

CHAPTER EIGHT: ARCHITECTURAL SELFISHNESS AND THE CONSECRATION OF PROPERTY

The elevation is to a building what the countenance is to the mind. T.L. Donaldson, *Architectural Maxims*, London 1947, XLIII.

Introduction

How can a building be selfish? In this chapter it will be argued that the endowment of moral qualities to inanimate objects such as buildings is philosophically dependent on an analogy with the concept of property. The possibility of architecture assuming *character* will be shown to depend on an extension of the philosophical justification of ownership. This relates buildings to the mechanics of civilisation as formulated by David Hume. The chapter will end with a discussion about the social implications of the moral behaviour of architecture.

Hylozoic stones: how alive is a building?

How is it possible for a building to be selfish or polite? Surely a building is not capable of moral behaviour? In his *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* David Hume had written expressly not to confuse the inanimate with the living when referring to moral behaviour:

*We ought not to imagine, because an inanimate object may be useful as well as a man, that therefore it ought also, according to this system, to merit the appellation of virtuous.*¹

By logical extension, Hume appears to be saying that architecture cannot be selfish. That would directly contradict Garbett's position. In Garbett's system, however, architecture is never seen as a thing by itself. A building is always seen as a product made by man or as an object owned by man. There is a necessary relation between a building and the people involved with it in some way or another. It is because of this relation that a building cannot be seen as inanimate,

1. Hume (1972) p. 213

a fact confirmed by Garbett who repeatedly refers to buildings as organisms. The relation between a building and humanity is informed by the concept of ownership. Character in architecture is only possible because buildings are owned by people.

Property, Hume argues is not a natural thing. The act of appropriation is akin to an act of consecration. Objects or things become someone's property by way of a ritualistic pronouncement, such as: *this is mine*. Such a pronouncement is enough to make the thing referred to sacred and make people behave in a particular way with regard to it. In other words ownership is a form of magic.² An object or thing can be owned in two ways. It can be owned in a material sense and in an intellectual sense. In both ways the object is seen as an extension of the owner; it becomes part of his substance in the same way that the author of the book of Job talked of Job's substance being

seven thousand sheep...and a very great household (Job 1,3) Whether it is intellectual property, in the form of a design of a building, or material property, in the form of a house, the concept of property presupposes some form of sympathy or connection between the owner and the object which makes others behave in a way appropriate to that concept and makes them equate the two, regardless of any pre-existing similarity.

With regard to a building, material ownership and intellectual ownership cannot be distinguished with ease. The material owner of a house is to a large extent also the intellectual owner of a building. He may not have been responsible for the original design, but he has infected the building with his presence to such an extent that his presence is perceptible in the condition of the building. Indeed Garbett was conscious of this when he talked of the styleformers as not necessarily the designers of buildings but those *who have*

2. Collingwood (1958) p. 58 f.

affected the style by whatever means, even mere proximity.³

With intellectual property the sympathy between the object and its maker is very direct. Man creates in his image, which means that he creates in the image of his personal experience. The act of consecration by which a designer or a patron owns a building, sets that building apart within society, makes it an object of special significance, endowed with meaning about the mind that resides within. The owner can not fail to stamp his mind on what he owns, cannot fail to endow his intellectual/material property with the signatures of his ownership. Architecture is able to express character, therefore, through a process of metastasis. Even though the product is inanimate, it may be labelled as virtuous or vicious in the sense that the product is an extension or an impress of the (intellectual) owner, the person (or

3. *Treatise*, p. 251. on the issue of identity cf. Snelder & Bakker (1971) p. 2.1 ff. I would like to take this opportunity to thank mr. Snelder for pointing out De Levita (1965) pp. 29 ff and William James (1890) pp. 291 ff.

persons) whose mind was responsible for its form and condition. That could be the architect, the patron, the builder or a combination of all three.

How would Hume have responded to this? We do not know. He probably would have dismissed it impatiently with a stroke of the tongue. Garbett, on the other hand, offers a detailed physiological explanation which allows inanimate matter to participate in certain aspects of life on just those conditions.

The physiology of architectural character

Seeing, writes Garbett, is a special way of feeling. Taste is an internal sense which is able to make judgements about beauty. The *feeling* which forces taste to make that judgement constitutes a state of mind where reason and habit converge. Habit allows a particular sequence of reasoning to be abbreviated into a feeling.⁴ In other words a feeling is

4. Seeing, he writes, *...means a train of reasoning which the mind, by frequent repetition, has acquired the habit of*
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nothing more than a pattern of causes and effects which is familiar to the brain. The internal sense of beauty, or Taste,

performing so rapidly, or rather with so much abbreviation and omission of intermediate steps, that it cannot follow itself, (...) but arrives at the conclusion that the object is pleasing or displeasing. Treatise, p. 6-7. Garbett's immediate source for the idea of internal senses even though it was a widely accepted form of explanation at the time is Frances Hutcheson. The appropriate instrument for perceiving the sense of beauty and the moral sense is "the mind's eye," a tool which Garbett makes eager use of. cf. Kivy (1976) pp. 12 f. On Hutcheson's use of the word Sense see Kivy (1976) pp. 22-42. Garbett quotes two lines of poetry the author of which, infuriatingly, I have not been able to trace: *It is the mind that sees; the outward eyes; Present the object but the mind describes.*

which is the name for this process of abbreviation, is a conditioned reflex which varies according to the circumstances and objects presented to it through the organs of sense. Those variations allow the different possible judgements about whether a certain object is pleasing or displeasing.

The mind can only perceive and judge upon that which is in some way analogous to itself, that which corresponds to its own structure:

...if it be the mind that sees, -the mind that is pleased with a fine building, or displeased with the reverse, -how can it be pleased or displeased with any qualities but mental ones? ⁵

A building in order to be found pleasing or displeasing must be *animated* with mental qualities. Specific mental qualities have to be equated to specific forms. Garbett tries to do this by humanising nature. After all nature, in his attitude to it,

5. *Treatise*, p. 6-7

is there to serve humanity. As such nature is seen as a language of anthropocentric symbols in which every form becomes expressive of some (moral) quality informing human behaviour. A building is able to express selfishness by finding a word, that is an icon for selfishness in nature:

..from the world sustaining sun down to the little busy world enlarging coral-line, nothing appears to belong to itself, with the sole exception of the oyster [shut up in the narrowness of its shell, pushing forth excrescences wherever its internal purposes suggest, without appearing to know that there is a world outside] -a marvellous anomaly, which may possibly be required to complete nature's great system of symbol-teaching, her universal language, which, without this, would have no word for selfishness. ⁶

The oyster here represents an allegorical instrument, an intermediate stage

6. *Treatise*, p. 8

between architecture and humanity by which architectural form and human behaviour are metaphorically linked. What is particularly interesting in this context is the use of the word excrescence. Certainly it denotes Garbett's attraction to scatological metaphors. At the same time it does more than that; the word excrescence, with which he characterises the drainage-pipes "inexplicably" emerging from the rear facades of London houses, and the word orifice which he uses to describe whatever hole a facade presents to the outside world, enliven the building. Such metaphors make it possible to talk of buildings as one does of human beings. The excrescence and the orifice, when there is no locomotive movement, constitute immediate evidence of life. Some everyday and necessary habits of human beings become revolting as soon as they are made public. The exterior of buildings are public by their very nature. When they are enlivened through analogy to human digestive processes,

their excretions necessarily also become revolting.⁷

Two analogies confront each other here and re-enforce a building's moral duties. The first enlivens the building in its role as extension of the owner. The second analogy belongs to the psychology of associationism and invokes a more general anthropomorphism which then fuses with, and complements the first. Inanimate matter is imbued with the power of expression through resemblances between the object and

7. *The Londoner, in whatever quarter residing, from Bermondsey to Belgravia, has only to look out of his back window...His view will be bounded by tall thin walls, or rather screens, apparently only half a brick thick, and showing no intention of being connected with roofed buildings. They are spotted all over, neither regularly nor irregularly, with square glazed holes, seemingly broken through after they were built, and are edged at the top with a narrow line of stone, above which, the tops of certain roofs occasionally, but rarely betray their presence; while below it, at every interval of about twenty feet, appears a gaping wound ready to discharge something (it is not apparent what) into a funnel and long pipe, the clumsy attachment of which to the wall renders it evident that the use of these additions was unknown by those who erected it. Equally unforeseen were the improvements which rise from behind this screen, and break the sky-line with a hundred grotesque bodies of red clay and blackened metal, in varied forms of ugliness, and nodding to each other in a way that makes their equilibrium seem as precarious and unaccountable as that of the tall brick screen itself. In: Treatise, p. 4.*

the viewing subject's physiognomical experience. Experience of the world in which we live has supplied us with physiognomical insight. This insight is used to build up expectations with reference to particular forms and relate them to our needs, fears and desires. That experience is used when designing buildings. A building becomes the intended expression of a designer's view of the world related to specific social, intellectual, political and economic aspirations:

How can tangible objects affect [the mind] except by retaining the impress of mind...It is not the building we condemn but the mind that appears in it, -not the design but the spirit that presided over it, and stamped its own character thereon.⁸

A building participates in the politics of being; it takes up a position, a pose to

8. *Treatise, p. 7.*

help the owner achieve social standing.⁹ Architecture becomes a social tool and as such endowed, even if only by extension, with virtue, or moral beauty.

All this is closely related to another direct source for Garbett's theory of expression, namely Ruskin. In some of his most inspired prose in "The Lamp of Life," Ruskin relates the attempt of architecture to be dignified and pleasurable to the vivid expression of the intellectual life which has been concerned in its production.¹⁰ Ruskin's concepts of

9. Diderot, *Rameau's nephew*, Harmondsworth, 1966, pp. 120-21.

10. *..things in other respects alike, as in their substance, or uses, or outward forms, are noble or ignoble in proportion to the fullness of life which either they themselves enjoy, or of whose action they bear the evidence. (...) And this is especially true of all objects which bear upon them the impress of the highest order of creative life, that is to say, of the mind of man: they become noble or ignoble in proportion to the amount of energy of that mind which has visibly been employed upon them. But most peculiarly and imperatively does the rule hold with respect to the creations of Architecture, which being properly capable of no other life than this, and being not essentially composed of things pleasant in themselves, as music of sweet sounds, or painting of fair colours, but of inert substance,-depend, for their dignity and pleasurable in the utmost degree, upon the vivid expression of the intellectual life which has been concerned in their production. Ruskin, Seven Lamps, "Lamp of Life," § I-II, pp. 175-176 Afterwards follows the beautiful passage in which the life of a society and of*

Jacob Voorthuis

frankness and audacity correspond closely to Garbett's architectural politeness. Ruskin converted social virtues into architectural ones solely on the basis of the belief that the mind of a man is made visible in his architecture.

Karl Marx had written that *the products of men's hands (...) appear as independent beings endowed with life.*¹¹ There lies a significant connection: it is not just inanimate matter that is being asked to participate in life and being asked to display virtue, it is the product of man. As Vico said, we can only know what we have made. An artefact is able to participate in moral life because it is a human product and functions as an

man is compared to a stream of lava slowly freezing up into immobility and stagnation.

11. Karl Marx, *Capital*, Oxford, 1974, vol. i, p. 77. The quotation was brought to my attention on reading Ludmilla Jordanova's essay "Objects of Knowledge: A Historical Perspective of Museums," in *The New Museology*, ed. Peter Vergo, London 1989, p. 38.

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extension of its maker/owner. The producer or the owner endows the object he produces or owns with his own being.

It is by virtue of that correspondence between the owner (designer/patron) and his product (the building), that property becomes subject to the same rules of etiquette to which the owner is obliged to conform:

*The name Architecture must apply (...) to those buildings which conform to all the rules of a systemised etiquette.*¹²

Architecture can not be judged in terms of a-moral or disinterested aesthetic criteria. Because every building is an extension of mind and because that mind intrudes into free and neutral space, architecture has to be judged according to its place within a spectrum of human values. Architecture participates in society.

12. *Treatise*, p. 8-9.

The power of expression in Garbett's thinking was physiologically explained by the association of ideas, more specifically by the ideas of Archibald Alison. Later in the century associationism would help to evolve the theories of *Einfühlung* and empathy by German thinkers such as Robert Vischer and Theodor Lipps which constitute a more sophisticated explanation of the transmission of mental qualities through inanimate matter.¹³

13. Michael Podro (1982) pp. 100-103 & 176. The problem that is being grappled with is comparable to the one which Wölfflin posed at the beginning of his career, namely how architecture is the expression of an *état d'âme*. Hegel had conjoined content and form, making art the expression of a particular metaphysics developing in time. That would be a fair judgement of Garbett's, and Ruskin's view of the interaction between mind and architecture. Garbett's position with regard to these, however, throws him well back into the eighteenth century.

Garbett's theory regarding architectural expression more closely resembles lord Kames' concept of sympathy, but a definite relation is doubtful. Critically Garbett's concept of architectural character fell back on a more purely architectural tradition represented by Blondel's concept of *caractère* and the *architecture parlante* of subsequent French theory. *Caractère* referred to correspondences of habit between the object and its functional destination. In a normative sense, *caractère* recommended the use of such resemblances as a rhetorical ploy to raise expectations concerning activities within

The Germans made use of a more sophisticated empirical psychology than Garbett at that time had access to and based themselves on an understanding of Kantian aesthetics which he did not pretend to. On the relation between Empathy, or *Einfühlung* and associationism cf. "Empathy," *Dict. Hist. of Ideas*, II, p. 88.

the building. Associationism on the other hand attempted to explain the process of thought which make *caractère* as well as a broader range of expressions possible. Associationism, as a constative theory of perception, was not able endow those trains of thought and the resemblances they work on, with a definite civil purpose or make them subject to duty. That was, however, precisely Garbett's intention.

The civil use of beauty

All this still does not explain why the ability of architecture to express the moral condition of its owner was seized on by Garbett to promote a particular kind of expression, not just as an aesthetic possibility, but a *civil duty*. The answer to that is supplied by Garbett in the form of an analogy between bodily and intellectual processes:

If it be true of the body and its senses, (which I believe no physiologist denies,) that they are pained or offended only by what tends to injure them, may not the continued and repeated analogies

observed between the material worlds and immaterial worlds lead us to suspect a similar law regarding the mind? The inference seems as fair as any that depends only on analogy.¹⁴

If a sharp object can hurt the body, why should not an ugly object hurt the mind? Ugliness is a cause of spiritual and mental pain:

If, as all admit, it is the mind alone, that sees, tastes, feels, likes and dislikes objects of art or taste, are not these self-preservative antipathies of the mind to be respected, as well as those of the body? does not this become a matter not of refinement and luxury, but of interest and DUTY? Are not ugly objects to be withdrawn as inflicting mental injuries, just the same as a nuisance, a noise, or a stench, which is known to be injurious to the body, because unpleasant? (...) Habit counteracts and renders us insensible to the unpleasantness, but not the injury.

14. *Treatise*, p. 10.

Who then shall dare to guess the difference in mental health, between a people living surrounded and immersed in objects of bad taste, or in objects of good taste, between a people whose works are all utilitarian, and one whose works are all artistic. These extreme cases, remember are not imaginary. History has afforded examples of both.¹⁵

Such statements preparing the road to a non-oppressive environment have since become truisms. They probably gained a wider currency from the concerns that city-life was generating within the medical profession during the nineteenth century.¹⁶

Ruskin had included the promotion of mental health in his definition of architecture.¹⁷ But even though he supplied many of the insights for Garbett's

15. *Treatise*, p. 10-11.

16. Asa Briggs (1968) pp. 19 ff.

17. Ruskin, *Seven Lamps*, "Lamp of Sacrifice," § I, p. 31,

idea of a morally upright architecture, he had not elaborated the concept of aesthetic health in that way. It may well have been that Ruskin prompted Garbett to take a closer look at the problem of the relationship between beauty and health. A similar remark about the physiological working of ugliness occurs as a tangential reference in Samuel Ware's *Tracts on Vaults* where he writes that *an ugly object is as much a nuisance to one man as a smoky atmosphere is to another*.¹⁸ But any visible contributing factor in the formulation the link between mental health and architecture must be seen in the wider context of Garbett's obvious interest in moral philosophy generally.

Beauty and moral well-being have always in some form or other been connected. In the Platonic-Christian world-view, beauty is the signature of both truth and goodness. Here that equation is restated by Rameau's nephew in conversation with Diderot:

18.Ware (1822) p. 34.

*The reign of Nature is quietly coming in, and that of my trinity, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail: truth, which is the father, begets goodness which is the son, whence proceeds the beautiful which is the holy ghost*¹⁹

Although many architectural theorists had made the connection between architectural beauty and well-being, none had argued through the connection making the health of a whole civilisation so deliberately dependent on the expressive powers of the built environment.

Shaftesbury had introduced beauty as the signature of civility and so had prepared the concept of a moral sense modelled on the sense of beauty which was subsequently elaborated in Hutcheson's *Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* of 1725. This

19.Diderot, *Rameau's Nephew*, Harmondsworth 1966, p. 101

work was a conscious response to Shaftesbury's ideas. Significantly, Hutcheson's *Inquiry* is divided into two treatises of which the first concerns beauty and the second virtue, thus the rhetorical structure is made to resemble a division in Hutchesonian metaphysics whereby aesthetics is prior to ethics.²⁰ This sequence is echoed by Garbett in his

20. The full title, both exhibits his respect for Shaftesbury as well as his taking up the challenge made by Locke to introduce a mathematics of morality: *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue; in Two Treatises, In Which the Principles of the Late Earl of Shaftesbury Are Explain'd and Defended, Against the Author of the "Fable of the Bees" and the Ideas of Moral Good and Evil Are Established, According to the Sentiments of the Antient Moralists. With an Attempt to Introduce a Mathematical Calculation in Subjects of Morality*, London 1725.

chain of values in which so-called lower or physical beauties precede higher moral ones. It is known that Garbett had studied the works of Hutcheson.²¹ He may well have been familiar with the passage by Shaftesbury quoted in note 25 below, or other vaguely similar passages in the *Characteristicks*, if only through Hutcheson's treatment of them.²²

The writings of the third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713) as such constitute an important prelude to Garbett's ideas. Shaftesbury provides the basic arguments for Garbett to do away with a sharp division between beauty and the supposedly practical sides of the Vitruvian triad. Influenced as he was by the Cambridge Platonists, Shaftesbury reinforces the necessity of including beauty in moral life, of consciously joining

21. *Treatise*, p. 51-52

22. On the relationship between Shaftesbury and Hutcheson see Kivy (1976) pp. 9-21.

utility and beauty in what he dubs as *the polite!*²³

Politeness, for Shaftesbury is an equivalent for civilised society. It means a studied demeanour, a conscious moral stand represented by an acquired pose which is, through the philosophical working of the rituals of property, antecedent to Garbett's architectural politeness. At the same time politeness refers back to Cicero's (and Vitruvius') concept of Decorum. The passage quoted at some length in note 25 from his *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* displays the exact anatomy of that synthesis between beauty and moral behaviour, its consequent reciprocation and its natural model: physical health. Moral health and physical health go hand in hand, just as beauty and goodness are two sides of the same coin. The philosophical cohabitation of moral and physical health had been made possible through the

23.Kivy (1976) pp. 2-4.

equivalence of ugliness and pain, beauty and pleasure.²⁴

24.Addressing the grown youth of our polite World, he writes:...*let the appeal be to these whose Relish is retrievable, and whose Taste may yet be formed in Morals; as it seems to be, already, in exterior Manners and Behaviour. That there is really a STANDARD of this latter kind, will immediately, and on the first view, be acknowledg'd. The Contest is only, "Which is right:-Which the unaffected Carriage, and Just Demeanour? And Which the affected and false?" (...) There are few so affectedly clownish, as absolutely to disown Good-breeding, and renounce the NOTION OF A BEAUTY in outward Manners and Department. With such as these, (...) I cou'd scarce be tempted to bestow the least Pains or Labour, towards convincing 'em of a Beauty in inward Sentiments and Principles. Whoever has any Impression of what we call Gentility or Politeneß, is already so acquainted with the DECORUM, and **The Necessity of Architecture, Chapter Eight***

GRACE of things, that he will readily confess a Pleasure and Enjoyment in the very Survey and Contemplation of this kind. Now if in the way of polite Pleasure, the Study and Love of BEAUTY be essential; the Study and Love of SYMMETRY and ORDER, on which Beauty depends, must also be essential, in the same respect. 'Tis impossible we can advance the least in any Relish or Taste of outward Symmetry and Order; but we must necessarily acknowledge that the proportionate and regular State, is the truly prosperous and natural in every Subject. The same Features which make Deformity, create Incommodiousness and Disease. And the same Shapes and Proportions which make Beauty afford Advantage by adapting to Activity and Use. Even in the imitating or designing Arts (...) the Truth or Beauty of every Figure or Statue is measur'd from the Perfection of Nature, in her just adapting of every Limb and Proportion to the Activity,

Shaftesbury's concept of politeness is a logical consequence of the moral development of the Socratic maxim concerning beauty and function. Things not only become beautiful when they are functional; symmetry and just proportion are not just tests of function; the equation

Strength and Dexterity, Life and Vigour of the particular Species or Animal design'd. Thus Beauty and Truth are plainly joined with the NOTION of Utility and Convenience, even in the Apprehension of every ingenious artist, the Architect, the Statuary, or the Painter. 'Tis the same in the Physician's way. Natural Health is the just Proportion, Truth, and regular course of things, in a Constitution. 'Tis the inward beauty of the BODY. And when the Harmony and just Measures of the rising Pulses, the circulating Humours, and the moving Airs or Spirits are disturb'd or lost, Deformity enters, and with it Calamity and Ruin. Shaftesbury (1984) pp. 220-222.

is reversible: Beauty in architecture has itself become a necessary function, as basic as, say, stability. Beauty in architecture not only denotes the physical as well as the moral health of society, of the builder, of the owner of whomever has managed to stamp his mind upon the building, but is itself also an instrument of health. The effects of ignoring such connections are described in a passage which echoes Alberti:

And will any one dare to say that this courtesy is useless? writes Garbett, Will any one dare affirm, for instance, that when the fearful cry of "Guerre au Chateau, paix a la chaumiere," arose from misguided millions, there was no difference observed between the mild, pleasant-fronted chateau,-which though embattled did not frown, but by its benign expression seemed the protector of the surrounding cottages, and by its symmetry and regular features resembled an organism of nature, not its own, but belonging to the surrounding scene,-and the rude heap of excrescences which, oyster-like, "concentrated all in self." bore no apparent relation to any thing without, but instantly turned its back on the beholder, (every side being in fact a back), and said as plainly as forms could speak, "Stand off, noli mi tangere; I care not a straw

for you; I have nothing in common with such a vulgar herd?" I doubt not that, had many buildings of this last description then existed in France (unfortunately there were few, or none), they would have done good service by bearing the brunt of the storm, and saving some of their more courteous neighbours.²⁵

A building is not alive, but it participates in the life of its owner. It is endowed with certain qualities that pertain to the living. Those qualities address themselves to the moral sense. At the same time, as we have seen from the passage just quoted it is a political instrument, essential to the organic conservatism as advocated by Burke and obviously supported by Garbett. The powerful must operate the politics of fear at their own peril, but as far as Garbett is concerned, their conservatism would be better served by benevolence.

Hume's society: benevolence as an extreme virtue

25. *Treatise*, p. 8-9.

The mind can only perceive selfishness in inanimate objects by analogy to itself, that is, by analogy to animate and moral beings capable of want and desire. For a building to be perceived as selfish or polite the concept of architecture requires a philosophical substructure based on a concept of society as a cohesive force to deal with want.

Hume's *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* has a chapter entitled "Why utility pleases".²⁶ The argument leading up to this chapter assumes that the underlying principle of political society is the idea of utility. Usefulness is the only binding and motive principle in society. Society is a cohesive force which exists because there is want. Society is useful to its participants in that it regulates the production and distribution of useful items such as food, shelter etc.

Few enjoyments, writes Hume, are given us from the open and liberal hand of nature; but by art, labour and industry, we can extract them in great

26.Hume (1972) pp. 212 ff.

*abundance. Hence the ideas of property become necessary in all civil society.*²⁷

The act of consecration which designates property also provokes moral conduct. In a world where there is natural abundance, there would be no need of property. In a world which was totally evil, the concept of property would be irrelevant. In this world however, where want is rife, but where abundance can be worked for, it is *useful* to have property and therefore there is a consequent need for the idea of justice. The concept of justice regulates property. Law upholds justice by prescribing a code of behaviour with regard to property. Law determines the relationship between the individual and society generally and keeps the balance between personal interest and the collective interest. That is also the reason *why we have humanity or a fellow feeling with others*. It is simply because it is useful to self-preservation.²⁸

27.Hume (1972) p. 219.

28.Ibidem.

Benevolence which services the relationship between the individual and society is not merely a virtue, it is to a differing degree in every person, an instinct. Its primary ingredient is usefulness to self *and* to society; it is the single most effective medium of a symbiotic relationship between the two. Utility pleases because it promotes a good. Benevolence is specifically concerned with promoting a greater good. All the other virtues are subject to corruption when taken to an extreme, all that is, except benevolence, there is no limit to the promotion of good. It is the ultimate manifestation of utility. Each of the elements introduced by Hume can now be recognised in Garbett's icon of a beautiful architecture as a socially useful architecture:

*A building devoid of architecture displeases all who see it, (...) because they see and feel that it benefits its owner at their expense.*²⁹

29. *Treatise*, p. 7.

Vitruvius' concept of utility has by Garbett been extended to incorporate architectural beauty. Law and architectural theory have to an uncanny extent become indistinguishable in a society in which utility is the binding force towards a civilised progress. Justice lies at the very basis of the process of civilisation forcing everything to coagulate into a symbiotic process of domestication by appropriation. Justice represents a sort of moral gravity by which everything assembles into complex relations of ownership. To improve the world it is necessary to progress towards an extreme benevolence. Benevolence is the single most effective moving power of the process of civilisation. As it is the idea of property which makes architecture partake in moral society; and as a building is, by nature and in the first instance, a necessary obstacle to society, then that property must, in order to further

civilisation, be benevolent. A building must express the benevolence of the owner within. Emerson's use of the word selfishness with regard to great mechanical works, should now be quoted in full:

Is not the selfish and even cruel aspect which belong to our great mechanical works -to mills, railways, and machinery- the effect of the mercenary impulses which these works obey. When its errands are noble and adequate, a steamboat bridging the Atlantic between Old and New England, and arriving at its ports with the punctuality of a planet, is a step of man into harmony with nature (...) When science is learned in love, and its powers are wielded by love, they will appear the supplements and continuations of the material creation.

It is the mercenary impulses which are at fault. The cure for architectural selfishness is the broadening out of these impulses to secure a personal good which does not deny, but actively proclaims a greater good. Therefore, as far as Garbett is concerned, the building is to transmit the *thought and consideration* which an

owner must feel with regard to society as a whole.

The negative art of politeness

Politeness is in that sense a negative art, as it consists *not in aiming at a positive good, but at avoiding a positive evil.*³⁰ It aims to neutralise Schopenhauer's obstacle and to allow once more the free flow of painlessness. As long as men are men they will not be pampered by courtesy but exasperated at the lack of it, provoked by the idea that a great building will benefit none but its owner. Politeness is a first step in a benevolent attitude, whereby a pose is assumed which affects a concern for the spectator and society as a whole in fact whereby the building no longer expresses the owner's character in the raw but moulds him to the obligations of society.

The moral maze

This immediately draws architecture further and further into the maze which is

30. *Treatise*, p. 10.

moral life and its dubious system of classification into, for example, genuine and affected poses. Garbett is forced to take the prescription of a moral architecture deeper and deeper into a resemblance with human behaviour similarly making a distinction between a *natural politeness* and an *artificial politeness* in architecture.

The problems inherent in Garbett's proposition for an architectural politeness have now fully surfaced. It is not architecture which has to improve but the owners' whole substance, including his home and his institutions. Greenough intelligently replied to Garbett's plea for politeness in architecture, saying that, quite simply, man was selfish:

Mr. Garbett, in his learned and able treatise on the principles of design in architecture, has dissected the English house and found with the light of two words, fallen from Mr. Emerson, the secret of the inherent ugliness of that structure. It is the cruelty and selfishness of a London

House, he says (and I think he proves it too), which affects us so disagreeably as we look upon it. Now, these qualities in a house, like the blear-eyed stolidity of a habitual sot, are symptoms, not diseases. Mr. Garbett should see herein the marvellous expression of which bricks and mortar can be made the vehicles. In vain he will attempt to get by embellishment a denial of selfishness, so long as selfishness reigns. To medicate the symptoms will never, at best do more than affect a metastasis -suppress an eruption.³¹

Greenough has hit the bull's eye with regard to Garbett's morality and by extension to that of Ruskin and many architectural moralists, in that it is rarely architecture they are trying to improve but humanity in general. It is for this reason that both Garbett and Ruskin eventually put aside their concern for architecture

31.Greenough (1969) pp. 78-79. The passage is also quoted by De Zurko (1957) pp. 221-222.

and went in search of a more direct involvement for society, involving themselves in all sorts of utopian and socialist schemes. The ingredients for that recipe were first brought together in their art-theories. Garbett's architectural theory is in essence really a moral philosophy.

Rather than emphasising the influence of moral philosophy and the theory of law, the moral demands Garbett makes on architecture should, perhaps, have been interpreted against the insistent background of contemporary evangelicalism which preached that everything should shout for the betterment of our consciences and so for the improvement of society in general. The *Treatise* propounds an architectural equivalent of common morality which says that to improve mankind one must begin by oneself, automatically relating the steps of man to the steps of mankind. Buildings in order participate in the process of civilisation must help to eradicate a destructive, isolating

selfishness as symbolised by the egocentric view of the oyster, and promote instead a more subtle and long-term form of self-interest which is embodied in the concept of society and civilisation. That refined self-love resides in benevolence which is based on a utilitarian conception of the relationship between the individual and society.³² Buildings in that relationship have to appear polite, paying tribute, not solely to the riches and power of the owner and his exclusive concern for his own well-being but using his riches to greater effect in an act of benevolence towards the environment as a whole. That is how the individual and the mass become interdependent aspects of the same process of civilisation.³³

32.Hume (1972) pp. 205 ff & 218 ff.

33.The possibility of interpreting politeness as a Communist approach to architecture occurred to Garbett as well and it obviously bothered him, at one point he writes: *Is architecture*

then, it will be asked, a concession to communism, and a pampering of the worst feelings of a mob? By no means: if it be so, then is common politeness the same...in: Treatise, p. 9.