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Describing the Breakdown of Artifact: On Form as Mortal Body and Content as Eternal Spirit

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ABSTRACT

If Reason is the rule of Will, then surviving the forces of Nature must be defined prior to willing to conflict, that is, prior to examining endurance. Schiller wrote: “All other things must; man is the being who wills,”^{vi} for ‘will’ is the one distinctive property of the mind upon the compromise of which nothing less than the very humanity is called into question should man must. Prior to and external to reason or will, The forces of Nature – prior and external to reason or will-- were set to compromise the essence of humanity when the subject of Reason –humankind-- was forced into strife, conflict, or war –the three set apart in extent. By the rule of Will, Reason would make possible conquering the forces of Nature by willing to harmonize with them, so that “the being who wills” may never “must” in exercising his innate will to art: a will to self-express and to define the other at the potential risk of self and jeopardy of the other. Toward subjugating matter to his purposes, the craftsman forever deferred the looming conflict with nature through temperance: regulating the movement of matter in Nature to suite purpose, only deferring an eternal strife to bring thought to the senses against Nature, forever self-recovering back into the purity of yore. In tempering the properties of things, reason made possible subordinating materials to a pursuit of happiness found in representation through imitating or interpreting Nature and her forces.^{iv} Temperance is a combination in due proportion, an adjustment to moderation, a modification in toning down or amplifying properties to bring about a moderate stateⁱⁱⁱ. A building will last for as long as would its masonry against the need for its conception, as *need* is not simply equivalent in meaning to *utility*. Rather, the need for an architecture is the root of an architectural program set to regulate the inextricable union of the mortal body natural and the eternal office or body politic. And while the laws of nature govern all things material in art, need --not simply utility or representation-- remains largely elusive and unaccounted for in nature, as it is entirely the work of reason and must thus be examined thereby.

KEYWORDS Art, war, Hegel, Plato, theory of esthetics, representation, form, ideal content of art

How then would the material work of art represent, in its making, the body politic; an ideal external to government of nature? Material is finite in every one of its perceptible attributes, from visibility and tactility to the duration in which it remains in one form before transforming into another; and so, there may be no sensuous –pertaining to the senses—representation of the eternal, for Eternity has no perceptible bounds. “To each particular stage which art traverses in its development, there is immediately joined a real form. Once time is eliminated, through eliminating attachment to material as property – nearly impossible a quest—or through incorporating time into design, as would be in a temporary construction, performance art, or all things narrative such as fireworks, processions and occasion observance only then would design have reconciled its material core as an essentially finite form clothing a finite ideal content.

It is then, indifferent whether we consider the progress as shown in the development of the idea, or in that of the forms which realize it, since these two terms are closely united, the one to the other, and since the perfecting of the idea as matter appears no less clearly than does the perfecting of the form.” Wrote Hegel in the introduction to his Lectures on

Aesthetics (p.333). Central to understanding the union between *form* and *idea* is continuity, where form continues to exist through as many visible manifestations as physical conditions may allow, ever embodying one idea or another. Unity of significance between form and idea is also unity of appearance since art is the “external manifestation” (p.334) of the idea. Dynamic as it is, “the idea” is the constituting matter of a stream that flows and wanders as far and as long as life itself. In dynamic union, reason and nature meet at the idea that “in virtue of its very nature, cannot remain thus in abstraction and indetermination,” (p. 334) and must be put into visible form that bears the qualities of life. Unable to remain in abstraction, the idea will, by necessity, seek external manifestation and will bestow its properties on its external manifestation. In other words, if ideas flow and wander through and around life and circumstances, so will form. Expecting constancy of form is at odds, not only to nature, but also to reason.

“Reason overruled Necessity by persuading her to guide the greatest part of the things that become toward what is best; in that way and on that principle this universe was fashioned in the beginning by the victory of reasonable persuasion over Necessity.”^{iv} The Craftsman, with an innate impulse to describe his will in visible form, could only make artifacts upon altering qualities of material, tempering them. There arose the Necessity that stood between the Craftsman and his fulfilling the desire to make; and he sought to persuade Necessity, by Reason to let him temper the properties of all things, for he knew that his work could only be as perfect as Nature --the author of all properties of matter-- would allow. Is it possible to liberate the artifact from the qualities of its matter-component? In his essay on the Sublime, Friedrich Schiller wrote that imitation is liberation when creative art copies the show and not the reality. While reality may take place and time in a course of sequence and consequence, show, an artifact of semblance in form and transformation and not of consequence, would come to being only if attended. Show would thus be but theatre and dance: a work of the apparent with no transaction of property, only of pleasure. Form, and transformation would become bearers of meaning and expression beyond the immediacy of the narrative, and the conventional conceptions of gain and loss. The dissolution of the object of reasonable contemplation would be sanctioned as a reasonable risk of self and jeopardy of other. The artifact, external to material possession, would then be free from loss, lamentation, and the presumption of an ideal state of being.

“But as ability is a vigorous and active principle, and as property is sluggish, inert, and timid, it never can be safe from the invasions of ability, unless it be, out of all proportion, predominant in the representation. It must be represented too in great masses of accumulation, or it is not rightly protected. The characteristic essence of property, formed out of the combined principles of its acquisition and conservation, is to be unequal. The great masses therefore which excite envy, and tempt rapacity, must be put out of the possibility of danger. Then they form a natural rampart about the lesser properties in all their gradations.”^v

Envy and rapacity are evoked by enormous property. The public perception of property excites latent sentiments, in turn bringing into question the accumulation of property to enormity. “The Presentation of itself, however, as pure abstraction of self-consciousness consists in showing itself as a pure negation of its objective form.”^{vi} The negation of

form, however, is not to be mistaken for abandonment to natural decay. As much labor and thought is required to mantle or dismantle an artifact. “The negative relation to the object passes into the “form” of the object, into something that is permanent and remains; because it is just for the laborer that the object has independence.”^{vii} The maker defines the object by its externality. The reason of the craftsman –having devised the object-- never departs his self-consciousness and never resides in the work. A visible form –to be recognized by another self-consciousness, the externality of which has, in turn, yet to be verified-- the object can only be recognized and defined by the agency of its maker. The reason in its conception in the first place, the ideal content, maintains the object.

The breakdown of form is thus only another stage in the coming to be of an objective form. The perpetual character of form means that only form’s material component enters and exits Space and Time, moving images of Infinity and Eternity, without Form itself being of beginning or end in the visible world. “We must in my opinion begin by distinguishing between that which always is and never becomes from that which is always becoming but never is.”^{viii} The latter is an objective form, external and different. The visible object, apprehended both by reason and the senses, is never real. Beyond the grasp of the senses, the eternal model is inaccessible to the Will: the faculty realizing the prescriptions of reason. In other words, the eternal model may not be changed by will. Change by cause may only affect the visible copy and never the perpetual form. The Copy, although of resemblance to Form, and indeed modeled thereafter, is sensible and has come into existence. As a Copy comes to an end, Form persists, a spirit, which would have otherwise come to pass unattended had it not aroused the senses by visible representation.

Common identification of breakdown, loss, destruction, demolition, or simply change are but points of interpretation that are less inherent of art itself than they are of subjective attributes to art such as purpose, custom, or property. Through such attributes, art is expected to maintain fixed form that remains unaffected through time and circumstance. In essence, the expectation is external to art in its two components of form and idea as well as it is to art as physical matter that lives, like all other things, within the constitution of nature and her forces. And as Beauty may live in harmony with Nature, Sublimity was a moment of rupture when the sensuous, the reasonable, and the necessary no longer sufficed to explain the sinking heart in painful awe. The action of sublimity, in likeness to a strike of lightning: sudden, external, mystical, singular and vast, remains the closest property of art to the action of Nature. The impact would tear the soul between reasonable discomfort against an obscure threat, and sensuous savoring of a discordant appeal. Conflict is at the heart of art and nature, and so is war.

In exchanging qualities --components of character-- trial in pursuit of making the artifact posed the jeopardy that things became others, or were obliterated. However, only in jeopardy of conflict with the other or oneself –disagreement or contradiction—has it been possible to define self and other. The artifact here is an object of purpose –be it utilitarian or expressive—of consequence and not only show. Art and conflict thus fulfilled natural courses toward balance through simplifying the forces of multiplicity into fewer collective streams naturally tending toward unity, a tendency with no agency to accommodate the heterogeneity intrinsic to the work of Reason. It is only by

reasonable persuasion that the heterogeneity of existence and representation may be maintained; otherwise, submitting to natural tendency will only bring about conflict in brutish flow toward reduction and homogeneity, or toward dispersal and annihilation of the other in favor of a prevailing presence of the self.

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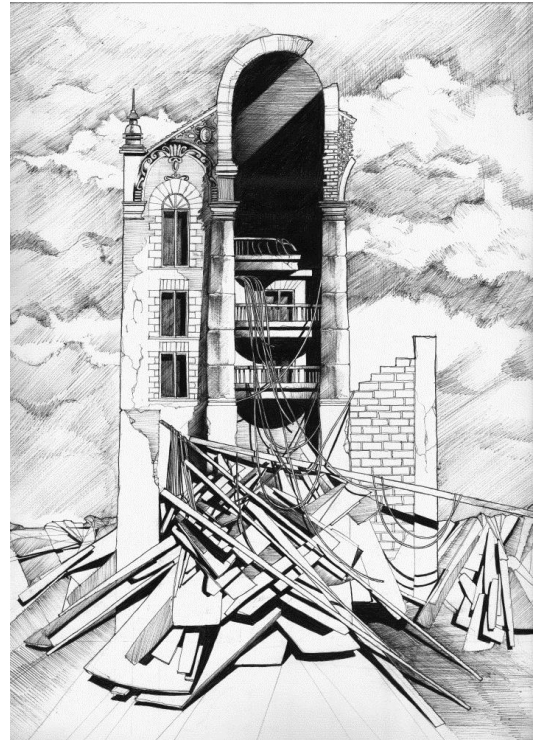
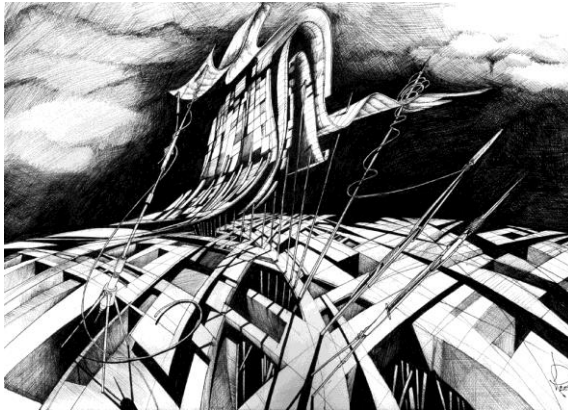
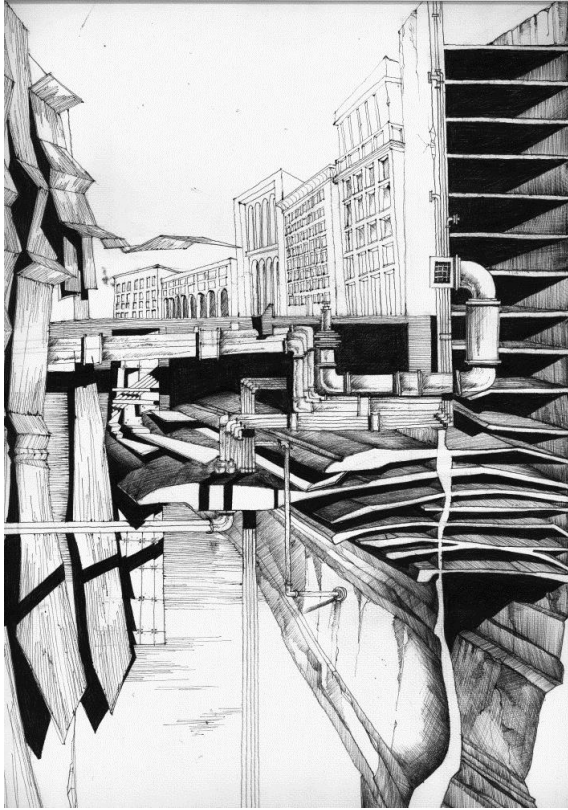
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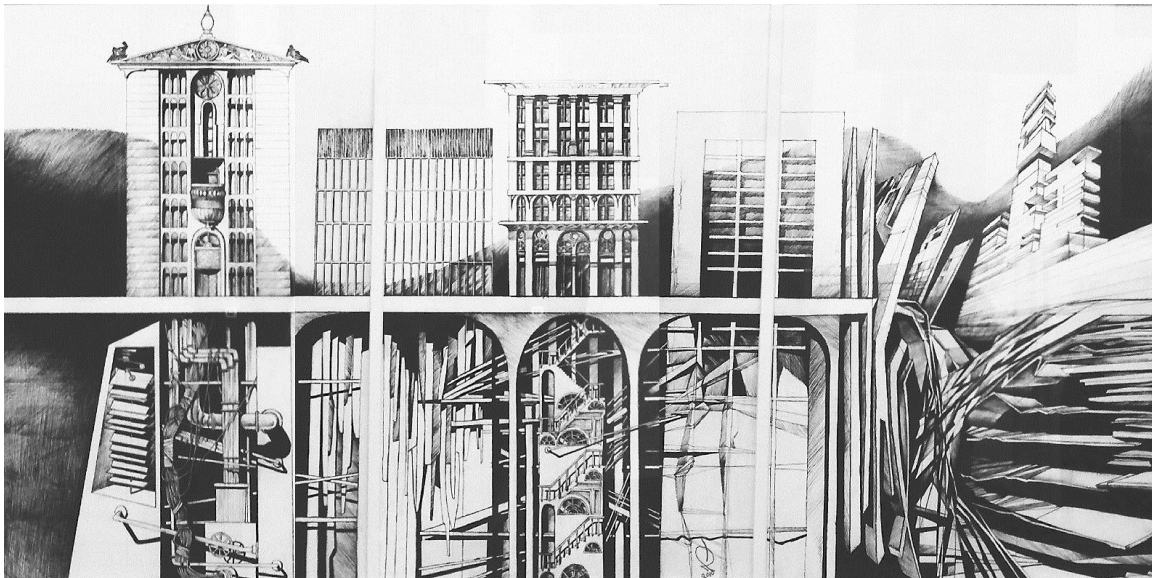
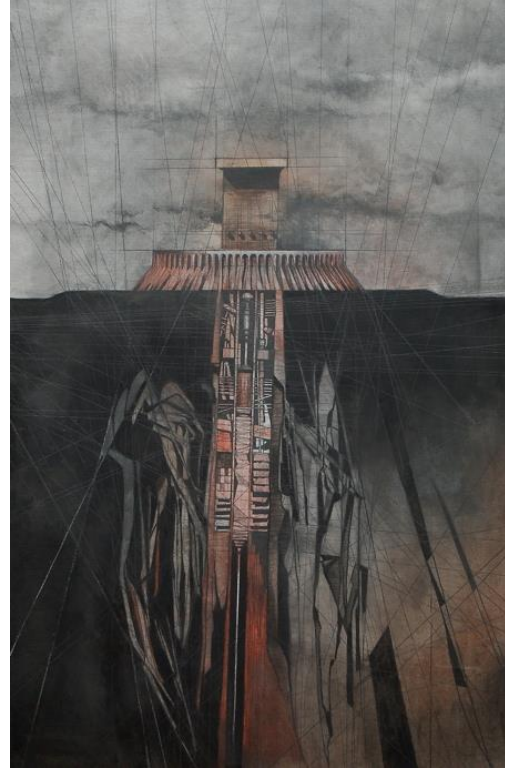
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ORIGINAL DRAWINGS [BY THE AUTHOR]





NOTE: Titles of drawings/ paintings, specifications and files at larger sizes/ higher resolution will be issued upon success of submission.

i Schiller, F. *Philosophical Essays. The Sublime*, p. 245.

ii "To Plato," wrote Ernst Cassirer, "happiness, eudaimonia, means inner freedom –a freedom that does not depend upon accidental and external circumstances. It depends upon the harmony, the 'right proportion' in man's own being. 'Reason' (phronēsis) is the condition of temperance and moderation (sōphrosynē)." Cassirer, E. *The Myth of the State*, pp. 75-76 on Plato's *Gorgias* 506 cff.

iii Oxford English Dictionary.

iv Pato, Timæus, 48.A. Cornford, p. 160.

v Burke, E., Reflections on the Revolution in France, p. 140.

vi Hegel, Gorg Wilhelm Friedrich. The Spirit, The Phenomenology of the Spirit, as published in The Philosophy of Hegel. Translated by J. B. Baillie. Edited & revised by Carl J. Friedrich, The Modern Library, New York, 1953: Independence and Dependence of Self-consciousness, The Phenomenology of the Spirit, p.402.

vii Hegel, Anxiety, The Phenomenology of the Spirit, p. 480.

viii Plato, Timæus, 28 in Lee, Desmond. Plato Timæus and Critias. Translated with an Introduction and an Appendix by. Penguin Books, USA,1965.