
The hype and hysteria surrounding the 1988 "Deconstructivist Architecture" exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art blurred an important distinction of terms in the relation of architecture and deconstruction. On the one hand was the ongoing problematic of architectural representation or meaning, the legacy of the architectural theory of the 1970s. In many ways so-called deconstructivist architecture continued the research of meaning but shifted from attempts to develop stable and controllable architectural meanings, adequate to a broad cultural consensus, to attempts to disrupt and disperse meaning, to seize on the fragmentation of present culture and the impossibility of consensus. On the other hand were the facts that an architectural metaphor had dominated the history of philosophy from Plato to Kant to Heidegger to Derrida, and that Derrida had declared: "Deconstruction itself resembles an architectural metaphor... It is not simply the technique of an architect who knows how to de-construct what has been constructed, but a probing that touches upon the technique itself, upon the authority of the architectural metaphor and thereby constitutes its own architectural rhetoric... One could say that there is nothing more architectural than deconstruction, but also nothing less architectural." If his curatorial and editorial roles in the "Deconstructivist Architecture" exhibition associated Mark Wigley with the former understanding of the architecture/deconstruction relation, his most important theoretical work places him squarely within the latter, in questions of philosophy's use of architecture as a figure of its own practices of building and interrogating structures.

Wigley turns the probing of the authority of the architectural metaphor back on the writings of Derrida, in an attempt to show that central (Heideggerian) notions of deconstruction like ground, structure, ornament, domestication, tomb, and institution cannot but produce an "architecture," and that architectural thinking—so implicated is it in the economy of translation of such notions—at once preserves and threatens philosophy. The translation of deconstruction in architecture, in fact, constitutes what it claims to simply reproduce. "The architectural translation of deconstruction, which appears to be the last-minute, last-gasp application, turns out to be part of the very production of deconstructive discourse from the beginning, an ongoing event organized by the terms of an ancient contract between architecture and philosophy that is inscribed within the structure of both discourses."

"The Translation of Architecture" is one mark of an important moment in architectural theory, a moment when architecture was understood as, inter alia, a way of doing philosophy—not representing or illustrating philosophical concepts but rather thinking philosophical problems through architecture. That the philosophical problems are now architectural (ornament/structure) rather than linguistic (form/content) entails that questions of meaning give way to questions of grounding (fixing, stabilizing, authorizing) and the ways in which architecture and philosophy constantly appeal to one another for the ground they cannot generate out of their own internal economies.
Notes
How then to translate deconstruction in architectural discourse? Perhaps it is too late to ask this preliminary question. What is left to translate? Or, more important, what is always left by translation? Not just left behind but left specifically for architecture. What remains of deconstruction for architecture? What are the remains that can be located only in architecture, the last resting place of deconstruction? The question of translation is, after all, a question of survival. Can deconstruction survive architecture?

1.
It is now over twenty years since Derrida's first books were published. Suddenly his work has started to surface in architectural discourse. This appears to be the last discourse to invoke the name of Derrida. Its reading seems the most distant from the original texts, the final addition to a colossal stack of readings, an addition that marks in some way the beginning of the end of deconstruction, its limit if not its closure.

After such a long delay—a hesitation whose strategic necessity must be examined—there is now such haste to read Derrida in architecture. But it is a reading that seems at once obvious and suspect. Suspect in its very obviousness. Deconstruction is understood to be unproblematically architectural. There seems to be no translation, but just a metaphoric transfer, a straightforward application of theory from outside architecture to the practical domain of the architectural object. The hesitation does not seem to have been produced by some kind of internal resistance on the part of that object. On the contrary, there is no evidence of work, no task for the translator, no translation. Just a literal application, a transliteration. Architecture is understood as a representation of deconstruction, the material representation of an abstract idea. The recent reception of Derrida's work follows the classical teleology from idea to material form, from initial theory to final practice, from presence to representation. Architecture, the most material of the discourses, sees the most detached from the original work, the most suspect of the applications, the last application, the representational ornament that cannot influence the tradition it is added to, a veneer masking as much as it reveals of the structure beneath. The last layer, just an addition, no translation. Yet.

But how to translate? Deconstruction is no more than a subversion of the architectural logic of addition which sets into play a certain thought of translation. But one cannot simply consider translation outside and above either deconstruction or architecture. The question immediately becomes complicated. There is no hygienic starting point, no superior logic to apply. There are no principles to be found in some domain that governs both deconstructive discourse and architectural discourse. Nevertheless, certain exchanges are already occurring between them. Architecture, translation and deconstruction are already bound together, already defining an economy whose pathological symptoms can be studied. It is a matter of identifying the logic of translation that is already in operation. Since
there is no safe place to begin, one can only enter the economy and trace its convoluted geometry in order to describe this scene of translation.

This can be done by locating that moment in each discourse where the other is made thematic, where the other comes to the surface. The line of argument that surfaces there can then be folded back on the rest of the discourse to locate other layers of relations. These hidden layers are not simply below the surface. They are within the surface itself, knotted together to form the surface. To locate them involves slipping along faultlines rather than excavation. As there are no principles above or below the convoluted folds of this surface, it is a matter of following some circular line of inquiry, of circulating within the economy, within the surface itself.

2.
Translation surfaces in deconstructive discourse when Derrida, following Walter Benjamin's The Task of the Translator, argues that translation is not the transference, reproduction, or image of an original. The original only survives in translation. The translation constitutes the original it is added to. The original calls for a translation which establishes a nostalgia for the innocence and the life it never had. To answer this call, the translation abuses the original, transforming it.

And for the notion of translation, we would have to substitute a notion of transformation: a regulated transformation of one language by another, of one text by another. We never will have, and in fact never have had, a “transport” of pure signifiers from one language to another, or within one and the same language, that the signifying instrument would leave virgin and untouched.

There is some kind of gap in the original which the translation is called in to cover over. The original is not some organic whole, a unity. It is already corrupted, already fissured. The translation is not simply a departure from the original, as the original is already exiled from itself. Language is necessarily impure. Always divided, it remains foreign to itself. It is the translation that produces the myth of purity and, in so doing, subordinates itself as impure. In constructing the original as original, the translation constructs itself as secondary, exiled. The supplementary translation which appears as a violation of the purity of the work is actually the possibility of that very purity. Its violence to the original is a violent fidelity, a violence called for by the original precisely to construct itself as pure. The abuse of the text is called for by an abuse already within the text. Translation exploits the conflict within the original to present the original as unified.

Consequently, in translation, the text neither lives nor dies, it neither has its original life-giving intention revived (presentation) nor is it displaced by a dead sign (representation). Rather, it just lives on, it survives. This survival is organized by a contract that ensures that translation is neither completed
nor completely frustrated. The contract is the necessarily unfulfilled promise of translation. It defines a scene of incomplete translation, an incompleteness that binds the languages of the original and the translation together in a strange knot, a double bind. This constitutional bond is neither a social contract nor a transcendental contract above both languages. Neither cultural nor acultural, it is other than cultural without being outside culture. The negotiable social contracts within which language operates presuppose this non-negotiable contract which makes language possible, establishing the difference between languages while making certain exchanges between them possible.

This translation contract is not independent of the languages whose economy it organizes. It is inscribed within both languages. Not only is the original already corrupt, already divided, but translation is already occurring across those divisions. The gap between languages passes through each language. Because language is always already divided, inhabited by the other, and constantly negotiated with it, translation is possible. The translation within a language makes possible translation outside it. Which is to say that one language is not simply outside the other. Translation occurs across a gap folded within rather than between each language. It is these folds that constitute language. The contract is no more than the geometry of these folds, the organization of the gaps.

Consequently, any translation between architecture and deconstruction does not occur between the texts of architectural discourse and those of philosophical discourse. Rather, it occupies and organizes both discourses. Within each there is an architectural translation of philosophy and a philosophical translation of architecture. To translate deconstruction in architectural discourse is not, therefore, to faithfully recover some original, undivided sense of deconstruction. Rather, it is one of the abuses of the texts signed by Derrida that constitutes them as originals. To translate deconstruction in architectural discourse is to examine the gaps in deconstructive writing that demand an architectural translation in order that those texts be constituted as deconstructive. The architectural translation of deconstruction is literally the production of deconstruction.

This production must be organized by the terms of a contract between architecture and philosophy which is inscribed within the structure of both in a way that defines a unique scene of translation.

3.

A preliminary sketch of this scene can be drawn by developing Heidegger's account of the relationship between architecture and philosophy. Heidegger examines the way in which philosophy describes itself as architecture. Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, for example, describes metaphysics as an "edifice" erected on secure foundations laid on the most stable ground. Kant criticizes previous philosophers for their tendency to "complete its speculative structures as speedily as may be, and only afterwards to enquire whether these foundations are reliable." The edifice of metaphysics has fallen apart and is "in ruins" because it has been erected on "groundless assertions" unquestioningly inherited from the philosophical tradition. To restore a secure foundation, the critique starts the "thorough preparation of the ground" with the "clearing, as it were, and levelling of what has hitherto been wasteland." The edifice of metaphysics is understood as a grounded structure.

Heidegger argues that Kant's attempt to lay the foundations is the necessary task of all metaphysics. The question of metaphysics has always been that of the ground (Grund) on which things stand even though it has been explicitly formulated in these terms only in the modern period inaugurated by Descartes. Metaphysics is no more than the attempt to locate the ground. Its history is that of a succession of different names (logos, ratio, arche, etc.) for the ground. Each of them
designates "Being," which is understood as presence. Metaphysics is the identification of the ground as "supporting presence" for an edifice. It searches for "that upon which everything rests, what is always there for every being as its support." For Heidegger, metaphysics is no more than the determination of ground-as-support.

Metaphysics is the question of what the ground will withstand, of what can stand on the ground. The motif of the edifice, the grounded structure, is that of standing up. Philosophy is the construction of propositions that stand up. The ability of its constructs to stand is determined by the condition of the ground, its supporting presence. Heidegger repeatedly identifies presence with standing. The "fundamental" question of metaphysics (why there are beings rather than nothing) asks of a being "on what does it stand?" Standing up through construction makes visible the condition of the ground.

But in Heidegger's reading, construction does not simply make visible a ground that precedes it. The kind of ground clearing Kant attempts does not simply precede that construction of the edifice. The ground is not simply independent of the edifice. The edifice is not simply added to the ground; it is not simply an addition. For Heidegger, a building does not stand on a ground that preceded it and on which it depends. Rather, it is the erection of the building that establishes the fundamental condition of the ground. Its structure makes the ground possible. The ground is constituted rather than revealed by that which appears to be added to it. To locate the ground is necessarily to construct an edifice. Consequently, philosophy's successive relayings of the foundation do not preserve a single, defined edifice. Rather, it is a matter of abandoning the traditional structure by removing its foundations. The form of the edifice changes as the ground changes.

Having cleared the ground, Kant must reassess its load-bearing capacity and "lay down the complete architectonic plan" of a new philosophy in order to "build upon this foundation." The edifice must be redesigned.Relaying the foundations establishes the possibility of a different edifice. For Heidegger, the laying of the foundation is the "projection of the intrinsic possibility of metaphysics" through an interrogation of the condition of the ground. This interrogation is the projection of a plan, the tracing of an outline, the drawing, the designing of an edifice, the drawing of the design out of the ground. Interrogating the condition of the ground defines certain architectonic limits, certain structural constraints within which the philosopher must work as a designer. The philosopher is an architect, endlessly attempting to produce a grounded structure.

In these terms, the history of philosophy is that of a series of substitutions for structure. Every reference to structure is a reference to an edifice erected on a ground, an edifice from which the ground cannot simply be removed. The motif of the edifice is that of a structure whose free play is constrained by the ground. The play of representations is limited, controlled, by presence: "The concept of centered structure is in fact the concept of a play based on a fundamental ground, a play constituted on the basis of a fundamental immobility and a reassuring certitude, which itself is beyond the reach of play." Philosophy is the attempt to restrain the free play of representation by establishing the architectonic limits provided by the ground. It searches for the most stable ground in order to exercise the greatest control over representation.

The metaphor of grounded structure designates the fundamental project of metaphysics to produce a universal language that controls representation, a logos. Heidegger identifies the original sense of the word logos as "gathering" in a way that lets things stand, the standing of construction. The link between structure and presence organizes traditional accounts of language. The means by which language is grounded is always identified with structure.
Metaphysics maintains its protocol of presence/presentation/representation with an account of language that privileges speech over writing. While speech is promoted as presentation of pure thought, writing is subordinated as representation of speech. Speech is identified with structure which makes visible the condition of the ground it is bonded to. Phonetic writing, as the representation of speech, is identified with ornament that represents the structure it is added to. If writing ceases to be phonetic, if it loses its bond with speech, it becomes representation detached from pure presence, attached to the structure like an ornament referring away from the structure. The protocol of metaphysics sustained by the traditional account of language as thought/speech/phonetic writing/nonphonetic writing is established by the architectural motif of ground/structure/ornament.

Metaphysics is dependent on an architectural logic of support. Architecture is the figure of the addition, the structural layer, one element supported by another. Metaphysics's determination of the ground-as-support presupposes a vertical hierarchy from ground through structure to ornament. The idea of support, of structure, is dependent on a certain view of architecture which defines a range of relationships from fundamental (foundational) to supplementary (ornamental). With each additional layer, the bond is weaker. The structure is bonded to the ground more securely than the ornament is bonded to the structure. But as the distance from the ground becomes greater, the threat to the overall structure diminishes. The vertical hierarchy is a mechanism of control that makes available the thought of the ground-as-support which is metaphysics.

Structure makes present the ground. Structure is grounding, submission to the authority of presence. Ornament either represents the grounding of structure or deviates from the line of support, detaching itself from the ground in order to represent that which is other than the structure. Philosophy attempts to tame ornament in the name of the ground, to control representation in the name of presence. The philosophical economy turns on the status of ornament. It is the structure/ornament relationship that enables us to think of support, and thereby, to think of the ground.

4.

The strategic importance of the architectural metaphor discussed above emerges when Heidegger examines the status of art. Metaphysics's determination of ground-as-support also determines art as a merely representative "addition" to a utilitarian object, a "superstructure" added to the "substructure" which, in turn, is added to the ground. The architectural metaphor organizes this relationship: "It seems almost as though the thingy element in the art work is like the substructure into and upon which the other, authentic element is built." It is the "support" to which the artwork is added, the presentation of the ground to which the artwork is added as a representation.

But it is not just the internal structure of the art object that is understood in these architectural terms, it is also the status of art as a discourse. Heidegger notes that metaphysics treats art itself as a superstructure added to the substructure of philosophy. Metaphysics understands itself as a grounded structure to which is attached the representational ornament of art. It subordinates the arts, and therefore architecture, by employing the vertical hierarchy dependent on a certain understanding of architecture. Art is subordinated by being located furthest from the ground. Architecture, then, plays a curious strategic role. It is able to pass between philosophy and art in a unique way. It is involved in a kind of translation. The metaphor circulates between and within the two systems, complicating them as it folds back on itself. A convoluted economy is sustained by the description of architecture as ornamented structure, which enables art to be subordinated to philosophy, even
while philosophy describes itself as architecture. Philosophy describes itself in terms of that thing which it subordinates.

Heidegger argues that art is actually "foundational" to the philosophical tradition that subordinates it to the level of ornament. This convolution is doubled in the case of architecture itself. Metaphysics organizes itself around an account of the object as grounded structure. It projects an account of architecture outside itself which it then appeals to as an outside authority. It literally produces an architecture. As Derrida argues, in reading Kant's use of the architectural metaphor, philosophy "represents itself as part of its part, as an art of Architecture. It re-presents itself, detaches itself, dispatches an emissary, one part of itself outside itself to bind the whole, to fill up or to heal the whole which has suffered detachment." It does so to cover up some kind of gap, some internal division. Metaphysics produces the architectural object as the paradigm of ground-as-support in order to veil its own lack of support, its ungrounded condition. Philosophy represents itself as architecture, it translates itself as architecture, producing itself in the translation. The limits of philosophy are established by the metaphorical status of architecture.

Philosophy draws an edifice, rather than draws on an edifice. It produces an architecture of grounded structure which it then uses for support, leaning on it, resting within it. The edifice is constructed to make theory possible, then subordinated as a metaphor in order to defer to some higher, non-material truth. Architecture is constructed as a material reality in order to liberate some higher domain. As material, it is but a metaphor. The most material condition is used to establish the most ideal order, which is then bound to reject it as merely material. The status of material oscillates. The metaphor of the ground, the bedrock, the base, the fundamental, inverts to become base in the sense of degraded, material, less than ideal. The vertical hierarchy inverts itself. In this inversion, architecture flips from privileged origin to gratuitous supplement, from foundation to ornament.

Philosophy treats its architectural motif as but a metaphor that can and should be discarded as superfluous. The figure of the grounded structure is but an illustration, a useful metaphor that illustrates the nature of metaphysics but outlives its usefulness and must be abandoned in the final form of metaphysics, a representation to be separated from the fundamental presentation, a kind of scaffolding to be discarded when the project is complete, a frame that traces the outline of the building, a trace that lacks substance but is structurally necessary, an open frame that is the very possibility of a closed structure to which it then becomes an unnecessary appendage. Scaffolding is that piece of structure which becomes ornamental. When philosophy reflects upon its own completion, it defines architecture as metaphorical. Metaphysics is the determination of architecture as metaphor.

But can architecture be so simply discarded? The use of the figure of structure "is only metaphorical, it will be said. Certainly. But metaphor is never innocent. It orients research and fixes results. When the spatial model is hit upon, when it functions, critical reflection rests within it." The very attempt to abandon metaphor involves metaphors. Even the concept that the metaphorical can be detached from the fundamental is itself metaphorical. Metaphysics grounds itself in the metaphors it claims to have abandoned. Metaphor "is the essential weight which anchors discourse in metaphysics" rather than a superfluous ornament. Metaphor is fundamental. The metaphor of the grounded structure in particular cannot be discarded in order to reveal the ground itself. The "fundamental" is an architectural metaphor, so architecture cannot be abandoned in favor of the fundamental.

Thus, the criteria for a classification of philosophical metaphors are borrowed from a derivative philosophical discourse... They are metaphorical, resisting every meta-metaphorics, the values of a concept, foundation, and theory... What is fundamental corresponds to the desire
for a firm and ultimate ground, a terrain to build on, the earth as the support for an artificial structure.\textsuperscript{11}

Philosophy can define only a part of itself as nonmetaphorical by employing the architectural metaphor. This metaphor organizes the status of metaphor. In so doing, it organizes the tradition of philosophy that claims to be able to discard it. Architectural figures cannot be detached from philosophical discourse. The architectural metaphor is not simply one metaphor among others. More than the metaphor of foundation, it is the foundational metaphor. It is therefore not simply a metaphor.

The architectural motif is bound to philosophy. The bond is contractual, not in the sense of an agreement signed by two parties, but a logical knot of which the two parties are but a side effect. More than the terms of exchange within and between these discourses, it produces each discourse as a discourse. The translation contract between architecture and philosophy works both ways. Each constructs the other as an origin from which they are detached. Each identifies the other as other. The other is constructed as a privileged origin which must then be discarded. In each there is this moment of inversion.

This primal contract, which is neither a contingent, cultural artifact nor an atemporal, acultural principle, establishes the possibility of a social contract that separates architecture and philosophy and constitutes them as discourses. The eventual status of architecture as a discipline began to be negotiated by the first texts of architectural theory, which drew on the canons of the philosophical tradition to identify the proper concern of the newly constituted figure of the architect with drawing (disegno) that mediates between the idea and the building, the formal and the material, the soul and the body, the theoretical and the practical. Architecture—architectural drawing—is neither simply a mechanical art bound to the bodily realm of utility, nor a liberal art operating in the realm of ideas, but is their reconciliation, the bridge between the two. Architectural theory thus constructs architecture as a bridge between the dominant oppositions of metaphysics and constitutes itself by exploiting the contractual possibility already written into the philosophical tradition wherein it describes itself as architecture.

It is not simply that architecture has some familiar unambiguous material reality that is drawn upon by philosophy. Rather, philosophy draws an architecture, presents a certain understanding, a certain theory, of architecture. The terms of the contract are the prohibition of a different description of the architectural object, or rather, the dissimulation of the object.

To describe the privileged role of architecture in philosophy is not to identify architecture as the origin from which philosophy derives, but rather to show that the condition effected when philosophy infects itself from outside by drawing on architecture is internal to architecture itself. Architecture is cut from within, and philosophy unwittingly appeals to architecture precisely for this internal torment.

The concern here is to locate certain discursive practices repressed within the pathological mechanisms of this economy, to trace the impact of another account of architecture hidden within the tradition. Deconstruction is not outside the tradition. It achieves its force precisely by inhabiting the tradition, and thereby operating in terms of the contract. The question is, what relationship does deconstruction assume with the account of architecture repressed by that tradition?

The translation of deconstruction in architecture does not simply occur across the philosophy/architecture divide. It is occurring within each discourse. It is not a matter of simply generating a new description of the architectural
object in architectural discourse but rather of locating the account of architecture already operative within deconstructive writing. It is the difference between this account and that of traditional philosophy that marks the precise nature of deconstruction's inhabitation of philosophy. The limits of deconstruction are established by the account of architecture it unwittingly produces.

5.
As architecture is bound up into language, this account can be located precisely in the discussion of translation itself. Inasmuch as deconstruction tampers with the philosophical ideal of translation, it tampers with the ideal of architecture.

Derrida's account of translation is organized around an architectural figure: the tower of Babel. The failure of the tower marks the necessity for translation, the multiplicity of languages, the free play of representation, which is to say the necessity for controlling representation. The collapse of the tower marks the necessity for a certain construction. The figure of the tower acts as the strategic intersection of philosophy, architecture, deconstruction, and translation.

The tower is the figure of philosophy because the dream of philosophy is that of translatability. Philosophy is the ideal of translation. But the univocal language of the builders of the tower is not the language of philosophy; it is an imposed order, a violent imposition of a single language. The necessity of philosophy is defined in the collapse rather than in the project itself. As the desire for translation produced by the incompletion of the tower is never completely frustrated, the edifice is never simply demolished. The building project of philosophy continues but its completion is forever deferred.

The tower is also the figure of deconstruction. Since deconstruction inhabits philosophy, subverting it from within, it also inhabits the figure of the tower. It is lodged in the tower, transforming the representation of its construction. Inasmuch as philosophy is the ideal of translation, deconstruction is the subversion of translation. That subversion is found within the conditions for philosophy, the incompleteness of the tower: "The deconstruction of the Tower of Babel, moreover, gives a good idea of what deconstruction is: an unfinished edifice whose half-completed structures are visible, letting one guess at the scaffolding behind them." Deconstruction identifies the inability of philosophy to establish the stable ground, the deferral of the origin which prevents the completion of the edifice by locating the untranslatable, that which lies between the original and the translation.

But the tower is also the figure of architecture. The necessity of translation is the failure of building that demands a supplementation by architecture. Just as it is the precondition for philosophy, understood as building (presentation), translation also marks the necessity for architecture (representation), but as a representation that speaks of the essence of building, an architecture that represents the ground in its absence: "If the tower had been completed there would be no architecture. Only the incompleteness of the tower makes it possible for architecture as well as the multitude of languages to have a history." The possibility of architecture is bound up with the forever incomplete project of philosophy. Philosophy requires the account of building as grounded and architecture as detached precisely because of this incompleteness. Structural failure produces the need for a supplement, the need for a building/architecture distinction, the need for architecture. Architecture is the translation of building that represents building to itself as complete, secure, undivided.

Since the tower is the figure of deconstruction, architecture, and translation, the question shifts from identifying the common ground between them, the identity, to locating the difference. The once discrete domains become entangled
to the extent that the task becomes to identify the convoluted mechanism of translation that produces the sense of separate identities. This mechanism must be embedded in the scene of translation which bears on the status of structure.

Translation between the discourses is made possible by a breakdown in the sense of structure that is the currency within them. Derrida argues that the incompleteness of the tower is the very structure of the tower. The tower is deconstructed by establishing that "the structure of the original is marked by the requirement to be translated" and that it "in no way suffers from not being satisfied, at least it does not suffer insofar as it is the very structure of the work." There is a gap in the structure that cannot be filled, a gap that can only be covered over. The tower is always already marked by a flaw inasmuch as it is a tower. This is a displacement of the traditional idea of structure. Structure is no longer simply grounding. It is no longer a vertical hierarchy, but a convoluted line. The structure is no longer simply standing on the ground. The building stands on an abyss.

This argument follows Heidegger's attempt to dismantle the edifice of metaphysics in order to reveal the condition of the ground on which it stood. In doing so, he raises the possibility that the ground (Grund) might actually be a concealed "abyss" (Abgrund) so that metaphysics is constructed in ignorance of the instability of the terrain on which it is erected: "we move over this ground as over a flimsily covered abyss." Metaphysics becomes the veiling of the ground rather than the interrogation of it.

Heidegger's later work developed this possibility into a principle. He argues that philosophy has been in a state of "groundlessness" ever since the translation of the ancient Greek terms into the language of metaphysics. This translation substituted the original sense of ground with that of the sense of ground as support, ground as supporting presence to which the world is added. For Heidegger, metaphysics is groundless precisely because it determines the ground as support. The original sense of logos has been lost. With metaphysics, the origin is seen as a stable ground rather than an abyss. The "modern" crisis, the groundlessness of the age of technology, is produced by philosophy's ancient determination of the ground as support for a structure to which representations are added. The crisis of representation is produced by the very attempt to remove representations in order to reveal the supporting presence of the ground. Man is alienated from the ground precisely by thinking of it as secure.

Because of the very familiarity of the principle of ground-as-support, "we misjudge most readily and persistently the deceitful form of its violence." Metaphysics conceals this violence. The architectural motif of the grounded structure is articulated in a way that effects this concealment. The vertical hierarchy is a mechanism of control that veils its own violence.

Heidegger attempts to subvert this mechanism by rereading the status of the architectural motif. He argues that the thought of architecture as a simple addition to building actually makes possible the thought of the naked ground as support. Undermining the division between building and architecture displaces the traditional sense of the ground: "But the nature of the erecting of buildings cannot be understood adequately in terms either of architecture or of engineering construction, nor in terms of a mere combination of the two." The thought of that which is neither building nor architecture makes possible the original ground that precedes the ground as support. The linear logic of addition is confused. The building is not simply added to the ground, the ornament is not simply added to the structure, art is not simply added to philosophy. The vertical hierarchy of ground/structure/ornament is convoluted. The architectural motif undermines itself.

But while certain Heideggerian moves subvert the logic of addition by displacing the traditional account of architecture, Heidegger ultimately con-
tradricts that possibility, confirming the traditional logic by looking for a stable structure. Derrida argues that Heidegger is unable to abandon the tradition of ground-as-support. Indeed, he retains it in the very account of translation he uses to identify its emergence.

At the very moment when Heidegger is denouncing translation into Latin Words, at the moment when, at any rate, he declares Greek speech to be lost, he also makes use of a “metaphor.” Of at least one metaphor, that of the foundation and the ground. The ground of the Greek experience is, he says, lacking in this “translation.” What I have just too hastily called “metaphor” concentrates all the difficulties to come: does one speak “metaphorically” of the ground for just anything? ¹⁵

The thought of ground-as-support is not just produced by a mistranslation. It is itself no more than a certain account of translation. Translation is understood as presentation of the ground, and mistranslation is understood as loss of support, detachment from ground. The collapse of the tower establishes the necessity of translation as one of reconstruction, edification.²⁴ Heidegger’s account of translation undermines itself when dealing with the translation of the original ground into the idea of the edifice. Heidegger appears to employ an account of translation similar to Derrida’s inasmuch as he argues that the violation of the original ground is already there in the Greek original. But then he attempts to go beneath this sense in order to erase the violation, and, in so doing, restores a traditional account of translation.²⁷ He rebuilds the edifice he appears to have undermined.

6.

Derrida departs from Heidegger precisely by following him. He takes the Heideggerian line further until it folds back on itself, transforming itself. “Deconstruction” is a “translation” of two of Heidegger’s terms: Destruction, meaning “not a destruction but precisely a deconstructing that dismantles the structural layers in the system,” and Abbau, meaning “to take apart an edifice in order to see how it is constituted or deconstituted.” ²⁸ Derrida follows Heidegger’s argument that this “deconstructing” or “unbuilding” disturbs a tradition by inhabiting its structure in a way that exploits its metaphorical resources against itself.

The movements of deconstruction do not destroy structures from the outside. They are not possible and effective, nor can they take accurate aim, except by inhabiting those structures. Inhabiting them in a certain way because one always inhabits, and the more when one does not suspect it. Operating necessarily from the inside, borrowing all the strategic and economic resources of subversion from the old structure, borrowing them structurally.²⁹

The concern here is with the way deconstruction inhabits the structure of the edifice, that is, the structure of structure. Deconstruction is neither unbuilding nor demolition. Rather, it is the “soliciting” of the edifice of metaphysics, the soliciting of structure “in the sense that sollicitus, in old Latin means to shake as a whole, to make tremble in entirety.” ³⁰ Solicitation is a form of interrogation which shakes structure in order to identify structural weaknesses, weaknesses that are structural.

Derrida destabilizes the edifice by arguing that its fundamental condition, its structural possibility, is the concealment of an abyss. The edifice of metaphysics claims to be stable because it is founded on the bedrock exposed when all the sedimentary layers have been removed. Deconstruction destabilizes metaphysics by locating in the bedrock the fractures that undermine its structure. The threat to metaphysics is underground. The subversion of presence is an underground operation. Deconstruction subverts the edifice it inhabits by demonstrating that the ground
on which it is erected is insecure: “the terrain is slippery and shifting, mined and undermined. And this ground is, by essence, an underground.” But the fissures in the ground that crack the structure are not flaws that can be repaired. There is no more stable ground to be found. There is no unflawed bedrock.

Consequently, deconstruction appears to locate in metaphysics the fatal flaw that causes its collapse. It appears to be a form of analysis that dismantles or demolishes structures. It appears to be an undoing of construction. It is in this sense that it is most obviously architectural. But this obvious sense misses the force of deconstruction. Deconstruction is not simply architectural. Rather, it is a displacement of traditional thought about architecture.

Now the concept of de-construction itself resembles an architectural metaphor. It is often said to have a negative attitude. Something has been constructed, a philosophical system, a tradition, a culture, and along comes a de-structor and destroys it stone by stone, analyses the structure and dissolves it. Often enough this is the case. One looks at a system—Platonic/Hegelian—and examines how it was built, which keystone, which angle of vision supports the authority of the system. It seems to me, however, that this is not the essence of deconstruction. It is not simply the technique of an architect who knows how to de-construct what has been constructed, but a probing which touches upon the technique itself, upon the authority of the architectural metaphor and thereby constitutes its own architectural rhetoric. Deconstruction is not simply—as its name seems to indicate—the technique of a reversed construction when it is able to conceive for itself the idea of construction. One could say that there is nothing more architectural than de-construction, but also nothing less architectural.

Deconstruction leads to a complete rethinking of the supplemental relationship organized by the architectural motif of ground/structure/ornament. To disrupt metaphysics in this way is to disrupt the status of architecture. But it is not to simply abandon the traditional architectonic. Rather, it demonstrates that each of its divisions are radically convoluted. Each distinction is made possible by that which is neither one nor the other. The architectural logic of addition is subverted by demonstrating that it is made possible by precisely that which frustrates it.

This subversion of structure does not lead to a new structure. Flaws are identified in the structure but do not lead to its collapse. On the contrary, they are the very source of its strength. Derrida identifies the constitutional force of the weakness of a structure, that is, the strength of a certain weakness. Rather than abandoning a structure because its weakness has been found (which would be to remain in complicity with the ideal of a grounded structure), Derrida displaces the architectural motif. Structure becomes “erected by its very ruin, held up by what never stops eating away at its foundations.” Deconstruction is a form of interrogation that shakes structure in order to identify structural flaws, flaws that are structural. It is not the demolition of particular structures. It displaces the concept of structure itself by locating that which is neither support nor collapse.

Structure is perceived through the incidence of menace, at the moment when imminent danger concentrates our vision on the keystone of an institution, the stone which encapsulates both the possibility and the fragility of its existence. Structure then can be methodically threatened in order to be comprehended more clearly and to reveal not only its supports but also that secret place in which it is neither construction nor ruin but lability. This operation is called (from the Latin) soliciting.

The edifice is erected by concealing the abyss on which it stands. This repression produces the appearance of solid ground. The structure does not simply collapse because it is erected on, and fractured by, an abyss. Far from causing its collapse, the
fracturing of the ground is the very possibility of the edifice. Derrida identifies the "structural necessity" of the abyss:

And we shall see that this abyss is not a happy or unhappy accident. An entire theory of the structural necessity of the abyss will be gradually constituted in our reading; the indefinite process of supplementarity has always already inflected presence. . . . Representation in the abyss of presence is not an accident of presence; the desire of presence is, on the contrary, born from the abyss (the indefinite multiplication) of representation, from the representation of the representation, etc.45

The abyss is not simply the fracturing of the ground under the edifice. It is the internal fracturing of the edifice, the convolution of the distinction between building and architecture, structure and ornament, presentation and representation. Architecture always already inhabits and underpins the building it is supposedly attached to. It is this convolution that makes possible the thought of a ground that precedes the edifice, a thought that subordinates architecture as merely an addition. Architecture makes possible its own subordination to building.

Deconstruction is concerned with the untranslatable, the remainder that belongs neither to the original nor to the translation, but nevertheless resides within both. Deconstruction marks the structural necessity of a certain failure of translation. That is to say, the structural necessity of architecture. Architecture becomes the possibility of building rather than a simple addition to it. Inasmuch as translation is neither completed nor completely frustrated, the edifice of metaphysics is neither building nor architecture, neither presentation of the ground nor detachment from it, but the uncanny effacement of the distinction between them, the distinction that is at once the contractual possibility of architectural discourse and the means by which to repress the threat posed by that discourse. Deconstruction traces architecture's subversion of building, a subversion that cannot be resisted because architecture is the structural possibility of building. Building always harbors the secret of its constitutional violation by architecture. Deconstruction is the location of that violation. It locates ornament within the structure itself, not by integrating it in some classical synthetic gesture, but, on the contrary, by locating ornament's violation of structure, a violation that cannot be excised, a constitutional violation that can only be repressed.

7.

Such a gesture does not constitute a method, a critique, an analysis, or a source of legitimation.46 It is not strategic. It has no prescribed aim. Which is not to say that it is aimless. It moves very precisely, but not to some end. It is not a project. It is neither an application of something nor an addition to something. It is, at best, a strange structural condition, an event. It is a displacement of structure that cannot be evaluated in traditional terms because it frustrates the logic of grounding or testing. It is precisely that which is necessary to structure but eludes structural analysis (and all analysis is structural); it is the breakdown in structure that is the possibility of structure.

The repression of certain constitutional enigmas is the basis of the social contract that organizes the discourse. Rather than offering a new account of the architectural object, deconstruction unearths the repressive mechanisms by which that figure of architecture operates. Hidden within the traditional architectural figure is another: the architectural motif is required by philosophy not simply because It is a paradigm of stable structure; it is also required precisely for its instability.

For this reason, to translate deconstruction in architecture is not simply to transform the condition of the architectural object. As metaphysics is the
definition of architecture as metaphor, the disruption of architecture's metaphorical 
condition is a disruption of metaphysics. But this is not to say that this disruption 
occurrss outside the realm of objects. The teleologies of theory/practice, ideal/materia-
lar, etc. do not disappear. Rather, there is a series of nonlinear exchanges within and 
between these domains, exchanges which problematize, but do not abandon, the 
difference. It is thereby possible to operate within the traditional description of archi-
te
tecture as the representation of structure in order to produce objects that make these 

cendencies thematic.

Such gestures are neither simply theoretical, nor simply practical. They are neither a new way of reading familiar architecture, nor the means of producing a new architecture. Objects are already bisected into theory and practice. To translate deconstruction in architecture does not lead simply to a formal reconfig-
uration of the object. Rather, it calls into question the condition of the object, its 
objecthood; it problematizes the condition of the object without simply abandoning 
it. Deconstruction is a concern with theoretical objects, objects whose theoretical 
status and objecthood are problematic, slippery objects that make thematic the theo-
retical condition of objects and the objecthood of theory.

Such gestures do not simply inhabit the prescribed domains of philosophy and architecture. While philosophical discourse and architectural dis-
course depend on an explicit account of architecture, they have no unique claim on that account. The translation contract on which those discourses are based underpin a multiplicity of cultural exchanges. The concern becomes the strategic play of the architectural motif in these exchanges. This cultural production of architecture does not take the form specified in the architectural discourse; architecture does not oc-
cupy the domain allotted to it. Rather than the object of a specific discourse, architecture is a series of discursive mechanisms whose operations can be traced in ways that are unfamiliar to architectural discourse.

Consequently, the status of the translation of deconstruction in architecture needs to be rethought. A more aggressive reading is required, an archi-
tectural transformation of deconstruction that draws on the gaps in deconstruction that demand such an abuse, sites that already operate with a kind of architectural violence. There is a need for a strong reading which locates that which decon-
struction cannot handle of architecture.

Possibilities emerge within architectural discourse that go beyond the displacement of architecture implicit in deconstructive writing. To locate 
these possibilities is to (re)produce deconstruction by transforming it. Such a trans-
formation must operate on the hesitation deconstruction has about architecture, a hesitation that surfaces precisely within its most confident claims about architecture.

Derrida writes:

The "Tower of Babel" does not merely figure the irreducible multiplicity of tongues; it exhibits an incompleteness, the impossibility of finishing, of totalizing, of saturating, of completing something on the order of edification, architectural construction, system and architecture. What the multiplicity of idioms actually limits is not only a "true" translation, a transparent and adequate interexpression, it is also a structural order, a coherence of construct. There is then (let us translate) something like an internal limit to formalization, an incompleteness of the construct. It would be easy and up to a certain point justified to see there the translation of a system in deconstruction."

This passage culminates symptomatically in a sentence that performs the classical philosophical gesture. Architecture is at once given constitutive power and has that power frustrated by returning its status to mere metaphor. Here the tower, the figure of translation, is itself understood as a translation, the architectural translation of
deconstruction. Which, in Derridean terms, is to say a figure that does not simply represent deconstruction, but is its possibility. But an inquiry needs to focus on why an architectural reading of deconstruction is “easy” and what is the “certain point” beyond which it becomes unjustified, improper. A patient reading needs to force the convoluted surface of deconstructive writing and expose the architectural motif within it. But perhaps even an abusive reading of Derrida is insufficient. Inasmuch as deconstruction is abused in architectural discourse, its theory of translation, which is to say its theory of abuse, needs to be rethought. Because of architecture’s unique relationship to translation, it cannot simply translate deconstruction. It is so implicated in the economy of translation that it threatens deconstruction. There is an implicit identity between the untranslatable remainder located by deconstruction and that part of architecture that causes deconstruction to hesitate—the architecture it resists. Consequently, deconstruction does not simply survive architecture.

Notes
2. A text lives only if it lives on [sévivi], and it lives on only if it is at once translatable and untranslatable.... Totally translatable, it disappears as a text, as writing, as a body of language [langue]. Totally untranslatable, even within what is believed to be one language, it dies immediately. Thus triumphant translation is neither the life nor the death of the text, only or already its living on, its life after life, its life after death.” Jacques Derrida, “Living On: Border Lines,” trans. James Hulbert, in *Deconstruction and Criticism* (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), p. 102.
4. Deconstruction is considered here in the context of philosophy. While Derrida repeatedly argues that deconstruction is not philosophy, he also notes that it is not nonphilosophy either. To simply claim that deconstruction is not philosophy is to maintain philosophy by appealing to its own definition of its other. It is to participate in the dominant reading of Derrida that resists the force of deconstruction. That force is produced by identifying the complicity of the apparently nonphilosophical within the philosophical tradition. Deconstruction occupies the texts of philosophy in order to identify a nonphilosophical site within them. Deconstruction cannot be considered outside the texts of philosophy it inhabits, even as a foreigner.
5. “For if the difficulties of translation can be anticipated ... one should not begin by naively believing that the word ‘deconstruction’ corresponds in French to some clear and univocal signification. There is already in ‘my’ language a serious (‘sombre’) problem of translation between what here or there can be envisaged for the word, and the usage itself, the reserves of the word.” Jacques Derrida, “Letter to a Japanese Friend,” in Derrida and Dillenmoe, ed. David Wood and Robert Bernasconi (Coventry: Parousia Press, 1985), p. 1.
7. Ibid., p. 608.
11. Cf the Greek temple in “The Origin of the Work of Art”: “Truth happens in the temple’s standing where it is. This does not mean that something is correctly represented and rendered there, but that what is as a whole is brought into unconcealedness and held therein.” Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971). The edifice is neither a representation of the ground, nor even a presentation, but is the production of the world.
12. "It is precisely the idea that it is a matter of providing a foundation for an edifice already constructed that must be avoided." Martin Heidegger, Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics, trans. James S. Churchill (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962), p. 4.
13. "The foundation of traditional metaphysics is shaken and the edifice . . . begins to totter." Heidegger, Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics, p. 129.
15. Heidegger, Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics, p. 5.
20. Ibid., p. 27.
22. Not in the sense of the structuralist concern for architecture as a kind of language, a system of objects to which language theory can be applied, but as the possibility of thought about language.
29. Ibid., p. 182.
31. This degenerate translation is based on a degeneration that already occurred within the original Greek, requiring a return to a more primordial origin: "But with this Latin translation the original meaning of the Greek word is destroyed, this is true not only of the Latin translation of this word but of all other Roman translations of the Greek philosophical language. What happened in this translation from the Greek into the Latin is not accidental and harmless; it marks the first stage in the process by which we cut ourselves off from the original essence of Greek philosophy. . . . But it should be said in passing that even within Greek philosophy a narrowing of the word set forthwith, although the original meaning did not vanish from the experience, knowledge, and orientation of Greek philosophy." Heidegger, An Introduction to Metaphysics, p. 13.
32. "The perfection of technology is only the echo of the claim to the . . . completeness of the foundation. . . . Thus, the characteristic domination of the principle of ground then determines the essence of our modern technology age." Martin Heidegger, "The Principle of Ground," trans. Keith Hoeller, Man and World 7 (1974), p. 213.
33. Ibid., p. 204.
36. Note how Derrida argues that the university is "built" on the ideal of translation (Derrida, "Living On: Border Lines," pp. 93–94) in the same way that he argues that it is "built" on the ideal of ground as support (Jacques Derrida, "Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of its Pupils," Diacritics, Fall 1983, pp. 11–20).
37. "Beneath the seemingly literal and thus faithful translation there is concealed . . . a trans-
lation without a corresponding, equally authentic experience of what they say. The rootlessness of Western thought begins with this trans-lation." Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," p. 23 (emphasis added). "We are not merely taking refuge in a more literal translation of a Greek word. We are reminding ourselves of what, unexperienced and unthought, unites our familiar and therefore outworn essence of truth." Ibid., p. 52 (emphasis added).


45. Derrida, Of Grammatology, p. 163.

46. "In spite of appearance, deconstruction is neither an analysis nor a critique and its translation would have to take that into consideration, it is not an analysis in particular because the dismantling of a structure is not a regression toward a simple element, toward an indissoluble origin. These values, like that of analysis, are themselves philosophemes subject to deconstruction." Derrida, "Letter to a Japanese Friend," p. 4.