudes of life.

This is more or less the same phenomenological approach taken by Robert Mugerauer frames his idea of well-being for that ‘great artifact’<sup>145</sup> we call city within Heidegger’s ‘gathering of the fourfold’.<sup>146</sup> His theory then recasts well-being as :

[...]an emergent state arising from the positive, generative dynamic of the gathering itself, which enables the flourishing of each of the mutually co-constitutive dimensions.<sup>147</sup>

Later on Mugerauer refines his notion of well-being:

[...]it is clear that well-being is not simply “one thing,” but instead a dynamic emergent state to which we aspire, toward which we journey if we are able to move away from impoverishment in regard to the mutually interactive features.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Todres et al., ‘Dwelling-Mobility’, p. 4.

<sup>144</sup> Todres et al., ‘Dwelling-Mobility’, p.4.

<sup>145</sup> Robert Mugerauer, “Cities, Well-Being, World – a Heideggerian Analysis,” in *Routledge Handbook of Well-Being*, ed. by Kathleen Galvin (Routledge, 2018), pp. 34–50 <<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315724966-4>> [accessed 16 December 2024].

p. 34.

<sup>146</sup> Mugerauer, ‘Cities, Well-Being, World’, p. 34.

<sup>147</sup> Mugerauer, ‘Cities, Well-Being, World’, p. 34.

<sup>148</sup> Mugerauer, ‘Cities, Well-Being, World’, p. 47.

Mugerauer elucidates, whilst agreeing with Todres and Galvin, that:

The scope of a broad well-being opens up here. Not only a matter of adequate material-economic support and health in a narrow sense of absence of illness (since the acceptance of death brings the many hurts and diseases along with it), but in terms of one's lifeworld.<sup>149</sup>

Todres and Galvin see this Heideggerian well-being as an interplay between 'existential mobility and existential dwelling' a peaceful attunement.

Holst in another paper thinks that Galvin and Todres attempt to develop their philosophy of caring and well-being by drawing on Heidegger's understanding of dwelling and home-coming'<sup>150</sup>, he says that:

[...] although Galvin and Todres attempt to develop their philosophy of caring and well-being by drawing on Heidegger's understanding of dwelling and home-coming, these concepts, when interpreted against the backdrop of Heidegger's late thinking, make little room for the well-being of the dwellers, who are closer to becoming pawns in a cosmic event of interacting forces, called the fourfold, than to finding themselves lightly lifted in their being on earth.<sup>151</sup>

Galvin and Todres's attempt to build a philosophy of caring and well-being based on Heidegger's concepts of dwelling and home-coming faces significant challenges when examined through the lens of Heidegger's later philosophical works. While their intention may be to create a framework that enhances human well-being, the application of these Heideggerian concepts may potentially undermine their goal. As will be seen, in Heidegger's late thinking, the notion of dwelling becomes less about individual human experience and more about humanity's place within a larger cosmic structure, known as the fourfold (earth, sky, divinities, and mortals).

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<sup>149</sup> Mugerauer, 'Cities, Well-Being, World', p. 42.

<sup>150</sup> Jonas Holst, "Finding Oneself Well Together with Others: A Phenomenological Study of the Ontology of Human Well-Being," *Philosophies*, 7.2 (2022), 41 <<https://doi.org/10.3390/philosophies7020041>>, p. 8: "it is not clear if they alone or with the help of Heidegger's late thinking can bring us all the way to a phenomenologically satisfying circumscription of the constituent or contributing elements of human well-being"

<sup>151</sup> Holst, 'Finding Oneself Well', p. 8.

This shift in perspective transforms the individual from an active participant in their own well-being to a more passive element within a grand interplay of forces. The fourfold concept, while philosophically rich, does not prioritise individual human flourishing in the way that Galvin and Todres (and most of us) might hope. Instead, it positions humans as part of a complex, interconnected system where their role is more akin to that of a conduit for cosmic forces rather than beings capable of achieving a state of personal well-being through their own agency. This interpretation suggests that the application of Heidegger's later ideas to a philosophy of care may inadvertently diminish the importance of individual human experience and autonomy in the pursuit of well-being.

In addressing the challenges encountered by Galvin and Todres in their endeavour to construct a philosophy of caring and well-being grounded in Heideggerian concepts, the following analysis will explore several pivotal ideas and potential solutions.

### **Reinterpretation of Heidegger's later works**

One approach could be to reinterpret Heidegger's later philosophical works in a way that aligns more closely with the goals of enhancing human well-being. This might involve emphasizing aspects of his thinking that still allow for individual agency and personal growth within the larger cosmic structure.

### **Selective application of Heideggerian concepts**

Rather than adopting Heidegger's later philosophy wholesale, Galvin and Todres could selectively apply certain aspects that are more compatible with their aims. They could focus on earlier Heideggerian concepts that prioritise individual experience while incorporating elements of the fourfold that enhance rather than diminish the role of human agency.

### **Bridging the gap between individual and cosmic**

A potential solution could involve developing a framework that bridges the gap between individual human experience and the larger cosmic structure described by Heidegger. This approach would aim to show how personal well-being can be achieved through an understanding of one's place within the fourfold, rather than viewing it as a limiting factor.

### **Emphasizing the interconnectedness of well-being**

While Heidegger's later works may seem to diminish individual agency, they also highlight the interconnectedness of all things. Galvin and Todres could leverage this aspect to argue that individual well-being is intrinsically linked to the well-being of the larger system, thereby maintaining the importance of personal care and flourishing.

### **Redefining agency within the fourfold**

Another approach could involve redefining the concept of agency within the context of the fourfold. This might entail exploring how individuals can actively engage with and influence their role as conduits for cosmic forces, rather than being passive elements.

### **Incorporating other philosophical perspectives**

To address the limitations of Heidegger's later works, Galvin and Todres could incorporate complementary philosophical perspectives that prioritise individual human flourishing. This syncretic approach could help balance the cosmic emphasis of Heidegger's fourfold with more human-centred philosophies, such as the Finnisian view.

### **Developing a nuanced understanding of well-being**

The challenges presented by Heidegger's later works could be addressed by developing a more nuanced understanding of well-being that encompasses both individual flourishing and one's place within a larger cosmic structure. This approach would aim to show how these two aspects are not mutually exclusive but can be integrated into a holistic philosophy of care.

### **Exploring the role of mindfulness and awareness**

Galvin and Todres could explore how mindfulness and awareness of one's place within the fourfold might actually enhance individual well-being. One could argue that understanding and accepting one's role in the larger cosmic structure can lead to a deeper sense of purpose and fulfilment.

## **Reframing the concept of dwelling**

While Heidegger's later works may seem to shift away from individual experience, Galvin and Todres could reframe the concept of dwelling to maintain its relevance to personal well-being. This might involve exploring how the act of dwelling can be seen as an individual's conscious engagement with their place in the fourfold.

## **Emphasising the transformative potential**

Finally, Galvin and Todres approach could be used to focus on the transformative potential inherent in Heidegger's later philosophy. By viewing the individual's role as a conduit for cosmic forces as an opportunity for growth and self-realization, one could maintain the emphasis on personal well-being within the larger philosophical framework.

## **Dwelling and *Befindlichkeit***

Moreover, Holst, very intuitively, finds that answers to Heideggerian 'well-being' may be found in the concept of *Befindlichkeit* ('finding oneself'<sup>152</sup>) as the fundamental way in which humans find themselves in the world, being affected by and faced with their own existence, Holst attempts to open a way to understanding well-being that locates the possibility of elevating one's own being not inside or outside the "I" but in the 'affective bond to others' called friendship or as Aristotle called it *philia*, which according to Holst has been somehow lacking in Heidegger's interpretation of Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, during Heidegger's lecture courses on Aristotle in 1924.<sup>153</sup> This is important in that, as will be seen, the good of friendship is crucial for the notion of common good.

Holst explains:

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<sup>152</sup> Holst, 'Finding Oneself Well', p. 5. One may perhaps understand this better in English by taking modern colloquial remnants of this idea of finding oneself. Whenever for example we ask someone in a letter or email how they are doing, 'hoping this mail finds you well'. This is a fairly formal way to essentially say, 'I hope you are well' or 'I hope you are healthy/safe/in good spirits.' Or whenever we say 'one is in a good place', Cambridge Dictionary explains that the remark "in a good place" is used to "to talk about someone's feelings, situation, or mental condition." What these two idiomatic phrases is the notion of 'finding' as to ask how one happens to be physically or mentally or both.

<sup>153</sup> Holst, 'Finding Oneself Well', p. 2.

Heidegger does not touch upon *philia* in his lecture course on Aristotle<sup>154</sup> and omits drawing any distinction between pleasure and joy, probably because his focus is on the meaning of being and not on well-being as such. He coincides with Aristotle in that other living beings also find themselves in certain states of wellness or fear, and thus he needs another key concept than *Befindlichkeit* to unlock the enigma of what it means to be human. Heidegger identifies this complementary Aristotelian concept with *logos*, i.e., language, which he, reasonably enough, links to the Aristotelian conception of humans as political beings<sup>155</sup>

More will be said about this when tackling the notion of “dwelling” in Chapter 2 and of the common good in Chapter 5.

Well-being in this phenomenological sense is not just happiness, in its common parlance sense, it is not even just the avoidance of pain or suffering or disease. It is indeed a sense of fulfilment of being where one is meant to be.<sup>156</sup>

Whilst happiness is a fleeting emotion, fulfilment, understood as *finding oneself in the world with others* is a state of mind that transforms one’s existence into a meaningful reality. It is indeed a sense of peaceful existence with oneself and one’s surroundings.

How does this apply to architecture?

Whilst a Heideggerian outlook on architecture does not directly conclude that architecture should bring about well-being, it is quite self-evident that Heidegger emphasises dwelling because he thinks it will eventually lead human beings to encounter their true *Being*.<sup>157</sup> This encounter will create thus a meaningful relationship between one’s being<sup>158</sup> and one’s surroundings<sup>159</sup>, which ultimately is what dwelling, (and thus building) is all about. This

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<sup>154</sup> See: Martin Heidegger, Grundbegriffe der Aristotelischen Philosophie, in *Gesamtausgabe* 18, II. Abteilung: Vorlesungen 1919–1944; Vittorio Klostermann: Frankfurt am Main, Germany, (2002). In particular pp.45–47, Heidegger says: ‘*Im Sein-in-der-póλις sieht Aristoteles das eigentliche Leben der Menschen. Um das zu zeigen, weist er auf, daß das Sein der Menschen λόγον εχειν ist. In dieser Bestimmung liegt beschlossen eine ganz eigentümliche, fundamentale Weise des Seins des Menschen, charakterisiert als »Miteinandersein«, κοινονία. Dieses Seiende, das mit der Welt spricht, ist ein solches, das im Sein-mit-anderen ist*’ translated loosely: Aristotle sees this in Being-in- πόλις actual lives of people. To show this, he points out, that human beings are λόγον εχειν. In this provision lies decided in a very peculiar, fundamental way of human being, characterized as “being with one another”, κοινονία. This being that speaks to the world is such a being, that is in being-with-others’.

<sup>155</sup> Holst, ‘Finding Oneself Well’, p. 5.

<sup>156</sup> In fact as Matthew King explains that happiness in its “deepest sense, consists in being as it is fitting for human beings to be, and this in turn consists in dwelling in our fitting-together with being...” Matthew King, *Heidegger and Happiness: Dwelling on Fitting and Being* (Continuum, 2009) <<https://doi.org/10.5040/9781472546654>> [accessed 18 December 2024]. p. 6

<sup>157</sup> After all “Being (*das Sein des Seienden*) is the meaningful presence of things to man.” See Sheehan, ‘What, after All, Was Heidegger About?’, p. 252.

<sup>158</sup> Knowing oneself or being at home with oneself one may speculate.

<sup>159</sup> By the same token, knowing one’s surroundings and being at home with such surroundings.

correspondence between what one ‘is’ and ‘how’ one lives makes only sense in the context of truthfulness understood as an *unconcealment* which in turn only makes sense in this context if one wants to live a meaningful life and not drifting meaninglessly and/or aimlessly. A meaningful life is then what Heidegger *wishes* for us - a life worth living. A life one would choose over some other version of that life. A life which one may perhaps not so presumptuously call a ‘good life’.<sup>160</sup>

However, for Heidegger before one can even start to address ethics, construed as the question of ‘how we ought to live’, one needs to get clear on ontology, on the question of what we are.<sup>161</sup>

So the existential meaning of what we are is a preliminary question Heidegger wishes to address. This in itself gives us a faint indicator towards his conception of what a life worth living is. It needs to be meaningful.

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<sup>160</sup> Truthfulness as unconcealment, or the revealing of one's true self, is a complex concept that intertwines with notions of authenticity and honesty. This idea suggests that living in accordance with one's true nature is a form of truthfulness that goes beyond mere factual accuracy. The concept of truthfulness as unconcealment aligns with the view of authenticity as "being true to one's self" (Phillip Vannini and Alexis Franzese, "The Authenticity of Self: Conceptualization, Personal Experience, and Practice," *Sociology Compass*, 2.5 (2008), 1621–37 <<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9020.2008.00151.x>>). This perspective emphasizes authenticity as a self-reflective and emotional experience, rather than simply adhering to external standards of truth. Similarly, Nietzsche's notion of honesty, as discussed in Harper (Aaron Harper, "Nietzsche's Thumbscrew: Honesty as Virtue and Value Standard," *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, 46.3 (2015), 367–90 <<https://doi.org/10.5325/jnietstud.46.3.0367>>), involves a form of confrontation with oneself and one's values, suggesting a deeper level of truthfulness than mere factual accuracy. Interestingly, this understanding of truthfulness as unconcealment may conflict with more conventional views of honesty. For instance, Roberts and West (Robert C. Roberts and Ryan West, "The Virtue of Honesty," in *Integrity, Honesty, and Truth Seeking* (Oxford University Press New York, 2020), pp. 97–126 <<https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190666026.003.0004>> [accessed 18 December 2024]) describes honesty as encompassing both truthfulness and aspects of justice, suggesting a more externally-oriented concept. Additionally, Huber and Huber's (Christoph Huber and Jürgen Huber, "Bad Bankers No More? Truth-Telling and (Dis)Honesty in the Finance Industry," *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 180 (2020), 472–93 <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2020.10.020>>) study on truthfulness in the finance industry focuses on factual honesty rather than self-expression, highlighting the diverse interpretations of truthfulness across different contexts. In essence, the correspondence between one's being and living can indeed be understood through the lens of truthfulness as unconcealment. This perspective emphasizes the importance of self-reflection, emotional authenticity, and living in accordance with one's true nature, rather than simply adhering to external standards of truth or factual accuracy. However, this authenticity alone may not be enough, some external higher yardstick is needed. For what if one's true nature is that of a psychopath, sociopath or serial killer? As Finnis puts it 'cruelty may be found to be an inverted form of pursuit of the value of freedom and self-determination and authenticity: some people may make themselves 'feel real' to themselves by subjecting others to their utter mastery', See John Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights* (Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 91.

<sup>161</sup> Golob, "Martin Heidegger: Freedom, Ethics, Ontology," *King's College London*, 2AD <<https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/portal/en/publications/martin-heidegger-freedom-ethics-ontology>> [accessed 15 December 2024], p. 1.

So much so that Thomas Sheehan justifies Heidegger's phenomenology through the transformative tool of 'meaningfulness'.<sup>162</sup> Heidegger, according to this view, then had as his ultimate 'lifelong' project to help us discover what we really are.<sup>163</sup>

After all, as Sheehan tells us Heidegger's '*final* final goal' was not 'theoretical-philosophical but *existentiel*-personal'.<sup>164</sup>

Sheehan concludes his essay by explaining that:

Heidegger's philosophy, as one might hope all philosophy would be, was not just about knowing something, getting the answer to a question, no matter how profound that question might be. In the spirit of what we might call Greek "existential wisdom," his philosophy was also and above all a protreptic to self-transformation.<sup>165</sup>

Why would someone instruct or persuade a self transformation if one were not to think it is good to do so?<sup>166</sup> So if one were to apply this interpretation of Heidegger's philosophy which is also consistent with his phenomenological approach, one would conclude that if building (qua architecture) should have as its goal dwelling, it stands to reason to believe that Heidegger considered this as desirable. He considered this as desirable because he must have believed it to be the truth. The truth being, in the final analysis, the main goal of all knowledge.

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<sup>162</sup> Sheehan, 'What, after All, Was Heidegger About?', p. 273.

<sup>163</sup> Sheehan, 'What, after All, Was Heidegger About?', p. 273: 'On his first day of teaching after the Great War he urged his students, in the words of the German preacher Angelus Silesius (1624-77): *Mensch, werde wesentlich!* "Become what you essentially are!"

<sup>164</sup> Sheehan, 'What, after All, Was Heidegger About?', p. 273.

<sup>165</sup> Sheehan, 'What, after All, Was Heidegger About?', p. 273.

<sup>166</sup> Heidegger's philosophy, particularly his concept of authenticity and self-transformation, presents an interesting paradox when considering the motivation behind instructing or persuading someone to transform themselves. In Heidegger's view, human existence (*Dasein*) is characterized by "thrownness" - we find ourselves already in a world with pre-existing meanings and contexts (Katherine Withy, "Situation and Limitation: Making Sense of Heidegger on Thrownness," *European Journal of Philosophy*, 22.1 (2011), 61-81 <<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0378.2011.00471.x>>.). This situatedness limits our understanding, but it does not fully define us. Heidegger argues that we have the potential for authentic existence by confronting our finitude and taking responsibility for our choices (Eva Gothlin, "Reading Simone de Beauvoir with Martin Heidegger," in *The Cambridge Companion to Simone de Beauvoir*, ed. by Claudia Card (Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 45-65 <<https://doi.org/10.1017/ccol0521790964.003>> [accessed 11 December 2024].; Thomas Sheehan, *Heidegger* (Routledge, 2017) <<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203790182>> [accessed 13 December 2024].). However, at the same time, the idea of instructing someone to transform themselves seems to contradict Heidegger's emphasis on personal authenticity. If one were to follow such instruction, would it truly be an authentic choice? This presents an interesting tension in applying Heidegger's philosophy. On one hand, Heidegger believes that we can come to know what we already are and become what we already are (Thomas Sheehan, *Heidegger* (Routledge, 2017) <<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203790182>> [accessed 13 December 2024].).

It then follows that if Heidegger was searching for the truth he must have believed that finding it is a good thing. A thing which one would try to adopt in one's life and persuade others to do the same.

If all this is true, then Heidegger must have believed that architecture leading to dwelling is a good thing and should be encouraged. Meaning that such architecture is conducive to some kind of well-being. Some version of well-being which is both a way of meaningfully being-in-the-world (what may be called its essence), as well as how this meaningfully being-in-the-world is perceived as an experience (its presence).

The essence of dwelling lies in all the ways that we existentially “come home” to what we have been given in time, space, others, mood and our bodies. The feeling of this “coming home” is one of acceptance, “rootedness” and peace. But this ‘dwelling’ has to be understood as ‘finding oneself’. So In summary in in order to move towards well-being in a Heideggerian sense, one must revisit and extend what Heidegger says. Well-being, in a Heideggerian sense would then imply that one would first have to find oneself in the world with others. Then one would have attune peacefully oneself to one's own surroundings. Feel at home as it were with who, where and when one is. One then needs to feel rooted but at the same time be ready to leave and come back, to appreciate what one has. So in order to dwell, one needs to have ‘the willingness to be there, whatever this “being there” is like’.<sup>167</sup>

## **The Main Argument Supporting The Claim**

How does all this tie in with the main goal of this research? The main argument of the latter stems from the simple fact that ‘[a]rchitecture is the only art that you can't help but feel’.<sup>168</sup> One cannot but fully subscribe to this statement and if it is true then architecture is the only art that cannot be avoided. It is indeed an unavoidable presence. The objection to this statement is that architecture is much more than just “a work of art” it is also perhaps shelter and function.<sup>169</sup> But above all it is (or ought to be) a place where dwelling happens.

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<sup>167</sup> Todres et al., ‘Dwelling-Mobility’, p. 4.

<sup>168</sup> Philippe Daverio, humansofnewyork, ““We're All Victims of the Architect. Architecture...,” *Tumblr*, 2014 <<https://www.humansofnewyork.com/post/100015452196/were-all-victims-of-the-architect-architecture/amp>> [accessed 15 December 2024].

<sup>169</sup> Admittedly some instances of architecture stop at these two dimensions without caring much about the meaning of their external manifestation and the impact of the latter on the surroundings.

According Valente and Silva quoting Puls<sup>170</sup>, ‘architecture is conceived to serve a function,<sup>171</sup> whereas art is “free”’.<sup>172</sup> Whilst this latter statement might be true the idea that architecture serves more than the artistic purpose, (or, as well, more than function) is not contrary to the idea that it does have an artistic or, as it were, an aesthetic component which is considered to be a basic human good.<sup>173</sup>

It is within the goal of this research to show that architecture may and ought to be both essentially intended for dwelling and also a work of art.

According to Heidegger, that architectural function *qua* building, as seen, has to serve human dwelling even though ‘not every building is a dwelling’.<sup>174</sup> Shelter and function are both contained into the notion of dwelling.

In fact Heidegger tells us that:

Bridges and hangars, stadiums and power stations are buildings but not dwellings; railway stations and highways, dams and market halls are built, but they are not dwelling places. Even so, these buildings are in the domain of our dwelling.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> Mauricio Puls, *Arquitetura e Filosofia* (Annablume, 2006).

<sup>171</sup> On this point one must say that utility or function whilst both are indispensable, they should not be the only criteria for architecture. As Karl Gustel Wörnberg explains, in ‘Scruton and Heidegger on Dwelling’ ‘Heidegger wrote that “Residential buildings do indeed provide shelter; today’s houses may even be well planned, easy to keep, attractively cheap, open to air, light, and sun, but—do the houses in themselves hold any guarantee that dwelling occurs in them?” In similar fashion, Scruton said in his BBC documentary Why Beauty Matters, “If you consider only utility, the things you build will soon be useless.” Each dwelling place must reflect an identity and communicate a sense of homecoming. If it remains a utilitarian project, this sense of home cannot arise. We are not created only for commerce; we are not reducible to a one-size-fits-all model. Humans are complex, sometimes contradictory, and prone to their own quirks. Out of this seeming imperfection works of true architectural and sculptural beauty have arisen, decorating the towns and cities of Europe’.

<sup>172</sup> Liz Fagundes Oliveira Valente and Luciana Bosco e Silva, “Art Dwells: Heidegger’s Concept of Dwelling and the Spatial Relations between Architecture and Contemporary Art in Two Artworks at Instituto Inhotim (Brazil) | A Arte Habita: O Conceito de Habitar Em Heidegger e as Relações Espaciais Entre Arquitetura e Arte Contemporânea Em Dois Trabalhos No Instituto Inhotim (Brasil),” *Oculum Ensaio*, 16.3 (2019), 603–21 <<https://doi.org/10.24220/2318-0919v16n2a4087>>.

<sup>173</sup> John Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights* (Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 88 says that “... often enough the valued [aesthetic] experience is found in the creation and/or active appreciation of some work of significant and satisfying form”.

<sup>174</sup> Heidegger, *Building Dwelling Thinking*, p. 323.

<sup>175</sup> Heidegger, *Building Dwelling Thinking*, p. 323. (my underlining). Vorträge und Aufsätze, p. 19 „*Brücke und Flughalle, Stadion und Kraftwerk sind Bauten, aber keine Wohnungen; Bahnhof und Autobahn, Staudamm und Markthalle sind Bauten, aber keine Wohnungen.*“

Building should have dwelling as a goal and that without dwelling, there can be no thinking, so that the human being fails to encounter the mystery of *Being*. This perspective on the relationship between building, dwelling, and human existence posits that:

- The primary purpose of building should be to create spaces for dwelling.
- Dwelling is perceived as a fundamental human activity that transcends mere shelter.
- Without the experience of dwelling, human thought is impaired or limited.
- The inability to dwell properly prevents humans from encountering the "mystery of Being" – a concept often associated with Heidegger's existential philosophy.

Urban planning and architecture then, should indeed prioritise creating environments that foster genuine dwelling experiences, rather than just functional spaces. This approach aligns with the growing recognition of the importance of quality of life and well-being in urban settings. Research indicates that residential satisfaction in higher-density urban environments is influenced by various factors beyond mere functionality. Key predictors include satisfaction with dwelling position, design and facilities, as well as neighbourhood characteristics such as walkability, safety, and social connections.<sup>176</sup> This suggests that urban planners need to consider both the physical attributes of dwellings and the broader neighbourhood context to create liveable meaningful spaces, or places rather.

Interestingly, the concept of "dwelling" extends beyond the confines of individual residences. Urban green spaces, particularly historical ones like Persian gardens, can serve as places of identity, memory, and belonging, enriching human life with meaning and emotions.<sup>177</sup> These spaces contribute to a sense of community and place attachment, which are crucial for creating sustainable urban environments.<sup>178</sup> All these concepts may be reduced, in their essence, to thinking.

Furthermore, Heidegger expresses this connection between building, dwelling and thinking, at the end of his essay *Building Dwelling Thinking* :

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<sup>176</sup> Laurie Buys and Evonne Miller, "Residential Satisfaction in Inner Urban Higher-Density Brisbane, Australia: Role of Dwelling Design, Neighbourhood and Neighbours," *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management*, 55.3 (2012), 319–38 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09640568.2011.597592>>.

<sup>177</sup> Raheleh Rostami and others, "Sustainable Cities and the Contribution of Historical Urban Green Spaces: A Case Study of Historical Persian Gardens," *Sustainability*, 7.10 (2015), 13290–316 <<https://doi.org/10.3390/su71013290>>.

<sup>178</sup> Summarily, to create environments conducive to genuine dwelling, urban planning should integrate various elements such as well-designed dwellings, accessible green spaces, and opportunities for social interaction. This holistic approach can enhance the quality of life for urban residents and contribute to the overall sustainability of cities.

Building and thinking are, each in its own way, inescapable for dwelling.<sup>179</sup>

He then invites us to look for the essence of dwelling:

The real dwelling plight lies in this, that mortals ever search anew for the essence of dwelling, that they must ever learn to dwell.<sup>180</sup>

It is here being argued that Heidegger is not giving out some one-stop description of what dwelling is. He on the contrary implies that humanity in its variegated diversity has to find its own answers adapted to its context. Heidegger's approach to the concept of dwelling is nuanced and multifaceted, resisting simplistic definitions or universal prescriptions. Rather than providing a singular, definitive explanation of dwelling, he invites us to consider it as a complex, context-dependent phenomenon. This perspective acknowledges the diverse ways in which human beings interact with and inhabit their environments, emphasizing that the nature of dwelling can vary significantly across cultures, societies, and individual experiences.

The argument advanced here is that by refraining from offering a one-size-fits-all description, Heidegger encourages a more reflective and personalized understanding of dwelling. He suggests that each individual or community must engage in a process of discovery and interpretation to uncover what dwelling means within their specific circumstances. This approach recognizes the rich tapestry of human existence and the myriad ways in which people create meaning and establish connections with their surroundings. It also implies that the concept of dwelling is dynamic and evolving, capable of adapting to changing social, cultural, and environmental conditions.

He ends his essay like this:

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<sup>179</sup> Heidegger, *Building Dwelling Thinking*, p. 338. Vorträge und Aufsätze, p. 36: “*Bauen und Denken sind jeweils nach ihrer Art für das Wohnen unumgänglich.*“

<sup>180</sup> Heidegger, *Building Dwelling Thinking*, p. 339. Vorträge und Aufsätze, p. 36: “*Die eigentliche Not des Wohnens beruht darin, daß die Sterblichen das Wesen des Wohnens immer erst wieder suchen, daß sie das Wohnen erst lernen müssen.*“

This [to bring dwelling to the fullness of its essence] they accomplish when they build out of dwelling, and think for the sake of dwelling.<sup>181</sup>

Heidegger sees dwelling as an engagement of thought and action. It is the primary way in which we, as humans, relate to our surroundings.<sup>182</sup>

Humans build by inserting their constructed buildings into their world, and they dwell where they build: “dwelling and building are related as end and means.”<sup>183</sup> Thinking is how humans become aware of themselves and their space, building mediates human relationship between thought and space, and that relationship itself is dwelling.

Heidegger looks to language to explain this relationship. First, he examines the meaning of *bauen*, which is the verb “to build” in German. Its roots can be traced to *buan*, which is an Old High German word that means “to dwell”. In this context, “to dwell” means “to remain, to stay in a place.”<sup>184</sup> One gets a sense of dwelling as infusing one’s being into a particular space. Additionally, both *bauen* and *buan* are linked to the German *bin*,<sup>185</sup> which is the verb “to be”:

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<sup>181</sup> Heidegger, *Building Dwelling Thinking*, p. 339. Vorträge und Aufsätze, p. 36: “*Sie vollbringen dies, wenn sie aus dem Wohnen bauen und für das Wohnen denken.*“

<sup>182</sup> As already said, the concept of dwelling and its essence is multifaceted, encompassing various aspects of human habitation and interaction with the environment. Building out of dwelling and thinking for the sake of dwelling can be interpreted through different lenses. In ancient coastal regions of the Netherlands, inhabitants adapted to the marine environment by constructing artificial dwelling mounds called terps (A. Nieuwhof and others, “Adapting to the Sea: Human Habitation in the Coastal Area of the Northern Netherlands before Medieval Dike Building,” *Ocean & Coastal Management*, 173 (2019), 77–89 <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ocecoaman.2019.02.014>>). This practice, which lasted for over 1500 years, demonstrates how people built out of necessity and thought for the sake of dwelling in challenging environments.

<sup>183</sup> Heidegger, *Building Dwelling Thinking*, 324.

<sup>184</sup> Heidegger, *Building Dwelling Thinking*, 324.

<sup>185</sup> This etymological method has been questioned by some. However, in Heidegger’s defence one source (<https://www.dwds.de/wb/bauen#1>) appears to be in agreement with him: “*bauen Vb. ‘errichten, anpflanzen’. Ursprünglich reduplizierendes Verb mit intervokalischem -w-, ahd. būwan, būwen ‘wohnen, bewohnen, Ackerbau treiben’ (8. Jh.), mhd. būwen, biuwen, bouwen ‘wohnen, Ackerbau treiben, errichten’, asächs. būan, būwan, mnd. būwen ‘(Häuser) bauen, errichten, bebauen, bewohnen’, mnl. bauwen, būwen, nl. bouwen, aengl. būan, bū(w)ian, anord. būa ‘wohnen, ausrüsten’ gehört wie Bau (s. d.) zur Ablautform ie. \*bhū- der Wurzel ie. \*bheu-, \*bheū-, got. bauan ‘wohnen, bewohnen’, gabauan ‘Wohnung aufschlagen’ dagegen zur Ablautform \*bhōū-. Die Bedeutung der Wurzel ist wohl ‘wachsen, gedeihen’ (im Sinne von ‘schwellen’, sofern ursprüngliche Verwandtschaft mit der Wurzel ie. \*b(e)u-, \*bh(e)u-, \*b(h)ū- besteht, s. Bausch, Beule, Busen), dann ‘entstehen, werden, sein’, schließlich ‘gewöhnheitsmäßig an einem Ort sein, wohnen’. Außergerm. stellen sich dazu aind. bhāvati ‘wird, entsteht, ist’, bhavanam ‘Wohnung, Heim’, bhūh ‘Welt, Ort’, griech. phyein (φύειν) ‘wachsen lassen’, phýsis (φύσις) ‘Natur’, phítv (φίτv) ‘Keim, Sproß’, phōleós (φωλεός) ‘Lager, Höhle wilder Tiere’, lat. fuisse ‘gewesen sein’, aslaw. byti ‘sein, werden’, russ. byt’ (быть), lit. būti ‘sein’; vgl. auch nhd. bin, bist (s. sein). Heute überwiegt bei bauen die Bedeutung ‘(ein Haus) errichten’ (entsprechend Bau ‘Errichtung, Gebäude’), während ‘Ackerbau treiben, das Feld bestellen’ weitgehend von Präfixbildungen übernommen wird: anbauen Vb. (15. Jh.), bebauen Vb., ahd. bibūwan ‘bewohnen’ (9. Jh.), mhd. bebūwen ‘das Feld bestellen’ (14. Jh.). Hierzu auch das in Bildungen wie Ackerbauer, Erbauer usw. erhaltene Nomen agentis Bauer! m. ahd.*

where the word *bauen* still speaks in its original sense it also says how far the essence of dwelling reaches. That is, *bauen*, *buan* . . . are our word in in the versions: *ich bin*, I am, *du bist*, you are, the imperative form *bis*, be. What then does *ich bin* mean? The old word *bauen*, to which the *bin* belongs, answers: *ich bin*, *du bist* mean I dwell, you dwell.<sup>186</sup>

In other words, our very being is dwelling. The position defended here is that our humanity is inherently tied to dwelling. To be sure, where one dwells is where one is at home, where one has a place.<sup>187</sup>

The notion of dwelling as poetic habitation opens up a path to what Heidegger describes as ‘the mystery’. Even though the world always opens up as meaningful in a particular way to any individual human being as a result of the specific heritage into which one has been enculturated, there are of course a vast number of alternative fields of intelligibility ‘out there’ that would be available to each of us, if only one could gain access to them by becoming simultaneously embedded in different heritages. But Heidegger's account of human existence means that any such parallel embedding is ruled out, so the plenitude of alternative fields of intelligibility must remain a mystery to us.<sup>188</sup>

Indeed, Heidegger believes that the art of building is very much similar to the art of poetry. The way the verses in a poem depict a simple fact in a really creative way is the same as that of the technique of constructing a building and then making the building alive by dwelling in that particular building. This is exactly why this research will also take into consideration architecture as a “work of art” and not only as a means to dwelling. Heidegger’s philosophy is reflected in his way of connecting architecture with human life itself. But it is not just any version of life but a ‘worldly, social, and historical nexus’ that ‘intimates an ethos of earthly

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*bū(w)āri* ‘Bewohner, Siedler, Landmann’ (9. Jh.), mhd. *būwære*, *bouwære* ‘Bauer, Erbauer’, mnd. *būwer*: *erbauen* Vb. ‘be-, an-, aufbauen’, übertragen (in Anlehnung an kirchenlat. *aedificāre*, bibl.-griech. *oikodomeîn* (οἰκοδομεῖν) ‘im Glauben stärken, geistig fördern’, mhd. *erbūwen*, *erbiuwen*.“

<sup>186</sup> Heidegger, *Building Dwelling Thinking*, p. 325. Vorträge und Aufsätze, p. 21: “Wo das Wort *bauen* noch ursprünglich spricht, sagt es zugleich, wie weit das Wesen des Wohnens reicht. *Bauen*, *buan*, *bhu*, *beo* ist nämlich unser Wort «*bin*» in den Wendungen : *ich bin*, *du bist*, die Imperativform *bis*, *sei*. Was heißt dann: *ich bin*? Das alte Wort *bauen*, zu dem das «*bin*» gehört, antwortet: «*ich bin*», «*du bist*» besagt: *ich wohne*, *du wohnst*.“

<sup>187</sup> Michael Wheeler, "Martin Heidegger", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/heidegger/>>.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid*.

dwelling’.<sup>189</sup> The argument advanced here is that architecture should be meaningful because it should contribute to the meaningfulness of human life.

If this is so, the main hypothesis behind this research may be framed as supporting the idea of having a type of architecture that encourages and fosters a meaningful life, which ultimately boils down to an all-round well-being<sup>190</sup>. This well-being in architecture is complex and any dissection of this notion will not do justice to its meaningfulness. However, for practicality’s sake one may advance the idea of having ‘dwelling’ as the essence of architecture and aesthetic experience as its form.<sup>191</sup> This topic will be examined in greater depth in Chapter 2.

The conceptual bridge binding architecture to the common good is not an easy project. However, establishing an architecture having dwelling in well-being as its goal, is already a step in the right direction. Since, the notion of the common good as described in this research will reduce the problem to a form coordination between the individual well-being and the well-being of the collective. The position defended here is that architecture pervades both these two realms (individual and public). The argument set out here proceeds on the assumption that dwelling without being well is hardly dwelling at all.

On the other hand, the general term architecture in this research includes two aspects as understood in the collective understanding, namely (a) the public building aspect and (b) the private building aspect.

It is self-evident that in public buildings both the internal and external aspects may fall within the political authority of those who decide to make such buildings more oriented towards the general well-being of the citizens who inhabit them and/or are exposed to them and thus orienting those buildings towards the common good, as aforementioned.

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<sup>189</sup> Nelson, ‘Heidegger and the Questionability of the Ethical’, p. 421.

<sup>190</sup> ‘well-being’ here understood as ‘fulfilment’ or ‘flourishing’ or both and not as ‘happiness’.

<sup>191</sup> Beauty (felt as aesthetic experience by humans) may be either natural or man-made. When considering architecture one has to consider both these aspects but focus more on the man-made aspect. The aesthetic connection stems from the philosophy of John Finnis, which conceptually reduces all-round human flourishing and thus all-round well-being (or *eudaimonia*) to the participation of humans in the seven basic goods, which are objectively non-hierarchical and equally fundamental. One of these basic goods is aesthetic experience which Finnis describes as a ‘valued experience [...] found in the creation and/or active appreciation of some work of significant and satisfying form’. The latter happens also to be one of the three Roman architectural tenets called in Latin *Venustas*. Consequently, as participation in aesthetic experience aids human beings to flourish and move towards *eudaimonia* (Aristotle) or *beatitudo* (Aquinas) so should architecture. The latter being, at least as it can be humanly perceived, and besides being other things as well, a work of art. There are various scientific studies confirming the intuitive and self-evident postulation that living in a neighbourhood which is aesthetically beautiful has a positive effect on the general well-being of those living there. Whilst the converse is also true that living in an disagreeable neighbourhood has negative effects on the well-being of those living there.

The point is that whilst it is uncontested that the “internal” design of any private house is the occupants’ prerogative, it is contestable that the external aspect of that private building is their prerogative as well.

Whilst there are objections to the claim that private aesthetics may be politically (hence legislatively) prescribed, the objection to the objection, is that its being a private building does not make it invisible to the public. It still is an unavoidable presence.<sup>192</sup> According to this view, which is being supported here, if that private building is disagreeable it will reduce the well-being of everyone and anyone who is in its presence. By say reducing its dwelling capability or by reducing its beneficial influence as a work of art. In other words by being a bad or ugly building, it becomes turpified. The converse is also true. A good and beautiful private building will increase the well-being of all those in its presence. This statement raises a number of questions. What is “good” and what is “beautiful”. Is not beauty a subjective matter of taste? And following on from that is not “ugliness” as well subjective. In other words, should the idea that *De gustibus non est disputandum* prevail?<sup>193</sup>

The question of the objectivity and subjectivity of beauty (and of ugliness) has intrigued philosophers throughout history. Plato, in his dialogues, proposed the Theory of Forms<sup>194</sup>,

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<sup>192</sup> Besides having other repercussions as Charles Montgomery: ‘Every urban dweller’s freedom to live, move, and experience the city as he chooses is inherently conditioned by what every landowner does with his or her property. If a developer builds an auto-dependent neighbourhood for ten thousand people at the far end of my city, that system will soon infringe on my own right to enjoy safe and navigable roads.’ Charles Montgomery, *Happy City: Transforming Our Lives Through Urban Design* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013), p. 329.

<sup>193</sup> The relationship between aesthetics and human response is more nuanced than a straightforward “beauty is good” stereotype (Angela M. Griffin and Judith H. Langlois, “Stereotype Directionality and Attractiveness Stereotyping: Is Beauty Good or Is Ugly Bad?,” *Social Cognition*, 24.2 (2006), 187–206 <<https://doi.org/10.1521/soco.2006.24.2.187>>). In the context of urban planning and architecture, the concept of “good” extends beyond mere visual appeal. It encompasses functionality, accessibility, and the ability to meet residents’ needs and preferences (Kostas Mouratidis, “Urban Planning and Quality of Life: A Review of Pathways Linking the Built Environment to Subjective Well-Being,” *Cities*, 115 (2021), 103229 <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2021.103229>>). A “good” building or urban space should contribute to overall quality of life by enhancing conditions for active travel, providing easy access to facilities and services, and integrating various forms of urban nature. These factors, combined with aesthetic considerations, can collectively contribute to increased well-being for those in its presence. In essence, while beauty and ugliness are indeed subjective, their impact on well-being cannot be dismissed. The challenge lies in creating built environments that balance aesthetic appeal with functional design, taking into account the diverse needs and preferences of the population. This approach recognizes the complexity of human responses to aesthetics while striving to enhance overall quality of life in urban spaces.

<sup>194</sup> See Plato, ‘Cratylus’ *The Project Gutenberg eBook of Cratylus*, para. 440. ‘But if the very nature of knowledge changes, at the time when the change occurs there will be no knowledge, and, according to this view, there will be no one to know and nothing to be known: but if that which knows and that which is known exist ever, and the beautiful and the good and every other thing also exist, then I do not think that they can resemble a process of flux, as we were just now supposing.’

suggesting that beauty is an objective, transcendent reality. According to him, physical beauty is a mere reflection of this higher, unchanging beauty.

Aristotle,<sup>195</sup> on the other hand, took a more nuanced stance. He acknowledged that there are commonalities in what people find beautiful due to shared human nature, suggesting an objective aspect. However, he also recognized the role of individual experiences and cultural influences in shaping personal aesthetic preferences.

Moving forward in time, Immanuel Kant argued that beauty is subjective but not arbitrary. He proposed that aesthetic judgments are based on universal principles rooted in human cognition. For Kant, while there is subjectivity in individual experiences of beauty, there is a shared foundation based on our cognitive structures.<sup>196</sup>

Heidegger, who will figure prominently in this research, contributed a unique perspective to this discourse. He diverged from traditional aesthetics by focusing on the concept of 'being-in-the-world.' For Heidegger, *beauty* arises from the meaningful relationships between individuals and the world around them.

In his seminal work *Being and Time*, Heidegger argued that our encounters with entities, including objects of aesthetic appreciation, are not merely subjective projections. Instead, they are rooted in our existence and engagement with the world. Beauty, according to Heidegger, is a product of the dynamic interplay between our own being and the world's unfolding.

In incorporating Heidegger into this discussion, one adds an extra layer, emphasizing existential engagement and the inherent connection between human existence and *aesthetics*.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> According to Aristotle Plato devised the 'Forms' to address a weakness in the doctrine of Heraclitus, who held that nothing exists, but everything is in a state of flow. In Thomas Taylor, 'The Metaphysics Of Aristotle', University of Michigan, (1801), p. 19 'For, when he was a young man, associating first of all with Cratylus, and being familiar with the opinions of Heraclitus, that all sensible things are perpetually flowing, and that there is no science reflecting them, he afterwards adopted these opinions. But as Socrates employed himself about ethics, and entirely neglected the speculation respecting the whole of nature ; in morals, indeed, investigating the universal, and being the first who applied himself to definitions; hence Plato, approving this his investigation of universals, adopted thus much of his doctrine, that these definitions referred other things, and are not conversant with any thing sensible.

<sup>196</sup> Immanuel Kant and J. H Bernard, 'Kant's Critique of Judgement' 2nd ed. rev ed. Macmillan (1914) p.137-138. Kant says 'taste can be called *sensus communis* with more justice than sound understanding can, and that the aesthetical judgment rather than the intellectual may bear the name of all, if we are willing to use the word "sense" of an effect of mere reflection upon the mind, for then we understand by sense the feeling of pleasure. We could even define taste as the faculty of judging that which makes universally communicable, without the mediation of a concept, our feeling in a given representation.'

<sup>197</sup> For Heidegger aesthetics would be a misnomer.

Heidegger's approach provides a nuanced perspective that complements the broader spectrum of ideas surrounding the objectivity and subjectivity of beauty. Suffice it to say for now that for Heidegger “*art is the becoming and happening of truth*”.<sup>198</sup>

There is of course another *stratum* which cannot be neglected that of what is happening in the real world. The outrage that professionals,<sup>199</sup> ordinary individuals<sup>200</sup> and entities are experiencing in different parts of the world when reacting to what is being built.<sup>201</sup> The paradox of having better building technology and producing less beautiful if not uglier buildings is deemed to give rise to the philosophical *raison d’etre* of the whole research.

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<sup>198</sup> Heidegger, *The Origin Of The Work Of Art*, Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. by Albert Hofstadter (HarperCollins Publishers, 2001), p. 36.

<sup>199</sup> Matthew Xuereb, Uglification of Malta is at the point of no return: Zaren Vassallo, *Times of Malta*, (May 17, 2021) <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/uglification-of-malta-is-at-the-point-of-no-return-nazzareno-vassallo.872131>

<sup>200</sup> Luke Vella, Thousands protest in Valletta against environmental rape, demand planning reform, *MaltaToday*, (May 27, 2023) [https://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/national/123126/xebbajtuna\\_protestors\\_head\\_to\\_valletta\\_demanding\\_environmental\\_planning\\_reform1](https://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/national/123126/xebbajtuna_protestors_head_to_valletta_demanding_environmental_planning_reform1)

<sup>201</sup> Fiona Galea Debono, 'Higher, bigger, grosser': the uglification of Malta and Gozo', *Times of Malta*, (March 17, 2021) <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/higher-bigger-grosser-the-uglification-of-malta-and-go.858127>



FIGURE 9 UGLY, BLAND AND MEANINGLESS PRIVATE BUILDINGS ARE CROWDING THE ONCE ARCHITECTURALLY PICTURESQUE ISLAND OF MALTA- PHOTOGRAPH: TIMES OF MALTA.

Examples will be discussed mostly taken from the island of Malta<sup>202</sup> where private building overdevelopment has led to an extreme case of general *turpification* (Figure 11). Ugly, bland and meaningless private buildings are crowding the once architecturally picturesque island (Figure 12) through a process of demolishing typical quaint dwellings to build bland boxes that look more like old totalitarian social houses lodgings.<sup>203204</sup> This is where the notion of “dwelling”<sup>205</sup> as distinguished from mere “lodging”<sup>206</sup> comes in.

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<sup>202</sup> But not only in Malta.

<sup>203</sup> The Covid-19 pandemic has changed humanity’s perspective of reality in so many ways. Being locked down in a home, neighbourhood and landscape, which is ‘comfortable’ as opposed to one which is not, had an impact on one’s well-being. <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2020/03/19/coronavirus-effect-economy-life-society-analysis-covid-135579>

<sup>204</sup> Lucia Alonso & Sam Jacoby (2022) The impact of housing design and quality on wellbeing: lived experiences of the home during COVID-19 in London, *Cities & Health*, DOI: 10.1080/23748834.2022.2103391. “Reflecting on how they lived in their homes during the pandemic, some realised how important housing design was to their everyday life. A well-designed home was described by one participant as ‘a space where you can go that isn’t impinging on someone else’s space in any way’ or ‘you know something is well designed when you don’t notice it’.”

<sup>205</sup> Heidegger, *Building Dwelling Thinking*, p.324.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.



FIGURE 10 TURPIFICATION OF MALTA AND GOZO- PHOTOGRAPH:TIMES OF MALTA

### **Navigating Reconciliatory Distinctions**

In summary, the question of beauty's objectivity or subjectivity remains a complex and multifaceted philosophical inquiry. While historical perspectives have, as seen, ranged from the transcendental ideals of Plato purposiveness of Kant, contemporary discussions, as seen through the lenses of thinkers like Heidegger, continue to navigate the delicate balance between the universal and the individual in the realm of aesthetics. Beauty, it seems, eludes a definitive categorization, inviting ongoing contemplation and discourse among philosophers.

As already mentioned, one issue that stands immediately out is that there are two distinct dimensions which have to be addressed in this research: (i) the essential-internal<sup>207</sup> aspect of architecture leading to dwelling for well-being (dwell-being)<sup>208</sup> and (ii) the formal-external<sup>209</sup>

<sup>207</sup> Perhaps 'ontological' Heidegger would say.

<sup>208</sup> As Thomas Sheehan puts it we 'make sense of Heidegger by first of all following him in his crucial phenomenological reinterpretation of the being of beings (das Sein des Seienden) as the meaningful presence of things to man (das Anwesen des Anwesenden)' in Sheehan, 'What, after All, Was Heidegger About?', p. 251.

<sup>209</sup> Perhaps 'ontic' as Heidegger would say.

manifestation of such dwell-being which unavoidably presents itself, as well, as a work of art<sup>210</sup>.

These two dimensions are essential when one comes to address both the notion of the common good and that of architecture. The distinction makes it convenient to tackle the subject at hand but from an ontic point of view the formal-external aspect, which we normally refer to as aesthetic experience, may more often than not be part and parcel of the essential-internal aspect of architecture. Moreover, as we will see towards the end of this research, the ‘well-being’<sup>211</sup> aspect here is understood as the participation in the basic human goods, which, as will be argued, is crucial to the notion of ‘dwell-being’. The list of these basic goods includes aesthetic experience as a self-evident, fundamental and irreducible value.<sup>212</sup>

After all, as Holst hints:

Some people may feel pleasure or satisfy their desires without being any better off, and somebody could even experience happiness while finding themselves uncomfortably awkward in this supposedly desirable state. Perhaps that person is not really happy then.<sup>213</sup>

Finally, despite their distinct philosophical backgrounds, John Finnis and Martin Heidegger share common ground in acknowledging the importance of human nature for ethics, critiquing elements of modernism, and engaging with existential themes, although their specific emphases within philosophy differ.

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<sup>210</sup> Heidegger thus suggests that art’s highest “[t]ruth is [not ‘the certainty of the absolute’ but] the unconcealedness of entities as entities.

<sup>211</sup> or as we also refer to as ‘flourishing’

<sup>212</sup> The distinction between the essential-internal and the formal-external is illuminating, yet it ultimately encounters the limits of its own conceptual enclosure. The phenomenon of built space does not always allow itself to be neatly gathered into such oppositions. What we customarily call the “rooms” of the city—its squares, narrow streets, and sheltered urban precincts—often disclose themselves as open interiors, unroofed yet still experienced as places that gather and hold. In such instances, the city itself “houses” by providing a mode of enclosure that is not material but essential, arising from scale, proportion, and the orientation of surrounding forms. Conversely, in certain vast architectural interiors, the world withdraws in such a way that the inside begins to appear as an outside: the principal elevations within the trainshed at St. Pancras Station in London, for instance, present themselves less as interior walls and more as external façades, as though the structure had gathered an exterior world within it. These experiences reveal that the binary of inside/outside is not merely spatial but ontological, grounded in how places let things appear and how they attune dwelling.

<sup>213</sup> Holst, ‘Finding Oneself Well’, p. 2.

## CHAPTER 2

### ARCHITECTURE: DWELLING PLACE AND WORK OF ART

„Das Wesen des Bauens ist das Wohnenlassen“<sup>1</sup>

The essence of building is letting dwell

„Das Wesen der Kunst ist die Dichtung“

The essence of art is poetry.

#### Introduction: Architecture and Unavoidable Presence

As already mentioned in the previous chapter architecture is an unavoidable presence.<sup>2</sup> One can avoid reading literature one does not like, one can refrain from listening to music one does not appreciate, or shun looking at a work of art which one finds uninteresting – all this possibly even for the duration of one’s whole life. However one cannot avoid a ‘building’ which one dislikes, especially if that building is within one’s visual range, or even within one’s habitable or dwelling zone. Most of all, people living around that building would not only be unable to avoid it, but they would be exposed to it constantly. This may probably impact their lives proportionately to their dislike and sensitivity to their surroundings.<sup>3</sup> The common expression “what an ugly building”<sup>4</sup> is a staple expression in common parlance, in some places more than

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<sup>1</sup> Heidegger: *Bauen Wohnen Denken*, p. 34 and *Holzwege*, p. 63.

<sup>2</sup> Tim Diacono, “WATCH: Gharghur Residents Take To The Streets To Protest Development Which Will ‘Kill Village’s Heritage,’” *Lovin Malta*, 27 September 2021 <<https://lovinmalta.com/lifestyle/environment/watch-gharghur-residents-take-to-the-streets-to-protest-development-which-will-kill-villages-heritage/>> [accessed 4 January 2025]; and Julian Bonnici, “WATCH: ‘We Will Not Stop Fighting For Justice’ – Residents, Activists, And Citizens Turn Up In Their Hundreds In Protest Against Construction Industry,” *Lovin Malta*, 18 June 2019 <<https://lovinmalta.com/news/news-politics/watch-we-will-not-stop-fighting-for-justice-residents-activists-and-citizens-turn-up-in-their-hundreds-in-protest-against-construction-industry/>> [accessed 4 January 2025].

<sup>3</sup> Gretchen E. Henderson, *Ugliness: A Cultural History* (Reaktion Books, 2015), p.128

<sup>4</sup> See on this: Timothy Hyde, *Ugliness and Judgment: On Architecture in the Public Eye* (Princeton University Press, 2023), wherein he states : “This succinct judgment, commonly enough expressed, has in its repetition underwritten a broad critique of architecture based in large part upon a presumed differentiation between public and professional points of view, between “what people think” and “what architects think.”

others (see Figure 11). Whilst both beauty<sup>5</sup> (see Figure 12) and ugliness<sup>6</sup> may occur naturally, most of the latter<sup>7</sup> is caused by humans.<sup>8</sup>

The problem with beauty and ugliness is the subjectivity (Figure 13) of it all. As we will see Heidegger has a lot to say about this as he often points out, in the modern, post-Cartesian world, an “object,” *Gegenstand*, is something that “stands opposite” a human subject, ‘something external to subjectivity’. He says:

In order to experience an object, the modern subject supposedly must first get outside the immanent sphere of its own subjectivity so as to encounter this “external” object, and then return back to its subjective sphere bearing the fruits of this encounter. Given the modern subject/object dichotomy, such an adventure beyond subjectivity and back again is required for the experience of any object.<sup>9</sup>

We will go into more detail about this when dealing with architecture as a work of art in the second part of this chapter.

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<sup>5</sup> Consider any untouched landscape.

<sup>6</sup> Consider deformities occurring at birth.

<sup>7</sup> Consider what Michael Diamant says in this interview: ALIAS, “Hässliche Neue Welt,” *Alias*, 2023 <<https://alias-mag.de/haessliche-neue-welt>> [accessed 4 January 2025], where he says: ” *Ein Diskurs ist aber nicht gewollt. Wer den Modernismus kritisiert, gilt als Hitler, denn der war bekanntlich auch ein Fan klassischer Architektur. Und mit Nazis redet man nicht. Nein, im Ernst: Das ist tatsächlich die Art von Reaktion, die man erwarten muss, wenn man eine Rückkehr zu bestimmten Traditionen fordert.*“

<sup>8</sup> Gretchen E. Henderson, *Ugliness: A Cultural History* (Reaktion Books, 2015).

<sup>9</sup> Iain Thomson, “Heidegger’s Aesthetics” <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2019/entries/heidegger-aesthetics>> [accessed 4 January 2025].



FIGURE 11 THE MERCURY TOWERS, TRIQ SAN GORG, PACEVILLE MALTA - ONE OF THE MANY BUILDINGS BEING ERECTED ON THE ISLAND. PHOTOGRAPH ALAN XUEREB



FIGURE 12 NATURAL BEAUTY - ONE OF THE MANY PATHWAYS THROUGH THE FOREST IN TAWERN, RHEINLANDPFALZ, GERMANY. PHOTOGRAPH ALAN XUEREB



FIGURE 13 UNIVERSITÄTSKLINIK AACHEN: CHIC DER SCHWERINDUSTRIE - GERMANY.  
PHOTOGRAPH: GÜNTER HENTSCHEL.

## From Content-Form to Essence-Presence

Architecture, as seen, is a complex notion, composed of a variety of elements. Moreover, it has been around for quite some time, basically since the first *dolmen* and *menhir*.<sup>10</sup> Architecture is both a thing intended for dwelling and in most cases also a work of art.

These elements are traditionally and representationally grouped under two general headings, namely: content and form. The content of architecture may vary in accordance with the function of the specific building, and so may its form. The old nineteenth century-early twentieth century adage form follows function comes to mind (see Figure 14).<sup>11</sup>

However, Heidegger does not react well to this content-form dichotomy. Why?

Heidegger does not understand the work of art,<sup>12</sup> in terms of representation, or else form and content. While aesthetics has long used these categories in order to analyse and explain

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<sup>10</sup> A dolmen can be defined as a massive worked block of stone which has been made to lie suspended in space in the horizontal position. In large structures, such as the Maltese temples and Stonehenge, the supporting stones are also worked and are as massive as the dolmen. These upright slabs are called menhirs. See: Daniel Sciberras, "The Maltese Dolmens," 1999 <<https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar/handle/123456789/46861>> [accessed 4 January 2025].

<sup>11</sup> Louis H. Sullivan, "The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered," *Lippincott's Magazine*, 1896.

<sup>12</sup> Or 'great work of art' – not clear at this point whether Heidegger would accept this form and content distinction for art which is not great.

artworks, Heidegger believes that they are unsuitable for investigating the Being of works of art. This, of course, is not to say that these categories are totally useless in relation to the study of works of art.



FIGURE 14 THE MONADNOCK BUILDING, 53 WEST JACKSON BOULEVARD, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, SEEN FROM THE EAST SIDE OF JACKSON AND DEARBORN STREETS LOOKING SOUTH. PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID K. STAUB CREATIVE COMMONS ATTRIBUTION.

As John Bruin explains this happens to us because:

[...] we are so geared toward understanding things in terms of their use, we are, by second nature, predisposed to conceive the production or origin of the work of art within the purview of the work-shop. Small wonder, therefore, that this distinction of matter and form has taken such a hold on our understanding, or misunderstanding, of the true nature of the work of art. It does so in terms of the aesthetic schema of “form” and “content”. With the imposition and misapplication of that schema on works of art, art be- comes representational.<sup>13</sup>

On this point through a very interesting analysis about ‘defensive’ and ‘offensive’ art<sup>14</sup> Bruin concludes that:

What Heidegger adamantly rejects, however, is what Hegel too willingly accepts- namely, the conceptual apparatus of form and content. According to Heidegger, beauty or form does not, or at least does not have to, “occur along- side and apart from this truth”<sup>15</sup>

We are left then with a thorny issue, the representational view that everything is divided into form and content, and the Heideggerian perspective that this is not the correct way to see things. As Pau Pedragosa succinctly puts it, for Heidegger:

What shows itself is reality, not just a symbol or a sign of it.<sup>16</sup>

Heidegger clearly disapproves of the distinction between content or form which most commentators attribute to Platonic idealism.<sup>17</sup> Tendentally, one has the impulse to see the content of some ‘thing’, be it politics, or architecture, as its essence. This is a metaphysical question or as Fried puts it:

[...]when we ask what any thing, any being, is, we are asking after its self-identical attributes, the immutable core of its being, and ultimately after Being itself as that which

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<sup>13</sup> John Bruin, “Heidegger and Two Kinds of Art,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 52.4 (1994), 447 <<https://doi.org/10.2307/432032>>, p. 452

<sup>14</sup> There is then the very interesting issue which is subsidiarily useful here that Heidegger drops the use of the term ‘art’ for a quite a long chunk of his *Origins of the work of art*, as Bruin points out. The latter has this explanation for this omission: : “Heidegger momentarily drops the term “art” for the purpose of driving home his point that the Greeks, specifically those mentioned in the passage in question, “had no need of ‘aesthetic’”. Bruin, *ibid*, p. 448.

<sup>15</sup> Bruin, ‘Heidegger and Two Kinds of Art’, p. 455.

<sup>16</sup> Pau Pedragosa Bofarull, “Presence or Meaning in Architecture,” *Architecture Philosophy*, 3.1 (2018), 25–48, p. 32.

<sup>17</sup> Gregory Fried, “Retrieving Phronêsis: Heidegger on the Essence of Politics,” *Continental Philosophy Review*, 47.3–4 (2014), 293–313 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11007-014-9305-1>, p. 4.

remains forever self-same, the indisputable touchstone for all that is, that we can call real.<sup>18</sup>

In line with this reasoning, as Fried explains, Heidegger rejects this notion of content as essence,<sup>19</sup> because it supposes that what ‘constitutes the Being of any being is something eternally static and present to a rationality unencumbered by time and history’.<sup>20</sup> Fried elucidates Heidegger's perspective, asserting that Heidegger perceives all aspects of reality as dynamic. This, it is submitted, encompasses not only our self-perception as human beings but also extends to domains such as politics, architecture, and art.

The key to this important issue, according to Fried is what Heidegger calls ‘*polemos*’:

In the *polemos* Heidegger finds a name for the collectedness and differentiation of beings in their meaning, in their Being, that accounts for the temporality, the historicity, of this very meaning, its coming and going over time, that serves as an alternative to the eternal, Platonic idea.

It is this *Auseinandersetzung*, or confrontation<sup>21</sup> that gives sense to the world in how beings are set out and apart from each other, how they collect themselves, present “‘fronts’” to each other, and this articulation of the world transpires as the historical struggle of human beings over the interpretation of the world, the beings within it, and Being itself as the horizon of meaning.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Fried, ‘Retrieving Phronêsis’, p. 4.

<sup>19</sup> Even though as Fried immediately clarifies a bit later ‘The theme of essence also plays a wide-ranging role in Heidegger’s thought, from the claim in Being and Time that existence is the human essence’, Fried, ‘Retrieving Phronêsis’ (pp. 4-5)

<sup>20</sup> Fried, ‘Retrieving Phronêsis’, p. 4.

<sup>21</sup> The concept of *Auseinandersetzung*, or confrontation, plays a crucial role in shaping our understanding of the world and the relationships between beings. This confrontation manifests as a historical struggle over the interpretation of reality, encompassing both individual entities and the broader horizon of meaning. In the context of human society, this confrontation is reflected in the psychological idioms that structure and evaluate reality (Vincent Crapanzano, “Saints, Jnun, and Dreams: An Essay-in Moroccan Ethnopsychology†,” *Psychiatry*, 38.2 (1975), 145–59 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/00332747.1975.11023844>>.). These idioms, which go beyond language, incorporate traditional symbols and values that form the basis for interpreting reality. They enable the articulation of subjective experience and explicit psychology, influencing how individuals perceive themselves and their surroundings. Interestingly, this concept of confrontation extends beyond human interactions to encompass broader historical and economic contexts. For instance, the major axis of world confrontation in modern economic growth has been between early and late industrializers (Yujiro Hayami, “Japan in the New World Confrontation: A Historical Perspective,” *The Japanese Economic Review*, 46.4 (1995), 351–57 <<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5876.1995.tb00026.x>>.). This confrontation arises when late-comers develop models of economic development that challenge the established order, leading to shifts in global power dynamics. In essence, the *Auseinandersetzung* or confrontation serves as a fundamental process through which beings define themselves in relation to others and interpret the world around them. This ongoing struggle for interpretation shapes not only individual perceptions but also broader societal, economic, and historical developments, ultimately contributing to the evolving horizon of meaning that defines our collective understanding of Being itself.

<sup>22</sup> Fried, ‘Retrieving Phronêsis’, p. 6.

The essence of human beings then becomes existence. But the meaning of what it is being human is may change. It is actually dynamic and not static. With it the meaning of everything else that is human changes. Following Fried's interpretation of Heidegger, I contend that art, architecture, and politics are inherently historical practices that undergo continual transformation. Their dynamism stems from *polemos*, the generative confrontation through which meanings and forms are disclosed and reshaped. I shall return to this theme in the fifth and final chapter of the thesis.

Heidegger, then does not believe in 'content' and 'form'. Another term for content in the sense used in this research is 'essence'. As seen above some say even there Heidegger does not intend 'essence' it is traditionally meant. Actually, in his essay *Building, Dwelling, Thinking*<sup>23</sup> Heidegger uses the term 'essence' thirty-eight times. But the main statement that will help us throughout or quest is the following:

The essence of building is letting dwell.<sup>24</sup>

This, by logical inference, means that the essence of architecture is dwelling.

Moreover, the form is then the other element that is so familiar to us because whatever the *content* of something is, it manifests itself to us as some 'thing'. As Bruin poignantly points out :

The form is that "thingly element," often enough associated with the beauty of a work. But its beauty, its immediate presentation,<sup>25</sup> gets written off as "what reposes and relaxes" and as "a matter for pastry cook"<sup>26</sup>

Bruin, para-quoting Heidegger says that the content is over and above the 'thingly' feature and constitutes the artistic nature of a work.<sup>27</sup> Perhaps more than Heidegger would care to admit, a

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<sup>23</sup> Which is extremely relevant to this research. In Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. by Albert Hofstadter (HarperCollins Publishers, 2001).

<sup>24</sup> Heidegger, *Building, Dwelling Thinking*, p. 337. In the original Martin Heidegger, *Vorträge Und Aufsätze*, fourth edition (Gunther Neske Pfullingen, 1978), p. 154 "*Das Wesen des Bauens ist das Wohnenlassen*".

<sup>25</sup> Bruin, 'Heidegger and Two Kinds of Art', p. 452

<sup>26</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics* (Yale University Press, 2000), p. 131

<sup>27</sup> Bruin, 'Heidegger and Two Kinds of Art', p. 452. The full quote *Origins of the Work of Art*, p.19: 'since the art work is something else over and above the thingly element. This something else in the work constitutes its artistic nature'. In the original text in Martin Heidegger, *Holzwege*, fourth edition (Vittorio Klostermann, 1963), p. 9: '*...weil das Kunstwerk über das Dinghafte hinaus noch etwas anderes ist. Dieses Andere, was daran ist, macht das Künstlerische aus*'.

thing does manifest itself physically to us in some 'form'. Heidegger does not deny that of course. The point that Bruin makes, following Heidegger's reasoning, is that the work of art does not, or at any rate does not have to, ground itself in "something other".<sup>28</sup> But a thing whether you consider architecture essentially - as building for dwelling or as a work of art - it does manifest itself to us in this reality as form which is present in space and time. We will tackle this issue later on when we deal with architecture as a work of art. Suffice it to say now that as Bruin puts it for Heidegger, the 'presence' of an artwork, to the extent that it "works," certainly has nothing to do with "intellective" presence.<sup>29</sup> As we will see fundamental to the presence of a work of art is its refusal to divulge itself, as Bruin says:

Revelment and concealment-light and darkness-are permanent co-equals in the kingdom of Heideggerian "truth"<sup>30</sup>

As Pedragosa states, Heidegger decides in favour of 'substance' as the first and the unique category.<sup>31</sup> The contingencies of history and the everyday cannot be transcended in such a way as to reveal some underlying essence or substance but rather constitute reality 'from the ground up'.<sup>32</sup>

Furthermore, as this thesis argues, there is a constant tension between the aspects of reality, essence, and presence, which interact with one another and with their surroundings; and when there is authentic 'attunement'—both with one's Being and with the world around one—a meaningful end product is created.<sup>33</sup>

This dynamic of attunement is clarified further by Heidegger himself, who writes:

What we indicate ontologically by the term [Befindlichkeit]<sup>34</sup> is ontically the most familiar and everyday sort of thing ; our mood, our Being attuned.<sup>3536</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Bruin, 'Heidegger and Two Kinds of Art', p. 453.

<sup>29</sup> Bruin, 'Heidegger and Two Kinds of Art', p. 457.

<sup>30</sup> Bruin, 'Heidegger and Two Kinds of Art', p. 457.

<sup>31</sup> Pedragosa, 'Presence or Meaning in Architecture', p. 31.

<sup>32</sup> Pedragosa, 'Presence or Meaning in Architecture', p. 36.

<sup>33</sup> Authenticity, in this sense, aims at an alignment between content and form.

<sup>34</sup> Literally: 'the state in which one may be found'.

<sup>35</sup> In the original on p. 134: Martin Heidegger, *Sein Und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1967), „Was wir ontologisch mit dem Titel Befindlichkeit anzeigen, ist ontisch das Bekannteste und Alltäglichsste: die Stimmung, das Gestimmtsein“

<sup>36</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Blackwell, 1962), p. 172.

This account of attunement thus serves as a conceptual transition to the next two sections, the first addressing the content of architecture in terms of dwelling, and the second examining its formal dimension through Heidegger's reflections on the work of art.

## **The Essence of Architecture – Dwelling**

### **Dwelling according to Heidegger**

In this research architectural content is explained by what Martin Heidegger called 'dwelling'. What one understands by dwelling may vary from place to place, but also from time to time. However, Heidegger's concept of dwelling means something more than just to 'lodge' somewhere.

Heidegger first presented *Bauen Wohnen Denken*<sup>37</sup> as a conference paper.<sup>38</sup> From the outset, Heidegger asserts:

This venture in thought does not view building as an art or as a technique of construction; rather it traces building back into that domain to which everything that is belongs.<sup>39</sup>

Heidegger's exploration of building delves deeper than mere artistic expression or technical construction, seeking to uncover the fundamental essence of what it means to build and dwell. By tracing building back to its ontological roots, Heidegger challenges conventional notions of architecture and the activity of human habitation. He posits that building is intrinsically linked to our existence and our relationship with the world around us, suggesting that it is through the act of building that we create spaces for dwelling and, in turn, shape our understanding of being.

This philosophical approach to building has had a profound impact on architectural theory and practice. Heidegger's essay prompts architects and designers to consider the deeper

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<sup>37</sup> Martin Heidegger, 'Building Dwelling Thinking', in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. by Albert Hofstadter (HarperCollins Publishers, 2001), p. 160.

<sup>38</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Vorträge Und Aufsätze*, fourth edition ( Gunther Neske Pfullingen, 1978).

<sup>39</sup> Heidegger, *Building Dwelling Thinking*, p. 323. Heidegger, *Bauen Wohnen Denken*, p. 139 „Dieser Denkversuch stellt das Bauen überhaupt nicht von der Baukunst und der Technik herdar, sondern er verfolgt das Bauen in denjenigen Bereich zurück, wohin jegliches gehört, was ist“.

implications of their work beyond aesthetic or functional concerns. It encourages a more holistic view of architecture that encompasses the human experience, the environment, and the cultural context in which buildings exist. By framing building as an existential act, Heidegger's ideas have inspired architects to create spaces that not only serve practical purposes but also foster a sense of belonging and connection to place, ultimately influencing how we perceive and interact with our built environment. Moreover, the central questions posed by Heidegger are:

1. What is it to dwell?
2. How does building belong to dwelling?<sup>40</sup>

He later answers those two questions by giving a threefold description of what building and dwelling are connecting them inextricably:

1. Building is really dwelling.
2. Dwelling is the manner in which mortals are on the earth.
3. Building as dwelling unfolds into the building that cultivates growing things and the building that erects buildings.<sup>41</sup>

As Sharr points out Heidegger considered building and dwelling to be bound up intimately with one another. So much so that Heidegger states:

We attain to dwelling, so it seems, only by means of building. The latter, building, has the former, dwelling, as its goal.<sup>42</sup>

Heidegger is unusually clear about this relationship between building and dwelling when he says:

[...]not every building is a dwelling. Bridges and hangars, stadiums and power stations are buildings but not dwellings; railway stations and highways, dams and market halls are built, but they are not dwelling places. Even so, these buildings are in the domain of our dwelling. That domain extends over these buildings and yet is not limited to the dwelling place.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Heidegger, *Building Dwelling Thinking*, p. 323. *Bauen, Wohnen, Denken*. p. 19: „Wir fragen: 1. Was ist das Wohnen? 2. Inwiefern gehört das Bauen in das Wohnen?“

<sup>41</sup> Heidegger, *Building Dwelling Thinking*, p. 146. *Bauen, Wohnen, Denken* p. 22 „Bauen ist eigentlich Wohnen. 2. Das Wohnen ist die Weise, wie die Sterblichen auf der Erde sind. 3. Das Bauen als Wohnen entfaltet sich zum Bauen, das pflegt, nämlich das“

<sup>42</sup> Heidegger, *Building Dwelling Thinking*, p. 323. *Bauen, Wohnen, Denken*. p. 19: „Zum Wohnen, so scheint es, gelangen wir erst durch das Bauen. Dieses, das Bauen hat jenes, das Wohnen zum Ziel.“

<sup>43</sup> Heidegger, *Building Dwelling Thinking*, p. 323. *Bauen, Wohnen, Denken*. p. 19: „Indessen sind nicht alle Bauten auch Wohnungen. Brücke und Flughalle, Stadion und Kraftwerk sind Bauten, aber keine Wohnungen; Bahnhof

Heidegger asserts that buildings like highways and power stations are buildings that host man. He inhabits them and yet does not dwell in them, when to dwell means merely that we take shelter in them.

For Heidegger, these activities of building and dwelling were related through ‘people’s involvement with the things of ‘place’; and their attempts to make sense of place’<sup>44</sup> as we saw in the previous section. The central image with which Heidegger tries to explain this is the bridge (Figure 15).



FIGURE 15 ONE OF THE MANY GRÜNBRÜCKEN (GREEN BRIDGES), FOUND ON ONE OF THE MANY HIGHWAYS IN GERMANY, (EIFEL). PHOTOGRAPH: ALAN XUEREB.

Heidegger says:

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*und Autobahn, Staudamm und Markthalle sind Bauten, aber keine Wohnungen. Dennoch stehen die genannten Bauten im Bereich unseres Wohnens.“*

<sup>44</sup> Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects*, p. 37.

He inhabits them and yet does not dwell in them, if to dwell means solely to have our lodgings in them.<sup>45</sup>

As we have seen to ‘dwell’ as a verb has a deeper and richer meaning for Heidegger. The position defended in this work is that it means, inclusively but non-exhaustively, to settle in a particular place around which one organises one’s life.<sup>46</sup> A place which one may call home. Now, the basic claim in this research is that human beings are innately predisposed to find what is good for them. They pursue, upon reflection and not as some knee-jerk reaction to some random event, to ‘be’ well. They intuitively look out for their well-being, as we have already discussed. Therefore, when given a genuine choice, humans do not typically choose an activity, person, or place that would make them not ‘be’ well. Of course, as this thesis acknowledges, some may nevertheless act against their own good—at times even choosing self-destruction—while many more simply err, knowingly or unknowingly, in pursuing paths that do not truly serve their flourishing. Such fallibility is part of the human condition. Thus, one may choose to reside in a place that is, in fact, not conducive to one’s well-being. Were that the case, it would no longer be appropriate to describe human beings as ‘dwelling’ in such a place – at least not authentically, for dwelling cannot occur in a context that frustrates the possibility of living well. Normatively conceived, then, ‘dwelling’ entails precisely the condition of living well within one’s world.<sup>47</sup>

Moreover, then authentic ‘dwelling’ should presumably be a place wherein humans foster their well-being. A place around which they would build their lives, with all the complexity - pleasure and pain – that chosen life implies. By the same token, what they choose to build in that place would also have the same goal, i.e. to ‘be’ well in it and around it.

If this is true, dwelling is presumably an attempt to live well and a more or less permanent fashion. To make, that is, a home for oneself. A place which one may call one’s home where one is embedded within the fabric of that place so to say. A dwelling place (location and

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<sup>45</sup> Heidegger, *Building Dwelling Thinking*, p. 324. *Bauen, Wohnen, Denken*. p. 19: „Er bewohnt sie und wohnt gleichwohl nicht in ihnen, wenn Wohnen nur heißt, daß wir eine Unterkunft innehaben.“

<sup>46</sup> Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger’s Topology: Being, Place, World* (The MIT Press, 2006) <<https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/3467.001.0001>> [accessed 5 January 2025], p. 259 Malpas explains that in *Art and Space*, Heidegger says that ‘clearing-away brings for the free, the openness for man’s settling and dwelling’.

<sup>47</sup> After all: ‘The fundamental character of dwelling is this sparing and preserving.’ Heidegger, *Building Dwelling Thinking*, p. 147.

building) implies that one is living one's life to the fullest possible there, and in so doing participating in all basic goods of human flourishing.

According to this view then dwelling then implies well-being. This is quite an assertion, and as such needs to be qualified and also needs to be backed up by arguments.

Heidegger argues that architecture is not simply a matter of building structures, but is rather a way of revealing the world to us. One must emphasise that Heidegger is talking of a world of which humans are an integral part, and not some external observers. He contends that architecture is a kind of art of dwelling which allows us to experience the world in a unique way.

He says:

We do not dwell because we have built, but we build and have built because we dwell, that is, because we are dwellers.<sup>48</sup>

Carrying this argument to its natural conclusion, and in alignment with the thesis's central claim, architecture may be seen as cultivating an enhanced attunement to the particularities of place and to the formative role such particularities play in disclosing our experience of the world. Heidegger explains this through etymology where he tells that the 'Old Saxon *wuon*, the Gothic *wunian*, like the old word *bauen*, mean to remain, to stay in a place'.<sup>49</sup> This issue of location will be tackled in much more detail later on when we will examine the concept of 'place' in Chapter 3; but suffice it to say for now that by 'remain' Heidegger probably means making a home for oneself.

He says that *Wunian* means to remain 'at peace' and the word for peace *Friede* means free.<sup>50</sup> Being really 'spared' Heidegger says occurs when we leave something in its own essence,<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Heidegger, *Building Dwelling Thinking*, p. 326; *Bauen, Wohnen, Denken*, p.23: „Wir wohnen nicht, weil wir gebaut haben, sondern wir bauen und haben gebaut, insofern wir wohnen, d. h. als die Wohnenden sind“.

<sup>49</sup> Heidegger, *Building Dwelling Thinking*, p. 326.

<sup>50</sup> Origin: Oxford Languages (German): *mittelhochdeutsch vride, althochdeutsch fridu, ursprünglich = Schonung, Freundschaft, zu frei*, See "Oxford Languages and Google - German," *Oxford Languages*, 2020 <<https://languages.oup.com/google-dictionary-de/>> [accessed 5 January 2025].

<sup>51</sup> Heidegger's exploration of the etymological connections between "wunian" (to remain at peace), "Friede" (peace), and "free" reveals his deep interest in the essence of being and the interconnectedness of language and existence (Andreas Elpidorou and Lauren Freeman, "Affectivity in Heidegger I: Moods and Emotions in Being and Time," *Philosophy Compass*, 10.10 (2015), 661–71 <<https://doi.org/10.1111/phc3.12236>>., 2015; Mark

when we return it specifically to its essential being, when we “free” it in the proper sense of the word into a preservation of peace.<sup>52</sup>

This revelatory power of architecture as expressed in dwelling is explained by Heidegger in the following:

The fundamental character of dwelling is this sparing. It pervades dwelling in its whole range. That range reveals itself to us as soon as we recall that human being consists in dwelling and, indeed, dwelling in the sense of the stay of mortals on the earth.<sup>53</sup>

Heidegger believes then that we build to dwell (‘because we are dwellers’<sup>54</sup>). He posits that dwelling pertains to the cultivation of tranquility, and that the state of remaining at peace, or being ‘spared,’ is essentially synonymous with the revelation of a thing’s ‘true essence.’ That essence of a ‘thing’ may be explained as living embedded in nature, or else, as being-in-the-world. The ‘embeddedness of the thing in its world’<sup>55</sup> is perhaps best rendered, by way of example, through Heidegger’s own ‘embeddedness in the mountain landscape of Todtnauberg’.<sup>56</sup> What is built, then, becomes part of the grand ‘dwelling’ project humans have, and as such, what is built – architecture - should be congruent to this ultimate purpose of dwelling peacefully in one’s world. What is then dwelling if not living one’s life well, in peace

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Wrathall, “How to Read Heidegger,” in *Authenticity, Death, and the History of Being* (Routledge, 2018), pp. 93–98 <<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315023991-9>> [accessed 22 March 2025].). This linguistic analysis aligns with Heidegger's broader philosophical project of uncovering the meaning of Being as disclosure (Thomas Sheehan, *Heidegger* (Routledge, 2017) <<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203790182>> [accessed 13 December 2024].). Heidegger's interpretation suggests that true freedom and peace are achieved when we allow things to exist in their essential nature, without imposing our own preconceptions or manipulations upon them (Michael Inwood, *Heidegger: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2019) <<https://doi.org/10.1093/actrade/9780198828662.001.0001>> [accessed 22 March 2025].; Wrathall, 2018). This perspective challenges conventional notions of freedom and peace, emphasizing a more profound understanding of these concepts as rooted in the authentic expression of being ( David R. Cerbone, “Heidegger and Dasein’s ‘Bodily Nature’: What Is the Hidden Problematic?,” *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 8.2 (2000), 209–30 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09672550050084018>>.; Elpidorou & Freeman, 2015). In essence, Heidegger's analysis of these terms reflects his fundamental ontological approach, which seeks to reveal the hidden meanings and connections within language and human existence (Sheehan, 2017; Wrathall, 2018). This interpretation aligns with his broader philosophical goal of encouraging individuals to recognize and embrace their authentic being-in-the-world, free from the constraints of inauthentic modes of existence (Elpidorou & Freeman, 2015; Inwood, 2019).

<sup>52</sup> Heidegger, *Building Dwelling Thinking*, p. 327.

<sup>53</sup> Heidegger, *Building Dwelling Thinking*, p. 327. On p. 143 of the original: Martin Heidegger, *Bauen Wohnen Denken*: “Der Grundzug des Wohnens ist dieses Schonen. Er durchzieht das Wohnen in seiner ganzen Weite. Sie zeigt sich uns, sobald wir daran denken, daß im Wohnen das Menschsein beruht und zwar im Sinne des Aufenthalts der Sterblichen auf der Erde”

<sup>54</sup> Heidegger, *Building Dwelling Thinking*, p. 326.

<sup>55</sup> Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place: Explorations in the Topology of Being* (MIT Press, 2017), p. 287.

<sup>56</sup> Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place*, p. 290.

with oneself, with others and with the surroundings into which one is embedded. Is this not what well-being, in an archetypical sense, is? This is also why Heidegger is considered here to be a useful flag-bearing philosopher and who has been taken ‘up outside of philosophy, especially within contemporary environmentalism’.<sup>57</sup>

Heidegger argued that human beings are not only conscious,<sup>58</sup> but also embedded in the world,<sup>59</sup> and that this embeddedness is ‘revealed’ through the things we make and use. Architecture is unquestionably one of these things. This embeddedness is manifested through the various instruments we employ, sparking a dialogue on the essence of technology.

As already hinted, the scope of this research goes beyond the ‘broader critique of the technocratic Western world’.<sup>60</sup> However, there is something to say about the paradox existing in our contemporary society wherein the architectural ‘procedures and protocols’<sup>61</sup> have improved but the overall result has deteriorated. One would expect that through an overall and general improvement of the technical aspects of any practice in a particular field, the result would also be better. Consider for example the medical field. The improvement in the tools and knowledge in this field has resulted in a better medical service overall in the Western world. How is it then, that in several parts of the architectural world, the situation has deteriorated instead of improving. So much so, that beautiful buildings are pulled down and bland boxes are erected in their stead nearly touching each other (Figure 16) ? However, there has been a reaction to this uglification or *turpification*<sup>62</sup> in other parts of the world, say for example in Sweden, a group calling itself the ‘Swedish Architectural Uprising’ led by Michael Diamant is promoting and encouraging beautiful, albeit traditional architecture. Something which is also slowly happening in Malta as well (Figure 17).<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place*, p.178.

<sup>58</sup> Whilst it is important to understand what Heidegger means by “Being” or *Dasein*, it is not the immediate goal of this research to go into a metaphysical exploration of the concept of Being. However for completion’s sake here is in a nutshell what Heidegger thought about *Dasein*: “Being lies in the fact that something is, and in its Being as it is; in Reality; in presence-at-hand; in subsistence; in validity; in *Dasein*; in the “there is” taken from *Being and Time*, p. 26.

<sup>59</sup> Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place*, p. 65.

<sup>60</sup>What Heidegger will also be remembered for.

<sup>61</sup> Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects*, p. 2.

<sup>62</sup> A term which has been coined here in this research in line with Heidegger neologism-creation tendencies.

<sup>63</sup> Michael Diamant: We have changed the Scandinavian discourse on architecture, Interview – Venetian Letters 2021, See: Venetian Letter, “Venetian Letter - Michael Diamant: We Have Changed the Scandinavian Discourse on Architecture,” *Venetian Letter*, 2021 <<https://www.venetianletter.com/2021/08/02/michael-diamant-we-have-changed-the-scandinavian-discourse-on-architecture/>> [accessed 5 January 2025].



FIGURE 16 - TURPIFICATION IN REAL TERMS, NOT ATTUNED, MALTA, 2023



FIGURE 17 DESPITE TURPIFICATION, SOME ARE CHOOSING TO ATTUNE TO WHAT EXISTS ALREADY MOSTA, MALTA, 2026.

So, perhaps, the technical aspects have improved, (say, a building's 'durability' or *firmitas* is indeed better, or the time taken to build a block of flats has been shortened) but the overall outcome is not what one would expect. Quite the opposite actually. What is being experienced,

by way of example in Malta may be called *turpification*.<sup>64</sup> This is certainly happening elsewhere as well.<sup>65</sup> This state of affairs has become in many ways not only a matter of aesthetics but also a matter of existential well-being.<sup>66</sup> Such buildings in many ways make it more difficult to dwell. In other words, they make one not feel at home. They detach one from one's own 'attunement' to one's surroundings. They uproot one's 'rootedness' to that 'place'. There is no more 'homecoming' let alone 'dwelling'. This appears to run counter to what Heidegger might have conceived as the ultimate meaning of architecture. Not only that, but these buildings at best lack what a work of art should have - the capability to unconceal truth. Especially a work of art which is an 'unavoidable presence' such as architecture. At worst these buildings lack the ability to allow 'dwelling' to happen within them and around them. In other words, they fail to foster individual attunement internally and externally.

This architectural *turpification* affects human well-being in a multitude of ways.<sup>67</sup> This fact is sometimes underrated and considered as some whimsical overstatement of our spoilt bourgeoisie liberal democratic citizenry. But it is not. It has been shown scientifically that architecture, in particular, and urban design in general, affect human mental and physical health.<sup>68</sup> This notwithstanding there is still a number of buildings which are being designed and built which disregard this phenomenon.

The writer Michael Bond explains this trend quite aptly:

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<sup>64</sup> From the Latin "*turpis*" meaning ugly, unsightly; foul, filthy. Attributed to Ennius by Cicero in '*M. Tulli Ciceronis De Natura Deorum Ad M. Brutum Liber Primus*, (97) "*Simia quam similis turpissima bestia nobis!* How similar to us is that most vile beast, the ape!" "*Cicero: De Natura Deorum I*" <<http://thelatinlibrary.com/cicero/nd1.shtml>> [accessed 5 January 2025].

<sup>65</sup> Fintan O'Toole, "M3 and the Uglification of Ireland," *The Irish Times*, 17 May 2005 <<https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/m3-and-the-uglification-of-ireland-1.443204>> [accessed 5 January 2025] and Shannon Broderick, "Mannheim: Life in Germany's Second Ugliest City," *Amherst Wire*, 2015 <<https://amherstwire.com/12077/travel/mannheim-life-in-germanys-second-ugliest-city/>> [accessed 5 January 2025].

<sup>66</sup> A type of well-being that may be called as holistic and conducive towards all-round flourishing. As described by Marijke Schotanus-Dijkstra and others, "What Factors Are Associated with Flourishing? Results from a Large Representative National Sample," *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 17.4 (2015), 1351–70 <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-015-9647-3>>. : "Flourishing is the ultimate end-state in psychology and a key-concept in the field of positive psychology research. Flourishers are those individuals with both high levels of hedonic well-being and eudaimonic well-being. Although many researchers have focused on one or another of these domains, only a few have investigated the comprehensive state of flourishing. The purpose of this study was to examine the prevalence of flourishing and its association with socio-demographics, personality traits and situational factors"

<sup>67</sup> See on this: Alison Abbott, "City Living Marks the Brain," *Nature*, 474.7352 (2011), 429–429 <<https://doi.org/10.1038/474429a>>.

<sup>68</sup> "BMW Guggenheim Lab," *BMW Guggenheim Lab* <<http://bmwguggenheimlab.org>> [accessed 5 January 2025].

Yet urban architects have often paid scant attention to the potential cognitive effects of their creations on a city's inhabitants. The imperative to design something unique and individual tends to override considerations of how it might shape the behaviours of those who will live with it. That could be about to change.<sup>69</sup>

One such example is given to us by Colin Ellard's most consistent results, that find that people are strongly affected by building façades. If the façade is complex and interesting, it affects people in a positive way; negatively if it is simple and monotonous.<sup>70</sup>

In connection to these findings Colin Ellard says:

When we ask people about their stress they say it's no big deal, yet when we measure their physiology we discover that their responses are off the charts. The difficulty is that your physiological state is the one that impacts your health.<sup>71</sup>

There are a number of notions in Heidegger's works which could be analysed in the context of the abovementioned issues. However, it is deemed fit to reduce the analysis to a few key concepts which could be of aid to interpret Heidegger and perhaps revisit and extend his reasoning about architecture with a fresh outlook informed by literature some of which has been reviewed in the previous chapter. The notions to be focussed on are namely: Dwelling, *Befindlichkeit*, place, *heimat*, nearness and the fourfold.

### **Dwell-Being: Befindlichkeit and Homecoming**

As seen in the previous chapter, it is often claimed that Heidegger's philosophy is somehow value-neutral.<sup>72</sup> It is devoid of ethical content, which is considered ontic as opposed to ontological, with which Heidegger is really concerned. This has been debated in that chapter and seen as perhaps an overreaction.

On this point Sarvimäki states that:

It is possible, that a Heidegger-inspired description of well-being would fit badly into a clear-cut definition. Rather, researching well-being inspired by this philosophy might

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<sup>69</sup> Michael Bond, "The Hidden Ways That Architecture Affects How You Feel," *BBC*, 6 June 2017 <<https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20170605-the-psychology-behind-your-citys-design>> [accessed 5 January 2025].

<sup>70</sup> Bond, 'The Hidden Ways'.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Eric Sean Nelson, "Heidegger and the Questionability of the Ethical," *Studia Phaenomenologica*, 8 (2008), 411–35 <<https://doi.org/10.7761/sp.8.411>>, p. 414.

be better carried out as a strategy focusing upon human beings caught up in their life course in everydayness, in their doings and not-doings, projects and anxieties.<sup>73</sup>

It is important to connect what has been told in the previous chapter about dwell-being to this chapter.

As Sarvimäki concludes that:

The landscape [of well-being] also included being well as orientating towards the future and realising one's potentialities as well as confronting anxiety and death. This view can be used as an ontological understanding, which can indirectly point out a strategy for understanding and researching human well-being in health sciences.<sup>74</sup>

If we follow this line of thought then well-being, according to Heidegger, is basically about a person's attempt to realising one's potentialities. This resonates, as we will see in more detail in Chapter 5, with what Finnis says, about 'self-constitution, self-realization, self-fulfilment'<sup>75</sup> under the heading of the common good as a methodological requirement of practical reasonableness.

How does this relate to Heidegger's concept of dwelling? To address this, we must first revisit Heidegger's discourse on dwelling:

Dwelling and building are related as end and means. However, as long as this is all we have in mind, we take dwelling and building as two separate activities, an idea that has something correct in it. Yet at the same time by the means-end schema we block our view of the essential relations. For building is not merely a means and a way toward dwelling-to build is in itself already to dwell.<sup>76</sup>

As Holst asserts Heidegger's project of laying bare the basic approaches through which humans 'make sense of their existence' formulates the way for placing human existence 'dynamically and affectively' in its everyday practical affairs - such as building or such as dwelling.<sup>77</sup> Holst

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<sup>73</sup> Anneli Sarvimäki, "Well-Being as Being Well—a Heideggerian Look at Well-Being," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-Being*, 1.1 (2006), 4–10 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/17482620500518101>>, p. 9.

<sup>74</sup> Sarvimäki, 'Well-Being as Being Well', p. 9.

<sup>75</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law*, p. 134.

<sup>76</sup> Heidegger, *Building, Dwelling Thinking*, p. 324. On p. 140, in the original: Martin Heidegger, *Bauen Wohnen Denken*, in *Vorträge Und Aufsätze* (Gunther Neske Pfullingen, 1978): "Wohnen und Bauen stehen zueinander in der Beziehung von Zweck und Mittel. Allein, solange wir nur dies meinen, nehmen wir Wohnen und Bauen für zwei getrennte Tätigkeiten und stellen dabei etwas Richtiges vor. Doch zugleich verstellen wir uns durch das Zweck-Mittel Schema die wesentlichen Bezüge. Bauen nämlich ist nicht nur Mittel und Weg zum Wohnen, das Bauen ist in sich selber bereits Wohnen."

<sup>77</sup> Jonas Holst, "Finding Oneself Well Together with Others: A Phenomenological Study of the Ontology of Human Well-Being," *Philosophies*, 7.2 (2022), 41 <<https://doi.org/10.3390/philosophies7020041>>, p. 7.

correctly explains that Heidegger no longer needs to think from the vantage point of the ‘is’ of the understanding because the understanding of being extends beyond the realm of an individual. Instead, it is a ‘place of meaning, sustained by the community’ of humans that dwell in that place.<sup>78</sup> This will be dealt with in some detail in the next chapter, wherein the *genius loci* will be analysed.

In the previous chapter we have seen dwelling, so properly called ought to lead to well-being. What was termed as ‘[d]well-being’, which basically meant that Heideggerian ‘well-being’ may be found in the concept of *Befindlichkeit* (‘finding oneself’<sup>79</sup>) as the fundamental way in which humans find themselves in the world, being affected by and faced with their own existence. Heidegger emphasises dwelling because he thinks it will eventually lead human beings to encounter their true *Being*.<sup>80</sup> His well-being, in this sense is more ontological than ethical.<sup>81</sup> However, this encounter may be said to create a meaningful relationship between one’s being<sup>82</sup> and one’s surroundings<sup>83</sup>, which ultimately is what [d]well-being, is all about. This [d]well-being needs a physical and conceptual context to happen.

Though dwelling *per se* may not be equated to human well-being, understood here, as seen, as conducive to an all-round flourishing, or as Sarvimäki puts it, the ‘realisation of one’s potentialities’.

The primary question that emerges is why one should turn to Finnis to address a problem that Heidegger does not resolve, while still requiring Heidegger to address other issues. As will be

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<sup>78</sup> Gregory David Jackson, “Heidegger, Holderlin, Hitler: Evaluating the Proximity of Heidegger’s Philosophy to National Socialism Through the Significance of Poetry for His Concept of Truth, 1927-1937,” *Maynooth University Research Archive Library*, 2019 <<https://mural.maynoothuniversity.ie/id/eprint/15543>> [accessed 5 January 2025]., p. 261.

<sup>79</sup> Holst, ‘Finding Oneself Well’, p. 5. One may perhaps understand this better in English by taking modern colloquial remnants of this idea of finding oneself. Whenever for example we ask someone in a letter or email how they are doing, ‘hoping this mail finds you well’. This is a fairly formal way to essentially say, ‘I hope you are well’ or ‘I hope you are healthy/safe/in good spirits.’ Or whenever we say ‘one is in a good place’, Cambridge Dictionary explains that the remark “in a good place” is used to “to talk about someone’s feelings, situation, or mental condition.” What these two idiomatic phrases have in common is the notion of ‘finding’ as to ask how one happens to be physically or mentally or both.

<sup>80</sup> After all “Being is the meaningful presence of things to man.” See on this point: Thomas Sheehan, “What, after All, Was Heidegger About?,” *Continental Philosophy Review*, 47.3–4 (2014), 249–74 <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11007-014-9302-4>>.

<sup>81</sup> Jackson, ‘Heidegger, Holderlin, Hitler’. p. 261. “Instead, this development attempts to think from the other side of the same coin, i.e., the pre-condition of meaningful intelligibility. The transcendental reduction, and the ontological difference it gives rise to, distinguishes being from beings. These concepts risk missing that being and beings are unified, and the attempt to separate them becomes reminiscent of the Platonic metaphysics he seeks to overcome”.

<sup>82</sup> Knowing oneself or being at home with oneself one may speculate.

<sup>83</sup> By the same token, knowing one’s surroundings and being at home with such surroundings.

seen John Finnis, in his seminal work *Natural Law and Natural Rights* (1980), underscores the significance of comprehensive flourishing, which entails aligning one's actions with the objective goods intrinsic to human nature. This alignment fosters personal fulfilment and the realization of one's potential.

Martin Heidegger, in *Being and Time*,<sup>84</sup> introduces the concept of *Befindlichkeit* or "being-in-the-world," which refers to the fundamental mood or attunement in which individuals find themselves. He argues that our understanding of ourselves is always shaped by our existence within a particular context or world.

The convergence between Finnis's natural law theory and Heidegger's concept of *Befindlichkeit* lies in their recognition of the importance of self-awareness and authenticity in the process of self-discovery.<sup>85</sup>

Finnis's conception of well-being as all-round flourishing starts to resonate with the more phenomenological idea of 'finding oneself', as Being.<sup>86</sup> These notions may not be identical, however they appear to aim towards the same goal, i.e. of describing, (and in Finnis's case perhaps of prescribing), what makes human living authentically human.<sup>87</sup> Making human beings authentically human is conducive to one being what one fully can be. This may not

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<sup>84</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 172.

<sup>85</sup> Both philosophers emphasize the need to understand oneself in relation to the world and to strive for alignment between our actions and our fundamental nature or being-in-the-world. Jean Porter, *Natural and Divine Law: Reclaiming the Tradition for Christian Ethics* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1999), discusses the relationship between natural law theory and existentialism, drawing connections between Finnis's emphasis on objective goods and Heidegger's focus on authenticity and being-in-the-world.

<sup>86</sup> In the previous chapter we saw that there are connections between the phenomenological world view and the Natural Law one. See Jonathan Crowe, "Existentialism and Natural Law," *N*: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=1340823>, 2005 <<https://ssrn.com/abstract=1340823>> [accessed 5 January 2025].

<sup>87</sup> Finnis's natural law theory, as part of the "new natural law" framework, emphasizes the compatibility of natural law with various ethical and philosophical viewpoints (Jonathan Crowe, "Natural Law Beyond Finnis," *Jurisprudence*, 2.2 (2011), 293–308 <https://doi.org/10.5235/204033211798716871>). This theory focuses on the rational standards for conduct and the relationship between law and morality (Jonathan Crowe, "Natural Law Theories," *Philosophy Compass*, 11.2 (2016), 91–101 <<https://doi.org/10.1111/phc3.12315>>). While self-awareness and authenticity are not explicitly mentioned in relation to Finnis's work, the natural law tradition does consider the rational nature of legal norms. Heidegger's concept of *Befindlichkeit*, often translated as "attunement" or "disposition," plays a crucial role in his account of human existence (Lauren Freeman and Andreas Elpidorou, "Affectivity in Heidegger II: Temporality, Boredom, and Beyond," *Philosophy Compass*, 10.10 (2015), 672–84 <<https://doi.org/10.1111/phc3.12273>>). It is described as a basic existential structure that constitutes how Dasein (human being) exists and discloses itself. *Befindlichkeit* and its ontic counterparts, moods, are fundamental to how we relate to and disclose the world (Lauren Freeman and Andreas Elpidorou, "Affectivity in Heidegger II: Temporality, Boredom, and Beyond," *Philosophy Compass*, 10.10 (2015), 672–84 <<https://doi.org/10.1111/phc3.12273>>). This concept is closely tied to Heidegger's exploration of authenticity and self-awareness.

presumably lead to happiness, in the common vernacular sense, but it does lead one to reach what is described in this research as ‘existential fulfilment’. Now, how does this tie in with dwelling? Human well-being is less about functioning or life going well than about a mode of being—namely, the realization of one’s potential.

After all as Holst argues:

[...]human well-being is not primarily a question of functioning well or of life going well, as it is for many theorists of well-being, but it expresses, as the word itself says, something about being, particularly about the being involved in realizing its own potential.<sup>88</sup>

It is being argued here that dwelling, in the sense just described, is indeed a meaningful presence in a place one calls home. Brief reference should be made at this juncture to the idea of place an home, the next chapter will delve in some more detail in these two notions. As Malpas puts it:

Place is a complex and multiple concept. When we talk of our own relatedness to place, our own placedness, as well as our encounter with such placedness, then place appears in at least a twofold way – and this twofold character corresponds to a twofold character that belongs to the idea of Heimat.<sup>89</sup>

This mode of dwelling then becomes conducive to existential fulfilment and is in turn an important aspect of ‘authentic all-round human flourishing’.<sup>90</sup> In summary then, existential fulfilment is the result of a meaningful presence that fosters a relationship with one’s own being and with one’s surroundings. Thus, knowing oneself and knowing one’s surroundings, is what gives meaning to things<sup>91</sup> and it also leads to an ‘attunement’ which opens the possibility of having all types of dwelling in well-being ((d)well-being) that are possible.

As Todres and Galvin tell us: to dwell existentially is to:

[...]come home to one's situation, to hear what is there, to abide, to linger and to be gathered there with what belongs there. When such dwelling is able to be fully

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<sup>88</sup> Holst, ‘Finding Oneself Well’, p. 10.

<sup>89</sup> Jeff Malpas, *Rethinking Dwelling: Heidegger and the Question of Place*, Environmental and Architectural Phenomenology Newsletter, 25, (1) pp. 15-23. (2014), p. 81.

<sup>90</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 64.

<sup>91</sup> Thomas Sheehan, “What, after All, Was Heidegger About?,” *Continental Philosophy Review*, 47.3–4 (2014), 249–74 <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11007-014-9302-4>>. p. 249.

supported, there may be a mood of peacefulness. But peacefulness is only one possible attunement within dwelling. The essence of dwelling is simply the willingness to be there, whatever this “being there” is like. One can come to dwelling in many ways such as sadness, suffering, concern, attentiveness, acceptance, relaxation or patience.<sup>92</sup>

Todres and Galvin explain that Heidegger creates a framework wherein he articulates another kind of homecoming which is authentically possible for human beings: a movement from the inauthenticity of a familiar being-at-home (*zuhause*) through a more authentic embrace of existential homelessness to the possibility of an authentic homecoming. Facing this “not being at home”, although an anxiety-provoking experience, can also open up a path of ‘movement’.<sup>93</sup> Todres and Galvin theorise that this can provide an energising potential that can itself be felt as well-being. Homelessness paradoxically provides an important motivation for the quest to seek the experience of homecoming.<sup>94</sup> All is connected to this idea of knowing what one is going through, of knowing oneself, and in some non-abandoning manner accept it as part of being a human being.

Thus, knowing oneself and one’s surroundings—finding oneself and becoming attuned to this general condition—constitutes what is being described here as ‘existential fulfilment’. This conception aligns with Heidegger’s manner of thinking, which operates between fundamental polarities such as life and death, world and earth, gods and mortals, and earth and sky. For Heidegger, it is precisely within this tension-filled “clearing” that truth is revealed.<sup>95</sup> As we will see later on in the second part of this chapter in *The Origin of the Work of Art*, Heidegger talks of the happening of truth<sup>96</sup> as *aletheia*<sup>97</sup> in terms of ‘clearing’ or ‘lighting’ (*Lichtung*).<sup>98</sup>

Moreover, the said sense of existential fulfilment may also be said to be what makes up one’s existence worth living. An overall sense of acceptance of where, why and how one finds oneself

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<sup>92</sup> Les Todres and Kathleen Galvin, “‘Dwelling-Mobility’: An Existential Theory of Well-Being,” *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-Being*, 5.3 (2010), 10.3402/qhw.v5i3.5444 <https://doi.org/10.3402/qhw.v5i3.5444>, p.4.

<sup>93</sup> Todres & Galvin ‘Dwelling-Mobility’, p. 3.

<sup>94</sup> Todres & Galvin ‘Dwelling-Mobility’, p. 3.

<sup>95</sup> Heidegger, *The Origin of the Work of Art*, in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 59: “Because truth is the opposition of clearing and concealing, there belongs to it what is here to be called establishing”.

<sup>96</sup> According to some there is a linguistic appropriation by Heidegger wherein he appropriates the language of mysticism. He appropriates Eckhart’s structural relationship between the soul and God to help in articulating the relation between Dasein and Being. See in this sense: John D. Caputo, “Project MUSE - Meister Eckhart and the Later Heidegger: The Mystical Element in Heidegger’s Thought: Part One,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 12.4 (1AD), 479–94.

<sup>97</sup> Further reading: “The ‘Truth of Alētheia’ and Language,” in *The Philosophy of Heidegger* (Acumen Publishing Limited, 2011), pp. 141–74 <<https://doi.org/10.1017/upo9781844652655.008>> [accessed 5 January 2025].

<sup>98</sup> Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place*, p. 114.

‘faced and affected’ by one’s existence. Holst explains that according to Heidegger, *Befindlichkeit* itself precedes any qualification or distinction between ‘positive or negative states’, as it refers to the primary way in which humans find themselves faced with and affected by their existence, a mode of being that makes the aforementioned attunement, together with other affective states and their opposites, possible in the first place.<sup>99</sup>

Holst explains that:

What is most striking for us, who engage with Heidegger’s work in order to reconceptualize human well-being, is that he starts developing the concept of *Befindlichkeit* from the Aristotelian concept of pleasure, *hedone*, which he translates by finding oneself well (*wohlbefinden*).<sup>100</sup>

This is quite an unusual move for Heidegger and Holst carries on with his critique:

What a living being experiences when it finds itself well (*Sichwohlbefinden*), Heidegger interprets Aristotle as saying, is that it enters into “a heightened state of being, a specific lightness of being-in-the-world, inherent in joy[...].”<sup>101</sup>

One is inclined to concur with Holst’s interpretation of the distinction between ‘joy’ and ‘pleasure’ in that, as he articulates, in contrast to pleasure—which predominantly encompasses ephemeral sensations of well-being without necessarily ascertaining whether the individual experiencing them is genuinely thriving—joy may serve as a more enduring indicator of and contributor to human flourishing.

In that without this mode of dwelling allowing the possibility of finding oneself - without *Befindlichkeit* – or a way of being so attuned to oneself and the place one finds oneself in – no well-being may be claimed.<sup>102</sup>

Heidegger in *Being and Time* says:

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<sup>99</sup> Holst, ‘Finding Oneself Well’, pp. 3-4.

<sup>100</sup> Holst, ‘Finding Oneself Well’, p. 5.

<sup>101</sup> Holst, ‘Finding Oneself Well’, p. 5.

<sup>102</sup> In Finnsian terms then, without such *Befindlichkeit* there is no participation in the basic goods of life, knowledge, friendship, play, aesthetic experience, religion and practical reasoning, if those goods do not include a certain attunement, a certain finding oneself, a certain sense of peacefulness, a sense of wanting to ‘being there’ where one dwells. Whatever this “being there” is like’

What we indicate ontologically by the term [*Befindlichkeit*] is ontically the most familiar and everyday sort of thing ; our mood, our Being attuned <sup>103</sup>

Holst interprets this as Heidegger's existential analysis of *Befindlichkeit* which incorporates important aspects of his account on world and space, and it prefigures his exposition of temporality in the second part, where he returns to the concept of *Befindlichkeit* in the fourth chapter after having introduced caring concern (*Sorge*) and resoluteness as the translator renders it or determinedness as Holst interprets it (*Entschlossenheit*) as the ontologically most authentic modes of confronting one's own existence.

Heidegger goes on:

Resoluteness, however, is only that authenticity which, in care, is the object of care [*in der Sorge gesorgte*], and which is possible as care-the authenticity of care itself.<sup>104</sup>

In fact, to make his point clear, Heidegger offers the opposite example of anxiety, namely joy, which he presents as the *conditio sine qua non* for rejoicing over something. This mood springs from the deeper-rooted state of finding oneself lifted, a mode of being, which needs to be explored further, as Heidegger only introduces it briefly, and he confounds it with pleasure, i.e., *hedone*, although Aristotle deploys another word for joy, namely *chara*.<sup>105</sup>

Holst tells us that Heidegger does not mention *philia* in his lecture on Aristotle but still manages to connect to Aristotle in the sense that living beings also find themselves in certain states of wellness or fear. Heidegger thus needs 'another key concept than *Befindlichkeit*' to unlock the mystery of what it means to be human.<sup>106</sup> Holst gives us an ingenious analysis of how Heidegger does this in the following passage:

Heidegger identifies this complementary Aristotelian concept with *logos*, i.e., language, which he, reasonably enough, links to the Aristotelian conception of humans as political beings<sup>107</sup>. Whereas other living beings call out to attract and warn each other, humans share their views and thoughts on what is useful, right and good through speech in order to make themselves understood, and by doing so, they engage in politics. The good constitutes the meaningful endpoint of human existence, Heidegger affirms in his

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<sup>103</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 172.

<sup>104</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 348.

<sup>105</sup> *χαρά*

<sup>106</sup> Holst, 'Finding Oneself Well', p. 5.

<sup>107</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Grundbegriffe Der Aristotelischen Philosophie* (Vittorio Klostermann, 2002). pp. 45–47.

lecture course on Aristotle<sup>108</sup>, whose view on well-being becomes clearer in the *Nicomachean Ethics*: having offered a preliminary definition of humans as the only living beings in possession of logos, Aristotle asserts that humans achieve well-being not by “living a solitary life” on their own but together with their family, friends and fellow citizens, “since a human being is by nature political”<sup>109</sup>

### **Dwelling in friendship: from *Eigentlichkeit* to *mitsein***

Finnis asserts that not everyone is at ease with the idea of ‘...‘self-interest’, which is sliding away from the dignity of ‘self-constitution’ towards the moral indignity of ‘self-centredness’ and ‘selfishness’.<sup>110</sup>

Is not this what Heidegger also asserts in *Being and Time*? One of the central themes in the latter being concerned, *inter alia*, with achieving self-ownership (or ‘ownedness’).<sup>111</sup> Is not this, at least partially, what Finnis, calls ‘self-constitution, self-realization, self-fulfilment’?<sup>112</sup>

On these lines, Taylor Carman<sup>113</sup> argues that this sense of ownedness says nothing about what is better or worse for oneself (or *Dasein*), but merely marks a distinction between one’s immediate relation to oneself and one’s mediate relations to others, or to oneself as another. Whilst Finnis’s ‘authenticity’ is when ‘one wants to be a certain sort of person, through one’s own authentic, free self-determination and self-realization’.<sup>114</sup> Implying somehow more than just a relationship with oneself in the first person. It is somehow implying that one needs to know oneself which appears close enough to what Heidegger is implying, but also to live in a ‘real world through that real pursuit of values that inevitably involves making one’s personality in and through one’s free commitment to those values’.<sup>115</sup>

Moreover, Koo, asserts:

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<sup>108</sup> Heidegger, *Aristotelischen Philosophie*, pp. 65–69.

<sup>109</sup> Holst, ‘Finding Oneself Well’, p. 5. Referring to: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (Hackett Publishing, 2023), Original Greek text used: Ingram Bywater, *Aristotelis Ethica Nicomachea* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 9 (I, 7, 1097b).

<sup>110</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p.134.

<sup>111</sup> Or *Eigentlichkeit* see Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 298 “Die Entschlossenheit löst als eigentliches Selbstsein das Dasein” nicht von seiner Welt ab, isoliert es nicht auf ein freischwebendes Ich.“

<sup>112</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & natural Rights*, p. 134.

<sup>113</sup> Taylor Carman, “Authenticity,” in *A Companion to Heidegger*, ed. by Hubert L. Dreyfus and Mark A. Wrathall (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2005), pp. 285–96 <<https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470996492.ch17>> [accessed 5 January 2025]. p. 285.

<sup>114</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 95.

<sup>115</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 96.

By taking Heidegger's disparaging rhetoric<sup>116</sup> about the impact of that mode of existence on the individual at face value, this existentialist reading of the text thereby closes off any positive contribution that our social existence could make to our personal and collective flourishing.<sup>117</sup>

However, as Koo himself clarifies, though one can acceptably criticise Heidegger's 'incompleteness' of his explanation of the 'positive significance of human social existence', it is erroneous to conclude that his view of the 'social' unconditionally excludes this significance.<sup>118</sup>

If Heidegger had such contempt for human social existence, why would he nevertheless insist that the 'anyone'<sup>119</sup> is a necessary enabling condition of *Dasein*'s basic way of existing that 'articulates the referential nexus of significance'<sup>120</sup>.

Whilst Heidegger's focus is on the individual who necessitates the social, Finnis posits that the individual is essential for the concurrent flourishing of the social sphere. These two perceptions of the self, the Heideggerian and the Finnisian, are not of course identical, but they do appear to somehow reflect two sides of the same coin, *mutatis mutandis*.

As will be seen in Chapter 5, Finnis is indeed interested in a type of common good that coordinates the 'proper relationship between one's own well-being and the well-being of others'.<sup>121</sup>

Nevertheless, whatever theory one follows and whatever reflection one does it appears factual, for Heidegger and for Finnis, that humans are social animals.<sup>122</sup> This is more or less the argument the early Heidegger makes in *Being and Time*. He aims to show how human beings presumably already (intrinsically) coexist with others in a common world.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 126, he writes: "In dieser Unauffälligkeit und Nichtfeststellbarkeit entfaltet das Man seine eigentliche Diktatur". Loosley translated Heidegger explains that In this inconspicuousness and undetectability is where the man develops actual dictatorship. Koo says that Heidegger uses this language to describe the superficial but insidious 'dictatorship' of the anyone over our everyday lives.

<sup>117</sup> Jo-Jo Koo, "Early Heidegger on Social Reality," in *Studies in the Philosophy of Sociality*, ed. by Alessandro Salice and Hans Bernhard Schmid (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2016), pp. 91–119 <[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-27692-2\\_5](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-27692-2_5)> [accessed 5 January 2025], p. 25.

<sup>118</sup> Koo, 'Heidegger on Social Reality', p. 30.

<sup>119</sup> Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* „das Man“ p. 126 *et seq.*

<sup>120</sup> Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 129 : „artikulierte den Verweisungszusammenhang der Bedeutsamkeit“

<sup>121</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 134.

<sup>122</sup> Aristotle, *The Politics of Aristotle: A Treatise on Government* (The Floating Press, 2009). p.25.

<sup>123</sup> Koo, 'Heidegger on Social Reality', p. 11.

‘Being-with [*Mitsein*] is a characteristic of one’s own *Dasein* [being-in-the-world] in each case.<sup>124</sup>

Koo explains that in this part of *Sein und Zeit* Heidegger is telling us that the fundamentally social dimension of human existence is constitutive of his or her very capacity to be an individual at all, regardless of whether others are present with whom an individual can possibly interact or go on to construct social or collective entities.

In Koo’s words:

[...]the human individual is necessarily socially constituted *by sharing a common world with others, in the sense of sharing a public understanding of the norms, practices, and roles that others also understand in their lived experience and activities.*<sup>125</sup>

Koo reminds us that in the 1925 lecture course that is published as *History of the Concept of Time*, which served as the penultimate draft of *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger writes: ‘One [Man] is what one [man] does.’<sup>126</sup>

This resonates with what McCall<sup>127</sup> is saying about what is good for say a ‘teacher’ a ‘monk’ will vary in details but it will be ultimately conducive to a particular narrative, to a general good. Koo interprets this part of Heidegger’s philosophy as telling us that ‘individual human beings make sense of who they are and thereupon seek to actualize themselves in some contexts by engaging in certain activities that accomplish certain short-term and medium-term goals within those contexts’.

Koo however comes to the conclusion that:

Understanding oneself and acting primarily and mostly in accordance with the normative intelligibility that the anyone supplies is what ensures that individuals by and large share a common world.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 156; and also in Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 121: “*Mitsein ist eine Bestimmtheit des je eigenen Daseins*”

<sup>125</sup> Jo-Jo Koo, “Early Heidegger on Social Reality”, p.13.

<sup>126</sup> Koo, “Early Heidegger on Social Reality”, p.13. “other people typically show up and make sense in terms of what they do...”. See in the original text *Sein und Zeit* “*Im unweltlich Besorgten begegnen die Anderen als das, was sie sind; sie sind das, was sie betreiben*” p. 126. In Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p.26.

<sup>127</sup> Brian McCall, “¿Qué Tipo de Bien Es John Finnis? Un Estudio Sobre El Bien Personal y Común En «Natural Law and Natural Rights»,” *Persona y Derecho*, 83 (2020), 637–68 <<https://doi.org/10.15581/011.83.012>>.

<sup>128</sup> Koo, “Early Heidegger on Social Reality”, p.19. In Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 118: “*Auf dem Grunde dieses mithaften In-der-Welt-seins ist die Welt je schon immer die, die ich mit den Anderen teile. Die Welt des Daseins ist Mitwelt. Das In-Sein ist Mitsein mit Anderen. Das innerweltliche Ansichsein dieser ist Mitdasein*”.

Koo also says that Heidegger's claim that *Dasein* is presumably already being-with-others is expressed here:

On the basis of this communal being-in-the-world, the world is in each case presumably already one that I share with others. The world of *Dasein* is [the] common world. Being-in is being-with others. The intraworldly being-in-itself of others is co-*Dasein* <sup>129</sup>

Koo is wary of thinking that one can easily understand what Heidegger means by 'destiny', which according to him is 'the happening of the community, of the people', or more generally what does Heidegger really understand by 'authentic community'.<sup>130</sup>

In perhaps more familiar terms, coexistence in a common world is just what is involved for individuals to be socialised into norms, practices, and traditions and then going on to live primarily and mostly by them. Is this so different from what Finnis asserts the content of the common good is? – justice, law and authority. Are not these the norms, practices and traditions in another more Anglo-Saxon wrapping?

On this issue of sociality Schatzki, asserts that:

Heidegger treats sociality as an essential feature of individual existence: any individual, merely by existing, is enveloped in a tissue of coexistence with others.<sup>131</sup>

The claim put forward here is that this leads to a perspective of 'community' which is not so dissimilar from that seen by Finnis.

Schatzki, moreover asserts:

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<sup>129</sup> Koo, "Early Heidegger on Social Reality", p. 21. – edited quote.

<sup>130</sup> Koo, "Early Heidegger on Social Reality", p. 22. – full original text included here: Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p.384: „Wenn aber das schicksalhafte *Dasein* als *Inder-Welt-sein* wesentlich im *Mitsein* mit Anderen existiert, ist sein Geschehen ein *Mitgeschehen* und bestimmt als *Geschick*. Damit bezeichnen wir das Geschehen der *Gemeinschaft*, des *Volkes*. Das *Geschick* setzt sich nicht aus einzelnen *Schicksalen* zusammen, sondern als das *Miteinandersein* als ein *Zusammenvorkommen* mehrerer *Subjekte* begriffen werden kann. Im *Miteinandersein* in derselben *Welt* und in der *Entschlossenheit* für bestimmte *Möglichkeiten* sind die *Schicksale* im *vorhinein* schon geleitet. In der *Mitteilung* und im *Kampf* wird die *Macht* des *Geschickes* erst frei. Das *schicksalhafte* *Geschick* des *Daseins* in und mit seiner »*Generation*« macht das volle, *eigentliche* Geschehen des *Daseins* aus“.

<sup>131</sup> Theodore R. Schatzki, "Early Heidegger on Sociality," in *A Companion to Heidegger*, ed. by Hubert L. Dreyfus and Mark A. Wrathall (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2005), pp. 233–47 <<https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470996492.ch14>> [accessed 5 January 2025].

Heidegger's own asseveration that "because being-with-one-another is being-with-one-another in a world, being-with one-another shapes the different possibilities of community as well as society"<sup>132</sup>

Is this not akin to what Finnis is telling us about the basic good of friendship and its importance in the formation of a community? Is it not true that the seemingly individualist analysis of *Dasein* as being in the world with others, resembles at best, or, is not contrary, at worst, to Finnis's *reduction* of the common good to a coordination of one's flourishing with the flourishing of others, and also with that of the more abstract entities, such as associations, institutions and the like?

As Crowell<sup>133</sup> explains, for Heidegger it is contradictory to somehow conceive a pre-social subject, which would have to constitute sociality from his own individuality. As being-in-the-world one is presumably being-with-others. This discussion advances the view that for Heidegger, then, the problem is not to explain how the social world can be constituted from one's elementary individual substance that reflects the order of the world and from which material properties are derived, but to explain how anything like individuality is at all possible. On Heidegger's view one understands oneself in terms of the typical roles, inherited customs, and standard ways of doing things prevalent in one's time and place.<sup>134</sup>

Moreover, Crowell states that:

Heidegger conceives individuation not as prior to the social but as a modification of it<sup>135</sup>

As will be seen, *prima facie*, Heidegger's argument comforts McCall's criticism of Finnis for rejecting 'the role of metaphysics'<sup>136</sup> in natural law. But what is Finnis really saying is that 'being' human means wanting to live well, and an integral and irreducibly fundamental part of that living well (of well-being then) is living with others. Finnis implicitly asserts that the individual and collective (or communal) aspects are inextricably linked. Both Heidegger and

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<sup>132</sup> Schatzki, 'Early Heidegger on Sociality', p. 245.

<sup>133</sup> Steven Galt Crowell, "Heidegger and Husserl: The Matter and Method of Philosophy," in *A Companion to Heidegger*, ed. by Hubert L. Dreyfus and Mark A. Wrathall (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2005), pp. 49–64 <<https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470996492.ch4>> [accessed 5 January 2025], p. 56.

<sup>134</sup> Crowell, 'Heidegger and Husserl', p. 56.

<sup>135</sup> Crowell, 'Heidegger and Husserl', p.56.

<sup>136</sup> McCall, '¿Qué Tipo de Bien Es John Finnis?', p.659.

Finnis acknowledge the ontological and ontic reality that the human being is a political animal by virtue of being a social animal. There is no inherent contradiction in this recognition.

Moreover, also in this direction, Holst attempts to open a way to understanding of Heideggerian well-being as connected to dwelling. A type of well-being that locates the possibility of elevating one's own being not inside or outside the "I" but in the affective bond to others called friendship or as Aristotle called it *philia*.<sup>137</sup>

The question to be asked is whether we could call 'dwelling' a state of affairs that is not conducive to some sense of well-being? Would it be dwelling in the Heideggerian sense if it were not contributing towards the individual and/or the communal well-being?

There is no proper friendship occurring in a place if there is no significant interaction; that only one who 'dwells' does within the community. In Finnisian terms then, there may be participation in the basic goods say of 'play' and 'aesthetic experience' going on in a place where one just *lodges* and does not dwell, but those two basic goods achieve their aim more properly, more fully, if one inhabits a place one calls home.

Similarly, there may be some degree of participation in the basic good of practical reasonableness and religion, when and where, one solely lodges and does not really dwell in a place. However, the degree of that participation may in the majority of cases be stifled and hampered because one feels a lack of communal commitment to where one resides. One may feel no need to invest so much of one's time (and energy) in an activity one considers not to be valuable. Indeed one may spend one's whole life not feeling part of one's community and thus one is said to be just lodging (even if permanently) but one may not be said to be dwell.

On the other hand one may dwell for a finite period of time, during which one feels existentially fulfilled and thus one flourishes even though one's permanence in that place is not definite. To some extent then, the phenomenon of dwelling is essentially psychological and may manifest itself externally through action. Namely through what Finnis would call the participation in the basic goods of human all-round flourishing.

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<sup>137</sup> Holst, 'Finding Oneself Well', p. 1.

Consequently, dwelling in this sense is internally a state of mind - an attunement - which is externally manifested through a certain set of conditions (and actions) conducive if not already resulting in a state of affairs one may call well-being. In this sense, then, all-round flourishing may be, at best, the result of proper dwelling, or at worst, an indication of such dwelling.

### **Heidegger: A Sense Of Belonging And Identity**

Since everything is political the danger of referring to such a controversial philosopher to frame architecture within political philosophy is that of being labelled as a conservative reactionary. This is a challenge that looms on anyone who explores Heidegger. What is being submitted here is that ‘philosophy’ is a tool, and as such it may be used to promote a concept which is generally considered ‘good’ or a concept which is considered ‘evil’<sup>138</sup>. By dismissing a philosopher's work, rather than reinterpreting and potentially expanding upon their arguments, one forfeits the opportunity to engage with that philosopher's perspective. This approach precludes the possibility of extracting valid aspects of their philosophy and utilizing those concepts for the benefit of humanity as a whole.<sup>139</sup>

Sharr addresses this issue at the onset of his book *Heidegger for Architects*:

Dangers of the milieu of Heidegger’s thinking are already apparent here. The potential for romantic myths of belonging to exclude people as well as include them, and a scepticism of high intellectual debate in favour of common sense, can veer toward totalitarianism. Unchecked, such thinking can lead in the direction of the fascist rhetoric with which Heidegger himself was involved, at least for a short time, in the 1930s.”<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Such as taking that idea of attunement to oneself and to one’s surroundings to a level of excluding all others not considered to pertain to that community.

<sup>139</sup> George Herbert Mead's theory of perspectives offers valuable insights into this question. Mead developed a theory of perspective-taking that emphasises the importance of understanding and incorporating different viewpoints (Jack Martin, “Reinterpreting Internalization and Agency through G.H. Mead’s Perspectival Realism,” *Human Development*, 49.2 (2006), 65–86 <<https://doi.org/10.1159/000091333>>.). Cancelling a philosopher's work instead of reinterpreting it would indeed result in losing that unique perspective. (George Herbert Mead and Charles W. Morris, *Mind, Self, and Society* (University of Chicago Press, 1967) <<https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226516608.001.0001>> [accessed 5 January 2025].) Mead's theory emphasises the importance of multiple perspectives in human development and social interaction. By extension, in the realm of philosophy and intellectual discourse, reinterpretation and extension of arguments can lead to richer, more nuanced understandings and potentially valuable new insights, rather than the limited view that might result from cancellation.

<sup>140</sup> Adam Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects* (Routledge, 2007), p. 3.

Here we already see some political elements which emerge from architecture, with terms like ‘totalitarianism’ and ‘fascism’, in the context of the inclusion and exclusion of people when discussing a sense of ‘belonging’ to a place. This may *prima facie*, appear to be running counter to what the notion of common good, preferred in this research, addresses. Excluding anyone runs counter to the idea that the common good is actually coordinating the well-being of the individual and the collective, and in so doing, avoiding both extreme anarchical individualism, on the one hand, and extreme absolutism or collectivism leading to totalitarianism, on the other.

However, according to Sharr, German romanticism vis-à-vis place is difficult since:

Many see Heidegger’s penchant for romanticism as one of the most dangerous aspects of his philosophy. Where there are those who honour their locality and celebrate a sense of belonging, others can be cast out as not belonging. And here are the seeds of racism and persecution. When the romantic reifies the land, ugly things might be done in the name of that land.<sup>141</sup>

This romanticism found in Heidegger, needs some elucidation. Sharr explains that there are some who ‘honour’ their place of abode, their home, and ‘celebrate a sense of belonging’, but there are others that can be excluded and rejected because deemed as ‘not belonging’. This is the tipping point of one feeling at home in some place and flourishing within it and in turn that place may also flourish with one. Nonetheless, there can be an attitude of xenophobia and fear of others who may be different in being outsiders that develops within that sense of belonging. This is when that sense starts producing the ‘seeds of racism and persecution’.<sup>142</sup> As Sharr puts it:

When the romantic reifies the land, ugly things might be done in the name of that land.<sup>143</sup>

### **Place, Being In The World And Home**

This is also why Heidegger’s emphasis on ‘place’ is problematic to some as it might resonate with German romanticism’s concept of ‘*Blut und Boden*’ (blood and soil).<sup>144</sup>

Jeff Malpas addresses this issue:

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<sup>141</sup> Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects*, p. 13.

<sup>142</sup> Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects*, p. 13.

<sup>143</sup> Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects*, p.13.

<sup>144</sup> Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects*, p. 13.

Place may be a means to ground identity, but the way it does this, so it is often claimed, is deeply problematic.<sup>145</sup>

Malpas appears to be suggesting that people often use physical locations or places to establish and define their sense of identity. However, he indicates that this approach is frequently criticised as being flawed or problematic. Malpas highlights a tension between the common practice of using place to shape identity and the criticism this practice faces from some observers or thinkers.

Malpas also says:

[...]inasmuch as that identity is based in our belonging within the bounds of place, so it leads us to exclude others from that place as the means to affirm that identity,<sup>146</sup>

The concept of identity rooted in place-based belonging carries significant implications for social dynamics and group formation. When individuals derive their sense of self from their connection to a specific location or territory, it often results in a strong attachment to that place and a shared identity with others who inhabit it. This place-based identity can foster a sense of community, shared values, and collective history among those who belong.

However, this same mechanism of identity formation can lead to exclusionary practices and the creation of boundaries between insiders and outsiders. By defining who belongs to a particular place, we inherently define who does not belong. This exclusion of others becomes a means of reinforcing and affirming the in-group's identity. The act of keeping others out serves to strengthen the bonds among those within, creating a clear distinction between "us" and "them." This process can manifest in various ways, from subtle social cues to more overt forms of discrimination or territorial claims, ultimately shaping social interactions, policy decisions, and cultural narratives surrounding place and belonging.

The argument advanced here aligns with the first interpretation while resisting the second.

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<sup>145</sup> Malpas, *Rethinking Dwelling*, p.5.

<sup>146</sup> Malpas, *Rethinking Dwelling*, p. 5.

In *The Principle of Identity*<sup>147</sup> found in the 1957 *Identity and Difference*,<sup>148</sup> Heidegger takes identity, or sameness, as a “belonging together”.<sup>149</sup> Heidegger's exploration of identity in *The Principle of Identity* (1957) delves into the concept of sameness as a fundamental aspect of belonging. He posits that identity is not merely a static state of equivalence, but rather a dynamic relationship that binds entities together. This perspective challenges the traditional understanding of identity as mere self-sameness, instead framing it as an active principle that establishes connections and relationships between things.

Heidegger's analysis extends beyond simple logical equivalence, suggesting that identity encompasses a deeper ontological significance. He argues that the principle of identity reveals something essential about the nature of being itself. By reframing identity as belonging, Heidegger opens up new avenues for understanding how entities relate to one another and to the world at large. This interpretation has profound implications for philosophy, particularly in areas such as metaphysics, epistemology, and the philosophy of language, as it prompts a reconsideration of how we conceptualize sameness, difference, and the fundamental structure of reality.<sup>150</sup>

As Dominic Griffiths explains this “belonging together”:

[...]gives us both the world and ourselves; we are shaped by it and it is shaped by us, as the house is designed for the inhabitants, but their existence then takes place within its rooms, seeing the view through its windows.<sup>151</sup>

In fact, Heidegger himself points out that there exists a difference between the understanding of such belonging in a way that emphasizes the ‘belonging’ or the ‘together’.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> From the preface “The Principle of Identity is the unchanged text of a lecture given on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the University of Freiburg im Breisgau, for the faculty day on June 27, 1957” From the original *Vorwort* in Martin Heidegger, *Identität Und Differenz: (1955-1957)* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann GmbH, 2006). “*Der Satz der Identität enthält den unveränderten Text eines Vor trages, der beim fünfhundert] ährigen Jubiläum der Universität Freiburg i.Br. zum Tag der Fakultäten am 27. Juni 1957 gehalten wurde.*”

<sup>148</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Identity and Difference* (Harper & Row Publishers, 1969).

<sup>149</sup> *Identität Und Differenz*, p. 36:“*Wir legen die Selbigkeit als Zusammengehörigkeit aus.*“

<sup>150</sup> Further reading: David A. White, “Heidegger on Sameness and Difference,” *The Southwestern Journal of Philosophy*, 11.3 (1980), 107–25 <<https://doi.org/10.2307/43155294>>.

<sup>151</sup> Dominic Griffiths, “Martin Heidegger’s Principle of Identity: On Belonging and Ereignis,” *South African Journal of Philosophy*, 36.3 (2017), 326–36 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/02580136.2017.1283768>>.

<sup>152</sup> Malpas, *Rethinking Dwelling*, p. 7.

Malpas has a different interpretation to this concept of identity based on place. The belonging together of the thing with itself is not a matter of the simple self-sameness of the thing taken alone, but is rather a belonging together of being and thing.<sup>153</sup> Identity thus appears as relational – and as such the ‘identity of the thing is also essentially tied to difference’.<sup>154</sup>

Malpas addresses this issue in the following way:

It is precisely the way in which place encompasses both the singular and the multiple that it can indeed allow both the foreign as well as the familiar to appear within it; that it can allow a genuine encounter, not only with one’s own self, but also with others.<sup>155</sup>

This philosophy of place will be the main subject in the following chapter when we discuss *genius loci*.

### **Heidegger: Being-in-the-world**

Philosophers such as Heidegger are often criticised for their sense of 'nostalgia' or some sort of 'autobiographical memory' bringing about a fanatic version of love of place. The nostalgia found in Heidegger is indeed a ‘matter of our relatedness to place’<sup>156</sup> as Malpas explains. Certainly, nostalgia is likely induced by our connection to a specific place. It involves our being recalling the relatedness that shaped our identity as human beings. This phenomenon illustrates how experience and memory function for humans. Malpas asserts that in *Being and Time*, this experience is encapsulated through the ‘explication of Dasein as being-in-the-world, and, more fundamentally, in the very concept of Dasein itself – Dasein is being-there/being-here’.<sup>157</sup>

Malpas says that:

“Dasein” names that which is first of all to be experienced, and subsequently thought accordingly, as a place – namely as the locality of the truth of Being.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Malpas, *Rethinking Dwelling*, p. 8.

<sup>154</sup> Malpas, *Rethinking Dwelling*, p. 8.

<sup>155</sup> Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place*, p.83.

<sup>156</sup> Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place*, p. 209.

<sup>157</sup> Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place*, p.208.

<sup>158</sup> Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place*, p.208.

What truth is Malpas referring to, one may ask? For Heidegger, the work of art opens up in its own way the ‘Being of beings’.<sup>159</sup>

*Das Kunstwerk eröffnet auf seine Weise das Sein des Seienden. Im Werk geschieht diese Eröffnung, d. h. das Entbergen, d. h. die Wahrheit des Seienden. Im Kunstwerk hat sich die Wahrheit des Seienden ins Werk gesetzt*<sup>160</sup>

This opening up, that this “deconcealing”, or as it were the “truth of beings”, happens in the work. In the artwork, the truth of what is has “set itself to work”. Art is truth setting “itself to work.” However, one has to keep in mind that this truth is located in a particular historical epoch,<sup>161</sup> as we will see later on.

Sharr interprets Heidegger more or less in this vein as well when he asserts that:

[...]people make sense first through their inhabitation of their surroundings, and their emotional responses to them.<sup>162</sup>

Sharr insists that:

[...]building configures physically, over time, how people measure their place in the world.<sup>163</sup>

This connects to the Heidegger’s idea of ‘being in the world’ as we previously saw. And, since, as we also saw previously, being in the world is presumably with others for Heidegger, what one does will presumably inescapably have an impact on others around him or her.

Right from the start of his book Sharr introduces the concepts of ‘dwelling’ and ‘ethos’ both of which will be developed later on:

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<sup>159</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Origin of the Work of Art*, p. 38.

<sup>160</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe: Veröffentlichte Schriften 1914-1970. Holzwege. I. Abteilung. Bd.5* (Vittorio Klostermann, 2003). My translation “In its own way, the work of art opens up the being of the existing. In the work this revelation takes place, i.e. the unveiling, i.e. the truth of being. In the work of art, the truth of the *existing* has been set in motion.”

<sup>161</sup> Troy Paddock, “Gedachtes Wohnen: Heidegger and Cultural Geography,” *Philosophy & Geography*, 7.2 (2004), 237–49 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/1090377042000285435>>., p. 242.

<sup>162</sup> Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects*, p. 2.

<sup>163</sup> Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects*, p. 2.

[...]by recording traces of human engagement physically at both large and small scales, buildings set out the particular ethos of every builder and dweller.<sup>164</sup>

Sharr claims that to Heidegger a building locates human existence.<sup>165</sup> Heidegger believes that building is ‘set out around’ human existence,<sup>166</sup> shaped by it but also shaping the activities of that presence over time. At best, a structure is built by its inhabitants according to their needs and then configured and reconfigured through the ways in which they dwell. The inhabitants’ lives, in turn, are configured by the building. To him, the very fact of a building also stood for human presence. For Heidegger, a building is built according to the specifics of place and inhabitants, shaped by its physical and human.

Sharr asserts that for Heidegger, building is about locating individuals. The shape of a building is a statement of the *ethos* of those individuals. Details of a building may be interpreted as signs of aspirations and ideals of these same individuals. The manifestation of a building whilst it may be ‘demonstrating the presence of an inhabitant’, it could also show the absence of inhabitants.<sup>167</sup>

Malpas adds using Heidegger’s terminology:

[...]dwelling is the mode of human being, so human being is essentially a being in place, just as it is also a being in the world. If the relation to place is an essential one, then it is not a relation that we can ever leave without also leaving our very humanity<sup>168169</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects*, p. 2.

<sup>165</sup> Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects*, p. 9.

<sup>166</sup> Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects*, p. 9.

<sup>167</sup> Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects*, p. 10.

<sup>168</sup> Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place*, p.81.

<sup>169</sup> When Christian Norberg-Schulz wrote about the *genius loci* spirit of place and Karsten Harries about the communal ethos of architecture they were responding in some way to Heidegger and his notions of dwelling and place. These figures will be dealt with in the coming chapters. The notion of ‘place’ will occupy most of the following chapter when *genius loci* will be discussed in the context of Norberg-Schulz’s interpretation of Heidegger’s philosophy. But the real crux of this part of the chapter should be the notion of ‘dwelling’.

Their foundational philosopher remains Heidegger and more specifically to his lecture at a conference in Darmstadt in 1951,<sup>170</sup> which later became an essay entitled: *Building Dwelling Thinking*.<sup>171</sup>

As Malpas enlightens us, Heidegger refers to the term 'in' in terms of 'dwelling' as *Dasein* is 'in' its world:

In' is derived from "innan"- "to reside"? "*habitare*", "to dwell" (sich auf halten] . 'An' signifies "I am accustomed", "I am familiar with", "I look after something". [...] It has the signification of "*colo*" in the senses of "*habito*" and "*diligo*". The entity to which Being-in in this signification belongs is one which we have characterized as that entity which in each case I myself am (*bin*). The expression '*bin*' is connected with '*bei*', and so 'ich bin' ['I am'] means in its turn "I reside" or "dwell alongside" the world, as that which is familiar to me in such and such a way. [...] "Being" [Sein] , as the infinitive of '*ich bin*' (that is to say, when it is understood as an *existentiale*), signifies "to reside alongside . . ." , "to be familiar with . . ." . "Being-in" is thus the formal existential expression for the Being of *Dasein*, which has Being-in-the-world as its essential state.<sup>172</sup>

The etymology of 'in' and its connection to dwelling suggests a profound relationship between existence and inhabiting a space. This concept underscores that our being is fundamentally intertwined with our environment and surroundings. The notion of 'being accustomed to' or 'familiar with' implies that our existence transcends mere physical presence, encompassing our relationship and understanding of the world around us. This familiarity shapes our experiences and our sense of self. The connection between 'bin' (am) and 'bei' (alongside) in German highlights the idea that existence is always relational. We do not exist in isolation but always in context and connection with the world. The phrase 'I reside' or 'dwell alongside' the world suggests a more active and engaged form of existence than simply 'being.' It implies continuous interaction and relationship with our environment. The concept of 'Being-in-the-world' as an

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<sup>170</sup> David Farrell Krell, translator and editor of Heidegger's basic writings tells us: "Heidegger presented the lecture "Building Dwelling Thinking" (*Bauen Wohnen Denken*) to the Darmstadt Symposium on Man and Space on August 5, 1951. It belongs to a group of three lectures composed in the early 1950s that unravel new though not wholly unfamiliar strands of the question of Being. These lectures, Building Dwelling Thinking, "The Thing," and "Poetically Man Dwells," are dominated less by scholarly technical philosophical language than by figures of myth and "poetry".

<sup>171</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, (New York : Harper & Row, 1971).

<sup>172</sup> Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 80. The full quote in German: " »in« stammt von innan-, wohnen, habitare, sich aufhalten; »an« bedeutet: ich bin gewohnt, vertraut mit, ich pflege etwas; es hat die Bedeutung von colo im Sinne von habito und diligo. Dieses Seiende, dem das In-Sein in dieser Bedeutung zugehört, kennzeichneten wir als das Seiende, das ich je selbst bin. Der Ausdruck »bin« hängt zusammen mit »bei«; »ich bin« besagt wiederum: ich wohne, halte mich auf bei ... der Welt, als dem so und so Vertrauten. Sein als Infinitiv des »ich bin«, d. h. als Existenzial verstanden, bedeutet wohnen bei..., vertraut sein mit... In-Sein ist demnach der formale existenziale Ausdruck des Seins des Daseins, das die wesenhafte Verfassung des In-der-Welt-seins hat."

essential state of Dasein (being-there or existence) emphasizes that our existence is inseparable from the context in which we find ourselves. We are always already embedded in a world of meaning and relationships. This perspective challenges the traditional subject-object divide, suggesting instead that we are always already involved with and shaped by the world around us. The idea of 'being familiar with' as part of existence suggests that our understanding and interpretation of the world is a fundamental aspect of our being, not merely an add-on to a pre-existing self. This view of existence as 'residing alongside' or 'dwelling' implies a certain comfort or at-homeness in the world, even as we engage with and navigate its complexities. The concept encourages us to perceive our existence not as static or isolated, but as a dynamic, ongoing process of engagement with the world and others around us. This perspective on being and existence could have significant implications for how we conceive identity, authenticity, and our relationship to the environments we inhabit. Malpas asserts that what is at stake in Heidegger's language of dwelling is not a contrast in the 'quality of life' between different historical epochs, but rather the 'nature of human being as intimately tied to place.'<sup>173</sup>

## Heidegger On Space And Home

Place is in a variety of ways, the result of space and time. Heidegger states:

What the word for space, Raum, designates is said by its ancient (meaning. Raum, Rum, means a place cleared or freed for settlement and lodging. A space is something that has been made room for, something that is cleared and free, namely, within a boundary, Greek peras.<sup>174</sup>

Malpas makes us aware of this intimate relationship as he examines the 'topographical' approach of Heidegger's thinking:

The centrality of space and spatiality to the understanding of world, and so to the understanding of our own mode of being, is especially evident in Heidegger. Indeed, the development of Heidegger's thinking is such that the spatial and topographic elements that occur in such pervasive and fundamental ways throughout his thinking – and that are present even in the concept of Da-sein, as well as in the idea of our essential existential and hermeneutical situatedness, as these appear in his early work – are gradually taken up in increasingly direct and self-evident fashion, with the centrality of

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<sup>173</sup> Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place*, p. 86.

<sup>174</sup> Heidegger, *Building Dwelling Thinking*, p. 332.

space as well as place becoming ever more evident, until Heidegger is finally able explicitly to characterise his thinking as itself topological in character.<sup>175</sup>

Malpas admits that as soon as one starts discussing place, space and ‘situatedness’ a ‘problem arises’ that involves the implication of these concepts ‘with the sort of reactionary politics that, in twentieth century Germany, is paradigmatically exemplified by Nazism’.<sup>176</sup>

This is a very difficult obstacle to overcome in a research like the current one, since it is presumably problematic to bridge political concepts, like the common good, with aesthetics in general and with architecture in particular. After all as explained by Jan-Werner Muller ‘in the popular imagination the combination of “architecture” and “politics” is bound to conjure up distinctly undemocratic figures.’<sup>177</sup>

Indeed Malpas admits that:

Heidegger’s preoccupation with ideas of rootedness and belonging, his apparent preference for the world of peasant and farmer, and his frequent appeal to notions of origin and home, have all been seen as tied to a conservative and even reactionary politics of a sort evident, not only in Heidegger’s personal entanglement with Nazism in the 1930s, but also in his admission late in his life, in the interview with *Der Spiegel* magazine in the 1960s, of his lack of faith in democratic politics[...]<sup>178</sup>

Malpas tries to overcome this prejudice and declares that these criticisms ‘considerably oversimplify the matter at issue’<sup>179</sup>

Malpas says that:

There is certainly a clear shift in Heidegger’s thinking that first occurs in the 1930s, and intensifies around the late 1940s, towards an explicit concern with place and related concepts – concepts that include those of ‘dwelling’ [...], the ‘Fourfold’ and the Event, [...] and this shift towards the ‘geographic’ or ‘topological’ is itself closely tied to the famous ‘Turning’ or ‘Reversal’ in Heidegger’s thought.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place*, p.170.

<sup>176</sup> Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place*, p.176 Malpas mentions Giorgio Agamben’s implication that a ‘commitment to a holistic or ecological conception – itself a key element in thinking oriented towards *topos* or place’ are ideas ‘implicated with Nazism’.

<sup>177</sup> Jan-Werner Muller, *What (if Anything) Is ‘Democratic Architecture’?* in *Political Theory and Architecture*, edited by Duncan Bell and Bernardo Zacka, Bloomsbury Academic, 2021, p. 21.

<sup>178</sup> Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place*, pp.177-178.

<sup>179</sup> Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place*, p. 180.

<sup>180</sup> Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place*, p. 181.

Malpas says that Heidegger, in accordance with the topological approach views the ‘human being as standing in a relation of necessary interdependence and interconnection with the environing world, and as articulated in terms of the complex interplay of both environment and action as that occurs in and through place’.<sup>181</sup>

Malpas explains that what distinguishes Heidegger’s analysis is the way in which the appraisal of technology is tied to a ‘topological analysis’ of which Heidegger’s interpretation of dwelling is an ‘integral part’.<sup>182</sup> This relationship between topology and dwelling is evident in the essay ‘The Thing’.<sup>183</sup>

Indeed, the broad concept of technology significantly influences architecture, understood as building. We have noted the paradox that, despite advancements in building technology, we seem unable to create beautiful or meaningful structures as frequently as one might expect. Furthermore, there is another aspect directly related to the impact of technology. We have increased the width of our development, we have stretched our cities to the limit, to what is sometimes called the ‘sprawl’ - a sort of extended ‘suburbanization’.<sup>184</sup>

Resonating with this approach but limiting it to the city *per se* Heidegger asserts, that the city allows for loneliness, but not for solitude; it fosters ‘a very active and very fashionable obtrusiveness’ that brings with it the risk of ‘destructive error’.<sup>185</sup> It perhaps creates the ‘lonely everywhere’ where ‘the dispersed city has altered the ways and speeds at which we cross paths with one another’.<sup>186</sup> Where it is possible to meet many people but not those whom you really wish to meet.

In this sense, Heidegger asserts that:

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<sup>181</sup> Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place*, p. 180.

<sup>182</sup> Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place*, p. 87.

<sup>183</sup> Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place*, p. 87.

<sup>184</sup> See: Sean Montebello, “Objections to Extensive Ghajnsielem Development ‘sprawl into ODZ’ - The Shift News,” TSN, August 18, 2023 <<https://theshiftnews.com/2023/08/18/objections-to-extensive-ghajnsielem-development-sprawl-into-odz/>> [accessed March 28, 2026] Charles Montgomery, *Happy City: Transforming Our Lives Through Urban Design* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013), p. 16 ‘The decades-long expansion in the American economy paralleled the migration of society from the country to cities, and from cities to the in-between world of sprawl’.

<sup>185</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Heidegger: Off the Beaten Track* (Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>186</sup> Montgomery, *Happy City*, p. 64.

We work in the city, but dwell outside it. We travel, and dwell now here, now there. Dwelling so understood is presumably merely the occupying of a lodging.<sup>187</sup>

Malpas addresses Heidegger's provincialism leading to a certain type of 'solitude' which is not a solitude that is constituted through isolation, but rather the solitude that comes from the 'letting-be' that allows things to be 'present as what they are', but also, therefore, in 'intimate connection with that to which they belong'.<sup>188</sup> Malpas thinks that Heidegger fears that this type of solitude is lost in the city, in fact he states:

The experience of the city as an experience of multiple images obtained through one's own movement as well as the movement that characterizes the urban surroundings through which one moves, is an essential part of the experience of the flâneur as he strolls through the city taking in its sounds and especially its sights<sup>189</sup>

Malpas asserts that:

The later Heidegger's apparently weary insistence on the limits in our ability to change the course of the world should not be construed as indicating a failure of vision or some lapse into quietistic resignation. It follows directly from a recognition of the essentially placed character of human being, and the limitation and fragility that follows inevitably from it. If it were possible to reconfigure our current forms of social and political organisation around a recognition of such placedness, then we would have a solution to many of our contemporary ills.<sup>190</sup>

Malpas follows Heidegger's suggestion, that humans should work their way in the many small ways that are available to them, 'to reorient' themselves to their 'actual situation',<sup>191</sup> to reorient themselves to the proper place in which they find themselves.

### **Surroundings And Attunement**

Sharr adopts the suggestion that one should engage in numerous small actions to reorient themselves to their rightful place. He notes that Heidegger viewed every human activity, from the intellectual to the mundane, as offering philosophical opportunities to explore the question of being when properly considered.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Heidegger, *Poetically Man Dwells*, in Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. by Albert Hofstadter (HarperCollins Publishers, 2001), pp.212-213.

<sup>188</sup> Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place*, p.282.

<sup>189</sup> Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place*, p.282.

<sup>190</sup> Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place*, p. 89.

<sup>191</sup> Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place*, p. 89.

<sup>192</sup> Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects*, p. 7.

Heidegger, observes that one begins to philosophically explore 'things' derived from our everyday experiences. They should not distract us from the main philosophical questions. Instead they should actually be 'celebrated as central to life in all its richness and variation'.<sup>193</sup> Heidegger simply does it by mentioning a 'jug' and a 'bridge'.

Sharr sees this connection in Heidegger as well, and states that the key themes of everyday 'life's paraphernalia' are crucial to Heidegger's assessment of architecture.<sup>194</sup>

Surroundings are also important for Heidegger as Malpas explains. The latter argues that Heidegger's engagement with what he calls '*topos*' is then reflected into twentieth century philosophy. This approach sees the 'human being in a closer relationship to its worldly surroundings, but also to grasp the interconnection of the spatial and the temporal within particular locales'.<sup>195</sup>

Sharr as an architect agrees with this topographic interpretation offered by Malpas, when he states that:

For Heidegger, a building was built according to the specifics of place and inhabitants, shaped by its physical and human topography.<sup>196</sup>

Heidegger, on the other hand, explores the relationship between human beings and their environment in his existential phenomenology. He emphasizes the way in which our understanding of being is grounded in our practical engagement with the world. Heidegger's concept of "*Dasein*" involves an analysis of our situatedness in the world, including our bodily orientation and our involvement in various cultural practices.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects*, p. 7.

<sup>194</sup> Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects*, p.23.

<sup>195</sup> Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place*, p. 174.

<sup>196</sup> Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects*, p. 10.

<sup>197</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 82.

Heidegger's approach is to examine how our existence as embodied beings is intertwined with the places we inhabit. Both thinkers are concerned with the relationship between human beings and their environment, but they approach it from different philosophical perspectives.

Moreover, Malpas explains that there is a continuous rapprochement between humans and their surroundings. That is, in some way (or ways) this relationship between 'topos' or place and 'being' has an impact on human self-identity, when he says:

[...] our self-identity is indeed connected with the identity of that which surrounds us – in which we find our place – is indicated by the way in which the desire for a continuation of our projects, and of ourselves.<sup>198</sup>

Heidegger's approach begins with the ordinary, as Malpas recounts:

[...]for the most part, it is the place of the ordinary and the everyday in and through which what is extraordinary shines forth. In the early writing this appears in terms of the continual use of everyday examples for phenomenological interrogation – it is in the engagement with such ordinary things that the world itself comes into view[...]<sup>199</sup>

### **Nearness And Attunement**

Heidegger commences his essay on 'The Thing' with a philosophical proclamation:

*All distances in time and space are shrinking. Man now reaches overnight, by plane, places which formerly took weeks and months of travel. He now receives instant information, by radio, of events which he formerly learned about only years later, if at all*<sup>200</sup>

The concept of nearness in Heidegger is an ambiguous idea.<sup>201</sup> One might ask whether it is a metaphor for all things familiar or intimate? Another interpretation is whether it is actually

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<sup>198</sup> Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place*, p. 245.

<sup>199</sup> Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place*, p.19.

<sup>200</sup> Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 163. The whole original passage: *Das Ding*, p. 37: „Alle Entfernungen in der Zeit und im Raum schrumpfen ein. Wohin der Mensch vormals wochen und monatelang unterwegs war, dahin gelangt er jetzt durch die Flugmaschine über Nacht. Wovon der Mensch früher erst nach Jahren oder überhaupt nie eine Kenntnis bekam, das erfährt er heute durch den Rundfunk stündlich im Nu. Das Keimen und Gedeihen der Gewächse, das die Jahreszeiten hindurch verborgen blieb, führt der Film jetzt öffentlich in einer Minute vor. Entfernte Stätten ältester Kulturen zeigt der Film, als stünden sie eben jetzt im heutigen Straßenverkehr.“

<sup>201</sup> Heidegger says in fact “Short distance is not in itself nearness. Nor is great distance remoteness.” *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 178.

intended as its literal interpretation as spatial proximity. Howard Eiland asserts that we are referring to the ‘ostensibly concrete’, pragmatic presence of things at hand, of objects lying before us which we may touch and manipulate.<sup>202</sup>

Heidegger says that what makes us terrified shows itself and hides itself in the way in which everything is present<sup>203</sup> that is:

[...] in the fact that despite all conquest of distances the nearness of things remains absent.<sup>204</sup>

These ideas of presence and absence are important for this research, since it is being argued here that architecture is indeed an ‘unavoidable presence’. This concept is directly relevant to how Heidegger understands ‘nearness’.

The nearness of things has definitely also another aspect that of spatial nearness of one building to the other, or to the rest of the buildings. The examples offered by Eiland are particularly interesting. Eiland says that In *Being and Time* (Section 23), he articulates some deceptively familiar examples of what he means by nearness. An easily accessible road of many miles may not be so long a haul, so considerable a span, as a shorter but more difficult road:

A pathway which is long 'Objectively' can be much shorter than one which is 'Objectively' shorter still but which is perhaps 'hard going' and comes before us as interminably long.<sup>205</sup>

Eiland gives us an interesting example:

Two farmhouses separated by acres of fields may yet be in closer touch than adjacent townhouses (or adjacent apartments, we might interject).<sup>206</sup>

In this sense consider Figure 18. The houses immediately adjacent to left and to the right of the block of apartments being built are more remote to that building than to each other. They have much more in common to each other than to what is being built. Physical distance, spatial

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<sup>202</sup> Howard Eiland, “The Way to Nearness: Heidegger’s Interpretation of Presence,” *Philosophy and Literature*, 8.1 (1984), 43–54 <<https://doi.org/10.1353/phl.1984.0039>>.

<sup>203</sup> Heidegger, *The Thing*, in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p.164.

<sup>204</sup> Heidegger, *The Thing*, in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p.164.

<sup>205</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 140.

<sup>206</sup> Eiland, ‘The Way to Nearness’, p. 44.

proximity is in this sense irrelevant. Though it becomes relevant from an aesthetic point of view, because there is a lack of harmony, or attunement. The apartments appear to have no meaning when seen as a whole. The same may be said of Figure 19.<sup>207</sup>



FIGURE 18 MOSTA, MALTA NEARNESS IS NOT SOLELY PHYSICAL IN HEIDEGGER'S VIEW BUT IT IS CONCEPTUAL, PHOTOGRAPH: ALAN XUEREB.

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<sup>207</sup> *Times of Malta*, "Editorial: The Ugliness All around Us," *Times of Malta*, 2021 <<https://timesofmalta.com/article/we-need-to-stop-the-uglification.873823>> [accessed 7 April 2025].



FIGURE 18 CONSTRUCTION AT SPINOLA BAY, ST JULIAN'S. PHOTOGRAPH: MARK ZAMMIT CORDINA(TIMES OF MALTA)

In order for a thing to be near according to Heidegger, it has to be meaningfully present, meaningfully connected.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> One has to also consider that say Fascist or Communist buildings might have demolished other meaningful buildings to build their own style of architecture. What would one do when confronted with such an issue? Would one demolish and rebuilt the original? Well that is the subject of Chapter 4 wherein the ethos of that specific community would have to be analysed.

Heidegger is telling us that if two buildings are touching each other but are conceptually disconnected they are far from each other in a metaphorical sense.

Heidegger in his descriptive mode<sup>209</sup> recognises that physical proximity whilst objectively relevant in different ways to an analysis of architecture, is not decisively key to conclude its nearness and attunement within a specific context.

Martin Heidegger's perception of architecture, as outlined in his essay *Building Dwelling Thinking*, focuses on the existential and ontological aspects of architecture. Heidegger suggests that architecture is not merely a matter of constructing buildings but is fundamentally linked to human existence, dwelling, and the relationship between human beings and their environment. For Heidegger, architecture reveals deeper truths about human existence and our place in the world.

Heidegger's perspective delves into the existential and ontological dimensions of architecture.

When attentiveness to context is abandoned, the result is often the insertion of austere bland boxes beside richly articulated Baroque structures.. At that point, the next generation of buildings will be built next to these bland boxes and then under the constraint of financial pragmatism, utility and/or under the excuse of a misinterpreted sense of attunement more bland boxes are built. The net result is usually *turpification*.

A few examples may help to explain this visually: Consider Frank Gehry's twisted buildings in Dusseldorf, Germany. Like so many industrial cities, the seaports of Dusseldorf were those faced with the steepest decline as the Western economies shifted from manufacturing and transport to information and finance. When one of the city's largest companies, Mannesmann, closed their operations, many lost their jobs and the harbour itself became rundown.<sup>210</sup> In an effort to bring the surroundings back to life, the East harbour had started the march towards

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<sup>209</sup> For an interesting discussion about the possible ethical normativity of Heidegger's Works see : Eric Sean Nelson, *Heidegger and the Questionability of the Ethical*. *Studia Phaenomenologica* (2008) 8:411-435.

<sup>210</sup> UGC, "The Gehry Buildings of Dusseldorf Harbor," *Atlas Obscura*, 20 June 2012 <<https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/gehry-buildings-dusseldorf-harbor>> [accessed 28 March 2025].

revitalisation. Through this combined effort, Dusseldorf Harbour became home to some spectacular postmodern architecture, including buildings by Frank Gehry.

The most famous buildings in the renovated Dusseldorf Harbour are the three aforementioned *twisted* constructions by Gehry, spiralling and stretching into the sky, their mirrored walls and matt white finishes symbolising the modernist aspirations of the harbour. Their shiny facades exemplify the newly stated purpose of the local harbour side industry. This was their *genius loci*, as Norberg-Schulz would call it, the spirit of the place intended and fuelled by community which commissioned them, their *ethos* which will be mentioned further on in the context of Karsten Harries's philosophy of architecture. They also exemplify the abovementioned 'nearness' since they are meant to stand out and uplift the area without the necessity to interact meaningfully (or otherwise) with anything else since they are objectively distant enough from the rest making them relatively 'stand-alone' and thus not needing to interact.



FIGURE 19 BUILDINGS OF DUSSELDORF A. PHOTOGRAPH: ALAN XUEREB

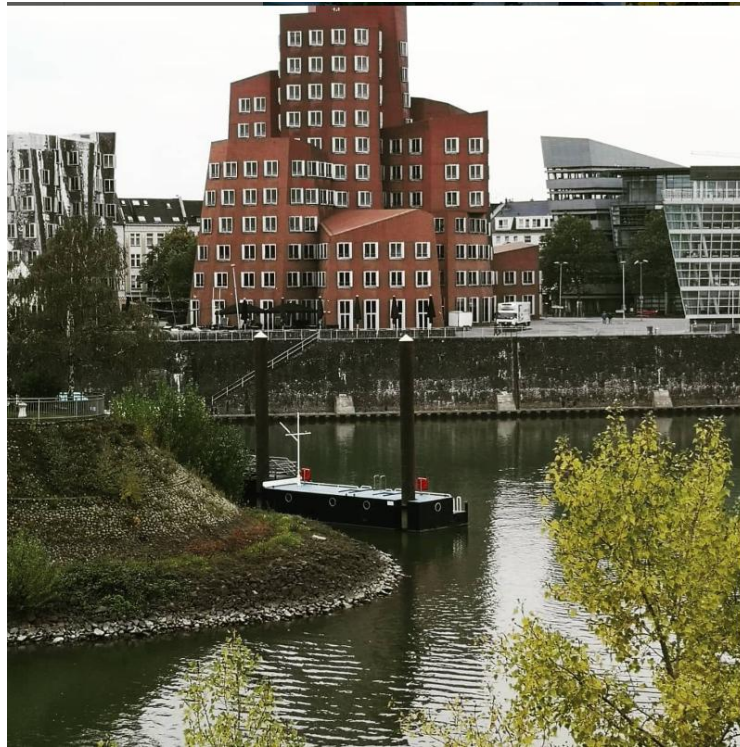


FIGURE 21 BUILDINGS OF DUSSELDORF B. PHOTOGRAPH: ALAN XUEREB.



FIGURE 20 FRANK GEHRY'S TWISTED BUILDINGS IN DÜSSELDORF, GERMANY- THEY ARE DIFFERENT BUT IN HARMONY WITH EACH OTHER BECAUSE THEY ARE FITTING TO EACH OTHER. THE THREE TWISTED BUILDINGS DO NOT NEED TO FIT SINCE THEY ARE DETACHED FROM THE REST.PHOTOGRAPH ALAN XUEREB

Moreover Heidegger states:

What is happening here when, as a result of the abolition of great distances, everything is equally far and equally near? What is this uniformity in which everything is neither far nor near—is, as it were, without distance?<sup>211</sup>

And also:

[...]the frantic abolition of all distances brings no nearness; for nearness does not consist in shortness of distance<sup>212</sup>

Heidegger links this notion of ‘nearness’ to a notion of ‘thingness’. He states:

Nearness, it seems, cannot be encountered directly. We succeed in reaching it rather by attending to what is near. Near to us are what we usually call things<sup>213</sup>

Consider at this point, just a side-street in Dusseldorf (Figure 23). These houses have similar but not identical styles, they have different features and different colours but they are harmonious, they foster continuity.

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<sup>211</sup> Heidegger, *The Thing*, p. 164. *Das Ding*, p. 38: „Nahe läßt sich, so scheint es, nicht unmittelbar vorfinden. Dies gelingt eher so, daß wir dem nachgehen, was in der Nahe ist. In der Nahe ist uns solches, was wir Dinge zu nennen pflegen.“

<sup>212</sup> Heidegger, *The Thing*, p. 163. *Das Ding*, p. 37: „Allein das hastige Beseitigen aller Entfernungen bringt keine Nähe; denn Nähe besteht nicht im geringen Maß der Entfernung.“

<sup>213</sup> Heidegger, *The Thing*, p. 164. *Das Ding*, p. 38: „Wie können wir ihr Wesen erfahren? Nähe läßt sich, so scheint es, nicht unmittelbar vorfinden. Dies gelingt eher so, daß wir dem nachgehen, was in der Nahe ist. In der Nahe ist uns solches, was wir Dinge zu nennen pflegen.“



FIGURE 23 HOUSES IN A SIDESTREET IN DÜSSELDORF, GERMANY - DIFFERENT BUT HARMONIOUS AND ATTUNED. PHOTOGRAPH: ALAN XUEREB.

## Thingness Of The Thing



FIGURE 21 HEIDEGGER'S JUG - ITS JUGNESS IS IN TRAPPING THE VOID ITS OUTPOURING OF WATER (SKY, EARTH, MORTALS) OR WINE (SKY, EARTH, GODS) PHOTOGRAPH: ALAN XUEREB

Heidegger asks what is a 'thing' and he gives us an example of a thing; he says the 'jug is a thing'.<sup>214</sup>

Heidegger links this notion of 'nearness' explained in the last section to a notion of 'thingness' by suggesting how a thing related to the preconditions of its own existence. Naming those preconditions 'the fourfold', he argued that any thing 'gathers' this fourfold, helping individuals become closer to the world around them.

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<sup>214</sup> Heidegger, *The Thing*, p. 164.

After a long-winded argumentation about the ‘making’ of the jug, Heidegger tackles the actual objective of his essay:

What in the thing is thingly? What is the thing in itself? We shall not reach the thing in itself until our thinking has first reached the thing as a thing.<sup>215</sup>

What we see, the jug, is just the ‘outward appearance’ of the thing. It is how it manifests itself to us in other words. It is in the terminology we have been using in this research, its form. But, what makes this thing called ‘jug’ a jug? Heidegger says that:

[...] the gift of the outpouring is what makes the jug a jug. In the jugness of the jug, sky and earth dwell.<sup>216</sup>

Heidegger appears to imply that what makes the ‘jug’ a jug *qua* a ‘thing’, is its function that of ‘holding’, ‘keeping’ and more specifically ‘outpouring’. The jug does what it is meant to do. The gathers in ‘twofold manner: taking and keeping’. But, the ‘pouring’ into the jug and the outpouring from the jug is what makes it a jug. Therefore, the outward form of the jug does not suffice to make it a jug it needs to have its conceptual *content* (no pun intended) described, and its conceptual *content* is the ‘outpouring’. In a similar fashion, the form of architecture does not make architecture unless its content is what it is meant to be, that is dwelling.

### **Unconcealment Of The Void**

Heidegger distinctly categorises the manifestation of something and the actual thing. After mentioning the nature of things according to Aristotle, he turns to Plato and the concept of ‘object’.

As Sharr explains,<sup>217</sup> Heidegger argued that the jug should be understood ‘as a thing and never a mere object’,<sup>218</sup> he lays out his notion of the thing as something more than an object.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> Heidegger, *The Thing*, p. 165. *Das Ding*, p. 40: „Was ist das Dingliche am Ding? Was ist das Ding an sich? Wir gelangen erst dann zum Ding an sich, wenn unser Denken zu- vor erst einmal das Ding als Ding erlangt hat.“

<sup>216</sup> Heidegger, *The Thing*, p. 170. *Das Ding*, p. 45: „Das Geschenk des Gusses aber ist das Krughafte des Kruges. Im Wesen des Kruges weilen Erde und Himmel.“

<sup>217</sup> Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects*, p.29.

<sup>218</sup> Heidegger, *The Thing*, p. 165.

<sup>219</sup> Heidegger, *The Thing*, p. 165.

Sharr interprets Heidegger's emphasis on 'thing' as distinct from 'object' in the context of seeing 'things of everyday life' vis-à-vis some 'notional transcendent object-form' as 'an unhelpful distraction from immediate experience'.<sup>220</sup> According to Sharr:

For Heidegger, conceiving of things as objects once again diminished the importance of being<sup>221</sup>

This does not mean that the 'jug' does not have a form, it does have an '*eidōs*' as Sharr admits:

[...] the jug had an appearance – Platonic '*eidōs*' or 'idea' which he defined as 'what stands forth' – deriving both from how it was made and from its perception when a human considers it.<sup>222</sup>

In Heidegger's own words:

First, standing forth has the sense of stemming from somewhere, whether this be a process of self-making or of being made by another. Secondly, standing forth has the sense of the made thing's standing forth into the unconcealedness of what is already present.<sup>223</sup>

Heidegger appears to allude that the jug is a jug because of its function. In other words because of certain characteristics, namely its being a vessel capable of 'outpouring'. He says that what the potter does when he makes the jug is in truth 'shaping the void'.<sup>224</sup> The void is already there waiting to be bounded. The potter somewhat *unconceals* the void and brings it forward by trapping the void - moulding space in other words. That space is already there it only needs to be bounded. This has an impact on how one thinks about architecture, and when one connects this to the concept of place and *genius loci*, as will be done in the next chapter, one sees that

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<sup>220</sup> Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects*, p.29.

<sup>221</sup> Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects*, p.29.

<sup>222</sup> Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects*, p.29.

<sup>223</sup> Heidegger, *The Thing*, p. 166. *Das Ding*, p. 40: „einmal das Her-Stehen im Sinne des Herstammens aus . . . , sei dies ein Sichhervorbringen oder ein Hergestelltwerden; zum andern das Her-Stehen im Sinne des Hereinstehens des Hervorgebrachten in die Unverborgenheit des schon Anwesenden.“

<sup>224</sup> Heidegger, *The Thing*, p. 167.

Heidegger's ideas have very concrete implications beyond the mere circular<sup>225</sup> idiosyncrasies<sup>226</sup> far too often attributed to this philosopher.

### The Fourfold

Heidegger contends that the 'thingness does not lie at all in the material of which [the jug] consists, but in the void that holds',<sup>227</sup> thus it lies in the space it traps. In other words it creates a place where this 'thingness' (or should we say 'jugness') may happen.

In order to gradually introduce us to the fourfold, Heidegger states that the jug may hold water or wine and that:

In the gift of water, in the gift of wine, sky and earth dwell. But the gift of the outpouring is what makes the jug a jug. In the jugness of the jug, sky and earth dwell<sup>228</sup>

He adds that:

The gift of the pouring out is drink for mortals. It quenches their thirst.<sup>229</sup>

But also that:

If the pouring is for consecration [...]. The outpouring is the libation poured out for the immortal gods.<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> Robert B. Stulberg, "Heidegger and the Origin of the Work of Art: An Explication." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 32, no. 2 (1973): 257–265. <https://doi.org/10.2307/429043>, p. 258: "In general, [Heidegger] disdains formal logic, preferring his own intuition; for him, logical thinking may at times impede or inhibit the search for "what is," while illogical, circular reasoning often can better reveal the truth." – an example of circularity would be the "thingness" of "things".

<sup>226</sup> Jussi Backman, Heidegger's Revolutionary (Anti-/Counter-/Post-)Modernism: A Rejoinder to Harri Mäcklin, "A Heideggerian Critique of Immersive Art", *Gatherings: The Heidegger Circle Annual* 11 (2021): 93–101, p. 99: "In my view, taking these features into account is of utmost importance for our current attempts to assess the continuing theoretical relevance of Heidegger, seriously compromised by the thinker's disturbing idiosyncrasies that have increasingly been brought to light with the publication of the Black Notebooks".

<sup>227</sup> Heidegger, *The Thing*, p. 167.

<sup>228</sup> Heidegger, *The Thing*, p. 170. *Das Ding*, p. 45: „Im Geschenk von Wasser, im Geschenk von Wein weilen jeweils Himmel und Erde. Das Geschenk des Gusses aber ist das Krughafte des Kruges. Im Wesen des Kruges weilen Erde und Himmel.“

<sup>229</sup> Heidegger, *The Thing*, p. 170. *Das Ding*, p. 45: „Das Geschenk des Gusses ist der Trunk für die Sterblichen. Er labt ihren Durst.“

<sup>230</sup> Heidegger, *The Thing*, p. 170. *Das Ding*, p. 45: „Jetzt wird das Geschenk des Gusses weder in einer Schenke geschenkt, noch ist das Geschenk ein Trunk für die Sterblichen. Der Guß ist der den unsterblichen Göttern gespendete Trank.“

It is then at this point that Heidegger suggests how a thing related to the preconditions of its own existence, as Sharr puts it.<sup>231</sup> It is at this point that we are given the fourfold (*Das Geviert*):

In the gift of the outpouring earth and sky, divinities and mortals dwell together all at once. These four, at one because of what they themselves are, belong together. Preceding everything that is present, they are enfolded into a single fourfold.<sup>232</sup>

Sharr asserts that the fourfold is more than just a way of dwelling. He stresses that through the 'fourfold' Heidegger seeks to set out the basic conditions of existence in which humans experience things.<sup>233</sup>

As Dreyfus puts it:

The fourfold names the different regions of our existence which can contribute to giving us a particular, localized way of dwelling.<sup>234</sup>

Heidegger asserts at the end of his essay that :

Men alone, as mortals, by dwelling attain to the world as world.<sup>235</sup>

Here one could possibly draw a parallel with Heraclitus, much admired by Heidegger.<sup>236</sup> So much so that Heidegger wrote:

Once, however, in the beginning of Western thinking, the essence of language flashed in the light of Being once, when Heraclitus thought the logos as his guiding word, so as to think in this word the Beings of beings. But the lightning abruptly vanished. No one held on to its streak of light and the nearness of what it illuminated.<sup>237</sup>

Sharr explains that these pre-requisites for existence are revisited in *Building Dwelling Thinking* as 'conditions in which people experience buildings'.<sup>238</sup>

Heidegger says:

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<sup>231</sup> Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects*, p. 24.

<sup>232</sup> Heidegger, *The Thing*, p. 171. *Das Ding*, p. 45 „Im Geschenk des Gusses weilen zumal Erde und Himmel. Diese Vier gehören, von sich her einig, zusammen. Sie sind, allem Anwesenden zu vorkommend, in ein einziges Geviert eingefaltet.“

<sup>233</sup> Heidegger, *The Thing*, p. 171.

<sup>234</sup> Hubert L. Dreyfus, Mark A. Wrathall , *A Companion to Heidegger*, 2005 by Blackwell Publishing Ltd, p. 14.

<sup>235</sup> Heidegger, *The Thing*, p. 180. *Das Ding*, p. 55: „Erst die Menschen als die Sterbhchen erlangen wohnend die Welt als Welt.“

<sup>236</sup> See Joanne B. Waugh, "Heraclitus: The Postmodern Presocratic?" *The Monist* 74, no. 4 (1991): 605–23. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27903265>.

<sup>237</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Early Greek Thinking* (Harper & Row Publishers, 1975), p. 78.

<sup>238</sup> Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects*, p. 30.

When we think, [...] about the relation between location and space, but also about the relation of man and space, a light falls on the nature of the things that are locations and that we call buildings.

He also says that:

The bridge is a thing of this sort. The location allows the simple onefold of earth and sky, of divinities and mortals, to enter into a site by arranging the site into spaces. The location makes room for the fourfold in a double sense. The location admits the fourfold and it-installs the fourfold.<sup>239</sup>

The location makes way (makes room) for the fourfold, as it ‘admits’ it and at the same time ‘installs’ it, in a unifying gesture of opening up the boundaries of such a place. In Malpas’s own words:

The unity that is established in the gathering of the Fourfold is thus the same unity as to be found in the opening up of a place and so in the establishing of the boundary or horizon<sup>240</sup> that is part of the structure of such a place.<sup>241</sup>

Malpas here explains that Heidegger by describing the gathering of the elements of the world which are brought together in and through particular things, a bridge, a jug and so also in particular ‘places’ is referring explicitly, to the concept of boundary itself tied to origin and to ground, something that is cleared and free within a boundary, or as he calls it (as seen above) ‘*peras*’.<sup>242</sup>

One may argue that the bridge is a very physical, thus not metaphorical, ‘thing’ describing the need for interconnectivity between human beings and their surroundings, nature or the environment. This bridge not only makes it possible to overcome a river, without disturbing it, but indeed, it connects other parts of those same surroundings to each other. Fusing itself with the surroundings in the process, the bridge becomes part of the whole structure keeping its identity as a manmade thing but at the same time fitting sometimes more, sometimes less, with

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<sup>239</sup> Heidegger, *Building Dwelling Thinking*, p. 336. *Bauen, Denken, Wohnen*. p. 32: “Die Brücke ist ein Ding solcher Art. Der Ort läßt die Einfalt von Erde und Himmel, von Göttlichen und von Sterblichen in eine Stätte ein, indem er die Stätte in Räume einrichtet. Der Ort räumt das Geviert in einem zwiefachen Sinne ein. Der Ort läßt das Geviert zu und der Ort richtet das Geviert ein.“

<sup>240</sup> Here we see convergence of Heidegger and Gadamer as pointed out in: Robert J. Dostal, ‘Gadamer’s Relation to Heidegger and to Phenomenology’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, ed. by Robert Dostal, Cambridge Companions to Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), pp. 334–54.

<sup>241</sup> Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place*, p. 113.

<sup>242</sup> Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place*, p. 114.

the rest. (Figure 18 shows this narrative explicitly: a green bridge fused into nature and allowing the fauna to traverse from one side to the other without being disturbed and, without disturbing, the traffic flow on the Autobahn).

Self-evidently, the bridge may also, be seen as an existential metaphor<sup>243</sup> through which human beings move beyond their limits. It may be interpreted as a symbol of human existence and a reflection of the essence of human life. The bridge, besides being a connection to other humans dwelling on the other side of itself, represents another way of 'being-in-the-world' by connecting with that same world, and overcoming the obstacles, it sometimes hurls at us. How? By crossing that bridge, human beings are able to transcend their individual limitations and establish a connection with a world yonder. A world, which was forbidden up until the bridge materialised. The bridge in this sense acquires meaning when considered in relation to its surroundings. It is in this sense of coexistence, that the bridge becomes meaningful. Similarly, the bridge makes it possible for human beings to be(ing)-in-the-world-with-others. The bridge is a reminder of the interdependence of all things: humans on each other and on their surroundings, as well as 'things', pristine and poetic, on each other and on humans.<sup>244</sup>

How does Heidegger do this? In his own words:

The bridge swings over the stream "with ease and power". It does not just connect banks that are already there. The banks emerge as banks only as the bridge crosses the stream. The bridge designedly causes them to lie across from each other. One side is set off against the other by the bridge. Nor do the banks stretch along the stream as indifferent border strips of the dry land. With the banks, the bridge brings to the stream the one and the other expanse of the landscape lying behind them. It brings stream and bank and land into each other's neighborhood. The bridge gathers the earth as landscape around the stream. Thus it guides and attends the stream through the meadows. Resting upright in the stream's bed, the bridge-piers bear the swing of the arches that leave the stream's waters to run their course. The waters may wander on quiet and gay, the sky's floods from storm or thaw may shoot past the piers in torrential waves-the bridge is ready for the sky's weather and its fickle nature. Even where the bridge covers the stream, it holds its flow up to the sky by taking it for a moment under the vaulted gateway and then setting it free once more<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> As Sharr points out in *Heidegger for Architects*, p.48 : "Although it also operates on the level of metaphor, Heidegger's hypothetical bridge was offered primarily as an example of an actual physical thing built as part of the world".

<sup>244</sup> See Spicher, 'The Distinct Basic Good of Aesthetic Experience', p. 712, 'Aesthetic experience includes natural objects as well as works of art'.

<sup>245</sup> Heidegger, Basic Writings, *Building Dwelling Thinking*, p. 330 *Bauen, Denken, Wohnen*, p. 26 : "Die Brücke schwingt sich «leicht und kräftig» über den Strom. Sie verbindet nicht nur schon vorhandene Ufer. Im Übergang der Brücke treten die Ufer erst als Ufer hervor. Die Brücke läßt sie eigens gegeneinander über liegen. Die andere

The ‘bridge’ as a ‘thing’ gathers the banks of the river, which ‘emerge’ because of the bridge.<sup>246</sup> One may interpret this passage through another two works of Heidegger’s, namely, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*,<sup>247</sup> and *Art and Space, Man and World*<sup>248</sup>. In the former Heidegger asserts that it is evident that the ‘actuality of things consists in their exercising the action of forces on each other’,<sup>249</sup> and in the latter he writes that ‘making-room (*Einräumen*) prepares for things the possibility to belong to their relevant whither and, out of this, to each other’.<sup>250</sup>

In the same vein, Malpas asserts that:

[...]the bridge appears as a bridge, not through the exercise of its own qualities in determining an otherwise featureless terrain, but through a coming to appearance in which bridge, river and the entirety of the countryside around it are gathered together as one and as many, and are thereby determined, in their being, as bridge, as river, as countryside.<sup>251</sup>

It is this essential gathering of elements in a mutual belonging together in which they come to presence that Heidegger also describes as the *Ereignis* – an event that is not to be understood as purely temporal, but as the temporalizing of space and the spatializing of time in the single gatheredness of place.

Sharr suggests that Heidegger proposed how the bridge might act as a thing in ‘gathering’ and ‘placing’ the fourfold.<sup>252</sup>

Heidegger presents an account of the way in which a world and its network of interconnections, is brought into view through the gathering of elements – of earth and

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*Seite ist durch die Brücke gegen die eine abgesetzt. Die Ufer ziehen auch nicht als gleichgültige Grenzstreifen des festen Landes den Strom entlang. Die Brücke bringt mit den Ufern jeweils die eine und die andere Weite der rückwärtigen Uferlandschaft an den Strom. Sie bringt Strom und Ufer und Land in die wechselseitige Nachbarschaft. Die Brücke versammelt die Erde als Landschaft um den Strom. So geleitet sie ihn durch die Auen. Die Brückenpfeiler tragen, aufruhend im Strombett, den Schwung der Bogen, die den Wassern des Stromes ihre Bahn lassen. Mögen die Wasser ruhig und munter fortwandern, mögen die Fluten des Himmels beim Gewittersturm oder der Schneeschmelze in reißenden Wogen um die Pfeilerbogen schießen, die Brücke ist bereit für die Wetter des Himmels und deren wendisches Wesen.”*

<sup>246</sup> Heidegger's concept of the bridge in *Building Dwelling Thinking* is a metaphorical device that he uses to illustrate the idea of connection and relationship between different things or concepts. .

<sup>247</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology, Revised Edition* (Indiana University Press, 1988).

<sup>248</sup> Ute Guzzoni, “III. Raum Und Ort, Raum Und Kunst, Raum Und Sprache,” in *Der Andere Heidegger* (Verlag Karl Alber, 2014), pp. 105–72 <<https://doi.org/10.5771/9783495860342-105>> [accessed 23 March 2025].

<sup>249</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology, Revised Edition* (Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 104.

<sup>250</sup> Heidegger, *Art and Space*, p. 6.

<sup>251</sup> Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place*, p. 24.

<sup>252</sup> Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects*, p.46.

sky, mortals and divinities (these four making up what Heidegger calls ‘the Fourfold [Das Geviert] that is also a Onefold) – around, not a work of art, but rather something more mundane – a jug of wine, a bridge. It is, according to Heidegger, only within the world, within the ‘spaces’ (not the abstract spaces of Galileo, Newton, or Einstein) opened up by such a gathering that human dwelling is possible.<sup>253</sup>

Sharr says:

Heidegger claimed dwelling to be a peaceful accommodation between individuals and the world, integral with building through the fourfold conditions of existence, which he restated.<sup>254</sup>

### **Place And Heimat**

Another important element in Heidegger’s philosophy of dwelling is the concept of ‘*Heimat*’. Whatever perception one has of dwelling, this dwelling has to happen in some place. A place one calls home. Home is not necessarily the place where one is born. Therefore, the idea that ‘*Heimat*’ is just another word for homeland – or fatherland – is perhaps overly simplistic. One may decide to make one’s ‘*Heimat*’ somewhere else and not one’s birthplace. Otherwise how could expatriates dwell if they did not call their new host country *Heimat*. Granted, some people never grow roots in their host country and in that case the host country is arguably not their *Heimat*. However, one’s roots and one’s rootedness may be quite different. One’s roots are somehow predetermined by one’s birth, but one’s rootedness may be arguably acquired. This newly acquired rootedness is dependent on and conditioned by a series of factors, such as employment, friends, partner, children, neighbours, safety, religion, culture and the like. In other words this rootedness is indeed conditioned by what Harries would call the community ethos. At any rate, the metaphor of ‘roots’ may be extended to include a transplanting of one’s existence from one’s birthplace to one’s new home.

Whilst, it may be true that Heidegger’s rootedness (*Bodenständigkeit*) and roots tally in that they both reside in the same ‘Alemannic-Swabian soil’, this may be a subjective phenomenon specific to him (and of course many others) but not a universally applicable phenomenon. Even if this is so, Heidegger’s philosophy in this regard may still have something to contribute to what is needed for one to feel at home in a place, and thus to dwell in that place.

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<sup>253</sup> Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place*, p. 252.

<sup>254</sup> Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects*, p. 37.

In this context, Malpas explains that:

[...]one finds, at the same time as Heidegger's thought orients itself more towards more clearly 'place-oriented' or 'geographic' conceptions, a shift away from, and sometimes direct criticism of, key elements of associated with Nazi ideology.<sup>255</sup>

Would it make sense to live in a place one despises and feels uncomfortable in, and still remain there? Would such a place deserve to be called home? Objectively speaking, any rational human being would answer in the negative to both questions. These questions arise only when one has a choice to live in a particular place. When one is forcefully displaced, one does not have the luxury to ask such questions. However, it is also true that those who are forcefully displaced are an exception and probably do not necessarily fall within the parameters of what Heidegger is talking about. Then another question arises: would it not make more sense if one who despises one's current location would be better off if one changes such location to somewhere where one can call home, and around which one may more meaningfully (or fulfilling-ly) build a life for oneself? In other words, given a choice then, would not one be better off if one could possibly dwell instead of just lodge in a place?

In this sense, dwelling becomes building of one's life around a place one would call home. In other words dwelling becomes itself an act of self-realisation.

This view reinforces the thesis put forward in the current research that there are at least two aspects to, generally speaking everything, and more specifically to architecture: the content and the form. We perceive architecture through its physical manifestation – which translates into aesthetic experience, which will be dealt with in the next section.

Dwelling is not just lodging or existing in a particular location, it is indeed living in place one would call home. Which human being would build a life around a place and call that place home and not try to live that life, in that place, in the best way one could? In other words, who would live in a place and not attempt to live well in that place?

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<sup>255</sup> Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place*, p. 181.

In the second part of this chapter we shall mainly deal with the basic good of aesthetic experience as its visual manifestation into art, according to Finnis, and see how it can be interpreted within the context of Heidegger's conception of art as a "thing". From there on we shall explore more specifically how this idea of aesthetic experience as art and art as a thing, relates to architecture. In other words we shall see if the idea of 'dwelling' and 'art' may be integrated into architecture.

### **Form - Architecture As A Work Of Art**

In the previous section the idea of dwelling and how it may give rise to well-being ([d]well-being) has been discussed. The bottom line of that discussion is that building, thus architecture, is meant for dwelling and that dwelling implies well-being, in order for it to be worthy. Indeed, Heidegger asserts that *bauen*, building in reality means dwelling. Here we now turn to the way this dwelling manifests itself to human beings. It does so inevitably through their senses. Since, architecture is an unavoidable presence, the mode by which humans perceive it, remains visual, in the main.<sup>256</sup> So, it is not by coincidence that most architecture is dubbed as art. Also not a coincidence that Finnis considers aesthetic experience, of which art is the man-made embodiment, as a fundamental basic good necessary for human all-round flourishing. One initial premise has to be made, the everyday understanding of what is meant by art is that it is the embodiment of man-made aesthetic experience (also commonly known as beauty).

One must say something about the expression 'aesthetic experience' before proceeding to how Heidegger sees the whole idea of art and aesthetics. Alexander Baumgarten appears to have coined the term "aesthetics"<sup>257</sup> deriving it from *aisthêsis* the Greek word for "sensation" or "feeling".<sup>258</sup> Evidently, modern "aesthetics" was originally conceived as the science of *aisthêta*, matters perceptible by the senses, as opposed to *noêma*, matters accessible to thought alone, like the truths dealt with in mathematical logic.<sup>259</sup> In fact, aesthetics is born of the

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<sup>256</sup> Since some architecture may have other sensory components like olfactory and auditory components, such is the case of power-stations, ports and railways and tactile like public stairs, pavements and roads for example.

<sup>257</sup> See amongst others : Tomáš Hlobil, 'Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten: Ästhetik', *Estetika. The European Journal of Aesthetics*, 46(1), 105-110, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33134/eja.54> p.105.

<sup>258</sup> Thomson, 'Heidegger's Aesthetics'. Part 2.1

<sup>259</sup> Thomson, *ibid.*

ambition to be in the sphere of ‘sensuousness’ just as ‘logic is in the domain of thinking’.<sup>260</sup> So aesthetics seeks to understand our relation to the beautiful.<sup>261</sup>

However, as will be seen, for Heidegger, the only way to get beyond mere ‘aesthetics’ is first to understand how art shapes us and then seek to pass through and beyond that influence, so accessing the true role of artworks which can ‘quietly play in forming and informing our historical worlds’.<sup>262</sup> Heidegger thinks that only such thinking about art can allow us to recognize and restore art’s true meaning, helping us recognise the inconspicuous way in which art works to shape our basic sense of what ‘is’ and what is truly meaningful.<sup>263</sup>

Most importantly for this section, and truly for the whole research, is the fact that for Heidegger, any attempt to disconnect art from politics, philosophy, and other history-shaping movements would not even be thinkable without the prior reduction of art to mere ‘aesthetics’ that he criticizes.<sup>264</sup>

### **Ars Imitator Naturam**

Heidegger considers that, at its greatest, art “grounds history” by allowing truth to spring forth. Art is the spring that leaps to the truth of what is.<sup>265</sup>

As we did at the outset of the research, one ought to restate the obvious fact that aesthetic experience may be both pristine and poetic. Beauty then, is not the monopoly of human beings. The hills surrounding Tawern (Figure 25) are a marvellous creation of nature and pleasing as they are have no purpose besides being what they are. However, The High Cathedral of Saint Peter in Trier, (Figure 26) is a masterpiece of human ingenuity. These two examples have little in common but they are both the origin of what one may call aesthetic experience.

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<sup>260</sup> Thomson, *ibid.*

<sup>261</sup> Thomson, *ibid.*

<sup>262</sup> Iain Thomson, ‘1. Introduction to “Heidegger’s Aesthetics”: Beyond the Oxymoron’, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2019 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2019/entries/heidegger-aesthetics/>>. [accessed on 2.9.23]

<sup>263</sup> Thomson, ‘Beyond the Oxymoron’, Introduction.

<sup>264</sup> Thomson ‘Beyond the Oxymoron’, Introduction.

<sup>265</sup> Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 75. “Art is history in the essential sense that it grounds history”; and ‘Art lets truth originate. Art, founding preserving, is the spring that leaps to the truth of what is, in the work. To originate something by a leap, to bring something into being from out of the source of its nature in a founding leap—this is what the word origin (German Ursprung, literally, primal leap) mean”. Heidegger, *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, in *Holzwege*, p. 65. “Die Kunst ist Geschichte in dem wesentlichen Sinne, daß sie Geschichte gründet“.

Having said that, on closer examination one sees other similarities between the two forms of aesthetic experience, in that they both geometrically start from a wide base and come to a more tapered, converging upper part.

The old adage *ars imitator natura* still holds even if interpreted in Heideggerian sense. Since Heidegger asserts that art ‘is the setting itself-to-work of truth’<sup>266</sup> nature indeed is presumably true to itself. Nature cannot fake anything or lie. It is in actual fact the only tangible (ontic)<sup>267</sup> benchmark we, as humans, have readily available.



FIGURE 25 THE HILLS OF TAWERN, GERMANY. PHOTOGRAPH: ALAN XUEREB.

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<sup>266</sup> Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, p.19.

<sup>267</sup> Indeed according to Thomson ‘Heidegger’s interpretation of Van Gogh allows him to move phenomenologically from the analysis of a particular, individual (“ontic”) work of art to the ontological structure of artwork in general’. Iain Thomson, “Heidegger’s Aesthetics,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2019 <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2019/entries/heidegger-aesthetics>> [accessed 28 March 2025].



FIGURE 26 THE HIGH CATHEDRAL OF SAINT PETER IN TRIER - PHOTOGRAPH: BERTHOLD WERNER RELEASED TO PUBLIC DOMAIN.

Heidegger considers the way an ancient Greek temple at Paestum (Figure 27) once functioned to help unify its historical world by tacitly reinforcing a particular sense of what ‘is’ and what is meaningful <sup>268</sup>:

It is the temple-work that first fits together and at the same time gathers around itself the unity of those paths and relations in which birth and death, disaster and blessing, victory and disgrace, endurance and decline acquire the shape of destiny for human being<sup>269</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> Thomson, ‘Heidegger’s Aesthetics’, 1.1.

<sup>269</sup> Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 42. Holzwege, *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, p. 31: „Das Tempelwerk fügt erst und sammelt zugleich um sich die Einheit jener Bahnen und Bezüge, in denen Geburt und Tod, Unheil und Segen, Sieg und Schmach, Ausharren und Verfall die Gestalt und den Lauf des Menschenwesens in seinem Geschick gewinnen“



FIGURE 27 - TWO GREEK TEMPLES TO HERA IN PAESTUM, ITALY. PHOTOGRAPH: OLIVER-BONJOCH,WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.

Thomson interprets this as meaning that great artworks<sup>270</sup> ‘work’ in the background of the various historical worlds, by ‘partially embodying’ and thus ‘selectively reinforcing’ a historical community’s implicit sense of what ‘is’ and what is meaningful.<sup>271</sup>

Furthermore, Thomson explains that Heidegger follows a doctrine earlier subscribed to by Hegel called ‘*ontological historicity*’, which basically boils down to meaning that:

[...]humanity’s fundamental experience of reality changes over time (sometimes dramatically), and he suggests that the *work* of art helps explain the basic mechanism of this historical transformation of intelligibility<sup>272</sup>

Heidegger emphasises that:

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<sup>270</sup> Young tells us that “Art is only great if, like the Greek temple or medieval cathedral, it possesses world-historical significance. Julian Young, *Heidegger’s Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 7.

<sup>271</sup> Thomson, ‘Heidegger’s Aesthetics’, 1.1. Thomson uses the term ‘what matters’.

<sup>272</sup> Thomson, *ibid.*

Thus art is: the creative preserving of truth in the work. Art then is the becoming and happening of truth. Does truth, then, arise out of nothing?<sup>273</sup>

So according to Heidegger, great artworks facilitate the establishing of the tacit ‘ontology and ethics’<sup>274</sup> through which a ‘historical community understands itself and its world’. Thomson thinks that in accordance with this doctrine of ontological historicity, ‘Heidegger understands “truth” ontologically as the historically-dynamic disclosure of intelligibility in time’.<sup>275</sup>

This historical unfolding of truth takes place as a struggle to “dis-close” or “un-conceal”<sup>276</sup> that which conceals<sup>277</sup> itself. Heidegger calls “world” and “earth” this “essential strife” between two interconnected dimensions of intelligibility.<sup>278</sup>

In Heidegger’s own words:

Truth is the unconcealedness of that which is as something that is. Truth is the truth of Being. Beauty does not occur alongside and apart from this truth. When truth sets itself into the work, it appears. Appearance—as this being of truth in the work and as work—is beauty. Thus the beautiful belongs to the advent of truth, truth’s taking of its place. It does not exist merely relative to pleasure and purely as its object. The beautiful does lie in form, but only because the *forma* once took its light from Being as the isness of what is. Being at that time made its advent as *eidōs*.<sup>279</sup>

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<sup>273</sup> Heidegger *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 69. Holzwege, *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes* p. 59: “Also ist die Kunst: die schaffende Bewahrung der Wahrheit im Werk. Dann ist die Kunst ein Werden und Geschehen der Wahrheit. Dann entsteht die Wahrheit aus dem Nichts?”

<sup>274</sup> Thomson, ‘Heidegger’s Aesthetics’, 1.1.

<sup>275</sup> Thomson, *ibid.*

<sup>276</sup> ‘*a-lêtheia*’ is the Greek word for Truth. Although it is frequently difficult to render ancient Greek words into modern European languages with great precision, in this case this translation is not particularly problematic or controversial. See Taylor Carman, ‘Alêtheia’, *The Cambridge Heidegger Lexicon*, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/9780511843778.009> Publisher: Cambridge University Press Print publication year: 2021 pp. 34–36; As Michael Watts explains ‘Philosophy is the search for truth. Heidegger claimed that essentially there are two main approaches to truth. The traditional one, which has existed at least since Plato, claims that the truth can be defined in terms of specific criteria for assessing true or false propositions. In contrast, Heidegger investigates the meaning or essence of truth that exists independently of, and prior to, any criteria. “Truth”, in his sense of the word, is no mere presentation of static facts, but the experience of a process of disclosure that is alive and happening in each moment. For Heidegger such “truth” is the essential foundation of all knowledge.’ Michael Watts ‘The “Truth of Alêtheia” and Language’, in *The Philosophy of Heidegger, Continental European Philosophy* (Acumen Publishing, 2011), pp. 141–74.

<sup>277</sup> ‘*lêthe*’ – Michael Watts explains that: ‘He hints at the nature of this process via his choice of the Greek word *alêtheia*, which contains the word *lethe*, meaning forgetfulness. In *Being and Time* Heidegger discusses how truth can be seen in the disclosure of the “meaning” of ordinary everyday events and things. In his later works he adds that “the essence of truth is the truth of essence” (“On the Essence of Truth”, in *Basic Writings*: 137). Michael Watts, ‘The “Truth of Alêtheia” and Language’, in *The Philosophy of Heidegger, Continental European Philosophy* (Acumen Publishing, 2011), pp. 141–74.

<sup>278</sup><sup>278</sup> Thomson *ibid.* ‘revealing and concealing’.

<sup>279</sup> Heidegger *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 79. Holzwege, *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes* p. 67: “Die Wahrheit ist die Unverborgenheit des Seienden als des Seienden. Die Wahrheit ist die Wahrheit des Seins. Die Schönheit kommt nicht neben dieser Wahrheit vor. Wenn die Wahrheit sich in das Werk setzt, erscheint sie. Das Erscheinen

In this sense then, works of art function as ‘ontological *paradigms*’, serving the communities they exist in equally as “models of” and “models for” reality, which means that artworks can variously “manifest,” “articulate,” or even “reconfigure” the historical ontologies undergirding their cultural worlds.<sup>280</sup> Heidegger sees art then as representing reality and somehow as well adding to it. The implications of this way of thinking are important to the ultimate goal of this research. If this line of thought is followed, then art becomes a revolutionary tool that impact the community. A tool which simultaneously is hermeneutical and normative. Art becomes a political tool that quietly influences in one or the other direction. This confirms one of the underpinning assumptions of this research, that everything is political. We have already seen that seeing architecture as the crystallisation of dwelling implies, or at least is conducive to well-being. A type of well-being that we are calling existential fulfilment. Now here, we are considering that architecture even when seen as a work of art, one, the presence of which cannot be avoided in the community, may also be a normative tool. The suggestion in this research is that that tool in its application to architecture, ought to be used for the individual and collective well-being of the community it stands in, and thus for the common good.

That is to say, ‘great art’ is capable of overpowering the apathy of existing traditions and moving the ‘interconnected ontological and ethical wheels of history’, either giving us a new sense of what is and what matters or else fundamentally transforming the established ontology and ethics through which we make sense of the world and ourselves. Young rightly recognises “the inseparability of ontology and ethics” as “a thesis fundamental to all phases of Heidegger’s thinking”.<sup>281</sup>

Following from Heidegger, Young explains that there is the ‘necessity for the grounding of [ethics] in [ontology]’. So much so that Young claims that (i) ontology is necessary to the grounding of ethics, and (ii) the claim that it is sufficient.<sup>282</sup>

The question that arises naturally is what type of ethics is Young talking about? Young explains that Heidegger is wary of the platonic dichotomy of separating ‘form of the good’ and ‘the other forms’ leading to Hume’s separation of fact and value or ‘is’ and ‘ought’ leads to the

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*ist, als dieses Sein der Wahrheit im Werk und als Werk, die Schönheit. So gehört das Schöne in das Sichereignen der Wahrheit. Es ist nicht nur relativ auf das Gefallen und lediglich als dessen Gegenstand. Das Schöne beruht indessen in der Form, aber nur deshalb, weil die forma einst aus dem Sein als der Seiendheit des Seienden sich lichtete. Damals ereignete sich das Sein als εἶδος.”*

<sup>280</sup> Thomson, ‘Heidegger’s Aesthetics’, 1.1.

<sup>281</sup> Young, *Heidegger’s Philosophy of Art*, p. 24.

<sup>282</sup> Young, *Heidegger’s Philosophy of Art*, p.24.

dangerous situation 'in which people in general experience the values of their culture, then moral nihilism sets in'.<sup>283</sup> The reason of Heidegger's fear of this dichotomy is due to what is here explained by Young in the following passage:

The realm of being, of 'fact', constitutes, for us, what we discover, simply acknowledge to be the case. If, then, values are expelled from that domain then, inevitably, they become assigned to the realm of what we make to be the case, the realm of human invention or, as Heidegger puts it in the 'Letter on Humanism', 'fabrication'<sup>284</sup>

Young carries on explaining Heidegger's ethical analysis:

If they are someone else's fabrications then their only source of authority is the power of the other, an authority which is quite different from, in Kant's language, the 'unconditional' character of genuinely ethical authority.<sup>285</sup>

On the other hand the individual test is also not viable according to Heidegger, Young says :

If, on the other hand, one's values are one's own fabrications - Heidegger is attacking, here, in particular, Sartre's notion that one must choose one's own fundamental values - then, if the going gets tough, one can simply unfabricate, unchoose them so that, again, they lack genuine authority.<sup>286</sup>

So far, Young is giving what ethics Heidegger excludes, but what is he after then? Values divorced from facts are impotent says Heidegger. According to Young the latter thinks that the 'grounding of man's historical existence on beings as a whole' can establish an authoritative ethic.<sup>287</sup>

Young points out that in *The Origin of the Work of Art* Heidegger says that '[h]e who truly knows (*weiß*) what is, knows (*weiß*) what he wills in the midst of being (*des Seienden*)'<sup>288</sup>

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<sup>283</sup> Young, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art*, p. 25.

<sup>284</sup> Young, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art*, p.25. "Otherwise all law remains merely something fabricated by human reason' p. 239 letter to Humanism.

<sup>285</sup> Young, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art*, p. 25.

<sup>286</sup> Young, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art*, p. 25.

<sup>287</sup> Young, *ibid.*

<sup>288</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe: Veröffentlichte Schriften 1914-1970. Holzwege. I. Abteilung. Bd.5* (Vittorio Klostermann, 2003) p. 55: „*Wer wahrhaft das Seiende weiß, weiß, was er inmitten des Seienden will.*”.

This would mean that:

Heidegger, however, says that he who properly knows 'what is', 'knows what he wills in the midst of what is', in other words that fully understanding one's world is not only knowing the 'fitting'<sup>289</sup> life but also being motivated to lead such a life<sup>290</sup>

However one question still needs to be answered. In practice, one may well, know the kind of conduct fitting, in a given frame of reference, and still be reluctant to act in the 'fitting' way. This according to Young demonstrates that there is more to 'truly know what is'. In an explanatory note Young gives us a partial answer to this question. He says that in ordinary German '*gestatte*' means 'permitted'. According to him Heidegger attempt here to argue that there is an etymological connection between 'place' and 'ethos', to suggest that the ethical is what belongs to the place. In Youngs own words that:

[...]the right life is the 'fitting', or as we would say 'appropriate' life, the life that is 'in place' in one's place. In the 'Letter on Humanism' Heidegger claims that thought in a properly Greek way 'ethos' simply means 'place', 'place of dwelling (*ἦθος bedeutet Aufenthalt, Ort des Wohnens*<sup>291</sup>).<sup>292</sup>

If what Young is implying above is true, and art is capable of transforming our reality ontologically and ethically then, a phenomenological, *qua* Heideggerian perspective of art, makes it possible to have architecture for the common good. Why? Because, if for Heidegger,

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<sup>289</sup> In some more detail see: *Letter to Humanism*, in *Martin Heidegger, Basic Writings*, ed. by David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), p. 231: "Soon after Being and Time appeared a young friend asked me, "When are you going to write an ethics?" Where the essence of man is thought so essentially, i.e., solely from the question concerning the truth of Being, but still without elevating man to the centre of beings, a longing necessarily awakens for a peremptory directive and for rules that say how man, experienced from eksistence toward Being, ought to live in a fitting manner. The desire for an ethics presses ever more ardently for fulfilment as the obvious no less than the hidden perplexity of man soars to immeasurable heights. The greatest care must be fostered upon the ethical bond at a time when technological man, delivered over to mass society, can be kept reliably on call only by gathering and ordering all his plans and activities in a way that corresponds to technology."

<sup>290</sup> Young, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art*, p.28.

<sup>291</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Wegmarken, Über Den Humanismus* (Band 9, Frankfurt A.M.: Verlag Vittorio Klostermann, 1976), p. 354.

<sup>292</sup> Young, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art*, p. 28. (footnote 22).

art cannot be disconnected from politics as seen above, then it stands to reason that architecture, even when viewed as a work of art, may be ethically<sup>293</sup> linked to the common good.

This means that it is not only possible, but desirable to connect the Heideggerian perception of aesthetic experience<sup>294</sup> embodied in art - in all areas art operates - to the Natural Law viewpoint offered by Finnis regarding the common good. This analysis will be dealt with in the last chapter, but suffice it to say for the moment that the aesthetic experience is, in many ways, a component of what we call human flourishing understood in this research as the goal of well-being, understood that is, in relation to architecture, in content as dwelling, and in form, as a work of art.

## **Phenomenology Versus Subjectivism**

Thomson asserts that Heidegger traces “subjectivism” back to Plato, whose doctrine of the ideas begins a movement whereby truth is no longer understood solely in terms of the manifestation of entities themselves but, instead, becomes a feature of our own “representational” capacities. In this way, truth becomes a matter of the way we secure our knowledge of entities rather than of the prior way entities disclose themselves to us. Heidegger characterizes humanity’s ongoing attempt to master every aspect of our objective reality as “subjectivism” in the first place.<sup>295</sup> Heidegger suggests that this problem is not merely theoretical, because the subjectivism of the modern worldview functions historically like a self-fulfilling prophecy.<sup>296</sup> Heidegger is thus an ‘ethical realist’,<sup>297</sup> one whose phenomenological investigations led him to recognize that the world is no mute partner but, rather, actively

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<sup>293</sup> This idea of the ethical function of architecture will be discussed in Chapter 4 dealing with Karsten Harries’s philosophy of architecture. Ethical here means as distinct from an aesthetic response. Ethical in that broad sense in which Heidegger attributes to the Greek temple an ethical function.

<sup>294</sup> As Thomson explains it: “Heidegger suggests that the best way to get beyond aesthetic experience is to transcend it from within (that is, to experience the way a subject’s experience of an aesthetic object can lead beyond or beneath itself)” Thomson, ‘Heidegger’s Aesthetics’, 2.6.

<sup>295</sup> See: John Marmysz, *The Path of Philosophy: Truth, Wonder, and Distress* (Cengage Learning, 2011), p.49:

<sup>296</sup> Thomson, ‘Heidegger’s Aesthetics’, 2.6.

<sup>297</sup> Heidegger's position on ethical realism is a subject of debate among scholars, with interpretations varying depending on the emphasis placed on different aspects of his philosophy. Proponents of the view that Heidegger is an ethical realist often draw upon his concept of authenticity and his critique of modernity to support their argument.. On the other hand, critics of the ethical realist interpretation point to Heidegger's rejection of traditional ethics and his emphasis on ontology as evidence to the contrary. Charles Guignon, in his essay ‘Authenticity, Moral Values, and Psychotherapy’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, ed. by Charles B. Guignon, Cambridge Companions to Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 268–92, highlights Heidegger's critique of subjectivity and his assertion that human existence is always already embedded in a particular historical and cultural context.

contributes to our most profound sense of what is meaningful, because the world he is in affects him.<sup>298</sup>

In other words, Heidegger does not deny the reality of the subject/object relation but, rather, points out that our experience of this subject/object relation derives from and so presupposes a more fundamental level of experience, a primordial modality of engaged existence in which self and world are united rather than divided. In Heidegger's words:

Modern subjectivism, to be sure, immediately misinterprets creation, taking it as the self-sovereign subject's performance of genius<sup>299</sup>

Heidegger thus insists that this more primordial level of practically engaged, "hands-on" existence—in which self and world are unified—must be the starting point of any description of ordinary human experience that seeks to do justice to what such experience is really like, a phenomenological dictum Heidegger insists should also govern our attempts to describe our meaningful encounters with works of art.<sup>300</sup>

In *The Origin of the Work of Art*, Heidegger presents his phenomenological conception of "existence" as a way to challenge and rise above the modern subject/object dichotomy:

However, in existence, man does not proceed from some inside to some outside; rather, the nature of *Existenz* is outstanding standing-within the essential sunderance of the clearing of beings<sup>301</sup>

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<sup>298</sup> Thomson, 'Heidegger's Aesthetics', 2.6.

<sup>299</sup> Heidegger, *The Origin of the Work of Art*, p. 73. *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, pp.63-64 "Der moderne Subjektivismus mißdeutet freilich das Schöpferische sogleich im Sinne der genialen Leistung des selbstherrlichen Subjektes".

<sup>300</sup> Thomson, 'Heidegger's Aesthetics', 2.6.

<sup>301</sup> Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 65. *Holzwege*, p.55: "In der Existenz geht jedoch der Mensch nicht erst aus einem Innern zu einem Draußen hinaus, sondern das Wesen der Existenz ist das ausstehende Innestehen im wesenhaften Auseinander der Lichtung des Seienden."

According to Thomson, Heidegger's 'post-aesthetic thinking' about the work of art seeks then to describe the usually unnoticed way in which artworks can form and inform our basic historical sense of 'what is' and 'what matters'.<sup>302</sup>

Thomson thinks that following on from this argument aesthetics looks for art at a derivative rather than primordial level of human interaction with the world, and what it finds there is not the true work of art.<sup>303</sup>

Albert Hofstadter in the introduction of *Poetry, Language, Thought*, asserts that:

There is a world of difference between man's present life as technological being under the aegis of *Gestell*, frame, framing—in which everything, including man himself, becomes material for a process of self-assertive production, self-assertive imposition of human will on things regardless of their own essential natures—and a life in which he would genuinely dwell as a human being.<sup>304</sup>

This "*Gestell*" is Heidegger's renowned term for the technological understanding of being that underlies and shapes our contemporary age.<sup>305</sup> Heidegger in the epilogue of *Poetry, Language, Thought*, contends that aesthetic experience is where art dies.<sup>306</sup> As the 'human subject' turns its subjectivist compulsion to <sup>307</sup> control the 'objective world back onto itself in such neuroscientific experimentation, aesthetics increasingly becomes just one more approach reinforcing the technological "enframing" of all reality'.<sup>308</sup>

Moreover, the ultimate goal of Heidegger's reasoning about art is to demonstrate what it would mean to move from a modern aesthetic experience of an art object to a genuinely post-modern encounter with a work of art. This in order to learn from art how to 'transcend modernity from within'.<sup>309</sup>

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<sup>302</sup> Thomson, 'Heidegger's Aesthetics', 2.6.

<sup>303</sup> Thomson, 'Heidegger's Aesthetics', 2.6.

<sup>304</sup> Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, Introduction, xiv.

<sup>305</sup> Thomson, 'Heidegger's Aesthetics', 2.6.

<sup>306</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 77.

<sup>307</sup> As some scholars would see it there is a form of *libido dominandi* - 'a Latin phrase, when translated it means 'a desire to dominate' or 'lust for power.' This phrase can be used to describe the attributes of the "City of man," an idea that St. Augustine of Hippo explores in his book *City of God*. See on this point: Michael E. Jones, 'Libido Dominandi : Sexual Liberation and Political Control' St. Augustine's Press (2005).

<sup>308</sup> Thomson, 'Heidegger's Aesthetics', 2.6.

<sup>309</sup> Thomson, 'Heidegger's Aesthetics', 2.6.

In Heidegger's own words when we encounter a true work of art:

The standing of the statue (*das Anwesen*) is different from the standing of what stands over against us [*Gegenstand*] in the sense of the object [*Objekt*].<sup>310</sup>

Julian Young explains that great works of art, gather 'together an entire culture to witness this charismatic presencing of world'. Whilst Hernandez suggests that Heidegger's decision to employ the term '*Anwesen*' to express his own conception of being can be seen as part of his effort to reach a balance between several aspects of the said conception.<sup>311</sup>

Heidegger's concept of encountering a true work of art involves a unique form of "standing" or presence (*Anwesen*) that differs from the ordinary object-subject relationship.<sup>312</sup> This presence is not merely physical but encompasses a deeper ontological significance, revealing aspects of Being itself rather than just entities within the world.<sup>313</sup> The use of "*Anwesen*" by Heidegger reflects his attempt to articulate a complex understanding of being that goes beyond traditional metaphysical concepts.<sup>314</sup> This approach aligns with his broader philosophical project of exploring the nature of existence and our relationship to the world. Young's interpretation suggests that great artworks have the power to unite an entire culture in witnessing this "charismatic presencing of world," emphasizing the communal and transformative potential of art.<sup>315</sup> In summary, Heidegger's perspective on encountering true art involves a profound engagement with being that transcends ordinary perception. This view challenges traditional aesthetic theories by situating the artwork not as a mere object of contemplation but as a medium through which fundamental aspects of existence and cultural meaning are revealed.<sup>316</sup>

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<sup>310</sup> Heidegger, *Holzwege*, pp. 70-71. 'Das Stehen des Standbildes (d. h. das Anwesen des anblickenden Scheinens) ist anderes als das Stehen des Gegenstandes im Sinne des Objektes'.

<sup>311</sup> Juan Hernández, 'How Presencing (*Anwesen*) Became Heidegger's Concept Of Being', *Universitas Philosophica*. 28. 213-240.

<sup>312</sup> Eva Gothlin, "Reading Simone de Beauvoir with Martin Heidegger," in *The Cambridge Companion to Simone de Beauvoir*, ed. by Claudia Card (Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 45–65 <<https://doi.org/10.1017/ccol0521790964.003>> [accessed 11 December 2024].

<sup>313</sup> Louis A. Sass, "Heidegger, Schizophrenia and the Ontological Difference," *Philosophical Psychology*, 5.2 (1992), 109–32 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09515089208573047>>.

<sup>314</sup> Santiago Zabala, *The Hermeneutic Nature of Analytic Philosophy* (Columbia University Press, 2008) <<https://doi.org/10.7312/zaba14388>> [accessed 23 March 2025].

<sup>315</sup> Noel Carroll, "Art and Interaction," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 45.1 (1986), 57 <<https://doi.org/10.2307/430466>>.

<sup>316</sup> Eleonora Belfiore and Oliver Bennett, "Determinants of Impact: Towards a Better Understanding of Encounters with the Arts," *Cultural Trends*, 16.3 (2007), 225–75 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09548960701479417>>. Also Carroll, 'Art and Interaction'.

The concept of "*Anwesen*" thus serves as a key to understanding Heidegger's unique contribution to art philosophy and his broader ontological investigations.

The concept of 'presencing' is crucial to this research because it is being claimed here that architecture is an 'unavoidable presence' and as such it has a direct impact on its surroundings in an existential manner. Just to recall, that claim is supported by two other assumptions, namely that architecture's content is actually dwelling and that its form manifests itself to humans as a work of art. Thus, since in this section the latter is being tackled, it is very important to clarify what a work of art is, or should be according to Heidegger. What Finnis considers to be a basic value - aesthetic experience - is not enough, presumably, to satisfy, the onus Heidegger places on whatever 'thing' that may call itself, art.<sup>317</sup> Having said that one cannot deny that there is an element of aesthetic experience in all art it is just not exclusively that.<sup>318</sup> It is subjective and reductive. Heidegger takes this to the next level by creating a link between the work of art and the rest of the community in a particular time. In this sense he *popularises* the work of art, making it, not just a personal *qua* subjective phenomenon but more of a social *qua* objective phenomenon. Not only that, as seen, Heidegger connects it to politics and history and firmly asserts that it can actually reconfigure both not just represent these two concepts. The question arises, as Thomson says, of what exactly is the difference between an aesthetic experience of an art object and an encounter with the true "presencing" of a work of art?<sup>319</sup>

In the final version of this famous essay, Heidegger reflects on three different works of art: Vincent van Gogh's painting of "A Pair of Shoes" (Figure 28); C. F. Meyer's poem entitled "The Roman Fountain" and the Greek temple at Paestum. The latter is the most important for this research since it is a building and as such an unavoidable presence. Heidegger asserts that:

All art as the letting happen of the advent of the truth of what is, is, as such, essentially poetry<sup>320</sup>

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<sup>317</sup> Even because Finnis does not tell us much about it.

<sup>318</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law*, pp. 87-88 : "Aesthetic experience, unlike play, need not involve an action of one's own; what is sought after and valued for its own sake may simply be the beautiful form 'outside' one, and the 'inner' experience of appreciation of its beauty". Heidegger adds another dimension to this. He basically says that 'truth of Being' is where, when and why beauty really occurs: "Beauty does not occur alongside and apart from this truth [of Being]". Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. by Albert Hofstadter (HarperCollins Publishers, 2001), p. 79.

<sup>319</sup> Thomson, 'Heidegger's Aesthetics', 2.8.

<sup>320</sup> Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p.70. in the original: Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe: Veröffentlichliche Schriften 1914-1970. Holzwege. I. Abteilung. Bd.5* (Vittorio Klostermann, 2003), p.59: „Alle Kunst ist als Geschehenlassen der Ankunft der Wahrheit des Seienden als eines solchen im Wesen Dichtung“

Heidegger's depiction of the lost temple supports his pursuit for a 'non-aesthetic encounter with art', as Thomson asserts, but not because he seeks some sentimental return to the Greek world, as is often claimed.<sup>321</sup> So much so that Heidegger dismisses such a restoration as an impossibility because the ancient temple 'no longer gathers its historical world around it and thus no longer works as great art',<sup>322</sup> and such "[w]orld-withdrawal and world-decay can never be undone".<sup>323</sup>



FIGURE 22 PAINTING BY VINCENT VAN GOGH, 1886, SCHOENEN - VAN GOGH MUSEUM.  
PHOTOGRAPH: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.

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<sup>321</sup> Thomson, 'Heidegger's Aesthetics', 3.

<sup>322</sup> Thomson, 'Heidegger's Aesthetics', 3.

<sup>323</sup> Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p.40. *Holzwege*, p. 26: "Weltentzug und Weltzerfall sind nie mehr rückgängig zu machen."

Thomson believes, and his thesis is preferred in this research, that Heidegger's Greek temple depiction confirms that art was once encountered in a way other than as a 'subject's intense aesthetic experience of an object'.<sup>324</sup> The suggestion then is that, while that ancient world has been lost 'irretrievably', other works of art might yet be 'encountered non-aesthetically' in this 'late-modern world'. Heidegger thus elaborates his philosophical vision of how the temple worked for a time to unify a coherent and meaningful historical world around itself (by inconspicuously focusing and illuminating its people's sense of what is and what matters) in order to suggest that a non-aesthetic encounter with art might yet do the same thing once again.<sup>325</sup> A work of art might yet help to gather a new historical world around itself by focusing and illuminating an understanding of being that does not reduce entities either to modern objects to be controlled or to late-modern resources to be optimized.

In Thomson's own words:

While Heidegger's project is thus undeniably inspired by the past, this inspiration serves his goal of helping us move historically into the future. His guiding hope, we have seen, is that a non-aesthetic encounter with a contemporary artwork will help us learn to understand the being of entities not as modern objects ("subjectivism") or as late-modern resources ("enframing") but in a genuinely post-modern way, thereby making another historical beginning.<sup>326</sup>

In fact, *The Origin of the Work of Art* does attempt to uncover and communicate art's historical "essence," by which Heidegger means that structure which allows art to reveal itself in different ways as it unfolds in the human understanding across time. What has to be kept in mind though is as Thomson says, that this essence is, an insubstantial and ever-changing, it is a sort of

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<sup>324</sup> Thomson, 'Heidegger's Aesthetics', 3.

<sup>325</sup> Heidegger's philosophical vision of the ancient Greek temple as a unifying force for a historical world resonates with the idea of temples as cultural centres in antiquity. The temple served not only as a religious site but also as a repository of communal memory and identity (Josephine Shaya, "The Greek Temple as Museum: The Case of the Legendary Treasure of Athena from Lindos," *American Journal of Archaeology*, 109.3 (2005), 423–42 <<https://doi.org/10.3764/aja.109.3.423>>.). This concept aligns with Heidegger's notion of the temple inconspicuously focusing and illuminating its people's sense of what is and what matters. Interestingly, the idea of encountering art non-aesthetically in the late-modern world seems to contradict the trend of increasing secularization and connoisseurial practices in the Hellenistic period (Verity Platt, "Art History in the Temple," *Arethusa*, 43.2 (2010), 197–213 <<https://doi.org/10.1353/are.0.0041>>.).

<sup>326</sup> Thomson, 'Heidegger's Aesthetics', 3.

tension<sup>327</sup> that is built into the ‘structure of all intelligibility’. It is not a set of timelessly valid determinations that apply throughout history to all types of art.

Finally, as Malpas notices in *The Origin of the Work of Art*, the focus is the artwork itself; in *The Thing* and *Building Dwelling Thinking*, it is the thing, whatever that thing may be.<sup>328</sup> Furthermore, Malpas clarifies that according to him the role of the work of art or the ‘thing’ in ‘unifying the various elements that together make up a world’, should not be interpreted to mean that the ‘work’ or the ‘thing’ is somehow ‘more fundamental than the elements themselves’.<sup>329</sup>

As we have seen when discussing *The Thing*, the jug does not come before earth or sky, but rather, through their being gathered in the jug, earth and sky, and the jug itself, are all brought forth or disclosed. Let us not forget that truth is brought forth as disclosedness or unconcealedness – as *Aletheia*. In this eternal tension Heidegger creates, ‘disclosedness’ requires a certain boundedness, but it is a boundedness that opens up rather than closes off. As Malpas says ‘presencing’, ‘which is also a way to understand ‘disclosedness’, occurs within certain bounds, that is, within a locality or place that is ‘proper to it’ (we sometimes say congenial or well suited) as will be seen in the next chapter when we discuss how the concept of place itself suggests already what kind of architecture should be built there or what Norberg-Schultz calls the *genius loci*.

## The Natural Law View

However, before exploring the *genius loci*, some connection has to be created between how Finnis sees aesthetic experience and the phenomenological *qua* Heideggerian analysis just exposed. According to Finnis’s view aesthetic experience through which, let us not forget, architecture manifests its presence to human beings, is equally fundamental as are life, knowledge, sociability, play, practical reasonableness and religion.<sup>330</sup> Participation in this non-reducible fundamental good leads to an all-encompassing flourishing, which, as previously

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<sup>327</sup> Thomson, ‘Heidegger’s Aesthetics’, 3. He says that: ‘In Heidegger’s view, then, for a great artwork to *work*—that is, for it to help focus and preserve a meaningful “world” for an audience—this artwork must maintain an essential tension between the *world* of meanings it pulls together and the more mysterious phenomenon of the “earth.”’

<sup>328</sup> Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place*, p. 252.

<sup>329</sup> Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place*, p. 252.

<sup>330</sup> Let us also not forget that all seven basic goods play a role in human flourishing and thus, all should be ‘participated in’ and considered as necessary when one considers what to do.

stated, is the essence of well-being as intended here. Consequently, this means that aesthetic experience is as important to the ‘being’ well of the individual and of the collective as all other basic goods.

Moreover, Spicher explains that ‘[a]esthetic experience includes natural objects as well as works of art’.<sup>331</sup> This resonates with what was said in this section that aesthetic experience is not the monopoly of mankind. The interesting thing is that whereas Heidegger sees art, understood as well as (but not solely) the embodiment of aesthetic experience, ‘to be truth’s taking of its place’, Finnis before publishing his *Natural Law and Natural Rights* appears, according to Spicher, to similarly consider aesthetic experience as an aspect knowledge:

As rational, human persons can know reality and appreciate beauty and whatever intensely engages their capacities to know and to feel. Knowledge and aesthetic experience are another category of basic good.<sup>332</sup>

It is this passage, from which Spicher, most probably deduces that Finnis *and others*<sup>333</sup> are reducing ‘knowledge’ and ‘aesthetic experience’ to one basic good. The wording of the passage is truly infelicitous. It creates seven categories that resemble somehow the seven basic goods in *Natural Law and Natural Rights* but they are somehow different.

Spicher asserts that:

Works of art initiate aesthetic experiences, which Finnis also considers a kind of knowledge.<sup>334</sup>

However, one doubts whether Finnis *et* intend this fusion between aesthetic experience and knowledge. What they are saying is that rational persons can ‘know reality’ and ‘appreciate beauty’ quite distinctly from each other. Finnis refers to a category and not to one basic good. It appears more probable that Finnis is grouping basic goods together. The list provided in

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<sup>331</sup>Michael R. Spicher, “The Distinct Basic Good of Aesthetic Experience and Its Political Import,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, 87.4 (2013), 711–29 <<https://doi.org/10.5840/acpq201387453>>., p. 712.

<sup>332</sup> Germain Grisez, Joseph Boyle, and John Finnis, “Practical Principles, Moral Truth, and Ultimate Ends,” *The American Journal of Jurisprudence*, 32.1 (1987), 99–151 <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ajj/32.1.99>>. p. 107.

<sup>333</sup> Namely Germain Grisez and Joseph Boyle.

<sup>334</sup> Spicher, ‘The Distinct Basic Good of Aesthetic Experience’, p. 712.

Finnis's 1987 article is truly confusing since items (5) and (6) appear to refer to some aspect of practical reasonableness, for example.<sup>335</sup>

As previously indicated, it is paradoxical that such a stance aligns Finnis more closely with Heidegger. For Heidegger, a work of art, which embodies aesthetic experience or beauty, transcends mere aesthetic value; it represents the 'unconcealedness' of truth itself. Thus, art serves as a medium for revealing truth. Now, it is evident that truth constitutes the ultimate objective of all forms of knowledge.<sup>336</sup> Thus aesthetic experience in the form of a work of art would (besides being beautiful) be some aspect of knowledge leading to truth.

Trying to argue as Spicher does, if aesthetic experience and knowledge are essentially one basic good, according to the earlier Finnis, it would not be very difficult to see how seeing representation of aesthetic experience such as works of art as not only *unconcealing* truth but somehow reconfiguring it. But is Heidegger really telling us the same thing as the earlier Finnis? Finnis, according to Spicher is stating that aesthetic experience is an aspect of knowledge, whilst Heidegger is telling us that 'art is the becoming and happening of truth'.<sup>337</sup> There is some sense in that, because the 'experience' component of aesthetic experience implies naturally some mental ability to process such intake of visual, auditory or other sensory stimulus into coherent associative mental state which translates into some form of knowledge. However, that can be said of all other basic goods as well. All basic goods are, at the end of the day, 'experienced', and thus they are somehow a continuous cumulative process of knowledge.

Having said that the position taken in this research is in agreement with Spicher. To use his words:

The separation of the two basic goods—knowledge and aesthetic experience—is sound because aesthetic experience, though presupposing a general knowledge, offers something other than knowledge in a way that is central to its good-making qualities. It

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<sup>335</sup> "(5) Within individuals and their personal lives, similar goods can be realized. For feelings can conflict among themselves and also can be at odds with one's judgments and choices. The harmony opposed to such inner disturbance is inner peace. (6) Moreover, one's choices can conflict with one's judgments and one's behavior can fail to express one's inner self. The corresponding good is harmony among one's judgments, choices, and performances peace of conscience and consistency between one's self and its expression." – Grisez et al., 'Practical Principles', p. 108.

<sup>336</sup> One may easily understand this: even if any reader would disagree with this last statement and would legitimately bring arguments to support his/her position, that same fact would be confirming that truth is ultimately the goal he/she would want to achieve. 'Truth' as he or she sees it. It would be a pointless exercise if such activity on their part would not aspire to seek the truth. Unless, of course the aim of that exercise is to intentionally deceive.

<sup>337</sup> Keeping in mind always that truth is the ultimate form of knowledge.

involves contemplating and responding to the aesthetic properties of the object, such as its beauty<sup>338</sup>

This position does not however, negate what Heidegger is saying about art and truth. Indeed, he does not say that art equates to truth but that it is the setting to work of truth. He says that art represents and reconfigures truth. The line is fine here, nonetheless as intimate as the relationship between the two might be, they are not one and the same thing.

Another important issue is that Finnis considers aesthetic experience ‘is found in the creation and/or active appreciation of some work of significant and satisfying form’.<sup>339</sup> This contrasts overwhelmingly with what Heidegger says about art.<sup>340</sup> Finnis remains framed within the modern aesthetics paradigm,<sup>341</sup> whereas Heidegger wants us to move beyond that. Heidegger thinks that aesthetics, is talking about appearances, experiences, and judgments, ‘useful and agreeable’ but not fundamental enough. In his aforementioned introduction Hofstadter asserts that Heidegger thinks through the basic creative function that obtains its creativeness from its ‘willingness to stop, listen, hear, remember, and respond to the call that comes from Being’.<sup>342</sup> Heidegger does in all his writings, ‘what thinking is called upon by nature to do: to open up and take true measure of the dimension of our existence’.<sup>343</sup> The argument made here is however this: if Finnis considers aesthetic experience as a basic value on such a superficial analysis of it, it should *multo magis*, be considered so, when it is enriched with the phenomenological input provided by Heidegger.<sup>344</sup>

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<sup>338</sup> Spicher, ‘The Distinct Basic Good of Aesthetic Experience’, p. 712.

<sup>339</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 88.

<sup>340</sup> Heidegger's concept of aesthetic experience, (which is an oxymoron since Heidegger is said not use the terminology of aesthetics) as articulated in his seminal work "Being and Time," emphasizes the notion of "being-in-the-world" and the existential nature of human existence. For Heidegger, aesthetics is not merely about the contemplation of beautiful objects but is fundamentally intertwined with the human condition and our relationship to the world..

<sup>341</sup> Finnis further elaborates on the role of reason and emotion in aesthetic experience, emphasizing the integration of cognitive faculties in the apprehension of beauty. Finnis, *Natural Law*, p. 87.

<sup>342</sup> Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, introduction xv

<sup>343</sup> Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, introduction xv.

<sup>344</sup> Heidegger's phenomenological approach to thinking and existence provides a deeper understanding of aesthetic experience, which could strengthen Finnis's consideration of it as a basic value. Heidegger's philosophy emphasizes the importance of "being-in-the-world" and the disclosure of meaning through lived experience (Ken H.M. Ho, Vico C.L. Chiang, and Doris Leung, “Hermeneutic Phenomenological Analysis: The ‘Possibility’ beyond ‘Actuality’ in Thematic Analysis,” *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 73.7 (2017), 1757–66 <<https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.13255>>.). This perspective aligns with the idea that aesthetic experience is not merely superficial but is deeply rooted in our existence and perception of the world.

## Dwelling In A Work Of Art?

Whatever *iter* one takes it appears that the relationship between truth and aesthetic experience is inextricably complex and perhaps one of interdependence. Finnis does not go deep enough, possibly by design, into the basic good of aesthetic experience, whilst Heidegger does. However, Finnis does elevate the status of aesthetic experience to that of the other basic values, as equally ‘fundamental’ and ‘incommensurable’. This does not advocate against the phenomenological qualification of aesthetic experience. We have seen that Heidegger considers art (which may be considered the embodiment of man-made aesthetic experience) as not only conducive to truth but also possibly as capable of reconfiguring it. Short of stating that aesthetic experience is an aspect of knowledge if we apply the old Finnisian natural law paradigm to his thinking, Heidegger still sees that ‘appearance’<sup>345</sup> is ultimately ‘as this being of truth in the work’.<sup>346</sup> He says that *techne*, is a bringing forth of beings, bringing forth present beings as such beings out of concealedness and specifically into the ‘unconcealedness of their appearance’.<sup>347</sup>

In Heidegger’s words:

[...] *techne* is the name not only for the activities and skills of the craftsman, but also for the arts of the mind and the fine arts. *Techne* belongs to bringing-forth, to *poiesis*; it is something *poietic*<sup>348</sup>

Heidegger explains this quite aptly when he recalls that from ancient times until Plato the term *techne* is connected to the word *episteme*. Both terms are designations of ‘knowing’ in the most inclusive sense. They signify ‘to be entirely at home in something’,<sup>349</sup> to understand and be an ‘expert’ in it.<sup>350</sup> This ‘knowing’ encourages an ‘opening up’. As such an opening up it is a ‘revealing’. Heidegger tells us then that Aristotle, distinguishes between *episteme* and *techne* in relation to ‘what’ and ‘how’ they reveal. Heidegger says that Aristotle tells us that *techne* is

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<sup>345</sup> So one may argue ‘beauty’ or ‘aesthetic experience’ – what one sees in front of him or her.

<sup>346</sup> Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p.79.

<sup>347</sup> Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 57.

<sup>348</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*, trans. by William Lovitt (New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1977), p. 13 and on p. 12 of the original: Martin Heidegger, “*Die Frage Nach Der Technik*,” in *Vorträge Und Aufsätze* (Verlag Günther Neske Pfullingen, 1967):“*Einmal ist Τέχνη nicht nur der Name für das handwerkliche Tun und Können, sondern auch für die hohe Kunst und die schönen Künste. Die Τέχνη gehört zum Her-vor-bringen, zur ποίηση; sie ist etwas Poietisches.*“

<sup>349</sup> Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, p. 13.

<sup>350</sup> Heidegger, *ibid.*

a mode of *aletheuein*. It thus, ‘reveals whatever does not bring itself forth’<sup>351</sup> and does not yet lie here before us (in our presence)<sup>352</sup>, whatever can appear and ‘turn out now one way and now another’.<sup>353</sup> In his own words:

Whoever builds a house or a ship or forges a sacrificial chalice reveals what is to be brought forth, according to the perspectives of the four modes of occasioning. This revealing gathers together in advance the aspect and the matter of ship or house, with a view to the finished thing envisioned as completed, and from this gathering determines the manner of its construction. Thus what is decisive in *techne* does not lie at all in making and manipulating nor in the using of means, but rather in the aforementioned revealing. It is as revealing, and not as manufacturing, that *techne* is a bringing-forth.<sup>354</sup>

Julian Young summarises this line of thought when he says:

The 'thought', explains Heidegger, is the 'unifying unity' that 'sets everything into the well-separated limits and structures of its presence' [...]. It holds together 'mountain' and 'valley', 'the highest heaven and the deepest abyss', within a unity or fundamental 'peace'. This peace, however, is by no means a matter of 'flat sameness'. Rather, it is the unity of 'well-distinguished opposites', a unity which constitutes the essence 'beauty' [...]. Beauty is, then, sharply distinguished 'opposites' resting in the 'connectedness' [...] of harmonious unity.<sup>355</sup>

This is a pivotal aspect for this research. The point here being that if both dwelling (intended here as (d)well-being and thus the essence<sup>356</sup> of architecture *qua* building) and the work of art (intended here as not only aesthetic experience, but as an artwork unconcealing the ultimate

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<sup>351</sup> Heidegger, *ibid*.

<sup>352</sup> “*das Währen als Gegenwart*”

<sup>353</sup> Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, p. 13.

<sup>354</sup> Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, p. 13. In the original: Martin Heidegger, “*Die Frage Nach Der Technik*,” in *Vorträge Und Aufsätze* (Verlag Günther Neske Pfullingen, 1967), p. 13: “*Wer ein Haus oder ein Schiff baut oder eine Opferschale schmiedet, entbirgt das Her-vor-zu-bringende nach den Hinsichten der vier Weisen der Veranlassung. Dieses Entbergen versammelt im voraus das Aussehen und den Stoff von Schiff und Haus auf das vollendet erschaute fertige Ding und bestimmt von da her die Art der Verfertigung. Das Entscheidende der Τέχνη hegt somit keineswegs im Machen und Hantieren, nicht im Verwenden von Mitteln, sondern in dem genannten Entbergen. Als dieses, nicht aber als Verfertigen, ist die Τέχνη ein Hervor-bringen.*”

<sup>355</sup> Young, ‘Heidegger’s Philosophy of Art’, p. 110.

<sup>356</sup> In a footnote to his translation of Heidegger’s ‘The Question Concerning Technology’ Lovitt clarifies that : “Essence” is the traditional translation of the German noun *Wesen*. One of Heidegger’s principal aims in this essay is to seek the true meaning of essence through or by way of the “correct” meaning. He will later show that *Wesen* does not simply mean what something is, but that it means, further, the way in which something pursues its course, the way in which it remains through time as what it is. Heidegger writes elsewhere that the noun *Wesen* does not mean *quidditas* originally, but rather “enduring as presence” (*das Währen als Gegenwart*)’ . p. 3.

truth and thus the form architecture *qua* building), are interdependent and inextricably linked to each other, then when building humans should be taking these two aspects into consideration if they wish to have good architecture. Good architecture here means: having a building in a congenial *place* and reflecting the communal spirit of those who live in its surroundings. A place where the building fits in and which contributes to the well-being of the individuals and of the collective. A building which is true to itself in all ways possible, because its essence and its form are themselves attuned to each other. A building which finds itself in a place where it matters. A building having a meaningful relationship with those living around it. A building conducive to the historical and political truth of those inhabiting it and/or in anyway exposed to its presence. A building which not only encourages but fosters, this *attunement* of Being in those human beings living around this unavoidable presence, making such *attunement* to Being extend to the surroundings. Having thus buildings which have the ontological and the ontic ‘nearness’ to each other because they are cultural, social, communal, spiritual and thus ethical symbols of whoever lives around them.

By linking architecture—understood as the act of dwelling—to well-being, conceived as a deep attunement to oneself and the surrounding environment, we establish a harmonious and meaningful relationship with others and the world. Architecture, in this light, becomes not only a work of art that reflects historical and political truths through its presence in the community, but also a medium capable of reconfiguring those truths. We began with considerations of content and form, but arrived at the deeper insight that dwelling is not merely about residing in a place—it is a profound and dynamic relationship with our community, our history, our politics, and ultimately, our thought. In essence, both dwelling and art are inherently poetic—poetic in the sense of *poiesis*, the ancient Greek notion of bringing-forth or creative unfolding<sup>357</sup> – human making.<sup>358</sup> Dwelling and art need not necessarily be antagonists or mutually exclusive. It may well be that one dwells well in a work of art.

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<sup>357</sup> The concept of *poiesis*, rooted in Greek philosophy, is indeed central to understanding the interconnectedness of dwelling, art, and human creation. This idea of "bringing into being" through human making is reflected in various aspects of cultural and artistic production across different societies. In the context of ancient Greek thought, *poiesis* was closely linked to notions of time and space. The Greek concepts of *chronos* and *kairos* (time), and *chora* and *topos* (space) were unified into more concrete and meaningful representations of time and place, such as *chronochora* and *kairotopos* (Hans Rämö, “An Aristotelian Human Time-Space Manifold,” *Time & Society*, 8.2–3 (1999), 309–28 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0961463x99008002006>>.).

<sup>358</sup> Robert Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.181.

## Conclusion

At its core, dwelling is not merely about shelter but about the deeper experience of being attuned to one's surroundings, of belonging to a place that fosters both individual and communal well-being. Heidegger's notion of *Befindlichkeit*—finding oneself in the world—is intimately tied to this act of dwelling, for it is only through a meaningful relationship with one's environment that human flourishing, or (d)well-being, becomes possible.

Yet, this act of dwelling does not occur in abstraction. It is always grounded in a specific place, shaped by the unique characteristics of the environment—the *genius loci*, or spirit of place. Just as Heidegger speaks of being-in-the-world, one might say that authentic dwelling is always being-in-place. A place is more than a mere location; it is an expression of identity, memory, and history. It is through the interplay of architecture, landscape, and cultural meaning that the *genius loci*—the spirit of place—emerges, offering a sense of rootedness and continuity.

In the modern age, the erosion of meaningful places through architectural *turpification*—where environments are stripped of character, depth, and cultural resonance—disrupts the possibility of *attunement*. Whereas architecture once served to reveal truth through its presence and form, it now frequently conceals it, generating spaces that alienate rather than anchor. The critical task, therefore, is to recover a sense of place that enables genuine dwelling—an endeavour that requires renewed engagement with the *genius loci*, the spirit of place.

The contemporary world faces an existential crisis of placelessness. If architecture is to serve more than a functional or ornamental role, it must reclaim its philosophical and ethical significance. Dwelling, as Heidegger conceives it, must be revisited not as a static ideal but as an evolving practice that responds to the human condition.

A meaningful approach to dwelling must integrate phenomenological insights with contemporary architectural practice, ensuring that built environments nurture both individual and collective well-being. This requires a shift away from a purely utilitarian mindset toward one that acknowledges the deeper human need for belonging, continuity, and engagement with place.

Looking ahead, architects, urban planners, and policymakers must embrace their roles not merely as constructors of physical structures, but as curators of lived experience. The challenge lies in bridging the divide between theoretical understanding and practical application—ensuring that our spaces embody not only efficiency, but also the profound existential dimensions of what it truly means to dwell.<sup>359</sup>

As the discussion progresses into the next chapter, attention turns to the concept of *genius loci* in greater depth. If dwelling is understood as the existential condition of being at home in the world, then the *genius loci*—the spirit of place—is what endows a location with its soul, shaping the manner in which dwelling occurs. Recognizing this connection allows architecture to be seen not merely as an aesthetic or functional enterprise, but as an ethical responsibility—one that can either cultivate attunement and deepen the human bond with the world, or contribute to turpification, severing that bond through the erosion of meaningful place.

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<sup>359</sup> It is worth noting here that architects often possess far less agency over the final appearance of buildings than is commonly assumed. Regulatory constraints, developer priorities, cost considerations, and planning requirements frequently delimit what architects can realistically achieve.

## CHAPTER 3 - ARCHITECTURE AND THE SPIRIT OF PLACE (GENIUS LOCI)

„Zwar gibt es, bevor die Brücke steht, den Strom entlang viele Stellen, die durch etwas besetzt werden können. Eine unter ihnen ergibt sich als ein Ort und zwar durch die Brücke.“

Before the bridge stands, there are of course many spots along the stream that can be occupied by something. One of them proves to be a location, and does so because of the bridge.<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

The ultimate aim of this thesis is to examine the relationship, if it exists, between architecture and the common good. We have seen, in the previous chapters, that as Norberg-Schulz puts it ‘Heidegger did not leave us any text on architecture, yet it plays an important role in his philosophy’.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, we have also seen in those chapters that the rich and intricate existential fabric in Heidegger’s writings reveals an interdependency and interconnectedness between certain key concepts such as *Being* and *dwelling*. We also saw that in the final analysis the relationship between building and place is much more than just lodging. Finding oneself at home in some “place” is what leads one to have a meaningful relationship with oneself and one’s surroundings – a form of dwelling conducive to an existential well-being. We called this [d]well-being. This is an attempt to what may be called a phenomenological approach to architecture.

This chapter, thus, occupies a pivotal mediating role within the thesis by developing a phenomenology of place through the work of Christian Norberg-Schulz, thereby extending Heidegger’s existential account of dwelling into the domain of concrete architectural reality. While Heidegger establishes dwelling as a fundamental ontological structure of human being-in-the-world, his analysis remains largely pre-architectural and offers limited guidance for the practice of building itself. Norberg-Schulz addresses this gap by showing how place, as a structured and meaningful environment, already discloses possibilities for building and

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. by Albert Hofstadter (HarperCollins Publishers, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> Christian Norberg-Schulz, “Heidegger’s Thinking on Architecture,” *Perspecta*, 20 (1983), 61 <<https://doi.org/10.2307/1567066>>.

suggests what ought to be constructed in response to its character. This move grounds architecture in a prior attunement to place rather than in arbitrary formal or functional decisions. Furthermore, drawing on Auret's interpretation of Norberg-Schulz, the chapter highlights the notion of care as implicit in this responsiveness to place, thereby introducing an ethical sensibility without yet articulating a full normative framework. In this way, Chapter Three prepares the conceptual and moral groundwork for Karsten Harries's explicitly ethical account of architecture developed in the subsequent chapter.

## Meaningful surroundings?

Already in 1963 Norberg-Schulz attributed the condition of "problem" in architecture to the failure of modern architecture to take account of some of the essential factors that give significance to the built environment, primary among those the role of perception, in addition to the importance of history as a source of meanings.<sup>3</sup> He says that:

The layman thus asks for an architecture which is at the same time 'normal' and unusual. In any case he surely does not find satisfaction in the so-called modern architecture'.<sup>4</sup>

Complementing this view is the fact that contemporary research has shown that surroundings have powerful psychological and physiological effects on human beings.<sup>5</sup> These effects include the influence of 'space and form, proportion and scale, natural and artificial light levels and qualities, texture, colour and materiality'.<sup>6</sup> This militates in favour of treating a 'space' as a potential 'place'. Something that Christian Norberg-Schulz is renowned for. Once we accept this simple idea we can move forward to treating a space less like a blank canvas, and more like painting which is already blocked or outlined.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Elie Haddad, "Christian Norberg-Schulz's Phenomenological Project In Architecture," *Architectural Theory Review*, 15.1 (2010), 88–101 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/13264821003629279>>.

<sup>4</sup> Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Intentions in Architecture* (MIT Press, 1968), p. 14.

<sup>5</sup> Iain Scott, "Well-Being in the Architectural Design Studio," *University of Edinburgh Research Explorer*, 2012 <<https://www.research.ed.ac.uk/en/publications/well-being-in-the-architectural-design-studio>> [accessed 12 December 2024].

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Blocking is the technique of creating an underpainting to establish "blocks" or shapes of basic color and/or value with minimal detail. Similar to when you write an essay, you don't start by writing a finished draft; you make an outline first.

In this sense, Norberg-Schulz argues that architects do not work in a vacuum.<sup>8</sup> He says that:

The architect works in 'situations' which are composed in particular ways and which explicitly or implicitly pose particular questions. The situations are for instance made up of economical, political and social conditions, of cultural traditions, of physical conditions such as climate and topography, and not least of human beings who 'see' the environment in very different ways.<sup>9</sup>

This point is significant for the purposes of the present thesis because it underscores the normative priority to be accorded to what already exists within a given spatial context. It highlights the need to acknowledge, interpret, and respect the conditions, meanings, and histories that a place discloses prior to any architectural intervention.

Of particular significance in this chapter is Christian Norberg-Schulz's seminal work, *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*, which examines the ontological essence of place and articulates the crucial role of architecture in shaping human experience of the built environment. His analysis provides an influential, though not unproblematic, foundation for understanding how environments disclose meaning and orient dwelling. Norberg-Schulz, a Norwegian architect and architectural theorist, presents a profound examination of the concept of *genius loci*, which translates to the "spirit of place" or the unique character and identity<sup>10</sup> inherent in a specific location. He explains:

Since ancient times the *genius loci*, or "spirit of place", has been recognized as the concrete reality man has to face and come to terms with in his daily life. Architecture means to visualize the *genius loci*, and the task of the architect is to create meaningful places, whereby he helps man to dwell.<sup>11</sup>

At the core of Norberg-Schulz's argument is the idea that architecture should not only be functional but also meaningful, reflecting the cultural, historical, and environmental context in

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<sup>8</sup> Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Intentions in Architecture* (MIT Press, 1968).

<sup>9</sup> Norberg-Schulz, *Intentions in Architecture*, p. 21.

<sup>10</sup> It is important to clarify what Norberg-Schulz understands by the term 'identity'. According to Norberg-Schulz meaning is found in the relationships in which things stand to one another. Meaning is essential for identity - the identity of man is determined through the relationships he has with his environment. True identity is only found through meaningful relationships. According to Norberg-Schulz identity depends on belonging to a place. "The place is the concrete manifestation of man's dwelling, and his identity depends on his belonging to places" (*Genius Loci*, p. 6) and the latter need "to have a meaningful relationship to earth and sky". (*Genius Loci*, p. 182).

<sup>11</sup> Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci*, p.5.

which it exists. He asserts that by understanding and honouring the *genius loci* of a place, architects can create designs that resonate with people on a deeper level, fostering a sense of belonging and connection to their surroundings.

He writes:

Architecture belongs to poetry<sup>12</sup>, and its purpose is to help man to dwell. But architecture is a difficult art. [...] The basic act of architecture is therefore to understand the "vocation" of the place. In this way we protect the earth and become ourselves part of a comprehensive totality.<sup>13</sup>

Throughout the book, Norberg-Schulz draws on examples from various historical and cultural contexts to illustrate his ideas, ranging from ancient sacred sites to modern urban landscapes. He examines how different architectural styles and forms reflect the *genius loci* of their respective environments, demonstrating the profound influence of place on the built environment. In his own words:

To protect " and conserve the *genius loci* in fact means to concretize its essence in ever new historical contexts. We might also say that the history of a place ought to be its "self- realization". What was there as possibilities at the outset, is uncovered through human action, illuminated and "kept" in works of architecture which are simultaneously "old and new."<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore, Norberg-Schulz discusses the role of identity<sup>15</sup> emerging from memory<sup>16</sup> and tradition in shaping our understanding of place, arguing that architecture should engage with

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<sup>12</sup> Poetry here being understood in the Greek sense of human making. There is a distinction between 'human action and human making, between praxis and *poiesis*', as pointed out by Robert Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 181.

<sup>13</sup> Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci*, p. 23

<sup>14</sup> Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci*, p. 18

<sup>15</sup> Norberg-Schulz states that: '[t]o gain an existential foothold man has to be able to orientate himself; he has to know where he is. But he also has to identify himself with the environment, that is, he has to know how he is in a certain place' (*Genius Loci* p. 19). Elsewhere, (Christian Norberg-Schulz, Thomas McQuillan, and Clarence Burton Sheffield, "Review: [Untitled] on JSTOR," *Studies in the Decorative Arts*, 5.1 (1997), 151–55 <<https://doi.org/10.2307/40662610>>. Norberg-Schulz discusses that the distinctly Nordic sense of space, form, and gestalt, these three elements together imply a unique sense of place. "Gestalt" involves memory, intellect, and a sort of quasi- intuition or precognition. Norberg-Schulz argues that "we use the word 'gestalt' to denote motifs that identify place, and that we recognize and recall".

<sup>16</sup> For example Aldo Rossi sees the city as the embodiment of collective memory, arguing that cities and buildings cannot be understood solely through function. In his words: 'One can say that the city itself is the collective memory of its people, and like memory it is associated with objects and places. The city is the locus of the

the collective memory of a culture while also embracing contemporary innovations. He emphasises the need for architects to strike a balance between tradition and innovation, creating designs that are both rooted in the past and responsive to the present.<sup>17</sup>

Again in his own words:

To respect the *genius loci* does not mean to copy old models. It means to determine the identity of the place and to interpret it in ever new ways. Only then we may talk about a living tradition which makes change meaningful by relating it to a set of locally founded parametres.<sup>18</sup>

One of the key concepts explored in the book is the notion of existential space, which refers to the subjective experience of space as it is perceived and interpreted by individuals.

"Existential space" is not a logico-mathematical term, but comprises the basic relationships between man and his environment [...] existential space is here divided in the complementary terms "space" and "character", in accordance with the basic psychic functions "orientation" and "identification"<sup>19</sup>

Norberg-Schulz emphasises the importance of considering human experience<sup>20</sup> and perception<sup>21</sup> in architectural design, advocating for spaces that evoke emotional responses<sup>22</sup>

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collective memory. This between the locus and the citizenry then becomes the city's predominant image, both of architecture and of landscape, and as certain artifacts become part of its memory, new ones emerge. In this entirely positive sense great ideas flow through the history of the city and give shape to it'. See: Aldo Rossi, "The Architecture of the City," *MIT Press*, 2021 <<https://mitpress.mit.edu/9780262680431/the-architecture-of-the-city/>> [accessed 12 December 2024], p. 130.

<sup>17</sup> On the issue of memory Heidegger explains that : The psychological Interpretation according to which the "I" has something 'in the memory' ["*im Gedachtnis*"] is at bottom a way of alluding to the existentially constitutive state of Being-in-the-world." Being and Time, p. 144, in the original on p. 109 "*Die psychologische Interpretation, daß das Ich etwas »im Gedächtnis« habe, meint im Grunde die existenziale Verfassung des In-der-Welt-seins.*"

<sup>18</sup> Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci*, p. 182.

<sup>19</sup> Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci*, p. 5.

<sup>20</sup> Norberg-Schulz explains that '[i]t is one of the basic needs of man to experience his life-situations as meaningful, and the purpose of the- work of arc is to "keep" and transmit meanings.' *Genius Loci*, p. 5.

<sup>21</sup> Norberg-Schulz explains that in his book *Intentions in Architecture* he considers that 'A thorough discussion of perception and symbolization was therefore included, and it was emphasized that man cannot gain a foothold through scientific understanding alone, he needs symbols, that is, works of art which "represent life-situations". *Genius Loci*, p. 5.

<sup>22</sup> Quoting Sigfried Giedion, Norberg-Schulz says that: 'The new regionalism has as its motivating force a respect for individuality and a desire to satisfy the emotional and material needs of each area', *Genius Loci* p.195. See Sigfried Giedion, *A Decade of Contemporary Architecture* (Zurich: Editions Girsberger, 1954).

and facilitate a sense of well-being<sup>23</sup>, the latter here being understood as the all-round-flourishing of the human being.<sup>24</sup>

## The Notion of Place (Ort)

Throughout history, the concept of “place” (*Der Ort*) has intrigued philosophers, architects, and scholars alike. According to Heidegger, a “place” is not merely a physical location but a space where human beings find their authentic dwelling. He believed that the human interaction with a place shapes their sense of belonging and identity.

The verbs mentioned by Heidegger - *huri*, *bilren*, *beuren*, and *beuron* - all share a common etymological root that relates to the concept of dwelling, abode, and place of residence.<sup>25</sup> These Old High German and Middle High German terms emphasise the fundamental human experience of inhabiting a space and making it one's own. Heidegger's focus on these words underscores his philosophical interest in the nature of human existence and our relationship to the world around us.

By highlighting these linguistic connections, Heidegger invites us to consider the deeper implications of dwelling and how it shapes our understanding of being-in-the-world. This exploration extends beyond mere physical occupation of space to encompass the ways in which humans create meaning, establish identity, and forge connections with their environment. The emphasis on dwelling as a central aspect of human experience aligns with Heidegger's broader phenomenological approach, which seeks to uncover the essential structures of human existence through careful examination of everyday experiences and language. In his own words:

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<sup>23</sup> In this research the preferred conception of wellbeing is that put forward by John Finnis. His concept of well-being emphasises the fulfilment of basic goods, including life, knowledge, play, aesthetic experience, practical reasonableness, and sociability, which contribute to the all-round human flourishing and the realisation of objective goods. On this point see *Natural Law and Natural Rights*, p. 85 *et seq.*

<sup>24</sup> There is an ongoing interest in the relationship between place and well-being. There in fact exist a number of studies that provide evidence to support the connection between the ‘sense of place’ and well-being. Having said that, the relationship between sense of place and well-being has yet to be fully investigated. See on this point: Allison Williams, *Sense of Place, Health and Quality of Life* (Routledge, 2016) <<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315243474>> [accessed 6 January 2025].

<sup>25</sup> Martin Heidegger, “Bauen Wohnen Denken,” in *Vorträge Und Aufsätze* (Gunther Neske Pfullingen, 1954), „*Die Zeitwörter huri, büren, beuren, beuron bedeuten alle das Wohnen, die Wohnstätte.*“ p. 148.

The location<sup>26</sup> [place] is not already there before the bridge is. Before the bridge stands, there are of course many spots along the stream that can be occupied by something. One of them proves to be a location [place], and does so because of the bridge. Thus the bridge does not first come to a location [place] to stand in it; rather, a location comes into existence only by virtue of the bridge.<sup>27</sup>

Norberg Schulz interprets this term of *location* as a *place*.<sup>28</sup> He says that:

Dwelling therefore implies something more than "shelter", it implies that the spaces where life occurs are places, in the true sense of the word. A place is a space which has a distinct character.<sup>29</sup>

The following table offers a comprehensive overview of key terminology essential for understanding the chapter's focus on place and space. Each term is accompanied by a concise definition, enabling readers to quickly grasp the nuances of spatial concepts. This micro glossary serves as a valuable reference tool for students and researchers, particularly in relation to Heidegger's theories concerning the built environment.

German Term	English Translation	Explanation
<b>Ort</b> Place		Refers to a specific, meaningful location or site where beings gather and interact. Heidegger emphasizes how a place is defined by its significance.
<b>Raum</b> Space		Denotes a broader concept of space as a dimension or openness where things can exist and events can occur. Raum is not empty but structured by relationships.
<b>Platz</b> Location		A more specific or physical location, often associated with a designated or functional spot within Raum or Ort.

<sup>26</sup> My underlining of the word 'location'.

<sup>27</sup> Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 152, in the original text: "Der Ort ist nicht schon vor der Brücke vorhanden. Zwar gibt es, bevor die Brücke steht, den Strom entlang viele Stellen, die durch etwas besetzt werden können. Eine unter ihnen ergibt sich als ein Ort und zwar durch die Brücke. So kommt denn die Brücke nicht erst an einen Ort hin zu stehen, sondern von der Brücke selbst her entsteht erst ein Ort." p. 148, in Martin Heidegger, "Bauen Wohnen Denken," in *Vorträge Und Aufsätze* (Gunther Neske Pfullingen, 1978).

<sup>28</sup> Jeff Malpas, "Place (Ort/Ortschaft)," in *The Cambridge Heidegger Lexicon*, ed. by Mark A. Wrathall (Cambridge University Press, 2021), pp. 578–79 <<https://doi.org/10.1017/9780511843778.156>> [accessed 12 December 2024].

<sup>29</sup> Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci*, p. 5.

<b>Dasein</b>	Being-there	Refers to human existence, which is always situated and engaged with the world in a particular place or context.
<b>Wohnung</b>	Dwelling	Indicates the act of inhabiting or residing. It connects to how humans build and live in ways that allow for meaningful dwelling.
<b>Bauen</b>	Building	Stemming from the German word <i>bauen</i> , Heidegger links building to dwelling, suggesting that building is an essential way humans dwell.
<b>Heimat</b>	Homeland	Suggests a deep connection to one's home or native place, integral to the experience of dwelling and identity.
<b>Gegend</b>	Region	Refers to an area or vicinity that holds relational significance for Dasein, emphasizing how spaces are experienced contextually.
<b>Erschlossenheit</b>	Unconcealedness	The state of openness or disclosure, through which spaces and places become meaningful. Related to the clearing ( <i>Lichtung</i> ).
<b>Lichtung</b>	Clearing	A metaphor for an open space where beings are revealed and where Dasein can encounter the world authentically.
<b>Zuhausesein</b>	Being-at-home	Represents a sense of belonging or rootedness in a particular place, central to Heidegger's idea of dwelling.
<b>Fremdheit</b>	Strangeness/Alienation	The experience of not being at home or being disconnected from a place, in contrast to dwelling authentically.

On the other hand, as Malpas puts it:

The idea of place – of *topos* – runs through the thinking of Martin Heidegger almost from the very start. Although not always directly thematized – sometimes apparently

obscured, displaced even, by other concepts – and expressed through many different terms (*Ort, Ortschaft, Stätte, Gegend, Dasein, Lichtung, Ereignis*).<sup>30</sup>

This chapter focusses on this concept of place. The idea is simple enough, different ‘places’ evoke different buildings. If this is true then there exists an inextricable link between place and what human beings build therein. This is interpreted as the mode through which humans express their being-in-the-world.

So much so that Norberg-Schulz tells us that:

[Heidegger’s] concept of being-in-the-world implies a man-made environment, and when discussing the problem of "dwelling poetically," he explicitly refers to the art of building<sup>31</sup>

In Heidegger’s own words:

Poetry is what really lets us dwell. But through what do we attain to a dwelling place? Through building. Poetic creation, which lets us dwell, is a kind of building.<sup>32</sup>

The main question then is how does a ‘place’ occur? This is exactly what Sharr asks when discussing the Heideggerian notion of place.

Sharr replies that:

For Heidegger, places, like things and buildings, were primarily understood through use and experience. To him, the spot where the bridge was sited was understood differently once the bridge was built. It became in peoples’ minds the place of the bridge<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place: Explorations in the Topology of Being* (MIT Press, 2017), p. 6.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Martin Heidegger, “Poetically Man Dwells”, in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. by Albert Hofstadter (Harper Collins Publishers, 2001), p. 213. “*Dichten ist das eigentliche Wohnenlassen. Allein, wodurch gelangen wir zu einer Wohnung? Durch das Bauen. Dichten ist, als Wohnenlassen, ein Bauen.*” From: Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe: 1. Abteilung: Veröffentlichte Schriften 1914-1970* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1985), p. 195.

<sup>33</sup> Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects* (Routledge, 2007), p. 52.

Sharr illustrates this by quoting Heidegger's renowned and already mentioned description of the bridge with the addition of the term 'place' in order to facilitate comprehension:

The [place] is not already there before the bridge is. Before the bridge stands, there are of course many spots along the stream that can be occupied by something. One of them proves to be a [place], and does so because of the bridge. Thus the bridge does not come first to a [place] to stand in it; rather a [place] comes into existence only by virtue of the bridge.<sup>34</sup>

As seen in the preceding chapters, just as the potter traps space in order to reveal the shape of the jug the builder imagines a spot along the stream where the bridge should stand. Sharr tells us that Norberg-Schulz calls this the 'concretization' of space.<sup>35</sup>

Norberg-Schulz defines architecture as a 'concretization of existential space',<sup>36</sup> which he describes as follows:

"Concretization" is furthermore explained by means of the concepts of "gathering" and "thing". The word "thing" originally meant a gathering, and the meaning of anything consists in what it gathers.

This whole idea starts to resonate with what was discussed in the previous chapter with regard to the Heideggerian concepts of 'gathering' and the 'thing' and 'jug' and 'bridge'.

Norberg-Schulz's reminds us that:

The jug, thus, forms part of that equipment which constitutes man's proximal environment, whereas the bridge is a building which discloses more comprehensive properties of the surroundings<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects*, original from *Poetry, Language, Thought*, pp. 151-152.

<sup>35</sup> Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects*, p. 52.

<sup>36</sup> Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci*, p. 5.

<sup>37</sup> Christian Norberg-Schulz, "Heidegger's Thinking on Architecture," *Perspecta*, 20 (1983), 61 <<https://doi.org/10.2307/1567066>>.

Interesting to note that from most interpretations of these texts it appears that the spot chosen is the choice of one man, when in what normally happens is that after a series of considerations a spot is chosen and the form of the bridge designed. The choice of place and form are more collective than one thinks.

Norberg-Schulz carries on analysing this issue of the bridge:

The bridge thus makes a place come into presence,<sup>38</sup> at the same time as its elements emerge as what they are. The words "earth" and "landscape" are not used here as mere topographical concepts, but to denote things that are disclosed through the gathering of the bridge<sup>39</sup>

This passage examines how a bridge creates a meaningful place and reveals the essence of its surroundings. Firstly, the bridge does more than just connect two points: (i) it creates a significant location or “place” and (ii) it helps define and bring attention to its surroundings

Secondly, the bridge reveals the true nature of its environment: (i) it highlights the characteristics of the land it is built on and (ii) it showcases the surrounding landscape.

Thirdly, the terms "earth" and "landscape" have deeper meanings in that they: (i) are not just describing physical features, and they (ii) represent elements that are made more apparent by the bridge's presence.

Fourthly, the bridge acts as a focal point: (i) it gathers or brings together various elements of its surroundings, and that (ii) this gathering helps people understand and appreciate the area better. In essence, the text suggests that a bridge is not just a functional structure, but also a way to create meaning and enhance our understanding of a place and its natural elements.

Moreover, Norberg-Schulz draws on Heidegger’s well-known example of the bridge in order to illustrate how built forms gather and disclose the elements that already constitute a site. The bridge, Heidegger argues, does not merely span the stream; it reveals the place in its meaningfulness by drawing its latent spatial relations into presence. Only once the bridge crosses the water do the banks truly appear as banks: the structure intentionally sets them into a relation of opposition, distinguishing one side from the other and transforming what would otherwise be unremarkable edges of dry land into articulated spatial boundaries. In so doing,

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<sup>38</sup> John Ehrenfeld, “Flourishing: Designing a Brave New World,” *She Ji: The Journal of Design, Economics, and Innovation*, 5.2 (2019), 105–16 <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sheji.2019.03.001>>. As seen in the last chapter to presence phenomenologically means to bring the world of the ‘present moment, the now, into the foreground of consciousness and hold it there as the basis for action’. Ehrenfeld explains that *presencing* is a form of attention that restores context to the external world, and that context is necessary for flourishing.

<sup>39</sup> Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci*, p. 64.

the bridge gathers the stream, the banks, and the surrounding terrain into a unified configuration, integrating earth and landscape into a coherent whole. The bridge thus does not impose meaning upon the site from the outside but rather discloses the world that was already there, bringing its elements into nearness and relational intelligibility. ..<sup>40</sup>

Malpas goes a step further and asserts that the notion of place is actually the pivot of all of Heidegger's philosophy when he says:

It is the very same place as that in which thinking itself arises, from which it is often estranged, and to which it must always return. Heidegger is himself quite explicit in his own understanding of thinking as always involved in such a 'return' to place – as a homecoming.<sup>41</sup>

Heidegger's real intention, according to Norberg-Schulz, is to illustrate the phenomenological gathering implied by the 'thingness' of things:

What Heidegger wants to reveal in his examples, is the thingness of the things, that is, the world they gather. In *Being and Time* the technique used was called "phenomenology."<sup>42</sup>

Moreover, what Heidegger is after according to Sharr is that this is 'the moment that dwelling is inscribed in place through building'.<sup>43</sup>

This gathering is deemed crucial to understand Heidegger's elaboration of place. Norberg-Schulz tells us that Heidegger introduce the term '*Andenken*' to show that kind of 'genuine thought which is needed to disclose a thing as a gathering'.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Heidegger, *Building Dwelling Thinking*, p. 150. *Bauen Wohnen Denken*, p. 26: "Im Übergang der Brücke treten die Ufer erst als Ufer hervor. Die Brücke läßt sie eigens gegeneinander über liegen. Die andere Seite ist durch die Brücke gegen die eine abgesetzt. Die Ufer ziehen auch nicht als gleichgültige Grenzstreifen des festen Landes den Strom entlang. Die Brücke bringt mit den Ufern jeweils die eine und die andere Weite der rückwärtigen Uferlandschaft an den Strom. Sie bringt Strom und Ufer und Land in die wechselseitige Nachbarschaft. Die Brücke versammelt die Erde als Landschaft um den Strom."

<sup>41</sup> Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place*, p. 24. On the same page Malpas says that: "...the bridge appears as a bridge, not through the exercise of its own qualities in determining an otherwise featureless terrain, but through a coming to appearance in which bridge, river and the entirety of the countryside around it are gathered together as one and as many, and are thereby determined, in their being, as bridge, as river, as countryside."

<sup>42</sup> Norberg-Schulz, 'Heidegger's Thinking on Architecture', p. 64.

<sup>43</sup> Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects*, p. 53.

<sup>44</sup> Norberg-Schulz, 'Heidegger's Thinking on Architecture', p. 64.

The idea of the fourfold, which will be discussed in some detail later on, is then present (sometimes implicitly, sometimes explicitly) in Heidegger's philosophy of place. In the previous chapter we have seen the importance Heidegger attaches to the Greek temple in Paestum. Norberg-Schulz asserts that even then the fourfold was present in his thought, albeit latently:

When Heidegger wrote "The Origin of the Work of Art" he had not yet arrived at the concept of the fourfold, but in the description of the Greek temple all the elements are there: the god, the human beings, the earth, and, implicitly, the sky. As a thing, the temple relates to all of them, and makes them appear as what they are, at the same time as they are united into a "simple onefold."<sup>45</sup>

Norberg-Schulz reminds that natural things, also gather the fourfold, and they 'ask for an interpretation which discloses their thingness'.<sup>46</sup> He carries on:

What a poem and a work of art have in common is the quality of image. A work is in addition a thing, whereas a thing proper does not possess the quality of image. As a gathering it mirrors the fourfold in its way, but its thingness is hidden and has to be disclosed by a work.<sup>47</sup>

When examining the commonalities between poetry and visual art, the concept of imagery emerges as a unifying element. Both forms of expression utilise the power of images to evoke emotions, convey ideas, and create lasting impressions in the mind of the audience.

In poetry, imagery is constructed through carefully selected words and phrases that appeal to the senses, creating vivid mental representations in the reader's imagination. Similarly, visual art employs colour, form, and composition to produce tangible images that engage the viewer's perception.

However, the notion of a work being "a thing" introduces a significant distinction. While both poems and artworks possess the quality of image, a physical artwork exists as a tangible object

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<sup>45</sup> Norberg-Schulz, 'Heidegger's Thinking on Architecture', p. 64.

<sup>46</sup> Norberg-Schulz, 'Heidegger's Thinking on Architecture', p. 65.

<sup>47</sup> Norberg-Schulz, 'Heidegger's Thinking on Architecture', p. 65.

in the world. This "thingness" distinguishes it from a poem, which exists primarily in the realm of language and thought.

The concept of the fourfold, as described in the quote, suggests that a work of art functions as a gathering point or mirror for various aspects of existence. This could be interpreted as the manner in which art reflects and interacts with the world around it, embodying elements of earth, sky, mortals, and divinities in its creation and interpretation.

Notably, the thingness of an artwork is described as hidden, necessitating disclosure through the work itself. This implies that the physical nature of the art object is not immediately apparent or significant, but rather revealed through engagement with the piece. One could argue that the artwork's *materiality* becomes a vehicle for expressing deeper meanings and connections.

To further explore this idea, one might consider how the physical properties of a painting - its texture, brushstrokes, or the way light interacts with its surface - contribute to its overall impact and meaning. These qualities are inherent to the work's "thingness" but may only become apparent upon close examination or contemplation.

In contrast, a poem's imagery exists in a more abstract realm, relying on the reader's imagination to construct mental pictures. While a poem may be printed on a page, its essence as a work of art is not tied to that physical form in the same way as a painting or sculpture.

This distinction between the tangible and intangible aspects of art raises questions about the nature of creativity and human expression. Both poetry and visual art strive to capture and communicate aspects of human experience, but they do so through different means - one through language and imagination, the other through physical materials and visual perception.

In summary, the interplay between image and thing in art invites consideration of how we perceive and interact with the world around us. It challenges us to look beyond the surface of things, to uncover hidden meanings and connections, and to appreciate the complex relationship between the physical and the imaginary in our experience of art and life.

## **The Fourfold Again**

As seen on more than one occasion Heidegger in “The Thing” defines the world as:

This appropriating mirror-play of the simple onefold of earth and sky, divinities and mortals, we call the world.<sup>48</sup>

The fourfold plays an important part in Heidegger’s philosophy and Norberg-Schulz succinctly explains why they are important for the notion of place:

Human life takes place between earth and sky in a concrete sense, and the things which constitute the place have to be disclosed in their immediate presence.<sup>49</sup>

Norberg-Schulz explains that Heidegger states that a man dwells between work and word. The word ‘opens up’ the world, the work gives the world ‘presence’.<sup>50</sup> In the work the world is set back on earth, namely, it becomes part of the immediate present, whereby such present is revealed in its being.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 177. *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, p. 52 „Wir nennen das ereignende Spiegel-Spiel der Einfalt von Erde und Himmel, Göttlichen und Sterblichen die Welt.“

<sup>49</sup> Norberg-Schulz, ‘Thinking about Architecture’, p. 65.

<sup>50</sup> One has to constantly keep in mind that Heidegger's concept of the fourfold (earth, sky, mortals, and divinities) plays a significant role in his philosophy, particularly in relation to the notion of place and human existence. The fourfold represents an intimate relationship that reveals wholeness and authenticity, bringing us into close contact with the world (Carol J. Steiner and Yvette Reisinger, “Ringing the Fourfold: A Philosophical Framework for Thinking about Wellness Tourism,” *Tourism Recreation Research*, 31.1 (2006), 5–14 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/02508281.2006.11081242>>.).

<sup>51</sup> Norberg-Schulz, ‘Thinking about Architecture’, p. 65.

Norberg-Schulz reminds us that Heidegger<sup>52</sup> himself asserts that ‘staying with things is the only way in which the fourfold stay within the fourfold is accomplished at any time in simple unity’.<sup>53</sup>

Heidegger explains that:

From the simple oneness in which earth and sky, divinities and mortals belong together, building receives the directive for its erecting of locations.<sup>54</sup>

Norberg-Schulz thinks that when one stays with things (which could be buildings) in a fourfold fashion, one manages ‘to save the earth, to receive the sky, to await the divinities, to escort mortals—this fourfold preserving is the simple nature, the presenting, of dwelling.’<sup>55</sup>

In fact Heidegger says that:

Building takes over from the fourfold the standard for all the traversing and measuring of the spaces that in each case are provided for by the locations that have been founded. The edifices guard the fourfold. They are things that in their own way preserve the fourfold.<sup>56</sup>

He tells us that it is in this way that ‘genuine<sup>57</sup> buildings give form to dwelling in its presence and house this presence’.<sup>58</sup> According to Heidegger then, building so ‘characterized is a distinctive letting-dwell’.<sup>59</sup>

Finally coming full circle, genuine buildings not only need to have this component of ‘letting-dwell’ but such buildings should also respond to the needs of the fourfold:

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<sup>52</sup> Norberg-Schulz, ‘Thinking about Architecture’ p. 65.

<sup>53</sup> Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 149.

<sup>54</sup> Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 156. *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, p. 33: “Aus der Einfalt, in der Erde und Himmel, die Göttlichen und die Sterblichen zueinander gehören, empfängt das Bauen die Weisung für sein Errichten von Orten.“

<sup>55</sup> Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 156.

<sup>56</sup> Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 156. *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, p. 33: „Aus dem Geviert übernimmt das Bauen die Maße für alles Durchmessen und jedes Ausmessen der Räume, die jeweils durch die gestifteten Orte eingeräumt sind. Die Bauten verwahren das Geviert. Sie sind Dinge, die auf ihre Weise das Geviert schonen.“

<sup>57</sup> ‘Echten’,

<sup>58</sup> Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 156.

<sup>59</sup> Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 156 in original on p. 153. Martin Heidegger, *Vorträge Und Aufsätze*, fourth edition ( Gunther Neske Pfullingen, 1978): „Das gekennzeichnete Bauen ist ein ausgezeichnetes Wohnenlassen“.

Whenever it is such in fact, building already has responded to the summons of the fourfold. All planning remains grounded on this responding, and planning in turn opens up to the designer the precincts suitable for his designs.<sup>60</sup>

There exists a misconception that Heidegger does not engage with the evaluative aspects of what constitutes a good or bad building, and instead, in typical phenomenological terms, merely describes or interprets what 'is'. Well, this is sometimes harsher than classifying a building good or bad, since what he is really saying is that real/genuine (*echten*) buildings so respond to what the fourfold dictate.

Heidegger's concept of dwelling and building is deeply intertwined with his notion of the fourfold, which encompasses earth, sky, mortals, and divinities. In this context, Heidegger is not lowering the ethical bar but rather elevating the significance of building as a practice that responds to the fourfold.<sup>61</sup> Heidegger argues that dwelling is not a passive condition but a mode of human practice that involves marking and claiming. Building, in this sense, is not merely a physical act but a way of constituting our dwelling and responding to the world around us.<sup>62</sup>

The fourfold emphasises how marking (as building) is always influenced by the spatial/temporal unfolding of the world itself, suggesting that buildings are claims made in the face of a relentlessly moving world.<sup>63</sup> Contrary to lowering ethical standards, Heidegger's perspective arguably raises the bar for what constitutes a genuine building. A building that does not respond to the 'summons' of the fourfold may be seen as lacking authenticity or failing to fulfil its true purpose. This aligns with Heidegger's broader philosophy, which emphasizes the importance of authenticity and the need to resist conformism in favour of more refined ways of acting.<sup>64</sup> In this light, a building that fails to engage with the fourfold may be viewed as

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid. *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, p. 34: „Ist es dieses in der Tat, dann hat das Bauen schon dem Zuspruch des Gevierts entsprochen. Auf dieses Entsprechen bleibt alles Planen gegründet, das seinerseits den Entwürfen für die Risse die gemäßen Bezirke öffnet.“

<sup>61</sup> See: Mitch Rose, “Dwelling as Marking and Claiming,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 30.5 (2012), 757–71 <<https://doi.org/10.1068/d6809>>; and Carol J. Steiner and Yvette Reisinger, “Ringing the Fourfold: A Philosophical Framework for Thinking about Wellness Tourism,” *Tourism Recreation Research*, 31.1 (2006), 5–14 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/02508281.2006.11081242>>.)

<sup>62</sup> Mitch Rose, “Dwelling as Marking and Claiming,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 30.5 (2012), 757–71 <<https://doi.org/10.1068/d6809>>.

<sup>63</sup> Mitch Rose, “Dwelling as Marking and Claiming,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 30.5 (2012), 757–71 <<https://doi.org/10.1068/d6809>>.

<sup>64</sup> Hubert L. Dreyfus, “What Could Be More Intelligible Than Everyday Intelligibility? Reinterpreting Division I of Being and Time in the Light of Division II,” *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society*, 24.3 (2004), 265–74 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0270467604264993>>.

inauthentic or incomplete, effectively demoting it from the status of a "real" or "genuine" building in Heidegger's philosophical framework. Actually, arguably, he is demoting a building not responding to such 'summons' of the fourfold as not being a real/genuine building.<sup>65</sup>

Heidegger then summarises this whole argument framing it into the dwelling paradigm:

Dwelling preserves the fourfold by bringing the presencing of the fourfold into things. But things themselves secure the fourfold only when they themselves as things are let be in their presencing.<sup>66</sup>

According to Heidegger, then a "place" is not merely a physical location but a space where human beings find their authentic dwelling. He believed that the human interaction with a place shapes their sense of belonging and identity. Norberg-Schulz promptly explains how this is done: Buildings are such constructed things, which gather a world and allow for dwelling.

## Genius Loci

In the realm of architectural theory, Christian Norberg-Schulz delved into the notion of *genius loci*, or the spirit of place, drawing inspiration from Martin Heidegger's philosophical insights. This part of the chapter explores Norberg-Schulz's interpretation of Heidegger's place in the context of *genius loci*, analysing their intertwined theories and the significance they hold for understanding the nature of architecture.

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<sup>65</sup> Heidegger here is arguably, analogically following the footsteps of St Augustine of Hippo and St Thomas Aquinas, whereby they considered a law that is unjust is not law at all. This view is expressed in the Latin maxim: *Lex iniusta non est lex*. See on this point: Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 363 *et seq.* Heidegger is somehow implying that a building not responding to the fourfold is not a 'genuine' building: *ingenuum aedificium non est aedificium*.

<sup>66</sup> Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 149. *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, pp. 25-26: "Das Wohnenschoht das Geviert, indem es dessen Wesen in die Dinge bringt. Allein die Dinge selbst bergen das Geviert nur dann, wenn sie selber als Dinge in ihrem Wesen gelassen werden"



FIGURE 23 FALLINGWATER AT MILL RUN, PENNSYLVANIA, FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT.  
PHOTOGRAPH: LACHRIMAE72, WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Several architectural achievements have successfully embodied the spirit of place by adhering to Norberg-Schulz's interpretation. For instance, Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater (Figure 23), situated in rural Pennsylvania, integrates seamlessly into its natural surroundings, utilizing materials and forms that harmonize with the landscape. The carefully designed relationship between the building and its environment reveals the *genius loci* of that specific location.

Christian Norberg-Schulz expanded on Heidegger's concepts in his book *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*.<sup>67</sup> His interpretation focuses on the importance of the spirit of place in architecture. Norberg-Schulz argues that architecture should aim to evoke a sense of place by integrating elements that resonate with the unique character, history, and identity of a particular location.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* (New York : Rizzoli, 1980).

<sup>68</sup> As explained by Evan Ahearn in a private reflection, Keith Basso, a linguistic anthropologist, wrote on the ways in which the white mountain Apache in Nevada use language to convey history and culture through place names – See: Keith H. Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache* (UNM Press, 1996).

Norberg-Schulz contextualizes *genius loci* by emphasizing the need for a holistic approach to architecture that is directly connected with its surroundings. He asserts that the embodiment of *genius loci* in architectural design can be achieved through the thorough analysis of local materials, climate, cultural heritage, and topography. By understanding and respecting these factors, architects can design structures that genuinely belong within a place.



FIGURE 30 MUSEO GUGGENHEIM, BILBAO. PHOTOGRAPH: NAOTAKE MURAYAMA.  
WIKIMEDIA CREATIVE COMMONS ATTRIBUTION.

Furthermore, the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao (Figure 30), designed by Frank Gehry, demonstrates a profound understanding of the *genius loci* of the city. Through an innovative use of architecture, materials, and colours, Gehry created a space uniquely linked to the cultural and architectural heritage of Bilbao. The building forms an intrinsic bond with its context, transforming the entire area and establishing it as an architectural landmark. We have seen Frank Gehry's work in the previous chapter and we had concluded that there was no conflict of the bendy buildings in Düsseldorf with the surrounding architecture. The same applies to the aforementioned creation.

Moreover, Norberg-Schulz's interpretation of Heidegger's ideas on place and *genius loci* provides valuable insight into the essence of architecture. By integrating and promoting the

spirit of place, architects embrace the uniqueness and authenticity of each location. This approach allows buildings to transcend the framework of function and aesthetics, evolving into places where individuals feel a deeper connection to their environment and understand the profound influences that shape their lives. The *genius loci* approach emphasises the importance of architecture's role in creating meaningful and harmonious spaces that enhance our understanding of place.

Norberg-Schulz suggests that architecture should be designed with an understanding of the *genius loci*, ensuring a harmonious coexistence between the built environment and its natural surroundings. He emphasizes the importance of considering the cultural, historical, and geographical context of a place when designing architectural structures. The construction of the new building beside this chapel raises concerns regarding contextual sensitivity, as its scale overwhelms and visually marginalizes the chapel within the setting of Manikata, Malta (Figure 31).



FIGURE 31 MANIKATA, MALTA CREDIT MIGUELA XUEREB, NEWSBOOK

According to Norberg-Schulz, the *genius loci* is not just limited to physical attributes but also encompasses the emotional, spiritual, and symbolic aspects of a place. It is this essence that

elicits certain feelings and emotions from individuals when they interact with the space. For instance, a religious building should aim to evoke a sense of serenity and spirituality, reflecting the values and beliefs of that particular community.

All this brings us to a point where we start considering the other important aspect found in Heidegger's philosophy of dwelling: care. Norberg-Schulz explains that *genius loci* is one way of getting there:

The genius loci of the classical landscape is therefore first of all manifest where clearly defined natural places are emphasized by the loving care of man.<sup>69</sup>

This evokes something Heidegger himself explains in *Building Dwelling Thinking*:

[...] *bauen* however also means at the same time to cherish and protect, to preserve and care for,<sup>70</sup> specifically to till the soil, to cultivate the vine. Such building only takes care—it tends the growth that ripens into its fruit of its own accord.<sup>71</sup>

So *bauen*, building, also means to protect, to preserve, to care for according to Heidegger; something which is reiterated in connection with the notion of 'place' by Norberg Schulz in this passage:

Regimes come and go, the place persists, and with it a particular kind of human identity. When we have realized this fact, we should start to improve the world by taking care of our places, rather than by abstract planning and anonymous building [...]. Thus we may leave Utopia behind and return to the things of our everyday life-world.<sup>72</sup>

Norberg Schulz here emphasises the persistence of a place and suggests that an improvement of the world starts with the recognition that human identity comes from the place itself. He says a 'certain kind' of identity, evidently not the abstract identity imposed by regimes. If Norberg-Schulz's notion of *genius loci* grounds architecture in place, then the next step is to

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<sup>69</sup> Norberg-Schulz, *Genius loci*, p. 46.

<sup>70</sup> My underlining.

<sup>71</sup> Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 145; From the original: Martin Heidegger, *Vorträge Und Aufsätze*, fourth edition (Gunther Neske Pfullingen, 1978), p. 141 "*bauen bedeutet nun aber zugleich: hegen und pflegen, nämlich den Acker bauen, Reuben bauen. Solches Bauen hütet nur, nämlich das Wachstum, das von sich aus seine Früchte zeitigt. Bauen im Sinne von hegen und pflegen ist kein Herstellen.*"

<sup>72</sup> Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci*, p. 185.

ask: what duties emerge from this grounding? What obligations do architects have to protect, recover, or enhance the identity of a place? If a place possesses an intrinsic identity—the *genius loci*—then the ethical question becomes unavoidable: how should architects respond to this identity? Is the duty of architecture merely to reflect and reinforce the *genius loci*, or does it extend to actively preserving and restoring it? Norberg-Schulz hints at this responsibility, but it is Hendrik Aret<sup>73</sup> who explicitly connects architecture to the ethics of care. Care, in this context, is not merely an aesthetic or nostalgic commitment to the past, but an ethical imperative to ensure that places remain meaningful for those who inhabit them.

#### A Note on Norberg-Schulz's Interpretation of Heidegger

A fuller understanding of *genius loci* requires a clarificatory note regarding the place of Christian Norberg-Schulz within architectural phenomenology. Although he is often treated as the natural interlocutor between architecture and Heidegger's thought, this reception is more complicated than the secondary literature frequently acknowledges. His most influential works—*Existence, Space and Architecture* and *Genius Loci*—are not straightforward phenomenological extensions of Heidegger but are shaped by the structuralist frameworks and environmental determinism prevalent in the mid-twentieth century.

In these early texts, Norberg-Schulz approaches Heidegger not as a thinker of Being, dwelling, or poetic world-disclosure, but as a philosophical authority whose language can be reorganised into a **system of spatial categories**. He extracts from Heidegger a set of “elements” of place—orientation, character, enclosure, and environmental structure—which he treats as quasi-stable, classifiable units that can be analysed and reproduced. This taxonomic impulse is valuable for architectural pedagogy, but it departs from Heidegger's intention: whereas Heidegger refuses categorisation and instead explores dwelling as an **existential attunement**, Norberg-Schulz often reduces existential meaning to environmental form. The risk here is a flattening of phenomenology into a descriptive pattern language—useful, but not faithful to the ontological depth of *Bauen Wohnen Denken*.

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<sup>73</sup> Hendrik Aret, *Christian Norberg-Schulz's Interpretation of Heidegger's Philosophy: Care, Place and Architecture* (Routledge, 2020).

This does not mean that Norberg-Schulz's project lacks philosophical development. When one turns to his later works—*The Concept of Dwelling* (1985),<sup>74</sup> *Roots of Modern Architecture* (1988),<sup>75</sup> and *Nightlands* (1996)<sup>76</sup>—a marked evolution becomes visible. In these texts, spatial categories give way to **symbolic, mythic, and poetic dimensions** of place. The focus shifts from environmental description to existential significance. Architecture becomes an act of grounding cultural memory and mediating the human relationship to landscape, sky, darkness, light, and ritual. This brings his thinking closer to Heidegger's concerns with world-formation and truth as unconcealment. Yet these later works, rich as they are, are **not the texts most commonly cited** in architectural phenomenology, nor are they the primary Norberg-Schulz sources drawn upon in this thesis.

Recognising this developmental arc allows for a more precise and critically nuanced use of *genius loci*. It remains an extraordinarily productive concept—particularly for articulating the cultural and environmental dimensions of place—but it must be understood as a **creative reinterpretation**, not an orthodox continuation, of Heidegger. Acknowledging these limits clarifies the philosophical stance of this thesis: its foundations rest not on a structuralist environmental taxonomy but on a more rigorously Heideggerian account of dwelling as world-disclosure, combined with Finnis's ethical concern for the common good.

This clarification also strengthens the ethical dimension of the thesis. If Norberg-Schulz's early structuralist interpretation risks reducing place to visual or climatic factors, then a Heidegger-inspired, ethically attuned framework must move beyond the classification of spatial elements. It must consider how architecture participates in shaping the conditions of flourishing—how it coordinates the basic goods, sustains communal identity, protects memory, and supports (d)well-being. Here, *genius loci* is retained, but placed within a deeper philosophical frame: the locus is not merely a set of environmental attributes but a disclosure of world, and its interpretation must remain open to historical, ethical, and existential depth. Here the concept of care, which is discussed in the next section, will be, as already said, crucial.

## Heidegger, Norberg-Schulz and Care

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<sup>74</sup> Christian Norberg-Schulz, *The Concept of Dwelling: On the Way to Figurative Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli, 1985).

<sup>75</sup> Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Roots of Modern Architecture* (New York: Electa/Rizzoli, 1988).

<sup>76</sup> Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Nightlands: Nordic Building* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996).

Architect and philosopher Hendrik Auret starts his analysis of Norberg-Schulz Heideggerian architectural phenomenology by quoting one of his mentors Professor Bennie Britz:

Architecture must dignify the human condition.<sup>77</sup>

Auret implies that this simple formulation by his mentor resonates with what Christian Norberg Schulz's 'driving force behind the formidable theoretical edifice'<sup>78</sup> examining the 'way we live in the world and give a voice to, or dignify, places through building'.<sup>79</sup>

Auret explains that Norberg-Schulz is widely acknowledged as the most architectural interpreter of Heideggerian phenomenology. He explains the importance of Heidegger's phenomenology as follows:

Heidegger formulated human existence as concerned participation in a concrete world of life. He called this intimate entanglement 'being-in-the-world'. Us, the entangled ones, he called *Dasein*; the ones who are *there/here*.<sup>80</sup>

Auret says that Norberg-Schulz's 'architectural goal' was:

[...] that the "art of place" – designated in Norwegian by the term *stedskunst* – had to become the "art of the experience of living" (*livskunst*)<sup>81</sup>

Auret says that above and beyond making 'meaningful places', architecture was meant to display 'the full significance of what people mean when they say that life "takes place"'.<sup>82</sup>

Auret then asks a central question to this research since dwelling for the common good is intimately connected with architecture for the common, since as we have seen building is dwelling, in his own words:

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<sup>77</sup> Auret, *Christian Norberg-Schulz's Interpretation*, p. 1.

<sup>78</sup> Auret, *Christian Norberg-Schulz's Interpretation*, p. 1.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

What should dwellers demand from architecture, if it is to manifest the taking place of human life?<sup>83</sup>

The answer to this question connects this chapter to the next one:

In *The Ethical Function of Architecture* [...] the philosopher Karsten Harries [...] proposed that works of architecture need to safeguard human life against two fundamental trepidations: the “terror of space” and the “terror of time” [...].

Auret interprets this as meaning that architecture as *livkunst* implies concretising human presence within a particular space and time. In other words, within a context. Karsten Harries will be the central figure around which the next chapter will revolve.

Moreover, Auret says that:

The most general assumption underpinning Norberg-Schulz’s approach is that life takes place between earth and sky, a predominantly spatial interaction.<sup>84</sup>

As Auret elucidates, Heidegger posited an equally fundamental aspect characterizing human 'betweenness': the interval between birth and death. Indeed, as previously discussed, it is the temporal nature of existence that mediates human interaction within the Heideggerian fourfold, comprising earth, sky, mortals, and gods. Humans, no longer mere observers or subjects, participate as mortals. This is not to suggest that Heidegger overlooked the spatial dimension of existence.<sup>85</sup>

One tends to agree with Auret that Heidegger believed that “care” or “concern”, the two key dimensions stored in the German term *Sorge*, always already fill the human being and constitute the “existential meaning” of its Being.<sup>86</sup> In Heidegger’s words:

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Auret, *Christian Norberg-Schulz’s Interpretation*, p. 3.

<sup>85</sup> In fact in *Being and Time* Heidegger says on p.346: “Being-in-the-world has a spatiality of its own, characterized by the phenomena of de-severance and directionality. *Dasein* 'makes room' in so far as it factually exists.” In *Sein und Zeit* p. 299 „Zum In-der-Welt-sein gehört eine eigene Räumlichkeit, die durch die Phänomene der Ent-fernung und Ausrichtung charakterisiert ist. Das Dasein »räumt ein«, sofern es faktisch existiert”.

<sup>86</sup> *Christian Norberg-Schulz’s Interpretation*, p. 1.

In defining "care" as "Being-ahead-of-oneself—in-Being-already-in [...] —as Being-alongside [...]", we have made it plain that even this phenomenon is, in itself, still structurally articulated.<sup>87</sup>

Heidegger believes that care exists before every factual attitude and 'position' of *Dasein*, that is, it is always already in them as an existential *a priori*.<sup>88</sup> In other words care is primordial. This position about care has also implications for the next chapter dealing with ethical architecture and for the general goal of this research, architecture for the common good. In that as Kittay explains:

[...]when we care for another, we are concerned with that person's welfare as it contributes to that individual's flourishing ...It is this concern with the other's well-being for his own sake that places responsibilities on us for the other's care.<sup>89</sup>

This view compels us to elaborate a form of well-being, or flourishing, that resonates with what Heidegger means with the concept of care.<sup>90</sup> As Reed Stevens clearly explains:

[...]care serves the purpose of freeing others to pursue their own conception of the good life, or, as Heidegger would put it, their notion of what it means to live an authentic life.<sup>91</sup>

Stevens concludes his article in the following way:

The potential for an existential ethic of care to serve as the guiding force in democratic theory invites us to consider the normative pursuits of democratic theory in a fresh and

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<sup>87</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time* p. 241 and Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* p. 196: „Die Bestimmung der Sorge als Sich-vorweg-sein – im-schon-sein-in... – als Sein – bei... macht deutlich, daß auch dieses Phänomen in sich noch struktural gegliedert ist“

<sup>88</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 238 original version *Sein und Zeit* p. 193: “Die Sorge liegt als ursprüngliche Strukturanzahl existenzialapriorisch »vor« jeder, das heißt immer schon in jeder faktischen »Verhaltung« und »Lage« des Daseins“

<sup>89</sup> Eva Feder Kittay, *Learning from My Daughter* (Oxford University Press, 2019) <<https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190844608.001.0001>> [accessed 7 January 2025].

<sup>90</sup> After all, Heidegger clearly states in *Being and Time* that: “Thus as Being-with, Dasein 'is' essentially for the sake of Others.” p. 160. In *Sein und Zeit*, p. 123: “Als Mitsein »ist« daher das Dasein wesenhaft unwillen Anderer“.

<sup>91</sup> Reed Stevens, “An Existential Foundation for an Ethics of Care in Heidegger’s Being and Time,” *The Journal of Ethics*, 26.3 (2022), 415–31 <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10892-021-09389-9>>.

exciting way, and provides legitimacy to the claim that an existentially-based ethical account of care has real world social and political relevance.<sup>92</sup>

Back to Aret, he tells us that Heidegger believed that:

Care, by describing the way a human being is “concerned about its very being” (1927a:12), engages with the ‘ground’ of what makes existence meaningful. For the being of care, space as always already lived as place and time is always already lived as care<sup>93</sup>

Aret’s project is to introduce the concept of ‘care’ into the concept of ‘place’ (see Figure 32 below), in his own words:

By grafting the art of care into Norberg-Schulz’s art of place, it might be possible to propose a way towards understanding architecture as *livskunst*.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Stevens, ‘An Existential Foundation’, p. 430.

<sup>93</sup> Aret, *Christian Norberg-Schulz’s Interpretation*, Introduction, p.3.

<sup>94</sup> Aret, *Christian Norberg-Schulz’s Interpretation*, p. 2.



FIGURE 32 MALTA, WHERE IS THE 'ART OF CARE'?

## **Constant Presence: Continuity And Change**

An emergent quality of care in the context of architecture is then that of presence understood in the Heideggerian sense of persistent or constant endurance,<sup>95</sup> what one may perhaps call

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<sup>95</sup> As we have seen in Chapter 2 Heidegger sees essence of things as "enduring as presence" (*das Währen als Gegenwart*).

*perdurance*.<sup>96</sup> This connects to what we have been saying about essence in the previous chapter.

Heidegger says:

Endurance, perpetual identity, presence at hand, lying at hand — all at bottom say the same: constant presence, *on* as *ousia*<sup>97</sup>

And also:

*Ousia* means Being in the sense of constant presence, presence at hand. Consequently, what really is is what always is, *aei on*. What is continuously coming to presence is what we must go back to, in advance, in all comprehending and producing of anything [...]<sup>98</sup>

While Norberg-Schulz argues for an architecture that respects the spirit of place, some contemporary theorists—such as Tschumi and Koolhaas—contend that architecture should resist nostalgic readings of place and instead create entirely new spatial identities.<sup>99</sup> Yet, as we

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<sup>96</sup> Or its archaic form *perdurance*. The word *perdure* in English means “to continue to exist” or “to last.” It conveys the idea of enduring or persisting over time. The term *perdure* may not be commonly used, but its roots trace back to Latin. It was borrowed into Middle English from Anglo-French and ultimately derives from the Latin verb *perdurare*, which means “to continue.” The Latin word *durare* itself means “to last,” and it’s also an ancestor of several English words, including *endure*, *durable*, *indurate*, and *during*. So, when something *perdures*, it remains in existence or lasts over an extended period. For example, the influence and legacy of the Roman Empire *perdures* to this very day. If you encounter this word, you’ll know it signifies something that endures or persists indefinitely. From “Definition of *Perdure*” <<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/perdure>> [accessed 7 January 2025].

<sup>97</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. by Gregory Fried and Richard Polt, second edition (Yale University Press, 2014) <<https://doi.org/10.12987/9780300210934>> [accessed 7 January 2025]. p. 216, in the original Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe: Grundbegriffe: [Freiburger Vorlesung Sommersemester 1941] / [Hrsg. von Petra Jaeger]. Bd. 40 : Abt. 2, Vorlesungen 1923 - 1944* (Vittorio Klostermann, 1991). p. 109 “*Bleiben, Immergleichheit, Vorhandenheit, Vorliegen - sagen im Grunde alle dasselbe: ständige Anwesenheit: öv als ousia.*“

<sup>98</sup> Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe: Grundbegriffe*, pp. 201-202 „*Es meint das Sein im Sinne der ständigen Anwesenheit, Vorhandenheit. Eigentlich seiend ist demzufolge das Immer-Seiende, αἰ ὄν. Beständig anwesend ist jenes, worauf wir im vorhinein bei allem Erfassen und Herstellen von etwas zu rückgehen müssen, das Muster, die Idee.*“

<sup>99</sup> In contrast to Norberg-Schulz, contemporary theorists like Bernard Tschumi and Rem Koolhaas argue for a more radical approach that resists nostalgic interpretations of place. Tschumi's work, as discussed in Vidler's "The Architectural Uncanny," explores fragmented forms and challenges traditional notions of domesticity and familiarity (Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (American Library Association, 1992), xxx, 30-1325-30–1325 <<https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.30-1325>> [accessed 25 March 2025].).

shall see, the ethical dimension of architecture suggests that even disruptions must be conscious of the communities they affect.

Why is this point of presence being made here at this juncture? The point is that once a place has been *turpified* by not respecting the *genius loci* one may reason that that place has no hope at all of being redeemed. That the *genius loci* is gone for ever. However, change is the dynamic<sup>100</sup> aspect of architecture that allows for adaptation and growth. It reflects the temporal nature of human existence and the need for spaces to evolve with societal shifts. Norberg-Schulz's reliance on Giedion's<sup>101</sup> concept of 'continuity and change'<sup>102</sup> rather than Heidegger's 'temporality'<sup>103</sup> indicates an inclination towards a more 'tangible interpretation'<sup>104</sup> of the temporal factor within the architectural context.

Instead of presenting architecture in terms of inter-epoch continuity and change, the art of care seeks to engage with the intra-epoch nature of dwelling;<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> In fact Walter Benjamin states that "Architecture has never been idle. Its history is more ancient than that of any other art, and its claim to being a living force has significance in every attempt to comprehend the relationship of the masses to art. Buildings are appropriated in a twofold manner: by use and by perception - or rather, by touch and sight." See Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, ed. by Hannah Arendt, trans. by Harry Zorn (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), at p. 240.

<sup>101</sup> "Giedion, Sigfried (1888–1968). Swiss art-historian, he became a powerful advocate of the Modern Movement, and, with Le Corbusier, was a leading light in the founding of CIAM, for which he served as Secretary-General until 1956." "Siegfried Giedion," *Encyclopedia.Com* <<https://www.encyclopedia.com/people/literature-and-arts/architecture-biographies/sigfried-giedion>> [accessed 27 March 2025].

<sup>102</sup> Sigfried Giedion, *The Eternal Present, Volume I* (Princeton University Press, 1962) <<https://doi.org/10.1353/book.114767>> [accessed 7 January 2025], p. 167 "The comparison of a rare prehistoric relief with a famous Egyptian relief may give a closer insight into the continuity and change of means of representing the human figure."

<sup>103</sup> Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, pp. 423-424 „*Die Gespanntheit der Zeit wird nicht aus der horizontalen Erstrecktheit der ekstatischen Einheit der Zeitlichkeit verstanden, die sich im Zeitbesorgen veröffentlicht hat. Daß in jedem noch so momentanen Jetzt je schon Jetzt ist, muß aus dem noch »Frühe ren« begriffen werden, dem jedes Jetzt entstammt: aus der ekstatischen Erstrecktheit der Zeitlichkeit, die jeder Kontinuität eines Vorhandenen fremd ist, ihrerseits aber die Bedingung der Möglichkeit des Zuganges zu einem vorhandenen Stetigen dar stellt*“ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Blackwell, 1962), p. 476. "The spannedness of time is not to be understood in terms of the horizontal stretching-along of the ecstatic unity of that temporality which has made itself public in one's concern with time. The fact that in every "now", no matter how momentary, it is in each case already now, must be conceived in terms of something which is 'earlier' still and from which every "now" stems: that is to say, it must be conceived in terms of the ecstatic stretching-along of that temporality which is alien to any Continuity of something present-at-hand but which, for its part, presents the condition for the possibility of access to anything continuous that is present-at-hand."

<sup>104</sup> Auret, *Christian Norberg-Schulz's Interpretation*, p. 74.

<sup>105</sup> Auret, *Christian Norberg-Schulz's Interpretation*, p. 16.

As Auret explains, one of the most ‘memorable and influential aspects’<sup>106</sup> of *Genius Loci* was the idea that there are ‘archetypal natural places’<sup>107</sup> and corresponding ‘archetypal buildings’.<sup>108</sup> In Norberg-Schulz’s words:

Among the landscapes where the sky dominates we may distinguish between those where the “cosmic order” is of primary importance and those where the changing atmospheric conditions contribute decisively to the environmental character. Where the earth is dominant, a classification must be based on the presence of archetypal “things” as well as variations in scale (micro-macro).<sup>109</sup>

Moreover, Auret asserts that this general idea of ‘archetype’ implies the metaphysical notion that all places and all buildings are mere semblances of ‘always identical’<sup>110</sup> and ‘enduring prototype’<sup>111</sup>.

More specifically, as already seen in Heidegger words:

Endurance, perpetual identity, presence at hand, lying at hand— all at bottom say the same: *constant presence, on as ousia*.<sup>112</sup>

Thus, if the *genius loci* persists as a constant presence carrying with it a ‘perpetual identity’ or its essence, or *ousia*, it should theoretically also carry the corresponding potential buildings which could arise in that location to render it a ‘place’.<sup>113</sup> Consequently, this should, in principle, allow for the reimagination of a turpified location by tracing its *genius loci*.

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<sup>106</sup> Auret, *Christian Norberg-Schulz’s Interpretation*, p. 248.

<sup>107</sup> Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci*, p. 42.

<sup>108</sup> Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci*, p. 56.

<sup>109</sup> Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci*, p. 42.

<sup>110</sup> Heidegger, *Introduction to metaphysics*, p. 217.

<sup>111</sup> Heidegger, *Introduction to metaphysics*, p. 217.

<sup>112</sup> Heidegger, *Introduction to metaphysics*, p. 217 and Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe: Grundbegriffe : [Freiburger Vorlesung Sommersemester 1935] / [Hrsg. von Petra Jaeger]. Bd. 40 : Einführung In Die Metaphysik Abt. 2, Vorlesungen 1923 - 1944* (Vittorio Klostermann, 1983). p. 211“ *Bleiben, Immergleichheit, Vorhandenheit, Vorliegen - sagen im Grunde alle dasselbe: standige Anwesenheit: ðv als ousia.*“

<sup>113</sup> This issue needs some qualification. The concept of *genius loci*, or the spirit of a place, is indeed closely tied to the idea of a perpetual identity or essence (*ousia*) of a location. This notion suggests that a place’s unique character persists over time, influencing its physical and spiritual attributes (Marilena Vecco, “Genius Loci as a Meta-Concept,” *Journal of Cultural Heritage*, 41 (2020), 225–31 <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.culher.2019.07.001>>).

The sole condition now required for such reimagination is the presence of a communal element to support it. If one accepts that architecture, by its very nature, is public, at least in its unavoidable presence, it must be viewed as rooted in a place that is collectively inhabited and thus experienced. If architecture is a public act, then the degradation of *genius loci* can be seen as an ethical failure—a failure to honour the collective memory, environmental context, and existential needs of a place. Scholars such as David Harvey<sup>114</sup> have argued that spatial justice demands that architecture engage with the lived histories of communities rather than impose abstract, placeless structures. Thus, restoring *genius loci* is not merely a nostalgic pursuit but an act of architectural responsibility.<sup>115</sup>

## Conclusion

In concluding, this chapter establishes place as the indispensable mediating concept between existential dwelling and the ethical evaluation of architecture. By showing, through Norberg-Schulz, that place is not a neutral container but a meaningful structure that already discloses possibilities for building, the chapter clarifies how architecture emerges from a prior responsiveness to the character of its environment. Auret's interpretation of this responsiveness as a form of care further reinforces the insight that architectural practice is never ethically indifferent, even before explicit normative criteria are introduced. This understanding marks a decisive transition in the thesis: once architecture is recognised as shaping, sustaining, or undermining the conditions of meaningful dwelling, questions of responsibility and obligation inevitably arise. It is precisely these questions that are taken up in the following chapter, where Karsten Harries's account of architecture's ethical function articulates the moral demands implicit in place-making and situates architecture within the broader horizon of communal meaning and the common good.

If architecture is more than shelter—if it is a means of dwelling, identity, and meaning—then its role cannot be neutral. But how far does this ethical responsibility extend? Some architectural theorists argue against the idea that architecture has any intrinsic ethical obligation. Postmodernists, such as Bernard Tschumi and Rem Koolhaas, contend that

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<sup>114</sup> David Harvey, "Social Justice, Postmodernism and the City\*," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 16.4 (1992), 588–601 <<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.1992.tb00198.x>>.

<sup>115</sup> The concept of spatial justice and its connection to architecture's engagement with lived histories aligns with the findings of several studies on heritage, nostalgia, and place identity. Research indicates that heritage interpretation can enhance visitors' sense of place and place identity, particularly when focusing on the people and activities of a location rather than just its built environment (David L. Uzzell, "Creating Place Identity through Heritage Interpretation," *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 1.4 (1996), 219–28 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/13527259608722151>>.).

architecture is an autonomous discipline that should be free from moral imperatives. They argue that buildings do not have an inherent duty to reflect history, culture, or community identity—architecture, like art, should be allowed to experiment and provoke. Similarly, modernist functionalists argue that architecture's primary role is efficiency and utility, not the preservation of place. These perspectives challenge the assumption that architecture must ‘care’ for its surroundings.

However, this view risks ignoring architecture’s unavoidable public nature. Unlike a painting or sculpture, which can exist independently, a building always interacts with and shapes its environment. Even radical architectural forms inevitably generate meaning and influence human experience. Thus, the argument for an ethical responsibility in architecture is not about restricting creativity but about recognizing that architectural choices have social and existential consequences. As Karsten Harries argues, architecture must orient human beings in space and time—without this, it risks becoming alienating rather than liberating.

Does it demand that architects preserve place at all costs? Or, as Karsten Harries suggests, must architecture go further—offering not just protection from spatial alienation, but also from the existential terrors of time and mortality?

As seen, Norberg-Schulz’s interpretation of *genius loci* reveals architecture as more than functional—it is a poetic act that allows humans to dwell meaningfully. This emphasis on place as a source of identity, memory, and existential rootedness aligns with Heidegger’s notion that architecture is not merely the construction of buildings but a response to the human condition. To dwell is to care—not only for buildings themselves but for the spaces they inhabit, the histories they carry, and the futures they shape.

Yet, the persistence of *genius loci* raises an ethical question: What happens when architecture fails to safeguard the spirit of place? Can a lost *genius loci* be recovered, or does careless building irrevocably sever the bond between place and dwelling? If, as Heidegger suggests,

authentic building must respond to the fourfold, then the architect's role becomes an ethical one: to protect and reveal place rather than distort or erase it.

This leads us to a crucial question: if architecture is inherently public—shaping collective spaces, cultural identity, and lived experience—does it bear a moral responsibility? Should architecture safeguard human dignity, counter alienation, and mitigate the anxieties of time and space?

Karsten Harries, in *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, argues that it must. The task of architecture, he suggests, is not merely to construct but to orient—to provide a sense of stability and meaning in an otherwise fragmented world. In the next chapter, we will explore Harries' claim that architecture is fundamentally an ethical enterprise, one that must respond to the terror of space and the terror of time. If Norberg-Schulz teaches us to listen to place, Harries demands that we ask: what should we build?

This question is particularly pressing in an era of rapid urbanization, where generic, placeless architecture threatens to erode cultural identity and human connection to place. If architecture is to serve the common good, it cannot remain indifferent to the ethical dimension of dwelling. The fourfold, as Heidegger describes it, suggests that human existence is deeply intertwined with the spaces we inhabit. Auren's emphasis on care extends this by demanding that architects not only build but also nurture the conditions for meaningful dwelling. This sets the stage for the next chapter, where Karsten Harries's critique of modern architecture will further elucidate the moral responsibilities inherent in architectural practice.

## CHAPTER 4

# ARCHITECTURE AND COMMUNITY ETHOS (GENIUS CIVITATIS)

“[...] we speak of a community's ethos to refer to the spirit that presides over its activities. "Ethos" here names the way human beings exist in the world: their way of dwelling. The ethical function of architecture names its task to help articulate and support a shared ethos.”

Karsten Harries, *The Philosophy of Architecture*, Lecture Notes, Fall Semester 2016 Yale University, p. 89.

### Introduction

The ultimate aim of this research is to explore possible conceptual connections between architectural activity and the political concept of the common good. As we have seen, one such connection may be found in the Heideggerian notion of dwelling. We have also seen that this latter notion lends itself to a number of interpretations as to its purpose of building. Furthermore, we have also illustrated how dwelling may be intimately connected to human existential well-being. So much so that in many ways proper dwelling is conducive to well-being, understood as human fulfilment or flourishing. Likewise, we have seen that the way something is built may also be influenced by the site it is built in, and that the final product of that activity depends to some important extent on the call made by the spirit of that site: the *genius loci*.<sup>1</sup> Finally, we have seen how according to Heidegger that site becomes a ‘place’ when that call is answered.

In this chapter we add another element to dwelling and *genius loci*, which is *ethos*, what is being called here - *genius civitatis*<sup>2</sup> - the community spirit or ethos. It is being suggested that these three interdependent and interconnected concepts contribute to a state of well-being when coordinated meaningfully and properly.

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<sup>1</sup> Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* (New York : Rizzoli, 1980).

<sup>2</sup> On this term see: Pedro Mateos Cruz and others, “Small Towns, Una Realidad Urbana En La Hispania Romana (I),” *DIGITAL.CSIC*, 2023 <<http://hdl.handle.net/10261/296808>>. “*Es importante destacar que, en estas ciudades púnico-romanas, el emperador divinizado, por la preeminencia del culto al dios poliado en sus ciudades, se asimiló por conveniencia a esa condición principal de genius civitatis, de divinidad protectora de la ciudad.*” i.e. “It is important to highlight that, in these Punic-Roman cities, the deified emperor, due to the prominence of the cult of the city's patron god, was conveniently assimilated into the primary role of *genius civitatis*, the protective deity of the city.” (my translation). In this research it is used slightly but significantly differently in that *genius civitatis* is understood here as the *spirit of the city*.

It has been argued that this idea of dwelling for well-being, creatively called (d)well-being, is an interpretation and an extension of Heidegger's dwelling as has been described throughout this research through the words of several Heideggerian scholars. A summary working-description of the concept of (d)well-being may be summarised as: that state of affairs wherein an individual living with others in a community, experiences an all-round sense of authentic fulfilment as self-actualisation and/or flourishing, by being peacefully and meaningfully attuned to his/her surroundings, by finding him/herself at home, by poetically<sup>3</sup> transforming that "space" into a dwelling "place" through building according to its *genius loci* and according to the *ethos* of that same community.

The last phrase needs to be delved into in this chapter. The latter is intended to concretize the connection between architecture and the common good by providing an analysis of what ties dwelling to the shared *ethos* of a community. This link between dwelling and community *ethos* is predominantly political. In fact, one of the opening statements made at the outset of this research, in chapter one, was that put forward by Thomas Mann who wrote that everything is politics.<sup>4</sup> Harries' opinion on the matter resonates with Mann's when it comes to architecture. Why is this important for the thesis?

The reflections of Karsten Harries are particularly significant for the present research because they illuminate the ethical dimension implicit in the phenomenological understanding of dwelling developed by Martin Heidegger. Heidegger's analysis clarifies why building matters for human existence, but it deliberately refrains from translating this insight into architectural prescriptions. Harries' work can therefore be understood as an important continuation of this line of thought: rather than providing rules for design, he asks how architecture participates in shaping the shared world within which communities understand themselves. In this sense, Harries helps shift the discussion from the ontological significance of building toward the civic and ethical responsibilities that accompany architectural practice. The relevance of this perspective for the present thesis lies in its capacity to prepare the transition from phenomenological reflection on dwelling to the normative question that follows: how the built environment may contribute to the conditions of the common good.

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<sup>3</sup> 'poesies' here means human making.

<sup>4</sup> Hermann J. Weigand, *The Magic Mountain* (University of North Carolina Press, 1965) <[https://doi.org/10.5149/9781469658612\\_weigand](https://doi.org/10.5149/9781469658612_weigand)> [accessed 8 January 2025]. p.119

Karsten Harries extends Heidegger's ontological account of dwelling into the ethical and political domains, arguing that architecture must mediate between the disclosure of a meaningful world and the responsibilities and values of a modern, pluralistic society.

For Harries, architecture possesses an ethical function insofar as it contributes to shaping the shared horizon within which a community understands itself and its place in the world. Buildings do not merely provide shelter or fulfil technical requirements; they also participate in ordering the spaces in which civic life unfolds. In this sense, architecture inevitably carries ethical significance insofar as it helps to structure the environments within which human beings dwell together. Yet architecture is ethical in a further sense as well: it is, or ought to be, the product of a collaborative engagement with the ethos of a society—a claim advanced here in support of Harries's position.

So much so that in his lecture notes Harries argues that:

What, for example, do you think of first when you think of Sydney? Or of Paris? Or of Bilbao? The work of architecture here is understood as the product of a communal act of self-assertion. So understood architecture has not so much an aesthetic, as a political and an ethical function.<sup>5</sup>

Harries's perspective on architecture aligns closely with Mann's, in the sense of emphasising the profound impact of iconic structures on a city's identity and collective consciousness. The examples of Sydney, Paris, and Bilbao illustrate how certain architectural works become synonymous with their locations, serving as visual shorthand for entire urban landscapes and cultures. This phenomenon underscores the idea that architecture transcends mere aesthetics, functioning as a powerful tool for communal expression and self-definition.

The notion of architecture as a "communal act of self-assertion" highlights its role in shaping not only physical spaces but also social and cultural narratives. By viewing architecture through

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<sup>5</sup> Karsten Harries, "Philosophy of Architecture Lecture Notes," <https://campuspress.yale.edu/karstenharries/courses-and-seminars/>, 2016 <[https://campuspress.yale.edu/karstenharries/courses-and-seminars\\_\\_trashed/philosophy-of-architecture-1wsooyk/](https://campuspress.yale.edu/karstenharries/courses-and-seminars__trashed/philosophy-of-architecture-1wsooyk/)> [accessed 11 January 2025], p. 213.

this lens, Harries suggests that buildings and urban designs are imbued with political and ethical significance. They reflect and reinforce societal values, aspirations, and power structures. This perspective invites a deeper examination of the responsibilities and implications of architectural practice, considering how built environments influence collective identity, social interactions, and the very fabric of community life. The advantages and potential drawbacks of this reality warrant further exploration, as they touch upon issues of representation, inclusivity, and the evolving relationship between people and their constructed surroundings. This reality, as we will see, has advantages and disadvantages.

## Dwelling and Ethos

In the following passage, Karsten Harries brings up a description of a farmhouse put forward by Heidegger wherein he points out that this building does not only offer shelter, but also provides for ‘dwelling by articulating man's ethos’, locating humanity’s ‘place in an ongoing order that includes God, the community, and nature’<sup>6</sup>

It placed the farm on the wind-sheltered mountain slope looking south, among the meadows close to the spring. It gave it the wide overhanging roof whose proper slope bears up under the burden of snow, and which, reaching deep down, shields the chambers against the storms of the long winter nights. It did not forget the altar corner behind the community table; it made room for the hallowed places of childbed and “the tree of the dead” - for that is what they call a coffin there: the Totenbaum - and in this way it designed for the different generations under one roof the character of their journey through time<sup>7</sup>

This has obvious political implications. After all, all that has to do with humans in a community is political. By being a public activity (even when it is a private tenement), architecture becomes an ethical and political one as well. This dissertation adopts this insight in order to

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<sup>6</sup> Karsten Harries, “Space, Place, and Ethos: Reflection on the Ethical Function of Architecture,” *Artibus et Historiae*, 5.9 (1984), 159 <<https://doi.org/10.2307/1483174>>., p. 160.

<sup>7</sup> Martin Heidegger, “Building, Dwelling, Thinking,” in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. by Albert Hofstadter (HarperCollins Publishers, 2001), p. 160. In the original: Martin Heidegger, ‘Bauen Wohnen Denken’ in *Vorträge Und Aufsätze* (Gunther Neske Pfullingen, 1978), p. 155.

“Es hat ihm das weit ausladende Schindeldach gegeben, das in geeigneter Schräge die Schneelasten trägt und tief herabreichend die Stuben gegen die Stürme der langen Winternächte schützt. Es hat den Herrgottswinkel hinter dem gemeinsamen Tisch nicht vergessen, es hat die geheiligten Plätze für Kind bett und Totenbaum, so heißt dort der Sarg, in die Stuben eingeräumt und so den verschiedenen Lebensaltern unter einem Dach das Gepräge ihres Ganges durch die Zeit vorgezeichnet.“

argue that architectural decisions cannot be reduced to technical or aesthetic criteria alone, but must be considered in relation to their impact on the conditions of communal dwelling.

Ultimately, as Harries proposes:

The way we bound space, wall things in and out, negotiate the transition from public to ever more intimate private spaces, has an inescapable ethical significance.<sup>8</sup>

The way we create boundaries around space<sup>9</sup> and what we make of it once it is so bound becomes political *qua* ethical issue. These appear to be two distinct aspects of building, the (i) space used and (ii) what is built within that space. In reality, they are inextricably intertwined issues, since how much space is used and what is done with it both have an effect, in varying degrees, on dwelling for the people within the boundaries and for those on the outside. So in actual fact they are distinct issues but seemingly inseparable. As Harries explains:

“Space,” as I am using it here, refers to the space of our life-world, space understood as environment, inescapably mediated by the way we remain bound to this earth. We all need space to live lives worth living, where expressions like “elbow room” and, in a far more ominous way, the German *Lebensraum*, hint at the way the increasing scarcity and the resulting demand for space can dehumanize an individual and a society.<sup>10</sup>

So space and what is done with it becomes a public - even when it is a private tenement one should add- it becomes an ethical and political issue:

We must not forget how intimately the availability of space is connected to much that possesses genuine value, to our sense of freedom, to the rights of the individual, also to his property.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Karsten Harries, “Some Thoughts and Questions on Revisiting The Ethical Function of Architecture,” ed. by Eduard Führ, *Wolkenkuckucksheim | Cloud-Cuckoo-Land | Воздушный Замок*, 22.36 (2017). P.19.

<sup>9</sup> Perhaps reference should be made here to the Heideggerian jug example. Heidegger's jug example highlights the philosophical implications of how we conceptualize and interact with space. Heidegger used the jug as a metaphor to explore the essence of "thingness" and how objects relate to their surroundings. In this context, the creation of boundaries around space can be understood as a process of defining and delimiting areas, both physically and conceptually. This act of boundary-making is inherently political, as it involves decisions about inclusion, exclusion, and the allocation of resources. The ethical dimension emerges from how we choose to utilize and interpret the bounded space.

<sup>10</sup> Harries, ‘Some Thoughts and Questions’, p. 19.

<sup>11</sup> Harries, ‘Some Thoughts and Questions’, p. 22.

While Harries draws on Heidegger's account of dwelling, his concern is explicitly ethical and civic. He does not extend Heidegger by deriving rules for architecture, but by clarifying how building participates in the shared world of a community.

Building (or architecture) as dwelling then implies that private and public space is still in the common shared domain because of this unavoidable presence it creates. A built-up space may still 'contribute to knitting some urban fabric'<sup>12</sup> as Harries puts it. The responsibility of having such a right to own property is often overlooked. Once the building satisfies the basic requirements imposed by law, (See Figure 24) the owner and/or architect may do *whatever* they individually wish for like 'self-absorbed individuals'<sup>13</sup>.



FIGURE 24 RESIDENTS RAISE CONCERNS ABOUT SLIEMA, MALTA DEVELOPMENT, WHERE A SIX-APARTMENT BLOCK UNDER CONSTRUCTION EXTENDS MORE THAN A METRE PAST THE NEIGHBOURING PROPERTIES. PHOTOGRAPH: CHRIS SANT FOURNIER

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<sup>12</sup> Harries, 'Some Thoughts and Questions', p. 17.

<sup>13</sup> Harries, *Lecture Notes*, p. 293.

## Case Study: Development Controversy in Malta

To illustrate the real-world implications of these theoretical concepts, let us examine a recent development controversy in Malta. An example of this adhering to the letter but not the ethos of the law is exemplified by a recent incident happening in Sliema<sup>14</sup>, as reported by the Times of Malta, the architect of a new apartment block of apartments being built has said that he was ‘left with no choice but to build further forward than neighbouring properties to be in line with Planning Authority rules’.<sup>15</sup> The president of the Chamber of Architects in Malta said to this newspaper:

Even if they [architects] want to do it architecturally right, they can’t. It’s not their fault, this is the predicament of architecture generally; it’s about law, not aesthetics.”<sup>16</sup>

As will be seen in this chapter, there is a tension between the individual architectural desires<sup>17</sup> and that what the community wishes. The question arises by whom is the community represented? Is it the local council, the planning authority, the developers and architects or is it the individuals? It could well be that all of these make up the community and that the ethos is then a balancing act between all these players. After all democratic politics is the ultimate balancing act. Sometimes, the *collectivity* embodied normally by the authorities (local councils, planning authorities etc..) encroach on individuals’ rights that is why the separation of powers and rule of law ensure recourse to judicial adjudication. The checks and balances<sup>18</sup> in democracies ensure (as far as it is humanly possible) that the ethos of the community emerges. It is indeed a constant balancing act between the individual and the collective.

What appears certain is that many fear is an encroachment on the individual rights by the *collectivity* or part thereof. This is also Harries’s concern:

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<sup>14</sup> A highly urbanised town in Malta.

<sup>15</sup> James Cummings, “‘I’m Following PA Rules’: New Sliema Block Juts out on Pavement,” *Times of Malta*, 2024 <<https://timesofmalta.com/article/im-following-pa-rules-architect-new-sliema-block-jutting-pavement.1098129>> [accessed 8 January 2025].

<sup>16</sup> Cummings, “‘I’m Following PA Rules’.

<sup>17</sup> By client, architect or developer.

<sup>18</sup> In fact checks and balances are the mechanisms which distribute power throughout a political system – preventing any one institution or individual from exercising total control. This principle is core to all modern democracies.

The example of Nazi architecture today shadows all discussions that would assign to architecture the task of restoring to us a new sense of community? It also shadows my talk of an ethical function for architecture<sup>19</sup>.

Harries explains later on that ‘art, and more especially architecture’ is needed to remember the human being to the whole self, not just as parts put together accidentally one would add.<sup>20</sup> It is needed also to bring our attention to the ‘community and to the individual, to all the tensions that are constitutive of our being’.<sup>21</sup> He delves into this in some more depth:

architecture today has to chart a difficult course between, on the one hand, a proud self-assertion that calls into all that would bind freedom, and, on the other, a need for spiritual shelter, all too ready to be liberated from a freedom that has become too heavy a burden to bear.<sup>22</sup>

‘Liberated from a freedom that has become too heavy a burden’ is the operative part which calls upon us to seek balance. Sometimes our individuality enslaves us and perhaps if we let it run rampant it might enslave others living with us as well. Harries makes the point that architecture today has to create a balance between, those who, ‘suspicious of all who claim something like an ethical or political function for architecture, would leave it only its functional, pragmatic, and aesthetic aspects’, and, those who claim that architecture should ‘forge a new sense of community, even in the absence of a living common sense’.<sup>23</sup>

What appears reasonably arguable is that some balance needs to be found between individual ideals and those of the community. The challenge of presuming that communities are virtuous arises from the inherent complexity and diversity of human societies. As Aristotle highlights in *Politics*, while the *polis* is meant to cultivate virtue, not all communities or individuals within them will act virtuously.<sup>24</sup> Communities are shaped by competing interests, conflicting values, and differing levels of education and understanding. Without mechanisms to ensure fairness

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<sup>19</sup> Harries, *Lecture Notes*, p. 208.

<sup>20</sup> Harries, *Lecture Notes* p. 210.

<sup>21</sup> Harries, *Lecture Notes* .p. 210.

<sup>22</sup> Harries, *Lecture Notes* .p. 210.

<sup>23</sup> Harries, *Lecture Notes* p. 210.

<sup>24</sup> Aristotle's conception of the *polis* as a means to cultivate virtue is central to his political philosophy, but he acknowledges that not all communities or individuals within them will necessarily act virtuously (Eric Brown, “Politics and Society,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Epicureanism*, ed. by James Warren (Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 179–96 <<https://doi.org/10.1017/ccol9780521873475.011>> [accessed 8 January 2025].;

and justice, communities can devolve into mob rule, where decisions are driven by the emotions or prejudices of the majority rather than reasoned deliberation. Mob rule, or ochlocracy, often marginalizes minority perspectives, leading to the suppression of dissent and the erosion of justice. Aristotle warns that such conditions make it difficult for communities to achieve the ideal of justice central to political life.<sup>25</sup> The alternative danger is tyranny, where power is concentrated in the hands of a single ruler or a dominant group, often justified as necessary to maintain order.

To avoid both mob rule and tyranny, political philosophers such as Montesquieu<sup>26</sup> and James Madison advocate for institutional safeguards that balance power. Montesquieu, in *The Spirit of the Laws*, emphasizes the separation of powers as essential to prevent any single entity from dominating the political landscape. James Madison,<sup>27</sup> in Federalist No. 10, identifies the importance of a large republic with a diversity of interests to dilute the influence of factions. John Stuart Mill<sup>28</sup> adds that fostering a culture of free speech and open dialogue helps communities arrive at decisions that reflect the common good rather than transient passions. Deliberative democracy, as championed by theorists like Jürgen Habermas<sup>29</sup>, provides another solution: it seeks to ensure decisions are made through rational discourse, where all voices have an equal opportunity to be heard. By combining institutional checks with a commitment to reasoned debate, communities can better navigate the tension between collective action and individual rights, fostering a governance structure that seeks justice rather than dominance.

So having settled the fact that a community may mean many things and that we intend a democratic and just community as explained, one needs to connect this to how can that community express its ethos in architecture without trampling over the individual.

What is certain is that there is more at stake than just aesthetics. A street, a district or a city are not some huge gallery of individual paintings, they are a collection of shared dwelling places making up a larger dwelling place. There will always be some tension between the individual

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<sup>25</sup> Aristotle, "The Politics of Aristotle : Benjamin Jowett, Aristotle : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive," *Internet Archive*, 1885 <<https://archive.org/details/politicsaristot05arisgoog>> [accessed 23 November 2024]. (Politics, III.11)

<sup>26</sup> Charles de Secondat baron de Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws: Translated from the French of M. de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu*. By Thomas Nugent, ..., trans. by Thomas Nugent and Jean Le Rond d'Alembert (New York: The Colonial Press, 1773).

<sup>27</sup> James Madison, "The Federalist Papers No. 10," *Yale Law School, The Avalon Project*, 1998 <[https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/fed10.asp](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/fed10.asp)> [accessed 23 November 2024].

<sup>28</sup> John Stuart Mill, *J. S. Mill: "On Liberty" and Other Writings* (Cambridge University Press, 1989).

<sup>29</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy* (John Wiley & Sons, 2018).

project and that of the rest of the community (See Figure 25). This tension enhances the overall visual appeal for residents and pedestrians without causing disruption. The skyline maintains a relatively uniform appearance through consistent building heights, while the depth of the structures respects the road's contour. Consequently, the individual elements occupy the given space in a meaningful manner, thereby creating a 'place' – an entity that transcends the mere sum of its constituent parts.



FIGURE 25 HAMRUN, MALTA - DEMONSTRATES DISTINCT IDENTITIES AND STYLES FOR EACH HOUSE, INCLUDING VARIED COLOUR SCHEMES, TO THE LEFT BUT LACK OF DIALOGUE TO THE RIGHT. PHOTOGRAPH: BRIAN BERRY

This tension according to Harries, quoting Schwarz<sup>30</sup>, stems from ‘increasing inability or unwillingness of individuals to commit themselves to something larger than their mortal selves’.<sup>31</sup>

Harries uses the concept of cathedral to explain the notion of shared ethos between individuals and community, not unlike Heidegger’s temple narrative; he states:

Once the cathedral thus gathered individuals into a community by speaking of what was then thought to matter most. In that sense it is an obvious example of what Hegel considered the highest function of art. That highest function is served only when the aesthetic stands in the service of the ethical, broadly understood.<sup>32</sup>

Harries's concept of the cathedral as a means (which perhaps becomes indispensable after some time) for shared ethos between individuals and community draws parallels with Heidegger's temple narrative, emphasizing the role of architectural spaces in fostering collective identity and values. The cathedral, in this context, serves as a physical manifestation of communal beliefs and aspirations, acting as a focal point for gathering individuals and unifying them under a common purpose. This shared sense of meaning and belonging is crucial in forming genuine communities, transcending mere physical proximity to create a deeper, more meaningful connection among members.

The idea that art serves an ethical purpose, as Harries seems to interpret from Hegel,<sup>33</sup> is illustrated through the cathedral analogy. The aesthetic beauty and grandeur of the cathedral are not ends in themselves but rather vehicles for conveying and reinforcing ethical principles and shared values. This perspective suggests that a return to communitarian responsibility may shift our understanding of art and architecture, emphasizing their role in cultivating a collective ethos and fostering a sense of shared purpose. As communities grapple with contemporary

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<sup>30</sup> Rudolph Schwarz, “Das Anliegen Der Baukunst,” in *Mensch Und Raum, Das Darmstädter Gespräch 1951*, ed. by Otto Bartning (Berlin, Boston: Birkhäuser, 1991) <<https://doi.org/10.1515/9783035600803.5>> [accessed 8 January 2025].

<sup>31</sup> Harries, *Lecture Notes*, p. 311.

<sup>32</sup> Harries, *Lecture Notes*, pp. 35-36.

<sup>33</sup> Some qualification is needed here. Hegel did not explicitly propose that art serves an ethical function. Instead, he viewed art as a way to express and reveal truth, contributing to human self-understanding and the development of spirit (*Geist*). (See Lydia L. Moland, *Hegel's Philosophy of Art* (Oxford University Press, 2017) <<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199355228.013.26>> [accessed 8 January 2025]). According to Hegel, art, along with religion and philosophy, plays a role in manifesting the absolute and the development of human consciousness ( see: Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art* (OUP UK, 1998).

challenges, the idea of creating spaces and symbols that can unite individuals around common values and goals becomes increasingly relevant, potentially offering a path towards stronger, more cohesive societies.

In summary, a return to communitarian<sup>34</sup> responsibility may change that perspective. After all, ‘what gathers individuals into genuine community can only be a shared sense of what matters’.<sup>35</sup> What one may call a spatial ethos, in essence.<sup>36</sup> The concept of ethos encompasses a shared set of moral principles that govern our collective daily existence. We aim to establish a spatial ethos: a lived environment tailored to our everyday experiences. Ethos is intrinsically linked to place.

### **Architecture is Political**

The design and organisation of architectural spaces not only reflect political ideologies but also shape ethical life by influencing social interactions, accessibility, and the equitable distribution of resources within a community.<sup>37</sup> This issue is picked up by Bart van Leeuwen:

At first glance, a degree of skepticism about the relevance of architecture for political theory seems called for. Is architecture not the practice of designing buildings in such a way that they meet standards of safety, functionality and beauty?<sup>38</sup>

Van Leeuwen argues that political theory formulates the ethical reasoning of concepts that have shaped politics, for instance ‘justice,’ ‘individual rights,’ ‘equality,’ ‘liberty,’ ‘democracy’.<sup>39</sup> He states that such concepts are ‘political,’ in that, they involve versions of the ‘common good’ that imply how governments should be ‘organized’ and how they should ‘act’. The author insists that applying this model of political theory to architecture, ‘one could claim that safety

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<sup>34</sup> See on this point: Bart van Leeuwen, “Communitarianism,” *The International Encyclopedia of Political Communication*, 2015, 1–5 <<https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118541555.wbiepc012>>, wherein he states that ‘Communitarianism argues that culture and shared values constitute the identity of individuals. Therefore it defends a politics of the common good.’

<sup>35</sup> Harries, *Lecture Notes*, p. 215.

<sup>36</sup> Nikolaos-Ion Terzoglou, “The Epistemological Location of Karsten Harries’ ‘Research Programme,’” ed. by Eduard Führ, *Cloud-Cuckoo.Net*, 22.36 (2017).

<sup>37</sup> For example, the layout of a city can affect social interactions, economic activities, and the distribution of resources. Public spaces, such as parks and squares, can serve as venues for political expression and community gatherings. Additionally, the architecture of government buildings can symbolize authority and transparency.

<sup>38</sup> Bart van Leeuwen, “Is Architecture Relevant for Political Theory?,” *European Journal of Political Theory*, 23.1 (2021), 116–24 <https://doi.org/10.1177/14748851211063672>, p. 116.

<sup>39</sup> van Leeuwen, ‘Is Architecture Relevant for Political Theory?’, p. 116.

is a public concern and so is the functionality and beauty of buildings' but asks whether there is anything more substantial to say about the interaction between the two.<sup>40</sup>

Van Leeuwen, then refers to the book *Political Theory and Architecture*<sup>41</sup> where the editors quote Winston Churchill's famous statement that 'we shape our buildings and afterwards our buildings shape us'. We will refer to this book later on in some more detail in the last chapter which deals with the common good.

Moreover, Van Leeuwen remarks that:

Human thought is necessarily embodied. There can be no understanding of the world or my place in it without some external medium (language, gesture, institutions, practices, buildings) that embodies and at the same time shapes this thought in certain ways.<sup>42</sup>

van Leeuwen declares that this 'embodiment' conveys the meaning that one's identity should be seen in terms of openness or connectedness to our immediate social, cultural and physical contexts<sup>43</sup> that constitute us in different ways. He concludes his review of the abovementioned book in the following telling passage:

The fact that these contexts 'constitute' us entails that they are not separate from our identity, but in a way part of it. And that is precisely where concerns about the 'common good' and hence about the discipline of political theory should make contact with reflections on urban design, planning, and architecture.<sup>44</sup>

The concept of 'context' is not unfamiliar to Harries. Indeed, in his 'Lecture Notes' he explicitly addresses this notion by recounting a personal experience when he and his wife travelled to Munich, Germany. He highlights the stark contrast between the diminutive church of St. John the Baptist in Oppolding, (Figure 26) and the airport at which they arrived.<sup>45</sup> His subjective experience resonates with Norberg-Schulz's notions of place when he says that his 'experience

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<sup>40</sup> van Leeuwen, 'Is Architecture Relevant for Political Theory?', p. 116.

<sup>41</sup> *Political Theory and Architecture*, ed. by Duncan Bell and Bernardo Zacka (Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2020) <<https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350103771>> [accessed 8 January 2025], p. 311.

<sup>42</sup> van Leeuwen, 'Is Architecture Relevant for Political Theory?', p. 9.

<sup>43</sup> My underlining.

<sup>44</sup> van Leeuwen, 'Is Architecture Relevant for Political Theory?', p. 9.

<sup>45</sup> Harries *Lecture Notes*, p. 217.

of the spirit of the place, the *genius loci*, is very much part of the experience of the church with its pulpit'.<sup>46</sup>



FIGURE 26 ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST IN OPPOLDING, GERMANY. PHOTOGRAPH: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.

Harries brings up this little church and its surroundings as an example of the inter-relationship between beauty, space and place. He then evokes the words of Walter Benjamin<sup>47</sup> when he states that the 'aura' of an 'artifact':

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<sup>46</sup> Harries *Lecture Notes*, p. 217.

<sup>47</sup> Walter Benjamin, a German philosopher and cultural critic, introduced the concept of "aura" in his seminal essay Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", *Illuminations*, ed. by Hannah Arendt, trans. by Harry Zorn (New York: Schocken Books, 2007). For Benjamin, the "aura" refers to the unique presence, authenticity, and originality of an artwork, which is inherently tied to its history, location, and singularity. The aura is the artwork's "here and now," its specific place in time and space. With the advent of mechanical reproduction (such as photography and film), Benjamin argued that this aura is diminished or lost, as art becomes

[...] depends on an appreciation of its embeddedness<sup>48</sup> in its historical context<sup>49</sup>, of its place in the ongoing story of humanity. That is certainly true of my experience of this modest little church. To really appreciate its special aura, we need not only to experience it in its geographical place, but also have to have a sense of its historical place. Such awareness establishes a sense of distance, but also a sense of homecoming.<sup>50</sup>

For the time being, it is adequate to assert that, assuming the validity of this proposition, every act of construction, as previously delineated, ought to fundamentally embody an act of dwelling, necessitates collective<sup>51</sup> support beyond the conventional official channels of permits and technical standards.

In the chosen epigraphical quote to this chapter, Harries emphasises how architecture not only reflects but also influences the *ethos*, or the characteristic spirit, of a society through the values, aspirations, and culture embedded within built structures. In other words, architecture is a reflection of our values, aspirations, and culture, shaping the ethos of our built surroundings.

In the previous chapters we have seen the importance of dwelling, building and place not only as physical entities but as existential (and thus philosophical) tools necessary for all humans to live meaningfully individually and collectively. (D)well-being<sup>52</sup> has been analysed as a natural progression toward finding oneself and coming peacefully to feel at home within one's surroundings. On this view, dwelling is not merely spatial but existential, involving a meaningful relation between the individual and the world inhabited. Harries takes up this idea and expresses it as follows:

To really dwell is to be at home in the world. Such dwelling presupposes that we experience the world not, as science would have us do, as the totality of mute facts that

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more accessible and reproducible. See Walter Benjamin, *Das Kunstwerk Im Zeitalter Seiner Technischen Reproduzierbarkeit: Dritte, Autorisierte Letzte Fassung, 1939* (Null Papier Verlag, 2024).

<sup>48</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>49</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>50</sup> Harries, *Lecture Notes*, p. 218.

<sup>51</sup> Walter Benjamin actually explains the relationship of architecture to the community as follows: "Architecture has always represented the prototype of a work of art the reception of which is consummated by a collectivity in a state of distraction." See Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, New York: Schocken, (1968), pp. 217-251, at p. 241.

<sup>52</sup> As described at the beginning of this chapter and in Chapter Two as "(d)well-being is that state of affairs wherein an individual living with others in a community, experiences an all-round sense of authentic fulfilment as self-realisation and/or flourishing, by being peacefully and meaningfully attuned to his/her surroundings, by finding him/herself at home, by poetically (poesies mean human making) transforming that "space" into a dwelling "place" through building according to its genius loci and according to the ethos of that same community".

just happen to be as they are, but as a meaningful order. But is the transformation of mute alien material into a home not the essence of building? And is it perhaps also the essence of thinking?<sup>53</sup>

Harries then adds that thinking is architectonic<sup>54</sup> in a broadly Kantian sense. As he puts it, building as dwelling also unfolds into the architectures erected by thought, most notably philosophical thought.<sup>55</sup> For Harries, building thus encompasses both the construction of structures that provide physical and psychological shelter and the use of language through which human beings gain orientation and come to feel at home in the world.<sup>56</sup>

Harries asserts that there is a dialogue between what happened in the built environment and human beings living around those environments. This dialogue is existential. By existential one means all-encompassing, not just social, not just social, not just political. What is existential is 'meaningful' not only to one individual but to the *collectivity*. In other words this dialogue is key to human well-being as a community. According to Harries this dialogue is not solely one that is aesthetic but is much more than that:

[...] linear accounts of the history of architecture as a succession of important aesthetic events are of course much too simple<sup>57</sup>

To such an extent that he inquires:

[...] can any merely aesthetic approach do Justice to architecture? Do we do justice even to postmodern architecture when we understand it as an essentially aesthetic response to modernism?<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Harries, *Lecture Notes*, p. 7.

<sup>54</sup> Harries mentions an interesting article here namely: Paula Manchester, "Kant's Conception of Architectonic in Its Philosophical Context," *Kant Studien*, 99.2 (2008) <<https://doi.org/10.1515/kant.2008.010>>.

<sup>55</sup> Harries, 'Ethical Function', p. 8.

<sup>56</sup> Harries, 'Ethical Function', p. 9.

<sup>57</sup> Harries, 'Ethical Function', p. 7.

<sup>58</sup> Harries, 'Ethical Function', p. 9.

## **Turpification as Immoral Uglification**

Here one is bound to say a word or two about *turpification* and the apparent contradiction of not adopting an aesthetics approach but at the same time advocating for beauty (Figure 27).<sup>59</sup> When something is not only ugly but it so ugly that it is verging on immorality. A building which does not let true human fulfilment happen around it or within it (Figure 28). The essence of *turpification*<sup>60</sup> as intended in this research is caught by Harries when he asserts that:

[...]we have to take seriously, more seriously perhaps than they took themselves, those postmodernists who proclaimed themselves humanists and charged modernism not so much with aesthetic as with moral failure.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Patrick Calleja, "Is Malta More Beautiful?," *Times of Malta*, 1 April 2025 <<https://timesofmalta.com/article/is-malta-beautiful.1107425>> [accessed 1 April 2025].

<sup>60</sup> See Umberto Eco, *On Ugliness*, trans. by Alastair McEwen (London: Harvill Secker, 2007), p. 436.

<sup>61</sup> Harries, 'Ethical Function', p. 9.



FIGURE 27 - 'STREETSCAPES ARE BEING RUINED, VILLAGE SKYLINES OBLITERATED AND URBAN CONSERVATION AREAS ENCROACHED UPON' - PATRICK CALLEJA. PHOTOGRAPH: TIMES OF MALTA



FIGURE 28 MALTA, THE BUILDING CURRENTLY UNDER CONSTRUCTION AT THE CENTRE OF THE IMAGE MAY BE UNDERSTOOD AS PART OF A BROADER PATTERN OF RECENT DEVELOPMENT THAT RAISES QUESTIONS OF BOTH AESTHETIC JUDGMENT AND ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY. ITS NOTABLY NARROW FORM, COMBINED WITH ITS SCALE AND PLACEMENT, APPEARS TO CONTRIBUTE LITTLE TO A MEANINGFUL SENSE OF DWELLING OR SPATIAL GENEROSITY, INSTEAD EXEMPLIFYING A GRADUAL PROCESS OF VISUAL AND CONTEXTUAL DEGRADATION THAT MAY BE DESCRIBED AS TURPIFICATION.

Although Harries does not explicitly engage with Ruskin, Ruskin's understanding of building as a moral duty anticipates and illuminates Harries's claim that architecture bears an irreducibly ethical significance.

This ethical dimension of building is articulated with particular force by Ruskin in this passage, who insists that architecture concerns not aesthetic pleasure or intellectual display, but a profound moral responsibility, as he writes:

[architecture] is not a question of mere ocular delight, it is no question of intellectual pride, or of cultivated and critical fancy, how, and with what aspect of durability and of completeness, the domestic buildings of a nation shall be raised. It is one of those moral duties, not with more impunity to be neglected because the perception of them depends on a finely toned and balanced conscientiousness, to build our dwellings with care, and patience, and fondness, and diligent completion, and with a view to their duration at least for such a period as, in the ordinary course of national revolutions, might be supposed likely to extend to the entire alteration of the direction of local interests.<sup>62</sup>

Ruskin's insistence on building as a moral duty already gestures beyond architecture understood as a discrete practice or technical discipline. What is at stake, rather, is a sustained manner of inhabiting the world—one in which building reflects enduring commitments, shared values, and forms of care. It is from this perspective that architecture can be approached not merely as an activity, but as a way of life.

### **Architecture is a way of life**

In fact, in a similar fashion to the main idea suggested in this research, Karsten Harries, deeply connects the aesthetic dimension with the notion of the good life:

What is needed is something quite different: a rigorous rethinking of the often taken for granted understanding of works of architecture as functional sheds to which an aesthetic component has been added; an understanding of architecture that allows us to take seriously Giedion's imperative that architecture interpret a way of life valid for our period.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (New York Public Library: J. Wiley, 1849), p. 150.

<sup>63</sup> Harries, 'Ethical Function', p. 12.

A word of caution here, however, Harries like Heidegger<sup>64</sup> before him, does not promote the aesthetic approach:

If architecture today is to address what Giedion is right to call its main task, it first has to free itself from the aesthetic approach, which also means freeing itself from an understanding of the work of architecture as fundamentally just a decorated shed.<sup>65</sup>

In fact in this context, the term “aesthetic” is not used in a purely formal or subjective sense, but rather to denote the manner in which architecture discloses itself within a shared world, in a way that may bear upon the conditions of the common good.

Harries asserts that beauty in architecture transcends mere ‘aesthetic appeal’;<sup>66</sup> it is integral to human well-being. Paradoxically though, beautiful environments have the power to uplift the human spirit, providing joy, inspiration, and a sense of harmony. This aligns with the Aristotelian concept of *eudaimonia*, or the good life, which emphasizes living in a way that fulfils human potential and promotes overall well-being. What he probably means is that beauty *per se* alone is not enough. An architect may build something which, taken on its own merits, is aesthetically pleasing – a work of art - but does not connect with what is already built; with the community which is pre-existing in that place. In this case the location is already a ‘place’. This does not contradict the idea of *genius loci*, on the contrary, it somehow compliments it. *Genius loci*, as seen, suggests what type of building would *fit* in that particular space, in order for it to become a place. Ethos assists and adjuvates this process by suggesting already existing elements within that community. This may take various forms, from community needs, activities or policies to landscape contours, built character or existing urban planning. So, the ‘threat’ of having a decorated shed is diminished.

Harries expresses this as follows:

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<sup>64</sup> Just as a *pro memoria*, Heidegger does not understand the work of art, in terms of representation, or else form and content. While aesthetics has long used these categories in order to analyse and explain artworks, Heidegger believes that they are unsuitable for investigating the Being of works of art.

<sup>65</sup> Harries, ‘Ethical Function’, p. 13.

<sup>66</sup> Harries says that this aesthetic approach in opposition to his ethical approach distinguishes a building and architecture by stating that the latter ‘is essentially a functional building with an added aesthetic component. An obvious way of creating such a work would be to decorate some utilitarian structure: work of architecture = building + decoration. Not that we have to think of the addition of the aesthetic component as a matter of adding decoration as it is usually understood.’ Harries, ‘Ethical Function’, p. 4.

Architecture helps us meet this threat: the quality of life should not be sacrificed to the economic imperative. As Aristotle knew, what makes life worth living is not work but leisure.<sup>67</sup>

This last statement appears to be ephemeral at best, why would a life worth living pertain to ‘leisure’ and not work? In what sense that Harries mean this? The answer comes soon after:

[...] aesthetic experience has long been considered a paradigm of such self-justifying experience. To appreciate art we must leave the work world behind, must be at leisure; that holds also for the creation and appreciation of architecture, at least, if, following Ruskin, we take for granted its art character. The distinction between building and architecture, utility and beauty, thus mirrors the distinction between work and leisure; both distinctions presuppose different ways of experiencing time.

But Harries also elaborates on what he means by a good life:

Dreams of a better life are inseparable from the good life, which also entails dreams of a better home. But human beings are social animals. Given the communal character of our dwelling, an oneiric city must thus take its place beside Bachelard’s oneiric<sup>68</sup> house.<sup>69</sup>

Here “dream” is necessarily interpreted not in a literal sense but as an aspiration.<sup>70</sup> Bachelard’s evocation to such aspirations was in truth his ‘way of countering an encroaching modernity’.<sup>71</sup> Similarly to Heidegger, his aversion to 20th-century ‘urbanism and technology receives its strongest expression in *The Poetics of Space*<sup>72</sup>:

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<sup>67</sup> Harries, *Lecture Notes*, p. 53, says that “Both Wittgenstein and Heidegger know that the modern world-picture has no room for whatever it is that can make life meaningful. That must be sought outside that world, outside “all happening and being so,” which cannot help but be, as Wittgenstein put it, “accidental.”

<sup>68</sup> In his philosophy of architecture lectures Harries states that “Bachelard claims that for every one of us there exists “an oneiric house, a house of dream-memory, that is lost in the shadow of a beyond of the real past.” p. 166. See Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. by Maria Jolas (Beacon Press, 1994), p. 15.

<sup>69</sup> Harries, ‘Ethical Function’, p. 326.

<sup>70</sup> In Jen Webb and Lorraine Webb, “Water and Dreams,” *TEXT*, 26.Special 68 (2022) <<https://doi.org/10.52086/001c.57572>>, p. 11: “For Bachelard, then, it is not the dream of sleep that is of interest, but rather waking dreams: the sorts of dreams one might have while fully awake, with cognitive processes at least partially engaged, and open to the possibility of making art. It is aligned to the mode of “dream” widely used as an analogue for creative aspirations, for longing and imagining, for seeing otherwise.”

<sup>71</sup> Joan Ockman, “The Poetics of Space by Gaston Bachelard,” *Harvard Design Magazine*, 2014 <<https://www.harvarddesignmagazine.org/articles/the-poetics-of-space-by-gaston-bachelard/>> [accessed 10 January 2025].

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

In Paris there are no houses, and the inhabitants of the big city live in superimposed boxes. They have no roots and, what is quite unthinkable for a dweller of houses, skyscrapers have no cellars. From the street to the roof, the rooms pile up one on top of the other, while the tent of a horizonless sky encloses the entire city. But the height of city buildings is a purely *exterior* one. Elevators do away with the heroism of stair climbing so that there is no longer any virtue in living up near the sky. *Home* has become mere horizontality. The different rooms that compose living quarters jammed into one floor all lack one of the fundamental principles for distinguishing and classifying the values of intimacy.<sup>73</sup>

Harries refers to Bachelard's dreams of a house in the image of a kind of nest (See Figure 29) in which 'we are warm and protected from an often hostile world'.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), pp. 26–27. The whole quote in the original: Gaston Bachelard, *La Poétique de l'espace* (Presses universitaires de France, 1957), p. 42 "A Paris, il n'y a pas de maisons. Dans des boîtes superposées vivent les habitants de la grand'ville : "Notre chambre parisienne, dit Paul Claudel (3), entre ses quatre murs, est une espèce de lieu géométrique, un trou conventionnel que nous meublons d'images, de bibelots et d'armoires dans une armoire. » Le numéro de la rue, le chiffre de l'étage fixent la localisation de notre « trou conventionnel », mais notre demeure n'a ni espace autour d'elle ni verticalité en elle. « Sur le sol, les maisons se fixent avec l'asphalte pour ne pas s'enfoncer dans la terre (4). » La maison n'a pas de racine. Chose inimaginable pour un rêveur de maison : les gratte-ciel n'ont pas de cave. Du pavé jusqu'au toit, les pièces s'amoncellent et la tente d'un ciel sans horizons enclôt la ville entière. Les édifices n'ont à la ville qu'une hauteur extérieure. Les ascenseurs détruisent les héroïsmes de l'escalier. On n'a plus guère de mérite d'habiter près du ciel. Et le chez soi n'est plus qu'une simple horizontalité. [Il manque aux différentes pièces d'un logis coincé à l'étage un des principes fondamentaux pour distinguer et classer les valeurs d'intimité."

<sup>74</sup> Harries, *Lecture Notes*, p. 166.



FIGURE 29 BAGGINS RESIDENCE 'BAG END' (NEW ZEALAND). A HOUSE WHERE ONE COULD DREAM PROTECTED FROM THE HOSTILE WORLD. PHOTOGRAPH: PSEUDOPANAX AT ENGLISH WIKIPEDIA, PUBLIC DOMAIN, VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.

He also draws a parallel between Bachelard and Heidegger when he says:

Heidegger's later conception of human being as a dwelling within the fourfold moves closer to Bachelard: the Black Forest farmhouse is his oneiric<sup>75</sup> house. And Heidegger's dream house, too, presupposes that primordial dwelling is a being at home in the world.<sup>76</sup>

Are not these dreams, these aspirations, then, the building blocks of both individual and communal dwelling (*qua* architecture) *spirit*? Is not this *spirit* what the idea of a shared community ethos, is all about? Harries appears to agree with this interpretation, in his own words:

What should architecture speak of? [...] As such [architecture] recalls an essential dwelling, recalls human beings to their essential humanity. So understood architecture

<sup>75</sup> Relating to dreams or dreaming.

<sup>76</sup> Harries, 'Ethical Function', p. 203.

has not so much an aesthetic, as an ethical function. "Ethical" derives from "ethos." By a person's ethos we mean his character, nature, or disposition. Similarly we speak of a community's ethos to refer to the spirit that presides over its activities. "Ethos" here names the way human beings exist in the world: their way of dwelling. The ethical function of architecture names its task to help articulate and support a shared ethos.<sup>77</sup>

This idea of ethos implies that, besides an obvious limitation of 'space' in which a particular community decides what type of architecture it favours, there is also a limitation in time. This point is clearly made by Giedion when he asserts that:

Likewise there are no absolute standards in the arts: the nineteenth-century painters and architects who thought certain forms were valid for every age were mistaken. History cannot be touched without changing it.<sup>78</sup>

Harries, following Giedion, is fully aware and in agreement. However, he asks 'what way of life is valid for our period?' It is evident that Harries is discussing the concept of absolute standards in art and architecture, and how these standards evolve over time. He appears to be challenging the notion that certain artistic forms or principles can remain valid across different eras, emphasizing that historical perspectives are subject to change when revisited.

This brings us to a more controversial aspect of this argument, questioning the validity of a "shared ethos" in architecture and politics. This argument raises concerns about how such an approach could potentially justify or condone problematic historical events. One may specifically mention Fascist<sup>79</sup> and Communist buildings<sup>80</sup>, one may collectively refer to them

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<sup>77</sup>Harries, *Lecture Notes*, pp. 88-89.

<sup>78</sup> Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture: The Growth of a New Tradition. 5th Ed.Rev.and Enl* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 5.

<sup>79</sup> See: Paolo Nicoloso, *Mussolini, Architect*, trans. by Sylvia Notini (University of Toronto Press, 2022) <<https://doi.org/10.3138/9781442630994>> [accessed 11 January 2025]. "In the first half of the twentieth century, there was no other country as politically invested in public architecture as fascist Italy. Over the course of the 1920s, and even more so during the 1930s, Italy produced a vast architectural output, exceeding that of many other countries. The regime left its mark on the country by raising hundreds of structures and developments: Case del Fascio (Fascist Party Meeting Houses), schools, government buildings, post offices, ministry headquarters, courthouses, railway stations, Opera Nazionale Balilla (Fascist Party youth group) headquarters, local government office buildings, swimming pools, state-controlled institutions...".

<sup>80</sup> See: Anastasiia Kirpalov, "Exploring Soviet Brutalism Through 9 Iconic Buildings," *TheCollector*, 21 March 2024 <<https://www.thecollector.com/soviet-brutalism-iconic-buildings/>> [accessed 11 January 2025].

"The architectural movement of Brutalism has British roots, yet it reached its full potential in the Soviet Union behind the Iron Curtain. This architectural style emerged from the post-war necessity to rebuild destroyed cities in an affordable, easy-to-build way. Soviet Brutalist buildings, still standing tall in now independent countries, were bold and ambitious projects that had their unique features related to ideology, regional and national traditions, and climate conditions".

as totalitarian architecture. This tendency was manifested not only in the political actions of Hitler,<sup>81</sup> Mussolini,<sup>82</sup> and Stalin but also in the monumental architectural projects that served as instruments of ideological expression (See Figure 30 and Figure 31).

Critical examination highlights the potential dangers of adhering too rigidly to a single ethos or ideology, as it may lead to the acceptance or normalization of harmful practices. Sometimes, when an ethos is translated into action, it may result in outcomes that society finds undesirable or even reprehensible, this underscores the need for careful consideration and critique of prevailing ethos in both artistic and political spheres.

This is indeed the downside of Harries's whole ethos project. Sometimes the ethos translates into something other parts of society would rather not have.<sup>83</sup> In summary, while Harries's ethos project in architecture aims to serve a common purpose and interpret contemporary life, it is crucial to recognize that the translation of ethos into practice can sometimes result in outcomes that society may reject later on or even contemporaneously. This could mean that what is being presented as ethos in a particular ethos does not really represent the ethos, but an ethos. This aligns with the broader observation that ethos, as a comprehensive and socially influential factor<sup>84</sup>, can have complex and sometimes contradictory effects when implemented across different domains. However, it is suggested that this should not defenestrate the whole idea of ethos.

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<sup>81</sup> See: Bernhard Leitner, "Artforum," *Artforum*, 1 December 1970 <<https://www.artforum.com/features/architecture-as-a-weapon-hitlers-speer-210487/>> [accessed 11 January 2025]. "Hitler clearly defined the role of architecture: "We build in order to fortify our authority." He wanted the new monuments to demonstrate the determination, oneness, strength and power of his Reich. Heroic architecture, symbolizing the power of the people according to his will".

<sup>82</sup> See: Paolo Nicoloso, *Mussolini, Architect*, trans. by Sylvia Notini (University of Toronto Press, 2022) <<https://doi.org/10.3138/9781442630994>> [accessed 11 January 2025]. "In the fascist mythology built around Mussolini – as the primary engineer of a new Italy, of its modernization, and of its renewed architectural look – the dictator's process of identification with architectural and urban changes was most evident in Rome. Italy's capital, redesigned by way of the dictator's interventions, into which he would pour huge amounts of money, would also be the "Mussolinian city" *par excellence*. The myth of Mussolini as the builder of cities was founded on his actual presence on the scene, which sometimes even affected the architectural choices made".

<sup>83</sup> Harries argues that architecture should serve a common ethos, interpreting a way of life valid for our time and freeing itself from formalist approaches (Karsten Harries, "The Ethical Function of Architecture," *Choice Reviews Online*, 34.10 (1997), 34-5479-34-5479 <<https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.34-5479>>).

<sup>84</sup> Dirkie Smit, "The Bible And Ethos In A New South Africa," *Scriptura*, 37.0 (2020) <<https://doi.org/10.7833/37-0-1814>>

Unlike totalitarian regimes, which impose a singular vision, democratic societies must balance individual creativity with communal ethos through legal and ethical safeguards. This balance ensures that architecture serves the common good without stifling innovation

### **Ethical Architecture: Checks and Balances in Democracy**

However, everything with regard human society may be seen in relative terms.<sup>85</sup> In the sense that democracy itself is to some extent a relativist and utilitarian project.<sup>86</sup> In fact, it creates checks and balances that, at least in theory, should curb absolutism. Always in theory, these checks and balances should limit absolutism in architecture as well. Regulatory frameworks, encompassing both overarching principles and precise stipulations, function to curtail the potential exploitation of individualistic approaches by architects, property developers, or political actors that might otherwise contravene the collective ethos embodied within democratic institutions.

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<sup>85</sup> Here ‘relative’ is not necessarily to be understood as advocating ‘moral relativism’

<sup>86</sup> Democracy, while often viewed as a universal ideal, can indeed be seen as a relativist and utilitarian project to some extent. The concept of democracy is not monolithic and its implementation varies across different societies and contexts (Arjun Appadurai, “Hope and Democracy,” *Public Culture*, 19.1 (2007), 29–34 <<https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-2006-023>>; Samuel H. Barnes, “The Contribution of Democracy to Rebuilding Postconflict Societies,” *American Journal of International Law*, 95.1 (2001), 86–101 <<https://doi.org/10.2307/2642039>>).



FIGURE 30 THE RED ARMY THEATRE IN MOSCOW, DESIGNED IN A SHAPE OF THE SOVIET RED STAR. PHOTOGRAPH: ALEX 'FLORSTEIN' FEDOROV, CREATIVE COMMONS ATTRIBUTION



FIGURE 31 BUNDESMINISTERIUM DER FINANZEN, BERLIN, PHOTOGRAPH: A.SAVIN, WIKIPEDIA

Moreover Harries towards the end of his lectures puts some important questions:

We should not take for granted that what we commonly understand by "a high standard of living" translates into "a high quality of life"? How important is a sense of community? What sort of community? Is it important to our spiritual well-being that this be an ongoing community?<sup>87</sup>

The concept of an 'ongoing community' implies the inclusion of future generations. It is challenging to conceive how a group of entirely self-centred individuals, cohabiting without sharing a common way of life, could achieve this. One might posit that such a scenario is unfeasible, as the persistent and unremitting conflict would potentially result in a Hobbesian 'state of nature', with its well-documented consequences.

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<sup>87</sup> Harries, *Lecture Notes*, p. 293.

Harries, however, advances a perspective that departs from Hobbes's emphasis on individual security by situating meaning within a temporally extended practice of dwelling. In a striking move, he turns to a biblical narrative—specifically the Old Testament account of Jacob—to show that what gives a place significance is not immediate utility or possession, but its orientation toward a communal future that exceeds the individual life. Dwelling, on this account, involves projecting oneself into a shared horizon of meaning and flourishing, a horizon that sustains a way of life rather than a momentary habitation, as Harries writes:

Of special significance is God's promise to give the land on which Jacob is sleeping to him and his descendants. Here they will flourish. The dream invites Jacob to project himself toward a future community that he will not live to see. It is this projection into the future, the confidence that his descendants will flourish in the future, that gives this moment and this place its special significance. Without such a projection, I want to claim, life is hollow.<sup>88</sup>

Harries summarizes this thought process eloquently when he says:

We will not experience that future, but we must will that there be such a future if our life is to be meaningful.<sup>89</sup>

This is how Harries understands and explains his 'post-Copernican geocentrism'<sup>90</sup>, and he also explains that this approach nowadays, demands 'care' and love for our 'fragile' planet which remains the core of 'living a meaningful life'.<sup>91</sup> We see here that Harries somehow merges Heidegger's *care* and Norberg-Schulz's *genius loci*. In fact, according to Harries, Heidegger offers us an "existential geocentrism," based on humanity's power to articulate its place poetically—even if it is "lost in space" understood scientifically.<sup>92</sup>

But Harries does also something else. He assembles together a framework wherein dwelling *qua* building and thus architecture, has a responsibility to community which because of its ethical function is inevitably also political. In his words:

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<sup>88</sup> Harries, 'Some Thoughts and Questions', p. 30.

<sup>89</sup> Harries, 'Some Thoughts and Questions', p. 30.

<sup>90</sup> Harries, 'Some Thoughts and Questions', p. 30.

<sup>91</sup> Harries, 'Some Thoughts and Questions', p. 30.

<sup>92</sup> Lawrence Vogel, "Evolution and the Meaning of Being: Heidegger, Jonas and Nihilism," *Continental Philosophy Review*, 51.1 (2017), 65–79 <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11007-017-9411-y>>.

Our dwelling is always a dwelling with others. The problem of architecture is therefore inevitably also the problem of community, which is only the other side of the problem of the individual. The ethical function of architecture cannot finally be divorced from the political.<sup>93</sup>

Harries compares the concept of primitive hut with that of the social contract. He does this in the context of his discussion about tradition and innovation. What was and what is in architecture. He highlights the tensions that exist between tradition and subjectivity. It is submitted that this is the same tension that exists between the collective (tradition) and the individual (subjective). In his words again:

The primitive hut has played in architectural theory much the same part that the social contract has played in political theory. Whether there ever was such a hut matters as little as whether there ever was such a contract. Both are imaginative constructs informed by reason and meant to legitimate a certain practice.<sup>94</sup>

These imaginative constructs presume a narrative, which according to some created our society together with money, religion and politics.<sup>95</sup> So a narrative becomes important for dwelling and in turn it becomes important to architecture. A narrative, in turn, creates an ethos. Harries says that:

If it is to meet the requirements of dwelling, building has to assume a mythopoeic<sup>96</sup>—and that means inevitably also a public and political—function. This is to say that vernacular building requires the illumination provided by architecture, where architecture can be either conservative or revolutionary: that is, serve the old or present new gods.

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<sup>93</sup> Harries, 'Ethical Function', p. 13.

<sup>94</sup> Harries, 'Ethical Function', p. 114.

<sup>95</sup> See for example Yuval Noah Harari, *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* (Harper Collins, 2015), wherein the author states that the truly unique trait of Homo Sapiens is our ability to create and believe fiction. All other animals use their communication system to describe reality. We use our communication system to create new realities.

<sup>96</sup> *Μυθοποιία* : The making of myths, either collectively in the folklore and religion of a given (usually pre-literate) culture, or individually by a writer who elaborates a personal system of spiritual principles as in the writings of William Blake. The term is often used in a loose sense to describe any kind of writing that either draws upon older myths or resembles myths in subject-matter or imaginative scope. "Mythopoeia," *Oxford Reference* <<https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100220548>> [accessed 10 January 2025].

In essence, in this passage Harries suggests that creating meaningful living spaces involves more than just construction; it requires architecture to infuse buildings with cultural significance and purpose. Architecture then is being described as serving "gods," which is a metaphor for the values, beliefs, or ideals that a society holds important. The type of architecture is relative and corresponding to the place it is built in. Is what Harries is advocating here a form of relativism? Well, all human activity is somehow relative. There is of course some common ground since all humans are considered one species. Consider for example political and legal systems. All have something in common but even within federations (like the United States, and Switzerland) and in political and economic unions (like the European Union) there are still a number of differences. Having communities that, through their 'ethos', decide on what type of architecture is best, and making that decision dependent on their values may *prima facie* appear relativist. Moreover, you may have competing values within the same community and thus that 'ethos' is not clearly defined. In this sense would Harries's thesis become somehow utilitarian: The greatest happiness for the greatest number?

Truly, in more than one way, democracy is both relativistic and utilitarian. It promotes the will of the majority, which one would argue is happy with most of what it voted for. Furthermore, at the same time it settles for a set of values which are not absolute but relative to each other.

Indeed, this is how it appears. However, one is compelled to qualify the above. Democracy traditionally, pushes the majority's well-being within the respect of the minorit(ies)' well-being. Moreover, the will of the majority is not 'final' since the minorities may work towards convincing more people to vote their way. Besides this, the values promoted by the majority are prevalent in as far as they do not conflict with or encroach onto the values of others (minorities included). So it appears to be true that these values are relative. However, these so-called values, (religious or political), have more basic, more fundamental principles underpinning them. These more fundamental principles are called 'human rights'. They are not absolute,<sup>97</sup> but they are fundamental enough to be, normally speaking, enshrined in that community's constitution, and are inalienable. So, one may argue that what Harries is doing is to emulate such a mechanism, short of using it *per se*, in order to achieve some sort of fundamental consensus about what it is to be done, or to be built in this case: to come up that is with what the *ethos*, is.

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<sup>97</sup> This is a common misconception. See Verica Trstenjak, "Limitations of Fundamental Rights in EU Law: Are Human Rights Absolute?," *European Review*, 32.2 (2023), 135–49 <<https://doi.org/10.1017/s1062798723000509>>.

Furthermore, it all depends then, on what type of ethos - or values - a community should base itself on. That is why an analysis about what is good for a community in terms of political ethos, needs general bearings. These bearings will be discussed in some detail in the fifth and last chapter. Suffice it to say for now that such a 'good life' has to be articulated in such fundamental basic terms as to be 'primordial' enough in order for it to cover the human spirit, and at the same time, it has to be articulated in such flexible terms as to accommodate it within varied communities.

These general bearings for buildings may also help in solving, or at least remedying the issue of 'subjectiveness' offered by the aesthetic approach and so heavily criticised by Heidegger.<sup>98</sup> Offering an objective criterion flexible enough to be accommodated into any community as diverse as it may be may prove helpful in finding a compromise between freedom and duty of individuality and freedom and duty of the collective. This criterion will have to reflect, truth in the work of art and it should then reflect the notion of dwelling and that of well-being: i.e. (d)well-being as discussed previously in architecture. In architecture it needs also to reflect the ethos of the community. This means that whoever builds this type of building has to have a very good perception of what that ethos is.

So far all this may appear to the uninitiated as a collection of abstract ideas trying to be fitted into a tangible medium such as a building. Well, concretely, the well-being of a community and also its ethos are both measured and calibrated to some not negligible extent by politics. It is the political environment that determines what happens, at least formally, in that community. Since as already explained, everything within the community is deemed political, all public activity including that carried out by NGOs, associations, clubs, parties, religious institutions, schools, universities, medical institutions, and so on and so forth, is political. This is one way to gauge the ethos of that community. It is not the only way, but nonetheless it is a telltale sign.

What is sure is that as Harries puts it:

In modern technology metaphysics can be said to have triumphed. It is the significance of this triumph that we need to consider. The death of art in what Hegel called its highest

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<sup>98</sup> Just a reminder of what has been said in Chapter Two, "Heidegger is against the modern tradition of philosophical "aesthetics" because he is for the true "work of art" which, he argues, the aesthetic approach to art eclipses. Heidegger's critique of aesthetics and his advocacy of art thus form a complementary whole." See Iain Thomson, "Heidegger's Aesthetics", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, (Summer 2024 Edition), Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman (eds.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2024/entries/heidegger-aesthetics/>>.

sense is a consequence of this triumph. Heidegger, too, links this death to the rise of what I have called the aesthetic approach.<sup>99</sup>

We are caught then in a paradoxical conundrum. We need objectivity, but what may provide us with such objectivity, science and technology, may be creating the current (artistic) and architectural situation. So much so, that as Harries admits if the current age is indeed the age of science and technology, one 'should expect this to find expression in our buildings'<sup>100</sup>. However, he quickly retorts to his own statement and explains that 'the very fact that we continue to value art shows that such an approach is felt to be deficient'.<sup>101</sup>

So, according to this reasoning what the technological approach (in building and art) lacks is supplemented by aesthetics. However, taking this argument to its fulfilment, technology and art appear to be separated by a thin veil of 'instrumental' reasoning.<sup>102</sup> This does not solve the quest for meaningfulness according to Harries.<sup>103</sup> The reason we are given is that 'science and technology cannot know anything of values'.<sup>104</sup>

What appears to unite everyone under one banner is the notion of truth. Some sort of 'disinterested objectivity'.<sup>105</sup> Scientific facts may well explain certain phenomena and technology following on from that may actually shape our world-view, but humans are more complicated than that. Whilst technology may give us the tools to build technically better buildings, it 'knows nothing of persons deserving respect' as Harries puts it.<sup>106</sup>

Of course, science and technology do shape our architecture in so many ways. Objectively speaking buildings may be said to be safer, greener, more economic. But the question remains are they more dwelling-friendly? Do they in other words respect a human's need for (d)well-being?

A disinterested objectivity then tells us very little about the meaning of life. It tells us, on its own fiat, nothing about respect of what is of value to the human person. It does not tell us about the complexity of what human reality is *made* of. A reality which many experience as aesthetic experience and meaning complexly entwined with truth. Does this mean 'that what makes life

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<sup>99</sup> Harries, *Lecture Notes*, p. 40.

<sup>100</sup> Harries, *Lecture Notes*, p. 40.

<sup>101</sup> Harries, *Lecture Notes*, p.40.

<sup>102</sup> Harries, *Lecture Notes*, p. 40.

<sup>103</sup> Harries, *Lecture Notes*, p. 40.

<sup>104</sup> Harries, *Lecture Notes*, p. 40.

<sup>105</sup> Harries, *Lecture Notes*, p. 44.

<sup>106</sup> Harries, *Lecture Notes*, p. 48.

meaningful must be sought outside reality so understood?’<sup>107</sup> Harries tackles this issue in the following passage:

To call the aesthetic experience disinterested is to say that it turns its back on reality. The aesthetic observer loses himself to beautiful appearance. Art offers him a refuge from reality as understood by science. That is why Heidegger can claim that the aesthetic approach to art helps to characterize the age of the world picture. Art so understood presents itself as the decoration of the Heideggerian *Gestell*. The age of the world picture becomes the age of the decorated shed.<sup>108</sup>

However, what appears to be needed are objective criteria that provide meaning. One of these may be the notion of dwelling itself. In dwelling as designated by Heidegger and as combined with well-being as described previously, we find a broad enough paradigm that may help the architect to identify building characteristics and features which in turn yield buildings which may be defined ‘good’ and thus may encourage (d)well-being, both individual and collective. The other criterion may be described as ‘ethos’. Since, as already explained community *ethos* is made visible by what the community has already approved and encouraged both politically (*qua* legislatively) and architecturally.<sup>109</sup> A recent example from Malta may help in explaining this idea of how ethos is manifested in a given community. Lately, a group of Swieqi<sup>110</sup> residents gathered in protest against a planning application that would see a terraced house ‘in a row of similar houses’ demolished to make way for a block of flats (Figure 41). In a statement, Swieqi Mayor Noel Muscat said that the ‘council is opposing the application as it will see a street of good urban quality, made up of 17 two-storey terraced houses, destroyed forever if approved’. More specifically, the claim is that if approved, this project would destroy the uniformity of the street.

Moreover, the mayor is quoted to have said that:

We once more appeal to the Planning Authority to seriously take note of the above and live up to its name and “act on behalf of the community” in refusing this application.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Harries, *Lecture Notes*, p. 53.

<sup>108</sup> Harries, *Lecture Notes*, p. 54.

<sup>109</sup> Formally and informally, through enacted rules and buildings standing.

<sup>110</sup> A small suburb in Malta.

<sup>111</sup> Swieqi residents protest outside terraced house set to become block of flats: *Times of Malta*, “Swieqi Residents Protest Outside Terraced House Set to Become Block of Flats,” *Times of Malta*, 2024 <<https://timesofmalta.com/article/swieqi-residents-protest-outside-terraced-house-set-block-flats.1097949>> [accessed 11 January 2025].



FIGURE 32, SWIEQI RESIDENTS ARE OBJECTING TO THE REPLACEMENT OF A TERRACED HOUSE WITH A BLOCK OF APARTMENTS. PHOTOGRAPH: MATTHEW MIRABELLI, TIMES OF MALTA

The mayor in this case also made reference to a landmark judgment which also took the Planning Authority ‘to task for approving applications that go against policy’. This judgment refers to a court ruling that stopped a two-storey Santa Luċija<sup>112</sup> house from being redeveloped into a five-floor apartment block despite the local plans allowing for the height, is “expected to shape future development applications”, as stated by the Maltese Chamber of Architects president Andre Pizzuto.<sup>113</sup>

Moreover, architect Professor Alex Torpiano, the Dean of the University of Malta’s Faculty for the Built Environment, also described the court decision as one that would have “fundamental repercussions”.

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<sup>112</sup> A small suburb in Malta.

<sup>113</sup> Claudia Calleja, “‘Landmark’ Ruling against Pencil Development Could ‘Shape Future Decisions,’” *Times of Malta*, 2023 <<https://timesofmalta.com/article/landmark-ruling-pencil-development-shape-future-decisions.1020631>> [accessed 11 January 2025].

In a previous case, a ‘pencil building’, was stopped from being built by a Santa Luċija resident (Figure 42), who fought to preserve his terraced house neighbourhood from being ‘defaced’<sup>114</sup> by a five-storey pencil building. The Court of Appeal overturned a decision<sup>115</sup> to allow a terraced house, in a row of 20 terraced houses in also in Santa Luċija, to be demolished and turned into four apartments and a penthouse. The court, presided by Chief Justice Mark Chetcuti, ruled that ‘just because the local plan’s height limitation permitted buildings of the height applied for, it did not mean that the permit ought to be granted’. In other words any new building had to ‘respect the context of the buildings it was located in’.<sup>116</sup> The chief justice added that according to planning policy, ‘dominant design considerations of adjacent buildings should be identified and integrated into the new development’.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Interesting choice of words, defaced in Italian may be translated as ‘deturpare’ a fusion of two Latin words ‘de’ and ‘turpis’.

<sup>115</sup> Charles Falzon vs Planning Authority, Court of Appeal, (Inferior Competence) (Environment And Planning Review Tribunal Act) Judge: Chief Justice Mark Chetcuti, 15th March 2023, [15\\_03\\_2023-75\\_2022-137664.pdf](https://www.court.gov.mt/decisions/15-03-2023-75-2022-137664.pdf).  
Lin the words of the court itself: “*L-izvilupp jippekkja fl-gholi dominanti fil-bqija tal-bini kollu fl istess triq u mhux tipiku ta’ terraced house bil-front garden. Ghalkemm il-policy P3 titkellem fuq id-disinn tal-izviluppi fl-istreetscape, it-Tribunal ma setax jinjora ‘the dominant defining design consideration’ billi jqis il-valur arkitettoniku tal-binjiet. Semmai l-izvilupp, f’konformita mal-bqija tal-istreetscape formata minn binjiet b’zewg sulari b’front garden kellu jsir b’disinn ta’ valur arkitettoniku li jirrifletti binjiet b’zewg sulari u front garden. Kif gia inghad il-‘height limitation’ tal-pjan lokali hu rekwizit li jillimita l-oghla massimu mhux jekk l-izvilupp hux idoneju ghac-cirkostanzi fattwali fiz zona immedjata fejn qed jigi propost*” - “The development fails in it being of dominant height vis-à-vis the rest of the buildings in same street and in not being typical of a terraced house with a front garden. Although policy P3 refers to the design of developments in the streetscape, the Tribunal could not ignore ‘the dominant defining design consideration’ by taking into account the architectural value of the buildings. It mentioned the development, in accordance with the rest of the streetscape formed by buildings with two floors with a front garden had to be done with a design of architectural value that reflects buildings with two floors and front garden. As it has been said the ‘height limitation’ of the local plan is a requirement that limits the highest maximum not if the development is suitable for the factual circumstances in immediate area where it is being proposed”.

<sup>116</sup> Claudia Calleja, “The Man Who Stopped a Pencil Building from Ruining a Street,” *Times of Malta*, 2023 <<https://timesofmalta.com/article/man-stopped-pencil-building-ruining-street.1020103>> [accessed 11 January 2025].

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.



FIGURE 33 SANTA LUĊIJA, MALTA, ONE MAN REPRESENTING THE ETHOS OF HIS STREET STOPPED ONE HOUSE FROM BEING DEVELOPED INTO A FIVE-STOREY BLOCK. PHOTOGRAPH: TIMES OF MALTA

In another recent case<sup>118</sup> the court presided by the same Chief Justice annulled a Planning Authority permit that allowed Transport Malta to develop offices and a restaurant along the Gżira Marina and Ta' Xbiex promenade. The Court of Appeal, identified a significant conflict of interest, as Transport Malta acted both as the applicant and the reviewer of the permit. The court emphasized that an independent transport reviewer should have been assigned to this role. Additionally, the court noted that the proposed project involved the use of public land without offering any compensation in the form of alternative public land. The implications are clear. The ethos of the community, embodied this time in the objectors - led by residents and NGO Flimkien għal Ambjent Aħjar (FAA) through democratic checks and balances stopped this development. (Figure 43)

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<sup>118</sup>Marc Galdes, "Court Annuls PA Permit for Transport Malta Capitanerie Project in Ta' Xbiex," *Times of Malta*, 19 February 2025 <<https://timesofmalta.com/article/court-annuls-pa-permit-transport-malta-ta-xbiex-capitanerie-project.1105395>> [accessed 19 February 2025].



FIGURE 34 - A COMPUTER-GENERATED RENDER OF THE PROPOSAL AS PRESENTED BY TRANSPORT MALTA, AND STOPPED BY FAA - GŻIRA, MALTA. PHOTOGRAPH: TIMES OF MALTA

These are just a few examples of how individuals and the *collectivity* coordinated in order to portray the *ethos* of the community. The individuals are the fundamental parts of the whole community. However, one ought to notice that at some point even the institutions which make up the *collectivity* (such as the planning authority, the national courts and the local council) become parts in the grand politico-legal whole which is the community. There is a complex and dynamic interaction which is not symmetrical. Sometimes the parts in the intermediate *collectivity*, the institutions, themselves made up of smaller units (individuals), act as parts in a greater whole which is the community taken altogether. The *ethos* lies within this dynamic interaction, and is normally visible in the outcome of an issue, like in the abovementioned cases (Figure 45). This may be confusing at times, since our societies are complex. The following diagram may help in understanding this Matryoshka-like dynamic interaction.

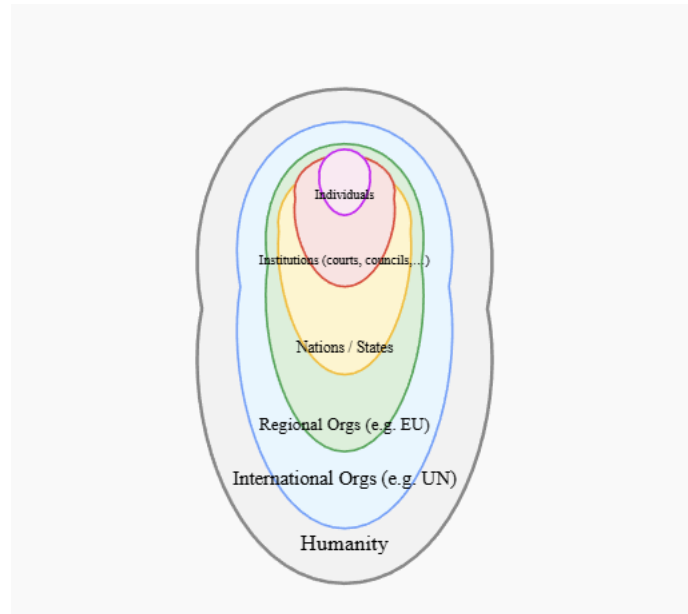


FIGURE 35 - MATRYOSHKA-LIKE DYNAMIC INTERACTION

It is arguable that the *ethos* Harries refers to is created through the interaction of all these parts and is not simply carried by only one aspect of the structure.

Clearly, it is impossible to accommodate everyone's wishes; *ethos* does not mean everyone's spirit. After all, even if there were a hypothetical referendum on every single issue, one would not be accurately gauging the democratic sentiment, since some people might not vote for various reasons, even if they were eligible and had an opinion about the issue at stake. This is the fundamental limitation of human beings and, consequently, of their societies.



FIGURE 36 A STREET IN SANTA LUĊIJA, THAT WAS SAVED FROM A SO-CALLED PENCIL DEVELOPMENT. PHOTOGRAPH: MATTHEW MIRABELLI, TIMES OF MALTA.

This does not mean that the *ethos* is static and/or unchangeable. It is indeed an ongoing dialogue between these two forces: what already 'is' and what 'can be'. Dialogue implies a certain coordination and not confrontation or competition. There has to be some complementarity. A two-way, respectful and meaningful relationship between what is and what can be. *Turpification* happens as well when this dialogue fails, (see Figure 37). Nevertheless, the situation is not entirely without hope; there remain architects who endeavour to maintain this dialogue, as evidenced by the concept wherein 'design marries the older historic'.(Figure 47).



FIGURE 37 TURPIFICATION AS LACK OF RESPECTFUL DIALOGUE BETWEEN TWO ARCHITECTURAL ENTITIES - WESTGATE HOUSE, NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE, UNITED KINGDOM.

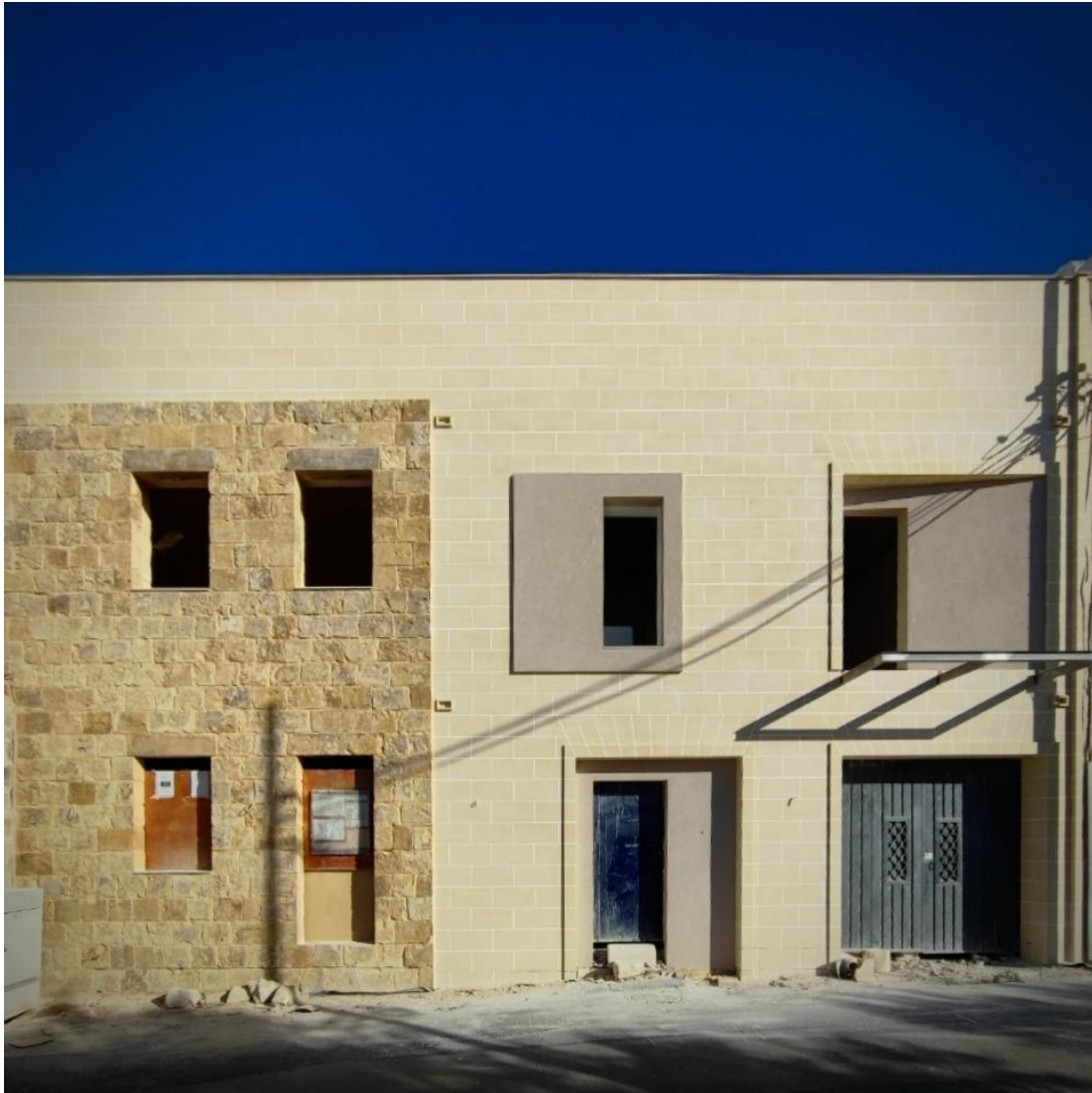


FIGURE 38 ŻURRIEQ, MALTA PRIVATE RESIDENCE. A RESIDENCE IN ŻURRIEQ, NEW DESIGN MARRIES THE OLDER HISTORIC PORTION OF THE BUILDING WITH THE NEW ADDITIONS, CREATING A LEGIBLE AND CONTEMPORARY BUILDING. PHOTOGRAPH: STUDJURBAN

### **Meaningfulness: Whole and the Parts**

As often happens in politics, it is mostly through dialogue that life of the individual and the community become meaningful. Harries understands this and admits that Heidegger knows that the modern world-picture, based on the 'aesthetic approach' giving us the idea of a 'decorated shed',<sup>119</sup> 'has no room for whatever it is that can make life meaningful'.<sup>120</sup> Harries connects this meaningfulness in the following passage:

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<sup>119</sup> Harries, 'Ethical Function', p. 65. "I associated decoration with decadence. For an interpretation of the phenomenon of decadence I turned to Nietzsche, who helps us recognize the political significance of the decorated shed, as of the strong styles of the past: to the disintegration of the architectural whole into functional building and applied decoration corresponds the disintegration of the social whole.

<sup>120</sup> Harries, *Lecture Notes*, p. 39.

Is there not still a sense in which stones, and more generally materials, "speak" to us, however such speech and its significance are to be understood? Have stones lost their voice altogether? I would indeed claim, although this claim still lacks support, that without hearing such voices our lives become hollow and meaningless, that to live meaningful lives we have to leave behind an understanding of meaning that finds it in the human spirit, have to root meaning in transcendence, and that one task of art, and especially of architecture is to allow us to take that step by so presenting materials that we once again hear these voices, open ourselves to the countless ways in which material is always already charged with meaning.<sup>121</sup>

Harries asserts that one must acknowledge that to live a really meaningful life, in this sense to dwell, one must recognise oneself as 'part of a larger ongoing community'.<sup>122</sup>

Recognizing oneself as part of a larger, ongoing community is essential for living a truly meaningful life, as this sense of belonging contributes to overall well-being and human flourishing, which are integral to a meaningful existence.

A meaningful life within a whole community has many parts. It may be argued that a meaningful life needs to be understood as part of what is being meant as well-being in this research. As part, that is, of that human all-round flourishing which makes life meaningful. Not some abstract notion of 'happiness' but living one's life in such a way as to have a sense of meaningfulness to oneself and to others. This would then mean that such a life would imply an effort to strike a balance between individual meaningfulness<sup>123</sup> and the meaningfulness of the collective – a balance between one's own well-being and the well-being of other individuals but also of the institutions and entities that exist in within that community. Why? One must reiterate what Harries understands with ethical function of architecture. The latter summons an 'essential dwelling',<sup>124</sup> summoning 'human beings to their essential humanity'.<sup>125</sup> This passage, though already cited, warrants being quoted again for clarity and emphasis:

So understood architecture has not so much an aesthetic, as an ethical function.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Harries, *Lecture Notes*, p. 234.

<sup>122</sup> Harries, *Lecture Notes*, p. 311.

<sup>123</sup> See on this Peltomäki, I.J. Meaningfulness, Death, and Suffering: Philosophy of Meaning in Life in the Light of Finitude. *Hu Arenas* (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42087-023-00376-0>

<sup>124</sup> Harries, *Lecture Notes*, p. 88.

<sup>125</sup> Harries, *Lecture Notes*, p. 88.

<sup>126</sup> Harries, *Lecture Notes*, p. 88.

So according to Harries an individual's ethos is meant to refer to his 'character, nature, or disposition'.<sup>127</sup> Whilst by the same token, a community's ethos refers to the 'spirit that presides over its activities'.<sup>128</sup> The community is of course made up of individual parts. But, at least in the modern version of that term, a community, is also made up of collective-parts; namely by entities like institutions, organisations, unions, and the like. In order for this 'community's ethos' to be understood one has to perceive these entities as not simply being the summing up of individual work, but in numerous ways, as being something more than the individuals which compose them. This is an important aspect of this chapter and is also the key to understanding how the common good functions. If one were to leave it out, or just gloss over it, one would fail to create that link between ethos and community which is central to understanding how architecture can, and should, be a manifestation of the community's ethos and not simply or exclusively a manifestation of the individual ethos. This will, in turn, aid us to consider what it means to have architecture for the common good.<sup>129</sup>

### **The Whole and the Parts**

How would this whole-more-than-parts be happening in communities, particularly to what is being referred to here as the collective and thus to the abovementioned entities? One way this institutional memory might unfold is through the gradual accumulation of experience and knowledge, which is passed down from one generation of the institution or organisation to the next. Over time, this inherited wisdom shapes the identity, values, and practices of the institution, allowing it to evolve while maintaining continuity with its past. In this way, the institution becomes a living tradition — not merely preserving its history, but actively building upon it to respond to new challenges and serve its purpose more effectively. This experience and knowledge is accumulated and distributed in the form of work practices, codes, rules, protocols, methods and the like. We see this in most organisations public and private, such as political institutions, parliament, government ministries and departments, the national courts. But also, on a supranational level such as the European Community level. From local councils to band clubs, associations and non-governmental organisations all have a compendium of experience and knowledge in the form of statutes, regulations, standing orders and so on and so forth. This 'historical' approach ensures, to some degree, that the *ethos* of the organisation is somehow passed on to the next generation of individuals.

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<sup>127</sup> Harries, *Lecture Notes*, p. 89.

<sup>128</sup> Harries, *Lecture Notes*, p. 89.

<sup>129</sup> Since the notion of common good, as understood here is the coordination between individual well-being and the well-being of the collective.

A common narrative is formed through this historical approach within the general community through byelaws and regulations, minutes at local councils, and more generally through education and political activity. A dynamic and complex interaction takes place between the individual and that of his fellow citizens. This interaction becomes a symbiotic relationship between the parts and the whole, but also between the parts themselves. This is one way of unconcealing the ethos of the community.<sup>130</sup>

Furthermore, this parts-to-whole approach is, perhaps not accidentally, one fundamental feature of the common good. This idea will be dealt with in the next and last chapter. Suffice it to say for now that this complex interaction between parts and the whole extends as well to well-being. This well-being then hinges on the balance to be achieved between the individual's ethos and the ethos of the rest of the community.

These political notions have an architectural dimension. As Harries puts it, in the architectural arena, '(f)reedom demands open space'.<sup>131</sup> Freedom to create, to express oneself even in building, is not absolute. In fact, Harries warns us that '(f)reedom must be bound by reason, if it is not to degenerate into arbitrariness'.<sup>132</sup> One of the best ways to avoid arbitrariness and seek truth is perhaps a certain degree of objectivity. After all, 'every search for truth is the commitment to objectivity'.<sup>133</sup>

Architecture needs to be seen through the eyes of the parts, say individuals, and by a whole, the community. Consider here what Norberg-Schulz says about parts and wholes in the architectural context:

What, then, do we mean with the word 'place'? Obviously, we mean something more than abstract location. We mean a totality made up of concrete things having material substance, shape, texture, and colour. Together these things determine an 'environmental character' which is the essence of place. In general, a place is given as such a character or 'atmosphere.' A place is therefore a qualitative, 'total' phenomenon,

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<sup>130</sup> Of course there is a corresponding duty imposed on architects, who have an ethical-professional responsibility to consider the social and political implications of their designs. By extension, Harries's argument advocates for an architecture that not only meets functional or aesthetic needs but also contributes to the well-being and ethical development of the community.

<sup>131</sup> Harries, *Lecture Notes*, p. 63.

<sup>132</sup> Harries, *Lecture Notes*, p. 63.

<sup>133</sup> Harries, *Lecture Notes*, p. 68.

which we cannot reduce to any of its properties, such as spatial relationships, without losing its concrete nature out of sight.<sup>134</sup>

Here, Norberg-Schulz<sup>135</sup> explicitly connects the totality of a place to its individual components, asserting that it is their interrelationship, not the elements alone, that defines the *genius loci*.

The whole being a neighbourhood, district, landscape or a townscape.<sup>136</sup> But also a building *per se*, has this aspect, since a building is many senses a part, and is inserted in a whole, again, a street, a neighbourhood and so on. However, the building itself has also parts, facade, windows, doors, roofs and the like, contributing to its whole being.

This brings us once again to what Harries<sup>137</sup> sees as a natural symbols offered within the architectural field. As seen Harries maintains that a principal value of architecture<sup>138</sup> is “interpreting the world as a meaningful order in which the individual can find his place in the midst of nature and in the midst of a community”.<sup>139</sup>

Moreover, Harries claims that, too often, buildings do not respond to human need because they are made arbitrarily<sup>140</sup> in that they do not arise from the real-world requirements and aspirations of particular people and places. As an interpretation and actualization of human life, a nonarbitrary architecture involves design that both listens to and sustains nature and culture.<sup>141</sup> A more transcendental type of architecture that may become a flexible framework for whatever style a building is built in.

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<sup>134</sup> Christian Norberg-Schulz *The Concept of Place*, (1969).

<sup>135</sup> Norberg-Schulz emphasizes the holistic character of place (*genius loci*) as a totality that transcends its individual components through the interaction of physical elements, cultural meanings, and existential engagement.

<sup>136</sup> See: Calleja, ‘Is Malta More Beautiful? :’ But many of the appalling development permissions issued most recently have not been limited to any particular area. They have had a widespread and detrimental effect in practically every other neighbourhood in both Malta and Gozo’.

<sup>137</sup> Harries connects architecture to the ethical and cultural whole, suggesting that individual structures only achieve significance when they contribute to a broader (whole) communal ethos.

<sup>138</sup> David Seamon, “Hermeneutics and Architecture: Buildings-in-Themselves and Interpretive Trustworthiness,” in *Contributions to Hermeneutics* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017), pp. 347–60 <[http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-52214-2\\_25](http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-52214-2_25)> [accessed 23 November 2024].

<sup>139</sup> Harries, thoughts on a nonarbitrary architecture inn David Seamon, *Dwelling, Seeing, and Designing: Toward a Phenomenological Ecology* (State University of New York Press, 1993).

<sup>140</sup> After Harries also says that “Freedom must be bound by reason, if it is not to degenerate into arbitrariness.” Harries *Lecture Notes*, p. 63.

<sup>141</sup> Harries “The Ethical Function”, p. 140.

Just to give one example Harries gives attention to the natural symbol of “inside and outside”,<sup>142</sup> which is “bound up with the awareness of our own bodies, with their openings so much like the windows and doors of buildings”.<sup>143</sup>

## Conclusion

This chapter examined the concept of architectural ethos (*genius civitatis*) and its correlation with dwelling, community, and well-being.

Architecture serves an ethical and political function in articulating and supporting a shared community ethos. A tension exists between individual architectural expression and community values/needs. The concept of "(d)well-being" interconnects dwelling, *genius loci*, and community ethos as interdependent factors contributing to human flourishing. Architecture both influences and is influenced by the ethos (character/spirit) of a community over time. Meaningful architecture necessitates a balance between individual creativity and respect for context and community values. It appears that the principle that "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts" is applicable to architecture and communities alike in this context. Moreover, architecture can "unconceal" truths about human existence and culture when it successfully integrates with its context. The contrary of that results in *turpification* most of the times as was the case in the examples brought into discussion from Malta. We have also seen that an ongoing dialogue exists between existing architectural/cultural conditions and new possibilities.

Architecture plays a crucial role in articulating and supporting the shared ethos of a community. While individual architectural expression is significant, it must be balanced with respect for context and collective values to create meaningful built environments that contribute to human flourishing. The concept of "(d)well-being" appears to provide a framework for understanding the interconnectedness of dwelling, sense of place, and community ethos in shaping both individual and collective well-being through, and around, the built environment.

Karsten Harries's architectural philosophy navigates a tension between relativism and utilitarianism. His emphasis on the communal ethos and the existential dimension of architecture highlights its role in fostering belonging and meaning within specific cultural and

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<sup>142</sup> Harries, "The Ethical Function", p.197.

<sup>143</sup> Harries, "The Ethical Function". p.192.

historical contexts. However, this contextual approach risks being interpreted as relativist, as it lacks a universal standard for architectural value, and as utilitarian, prioritizing the functional cohesion of communities over intrinsic aesthetic considerations. Yet, Harries' concept of dwelling transcends mere functionality (or instrumentality) drawing from Heidegger's dwelling and Norberg-Schulz's *genius loci* to advocate for architecture as a medium that fulfills universal human needs for orientation and identity.

Karsten Harries's ethos, particularly his emphasis on the ethical dimension of architecture and its role in fostering community, aligns well with an intersubjective approach rather than a utilitarian one. Harries critiques the modern tendency to reduce meaning to functionalism (a utilitarian impulse) and instead advocates for an architecture that acknowledges our shared human experience and historical continuity.

By encouraging intersubjectivity, we align with Harries' concern for how spaces, traditions, and communal practices shape our understanding of the good, rather than reducing ethical decisions to mere calculations of utility.

In this light, Harries's vision parallels democracy itself, which is inherently shaped by intersubjective<sup>144</sup> principles - as opposed to mere utilitarian ones - balancing diverse values and prioritizing the common good within a specific cultural and historical context - while also making architecture inherently political, as it reflects and shapes the shared values and identity of a society.<sup>145</sup>

In order for this to happen, there has to arguably be, a correspondence, between the requirements necessary for humans to be well and flourish and the actual feasibilities offered by buildings. This is, after all, what we are calling (d)well-being.

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<sup>144</sup> John Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights* (Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 52. "The basic principles and requirements of practical reasonableness are intersubjectively transmissible; their transmissibility can be appreciated by anyone who steadily attends to the matter (i.e. to the basic forms of human good) and who is not deflected by the irrelevant objections that not everyone happens to agree in pronouncements on these or related matters, and that the subject-matter and procedures of other disciplines differ from those of practical reasonableness."

<sup>145</sup> Harries's vision of democracy appears to align with the concept of intersubjective cultural representation, which refers to a collective's common representation of a culture (Ching Wan, "Understanding Cultural Identification Through Intersubjective Cultural Representation," *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 46.10 (2015), 1267–72 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022115610213>>.). This approach emphasizes the importance of shared perceptions and values within a society, which mediate the effect of ecology on individuals' responses and adaptations (Chi-Yue Chiu and others, "Intersubjective Culture," *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 5.4 (2010), 482–93 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691610375562>>.).

Finally, this chapter has demonstrated how architecture, as an ethical and political endeavour, becomes a manifestation of a community's ethos, bridging the individual and the collective in a complex interplay of values and expression. The concept of (d)well-being, rooted in the integration of dwelling, *genius loci*, and community ethos, encapsulates the transformative potential of architecture to foster human flourishing. Yet, as we have seen, this potential is not without challenges. Striking a balance between individual creativity and collective harmony requires more than aesthetic considerations; it necessitates a profound engagement with the principles that underpin human existence and shared meaning.

Harries does not provide a systematic method for adjudicating between competing architectural outcomes, and such an ambition would sit uneasily with the phenomenological orientation of his work. Nevertheless, his emphasis on architecture's ethical function clarifies why the built environment cannot be treated as a merely technical domain.

As we turn to the next chapter, this dialogue broadens to examine how architecture aligns with the common good, drawing on Finnis's basic human goods as a framework for understanding the essential connection between (d)well-being and the enduring values that bind individuals and communities together.

## CHAPTER 5

### ARCHITECTURE FOR THE COMMON GOOD

*“Wohlbefinden: Gehobensein, eine spezifische Leichtigkeit des Seins-in-der-Welt, die in der Freude liegt“<sup>1</sup>*

“Well-being: a heightened state of being, a specific lightness of being-in-the-world, inherent in joy”

#### Introduction

This research commenced with a consideration of Heidegger's equation of building and dwelling. Subsequently, it was observed that building must necessarily engender well-being to be classified as proper dwelling. The investigation then proceeded to examine the methodology of building, primarily by analysing how a space transforms into a place through attentive consideration of the location's inherent characteristics (Figure 39). Furthermore, it was established that perhaps the most effective approach to this process is through an examination of the ethos of the community surrounding the location in question.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe: Grundbegriffe Der Aristotelischen Philosophie* (Frankfurt am Main : Vittorio Klostermann, 2002), p. 48.

<sup>2</sup> After all, even Scruton recognises that “Settlement is a communal act.” In other words, we cannot build for idiosyncratic reasons. Architecture, by its nature, has to serve the common good. See Christopher Morrissey, “Roger Scruton on Architectural Principles in an Age of Nihilism ~ The Imaginative Conservative,” *The Imaginative Conservative*, 2017 <<https://theimaginativeconservative.org/2017/05/roger-scruton-architectural-principles-age-nihilism-christopher-morrissey.html>> [accessed 10 December 2024].

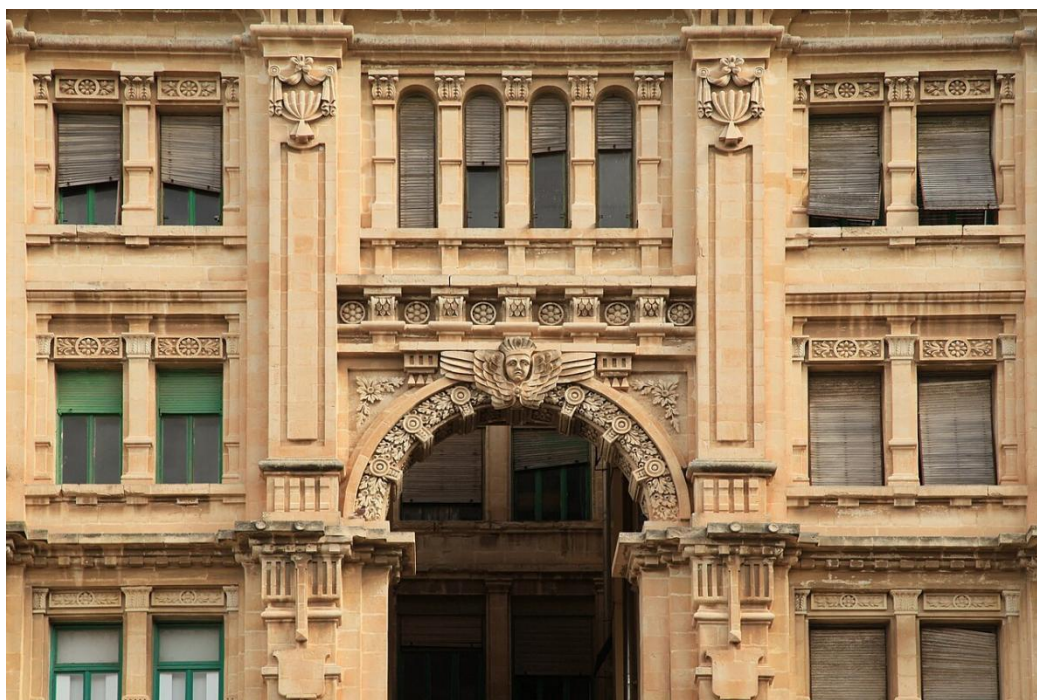


FIGURE 39 BALLUTA BUILDINGS, IN ST. JULIAN'S (SAN ĠILJAN), MALTA, A VISUAL REPRESENTATION OF THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN TRADITION, CULTURAL IDENTITY, AND ARCHITECTURAL DETAIL. PHOTOGRAPH FRANK VINCENTZ, WIKIMEDIA

This is the final chapter before the conclusions of this research which are being kept distinct and as such it has the challenging task of synthesising the previously analysed phenomenological elements and potentially connecting them to the political concept of the common good. The arduous objective of this chapter shall be to present a theoretical framework in which architecture, as hitherto described, contributes to a state of affairs that ultimately, and upon comprehensive consideration, promotes individual and collective well-being: (d)well-being. This chapter, therefore, is infused with political and legal philosophy and endeavours to bridge the philosophical divide between Heidegger's dwelling phenomenology and the political and legal realities within the domain of architecture.

The exploration of Heidegger's dwelling phenomenology in relation to architecture's political and legal dimensions presents a complex intersection of philosophical thought and practical realities. This chapter aims to reconcile the abstract concepts of dwelling and being-in-the-world with the concrete challenges faced in architectural practice and policy. By examining how Heidegger's ideas about human existence and our relationship to space can inform and potentially transform our understanding of architectural law and politics, the chapter seeks to uncover new perspectives on how we design, regulate, and inhabit our built environments.

This philosophical bridge-building exercise has significant implications for how we conceptualize and implement architectural policies, building codes, and urban planning strategies. It challenges us to consider how the phenomenological experience of dwelling might be incorporated into legal frameworks and political decision-making processes surrounding architecture. This chapter delves into questions of how Heidegger's notions of authenticity, care, and the fourfold (earth, sky, divinities, and mortals) always implicitly present, can be translated into tangible guidelines for creating spaces<sup>3</sup> that not only meet functional and regulatory requirements but also foster a deeper sense of human connection and belonging. By interweaving these philosophical insights with practical considerations, this chapter aims to enrich the discourse on architecture's role in shaping our lived experience and societal structures.

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, architects and urban planners should strive to create buildings and spaces that not only fulfil functional requirements (or solely aesthetic ones) but also resonate with and enhance the cultural identity and values of the communities they serve.<sup>4</sup> This necessitates ongoing dialogue between individual vision and collective aspirations, as well as careful consideration of how new dwelling structures integrate with existing contexts. By acknowledging the complexity of architecture's ethical and political dimensions, one can work towards built environments that genuinely support human flourishing at both individual and community levels.

The abovementioned complexity reflects the complexity of the human being. It is arguable then that this complexity should also be manifested physically in the built environment. This is not just a phenomenological observation but has some foundation in science as well. So much so that urban policy professor Justin Hollander and architect Ann Sussman reviewed scientific data to assist architects and urban planners understand how, exactly, humans respond to the

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<sup>3</sup> Heidegger's concepts of authenticity, care, and the fourfold are deeply interconnected and have significant implications for understanding human existence and our relationship with the world. The notion of authenticity in Heidegger's philosophy is perhaps less about being true to one's unique inner nature, but rather more about the human capacity to be fully human (Charles Guignon, "Authenticity," *Philosophy Compass*, 3.2 (2008), 277–90 <<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-9991.2008.00131.x>>).

<sup>4</sup> This point needs elucidation and qualification. Cultural identity and values of communities play a significant role in shaping societal dynamics, but they also need to adapt to accommodate change and the needs of newcomers. This complex interplay between tradition and transformation is evident in various aspects of society. Cultural identity and values often serve as anchors for communities, providing a sense of continuity and belonging. For instance, traditional bazaars represent living culture and are valuable attractions for cultural enthusiasts (Mahdi Zandieh and Zeinab Seifpour, "Preserving Traditional Marketplaces as Places of Intangible Heritage for Tourism," *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 15.1 (2019), 111–21 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/1743873x.2019.1604714>>).

built surroundings. Humans, they argue, ‘by design enjoy processing complex aural and visual stimuli’ as opposed to dwarfing, blank, box-like buildings.<sup>5</sup>

This instance demonstrates a broader concept, which Scruton typically describes as an aesthetic paradox: The seemingly superfluous elements are what render something genuinely functional. From a purely practical design standpoint, mouldings might be deemed unnecessary. However, as Scruton notes, in their absence, ‘[w]indows and doors cease to be aedicules<sup>6</sup> and become mere holes in the wall.’ (See Figure 40) Without these decorative features, openings lose their architectural significance and are reduced to simple gaps in the structure.

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<sup>5</sup> Ann Sussman and Justin B. Hollander, *Cognitive Architecture* (Routledge, 2021) <<http://dx.doi.org/10.4324/9781003031543>> [accessed 29 November 2024]. See also: Rebecca Granström and Sofia Wahlström, “From Boring Boxes to Beautiful Cost-Effective Houses A Study about Housing Development and Exterior Architectural Preferences” (unpublished Master of Science Thesis, Kth Royal Institute Of Technology Department Of Real Estate And Construction Management, 2017) <<https://kth.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1128137/FULLTEXT01.pdf>> [accessed 2 December 2024].

<sup>6</sup> See “Aedicule,” Oxford Reference <<https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095353325>> [accessed 7 December 2024]: “Architectural frame around a doorway, niche, or window-aperture consisting of two columns or pilasters over which is an entablature with pediment, like a miniature *distyle* building: such an opening is said to be *aediculated*”.



FIGURE 40 UNINHABITED WINDOW WITH MOULDINGS, PRIVATE TERRACED HOUSE, ST PAUL'S BAY, MALTA. PHOTOGRAPH: ALAN XUEREB



FIGURE 41 CONTEMPORARY BLOCK OF FLATS IN ST PAUL'S BAY, MALTA, DESIGNED WITH MOULDINGS AND FRAMES AN EXAMPLE OF RETRNOVATION KEEPING MODERN ARCHITECTURAL TECHNIQUES AND MATERIALS WITHOUT LOSING THE TRADITIONAL CONCEPTS. PHOTOGRAPH: ALAN XUEREB.

Sussman and Hollander elucidate this phenomenon through scientific means. Utilising eye-tracking technology studies,<sup>7</sup> they demonstrate that visual complexity (Figure 41) is a significant factor in human interaction with buildings. In their words:

[...]biometric research, particularly eye tracking, shows how people implicitly ignore blank facades, and instead, our brain without our conscious awareness or control makes us fixate on buildings that present organized complexity<sup>8</sup>

They posit that buildings and streets should possess sensorial richness to engender an enhanced sense of well-being.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, Colin Ellard, a neuroscientist, posits that the architectural aesthetics of buildings influence our urban experiences and, consequently, our well-being.<sup>10</sup>

In accordance with this line of reasoning, American architect and architectural historian Grant Hildebrand posits that one should strive to achieve equilibrium between order and complexity. Order and complexity are two extremes.<sup>11</sup> Balance between the two will bring about well-being. However, at one extreme, *turpification* becomes a product of too much order and on the other it may be a product of excessive simplicity. One should thus aim for some balance. Hildebrand reinforces this argument when he says that not unlike music there has to be a balance between order and complexity. Order alone is monotony, complexity alone is chaos. In both constructed and natural environments, structure and organisation are employed to achieve order. Structure and organisation are fundamental principles used to create order in both constructed and natural environments. In constructed environments, such as cities, buildings, and infrastructure, human intervention deliberately imposes structure through urban planning, architectural design, and engineering. This intentional organisation helps optimize space utilization, improve functionality, and enhance the overall aesthetic appeal. For example,

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<sup>7</sup> Eye tracking is a powerful method used to investigate the relationship between behaviour and neural mechanisms (Ling Tao and others, “Eye Tracking Metrics to Screen and Assess Cognitive Impairment in Patients with Neurological Disorders,” *Neurological Sciences*, 41.7 (2020), 1697–1704 <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10072-020-04310-y>>). It has been applied in studies of neurological disorders, cognitive function assessment, and even in aeronautics (Irving H. Anderson, “Studies in the Eye Movements of Good and Poor Readers.,” *Psychological Monographs*, 48.3 (1937), 1–35 <<https://doi.org/10.1037/h0093391>>).

<sup>8</sup> Ann Sussman and Justin B. Hollander, *Cognitive Architecture* (Routledge, 2021) <<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003031543>> [accessed 30 March 2025], p. 187.

<sup>9</sup> Sussman et al., *Cognitive Architecture*, p. 216.

<sup>10</sup> Colin Ellard, *Places of the Heart: The Psychogeography of Everyday Life* (Bellevue Literary Press, 2015).

<sup>11</sup> Stephen R. Kellert, Judith Heerwagen and Martin Mador, *Biophilic Design: The Theory, Science and Practice of Bringing Buildings to Life* (John Wiley & Sons, 2011), p. 13.

city grids, zoning regulations, and building codes all contribute to a structured urban landscape that facilitates efficient movement, resource distribution, and social interaction.

In natural environments, structure and organisation emerge through complex biological and geological processes. Ecosystems demonstrate intricate hierarchies and interconnected relationships between organisms and their surroundings. From the cellular level to entire biomes, nature exhibits patterns and systems that maintain balance and promote survival. For instance, the structure of a forest canopy allows for efficient light distribution among different plant species, while the organisation of coral reefs supports a diverse array of marine life. These natural structures and organisational patterns, though not consciously designed, result in ordered systems that have evolved over time to maximize resource utilization and adapt to environmental challenges. In summary, both natural and human-constructed systems demonstrate a tendency to evolve ordered structures that optimize resource use through self-organization, adaptation, and selection pressures operating at multiple scales. This highlights the potential for applying ecological principles to understand and improve the resilience and efficiency of organizational and industrial systems.

However, excessive order can lead to repetitiveness, uniformity, and tedium. Conversely, complexity is characterised by the presence of intricacy and diversity. Yet, when complexity becomes overwhelming, it can hinder the assimilation of details and potentially create a sense of disarray. Successful designs often strike a balance<sup>12</sup> between order and complexity, satisfying the craving for variety whilst maintaining a sense of control and comprehensibility.<sup>13</sup>

This dialogue between tradition and innovation in architecture reflects the dynamic nature of communities themselves. The evolution of cultures and their built environments is a complex interplay of sustainability, adaptation, and preservation of cultural identity. As societies progress, their architectural landscapes must also evolve to meet changing needs while maintaining a connection to their heritage. Research has shown that sustainable development in interior architecture can be enhanced by drawing inspiration from ancient cultures. Traditional design elements, such as natural materials, symbolic colours, and energy-efficient layouts, offer valuable lessons for contemporary architects and designers.<sup>14</sup> This approach

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<sup>12</sup> Sebastian Moffatt and Niklaus Kohler, "Conceptualizing the Built Environment as a Social–Ecological System," *Building Research & Information*, 36.3 (2008), 248–68 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09613210801928131>> [accessed December 7, 2024].

<sup>13</sup> Kellert et. al., *Biophilic Design*, p.13.

<sup>14</sup> Dr. Sahar Ezz El Arab Ramadan, "Sustainable Development Interaction between Humans and the Interior Architecture," *Engineering and Technology Journal*, 09.09 (2024) <<https://doi.org/10.47191/etj/v9i09.19>>.

allows for a balance between cultural heritage preservation and ecological sustainability, leading to designs that are harmonious with the environment.<sup>15</sup>

Interestingly, the concept of care is increasingly becoming structural in contemporary architecture. Built environments are now seen as productive spheres to explore imaginations of a shared future on a changing planet, extending beyond environmental considerations to include social and community aspects.<sup>16</sup> This shift in perspective highlights the interdependency between spaces, places, and communities that care, emphasizing the need for adaptive and responsive architectural solutions. In addition, the adaptation of built environments to evolving cultural needs requires a multifaceted approach. It involves integrating traditional wisdom with modern technologies, considering environmental sustainability, and fostering a sense of community care. As cities face increasing climate-related challenges, building resilience through adaptation has become crucial.<sup>17</sup> By embracing these principles, architects and urban planners can create spaces that not only meet the functional requirements of contemporary society but also preserve and enhance cultural identity<sup>18</sup> in the face of rapid urbanization and global changes.

Furthermore, successful architectural interventions can serve as catalysts for positive social change, fostering a sense of collective identity and shared purpose. Architectural interventions can indeed serve as powerful catalysts for positive social change, fostering a sense of collective identity and shared purpose within communities.

The 2019 Intersections Symposium highlighted that architects, educators, and students can play a significant role in catalysing change within their communities. However, they must remain aware of their often privileged position when responding to collective needs, as the concepts

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<sup>15</sup> Colin Ellard's assertion aligns with the findings from several studies on the impact of built environments on human experience and well-being. Research indicates that the design and aesthetics of buildings significantly influence cognitive function, mental health, and overall user satisfaction in urban settings (Ming Hu and others, "Exploring a Sustainable Building's Impact on Occupant Mental Health and Cognitive Function in a Virtual Environment," *Scientific Reports*, 11.1 (2021) <<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-021-85210-9>>). The neurophysiological evidence presented in Hu et al. (2021) demonstrates that sustainable buildings (SBs) impact people's affective and cognitive functioning differently compared to conventional buildings (CBs).

<sup>16</sup> Linda Kopitz, "Affective Architecture: Encountering Care in Built Environments," *Krisis | Journal for Contemporary Philosophy*, 42.1 (2022), pp. 29–42, doi:10.21827/krisis.42.1.37891.

<sup>17</sup> Simona Mannucci and others, "Flood Resilience and Adaptation in the Built Environment: How Far along Are We?," *Sustainability*, 14.7 (2022), p. 4096, doi:10.3390/su14074096.

<sup>18</sup> Cultural identity preservation and enhancement through cultural heritage can be both beneficial and problematic, requiring careful consideration of its impacts and implementation. Cultural heritage plays a crucial role in defining national identity and supporting sustainable development (Vladia Borissova, "Cultural Heritage Digitization and Related Intellectual Property Issues," *Journal of Cultural Heritage*, 34 (2018), 145–50 <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.culher.2018.04.023>>).

of 'bottom-up' or 'top-down' can shift based on one's ideological or socio-economic perspective.<sup>19</sup>

Interestingly, the impact of architectural interventions on collective identity and social change can vary depending on the cultural and operational context. For instance, the comparison between EU cohesion policies and Hong Kong's public-private participation model for preserving architectural heritage reveals different approaches to generating shared value and enhancing social cohesion. While Europe often adopts an inclusive approach involving communities in the valorisation of public spaces, Hong Kong focuses more on public-private partnerships.<sup>20</sup>

Moreover, successful architectural interventions can indeed foster a sense of collective identity and shared purpose (an aspect of community *ethos*), but their effectiveness depends on various factors. Community-driven approaches to improve living conditions (so contributing to (d)well-being) can have positive co-benefits for resilience to climate change while addressing underlying drivers of vulnerability.<sup>21</sup>

Finally, building social capital through participatory community planning<sup>22</sup> and design can strengthen community ties and enable positive change, although the relationship between community size and social capital development remains a challenge worthy of study.<sup>23</sup>

To maximise the efficacy of architectural interventions, it is imperative to consider the specific context, engage the community, and balance the interests and resultant well-being of various stakeholders. Consequently, the coordination of individual well-being with collective well-being becomes crucial. It is essential in order to connect architecture to the common good, to recognize that architectural interventions have far-reaching impacts on both individuals and communities. The success of these interventions hinges on a comprehensive understanding of

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<sup>19</sup> Elizabeth Golden and Joshua Vermillion, "Bottom-Up Social Change: Materials | Buildings | Community," in *Bottom-Up Social Change: Materials | Buildings | Community* (ACSA Press, 2019), pp. 2–3 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.35483/acsa.aia.inter.19.1>> [accessed 17 November 2024].

<sup>20</sup> Antonella Violano, Francesca Muzzillo, and Desmond Hui, "Europe vs Hong Kong Partnership Agreements: Reversing Trends," *TECHNE - Journal of Technology for Architecture and Environment*, 28, 2024, pp. 60–73, doi:10.36253/techne-15913.

<sup>21</sup> Diane Archer, "Building Urban Climate Resilience through Community-Driven Approaches to Development," *International Journal of Climate Change Strategies and Management*, 8.5 (2016), pp. 654–69, doi:10.1108/ijccsm-03-2014-0035.

<sup>22</sup> Pat Crawford and others, "Social Capital Development in Participatory Community Planning and Design," *Town Planning Review*, 79.5 (2008), 533–54 <<https://doi.org/10.3828/tpr.79.5.5>> [accessed December 7, 2024].

<sup>23</sup> Pat Crawford and others, "Social Capital Development in Participatory Community Planning and Design," *Town Planning Review*, 79.5 (2008), pp. 533–54, doi:10.3828/tpr.79.5.5.

the local context including cultural, social, economic, and environmental factors (hence the *ethos* but also *genius loci*).<sup>24</sup> By thoroughly analysing these elements, architects and urban planners can develop solutions that are not only aesthetically pleasing, because they would have the right balance between order and chaos, but also functionally appropriate and socially responsible. Furthermore, engaging the community throughout the design and implementation process ensures that the interventions address the actual needs and aspirations of the people who will be directly affected by them.

So, balancing the interests of various stakeholders is a complex but necessary task in architectural interventions. This involves considering the needs of residents, businesses, local authorities, and other relevant parties.<sup>25</sup> The ultimate goal remains the same: to create spaces and structures that enhance the well-being of individuals while simultaneously contributing to the collective well-being of the community.<sup>26</sup> This delicate balance requires careful planning, open communication, and a willingness to compromise. By aligning individual and collective well-being, architectural interventions can foster the common good, as will be demonstrated in subsequent sections.

Having established the philosophical foundations of architecture as a reflection of the human experience of dwelling, it becomes imperative to explore how this interplay extends to the political and legal realms. The notion of the common good emerges as a pivotal concept in this context, serving as a bridge between individual well-being and collective flourishing. John Finnis's natural law theory provides a robust framework for examining the role of architecture in fostering the common good. At the heart of his theory lies the concept of basic goods—life, knowledge, play, aesthetic experience, friendship, practical reasonableness, and religion—essential components of human flourishing. These goods offer a lens through which to assess how architecture can contribute not only to material and functional needs but also to the deeper, intangible aspects of human well-being. By integrating Finnis's perspective, this chapter seeks

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<sup>24</sup> The *genius loci* is analogous to the Id, architecture is comparable to the Ego, and the *ethos* corresponds to the superego..

<sup>25</sup> Mei-yung Leung, Jingyu Yu and Qi Liang, "Improving Public Engagement in Construction Development Projects from a Stakeholder's Perspective," *Journal of Construction Engineering and Management*, 139.11 (2013) <[https://doi.org/10.1061/\(asce\)co.1943-7862.0000754](https://doi.org/10.1061/(asce)co.1943-7862.0000754)> [accessed December 7, 2024].

<sup>26</sup> See: Antonio Zumelzu and Marie Geraldine Herrmann-Lunecke, "Mental Well-Being and the Influence of Place: Conceptual Approaches for the Built Environment for Planning Healthy and Walkable Cities," *Sustainability*, 13.11 (2021), 6395 <<https://doi.org/10.3390/su13116395>> [accessed December 7, 2024]. The built environment plays a crucial role in promoting mental well-being and overall quality of life in urban settings. Research has identified several key elements that contribute to this goal, including walkability, density, spatial design, environmental noise, green areas, and social interaction. All may be considered elements contributing to (d)well-being.

to uncover how architecture can harmonize these goods to create spaces that resonate with the ethos and values of the community, ultimately fostering a balanced coordination between individual and collective well-being.

## **Finnis And The Common Good**

John Finnis's concept of the common good is central to his natural law theory and plays a significant role in his understanding of law, morality, and political philosophy. As seen in the preceding chapter with reference to the Maltese urban development cases resisted by the community ethos, all three play a role in the way architecture is done, or should be done. The common good, according to Finnis, is a key element in achieving individual flourishing and is closely linked to his theory of basic goods (values)<sup>27</sup>. Finnis argues that the common good is not merely an aggregation of individual goods but is integral to the well-being of individuals within a community. This view challenges liberal and philosophical anarchist positions that deny a generic obligation to obey the law.<sup>28</sup> Finnis contends that the common good provides a foundation for the authority of law and creates a presumptive moral obligation to obey it,<sup>29</sup> as it facilitates the coordination necessary for individuals to pursue basic goods<sup>30</sup>. However, as will be seen, Finnis's conception of the common good has faced criticism. Some argue that his emphasis on the instrumental nature of the common good leaves his position vulnerable to objections, such as those raised by Joseph Raz.<sup>31</sup> Others suggest that Finnis's approach to the common good is influenced by a (Neo-)Kantian conceptual framework, leading to a *decisionist* account<sup>32</sup> that may not fully capture the complexity of moral reasoning<sup>33</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> Roger Crisp, "Finnis on Well-Being," in *Reason, Morality, and Law* (Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 24–36 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199675500.003.0003>> [accessed 17 November 2024].

<sup>28</sup> George Duke, "Finnis On The Authority Of Law And The Common Good," *Legal Theory*, 19.1 (2013), pp. 44–62, doi:10.1017/s1352325212000237

<sup>29</sup> George Duke, "Finnis On The Authority Of Law And The Common Good," *Legal Theory*, 19.1 (2013), pp. 44–62, doi:10.1017/s1352325212000237.

<sup>30</sup> Pauline C. Westerman, "Finnis's Decisionism," in *The Disintegration of Natural Law Theory* (BRILL, 1998), pp. 259–85 <[http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/9789004247383\\_012](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/9789004247383_012)> [accessed 17 November 2024].

<sup>31</sup> Joseph Raz, "The Obligation to Obey: Revision and Tradition," in *Ethics in the Public Domain Essays in the Morality of Law and Politics* (Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 341–54 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198260691.003.0015>> [accessed 17 November 2024], p. 338. "[...] if there is a general obligation to obey the law, it exists because it was voluntarily undertaken. That is the view defended here".

<sup>32</sup> A criticism which is also put forward against Heidegger's *political philosophy*, as will be seen.

<sup>33</sup> Simon Hope, "The Basic Goods and the 'Lawlike' Use of Reason: Comments on Human Rights and the Common Good," *Jerusalem Review of Legal Studies*, 8.1 (2013), 136–46 <<https://doi.org/10.1093/jrls/jlt016>> [accessed November 30, 2024].

However, an alternative interpretation suggests that Finnis views the common good as integral, rather than merely instrumental, to individual well-being. This perspective could potentially strengthen his case for a generic obligation to obey the law.<sup>34</sup> And that obligation would then denote the limits of the framework within which everything starts happening. The concept of common good in Finnis's work draws parallels with Catholic social teaching and is influenced by the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas.<sup>35</sup> Actually, however, it is from Neo Thomists that some of the strongest criticism of Finnis's conception of the common good emerges.<sup>36</sup>

Nevertheless, despite these criticisms, Finnis's work on the common good remains influential in discussions of constitutional law, citizenship, and the relationship between morality and politics.<sup>37383940</sup> These latter concepts, as elucidated in the previous chapter, shape the mechanisms available to individuals and *collectivities*<sup>41</sup> that are utilised to create or challenge an architectural narrative. As demonstrated, individuals may resort to legal procedures - including constitutional ones when human rights are involved - in order to reverse a decision by the competent building or planning authority. In other instances, an association or an institution, through its enabling powers (granted by law), enforces or invalidates a decision to, for example, develop a particular building in a particular area. As examined in the previous chapter, this interplay between law, politics and architecture yields, at any given point in time, the *ethos* of the community, which would encompass differing currents. The demarcation must,

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<sup>34</sup> As seen in the previous chapter, obeying the law may be a way, if not the only way, of enforcing the community ethos.

<sup>35</sup> Petr Osina, "The Idea Of Common Good In New Natural Law Theory," *Studia Iuridica Cassoviensia*, 8.1 (2020) <<https://doi.org/10.33542/sic2020-1-05>> [accessed November 30, 2024], p. 52 : "[Finnis's] definition bears clear parallels to the description of the common good found in contemporary Catholic social teaching, most notably seen in the document *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World) issued in 1965".

<sup>36</sup> Some of the strongest criticism of John Finnis's conception of the common good comes from Neo-Thomists who argue that Finnis's interpretation of Thomas Aquinas is flawed. Critics like Lawrence Dewan contend that Finnis's approach inadequately captures the Thomistic understanding of the common good, particularly in its political dimension. Dewan argues that Finnis's emphasis on individual basic goods and personal zones of autonomy does not align with Aquinas's view, which integrates the common good more deeply into the fabric of political and social life. Vide: Lawrence Dewan, "St. Thomas, John Finnis, and the Political Good," in *Wisdom, Law, and Virtue* (Fordham University Press, 2007), pp. 279–311 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5422/fso/9780823227969.003.0018>> [accessed 17 November 2024].

<sup>37</sup> Osina, 'The Idea Of Common Good', p. 52.

<sup>38</sup> Raymond Plant, '2 Citizenship, Religion, and Political Liberalism', Oxford University Press Oxford, 2009, pp. 37–57

<sup>39</sup> Matthew H. Kramer, "Retributivism in the Spirit of Finnis\*," in *Reason, Morality, and Law* (Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 167–85 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199675500.003.0012>> [accessed 17 November 2024].

<sup>40</sup> Richard Ekins, "Constitutional Principle in the Laws of the Commonwealth," in *Reason, Morality, and Law* (Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 396–412 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199675500.003.0025>> [accessed 17 November 2024].

<sup>41</sup> Such as local councils, national courts, planning authorities, local and national associations, and similar entities.

however, be established at some juncture, and that demarcation is ultimately determined by politicians enacting legislation.

This implies that politics, in both its normative and descriptive aspects, may have a significant impact on the *ethos* of that community. A particular philosophy, as discussed in the previous chapter, may promote corporatism, wherein the individual is perceived as a component in a much larger, and more significant system. Conversely, individualism may posit that the entire system is merely the sum of its constituent individuals and is thus of lesser importance. This presents a delicate, complex and ongoing balancing act.<sup>42</sup>

The underlying premise in this research has been, since its inception, to promote a coordination between these two poles. This coordination, it is proposed, may produce the stability necessary for comprehensive human flourishing, not because it produces an ideal state, but because it creates a political equilibrium wherein the optimal conditions for human potential can be realised. It becomes a meaningful allegorical space through which and in which all human activities, including architecture, flourish naturally from their inherent truth, attuned to the *ethos* of that community. In this context, even dissenting views may find harmony with, for instance, a particular building development, because they are cognisant that the decision to build has been made according to specific transparent criteria.<sup>43</sup> These dissenting perspectives would acknowledge that they were afforded the opportunity to express their opposition and that their viewpoints had been duly considered.

Whilst the philosophical framework is indispensable in order to justify the purpose of architecture, law (which essentially is concretised politics) is necessary to establish the parameters of what is shaped in the real world. Architecture must therefore navigate the intersection of philosophical ideals and legal realities. This delicate balance requires architects to consider not only the aesthetic and functional aspects of their designs, but also their compliance with regulatory frameworks and societal norms. By comprehending and adhering

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<sup>42</sup> The debate between corporatism and individualism, often wrongly framed as socialism versus individualism, is indeed more nuanced than a simple binary opposition. While these systems are often presented as polar opposites, several scholars have argued for a more complex understanding of their relationship and the existence of alternative approaches.

<sup>43</sup> In democratic systems, the influence of large developers can have significant repercussions. Specifically, these entities may exert undue pressure on regulatory officials and agencies, potentially leading to several adverse outcomes. See: James Cummings, James Cummings, “Carlo Stivala’s 15-Storey Sliema Seafront Hotel Approved,” *Times of Malta*, 15 March 2025 <<https://timesofmalta.com/article/carlo-stivala-15storey-sliema-seafront-hotel-approved.1106599>> [accessed 15 March 2025].

to these politico-legal parameters, architects can design structures that not only encapsulate their philosophical vision but also address the practical needs of society within established boundaries.

### **Building, Street, City**

In light of these considerations, one may inquire as to who possesses the authority to shape the urban environment. Does this right belong to the State, the *collectivity* or the individual?

The French philosopher Henri Lefebvre once proposed a straightforward response.<sup>44</sup> This right, he argued, is not something that can be conferred by the state. It is not contingent upon ethnicity, nationality, or place of birth. Rather, it is earned through the act of habitation. If one lives out one's life in the shared urban landscape, then one has a natural right to participate in shaping its future. Lefebvre coined a new term for his naturally enfranchised city shaper, who was both citizen and denizen of the city: the *citadin*.<sup>45</sup>

This assertion is only partially accurate. The State, in its multifaceted complexity, is responsible for creating, implementing, and interpreting the framework within which any entity, individual, or organisation operates. Thus, while these non-governmental entities may contribute to shaping the city, the ultimate parameters are established by the State through legislation. However, in democratic systems, the State is composed of and regulated by an intricate network of political and legal mechanisms, which provide an ongoing array of checks and balances. Consequently, individuals may be considered to possess power, albeit representationally, to influence outcomes through voting in elections and other instruments (such as activism in civil society and recourse to the judicial system). Therefore, Lefebvre's assertion is, to some extent, valid. However, this right empowering individuals *qua* citizens is not absolute.<sup>46</sup>

Additionally, in the real world, as much as this latter statement is true in theory, the citizen may, for a variety of reasons, not exercise such right.

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<sup>44</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, (Wiley-Blackwell, 1992).

<sup>45</sup> Montgomery, *Happy City*, p. 332, referring to Lefebvre. In the original: Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities* (Wiley-Blackwell, 1996), p. 34. "The right to the city, complemented by the right to difference and the right to information, should modify, concretize and make more practical the rights of the citizen as an urban dweller (*citadin*) and user of multiple services. It would affirm, on the one hand, the right of users to make known their ideas on the space and time of their activities in the urban area; it would also cover the right to the use of the centre, a privileged place, instead of being dispersed and stuck into ghettos (for workers, immigrants, the 'marginal' and even for the 'privileged')"

<sup>46</sup> In reality, against the common presumption, no right is absolute, not even our right to live.

Nonetheless, at the end of the day the democratic project is the system we currently have and whilst some make a choice to detach themselves from society, most humans actually need to belong to a community in order to lead a meaningful life. In other words, (d)well-being comes from being part of a larger being in the world.

Despite the fact that modern cosmopolitan cities offer more opportunities than ever for people to isolate themselves from neighbours and strangers, the most fulfilling human experiences come from collaborating and enjoying activities with others. While we may value our privacy and time alone, it is strong, positive relationships that form the cornerstone of happiness. Ultimately, the city is a collective endeavour, akin to Aristotle's concept of the polis, where we can create a shared good that is impossible to achieve on our own.<sup>47</sup>

The common good is important because it is based on the idea that everything pertaining to society, to a community, is political.<sup>48</sup> Following this line of thought, architecture becomes an activity, individual and/or communal, which is woven into the physical, existential, social and ultimately political fabric of human communities.<sup>49</sup> That is the reason why the common good needs to be analysed at the beginning of this chapter. Without understanding, what is meant by the concept of common good, one cannot understand how architecture may possibly be framed with reference to it.

It would be to say the least preposterous to attempt any comprehensive historical appraisal of what the concept of common good meant throughout the ages. What may be attempted here, instead, is to single out the notion of common good, namely that elaborated by John Finnis, and apply that notion to the purposes of this research. This application is important because the main claim in this research is that it is possible to have architecture for the common good.

What is premised in the next sections is that the content of architecture ought to provide and foster dwelling. Perhaps Jonas Holst says it best when he says that '[a]rchitecture allows the inhabitants to reside in the sense of sitting back and dwell'.<sup>50</sup> Dwelling should always be for

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<sup>47</sup> Montgomery, *Happy City*, p.46.

<sup>48</sup> Hermann J. Weigand, *The Magic Mountain: A Study of Thomas Mann's Novel Der Zauberberg*. University of North Carolina Press, 1965. JSTOR, [https://doi.org/10.5149/9781469658612\\_weigand](https://doi.org/10.5149/9781469658612_weigand). Accessed 11 Mar. 2023. p.119 "Es gibt keine Nichtpolitik. Alles ist Politik. - There is nothing that is not political. Everything is Politics"

<sup>49</sup> What is political in nature, has frequently a legal aspect to it as well. This issue will be tackled in the concluding coming chapters: whether law, which should have the common good as its aim, may address aesthetic experience.

<sup>50</sup> Jonas Holst, "Rethinking Dwelling and Building. On Martin Heidegger's conception of Being as Dwelling and Jørn Utzon's Architecture of Well-being", *Zarch: Journal of interdisciplinary studies in architecture and urbanism*, 2013, pp.52-60, (p. 57).

the well-being of the individual, otherwise it is just lodging. If this is true then dwelling becomes the notion that captures the participation in all the basic goods of human flourishing. The other aspect of architecture is its form:<sup>51</sup> or how architecture physically manifests its presence in a community. This phenomenon is described in various ways: *presence* is one term, *aesthetic experience* another. What we encounter in the external aspect of architecture—and what we subsequently register as beauty—is one way of naming it. This is what Finnis refers to as *aesthetic experience*, which is not to be confused with the discipline of aesthetics. In Finnis’s account, the emphasis falls less on the criteria that might define beauty and more on the lived experience itself. Aesthetic experience, understood in this Finnisian sense as a fundamental and irreducible dimension of human fulfilment, becomes a constituent of the common good, contributing to the all-round flourishing of individuals and communities. So, in summary, all basic goods may be participated in by architecture both in its content and in its form; both not understood in the Platonic sense but more in the Heideggerian sense of *wesen*<sup>52</sup> (*whatness* in the sense of *howness*) ready-to-hand<sup>53</sup> or *zuhanden*.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Dwelling encompasses more than just physical shelter; it is a complex concept that intertwines with an individual's well-being, social connections, and sense of place. The notion of dwelling captures the essence of how people interact with their living spaces and the broader environment, going beyond mere lodging. Research suggests that dwelling satisfaction is closely linked to an individual's quality of life, particularly for older adults (Stephen M. Golant, "Individual Differences Underlying the Dwelling Satisfaction of the Elderly," *Journal of Social Issues*, 38.3 (1982), 121–33 <<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.1982.tb01774.x>> [accessed 8 December 2024]).

<sup>52</sup> In considering how architecture may participate in basic goods through both content and form, we can draw insights from Heidegger's concept of "*wesen*" or essence, rather than a Platonic understanding: Heidegger's notion of "*wesen*" refers to the way something comes into presence or reveals itself, rather than an unchanging ideal form. In this sense, architecture can participate in basic goods by how it discloses or brings forth certain fundamental human needs and values through its physical manifestation (Daniel H. Cohen, "TArgument Is War...and War Is Hell: Philosophy, Education, and Metaphors for Argumentation," *Informal Logic*, 17.2 (1995) <<https://doi.org/10.22329/il.v17i2.2406>>). See also: Hubert L. Dreyfus, "Being and Power: Heidegger and Foucault," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 4.1 (1996), 1–16 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09672559608570822>>.

<sup>53</sup> See: Johan de Jong, "FromGegenstandtoGegenstehenlassen: On the Meanings of Objectivity in Heidegger and Hegel," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 28.3 (2020), pp. 390–410, doi:10.1080/09672559.2020.1766883.

<sup>54</sup> See: Robert Brandom, "Heidegger's Categories in Being and Time," in *A Companion to Heidegger*, ed. by H.L. Dreyfuss and M.A. Wrathall (Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2005), pp. 214–32 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/9780470996492.ch13>> [accessed 16 November 2024].

As Brandom says "Zuhandene things are those that a neo-Kantian would describe as having been imbued with human values and significances". Whilst Michael Wheeler, explains in "Martin Heidegger", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/heidegger/> : "In other words, once we have assumed that we begin with the present-at-hand, values must take the form of determinate features of objects, and therefore constitute nothing but more present-at-hand structures. And if you add more present-at-hand structures to some existing present-at-hand structures, what you end up with is not equipmental meaning (totalities of involvements) but merely a larger number of present-at-hand structures."

This suggests that architecture's participation in basic goods is not about conforming to predetermined ideals, but rather about how it shapes our engagement with the world and discloses possibilities for human dwelling and interaction. In essence, architecture can participate in basic goods through both its content and form by the way it reveals and shapes our understanding of fundamental human needs, values, and ways of being-in-the-world. This aligns with Heidegger's concept of "wesen" as a dynamic unfolding or coming-into-presence, rather than a static Platonic form. The built environment thus has the potential to disclose and foster basic goods through its very presence and the experiences it enables. The content of architecture - its purpose, function, and meaning - as well as its form - its physical structure and aesthetic qualities - can both contribute to this revealing of basic goods. Interestingly, this Heideggerian approach contrasts with traditional metaphysical views of essence.

As already hinted, notwithstanding the fact that Finnis is considered to be an advocate of the natural law theory and by default a follower of both Aristotle's and Aquinas's, a critique will follow in this analysis which will show that Finnis departed from Aquinas when it comes to (*inter alia*) the common good. Such analysis will 'all-things-considered'<sup>55</sup> confirm Finnis's approach towards the common good as being a valid political philosophy notion, which lends itself proficiently to the current task of ascertaining whether architecture can be for the common good.

Consequently, this chapter will be based on two presumptions: the well-being of the individual and the well-being of the collective.

### **The First Presumption – Well-Being Of The Individual**

The foundations upon which this research is predicated rest on the assumption that human beings, in the majority of instances, engage in deliberate actions to optimise their well-being. This would imply that rational human beings seek, if only, on an individual level, to lead a good life. A good life in a general sense is that which is we experience as a sense of well-being. One needs of course, material, legal and political security, engagement in meaningful activities, loving relationships (with family and friends) and a sense of belonging to a community.<sup>56</sup> This sense of well-being should not be confused with the idea of pleasure or happiness. Nor does a

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<sup>55</sup> An expression used often by Finnis.

<sup>56</sup> Modern psychology appears to describe these very basic goods as domains of well-being, quite overlapping with those basic values identified by Finnis. Vide: Tyler J., VanderWeele, *On the promotion of human flourishing*, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 114 (2017): 8148 - 8156.

‘good life’ necessarily mean good in some confessional sense, but, perhaps, it may consist of a ‘set of general moral standards’ that fosters that sense of well-being.<sup>57</sup>

One may consider without perhaps resolving if the presumption would be inverted and one would accept that rational human beings, most of time intentionally act in order (i) not to know what is good for them, and/or (ii) not to enhance their well-being. But say, in order to intentionally ‘unknow’ what is conducive to their well-being, or act intentionally to diminish their well-being.<sup>58</sup> On the other hand, even worse would be if one presumes that human beings act most of the time with the aim to intentionally undermine their well-being and promote their ill-being – their misery.

The question then becomes one of identifying what this ‘well-being’ could be, and as far as it is possible to find ways and means how to foster it for oneself and, as we will see in the second presumption, for the collective as well.

## **The Well-being of the Individual**

Finnis starts off his reinterpretation of the Natural Law Theory by stating that :

[human] actions, practices, etc., can be fully understood only by understanding their point, that is to say their objective, their value, their significance or importance, as conceived by the people who performed them, engaged in them, etc.<sup>59</sup>

The issue is that human beings are individual, so by definition they have a subjective view as Finnis recognises:

[...] these actions, practices, etc., and correspondingly these concepts, vary greatly from person to person, from one society to another, from one time and place to other times and places.

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<sup>57</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights*, p.23.

<sup>58</sup> One understands that the term ‘intentional’ may be problematic. What is meant here is the frame of mind of a rational person who thinks what is the best course of action in life without drifting away because of passion, rage or intoxication. Pretty much like what John Finnis describes like a person ‘who considers what to do’ – Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 23.

<sup>59</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 3.

Finnis asks :

How, then, is there to be a general descriptive theory of these varying particulars?

After giving a comparative analysis of the concept of 'law' he concludes that one should look for 'a common element' in order to come to the 'essence'<sup>60</sup> of the concept.<sup>61</sup>

Finnis attempts to construct his Natural Law theory on the basis of what is essentially common to all, in his own words:

A theory of natural law claims to be able to identify conditions and principles of practical right-mindedness, of good and proper order among persons, and in individual conduct.<sup>62</sup>

Finnis explains that the principles of natural law are:

(i) a set of basic practical principles which indicate the basic forms of human flourishing as goods to be pursued and realized, and which are in one way or another used by everyone who considers what to do, however unsound his conclusions; and (ii) a set of basic methodological requirements of practical reasonableness (itself one of the basic forms of human flourishing) which distinguish sound from unsound practical thinking and which, when all brought to bear, provide the criteria for distinguishing between acts that (always or in particular circumstances) are reasonable-all-things-considered (and not merely relative-to-a-particular purpose) and acts that are unreasonable-all-things-considered, i.e. between ways of acting that are morally right or morally wrong—thus enabling one to formulate (iii) a set of general moral standards.

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<sup>60</sup> What Heidegger would call the '*ousia*'. Carol J. White tells us that 'Heidegger suggests that "beingness" ("*Seiendheit*") is the only adequate translation of Aristotle's term "*ousia*," rather than "essence" or "substance."' In . In A Companion to Heidegger, eds. H. Dreyfus and M. Wrathall, 2005, Malden (USA) and Oxford: Blackwell p. 137.

<sup>61</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 6.

<sup>62</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 18.

In this section of the research, the first principle is of utmost importance.

- (i) a set of basic practical principles which indicate the basic forms of human flourishing as goods to be pursued and realized, and which are in one way or another used by everyone who considers what to do, however unsound his conclusions<sup>63</sup>

Finnis tells us that philosophers who have recently sought to test this assumption, by surveying the anthropological literature make him confident to assert that:

All human societies show a concern for the value of human life; All human societies display a concern for truth,... all societies display a favour for the values of co-operation, of common over individual good... All know friendship,... All value play, serious and formalized, or relaxed and recreational.... in one form or another, religion is universal.<sup>64</sup>

Finnis reverts, from the descriptive or 'speculative' findings of anthropology and psychology, to the critical and essentially practical discipline in which we all must ask ourselves what are the basic aspects of our individual well-being?<sup>65</sup>

Finnis reminds us at this stage that by 'good' he does not mean moral good 'yet'. He means at this stage something which is good for one's all-round flourishing.

The following quote provides a profound exploration of the basic values that underpin human flourishing in his own words:

A first basic value, corresponding to the drive for self-preservation, is the value of life.<sup>66</sup>

The second basic value [...] is knowledge, considered as desirable for its own sake, not merely instrumentally.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 23.

<sup>64</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 83-84.

<sup>65</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 85.

<sup>66</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 86.

<sup>67</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 87.

The third basic aspect of human well-being is play.<sup>68</sup>

The fourth basic component in our flourishing is aesthetic experience.<sup>69</sup>

Fifthly, there is the value of that sociability which in its weakest form is realized by a minimum of peace and harmony amongst persons, and which ranges through the forms of human community to its strongest form in the flowering of full friendship.<sup>70</sup>

Sixthly, there is the basic good of being able to bring one's own intelligence to bear effectively (in practical reasoning that issues in action) on the problems of choosing one's actions and lifestyle and shaping one's own character. ... and for a label I choose 'practical reasonableness'<sup>71</sup>

Seventhly, and finally in this list, there is the value of what, since Cicero, we summarily and lamely call 'religion'.<sup>72</sup>

The list delineates seven fundamental goods (values) or components of human well-being, as identified by Finnis in his natural law theory. These values are considered essential to human flourishing and are not hierarchically ordered. The first value is life itself, emphasising the innate human drive for self-preservation. The second is knowledge, valued intrinsically rather than merely for its practical applications. Play is recognised as the third basic value, acknowledging the importance of leisure and enjoyment in human life. The fourth value is aesthetic experience, highlighting the significance of beauty and artistic appreciation in human existence. The fifth value focuses on sociability, ranging from basic peaceful coexistence to profound, meaningful friendships. Practical reasonableness, the sixth value, emphasises the importance of effectively applying one's intelligence to make decisions and shape one's character. The seventh value, though not fully elaborated therein, likely refers to religion or spirituality. This comprehensive list of basic goods provides a framework for understanding human well-being and ethical decision-making, recognising the multifaceted nature of human flourishing beyond mere survival or material prosperity.

McCall correctly states that '[t]his list resembles in many respects the list of first precepts of the natural law identified by St. Thomas Aquinas<sup>73</sup> in his *Treatise on Law*'.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p.87.

<sup>69</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 87.

<sup>70</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 88.

<sup>71</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 88.

<sup>72</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 89.

<sup>73</sup> Thomas Aquinas, "Summa Theologica - Christian Classics Ethereal Library," <https://www.Ccel.Org/> (Benziger Bros, 1947) <<https://www.ccel.org/a/aquinas/summa/>> [accessed 6 December 2024], I-II, q. 94, a. 2,

<sup>74</sup> Brian McCall, "¿Qué Tipo de Bien Es John Finnis? Un Estudio Sobre El Bien Personal y Común En «Natural Law and Natural Rights», "[What Good is John Finnis? Assessing the Personal and Common Good in Natural

McCall points out that there is a difference between Finnis and Aquinas:

Finnis maintains that the basic goods are both indemonstrable and incommensurable; whereas, Aquinas understands the goods to be demonstrable from the natural inclinations (even if not derived through a formal syllogism), and he understands them to exist in a hierarchical relationship.<sup>75</sup>

Another difference between Finnis and Aquinas according to McCall is that even though Finnis uses the term “self-evident”<sup>76</sup> which is often the phrase used to translate into the English language Aquinas’s concept of things known *per se nota*,<sup>77</sup> Finnis understands self-evident principles differently than Aquinas does. Finnis claims a self-evident principle is “obvious”<sup>78</sup> and “[i]t cannot be demonstrated, but equally it needs not demonstration”.<sup>79</sup> Finnis’s definition of self-evident as “obvious” leads him to the conclusion that self-evident principles are ‘indemonstrable’.<sup>80</sup> This definition differs significantly from Aquinas’s understanding of self-evident, or *per se nota*. For Aquinas, such propositions although not known through syllogistic reasoning are still the products of rational thought.

This difference on what self-evident may mean to Finnis and Aquinas may not have a drastic impact on this research, it may however, have a discerning effect on the use of the expression ‘self-evident’ which may be herein used as meaning ‘obvious but still demonstrable’.

Furthermore, Finnis insists that it is not an exhaustive list but:

[...]besides life, knowledge, play, aesthetic experience, friendship, practical reasonableness, and religion, there are countless objectives and forms of good. But I suggest that these other objectives and forms of good will be found, on analysis, to be ways or combinations of ways of pursuing (not always sensibly) and realizing (not always successfully) one of the seven basic forms of good, or some combination of them.

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Law and Natural Rights] *Persona y Derecho*, 83 (2020), 637–68 <<https://doi.org/10.15581/011.83.012>> [accessed 6 December 2024].

<sup>75</sup> McCall, ‘What Good is John Finnis?’, p.642.

<sup>76</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p.31 et seq.

<sup>77</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 32.

<sup>78</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 59.

<sup>79</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p.65.

<sup>80</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 85.

Finnis claims that the basic goods are all equally fundamental:

First, each is equally self-evidently a form of good. Secondly, none can be analytically reduced to being merely an aspect of any of the others, or to being merely instrumental in the pursuit of any of the others. Thirdly, each one, when we focus on it, can reasonably be regarded as the most important. Hence, there is no objective hierarchy amongst them.<sup>81</sup>

Finnis claims that:

[practical] reasonableness both is a basic aspect of human well-being and concerns one's participation in all the (other) basic aspects of human well-being. Hence, its requirements concern fullness of well-being (in the measure in which any one person can enjoy such fullness of well-being in the circumstances of his lifetime). So someone who lives up to these requirements is also Aristotle's *spoudaios* (mature person); such a person's life is *eu zen* (well-living) and, unless circumstances are quite adverse, has (we can say) Aristotle's *eudaimonia*<sup>82</sup> (the inclusive all-round flourishing or well-being—not safely translated as 'happiness'). But, thirdly, the basic forms of good are opportunities of being; the more fully one participates in them the more one is what one can be.<sup>83</sup>

This so far gives one an idea of what Finnis understands by an individual's well-being as an all-round-flourishing or *eudaimonia* through participation in all basic goods.

Of course, individual well-being varies in space and in time. This reality of individual well-being may be one of the limitations of this research. The subjectivity of what is good may in actual fact nullify all that has been said about what is good for human beings. In the sense that there cannot be one type of good.<sup>84</sup> McCall tackles this issue by referring to McIntyre's method of asking "What is the good for me?" and then asking "What is the good for man?"<sup>85</sup>. McCall

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<sup>81</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 92.

<sup>82</sup> My underscoring and bolding.

<sup>83</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, pp. 102-103.

<sup>84</sup> On this point for example, Rawls's theory of justice distinguishes between strong and weak concepts of the good, which has implications for how he approaches political philosophy and ethics (Paul Raekstad, "The Radical Realist Critique of Rawls: A Reconstruction and Response," *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 27.2 (2021), 183–205 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/13698230.2021.1891377>>.; Fernando R. Tesón, "The Rawlsian Theory of International Law," *Ethics & International Affairs*, 9 (1995), 79–99 <<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7093.1995.tb00172.x>>).

<sup>85</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory, Third Edition* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2007). On this point a reflection is needed. Hannah Arendt's philosophy emphasizes the importance of plurality and political action as essential to human existence. For Arendt, the good for man is not singular but rooted in the collective experience of human beings in the public realm (Jeremy Waldron, "Arendt's Constitutional Politics,"

explains that the answer to the second question involves determining what answers to the former question, with respect to different lives, have in common. McCall reminds us that the answer to the first question will vary from person to person, depending upon their own personal narrative. McCall sustains that MacIntyre is not promoting some 'pluralist liberalism of limitless variation in conceptions of human good'.<sup>86</sup> McCall specifies that the unstated premise that saves MacIntyre's explanation from sliding into pluralistic liberalism is the eternal law.

McCall states that:

That which is good for a monk, a teacher, a parent, an architect, and so on will vary in details; but those details will be constrained within the pattern formed by what within each of these types of narratives is common to all the narratives.<sup>87</sup>

McCall criticizes Finnis for lacking a hierarchical orientation of "basic goods" to Eternal Law. This means that Finnis does not prioritise certain goods over others in his understanding of the common good. Finnis argues that all goods are equal and should be pursued equally. However, McCall argues that this approach fails to account for the reality of human experience and the fact that certain goods are more important than others.

For example, McCall argues that the pursuit of justice is a higher good than the pursuit of pleasure, because justice is necessary for the common good, whereas pleasure is not. McCall believes that Finnis's approach to the common good is too individualistic and fails to take into account the needs of the community as a whole.

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in *The Cambridge Companion to Hannah Arendt* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 201–19 <<https://doi.org/10.1017/ccol0521641985.011>> [accessed 24 February 2025].). She argues that humans find their greatest fulfilment in politics, where they can transcend the cyclical nature of biological life and undertake unique initiatives that leave a lasting impact on history (Waldron, 2000). Interestingly, Arendt's concept of "amor mundi" (love of the world) suggests that the good for man involves a public bond grounded in political friendship (Shin Chiba, "Hannah Arendt on Love and the Political: Love, Friendship, and Citizenship," *The Review of Politics*, 57.3 (1995), 505–36 <<https://doi.org/10.1017/s0034670500019720>>.). This notion challenges traditional views of love as an exclusively private affair and proposes a more inclusive understanding of human relationships in the political sphere. See: Jeffrey C. Isaac, "Oases in the Desert: Hannah Arendt on Democratic Politics," *American Political Science Review*, 88.1 (1994), 156–68 <<https://doi.org/10.2307/2944888>>.; Waldron, 2000). This view aligns with her famous statement that "men, not man, inhabit the earth," highlighting the fundamental importance of human diversity and interaction in shaping the human condition.

<sup>86</sup> McCall, 'What Good is John Finnis?', p. 650.

<sup>87</sup> McCall, 'What Good is John Finnis?', p. 650.

Thus, McCall's critique of Finnis highlights the importance of recognizing the hierarchical nature of goods in the pursuit of the common good. By prioritizing certain goods over others, we can ensure that our actions are directed towards the greater good and not just individual desires. Additionally, by taking into account the needs of the community, we can ensure that the common good is served in a just and equitable manner.<sup>88</sup>

McCall's critique of Finnis's theory of the common good can be countered by emphasizing several key aspects of Finnis's philosophy: Finnis argues that the political common good is instrumental and limited, serving to create conditions for individuals and families to pursue basic goods.<sup>89</sup> This view challenges the notion of a hierarchical nature of goods, as Finnis sees the common good as a means to enable individual flourishing rather than an end in itself. The emphasis on individual rights and freedoms aligns with Finnis's conception of the common good as a facilitator rather than a superior entity<sup>90</sup>. Interestingly, Finnis's approach to the common good can be seen as a middle ground between competing philosophical perspectives. While he acknowledges the importance of the common good, he does not elevate it above individual rights and freedoms. This nuanced position allows for a balance between collective and individual interests, potentially addressing concerns about hierarchical structures.<sup>91</sup>

In summary, defending Finnis against McCall's critique involves highlighting the instrumental nature of the common good in Finnis's theory, which serves to enable individual pursuit of basic goods rather than imposing a strict hierarchy. This approach respects both individual rights and the collective welfare, offering a more flexible and balanced perspective on the role of the common good in society.

## **The Second Presumption – Well-Being Of The Collective**

The other presumption here is that human beings are social rational animals, in the sense that Aristotle would have called political animals. This would mean that human beings almost inescapably live and seek this aforementioned well-being within their communities. But then again not only that, there is a collective level made up of entities like public and private civic

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<sup>88</sup> McCall, 'What Good is John Finnis?', p. 660.

<sup>89</sup> George Duke, "Finnis On The Authority Of Law And The Common Good," *Legal Theory*, 19.1 (2013), 44–62 <<https://doi.org/10.1017/s1352325212000237>>.

<sup>90</sup> Timothy Fuller, "Taking Natural Law Seriously Within the Liberal Tradition," in *Michael Oakeshott on Authority, Governance, and the State* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), pp. 89–110 <[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-17455-2\\_5](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-17455-2_5)> [accessed 19 January 2025].

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

associations, social clubs, religious organisations, religious institutions, and a myriad of State institutions that participate in the common good quite distinctly from the individuals composing them.

### **The Well-Being Of The *Collectivity***

We have seen that part of that individual well-being implies not unimportantly the need to aggregate with others. To participate in the basic good of sociability. The levels of sociability vary and are categorised into different types of ‘unifying relationships’.<sup>92</sup> The natural process of procreation is one of these relationships. In order for humans to flourish and feel safe enough to procreate they needed the tribe. This confirms what has been said before about the anthropological universality of ‘friendship’.

As Finnis’s observation is comforted by Harari who puts it as follows:

Human babies are helpless, dependent for many years on their elders for sustenance, protection and education.<sup>93</sup>

Harari states that this fact has contributed greatly both to humankind’s extraordinary social abilities and to its unique social problems. Lone mothers could hardly forage enough food for their offspring and themselves. So raising children required constant help from other family members and neighbours. It takes a tribe to raise a human.<sup>94</sup>

There must have been a tipping moment when surviving was not enough. Where the Hobbesian self-preservation<sup>95</sup> was superseded by something else. When, that is, living well became important.

Harari says that:

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<sup>92</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p.135.

<sup>93</sup> Yuval N. Harari, *Sapiens : A Brief History of Humankind* (New York: Harper), (2015), p. 11.

<sup>94</sup> Harari, *Sapiens*, p. 11.

<sup>95</sup> C. D. Meyers, “Hobbes and the Rationality of Self-Preservation: Grounding Morality on the Desires We Should Have,” *The European Legacy*, 18.3 (2013), 269–86 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/10848770.2013.774987>>.

Sometime during the last two million years, important changes occurred in human psychology that support larger, more cooperative societies.<sup>96</sup>

In some way then the impetus towards individual self-interest and thus well-being extended towards the community. This perspective on self-interest and community well-being aligns with Finnis's broader framework of social order. Finnis mentions four main 'orders' of relationship, and classifies the common good as pertaining to the fourth order, in his words 'the unity of common action'.<sup>97</sup> In other words he refers to "co-ordination of action"<sup>98</sup>. Throughout his analysis Finnis uses, 'collaboration', 'co-operation', and 'co-ordination' in a more or less synonymous fashion. Also, when he uses 'negative co-ordination' he means mutual non-interference as in the cases of abstaining from assault, theft, and the like.<sup>99</sup>

Finnis then provides examples of three different types of common 'unifying' or one might call 'community of action'.<sup>100</sup> Finnis states that Aristotle thought that these three species of community of action and interest are sufficiently similar to warrant applying a common name to all these relationships, which he therefore called three sorts of *philia*.<sup>101</sup>

Finnis's flagship concept is that all good is ultimately reducible to one's own all-round-flourishing. Concurrently, he asserts that the 'common good' shared between two or more friends transcends mere 'collaboration,' 'coordination,' or coincidence. He emphasizes this point by stating that:

[...] the good that is common between friends is not simply the good of successful collaboration or co-ordination, nor is it simply the good of two successfully achieved coinciding projects or objectives; it is the common good of mutual self-constitution, self-fulfilment, self-realization.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Robert Boyd and Peter J. Richerson. 'Culture and the Evolution of Human Cooperation', *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London. Series B, Biological Sciences*, 364.1533: (2009) pp. 3281–88 <<https://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2009.0134>>

<sup>97</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p.138.

<sup>98</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p.138.

<sup>99</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 138.

<sup>100</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 141.

<sup>101</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 141.

<sup>102</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 141.

Finnis's *friends* act in reciprocity. They help each other become the best version of themselves. According to Finnis, true friends engage in mutual support and cooperation, helping each other to flourish and achieve their full potential. This concept is rooted in the idea that human beings are inherently social and that our well-being is deeply connected to the well-being of others. By fostering these reciprocal relationships, friends contribute to each other's development and well-being, ultimately helping each other become the best versions of themselves. This mutual support is a key aspect of Finnis's broader philosophy on the importance of community and social bonds in achieving a fulfilling and meaningful life.

Finnis says in no unclear terms that there is no possibility of understanding the classical tradition of 'natural law' theorizing, or his own later explorations of obligation, 'without first appropriating the analysis of friendship in its full sense'.

The 'core' of this whole idea of *philia* is that friendship is a basic form of good. The state of affairs called friendship is the source of the deep satisfaction which normally accompanies it and which is a manifestation of the intrinsic value of that state of affairs.<sup>103</sup>

Finnis tells us then that this state of affairs (friendship) has to be from both ends and works on the following principle:

One must treat one's friend's well-being as an aspect of one's own well-being.<sup>104</sup>

In summary, both friends must act in the interest of the other. The 'reciprocity of love' does not stop at either end.

### **Beyond the Aggregate of Individual Well-Being: A Holistic Perspective**

The elegance of Finnis's theory of the common good lies in its foundation on an individual perspective of comprehensive flourishing in general terms, while simultaneously positing that individual well-being is contingent upon, among other factors, collective well-being. This is evident in the fundamental and irreducible good of sociability (friendship) and in the common good as a methodological requirement, among other aspects, of the good of practical reasonableness. This aligns with the primary objective of this research, which posits that

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<sup>103</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p.141.

<sup>104</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p.141.

architecture, to serve the common good, must promote, encourage, and foster well-being at both the individual and collective levels. These two levels are not only interconnected but are entwined.<sup>105</sup>

As previously discussed, it can be reasonably assumed that Heidegger would not advocate for dwelling as a criterion for building unless it was fundamentally evident to him that it is beneficial for humans.

It is quite self-evident that there is in every human being an attraction towards his or her well-being. This well-being maybe legitimate self-interest, which ultimately assists the individual in his or her self-preservation.

Finnis, whilst as seen, accepts tells that:

[...] self-love (the desire to participate fully, oneself, in the basic aspects of human flourishing) requires that one go beyond self-love (self-interest, self-preference, the imperfect rationality of egoism).<sup>106</sup>

Finnis then returns to the analysis of community, and states that finally friendship is the most communal though not the most extended or elaborated form of human community.<sup>107</sup>

Finnis feels the need to clarify this aspect in the notes to that section when he states that:

In acting for any common good, one is rejecting the claims of 'self-interest' but is not ignoring one's own interests.<sup>108</sup>

In fact Finnis echoes Aquinas when he tells us that :

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<sup>105</sup> Individual and collective well-being are indeed interconnected, entwined, and interdependent. The concept of well-being extends beyond individual experiences to encompass collective and societal dimensions. Atkinson et al. (Sarah Atkinson and others, "Being Well Together: Individual Subjective and Community Wellbeing," *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 21.5 (2019), 1903–21 <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-019-00146-2>>.) emphasizes that community well-being is "about something more than the sum of the parts," highlighting the interconnectedness of individual and collective well-being.

<sup>106</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p.145.

<sup>107</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 145.

<sup>108</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 156.

The basic forms of good grasped by practical understanding are what is good for human beings with the nature they have.<sup>109</sup>

Human nature is political *qua* social.<sup>110</sup> It is then inescapable that humans beings' sociability is part-and-parcel of their nature and thus also good for them on an individual level. What Finnis attempts, over and over again, to say is that basic goods (basic values) have "moral normativity"<sup>111</sup> only when modulated by the requirements of practical reasonableness, and thus they are 'not merely pre-moral but also—so to speak, eventually .....moral'.<sup>112</sup> This moral normativity is clearly intersubjective and it is founded in reason not in Eternal law.<sup>113</sup> It is a form of secularisation of what McCall, or Aquinas for that matter, would otherwise attribute to Eternal Law. However, Finnis is indirectly telling us that at least some aspects of Eternal Law is actually written in our DNA,<sup>114</sup> in our human nature, but in order to be able to read that what is written humans need practical reasonableness. In his words that 'any sane person is capable of seeing that life, knowledge, fellowship, offspring, and a few other such basic aspects of human existence are, as such, good'.<sup>115</sup> Finnis does not employ Eternal Law as his primary point of reference, as he himself articulates:

[...] if there is an Eternal Law, we do not know enough of it to be able to judge [God]'s creative performance defective in terms of it.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 34.

<sup>110</sup> After all the word "politics" derives from the Ancient Greek term "πολιτικά" (politiká), meaning "affairs of the city-state." It is derived from "πόλις" (pólis), meaning "city-state" demonstrating the intimate relationship between the city and politics. Any claims advanced with respect to Aristotle must be understood as applying *mutatis mutandis*. Such an application necessarily requires careful attention to the substantial divergences between the ancient Greek polis—in its scale, socio-political organisation, and institutional structure—and the conditions characteristic of modern political communities. The interconnectedness of human social and political nature, emphasizing that our social interactions and political engagements are fundamental aspects of our identity and well-being. See: (Oxford University Press, 2023) <<https://doi.org/10.1093/oed/2466137345>> [accessed 17 January 2025]. "politic n. (see -ic suffix 2), after Middle French politiques, polliticques public affairs, government, also the title of Aristotle's treatise on politics (all late 14th cent.) and its models post-classical Latin politica, the title of Aristotle's treatise on politics (14th cent. in British sources), public affairs (c1488 in a British source), and ancient Greek τὰ πολιτικά public matters, civic affairs."

<sup>111</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 442.

<sup>112</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, pp. 442-443.

<sup>113</sup> McCall, 'What Good is John Finnis?' p. 650.

<sup>114</sup> John Finnis's natural law theory does not directly claim that aspects of Eternal Law are written in our DNA. However, his approach does emphasize the role of practical reasonableness in understanding and applying natural law principles (Jonathan Crowe, "Natural Law Beyond Finnis," *Jurisprudence*, 2.2 (2011), 293-308 <<https://doi.org/10.5235/204033211798716871>>). See also: Francis S. Collins, *The language of God : a scientist presents evidence for belief*, New York : Free Press, 2007, 2006, p. 27 et seq.

<sup>115</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 30.

<sup>116</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 391.

In other words Finnis, is taking what he knows best, our human nature, and attempts to explain human flourishing cross-culturally to a wide gamut of persons (believers, different-believers and non-believers); articulating in a more elaborate fashion what St Paul had written in his letter to the Romans:

For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts [...]<sup>117</sup>

In this way making this ‘well-being’, this ‘good’, applicable to everyone who is ‘mature’ enough to understand it.

In Finnis’s words:

Hence [the] requirements [of practical reasonableness] concern fullness of well-being (in the measure in which any one person can enjoy such fullness of well-being in the circumstances of his lifetime). So someone who lives up to these requirements is also Aristotle’s *spoudaios* (mature person); such a person’s life is *eu zen* (well-living) and, unless circumstances are quite adverse, has (we can say) Aristotle’s *eudaimonia* (the inclusive all-round flourishing or well-being—not safely translated as ‘happiness’).<sup>118</sup>

Finnis’s conception of the common good follows the principle that it is not the sum total of the individuals within it, like Rand would have it.<sup>119</sup> That is why he proposes a coordination between individual well-being and that of the collective. Otherwise, he would propose solely horizontal coordination between individuals (‘commutative justice’).<sup>120</sup> In fact, Finnis mentions that there is a level of the collective (which we may call the State, the community, the authority, etc...) which has to coordinate with the individual (‘distributive’ and ‘legal’ justice)<sup>121</sup>. Nevertheless, one has to understand that the collective remains always made up of

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<sup>117</sup> St. Paul, King James Bible, Romans II , 14-15.

<sup>118</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 103.

<sup>119</sup> Ayn Rand says: ““The common good” is a meaningless concept, unless taken literally, in which case its only possible meaning is: the sum of the good of all the individual men involved.” - Rand Ayn, Nathaniel Branden, Alan Greenspan and Robert Hessen. 1967. *Capitalism : The Unknown Ideal*. New York: Signet.

<sup>120</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 186.

<sup>121</sup> Finnis *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 186.

individuals, at all times. After all an entity - from a limited liability company to a nation State - is an abstract concept, a *fictio iuris*.<sup>122</sup> Such entities, are made up of individuals but those individuals have a specific function to be performed in accordance with specific rules. There is in any such entity the benefit of hindsight, of experience handed down and recorded by previous individuals in those positions - which one may call tradition - sometimes dating hundreds of years.<sup>123</sup> This does not mean that the individual element in such entities is suppressed. It only means that an entity 'is' much more than the individuals who compose at that specific point in time. This does not mean that the individuals disappear within that entity, but they are somehow steered towards a bigger cause than just their own personal interest *qua* individual. This idea of the whole is greater than the parts, has also some foundation, in *Gestalt* psychology.<sup>124</sup>

Furthermore, Finnis appears to give a new packaging to this principle. Finnis does not negate this idea of the whole being greater than the sum total of the parts, he actually attributes the basis of a community to this interaction between the whole and the parts.<sup>125</sup> One may exemplify this through the analogy of a team playing a match, though the ability of the individual players might (and usually does) contribute to the overall success of the team, their 'being' gifted does not necessarily help the team to achieve its success. It is indeed the 'coordination' and 'interaction' that most of the time guarantees success. Otherwise having a team would be pointless. The same happens in the business sector, the political arena, in a family and so on. Finnis tells us in fact that there is a 'sharing of aim rather than multiplicity of interaction is constitutive of human groups, communities, societies'.<sup>126</sup>

In the same vein, on a more extensive and all-encompassing level, a 'society' is 'an ongoing state of affairs, a sharing of life or of action or of interests, an associating or coming-together. Community in this sense is a matter of relationship and interaction.'<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 150.

<sup>123</sup> As is the case with democratic institutions such as the executive, the judiciary and the legislative.

<sup>124</sup> See: Ian Verstegen, "Gestalt Psychology," *The Corsini Encyclopedia of Psychology*, 2010, 1–3 <<https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470479216.corpsy0386>>. Gestalt theory emphasizes that the whole of anything is greater than its parts. See also for more in depth discussion on Heidegger and Gestalt: Vincent Blok, "Establishing the Truth," *Heidegger Studies*, 27 (2011), 101–18 <<https://doi.org/10.5840/heideggerstud2011275>>.

<sup>125</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 135. "Community in this sense is a matter of relationship and interaction".

<sup>126</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 152.

<sup>127</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p.135.

From these arguments emerges the desirability of a ‘complete community’, an all-round association in which there would be a series of co-ordinated initiatives and activities of individuals, of families, and of a ‘vast network of intermediate associations’.<sup>128</sup>

Finnis tells us that:

The point of this all-round association would be to secure the whole ensemble of material and other conditions, including forms of collaboration, that tend to favour, facilitate, and foster the realization by each individual of his or her personal development.<sup>129</sup>

There is no aspect of human affairs that is ‘outside the range’ of this type of a complete community.<sup>130</sup> Even an aesthetic experience, including architecture, would not remain insulated from this ‘all-round association’.<sup>131</sup>

Finnis pushes the idea that the form of community that today claims to be complete and self-sufficient – what we call the ‘territorial state’ - retains the label ‘political community’ or ‘body politic’; for though it does not fit Aristotle’s descriptions of paradigmatic forms of *polis*, it claims the all-embracing function which Aristotle (after Plato) ascribed to the *polis*.<sup>132</sup>

In summary, and in alignment with the overarching themes presented in this research, it can be posited that all phenomena possess a political dimension, albeit in a broad and generalized context.

Finnis subsequently encapsulates his understanding of a *collectivity* by articulating that:

[...] a group, in the relevant sense, whether team, club, society, enterprise, corporation, or community, is to be said to exist wherever there is, over an appreciable span of time,

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<sup>128</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 147.

<sup>129</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 147.

<sup>130</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 148.

<sup>131</sup> By implication then: (i) all aspects of society and culture are interconnected; changes or influences in one area will inevitably affect others; (ii) aesthetic experience and thus architecture, often seen as separate or insulated from broader social dynamics, are also subject to the influences of collective associations; (iii) this perspective encourages viewing aesthetic and architectural developments as integral parts of the broader cultural and social fabric, rather than isolated phenomena; (iv) the collective values, norms, and dynamics of a society will shape and be reflected in its aesthetic expressions and architectural styles.

<sup>132</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 148.

a coordination of activity by a number of persons, in the form of interactions, and with a view to a shared objective.<sup>133</sup>

The ‘existence’ of the group, the ‘existence’ of social rules, and the ‘existence’ of authority tend to go together. Moreover, what makes sense of these acknowledgements of existence is in each case the occurrence of some more or less shared purpose or, more precisely, some shared conception of some form of continuing co-operation. Finnis calls this the common good.<sup>134</sup>

If individual well-being is achieved through participation in seven basic goods mentioned by Finnis, the same applies correspondingly, even if perhaps not symmetrically, for the well-being of the collective. In this sense, the institutions and associations of the collective, participate as well in the basic goods, since they are in an analogical way, an extension and a reflection of individuals in the communal arrangement. However, the participation of these institutions and associations is not just the sum total of the individuals *qua* individuals participating in them. For example a judge may not be experiencing an individual well-being in all aspects of his personal life, (or not in the same way as in his professional life) but he may be still participating in his institutional role and thus contributing to his institution’s well-being, as a result of which that same institution would be experiencing its all-round-flourishing.

### **The Common Good - Bonum Commune**

The coordination of the well-being of the individual and that of the collective is what we know as the common good. Finnis summarizes his conception of the common good as:

[...] in the case of political community [...], the point or common good of such an all-round association was said to be the securing of a whole ensemble of material and other conditions that tend to favour the realization, by each individual in the community, of his or her personal development.<sup>135</sup>

Consistently with Finnis’s own conception of individual well-being he says:

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<sup>133</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 153.

<sup>134</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 153.

<sup>135</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 154.

[...] there is no reason to suppose that the members of a political community each have, or ought to have, any one such aim or determinable set of aims which political community does or should seek to support.<sup>136</sup>

Nevertheless, there is a common 'good' of the political community, and it is sufficiently 'definite' to dismiss a considerable number of types of political arrangement, laws, and the like. Let us say that Finnis would rule out a utilitarian type of common good.

His emphasis appears to be on what could be called the intangible goods as distinguished from the material goods. He says:

For there is a 'common good' for human beings, inasmuch as life, knowledge, play, aesthetic experience, friendship, religion, and freedom in practical reasonableness are good for any and every person.<sup>137</sup>

So in all the senses Finnis identifies as describing the common good, from that of a common objective to that of participation in a set of common goods he somehow deduces a third sense:

[...] a set of conditions which enables the members of a community to attain for themselves reasonable objectives, or to realize reasonably for themselves the value(s), for the sake of which they have reason to collaborate with each other (positively and/or negatively) in a community.<sup>138</sup>

McCall tells us that the way in which Finnis understands the basic goods in which individual participate affects his understanding of the common good:

The common good becomes merely a means to realizing the personal goods of individuals through useful coordination. According to Finnis the common good promotes collaboration to realize individually chosen goods. The common good is no longer a true good (in the sense of an end in itself) but merely a means to pursue the

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<sup>136</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 155.

<sup>137</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 155.

<sup>138</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p.155.

basic goods sought by individuals. Finnis essentially removes both the aspect of “common” and “good” from the common good.<sup>139</sup>

According to McCall in Finnis’s third sense definition, we see that the common good is not a ‘good in and of itself’,<sup>140</sup> but it simply allows individuals to pursue the goods they choose for themselves. He also asserts that by Finnis’s own admission this definition is “value neutral”.<sup>141</sup>

McCall says that the fact that Finnis does not list the common good as one of the basic goods is proof that he cannot reconcile the claim that the common good is more than instrumental with his definition of it as a means to attain individual goods.<sup>142</sup> McCall somehow mitigates his criticism of Finnis by allowing that *Natural Law and Natural Rights* was written in a century where ‘collectivists placed the common good in opposition to the individual good which they believed must be sacrificed for the good of the collective’.<sup>143</sup>

McCall tells us that Finnis is correct in refuting the error collectivists make by making clear the common good cannot require the frustration of the good of the individuals forming the community. But then he quickly tells us that Finnis does it in the wrong way:

[...] the way in which he does so empties the concept of any content and makes the common good merely a method of coordination that is a means for individuals to participate in the individual basic goods.<sup>144</sup>

McCall does not limit himself to criticize Finnis’s conception of the common good but tells how Finnis should have tackled the whole concept by reference to the Thomist Charles de Koninck who argued that the concept of the common good is in contrast not only to the collectivist mistakes but also to the personalists errors mistakes who see the common good as subservient to the individual good.

McCall says that Finnis gives it no real content beyond coordination and cooperation. Aquinas defines the end of the common good as “justice and peace”:

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<sup>139</sup> McCall, ‘What Good is John Finnis?’ p. 660.

<sup>140</sup> McCall, ‘What Good is John Finnis?’ p. 661.

<sup>141</sup> McCall, ‘What Good is John Finnis?’ p. 661.

<sup>142</sup> McCall, ‘What Good is John Finnis?’ p. 661.

<sup>143</sup> McCall, ‘What Good is John Finnis?’ p. 662.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

[...] citizens are directed in the upholding of the common good of justice and peace.<sup>145</sup>

In the last paragraph of the chapter “Community, Communities, and Common Good” Finnis tackles exactly this issue of content:

What, then, is the content of the common good of the political community, [...] that ought to [...] assume some though not all of the present justified functions and aspects of the political communities we call states?<sup>146</sup>

He immediately answers that that is the subject-matter of the chapters that follow namely on justice, authority, and law. Finnis is doing exactly what McCall is saying Finnis is not doing. He is telling the reader that the content of the common good is made up of ‘justice, authority, and law’.<sup>147</sup> Finnis mentions peace specifically as part of the basic good of sociability, he says ‘the value of that sociability which in its weakest form is realized by a minimum of peace and harmony amongst persons [...]’.<sup>148</sup>

Not to mention what Finnis says in an article written in 1987:

For instance, people cannot live together in peace without true justice.<sup>149</sup>

Even if we grant McCall’s critique — that Finnis reduces the common good to mere “coordination and cooperation” — one must still ask: are these concepts not themselves grounded in the deeper requirements of justice and peace? After all, if individual or collective well-being is to be genuinely achieved, can it truly be sustained without those foundational conditions? How can one coordinate and cooperate for the well-being of all individuals in society if there is injustice or lack of cooperation? The whole democratic legal set-up is exactly

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<sup>145</sup> Aquinas, *Summa*, I-II, q. 96, a. 2.

<sup>146</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 156.

<sup>147</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 156.

<sup>148</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 88.

<sup>149</sup> Germain Grisez, Joseph Boyle, and John Finnis, Practical Principles, Moral Truths, and Ultimate Ends, *The American Journal Of Jurisprudence*, (1987), pp. 99-159, (p. 139).

geared to implement justice and peace within the parameters of the rule of law and human rights. It would be virtually impossible to ensure any sort of common good if justice and peace were not part of its content. So a charitable but in depth reading of *Natural Law and Natural Rights* should actually bring one to the conclusion that Finnis reaches in his Notes XII 4 when discussing unjust laws :

[...] though a private person should not lightly judge a law to be unjust, its contrariety to the Law of Nature and the peace and justice of society may be so manifest that such a judgment is assured.<sup>150</sup>

### **Heidegger Is Not Enough**

It has been made amply clear throughout this research that Heidegger's ideas about architecture, and especially their interpretation and extension by Norberg-Schulz and Harries, are sufficiently flexible in order to elaborate a theory of (d)well-being befitting a coordination framework between individual and collective well-being, which we have termed, as Finnis does, as common good. However, when one examines, as one should, other aspects of Heidegger's philosophy, in particular that which purports to be his political inclination, one cannot but criticise such philosophy as being in contradiction, or at least in dissonance with democratic and ethical ideals, falling thus short of what we have been saying about checks and balances resulting in ethos of a community. Heidegger's trajectory so to say leads towards decisionism, which is exactly what one would like to avoid in both politics and architecture.

So much so that Fried following up from Heidegger makes the point that:

[...] politics is “a way of Being of human beings,” which seems hopelessly abstract until we realize that this “way of Being” is always a matter “of our Being”: it is always the way a particular historical people shares in an understanding of the world, its Being as a collective Dasein.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Finnis, *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, p. 367.

<sup>151</sup> Gregory Fried, “Retrieving phronesis: Heidegger on the essence of politics”, *Continental Philosophy Review* (2014), DOI 10.1007/s11007-014-9305-1, p. 298.

The idea that politics should be “finely attuned to the historical meaning of a given community”<sup>152</sup> suggests a deep connection between political decision-making and the cultural, social, and historical context of the community it serves. This perspective, supported here, emphasizes the importance of understanding and respecting the unique identity, values, and traditions that have shaped a community over time. It implies that effective governance should not be based solely<sup>153</sup> on universal principles or abstract theories, but should also take into account the specific experiences, narratives, and collective memory of the people it represents. This notion aligns closely with Harries's views on architecture and community ethos.

This thesis takes the position that in architecture, as in politics, there is a recognition that built environments should reflect and respond to the cultural and historical context of their location. Just as buildings and urban spaces can embody the spirit and values of a community, political systems and policies should be designed to resonate with the collective identity and aspirations of the people. This approach advocates for a more nuanced and contextually sensitive form of governance that acknowledges the diverse ways in which communities understand themselves and their place in the world, fostering a stronger sense of connection between political institutions and the populations they serve.

That is indeed a problem, and it is one that drives Heidegger towards decisionism during this period. Fried's acknowledgment of the lack of principled basis for politics presents a significant challenge in evaluating and quantifying political activity.<sup>154</sup> This absence of a foundational justification raises questions about the nature and legitimacy of political actions, as well as the criteria by which they should be assessed. Without a clear set of principles to guide political decision-making, the risk of arbitrary or self-serving actions increases, potentially undermining the integrity of the political process.

This dilemma resonates with Heidegger's philosophical trajectory during the same period, pushing him towards a *decisionist* stance.<sup>155</sup> Decisionism refers to the belief that political decisions should be made based on the will or judgment of a leader or authority figure, rather

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Without however excluding some participation of such principles in said community shaping.

<sup>154</sup> Fried, “Retrieving phronesis”, p. 294.

<sup>155</sup> Risks of Decisionism: Fried substantiates his critique by pointing out the potential dangers in Heidegger's embrace of "decisionism," where leaders act based on existential authenticity without established norms to guide them. This unmoored political action opens the door to subjectivism and potentially destructive leadership, as evidenced by Heidegger's own political choices during the Nazi era. Fried notes that Heidegger's valorisation of leaders who are "essential" in their being, acting beyond the bounds of law or normative ethics, poses risks for ethical governance and aligns with totalitarian practices.

than on predetermined principles or laws. This concept highlights the limitations of relying solely on Heidegger's philosophy to propose any form of architecture that serves the common good. Therefore, it is essential to employ a corrective lens to discern which aspects of Heidegger's philosophy are applicable to architecture and which should be discarded as *decisionist*, as they fall short of the expectations in a democracy guided by the common good.

## **Conclusion**

Architecture is more than the physical structuring of space; it is a lived experience, a reflection of community ethos, and a medium through which individual and collective well-being are negotiated. This chapter has argued that the built environment is not only shaped by legal and political structures but also by deeper philosophical and phenomenological concerns. Drawing on Heidegger's notion of dwelling, we have seen that architecture should enable a meaningful relationship between individuals and their surroundings. Yet, as Finnis's theory of the common good suggests, this relationship is never purely individual—it is embedded within the social and legal frameworks that define human coexistence.

The discussion has underscored that architecture for the common good requires a balance between order and complexity, tradition and innovation, and personal expression and collective responsibility. Scientific studies on human perception confirm what architectural philosophy has long suggested: people thrive in spaces that engage them, resonate with their cultural identity, and allow for both continuity and transformation. This insight challenges both the excesses of hyper-individualistic design and the imposition of rigid, top-down urban planning. Instead, what emerges is a vision of architecture as a form of structured care—an ethical practice that shapes human flourishing by integrating aesthetic, legal, and political considerations.

At its core, this chapter has sought to demonstrate that architecture is not merely a collection of buildings but an ongoing negotiation between individual and collective well-being, as understood by Finnis. By situating architectural practice within the broader framework of the common good, it becomes clear that design decisions are not neutral—they have ethical and political weight.

My analysis suggests that a meaningful building ought to enhance well-being by fulfilling Finnis's seven basic goods. It ought to support life in all its complexity, by promoting physical

and mental health through say, natural light, ventilation, safety, security, vegetation and the use of sustainable materials. It ought to foster knowledge by inspiring intellectual and creative engagement, care in preservation of historical and cultural legacy whether in libraries, universities, or simply in private dwellings. Play is encouraged through stimulating, interactive environments that invite exploration and wonder, balancing complexity and simplicity and above all creativity in every aspect. Aesthetic experience is directly realized in architecture that evokes harmony, awe, and attunement and also creativity.<sup>156</sup> Sociability thrives when buildings create spaces for human connection, acknowledging community ethos, from communal plazas to inviting neighbourhoods, streets and squares that facilitate interaction whilst respecting the other basic values.<sup>157</sup> Practical reasonableness is embodied in design choices that balance beauty with functionality, helping dwellers: to have coherent plans of life; to abstain from having arbitrary preferences among values; to abstain from having arbitrary preferences among persons; to experience detachment when necessary, by being away from the urban sprawl; but also to experience commitment to the dwelling, the street and the neighbourhood;<sup>158</sup> to live efficiently but within reason - by building something fitting its purpose; to respect every basic value in every act – keeping in mind all this when planning and building; and to live up to the requirements of the common good<sup>159</sup> by promoting coordinated well-being, ensuring that buildings serve real human needs while respecting their surroundings; architects, developers and planners can follow their conscience<sup>160</sup> in architectural design by considering ethical and moral implications of their work, particularly, but not exclusively, in relation to social justice, sustainability and cultural ethos. Practitioners, like architects, planners and developers, should critically evaluate whether their work will contribute to the well-being of individuals and

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<sup>156</sup> Giuseppe Mifsud Bonnici (17 July 1930 – 21 February 2019) was a distinguished Maltese judge and philosopher who served as the Chief Justice of Malta from 1990 to 1995. He specialized primarily in the philosophy of law. He often expressed the view that the fundamental value of play and aesthetic experience is intrinsically the same.

<sup>157</sup> Sociability in urban spaces is closely linked to the design and layout of buildings, streets, and public areas that facilitate human interaction and foster a sense of community. Research indicates that well-designed public spaces, including town squares, plazas, parks, and gardens, play a crucial role in cultivating community and promoting social encounters (Susan Thompson and Jennifer Kent, “Connecting and Strengthening Communities in Places for Health and Well-Being,” *Australian Planner*, 51.3 (2013), 260–71 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/07293682.2013.837832>>).

<sup>158</sup> Urban sprawl has significant implications for practical reasonableness in design choices and living experiences. Location-based assessments of accessibility reveal that residential patterns tend to be concentric, with central urban areas being most attractive, while employment accessibility is more decentralized (Mark W. Horner, “Exploring Metropolitan Accessibility and Urban Structure,” *Urban Geography*, 25.3 (2004), 264–84 <<https://doi.org/10.2747/0272-3638.25.3.264>>).

<sup>159</sup> In Finnis’s Natural Law Theory, the Common Good is a requirement of the basic value of practical reasonableness. See Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights*, p. 125.

<sup>160</sup> The ninth methodological requirement of practical reasonableness is that of following one’s conscience. This requirement is quite important with regard to the concept of authenticity.

communities they serve, or if it merely serves as a testament to their creativity and skill?<sup>161</sup> Finally, the basic good of religion - architecture can evoke a sense of the transcendent by fostering contemplation, reverence, and a deeper connection to existence, whether through sacred spaces or structures, like churches, synagogues mosques, temples, ruins, cemeteries, iconic buildings that integrate seamlessly with their surroundings.<sup>162</sup> Thus, meaningful architecture is not mere decoration but a vital expression of (d)well-being, enriching human life in all its dimensions.

In light of the conclusions reached in this research, Chapter 5 can now be seen as playing a necessary justificatory role rather than constituting a merely theoretical detour. The chapter demonstrates that the claim that architecture can be for the common good cannot be sustained without a careful articulation of how individual and collective well-being are coordinated within political, legal, and ethical frameworks. By bringing Heidegger's phenomenology of dwelling into dialogue with Finnis's account of the common good, the chapter clarifies the conditions under which architectural practice may legitimately be said to contribute to human flourishing rather than merely to functional provision or aesthetic preference. In doing so, it addresses the need—highlighted in the coming final conclusions—to ground architectural responsibility not only in experiential accounts of dwelling, but also in shared normative

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<sup>161</sup> In the context of K-12 public education, professionals working in high-poverty, racially segregated schools are significantly more likely to experience moral injury, which is associated with feelings of guilt, troubled conscience, burnout, and intention to leave their jobs (Erin P. Sugrue, "Moral Injury Among Professionals in K-12 Education," *American Educational Research Journal*, 57.1 (2019), 43-68 <<https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831219848690>>). This highlights the importance of addressing systemic inequalities in educational settings through thoughtful architectural design that promotes inclusivity and equal access to resources. Sustainability has introduced a new pattern to architectural practice, requiring important modifications in the teaching and practice of architecture. The implementation and evaluation of sustainability principles need to be included in the early stages of the architectural design method (Margarida Feria and Miguel Amado, "Architectural Design: Sustainability in the Decision-Making Process," *Buildings*, 9.5 (2019), 135 <<https://doi.org/10.3390/buildings9050135>>). By incorporating economic, social, and environmental factors into decision-making processes, architects can align their work with their conscience and contribute to sustainable development. In essence, architects can follow their conscience by prioritizing ethical considerations in their design processes. This includes addressing social inequalities, promoting sustainability, and considering the long-term impact of their work on communities and the environment including from an aesthetic point of view. By doing so, architects can create more just and ethical built environments that reflect their moral values and contribute positively to society.

<sup>162</sup> Architecture has long been recognized as a powerful medium for evoking a sense of the transcendent and fostering spiritual experiences. Sacred spaces and structures play a crucial role in cultivating contemplation, reverence, and a deeper connection to existence. Religious buildings like churches, synagogues, mosques, and temples are specifically designed to create an atmosphere conducive to spiritual reflection and reverence. These structures often incorporate elements that inspire awe and wonder, such as soaring ceilings, intricate details, and symbolic imagery (Charlotte Rose Potts, *Religious Architecture in Latium and Etruria, C. 900-500 BC* (Oxford University Press, 2015)). The 'Alid shrines in Syria, for instance, serve as unique places of inter-sectarian exchange and shared piety, demonstrating how architecture can unite diverse groups in spiritual contemplation (Stephennie Mulder, *The Shrines of the 'Alids in Medieval Syria* (Edinburgh University Press, 2014) <<https://doi.org/10.1515/9781474471169>> [accessed 6 March 2025]).

structures that render such experiences sustainable, intelligible, and publicly accountable. Chapter 5 thus secures the conceptual bridge between dwelling as a way of life and architecture as a practice ordered toward the common good, thereby justifying both its scope and its position within the overall argument of the thesis.

The next, and last section will build on these insights, exploring how architectural principles can be translated into concrete acts of care that uphold the (d)well-being of both the individual and the community. If architecture is to serve the common good, it must not only embody the above-mentioned values but actively create spaces that foster human flourishing—ensuring that (d)well-being is not just an abstract ideal, but a lived reality.

## CONCLUSIONS

*“I see this potential in all of you present here: architects, engineers, designers, administrators and legislators. All, in your respective fields, are duty bound to ensure that central to your daily practice, is the common good rather than any short-term gains that will only benefit personal or sectorial interests in the long run.”*

*President Emeritus of Republic of Malta George Vella<sup>1</sup>*

### Introduction

In the preceding chapter - and throughout the thesis - it has been posited that architecture must transcend its conventional boundaries of function and aesthetics to actively contribute to both individual and collective well-being as understood in that chapter. Drawing on Heidegger’s phenomenology of dwelling and Finnis’s natural law theory, it has been demonstrated that architecture, as a human and social enterprise, occupies a unique position at the intersection of existential and political concerns. Architecture is an unavoidable presence. It shapes, and is shaped by, the moral, cultural, and legal frameworks of the communities it serves.

### Limits of these Conclusions

This section is not a defence of a single philosophical system, nor does it introduce an entirely new philosophical theory. Rather, it is a philosophically grounded framework that synthesizes key insights from thinkers such as Finnis, Heidegger, Harries, and Norberg-Schulz to offer a practical application of philosophy to architecture and the common good. While it draws from multiple traditions, its primary aim is to bridge theory and practice, ensuring that philosophical principles are not merely abstract but actively inform architectural decision making,.. In this way, this last section serves as an applied ethical and political framework for (d)well-being, which in turn may foster the conditions necessary for the common good, rather than a rigid defence of any one philosophical position.

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<sup>1</sup> George Vella, “Closing Speech by His Excellency George Vella, President of Malta, on the Occasion of the Malta Architecture and Spatial Planning Awards 2021, Hilton Malta Conference Centre, 26 Feb 2022,” *George Vella*, 2022 <<https://georgevella.gov.mt/en/closing-speech-by-his-excellency-george-vella-president-of-malta-on-the-occasion-of-the-malta-architecture-and-spatial-planning-awards-2021-hilton-malta-conference-centre-26-feb-2022/>> [accessed 30 January 2025].

## Malta's Lessons for the World

The conclusions drawn here are particularly specific to Malta. Indeed, Malta serves as the primary case study for this whole research. However, it is important to emphasize that while the specific findings are rooted in the Maltese context, they offer insights that can be applied more broadly to similar situations in other regions or countries.

## Meaningful Architecture

The central proposition of this research is that architecture can and should align itself with the common good, understood as the harmonious coordination of individual and collective flourishing. This entails a deliberate integration of the seven basic goods identified by Finnis, ensuring that architecture not only accommodates life's practicalities but also nurtures its deeper dimensions—knowledge, aesthetic experience, sociability, play, practical reasonableness, religion and ultimately, the sense of dwelling that makes life meaningful. Architectural design has evolved to encompass not only functional aspects but also deeper dimensions of human experience.<sup>2</sup>

In situating architecture within this framework, this thesis underscores its dual nature: as a reflection of a community's ethos and as an instrument for its continued development.<sup>3</sup> This requires architects, planners, and policymakers to move beyond reductionist approaches that prioritise efficiency or profit, embracing instead a more complete vision that accounts for historical, cultural, and environmental contingencies.

One may inquire whether it is conceivable that, despite possessing fewer technological resources, our predecessors were sometimes capable of constructing more meaningful architectural structures than contemporary society occasionally produces, potentially attributable to divergent values or priorities? This apparent paradox of our ancestors sometimes producing such significant architectural works with fewer technological resources is indeed perplexing. Despite lacking modern design software, advanced construction equipment, and sophisticated materials, previous generations managed to erect structures that continue to

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<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, the field of neuro-architecture explores the neural basis of human perception and interaction with built environments, aiming to develop evidence-based architectural design principles (Sheng Wang and others, "The Embodiment of Architectural Experience: A Methodological Perspective on Neuro-Architecture," *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 16 (2022) <<https://doi.org/10.3389/fnhum.2022.833528>>.).

<sup>3</sup> Of course there appears to be a downside to this ethos. That downside is interference with experts' work within the planning entities in democratic societies. This represents the longstanding issue concerning the interplay between *techne* (practical skill or craft), *episteme* (scientific knowledge), and *doxa* (common belief or opinion).

captivate and inspire us today.<sup>4</sup> This disparity raises questions about the relationship between technological progress and architectural significance, suggesting that the abundance of tools at our disposal may not always, necessarily, translate into more meaningful or impactful designs. While it must be acknowledged that architectural practice is always conditioned by the materials currently available, by contemporary regulatory frameworks, and by cultural contexts shaped—often decisively—by globalisation, this does not imply that architects should simply replicate the aesthetic forms or images of the past. Indeed, not all, nor even the majority, of historic buildings were inherently meaningful or exemplary. Many private and public tenements of earlier periods were, and in some cases remain, substandard, largely due to inadequate resources and other socio-economic constraints.

The point being advanced here is that, wherever possible and feasible, architectural interventions should begin with an attunement to the existing surroundings and to the character of what already is, before imposing external modifications or new constructions. Such an approach preserves a living dialogue between the built environment as it stands and the one that is yet to come, ensuring continuity rather than rupture between present realities and future possibilities, which may result in what we are calling *turpification*. While it may appear highly speculative to predict what will captivate the imagination of future generations in the next century or two, it is reasonable to assert with some degree of certainty that many structures deemed culturally and historically significant across various societies continue to be regarded as such even after several centuries, if not millennia. (Figure 42). This delineates certain parameters for what may be considered meaningful. Naturally, there exists a clear distinction between iconic, landmark buildings designed to serve as focal points within their communities and ordinary structures intended solely as residential dwellings for the general inhabitants.

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<sup>4</sup> Heidegger's concept of "dwelling" suggests that building is a fundamental aspect of human existence, reflecting our relationship with the world around us. The enduring and inspiring nature of structures built by previous generations, despite the lack of modern technology, underscores the intrinsic value of architecture beyond mere functionality. See on this: Paul Kidder, "Philosophical Hermeneutics and the Ethical Function of Architecture," *Contemporary Aesthetics*, 9 (2011). Kidder says: "[Karsten] Harries pointed out that the archaic-sounding language of the fourfold, while it provides a potent framework for grasping elemental meaning in traditional architecture, does not seem to be well-suited to modern forms of building that are thoroughly mediated by modern technology. Given the number of criticisms that Heidegger made of modernity and the technological mentality *per se*, it is easy to find oneself simply at a loss as to how architecture might move forward, along Heideggerian lines, from where it presently stands".

However, the former can influence the latter in multiple ways.<sup>5</sup> For structures may function as benchmarks for determining meaningfulness.<sup>6</sup>



FIGURE 42 TAJ MAHAL, AGRA, INDIA, PHOTOGRAPH: © YANN FORGET / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Karsten Harries recognises this tension when discussing the future of an ‘ideal city’ emanating from shared ideals of what constitutes a good life.<sup>78</sup>

One possible explanation for this phenomenon lies in the constraints and limitations faced by our predecessors. These restrictions may have fostered greater creativity, forcing architects and builders to innovate within narrow parameters and rely more heavily on local materials and

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<sup>5</sup> Iconic buildings have a significant influence on ordinary dwellings and communities, shaping both the physical landscape and social dynamics: Iconic architecture often serves as a representation of power and cultural values, influencing the design and perception of ordinary dwellings in the surrounding area. As Sklair notes, contemporary iconic architecture is increasingly corporate and tied to capitalist globalization, potentially impacting the overall architectural character of communities. See: Leslie Sklair, “Iconic Architecture and Capitalist Globalization,” *City*, 10.1 (2006), 21–47 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/13604810600594613>>.

<sup>6</sup> See Khaled Elhagla, Dina M. Nassar, and Mohamed A. Ragheb, “Iconic Buildings’ Contribution toward Urbanism,” *Alexandria Engineering Journal*, 59.2 (2020), 803–13 <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aej.2020.01.020>>.

<sup>7</sup> Harries says that: “The building of such a[n ideal] city requires then something like a shared sense concerning what matters, held together by a guiding ideal of what constitutes the good life.” p. 203 Lecture Notes.

<sup>8</sup> Karsten Harries, Lecture Notes, Philosophy of Architecture, p. 202: “... there is tension between much that we value today, including especially our freedom, our spiritual and physical mobility, and the look of a traditional city must be granted. Just think of the way the car has affected the look of our cities. And how will the electronic revolution change our experience of space and distance and therefore the way we shall live and build fifty or a hundred years from now”.

traditional craftsmanship.. In contrast, modern architecture often prioritises efficiency and cost-effectiveness, potentially though not necessarily, sacrificing the depth of meaning and connection to local context that characterized many historical buildings. This observation challenges us to reconsider our approach to contemporary architecture and explore ways to infuse our designs with greater cultural relevance and lasting impact, despite—or perhaps because of—our technological advantages.(Figure 43)



FIGURE 43 MALTESE ARCHITECTURAL VERNACULAR, ARGUABLY MORE SIGNIFICANT THAN NUMEROUS CONTEMPORARY STRUCTURES - POTENTIALLY LESS TECHNOLOGICALLY SOPHISTICATED? PHOTOGRAPH: KAPPA VISION

At a time of unprecedented ecological and societal challenges, architecture's role becomes increasingly urgent. It must not only mitigate harm but actively cultivate spaces that reflect our

highest aspirations for justice, sustainability, and communal belonging. This is not an abstract ideal but a concrete imperative grounded in the shared reality of human interdependence.

Thus, the act of building is reconceptualized as a moral and political act<sup>9</sup>—an affirmation of our collective commitment to the common good.<sup>10</sup> By embedding principles of practical reasonableness<sup>11</sup> and ethical responsibility into the very fabric of our built environments, architecture becomes a testament to the possibility of a society that prioritises human flourishing over mere utility or sheer vanity.

## Final Practical Reflection

As a final and controversial reflection,<sup>12</sup> we turn to Renzo Piano’s Parliament Building in Valletta (Figure 44) which encapsulates many of the tensions explored throughout this research.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> The reciprocal influence between architecture and politics is evident in various countries, as demonstrated by statements from prominent political figures regarding construction. An illustrative example is the speech by the former President of Malta, George Vella, which was referenced at the beginning of this chapter. His address has been documented on multiple occasions; for instance, see: *Times of Malta*, “President Urges Architects to Pursue Common Good,” *Times of Malta*, 2022 <<https://timesofmalta.com/article/president-urges-architects-to-pursue-common-good.937557>> [accessed 31 January 2025].

<sup>10</sup> See again Fiona Galea Debono, “David Felice on Malta’s Construction Boom: ‘We All Have Our Finger in This Pie,’” *Times of Malta*, 30 January 2025 <<https://timesofmalta.com/article/david-felice-malta-construction-boom-we-finger-pie.1103911>> [accessed 30 January 2025]. “The key to where we are today lies in a planning system that is partial to central government, Felice states. It is driven by politicians and cannot, therefore, work in the interest of the common good.”

<sup>11</sup> One has to remember that the common good according to Finnis is a requirement of practical reasonableness. See Finnis, 2011, p. 125 “Very many, perhaps even most, of our concrete moral responsibilities, obligations, and duties have their basis in the eighth requirement [of practical reasonableness]. We can label this the requirement of favouring and fostering the common good of one’s communities. The sense and implications of this requirement are complex and manifold”.

<sup>12</sup> It was controversial from the start see: Bernard A Vassallo, “Plea to Reconsider Piano’s Plans for Valletta,” *Times of Malta*, 26 March 2010 <<https://timesofmalta.com/article/plea-to-reconsider-pianos-plans-for-valletta.299947>> [accessed 14 March 2025]. And also: Nick Squires, “Maltese Anger at Plans to Rebuild Valletta,” *The Telegraph*, 8 May 2010 <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/malta/7697046/Maltese-anger-at-plans-to-rebuild-Valletta.html>> [accessed 1 April 2025].

<sup>13</sup> Positioned at the intersection of modernity and tradition, the building attempts to create a dialogue between the historical identity of Valletta and the demands of contemporary civic architecture. Yet, as this discussion has shown, such efforts often walk a fine line between integration and alienation. While the use of local limestone and sustainable design principles reflects an understanding of the *genius loci*, the stark modernist geometry and perceived detachment from Valletta’s Baroque urban fabric have drawn criticism. This project underscores the need for an architectural approach that balances innovation with continuity, emphasizing the ethical responsibility to honour both place and community. The lessons from Valletta’s Parliament inform the conclusions that follow, offering pathways to align architecture more closely with the common good and the principles of (d)well-being.



FIGURE 44 PARLIAMENT BUILDING IN 2018, VALLETTA, PHOTOGRAPH: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

The Parliament Building is a striking example of contemporary architecture within a UNESCO World Heritage city. Completed in 2015 as part of the City Gate Project, the building redefines Valletta's entrance while respecting the historical urban fabric. Piano's design, which includes two limestone-clad blocks elevated on slender columns, integrates modernist principles with traditional Maltese materials, creating a dialogue between past and present.<sup>14</sup>

The choice of locally sourced globigerina limestone for the façade reflects Malta's architectural heritage while utilizing advanced digital stone-cutting techniques to achieve a perforated pattern that provides passive cooling—an essential adaptation to the Mediterranean climate. This sustainable approach aligns with contemporary environmental considerations<sup>15</sup> while maintaining visual harmony with Valletta's 16th-century Baroque architecture.

Internally, the building accommodates the House of Representatives with a functional yet minimalist design. The spatial layout prioritises transparency and accessibility, reinforcing

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<sup>14</sup> Renzo Piano, "RPBW Architects," *Renzo Piano Building Workshop*, 2015 <<https://www.rpbw.com/project/la-valletta-city-gate>> [accessed 28 January 2025].

<sup>15</sup> Matthew Xuereb, "Over 1,000 Objections to Piano's Project," *Times of Malta*, 2009 <<https://timesofmalta.com/article/over-1-000-objections-to-pianos-project.285747>> [accessed 13 March 2025].

democratic values.<sup>16</sup> The adjacent open-air theatre, built within the ruins of the former Royal Opera House, further embodies Piano's vision of architectural continuity, ensuring that Valletta's historical and cultural legacy remains integral to its urban renewal.<sup>17</sup>

### **Criticism Of The Parliament Building In Valletta**

Despite its architectural and environmental innovations, Renzo Piano's Parliament Building in Valletta has been met with significant criticism,<sup>18</sup> particularly regarding its aesthetic, functional, and historical impact.<sup>19</sup> One of the primary concerns is the perceived discord between the building's ultra-modern design and Valletta's Baroque and Neoclassical urban landscape.<sup>20</sup> Critics argue that the stark geometry and perforated limestone façade create a visual rupture rather than a seamless integration into the historical cityscape. While Piano intended to establish a dialogue between old and new, some scholars contend that the result is an imposition rather than an evolution of the city's architectural identity.<sup>21</sup>

Functionally, the project has also faced scrutiny. The large gaps between the two main blocks, meant to enhance ventilation and light permeability, have been criticized for creating an imposing and somewhat fragmented structure. Some argue that the elevated design leaves the space beneath underutilized, leading to issues of accessibility and urban flow. Furthermore, the extensive use of open-air spaces within the project, including the reimagined Royal Opera House ruins, has sparked debate over practicality, particularly given Malta's hot summers and occasional harsh weather conditions.

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<sup>16</sup> Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses* (John Wiley & Sons, 2012).

<sup>17</sup> However, ironically some architects expected that the decision itself of constructing the Parliament building by Renzo Piano should have been more democratic. See on this: Lino Bianco, "Architecture, Values and Perception: Between Rhetoric and Reality," *Frontiers of Architectural Research*, 7.1 (2018), 92–99 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foar.2017.11.003>, p. 94: "Given the world heritage standing of Valletta, awarding the project following an international design competition, which allowed local architects to participate, would have been more democratic."

<sup>18</sup> Andrew Borg Wirth and others, "Barra (Get Out!) Agency for Public Resistance at the Parliament of Malta," *Parliament Buildings* (UCL Press, 2023) <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/jj.16430730.23>> [accessed 28 January 2025].

<sup>19</sup> Trudy Darmanin, "Rock, Paper, City," *Patron Magazine*, 2013 <<https://patronmagazine.wordpress.com/2013/12/18/rock-paper-city/>> [accessed 13 March 2025].

<sup>20</sup> Andrew Smith and John Ebejer, "Outward versus Inward Orientation of Island Capitals: The Case of Valletta," *Current Issues in Tourism*, 15.1–2 (2012), 137–52 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2011.634900>>.

<sup>21</sup> The criticism of Renzo Piano's Parliament Building in Valletta highlights the ongoing tension between modern architectural interventions and historical urban landscapes, particularly in cities with rich cultural heritage like Valletta. This conflict exemplifies the challenges of integrating contemporary design into historically significant contexts (Liane Lefavre and Alexander Tzonis, "Critical Regionalism: Architecture and Identity in a Globalized World," *Choice Reviews Online*, 41.08 (2004), 41-4450-41-4450 <<https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.41-4450>>.). See also: John Ebejer, "Urban Heritage and Cultural Tourism Development: A Case Study of Valletta's Role in Malta's Tourism," *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, 17.3 (2018), 306–20 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/14766825.2018.1447950>>.

Another contentious aspect is the project's cost and execution. Initially estimated at €80 million, the budget significantly exceeded expectations, leading to public outcry over expenditure on a government building rather than social infrastructure.<sup>22</sup> Additionally, some critics argue that the modernist intervention at the city gate and the demolition of the 1960s entrance eroded an aspect of Valletta's post-war architectural history, replacing one controversial structure with another.<sup>23</sup>

Ultimately, while the Parliament Building is lauded for its sustainability and craftsmanship, its reception remains polarized. For some, it symbolizes a bold step forward in Maltese architecture; for others, it represents an unnecessary rupture with Valletta's historic aesthetic<sup>24</sup> and urban traditions.<sup>25</sup>

### **Heidegger: Architecture And Dwelling**

From a Heideggerian perspective, Piano's Parliament Building is controversial.<sup>26</sup> On the one hand, its use of local limestone and its attempt to establish a dialogue with Valletta's history could be seen as a form of rootedness (*Bodenständigkeit*).<sup>27</sup> However, the radically modern design—especially its geometric detachment from Valletta's Baroque urban fabric—could be critiqued as an imposition rather than a natural evolution of place. Critics might argue that it disrupts the city's ontological continuity, making it feel more like an abstract object rather than a “lived” place that grows from its surroundings.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Steve Parnell, “Renzo Piano Courts Controversy in Malta,” *The Architectural Review*, 2014 <<https://www.architectural-review.com/essays/renzo-piano-courts-controversy-in-malta>> [accessed 28 January 2025].

<sup>23</sup> G. J. Ashworth and J. E. Tunbridge, “Multiple Approaches to Heritage in Urban Regeneration: The Case of City Gate, Valletta,” *Journal of Urban Design*, 22.4 (2016), 494–501 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/13574809.2015.1133230>>.

<sup>24</sup> See: Trudy Darmanin, “Rock, Paper, City,” *Patron Magazine*, 2013 <<https://patronmagazine.wordpress.com/2013/12/18/rock-paper-city/>> [accessed 13 March 2025].

“Criticism has also been earned by the new kind of aesthetic introduced into Valletta, with the issues being twofold; the amount of space occupied, and the architectural style. Marthese Formosa, a philosophy and International Relations student at university, also voices the general opinion that ‘we are tight on space and the buildings cramp it even more.’ This, alongside the architectural style chosen, has been enough to earn widespread public disdain.”

<sup>25</sup> Chris Foges, “Valletta City Gate,” *Architectural Record*, 1 May 2016 <<https://www.architecturalrecord.com/articles/11646-valletta-city-gate>> [accessed 28 January 2025].

<sup>26</sup> See also: Steve Parnell, “Renzo Piano Courts Controversy in Malta,” *The Architectural Review*, 2014 <<https://www.architectural-review.com/essays/renzo-piano-courts-controversy-in-malta>> [accessed 1 April 2025].

<sup>27</sup> As Robert Metcalf says in “Rethinking ‘Bodenständigkeit’ in the Technological Age,” *Research in Phenomenology*, 42.1 (2012), 49–66 <<https://doi.org/10.1163/156916412x628748>>. “The difficulty involved in translating *Bodenständigkeit* is shown by the fact that it is rendered in English with the words, “autochthony,” “subsistence,” “indigenous character,” “native ground,” “ground-hold,” “groundedness,” “rootedness” or “rootedness in the soil”—all of which are correct, to be sure, though each falls short in some specific way.”

<sup>28</sup> From a Heideggerian perspective, Piano's Parliament Building in Valletta presents a complex interplay between rootedness and modernity. The use of local limestone and attempts to engage with Valletta's history could be

### **Norberg-Schulz: Genius Loci And Identity**

Applied to the Parliament Building, the question becomes: Does Piano's design truly capture the essence of Valletta? Some would argue that its materiality and perforated limestone screens attempt to harmonize with Malta's historic light and climate. However, its sharp modernist geometries and the fragmented form of the structure may be seen as disrupting Valletta's historical continuity. If one follows Norberg-Schulz's argument, the project risks feeling placeless—more akin to a globalized intervention than an organic extension of Valletta's centuries-old urban narrative.<sup>29</sup>

### **Karsten Harries: Ethics And Symbolism In Architecture**

If analysed through Harries's lens, Piano's Parliament Building can be seen as part of a broader modernist trend that prioritises functionalism and abstraction over symbolic depth. Valletta, as a UNESCO World Heritage City, carries profound historical and cultural meaning. Harries might argue that a parliamentary building should reflect democratic ideals<sup>30</sup> and national identity, yet the detached and minimalist aesthetic of Piano's design lacks explicit cultural symbolism beyond its materiality. Unlike Valletta's grand Baroque architecture—rich in allegory, ornamentation, and historical references—the Parliament Building adopts an abstract, internationalist vocabulary that some might see as eroding its cultural resonance.<sup>31</sup>

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interpreted as a form of *Bodenständigkeit* (rootedness), aligning with Heidegger's emphasis on the importance of place and historical context in shaping human experience (Lefaivre & Tzonis, 2004). This approach demonstrates a sensitivity to the city's existing fabric and cultural heritage. However, the building's radically modern design, particularly its geometric detachment from Valletta's Baroque urban context, introduces a tension that challenges the notion of organic evolution of place. Critics might argue that this architectural intervention disrupts the city's ontological continuity, potentially transforming it from a "lived" place into something more akin to an abstract object (Louis A. Sass, "Heidegger, Schizophrenia and the Ontological Difference," *Philosophical Psychology*, 5.2 (1992), 109–32 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09515089208573047>>; James W Scott and Christophe Sohn, "Place-Making and the Bordering of Urban Space: Interpreting the Emergence of New Neighbourhoods in Berlin and Budapest," *European Urban and Regional Studies*, 26.3 (2018), 297–313 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0969776418764577>>.).

<sup>29</sup> Piano's design for the Parliament Building in Valletta presents a complex case when evaluated through the lens of critical regionalism and place-based architecture. While the use of local limestone and perforated screens demonstrates an attempt to respond to Malta's climate and traditional building materials, the modernist form and fragmented structure create tension with the historic urban fabric (Lefaivre & Tzonis, 2004). Norberg-Schulz's emphasis on the symbolic and linguistic aspects of architecture suggests that a building should emerge organically from its context, embodying the "architectural reality" of a place (Paul Zucker and Christian Norberg-Schulz, "Intentions in Architecture," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 28.3 (1970), 405 <<https://doi.org/10.2307/429522>>). See also: Beau B. Beza, "The Role of Deliberative Planning in Translating Best Practice into Good Practice: From Placeless-Ness to Placemaking," *Planning Theory & Practice*, 17.2 (2016), 244–63 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/14649357.2016.1156730>>; Ebejer, 2018).

<sup>30</sup> See for example: "Perhaps the building's understatement is deliberate - a desire to flatten hierarchies between the people and their representatives" in Rob Bevan, "Parliament Building in Valletta, Malta by Renzo Piano Building Workshop," *The Architectural Review*, 2015 <<https://www.architectural-review.com/today/parliament-building-in-valletta-malta-by-renzo-piano-building-workshop>> [accessed 13 March 2025].

<sup>31</sup> Harries's perspective on architecture emphasizes its role in interpreting a way of life and serving a common ethos, which aligns with the idea that a parliamentary building should reflect democratic ideals and national

## Conclusion

Finally, Piano's Parliament Building in Valletta presents an intriguing case study in the tension between modernist design and historical context. From the perspective of Heidegger and Norberg-Schulz, the project could be seen as problematic for potentially disrupting Valletta's organic identity and sense of place. Norberg-Schulz emphasizes the importance of architecture being rooted in its specific context, with buildings organically integrated into their environment.<sup>32</sup> A modernist abstraction risks detaching itself from Valletta's established urban fabric and character. However, an alternative view is that Piano's design embodies an ethical vision of progress aligned with Karsten Harries's philosophy. Rather than simply mimicking historical forms, it offers a contemporary civic landmark that speaks to Malta's present and future aspirations.<sup>33</sup> This aligns with the shift in Malta's tourism policy since the mid-1990s to give greater importance to culture and heritage while still embracing development.<sup>34</sup> The Parliament Building could be seen as part of Valletta's evolution as a living city, not just a historical artifact. Ultimately, the project highlights the ongoing challenge of balancing preservation and progress in historic urban environments. While respecting Valletta's rich heritage is crucial, there is also value in allowing the city to grow and adapt to contemporary needs. Piano's design attempts to navigate this tension, creating a dialogue between old and new that reflects Malta's identity as both a historic and forward-looking nation. Its success likely depends on how well it integrates functionally and symbolically into Valletta's urban context over time.<sup>35</sup>

Ultimately, the project challenges the balance between historical reverence and modern expression, making it a compelling case study in architectural philosophy.

Finally, it must be acknowledged that, although this building possesses a certain aesthetic appeal, it does not measure up to the grandeur of the former opera house that once stood adjacent to it (Figure 45). Furthermore, the interior design lacks the elegance and refinement

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identity (Karsten Harries, "The Ethical Function of Architecture," *Choice Reviews Online*, 34.10 (1997), 34-5479-34-5479 <<https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.34-5479>>).

<sup>32</sup> Paul Zucker and Christian Norberg-Schulz, "Intentions in Architecture," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 28.3 (1970), 405 <<https://doi.org/10.2307/429522>>.

<sup>33</sup> Lefaivre & Tzonis, 2004.

<sup>34</sup> Ebejer, "Urban Heritage and Cultural Tourism".

<sup>35</sup> Raphael Vassallo, "Stuck in a Cultural Rut," *MaltaToday.Com.Mt*, 8 February 2015 <[https://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/interview/49355/stuck\\_in\\_a\\_cultural\\_rut\\_\\_alex\\_torpiano](https://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/interview/49355/stuck_in_a_cultural_rut__alex_torpiano)> [accessed 28 January 2025]. Where the former president of the Maltese Chamber of Architects says "The decision was taken, whether you like the idea of the parliament being there or not... whether you admire Renzo Piano or not; whether you think it's a masterpiece or a cheese-grater. I happen to admire Piano, because compared to other contemporary architects, I find that he is more contextual. If you compare with Zaha Hadid, for instance... when she was criticised for her building in Rome, she said: 'I don't care about context: that's my building...'"

of its predecessor. The pursuit of modernity appears to have come at the expense of symbolic significance, resulting in a diminished sense of authenticity. Additionally, it seems to lack the element of care or love<sup>36</sup> towards current and future generations, which is essential in creating spaces that resonate deeply with the community.<sup>37</sup>

The dynamics revealed in the above analysis of Renzo Piano's Valletta interventions thus foreground the very tensions between expertise, public meaning, and communal flourishing that the following section systematises through a combined political, juridical and phenomenological account of architectural judgment.



FIGURE 45 TEATRU RJAL, VALLETTA MALTA 1911. PHOTOGRAPH: WIKIMEDIA

<sup>36</sup> Alberto Pérez-Gómez, *Built upon Love* (The MIT Press, 2006) <<https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/1697.001.0001>> [accessed 1 April 2025].

<sup>37</sup> The critique of Piano's Valletta parliament raises important points about aesthetics, authenticity, and the role of architecture in preserving cultural heritage and creating meaningful spaces for communities. While Piano's design may have aesthetic appeal, it appears to fall short in capturing the grandeur and symbolic significance of the former opera house (Lefavre & Tzonis, 2004).

## **Architectural Judgment as a Shared Practice: From Legal Reasoning to the Common Good**

These dynamics, made visible in the Valletta case, invite a broader inquiry into how architectural judgment itself might be structured so that expertise, civic meaning, and the common good are held in a relationship of mutual accountability.

The aim in this section is not to dictate what architects or communities ought to build, nor to extract prescriptive rules from Heideggerian thought, but to outline how collective architectural judgment might be coordinated in a way that safeguards both individual fulfilment and communal flourishing, avoiding turpification while orienting decisions toward the common good.

Architecture is an unavoidable presence shaping the horizons of individual and collective dwelling. If it bears such influence on the conditions of human life, then architectural judgment must be exercised with a discipline comparable to that found in legal practice. Because all social life is political, and because nearly every domain of our shared existence is mediated, guided, or constrained by law, it is instructive to look toward this fundamental structure of mortal coexistence to understand how architecture, too, might be oriented toward—and made accountable to—the common good.

A society seeking meaningful architecture for the common good must cultivate a shared practice of judgment rather than rely either on unrestrained professional discretion or rigid regulatory control. Both extremes are equally problematic: trusting solely in the designer risks idiosyncrasy, private bias, or conceptual myopia, while over-regulation risks suppressing innovation, foreclosing unanticipated possibilities, and producing what might be called “architectures of the loophole.” The common good—understood in Finnis’s sense as the ensemble of conditions enabling all members of the community to pursue the basic goods—is therefore best served by a collaborative, deliberative process. In such a process, professional expertise is exercised through public reason-giving, and civic voices are neither romanticised nor sidelined but recognised as bearers of situated knowledge. This framework protects and promotes (d)well-being: a state in which individuals living with others experience authentic fulfilment by being peacefully and meaningfully attuned to their surroundings, finding themselves at home, and poetically transforming “space” into a dwelling “place” in accordance

with the *genius loci* and the ethos of their community. Achieving the common good in architecture thus requires a system of mutual accountability in which designers, policymakers, and citizens co-disclose and co-interpret what a place calls for.

To work together in this way, society must establish institutional and cultural conditions that mirror the best practices of legal judgment—conditions that balance expertise with answerability. A model grounded in proportionality, reasonableness, and fiduciary responsibility provides precisely this structure. In other words, designers should be able to demonstrate that proposals are suitable to the site’s meaning, necessary relative to less intrusive alternatives, and proportionate in balancing private interests with communal flourishing. Democratic bodies, such as planning authorities, for their part, should craft guidance that shapes judgment without calcifying it, leaving room for contextual sensitivity and creative expression. Citizens participate not simply as a plebiscitary veto but as a community of interpreters whose lived experience of place offers essential insight into how architecture enables or undermines flourishing. Those who live within a particular “space” possess the most intimate knowledge of how it may be constituted as a “place”. For this reason, decisions concerning it ought to be made at that level. This captures the essence of the principle of subsidiarity. This decision-making power—however fair it may appear—cannot remain untrammelled. In the spirit of checks and balances, it must be complemented and moderated by other forces within society. Why? For one thing, local communities may lack the professional expertise required in architecture and urban planning. They may also depend on sources of funding that exceed their immediate means. And, not least, in certain extreme scenarios they may decide to remove from the architectural equation a building or feature that is integral to the larger urban whole, or even of significance to humanity more broadly.

Such an approach may be interpreted as an internal refinement of democratic practice, rather than as an attempt to reinvent democracy itself. Through this political, juridical and phenomenological partnership, society can cultivate a mode of building that is neither technocratic nor populist but attuned—integrating expertise, memory, ecology, and civic ethos. Architecture then becomes a shared labour of world-making, where (d)well-being is not merely a private sentiment but the ethical horizon of collective life.

Finnis’s conception of the common good is not a mere aggregation of private interests but a coordinated ordering of the basic goods that enable individuals to flourish without diminishing

the flourishing of others. It thereby also promotes the conditions in which flourishing of the broader *collectivity*—the ensemble of institutions, associations, and other groups, that constitute a community as something more than a collection of individuals. Architecture participates directly in constructing these conditions: it can support or erode sociability, meaning, memory, aesthetic experience, and belonging. Determining who decides “what is reasonable” in architecture is therefore not a trivial procedural matter but a question of ethical and civic significance. Just as legal adjudication tests proportionality, legitimacy, and reasonableness, architectural judgment should examine whether an intervention truly coordinates the goods of a community—including its capacity to sustain (d)well-being and avoid turpification—or whether it privileges one interest at the expense of others.

The range of possible decision structures in architecture mirrors those found in jurisprudence. At one end lies the trust-the-expert model, in which clients simply hire a competent architect and leave judgment entirely in their hands. At the other end, democratic bodies may issue strict regulations and design codes. Both approaches fail in characteristic ways: the former risks arbitrariness and the dominance of personal vision over communal needs, while the latter risks stifling creativity and producing loophole-driven design. The challenge is to locate an intermediate space where society works together toward the common good, balancing expertise with democratic oversight in a way that protects (d)well-being without paralysing creativity.

Legal reasoning suggests how such an intermediate space may be structured. Doctrines such as proportionality, legitimate expectation, and reasonableness offer tools for guiding expert judgment without dictating outcomes. Proportionality, in particular, asks whether a measure is suitable, whether less intrusive alternatives exist, and whether the benefits justify the costs. Transposed to architecture, these questions yield what might be called a proportionality of place: Does the proposal unconceal what the site discloses? Does it align with the ethos of the community? Does it support or compromise (d)well-being? Does it minimise harm to memory, ecology, or identity? Such a structure does not mechanise judgment; it cultivates attentive, responsive dwelling.

Understanding the proper relationship between expert and public is likewise essential. The analogy “architect : public :: jurist : jury” is suggestive but imperfect. A jury decides on a past event, whereas a public co-creates the future of the place it inhabits. The architect is therefore not a solitary adjudicator but a fiduciary of place—one who owes duties of transparency,

loyalty, and care to present and future dwellers. The public, meanwhile, is not merely a recipient of architectural decisions but a bearer of embodied, situated knowledge about how places are lived. This relationship of co-responsibility ensures that architecture remains open to communal insight while preserving the integrity of professional judgment.

This framework also clarifies the limits of aesthetic terminology. Words such as “beautiful,” “authentic,” or “harmonious” can illuminate but also obscure. They risk reducing complex ethical and existential questions to matters of taste. A juridical-phenomenological approach interprets such terms not as aesthetic verdicts but as markers of deeper claims about dwelling: whether a design fosters belonging, respects the *genius loci*, or supports the community’s orientation toward flourishing. Understood in this way, “aesthetic” language becomes a means for articulating the conditions of (d)well-being rather than a crude vocabulary of approval or disapproval. In fact, this approach moves beyond the merely aesthetic and toward what Heidegger calls the becoming and happening of truth (*aletheia*). Architecture thereby emerges as a concrete site in which art and dwelling converge, each participating in the disclosure of truth.

While it is neither possible nor desirable to eliminate what has been called aesthetic judgment entirely from architectural practice, it is possible to establish modes of reflection and evaluation that guide architectural reasoning toward a more authentic revealing of place. In this sense, the truth of what is built should arise from the world it brings forth rather than be imposed as an external projection. Such an orientation fosters (d)well-being as understood throughout this thesis: a dwelling that discloses our being-in-the-world rather than obscuring it.

If this is granted, the final task becomes normative and practical: how might such truth-oriented architectural practices be cultivated and implemented?

In other words the final question concerns how these philosophical considerations might be translated into practical decision-making within the built environment. If architecture contributes to the conditions of communal dwelling, then judgments concerning building cannot remain purely theoretical; they inevitably take place within institutional structures mediating between private initiative and the public interest. One avenue for translation lies in refining existing planning and building regulations. If architecture bears upon communal dwelling, then regulatory frameworks already governing development become key institutional arenas in which such concerns are negotiated. Within these frameworks, attention to the ethos

of a community, responsiveness to its *genius loci*, and sensitivity to the risk of architectural degradation can inform both professional and civic deliberation.

Comparative examples may help to illustrate how such mediation already operates. In Germany, planning and environmental regulation can extend to detailed prescriptions concerning the built environment and its ecological context. Under the *Baugesetzbuch*<sup>38</sup> and municipal ordinances such as *Baumschutzsatzungen*<sup>39</sup> (tree protection statutes), Land authorities may regulate not only building form but also the planting, removal, or preservation of particular tree species on private property. These provisions recognise that private development decisions have wider environmental and spatial consequences affecting the character of a locality. A different but related example appears in Malta, where the Planning Authority administers façade and traditional balcony restoration schemes such as the *Irrestawra Darek* programme.<sup>40</sup> These initiatives provide financial incentives for preserving historically significant architectural elements. These initiatives do not impose rigid stylistic rules; rather, they encourage property owners to maintain features that contribute to the historical continuity and visual coherence of Maltese urban environments. Important to these existing mechanisms is the cultivation of public education and engagement. After all this is also a form of attunement. Sometimes such attunement manifests in biophilic design; at other times it calls for what is now termed retronovation; and on occasions it takes a form that is neither of these.<sup>41</sup>

Such examples show how regulatory and policy instruments can mediate between private architectural initiative and the collective interest in maintaining intelligible and meaningful built environments. At the same time, planning regimes likely already approach the practical limits of legitimate collective intervention in privately commissioned building. The task, therefore, is not to expand regulation indefinitely but to clarify the principles guiding its application. Within these limits, planning frameworks can still help safeguard the intelligibility and continuity of the built environment while respecting the plurality of architectural expression.

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<sup>38</sup> Baugesetzbuch (BauGB) – German Federal Building Code.

<sup>39</sup> Municipal Baumschutzsatzungen (Tree Protection Ordinances), various German Länder and municipalities.

<sup>40</sup> Planning Authority Malta, Irrestawra Darek Scheme and related façade/balcony restoration initiatives.

<sup>41</sup> Marjorie Blom, “Biophilic Architecture and Its Influence on Human Behaviour and Well-Being : A Proposed Urban Multi-Use Office Park Development.,” <https://researchspace.ukzn.ac.za/home>, 2013 <<http://hdl.handle.net/10413/11123>> [accessed 21 December 2024].

## Thinking And Building As Acts Of Love

Taken together, the various strands of evidence discussed throughout this thesis suggest that a discernible shift in public sensibility regarding the built environment is emerging in Malta. Statements by at least one head of state, sustained commentary in national newspapers, judicial observations in planning-related cases, and reactions from civic and political groups all point toward a growing unease with prevailing patterns of development. While these voices do not necessarily converge on a single architectural programme, they collectively indicate the gradual formation of an *ethos* that calls for greater attentiveness to place, civic responsibility, and the long-term character of the Maltese built environment. This evolving public consciousness suggests that questions concerning architecture and the common good are no longer confined to professional or academic circles but are increasingly becoming part of broader societal reflection. In a democratic society, one cannot dismiss persistent dissent as insignificant merely because it lacks professional expertise. Ultimately, the people who inhabit and inhabit alongside these buildings remain the final judges of what is built.

Finally, an endeavour was made to produce a work that could be utilised both philosophically and politically, not to conclude discussions or define principles definitively, but to initiate discourse and creatively elucidate principles. In fact one might say that this research itself represents an act of care, and as such it is in itself an act of dwelling. Since, building and thinking are, each in its own way, inescapable for dwelling

Across phenomenology and political theory, a shared insight emerges: both thinking and building are fundamentally acts of care—ways of attending to the world, to others, and to the conditions that allow dwelling and flourishing to endure

In this sense, the act of design extends beyond mere construction to encompass deliberation, consideration, and ultimately, building.<sup>42</sup> As such, architecture emerges not as a static artefact but as an ongoing dialogue between the individual and the collective, between heritage and

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<sup>42</sup> The concept of design as a deliberative process extends beyond mere construction, encompassing consideration and habitation, as evidenced by various studies on deliberation in different contexts. In product line design, firms must carefully deliberate on whether to induce consumer deliberation or prevent it, considering factors such as quality dispersion, pricing strategies, and consumer surplus (Liang Guo and Juanjuan Zhang, “Consumer Deliberation and Product Line Design,” *Marketing Science*, 31.6 (2012), 995–1007 <<https://doi.org/10.1287/mksc.1120.0736>>). [accessed 24 January 2025].

innovation, and between the physical and the metaphysical. It invites us to inhabit not only the spaces we create but the ideals we collectively uphold—a profound reminder that our methods of construction are inextricably linked to our identity and aspirations. Our way of building is our way of dwelling. It is indeed remarkable how Heidegger’s philosophical reflections, along with the elaboration of his principles on dwelling by scholars such as Norberg-Schulz and Karsten Harries, have garnered substantial authoritative and interdisciplinary support in the contemporary academic discourse.

In the end, architecture, like the communities it serves, is an act of collective becoming—a negotiation between the tangible and the transcendent, the functional and the poetic, the individual and the common good. By grounding architecture in the principles of dwelling, the *genius loci*,<sup>43</sup> and the common *ethos*, we recognize that our built environment is not merely a backdrop to human life but an essential participant in it. Architecture, when aligned with the fundamental goods of human flourishing, becomes more than the sum of its parts—it becomes a vessel for meaning, a stage for collective memory, and a framework for belonging. This is because architecture, in such a context, manifests and celebrates the essential aspects of life, knowledge, friendship, play, aesthetic experience, practical reason,<sup>44</sup> and religion. Building, becomes an act burdened with intergenerational responsibility. It becomes an act of care, of love even, from one generation that made it to the following, a tribute to the shared hope that the spaces we create today will nurture lives not yet lived. Thus, architecture, when aligned with the goal of human flourishing, indeed becomes an act of care and love, transcending its physical components to foster well-being. This concept is supported by recent research on human flourishing and neuro-adaptive architecture. Human flourishing, defined by some as “the relative attainment of a state in which all aspects of a person's life are good including the contexts in which that person lives”<sup>45</sup> has gained significant attention in recent years.<sup>46</sup> The

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<sup>43</sup> Just as a reminder: The concept of *genius loci*, or “spirit of the place,” plays a crucial role in this understanding. It encompasses both tangible and intangible qualities of a location, including its physical features, cultural significance, and the emotions it evokes (Marilena Vecco, “Genius Loci as a Meta-Concept,” *Journal of Cultural Heritage*, 41 (2020), 225–31 <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.culher.2019.07.001>>.). This holistic view of place-making extends beyond aesthetics, incorporating elements of power relations, political symbolism, and national identity (Argyro Loukaki, “Whose Genius Loci?: Contrasting Interpretations of the ‘Sacred Rock of the Athenian Acropolis,’” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 87.2 (1997), 306–29 <<https://doi.org/10.1111/0004-5608.872055>>.).

<sup>44</sup> The product of its requirements is morality.

<sup>45</sup> Tyler J. VanderWeele and others, “Flourishing in Critical Dialogue,” *SSM - Mental Health*, 3 (2023), 100172 <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmmh.2022.100172>>.

<sup>46</sup> See: Alan C. Logan, Brian M. Berman, and Susan L. Prescott, “Vitality Revisited: The Evolving Concept of Flourishing and Its Relevance to Personal and Public Health,” *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 20.6 (2023), 5065 <<https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20065065>>.

emerging field of neuro-adaptive architecture aims to create buildings and urban environments responsive to human emotions, cognition, and well-being.<sup>47</sup> Somehow departing from these definitions we have seen that the idea of (d)well-being as understood in this research is something less idealistic and perhaps closer to a state of truthfulness or “unconcealment” (*Aletheia*) of one’s being, of meaningful “attunement” (*Stimmung*) to one’s surroundings; to a finding oneself (*Befindlichkeit*) in all the complexities of being oneself as oneself, an authentic (*Eigentlichkeit*) well-being based not on some ideal state of being but of a state of affairs where participation in one’s life to the fullest way possible, is attempted.<sup>48</sup> With this in mind (d)well-being becomes a state of affairs wherein an individual living with others in a community, experiences an all-round sense of authentic fulfilment as self-realisation and/or flourishing, by being peacefully and meaningfully attuned to his/her surroundings, by finding him/herself at home, by poetically (*poesies* mean human making) transforming that “space” into a dwelling “place” through building according to its *genius loci* and according to the ethos of that same community”.

Moreover, architecture should not be construed as an act of rebellion, self-aggrandisement or dominance.<sup>49</sup> Rather, it is in this delicate balance between order and complexity, individuality and community, that we find the essence of (d)well-being. The avoidance of *turpification*, as embodied<sup>50</sup> by Maltese<sup>51</sup> peculiar architectural brutalism<sup>52</sup>, (Figure 55) is insufficient.

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<sup>47</sup> See: Ashish Makanadar, “Neuro-Adaptive Architecture: Buildings and City Design That Respond to Human Emotions, Cognitive States,” *Research in Globalization*, 8 (2024), 100222 <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resglo.2024.100222>>.

<sup>48</sup> Thomas Szanto and Hilge Landweer, *The Routledge Handbook of Phenomenology of Emotion* (Routledge, 2020).

<sup>49</sup> Architecture should be approached as a collaborative and responsive discipline that balances functional requirements, safety considerations, and aesthetic values. While it may occasionally challenge conventions, its primary goal should be to create spaces that enhance the quality of life for individuals and communities, rather than serving as a platform for rebellion or personal aggrandizement.

<sup>50</sup> Fiona Galea Debono, “‘We Have to Accept That Malta Is Moving into a Modern Era’: PA Chief,” *Times of Malta*, 23 May 2021 <<https://timesofmalta.com/article/we-have-to-accept-that-malta-is-moving-into-a-modern-era-pa-chief.873841>> [accessed 26 January 2025].

<sup>51</sup> Blanche Gatt, “Architects of Chaos: A Greek Tragedy for Malta,” *The Shift News* <<https://theshiftnews.com/2021/05/25/architects-of-chaos-a-greek-tragedy-for-malta/>> [accessed 26 January 2025].

<sup>52</sup> Brutalism, as an architectural movement, challenges the notion of avoiding “*turpification*” by embracing a raw aesthetic that one may consider unappealing. The original brutalist ethics, as articulated by Raynar Banham, focus on monumentality, structural honesty, and materials “as found” (Oli Mould, “Brutalism Redux: Relational Monumentality and the Urban Politics of Brutalist Architecture,” *Antipode*, 49.3 (2016), 701–20 <<https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12306>>.). As the already quoted Felice says “things will change the moment we open the window one day and say: ‘Oh my God, what a horrible mess this is.’” See Fiona Galea Debono, “David Felice on Malta’s Construction Boom: ‘We All Have Our Finger in This Pie,’” *Times of Malta*, 30 January 2025 <<https://timesofmalta.com/article/david-felice-malta-construction-boom-we-finger-pie.1103911>> [accessed 30 January 2025].



FIGURE 46 SLIEMA'S SKYLINE MALTA'S OWN PECULIAR BRUTALISM, PHOTOGRAPH: SHUTTERSTOCK

As demonstrated in the preceding chapters, the two extremes—architectural blandness or overstatement—continue to impede (d)well-being, as they frequently fail to respect the *genius loci* or the ethos of the community in which they are situated, and thus, both extremes ultimately lack authenticity. The significance of this issue lies in its relevance to human self-understanding, both individually and collectively. The alternative would suggest that our species has resigned itself to either banality or excessive zeal, demonstrating a lack of concern regarding whether our communities are progressing towards extreme homogeneity or extreme individualism.<sup>53</sup> This conjecture warrants further investigation, as it substantiates the central argument of this thesis: the notion that architecture inherently possesses a political dimension.

The statement that architecture is also political is rooted in the idea that the design and structure of buildings and spaces reflect and influence societal values, power dynamics, and cultural norms. Architecture is not merely about aesthetics or functionality; it also embodies the

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<sup>53</sup> Research indicates that communities are neither entirely homogeneous nor completely individualistic. Instead, they exist on a spectrum influenced by various factors, including cultural dimensions (Tung Lam Dang and others, “Individualistic Cultures and Crash Risk,” *European Financial Management*, 25.3 (2018), 622–54 <<https://doi.org/10.1111/eufm.12180>>; Fincher et al., 2008), decision-making processes (John G Oetzel, “Culturally Homogeneous and Heterogeneous Groups: Explaining Communication Processes through Individualism-Collectivism and Self-Construal,” *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 22.2 (1998), 135–61 <[https://doi.org/10.1016/s0147-1767\(98\)00002-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0147-1767(98)00002-9)>).

ideologies and priorities of the society that creates it. For instance, the layout of urban spaces can either promote inclusivity and accessibility or reinforce segregation and inequality. Public buildings, monuments, and even residential areas can serve as symbols of political power, economic status, and social control. Thus, the choices made in architectural design can have far-reaching implications on how people interact with their environment and with each other. Moreover, architecture can become a tool for political expression and resistance. Throughout history, various architectural styles have been used to convey political messages, whether through the grandeur of imperial structures, the austerity of totalitarian regimes, or the innovative designs of democratic societies. In contemporary times, sustainable and eco-friendly architecture reflects a political commitment to environmental responsibility and social equity. As seen previously, also in contemporary times, businesses reflect capitalism by prioritizing brand visibility over harmony, with bold signage that upsets traditional architectural settings to assert commercial presence. This can disrupt the continuity of architectural and cultural dialogue, often contravening the *genius loci* and *ethos*, and resulting in a lack of continuity. This choice is ultimately political, albeit subconscious, as it asserts the dominance of market values over communal or cultural ones, privileging commercial identity above local heritage or visual cohesion. However, this is not always the case. Consider, for example, the integration of shops in Figure 56 - below the blue line - where a business outlet is seamlessly incorporated within what may be termed a meaningful building. This is also a political decision.



FIGURE 47 TRIER, GERMANY SHOPS INTEGRATED INTO A TRADITIONAL BUILDING.  
PHOTOGRAPH: ALAN XUEREB

By understanding architecture as a political act, we recognize that the built environment is a manifestation of the values and conflicts within a society, and that architects and planners play a crucial role in shaping that feature of the political landscape.<sup>54</sup> Those values and conflicts should then happen within the context of the common good.<sup>55</sup> Only then individuals and *collectivities* may be said to be practising (d)well-being. This, as already seen, is based on the fact that Heidegger does not use the term ‘well-being’ explicitly, but his concept of dwelling (*Wohnen*) offers a deeper existential foundation for it. Rather than defining well-being in terms of subjective satisfaction or external conditions, Heidegger reorients us toward the question of how we inhabit the world authentically. As seen, his analysis of care (*Sorge*) in *Being and Time* shows that human existence is fundamentally structured by concern and engagement with the world, rather than passive contentment. Moreover, his later notion of *Gelassenheit* could be seen as a way of attuning oneself to Being in a way that resonates with a more profound, existential sense of well-being.<sup>56</sup>

To build, then, becomes not simply (or not only) to construct but to affirm our shared humanity, to reconcile the competing forces of our existence, and to offer future generations<sup>57</sup> spaces that speak to the profound truth that the whole is always greater than the sum of its parts. Spaces that become places. In this endeavour, architecture becomes not just a response to the world but a gift to it—a testament to the enduring capacity of the human spirit to shape, and be shaped by, the places we inhabit.

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<sup>54</sup> Aris Roussinos, “Why Architecture Is Political,” *UnHerd*, 28 December 2020 <<https://unherd.com/2020/12/why-architecture-is-political/>> [accessed 26 January 2025].

<sup>55</sup> Certain Maltese architects, such as the aforementioned David Felice, advocate for the detachment of planning from partisan politics, though implicitly acknowledging that nothing exists outside the political sphere. Felice emphasizes that the current state of affairs is a result of a planning system that favours central government. This system, being driven by political figures, inherently fails to serve the common good. This phenomenon can be classified as a form of corruption, which may also be characterized as an abuse of power. See Fiona Galea Debono, “David Felice on Malta’s Construction Boom: ‘We All Have Our Finger in This Pie,’” *Times of Malta*, 30 January 2025 <<https://timesofmalta.com/article/david-felice-malta-construction-boom-we-finger-pie.1103911>> [accessed 30 January 2025].

<sup>56</sup> Heidegger does not frame well-being in the Aristotelian or modern sense, but that his work provides a crucial ontological grounding for any serious reflection on what it means to ‘be well’ in a meaningful way.

<sup>57</sup> See George Vella, “Closing Speech by His Excellency George Vella, President of Malta, on the Occasion of the Malta Architecture and Spatial Planning Awards 2021, Hilton Malta Conference Centre, 26 Feb 2022,” George Vella, 2022 <<https://georgevella.gov.mt/en/closing-speech-by-his-excellency-george-vella-president-of-malta-on-the-occasion-of-the-malta-architecture-and-spatial-planning-awards-2021-hilton-malta-conference-centre-26-feb-2022/>> [accessed 30 January 2025]. “Keep in mind, that contemporary architecture is the heritage we will leave to our future generations. I want you to keep questioning yourselves in this respect. How do you want to be remembered in fifty, hundred or four hundred years’ time?”

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