

Schinkel 'in Athens'

Meta-narratives of 19th-century city planning

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To Alex



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*Man is not a product of the world of sense,
and the end of his existence cannot be attained in it.
His vocation transcends Time and Space, and everything that pertains to sense...
Where his being finds its home, there his thoughts, too, seek their dwelling place.*

*Johann Gottlieb Fichte,
'The Vocation of Man'*

Preface

On the Narrative and the Meta-narrative

'Meta-narrative' includes the preposition 'meta', which, in modern Greek, has the meaning of 'after', 'post' – but under another, formal, meaning the word implies a transformation, a structural *change*. For instance, 'meta-morphosis' (μετα-μόρφωσις) denotes a *change* of a specific form; 'meta-phrasis' (μετά-φρασις, in English: 'translation'), denotes a significant change of the meaning of a phrase once its content is transferred to another language; 'meta-kinisis' (μετα-κίνησις, in English: 'change of position'), literally means 'movement', but it is here that our preposition ('meta') deploys its greatest power: moving from A to B does not simply imply a change of position in space, whereupon moving back from B to A might, supposedly, denote that the original condition is restored. This is not so, because it takes *time* to move from A to B – and Time is not a reversible phenomenon. In other words, by moving from one place to the other a great 'metamorphosis' does take place.¹

Narrative, narration, etc., are the English words standing for what, in Greek language, comes as 'diegesis' (διήγησις) – and the root of this word is the verb 'ηγούμαι' (= 'I am the leader', 'I show the way'). In 1979, at the dawn of postmodernism, the French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard addressed to the content that knowledge might acquire at a time when the 'grand narratives' (or, meta-narratives) "have come to an end", as he claimed.² But we may, as well,

¹The 'Post-modern' movement in art, architecture, etc, is, primarily, intended to be understood as an artistic conception, or cultural approach, which comes (c. 1980) after Interwar Modernism in Europe (1920-1940). Yet, in Greece, for denoting 'Post-modern' tendencies, etc., we use the word Μετα-μοντέρνο (Post-modern) – but in this case the selected preposition 'meta' (Μετα) reveals, primarily, the true condition of a structural change having been accomplished, the chronological order standing next. Therefore in Greece, linguistics leads the way!

²For Lyotard, the 'grand narratives' are associated with a Marxist interpretation of History (see, J-F., Lyotard, *La condition postmoderne*, Paris 1979).

consider that a 'narrative' is any written or spoken account of events, to argue immediately after that:

- It makes a difference if someone (for instance, an historian) analyses structures or, 'simply' narrates events;³ the relation between structures and events is of cardinal importance.
- Varieties of narrative and non-narrative modes might exist along a continuum.⁴
- A narrative on 'what actually happened' normally needs to explain the particular point of view from which this 'what' is represented.
- An hypothesis in a narrative might be as important as a 'fact' or 'event' in the same or in any another narrative.
- Oral and written narrative might claim equal significance in what 'proper history' may stand for.

Some of these issues, associated with 'narrative' are further elaborated at this point.

- a. In most narratives, 'facts' or 'events', supposedly the *heart of the matter* of these same narratives, are directly associated with 'causes', implying the formulation of a concept, according to which 'events' within a given 'paradigm' are bound by 'causality' in such a way that any state (of an object or event) is completely determined by prior states. Such a situation comes close to what in physics is (was) understood as the cause-and-effect syllogism. Indeed, in Schinkel's time, History of Science was represented by the renowned essay by Pierre-Simon, Marquis de Laplace, *A Philosophical Essay on Probabilities*, published in 1814 – which came to be known as 'Laplace's demon'.⁵ The French philosopher had claimed that for "an intellect which at a certain moment would know all forces that set nature in motion, and all positions of all items of which nature is composed...nothing would be uncertain and the future, just like the past, would be present before his eyes."⁶ It is not accepted that a deterministic concept of physics might easily move to the field of sociological analysis. Even under Hegelian dialectics,

³ The best known treatment of structural history remains Braudel's *'La Méditerranée'* (1949), with the *Annales School*.

⁴ Burke, 1991: 239.

⁵ 'Demon' came later – Laplace had referred to 'une intelligence'.

⁶ Laplace, 1951: 4.

synchronous to Laplace, mutual relations contracted by men in the social sphere were considered to be independent of the will, necessarily determined. Therefore, 'facts' or 'events' and the 'causality issue' should be reconsidered in terms of their association with blunt, deterministic concepts.

- b. An interplay between concrete analyses and theoretical abstractions might explain, as Paul Hirst argued some time ago, that 'facts' or 'events' of historical narratives (partly derived from biographical analyses) are never 'given' to knowledge: "They are always the product of definite practices, theoretical or ideological, conducted under definite real conditions. To pretend otherwise, to represent certain elements of knowledge as given in the real, is to denegate the central role of scientific practice, of experimentation, and of explicit theoretical construction and argument, in the production of scientific knowledge. Facts are never *given*; they are always produced."⁷ Apparently, Hirst addressed his polemic against Empiricism, considering that the latter represents knowledge as constructed out of 'given' elements, the elements of experience.
- c. "Historians in modern, mass-literate, industrial societies – that is, most professional historians – are generally pretty skeptical about the value of oral sources in reconstructing the past."⁸ This statement, made some thirty years ago, seems to be a deep-seated cultural stereotype, an assertive argument. Its author is a scholar who plausibly believed that many of the inhabitants of literate societies "hold the spoken world in contempt ... [since] it is the corollary of our pride in writing and our respect for the written word."⁹ Apparently, written sources, under whatever form, might keep their cardinal position as meaningful tools in the service of knowledge, but there seems to be no need to do this by downgrading in any way the spoken word, oral history, or oral tradition. The narrative on the first plan of Athens as a capital city of an Independent State, will provide ample evidence of how (and why), apart from specific *written* documents related to this plan which re-assure on the 'validity' of an act or an event having taken place in space and time, in a multitude of other cases pre-existing *oral* evidence, setting the subsequent written official texts at a distance, illustrate further our own understanding of 'facts' (given, or constructed)....In any event, the hermeneutic power of written sources

⁷ Hirst and Hindess, 1975: 2-3.

⁸ Prins, 1991: 114.

⁹ Prins, 1991: 116.

might coexist with *reading through the* (written) *lines*....Oral tradition on one side, and the raising of hypotheses where no written evidence is provided, might, without any skepticism, form part of a serious historiographic undertaking – even, perhaps, leaving no room for a passionate debate!

- d. ‘Meta-narratives of 19th-century city planning’ in the sub-title, along with the title in the enigmatic quotation marks around the words ‘in Athens’ before Schinkel’s name, is directed to an intentionally *contextual analysis*. The intention to put an emphasis on ‘context’, of which Time and Space are the main constituent parts, cuts through traditional references on these two elements by historians. Metaphorically, Space is ‘floating’ in Time and Time ‘metamorphoses’ Space during unpredictable, as for their duration, time-periods. This is true, for example, in regard to Schinkel’s Berlin, both as regards its *small* core area (stretching from the Gendarmenmarkt to the Lustgarten) *dramatically transformed* by his projects within a *short period*, as well as in regard to an otherwise *small part* of its public space, the area in front of the Schloss, which, resourcefully ‘hosted’ the ‘tailor uprising’, an event of *major importance* in provoking the Prussian Absolutist Monarchical Regime – an echo of the July 1830 events in Paris. So it was the case in Athens: between 1833 and 1835, a small mainly agricultural town with its bazaar and mosques, its relics of antiquity and Byzantine churches, was transformed into a modern and European-like (capital!) city, with its straight boulevards and its own (imported) monarch ruling by the Grace of God, or– to put it otherwise, the *small town of the Greeks* might change, but the latter would have no participation in the building of *their own state*.

Thus, it is not a matter of discussing issues of Space *and* Time as two separate entities – but, definitely, of following up an adventurous Time-Space relationship. Moreover, contextual analysis implies an emphasis on ‘details’. No ‘fact’ or ‘event’ related to a specific person can be properly analyzed unless what *motivated* this person to act accordingly has been understood. These ‘details’ range from an interest in interaction between major events and trends, from an interest in interaction between ordinary, everyday life and imported, enforced obligations, well beyond, down to attitudes and feelings of specific persons and their own understanding of Time-Space changing relationships. This might also be true in regard to the immense enthusiasm which the present author experiences today while realizing that a pencil drawing of Athens of the

1820s he had ‘discovered’ in the Manuscript’ Department of the British Library more than forty years ago, had been executed by the same person who, in his youth, was associated to Wilhelm von Humboldt, the same person who was acting as Consul of Austria in Athens in the 1830s, the same person who (so this author claims today) was one of the four protagonists of the new Athens plan in 1833, the same person who (so this author claims today) must have introduced Schinkel in a ‘backstage’ intervention while the elaboration of the new Athens plan, in 1833, was in progress.

On the nature of ‘Biography’

While discussing the character of a ‘biography’, Pierre Bourdieu condemned whichever attempt to consider anyone’s life as a series of selected *significant events*, as a history and a narration of this history:¹⁰

“To produce a history of someone’s life as history, namely as a coherent narration of a meaningful sequence directed by events, is almost as if to sacrifice this narration to a literary illusion, to a common representation of existence, as a whole literary tradition has kept doing so.”¹¹ He believed that “one cannot avoid asking about the social mechanisms which favour or allow ordinary experience of life as a unity and as a whole.”¹² Existential philosophy, he argued, might provide an answer, since “habit might be the active principle, unaltered by passive perceptions, in the unification of practices and representations, that is to say the equivalent, historically formed, thus historically established, of the ‘I’, which according to Kant one has to claim its existence in order to understand the synthesis of the various facts experienced by the senses in intuition and the link of the representations in conscience.”¹³ Bourdieu even went as far as

¹⁰ Bourdieu, 1986: 69-72.

¹¹ Bourdieu, 1986: 71 - “Produire une histoire de vie, traiter la vie comme une histoire, c’est-à-dire comme le récit cohérent d’une séquence signifiante et orientée d’événements, c’est peut-être sacrifier à une illusion rhétorique, à une représentation commune de l’existence, que toute une tradition littéraire n’a cessé et ne cesse de renforcer”.

¹² Bourdieu, 1986: 71 - “On ne peut en tous cas esquiver la question des mécanismes sociaux qui favorisent ou autorisent l’expérience ordinaire de la vie comme unité et comme totalité”.

¹³ Bourdieu, 1986: 71 - “...trouver dans l’habitus le principe actif, irréductible aux perceptions passives, de l’unification des pratiques et des représentations (c’est-à-dire l’équivalent, historiquement constitué, donc historiquement situé, de ce moi dont, selon Kant, on doit postuler l’existence pour rendre compte de la synthèse du divers sensible donnée dans l’intuition et de la liaison des représentations dans la conscience)”.

examining the role of the proper name of a person with regard to his/her biography as long as this name is established as a constant and durable 'social identity', which guarantees the identity of the biological being in all possible domains where he/she interferes in the form of an agent, that is in all possible histories of life. "The proper name...assures designated persons, beyond all changes and all biological and social fluctuations the nominal constancy, the identity within its own identity...which social order demands...in a number of social conditions ...the most sacred duties towards one's self take the form of duties towards the proper name."¹⁴ What the proper name indicates, he said, is but a mixed and dissimilar rhapsody of biological and sociological properties constantly changing...it cannot attest the personality's identity as a socially constructed individuality, but at the cost of a great abstraction.

Bourdieu makes a parallel with the absurdity of trying to understand a metro drive without considering the network's structure, namely the matrix of the objective relations between the different stations. Therefore, he claimed that the biographical events are defined both as *placements* and *displacements* in social space; the meaning of movement which takes us from one position to another is defined by means of the objective relation between the value of these positions in a specific moment at a specific place. This means that one cannot conceptualize a trajectory (social ageing, inevitably accompanied by biological ageing) but on condition of having previously detected the successive conditions along the selected route, in other words the totality of the objective relations which have bound the considered agent to the totality of the other agents engaged in the same field and the same route.¹⁵

The distinction between a concrete individual and a 'constructed' individual is doubled, he said, by a distinction between a person who is competent in a field and the personality as a biological individuality socially established, itself carrying the properties and the power which guarantee what Bourdieu considered to be the 'surface sociale'. Finally, as a sort of Eulogy, he wonders whether any scholar detecting a person's own personality is not aware that "the

¹⁴ Bourdieu, 1986: 71 - "Le nom propre... assure aux individus designés, par delà tous les changements et toutes les fluctuations biologiques et sociales, la *constance nominale*, l'identité au sens d'identité à soi-même...que demande l'ordre social...dans nombre d'univers sociaux, les devoirs les plus sacrés envers soi-même prennent la forme de devoirs envers le nom propre".

¹⁵ Bourdieu, 1986: 71 - "Les événements biographiques se définissent comme autant de *placements* et de *déplacements* dans l'espace social." As discussed in the main text, for Schinkel, these movements along a specific trajectory are of cardinal importance in understanding the true personality of the prodigious Prussian architect and urban designer.

individual, the person, the 'moi' [myself],¹⁶ i.e. "the most irreplaceable of all beings" – according to Gide, towards whom we are irresistibly drawn by a narcissistic impulse socially established, is at the same time the most real, in appearance, among realities, immediately offered to our own fascinated intuition.¹⁷

Following Bourdieu's philosophical, uncompromising stance, it has been argued that one lesson taken from avant-garde 20th-century artists and philosophers is to consider life in its discontinued, arbitrary and accidental reality and to remain vigilant against biographical illusions.¹⁸

The few previous lines, on the *nature of biography*, reflect the prism through which the biographical references on behalf of the authors of the first Athens plan will be analyzed.

*

A contextual Analysis

Some 'details' regarding the authors of the 1833 Athens plan

Karl Friedrich Schinkel

Johann Gottlieb Fichte delivered his lectures entitled 'Addresses to the German Nation' in 1807, when Prussia was under French (Napoleon's) occupation. The spiritual echo of those patriotic calls to a liberating mission reached the 26-year old Schinkel. Ten years before, the young Friedrich, who had become acquainted with Gilly the younger, an emblematic personality in Architectural Theory and Practice, had decided *here and now* to become an architect.

¹⁶ As elsewhere in his text, Bourdieu uses the word 'moi', to make a parallel to Kant or Fichte's transcendental 'ego'.

¹⁷ Bourdieu, 1986: 72 - "Que l'on aurait peine à comprendre qu'il ne soit pas d'emblée imposé à tous les chercheurs si l'on ne savait pas que l'individu, la personne, le moi, «le plus irremplaçable des êtres», comme disait Gide, vers lequel nous porte irrésistiblement une pulsion narcissique socialement renforcée, est aussi la plus réelle, en apparence, des réalités...immédiatement livré à notre intuition fascinée".

¹⁸ See Proimakis, 1997-1998: 225. Yet, long before these modern 20th-century approaches, Gustav Waagen, the art-historian, Schinkel's collaborator and biographer, had approached Schinkel's life under a non-conventional diegesis – perhaps because, as is commonly believed, exception proves the rule.

This 'here and now' is repeatedly 'explained' by the young Schinkel's impression of the aforesaid Gilly's project for a monument to King Friedrich the Great. The very short, but intimate and affectionate relationship he developed with Gilly, did not just introduce Friedrich Schinkel to what was to become part of the 'Elysian Fields of World Architecture', it also bonded him to a 'promise' to the 28 year-old's dead friend – a promise that can be deduced from a clue in his letter to Friedrich Gilly's father, "he is the creator of what I am". Within the broader philosophical and political context, Schinkel was soon schooled to be responsible for the other's education, as Fichte's 'vocation of a scholar' demanded. But that was one of Fichte's primary concepts of freedom. As Moyano has argued, Schinkel "asserted that *Anschaulichkeit* ['transparency'] in architecture could disseminate cultivation [*Bildung*]...associating structural clarity with classical Greek architecture."¹⁹ The appreciation of feelings of fraternal affection, of social commitment feelings, and of feelings of intellectual intimacy conceptualized by the 'ideal' in architecture, seem to be the guiding lines along which one might trace the course of Schinkel's story.

In this sense, Schinkel's early formative years were to be stamped by these two personalities – Friedrich Gilly and Fichte. It is worth discussing, in a few words, some aspects of Fichte's philosophy, which were to become the cornerstone of the Prussian architect's later years. Locke in England, and Condillac in France, were the forerunners of Fichte's philosophical system. Their emphasis on physical phenomena, on a deification of nature, had produced a system attempting to balance 'unmixed' materialism and intellectual idealism. When Hume's later 'Essay of Human Nature' appeared, an analysis of the phenomena of reflection was put on a sound basis. But since these approaches, one might think, were blurred by psychological analyses, the road was open to 18th century German Idealism, and for Immanuel Kant to shed light on consciousness (as "something more than a cognitive faculty"²⁰), by means of metaphysical speculation. Kant's world was defined by free obedience, moral determination and a strong sense of duty. 'Freedom' was considered the ultimate goal, but 'Morality' stood by to protect the way to freedom (or, even better, to close the way to 'excessive' or 'undue' freedom). And, ultimately, 'aesthetic feeling' appeared, to bridge the gap between the sensible and the spiritual world, that is, between the *content* of experience and the *form* of experience or between *subject*

¹⁹ Moyano, 1990.

²⁰ Smith, 1845: 54.

thinking and *object* thought of.²¹ If this division might be avoided, the same was true for the duality ‘subject thinking’/‘object considered’.

The interplay of opposites was to be further developed under Fichte’s philosophical system. To be acted upon by influences from the outside and, at the same time to exercise an influence on the outside world, is a concept understood on the basis of a *thesis* (the supposition of itself) and an *antithesis* (what is opposed to itself), resulting in a *synthesis* (the two conditions are identical, since they mutually imply each other). The *ego* supposes the *non-ego* and is supposed by it. A *synthesis* there is! But it is conditional on a constant fight: as long as the non-ego defines the ego it is the sensible world that reigns (the state of realism), but if the ego defines the non-ego it is the spiritual world that comes forward (the state of idealism). The opposition never ends, since under relentless fight the ego *tends* to transform itself into the state of an ‘absolute’ ego. Outside reality, moral obligations, conscience and reason, the significance of Life – are all there, if only to declare that Life begins with an action not a thought.

This side of Fichte’s philosophy had significant influence on Schinkel’s life as long as a ‘transcendental’ ego was considered to take a life of its own. That ‘Transcendentalism’ was best fitted to Schinkel’s last years of life is explained elsewhere in this book. Yet it was Fichte’s more popular texts, such as *The Vocation of Man* and the *Nature of the Scholar* that attracted Schinkel more, the very busy state- or court-architect of the 1820s and 1830s.²² It is from his belief that he

²¹ Or, to put it another way, “the *phenomenal* world, which can be known rationally and empirically, and the *noumenal* world of things-in-themselves, which lies beyond rational or empirical knowledge” Gelernter, 1995: 196.

²² Fichte was, of course a controversial personality. In his 1793 pamphlet ‘*Contributions to the corrections of public opinion on the French Revolution*’, he adopted a daring stance arguing that there can be no absolutely unchangeable political constitution. In the same text he looked at the affluence, the privileged classes, the nobility and the clergy – that was enough, he said! A charge was brought upon him of being a democrat! But on the other side, his transcendental philosophy boiled down to expressions such as: “Our faith in duty and in the objects of duty, is only faith in Him, in His Wisdom, in His Truth...And serene above all change, the unattainable object of all finite effort, fountain of our life, home of our spirits. Thou art the One Being, the I AM, for whom reason has no idea, and language no name”. Although it is understood to whom the words with capital letters might belong (‘Him’, ‘His’, ‘Though’, ‘One Being’, ‘I AM’), the distance of an extreme form of absolute monarchy from the political reality of 18th and 19th century Prussia, was much smaller than the distance separating Hegel’s home from the Schloss in Berlin! To a certain extent, this is, of course, understandable. John Locke’s empiricism of the 17th century had flourished in the context of the meteoric growth of income from overseas trade, while liberalism sided with the British political reality of a representational government, a parliamentary monarchical regime, which had been in power since the first parliament was called in 1265. On the other hand, Kant’s Idealism was to flourish under an absolutist monarchical regime. Nevertheless, to examine the birth

was acting as a 'priest of truth', or a 'social apostle', accomplishing his *duties* and *obligations* as a member of the 'Gebildeten' (the 'Educated'), that his architecture and urban design projects which restructured central Berlin came into being. It is considered that his cognitive reaction to this belief did not, understandably, manifest itself until rather late, in the mid-1830s. One assumes this view by decoding external aspects of his personality, which include architectural expressions conceptualized by his own feelings and expectations, as these were constantly changing in parallel to changing social and political contexts. As Ouspensky once declared, architecture, just as "poetry, drama, sculpture...[are] means for transmitting psychological knowledge."²³ Indeed, Schinkel's Neues Museum (Altes Museum today), in as much as it bears witness to a sublime architectural expression, also incorporates the daring juxtaposition of the symbol of Culture to that of Authority – a relation dictated by Schinkel's strong disappointment at the rising autocracy of the Prussian monarchical regime. Schinkel befriended the Crown Prince and shared the latter's naïf anxieties on behalf of architecture, even after 1819, when the reactionary Carlsbad Decrees were issued – but the overall conditions became worse after the 'tailors uprising' of 1830.

Architectural historians have occasionally been frustrated with two of Schinkel's projects, elaborated only a few years before he died. The frustration consists over coming to terms with the fact that the author of the projects labelled them 'Projects of higher Architecture intended to be realised'²⁴, though they were never built. They both referred to royal residences, one for King Otto of Greece atop the Acropolis of Athens (1834) and the other for the Czarina Alexandra on the Crimean peninsula (1838) – they have both been acknowledged as fine specimens of 'higher architecture' *but* they remained on paper. What, perhaps, has escaped attention is the fact that both drawings were prepared under quite specific conditions, mainly as regards an eventual incompatibility between Schinkel's position as a civil servant and his affiliation to authority on one side, and his *vocation as a scholar* on the other. Indeed, since the mid-1830s he seems to have had cognizance of living along a *transcendental* path of life – itself setting its own

and development of late 18th-early 19th century Romanticism in German lands is one of the most provoking of issues.

²³ Ouspensky, 1973 [1950]. To quote Ouspensky, at a time when psychology was connected with philosophy.

²⁴ 'Werke der höheren Baukunst für die Ausführung erfunden (Berlin 1840 to 1848).

terms and conditions under which any of his drawings might (ought to) be understood. Even if the ‘technique’ of design (the expressive means) remained the same, the *meaning* assigned to the drawings changed dramatically. For instance, in both projects, the Prussian architect had *intentionally* introduced the co-habitation of a ruler with a delineation of cultural activity (a museum or a monumental complex).²⁵ If this sounds as if Schinkel ‘repeated’ in his ‘höheren Baukunst’ projects the ‘hidden subject matter’ of the Lustgarten Neues Museum, in fact there was more than that. The 1833 new plan of Athens had established a direct relationship between the royal palace, located a few hundred metres north of the Acropolis and the hill of the Acropolis itself. This relationship was emphasized by the ‘trivium’ design pattern adopted on the occasion. It is claimed, in this book, that these conceptual and technical design options should be attributed to the Prussian architect, sensibly acting on anonymity grounds – what is, otherwise, responsible for the absence of any *written* sources. A meta-narrative reading of the specific design concept uncovers its technical dimensions and brings the two Athenian cases, the one appearing in the plan ratified in 1833 and the 1834 unrealised project, under *one and the same* conceptual roof: the juxtaposition of the palace with the Acropolis on the 1833 plan of the capital city stands within the same conceptual background with the superimposition one year later of royal residence on ancient relics! Indeed, it is this alternative, 1834, Athenian expression which Schinkel brought to perfection in 1838 in his Crimean drawing: a euphonious and graceful ancient-like ionic temple which crowned the whole building complex.

In the very last drawing of his life Schinkel paid his homage to the man who was ‘his’ creator, Friedrich Gilly (if one recalls the latter’s monument to Friedrich the Great and its temple on the top: “The temple alone held the speaking stillness of the soul, and remembered a time when it was at one with the cosmos”, as Alan Balfour had acerbically argued).

²⁵ In the Crimea, the ‘Musée de la Crimée et des Provinces Caucasiennes’ was included in the royal residence (although the Tzar’s family had not asked for it) – in Athens, the monarch of the newly founded Hellenic Kingdom was, as it were, dared to reside next to the palimpsest of culture, the Parthenon (5th cent. BCE) and other monuments of the Acropolis. A more careful reading (and understanding) of the sources reveals that it was *not* Maximilian, or any other member of the Bavarian court, who commissioned the *specific* project (even if this is what it looks like), but Schinkel’s own decision – by coincidence (or not), ‘timing’ was propitious as the new Athens plan was just born (follow the text).

If in Kant's philosophy 'Morality' stood by to protect the way to freedom, Fichte's own understanding of the long and painful process, by means of which the transcendental ego might become a divine absolute, implied a continuous struggle for realizing an ideal world order. This is why Schinkel's Architecture, in fact his own life (since the one finds its meaning through the other), by no means should be considered as a static, linear movement forward, but, rather, as an evolving elegy for a way of life where 'Reason' might impose itself over instinct and 'Freedom' might rule. To be reminded: *Werke der Höheren Baukunst*, by all means!

George Christian Gropius

Around 1800, Wilhelm von Humboldt, during his early diplomatic career in Rome, had entrusted the education of three of his children to George Gropius, an archaeologist, and later diplomat.

If one visits the web-site of the British Museum, entering as a key-research name that of Gropius,²⁶ a photographic gallery of '319 results' will appear on the screen: all items (friezes, statues, etc.) come from excavations conducted in 1811-1813 at 'Bassai', Phigalia, close to Olympia, in Greece, where the Temple of Epicurius Apollo stands. Apart from Charles Robert Cockerell, the excavation group also included Haller von Hallerstein, architect/archaeologist and the architect John Foster. In 1799, Hallerstein had been, together with Schinkel, member of a small group of seven architects meeting regularly in Berlin, on the initiative of Friedrich Gilly. Foster, for his part – when back to England and became engaged in several, grand in scale, architectural projects – was the only British architect Schinkel met when he toured England in 1826.

But, to return to the excavations in Phigalia, as it will be indicated in the present book, the specific relics of antiquity were more 'extracted', shall we say, from the monument than simply 'excavated' – one might claim that the overall conditions which prevailed in closing the 'deal' between the 'excavation group' (politely speaking) and Veli Pasha, Governor of the Morea at the time, may not have stood as the most wished for moment of the 'Greek Revival Period'.²⁷

²⁶ <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/term/BIOG58531> (accessed December 2020).

²⁷ A year before, the same European excavation group had sent to Munich the Aegina pedimental sculpture, at the request of Ludwig I, "who had staged a cultural coup in acquiring original Greek sculpture" (<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203171974> accessed December 2020).

'Our' Gropius was member of a large Gropius family settled in Berlin – the earlier part of this family included three brothers, one of whom was George Christian, who was soon to leave Prussia for long trips in Italy and Greece, to be later involved in archaeology and diplomacy. The eldest of the group, Wilhelm Ernst Gropius was the owner of a 'Machinenfabric' and a 'Figuretheater' both in Berlin. "Between 1807 and 1815 [Schinkel] designed some forty optical-perspective pictures for the flourishing business of his friends Wilhelm and Carl Gropius... providing popular Christmas window displays, combining painted views with silhouette figures of real actors to create tableaux vivants."²⁸ This Wilhelm Ernst Gropius had three sons, Carl Wilhelm (1793-1870), Friedrich George (1802-1842) and Ferdinand (1798-1849). The first, Carl Wilhelm, trained under Schinkel, became a landscape painter and later on was promoted (most probably with Schinkel's support) to 'Theaterinspektor'. Later on, in 1827, the Gropius brothers opened a Diorama Theatrical installation in Berlin (on the corner of Georgenstrasse and Universitätstrasse), following in the steps of a pioneering artistic venture that was already flourishing in Paris, invented by Louis Daguerre five years earlier. The diorama functioned in its early years "as a tourist office for visitors, selling artworks by local artists and all kinds of publications and other printed matter related to Prussia's capital city."²⁹ Next to the Diorama building a workshop for preparing and storing the scenographic material of the 'Brüder Gropius' (the Gropius Brothers) was soon added – and that was not all. An 1832 poster advertised the (Friedrich) George Gropius art-gallery and bookshop, located in a most significant place, Brüderstrasse 1, at the corner with Schlossplaz. Moreover, when later Schinkel's Bauakademie was finished in its new premises nearby, the Gropius publishing company took an office on part of the ground floor. As Schoonman has argued when commenting on Samuel Spiker's 1833 *Guide to Berlin*, "these advertisements place the private companies of the Gropius family on an equal footing with Berlin's public monuments. In the guide, as well as on the streets of Berlin, the growing middle class made its appearance and challenged the existing status quo."³⁰ Carl Wilhelm, the previously mentioned 'Theaterinspektor', had retained close friendship with Schinkel, and he was one of the three persons Schinkel met with while the latter was walking in the Tiergarten, in September 1839, before the fatal stroke.

²⁸ Bergdoll, 1994: 24.

²⁹ <https://spikers.berlin/essay/>(accessed December 2020)

³⁰ <https://spikers.berlin/essay/>(accessed December 2020)

George Gropius, from the first generation, Consul of Austria in Athens, must have kept contacts with Schinkel, if only as the uncle of all three members of the second generation Gropius family. This was the story with the Gropius family, as far as the relation of some of its members with Schinkel is concerned over the years.

Returning to Athens and George Christian Gropius, once the excavations at Phigalia and Aphaia were over, he settled in Athens, where he was to spend the rest of his life. For a short period, from 1810, he held the office of Consul of Great Britain in Thessaly, and in 1816 was appointed Vice-Consul in Athens, and for the islands of Kea, Hydra, Spetses and Euboia.³¹ The next fifteen years were calm ones (politically speaking) for Athens, providing a period for the town to 'look at herself' – also a time when Gropius might 'silently' carry on archaeological excavations of his own within the city and its whereabouts. As a character Gropius was polite and good-tempered, becoming a respected member not only of the European community in Greece but, as well, of the native Greek community and the local Ottoman officials and residents.

That same moderate character enabled him "to avoid, skillfully, any unpopularity with rival parties and governments."³² These skills enabled him to survive all the political and social turmoils that followed the Greek War of Independence. Within only a few months, following the declaration of an independent Greek state, he had already become a member of the eminent Council of the Archaeological Society in Athens (the Society which had been set up particularly to protect the country's antiquities) – apparently, and ironically 'our Gropius' was beyond any relevant suspicion.³³ In any event, he was soon to become acquainted with a plethora of eminent European visitors, archaeologists, painters, architects, antiquarians, all sorts of intellectuals, diplomats, and, it has to be added, smugglers of antiquities and spies as well. In his everyday dealings with such individuals he could demonstrate his knowledge of the topography and history of the town he loved, and was able methodically to make his own

³¹ The letter of his appointment was from de Stuurmer, Austrian ambassador in Istanbul, and dated 14/9/1816 (Archives of the Austrian Consulate in Athens, PRI190.01)

³² Thomson de Grummond (ed.), 1996: 543.

³³ And yet, as referred to elsewhere in this present volume, four lekythoi, dating from the 5th century BCE, exhibited at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, 'part' of the collection of Count Prokesch Osten, Austrian Ambassador in Greece from 1834, had been given to him (as a present perhaps) by 'our' Gropius. It appears that they had been excavated some 20 kms south of Athens, on the southwest slopes of Mt Hymettus. Apparently, the Consul's 'quiet life' did not exclude archaeological practice, as he understood it.

property acquisition, speculating, as it were, on the future development of Athens – the idea of a new Athens plan was but a part of that ‘future development’.

Eduard Schaubert, Stamatios Kleanthes and ‘their’ plan of Athens

Rome was a blessed city, as much on the grounds Goethe had acknowledged in such musical terms during his second Roman visit (“What a quodlibet!”, as he had exclaimed)³⁴, but because she provided such unique advantages to visitors. Karl Friedrich Schinkel, as well as Kleanthes and Schaubert, were among those who profited from their stay there. Indeed, it was in Rome that Schinkel had made the acquaintance of Wilhelm von Humboldt, during the former’s visit in 1804. In the post-Napoleonic period, Schinkel was strongly supported by the famous diplomat, linguist and philosopher via von Humboldt’s relations with the Prussian court. So it happened with the two young architects, who visited the Eternal City soon after they had graduated from the Berlin Building Academy, in 1828-1829, on their way to the island of Aegina. On that occasion they had come to know Karl Wilhelm von Heideck, a Bavarian military officer and painter, a philhellene who had participated in the Greek war of Independence. This same person was nominated a few years later to the regency council, in Greece, until King Otto from Bavaria came of age. Heideck provided the two architects with a precious letter of reference addressed to Kapodistrias, the Governor of Greece, in Aegina at that time.³⁵ Indeed, during their stay on the island, the Governor assigned them architectural projects on public buildings,³⁶ while, later, in 1830-1831, these same architects moved to Athens and settled there, expecting to broaden their client base – or, perhaps, to participate in an ongoing discussion in regard to a new plan of that renowned town. In between Greek independence had been declared in 1830

³⁴ Goethe, 1970: 392-393.

³⁵ It might be mere coincidence, but both Heideck and Humboldt had taken part in the Vienna Congress, in 1814-1815.

³⁶ The reader is asked to refer to Act One, Scene I in this volume for aspects of the revival of classical architecture in Greece, as early as 1830. When they were in Aegina, Kleanthes and Schaubert were commissioned to draw an ‘educational’ building. They complied with the request and their plan drew heavily on Schinkel’s Schlosstegel (see Nikolaos Karydis 2020). In the years to come shortly afterwards, this simple school of Aegina was so admired by the Greek authorities that it became the prototype of school buildings in Greece throughout the 19th century down to the inter-war period, when the ‘Modern Movement’ of the 1930s swept away every single relic of ‘traditional backwardness’ (as it was claimed). But those buildings that have survived still bear witness to Schinkel, echoed, at least, in the grouped and elongated classroom windows on their facades.

and Athens might soon be nominated as capital city, with Prince Otto from the Bavarian court arriving there and being assigned the title of King to rule by 'the Mercy of God'.

From this point on, should the reader follow current Athenian historiography in regard to the new plan of the town he might be disappointed by a considerable oversimplification involved in it. In fact narration comes close to an almost 'fairy tale', in regard to these two young architects and the elaboration of a 'new' Athens plan. The two 'friends' (this is how these two architects are often referred to) decided (perhaps on a sudden flash of intuition?) to draw a new plan for Athens; at first, they started to prepare a detailed survey plan (at their own initiative and at their own expenses, it is said), hiring the appropriate personnel, ordering from Germany costly and state-of-the-art measuring equipment (which indeed was the case), proceeding, a few months later, to the design of the detailed plan (as simple as that). The Government on its side, within a few months later (July 1833), ratified the plan.

This is part of a story which is History, of course, but its narration, under this simplified form, has been 'repeated' many times by current Athenian historiography, word for word, for more than a century, providing a more or less linear, undifferentiated sequence of 'events' and 'facts' – in other words, an altogether unenlightening and simplistic narration of 'what happened', usually backed by very poor hermeneutic information. Questions such as,

- Who raised the issue of a new plan even before the town had been upgraded to capital city?
- How could the two Bauakademie architects only a few weeks after they had set foot in a town hitherto unknown to them start preparing a costly detailed survey plan?
- Can it be believed that such a design procedure might, by any stretch of the imagination, take place within a social, political and economic 'void'?

The plan of Athens, unquestionably attributed to Kleanthes and Schaubert, has come down to us through (at least) three versions of a still missing original, signed and dated graphic document. But, any how, less than a year later, the officially ratified in July 1833 plan was withdrawn (not to say 'rejected'), since a new architect, Leo von Klenze, from the Bavarian court, was asked to provide amendments – even though the latter had understood, presumably, that he had been asked to 'draw up a new plan'. Further on, the 'two young friends' from the Bauakademie

soon exchanged their earlier cordial relationship for a series of long-lasting disputes between them, ranging from disagreements with a political tone (on the basis of an antithesis among the foreign/Bavarian/German rulers and the local/Greek ruled population)³⁷ and financial disputes (repayment of loans and similar transactions)³⁸. In the Greek State Archives there exist tens of documents testifying that the two architects (mostly Kleanthes) repeatedly, appealed to the King, to his ministers and his councillors, for the government to reimburse them for the expenses they had incurred while preparing the elaborate new Athens plan (although, as it was said, during the early phases they had openly declared that the whole venture was to be offered gratis – apparently, that was until they had been assigned the commission).

Nevertheless, notwithstanding all such set-backs to the first plan of the capital city of Greece, and despite the rigidity of Athenian historiography in its analysis of this same plan, albeit political interferences in the process of the plan's implementation, and in spite of the rejection of this plan and, possibly, its replacement by the uninspiring and hastily prepared plan of Leo von Klenze, despite all this, the so called 'Kleanthes and Schaubert plan' was a prodigious 19th century planning proposal. Of course, Athenian historiography has allegedly argued that the main reason for disapproving the plan was the discontent of certain landowners in regard to compulsory expropriation of their ownership in specific areas of the town, following the new plan's prescriptions. Such an argument, though, implies either lack of information or lack of understanding. In fact, similar cases of land speculation and prices of land rising up or falling down disproportionately to the needs and the expectations of the people are current phenomena in the production of the modern built environment. And though the related social implications are by no means to be overlooked, this reason cannot claim priority in explaining the plan's rejection, and, anyhow, that was not the seamy side of the plan in question. As for those who are eager to assign to Leo von Klenze's interference the rejection of the first plan,

³⁷ On this occasion, it is reminded that on September 1843, the so-called 'political movement of the 3rd of September' took place, with the inhabitants demanding constitutional reforms to set limits on Bavarian Absolutism – demands which were answered positively by King Otto.

³⁸ Some of these financial disputes led to auctions, after-Sunday services, in the courtyards of Athens' central churches, where lands (either houses in the town proper or orchards in the countryside) belonging to Kleanthes were sold and the money given to Schaubert (apparently, as loan repayment). Many such disputes are supported by juridical documents. On this occasion it should be noted that Kleanthes had managed to amass a fortune by purchasing large areas of land, in and outside the town.

perhaps, they should better cast their eyes over the shadow which Schinkel's Neues (Altes) Museum in Berlin sheds heavily over Klenze's Glyptothek in Munich!

Even if not rating quite as a planning epiphany, the 1833 plan remains worthy of being seriously discussed, along with other 19th century famous city plans, for its unique, inherent conceptual framework. The oxymoron in this early plan lies in the fact that though (officially) rejected, as it was said, it did had the time, within a few months only, to dictate two significant planning elements in the about-to-become capital city: the first was the street-network of the principal thoroughfares, quickly laid down between 1833 and 1835 following the trivium design-pattern; the second was the prevision that for some time to come the new city might rely on the traditional market area – and so it was the case for almost the next half a century. The last paradox of the same plan is a down to earth reality: ever since the next two or three years after the ratification date of the plan, Athens plainly developed according to an 'extension plan' – the traditional town was to be left in its tranquillity, and the new town was given the opportunity to encircle the historical nucleus from the north-east, the north and the north-west. One might argue that this 'extension plan' is but a *metaxis* of the original 1833 plan!

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The results of the previous analysis come under Introductions 'a' and 'b', where the city is viewed as a topographical and an ideological discourse. When this analysis is concluded, a rather unusual 'bottom-up' procedure adopted in this text answers the question of who among those involved, in one way or another, in the preparation of the 1833 plan of Athens, fits in with that plan's inherent properties, so as to claim its authorship. The contextual-historical analysis indicates at least two more individuals participated in the preparation of this plan, as indicated in the previous biographical anthologies. The following 'Acts', One to Four, give their own answer along an antithetical 'top-down' direction, and, when the two directions have reached their 'verdict', the main title of this book, Schinkel 'in Athens', is shown to lead the way; the 'meta-narrative' interface of the subtitle having been configured at the beginning of this Preface.

D.N.K – Palaio Phaliro

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