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**Venturi Philosophically Revisited
(Robert Venturi and the revival of modernism)**

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Abstract: This article explores the significant implications of Robert Venturi's "Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture" on architectural discourse. By delving into Venturi's theoretical foundation, we gain an understanding of the evolution of discursive paradigms that have shaped architectural projects in recent years. The distinction between modern and postmodern architecture primarily hinges on the argument for the necessity of architectural inclusivity advocated by Venturi. This revision challenges the entire paradigm of modern architectural exclusivity. Venturi's concept of complexity holds a crucial place in postmodern philosophical discourse, as exemplified by Lyotard. The incommensurability of language games, which Lyotard considers as an argument for the impossibility of reducing them to a single universal judgment, parallels the incommensurability of architectural elements. Venturi emphasizes that architectural elements should not be excluded from a universal architectural premise. This complexity introduces a nuanced situation, necessitating, according to Lyotard, a new kind of sensibility to appreciate their incommensurability. Meanwhile, in Venturi's perspective, this situation reflects the complexity that must be realized in achieving a delicate balance between inclusion and the potential avoidance of an abusive unity of exclusion. The schemata used by Lyotard to describe the transformation and liberation of various linguistic contents are generally applicable in Venturi's context, offering insights into the liberation of architectural content.

Keywords: Inclusive architecture, Complexity, Contradiction, Postmodernity, Lyotard

We have already become familiar with the names we encounter which are frequently used to describe architectural practices and the identification of styles such as 'modern architecture' or 'postmodern architecture'. However simplified and schematic these names, which are used to include a variety and vividness of styles in the architectural practices of modernism, might seem, behind them lies a crucial discursive moment which then reflects on the paradigms of forms, not only programmatic but also architectural and visual. That which in modern architecture was self-obvious as the overthrowing of tradition, the projection of the entirely new in universal and geometrically

pure forms such as purism, minimalism, homogenisation and functionalisation, becomes the object of a necessary discussion in what we today know as postmodern architecture. Thus begins the fading away of a great architectural paradigm to make way for a different and more complex architectural expression. This interpretation lies outside the unified schemes of modernism, and, even though outside of any definition of itself in a new identity, it is known as postmodern. This reorientation in architecture is also expressed explicitly on the discursive plane of architects who have reflected on their architectural practices. One of them is Robert Venturi, who for the first time lays out the necessity of rethinking the premises of modern architecture in an explicit manner.

Even though Venturi never identified himself as a postmodern architect (he rather preferred himself as an architect of the Classical tradition of Western Architecture), in all of his premises he completely displaces architectural practice from the imposed contours of modernism in architecture: especially modernist attempts at non-historical projection and their disregard for context. The distinguishing architectural premises of Venturi in a way match with all of the assumptions of postmodern discourse – not only in architecture. Despite the fact that such categorisations may seem rigid, Venturi's viewpoints lead us to conclusions for a paradigmatic discourse in architecture which submerges much from modernist practices with a different and new attitude in architectural thinking and planning. In his discourse, Venturi promoted the disregarded concepts in modernist practice which are regained completely in postmodern practice. Concepts such as con-

text, complexity, contradiction, ambiguity, the hybrid, the vernacular, the historical, etc. create new tensions in architectural planning and at the same time make possible the emergence of violently repressed contents from the ahistorical and universal modernist planning.

Naturally, Venturi's achievements are part of a long search and formation of his discourse. Robert Venturi was the first to treat the relevance of context in architectural discourse from as early as his M.F.A. thesis in Princeton in 1950 titled 'Context in Architectural Composition'.[1] Today renowned architectural practices consider context as a crucial aspect of their work, excluding the stubborn devotion of vulgar functionality. For this reason, his discursive development in Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture (1966), initially was ignored by architects of the modernist provenience. Subsequently, Venturi's writing sparked a debate and the need to rethink architectural approach. This work has not awakened and deepened the debate without reason. With its appearance, the fixed schemes of architectural thinking have been disturbed, and a more open and tolerant discourse has been devised to treat relevant architectural issues, which resulted in the inclusion of various contents discarded from the modernist program.

These generalised conclusions for Venturi's viewpoints are supported by the elaboration of base concepts from his discourse, which resulted in the inclusion of contextual cultural elements in architectural design, as well as the affirmation of complex structural models of architectural

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[1] See Sam Rodell, Influence of Robert Venturi on Luis Kahn, Washington State University, School of Architecture, 2008, p.2

practice. One of these models is that of Las Vegas, which in 'Learning from Las Vegas', together with Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour, Venturi treated as 'a new type of urban form' which is appearing in Europe and America. This is because, as Vinegar states: ''this book, simply, re-configures some given genealogies of modern and con-temporary architecture''.[2]

In the open trail of this discourse are later traversed the many types of research regarding architectural conditions, in an attempt to correct its last century premises. If we can reveal the theoretical and discursive background of Ven-turi's viewpoints, we can manage to find the paradigmatic and discursive scissions which have oriented architectural planning in the last decades, and the latter are mere ex-pressions of Venturi's theses.

Which discursive aspects of Venturi form a thought which we could call paradigmatic? Of what do they consist? Which are the arguments upon which the discourse we can identify as postmodern is founded?

It seems that the answers to the posed questions will be found if we identify the conjuncture of Venturi's thoughts on his treatises of context, contradiction and complexity on one side, and the communicative plane of architecture in the affirmed symbolism of the new urban type we find in Las Vegas on the other. There are two planes of identi-fying the issues confronting modern architecture. On the one side there is the aggressivity of the temporal cut with the past and tradition. The other approach is the architec-tural discourse with the paradigm of language, known as the linguistic turn, in which subjective centralisation is giv-en up – in which also modern architecture and architects had fallen as the subject-centrics which aimed at the spa-tial formation of society. From this we will see how Ventu-ri's initiative for the revitalisation of modern architecture is deeper than it may seem at first sight. Despite different evaluations on whether Venturi and his discourse belong to modernism or postmodernism, the conclusion to undo a discursive paradigm such as the modernist one remains a direct contribution. Vincent Sully asserts the same for modern architecture when he makes an interesting par-allelism between Venturi and Roosevelt by writing that ''Roosevelt has saved capitalism in America – pretty much from itself – and was hated for it by all capitalists; Venturi saved modern architecture from itself and was hated for it by almost all modern architects. I think that the reason is this: modern architecture, cannot or does not want to con-front the complexities of the city. Its urbanism, just as its architecture, was abstract. Thus they have destroyed the city, casting out everything that has laboriously developed over the centuries to make the city worth living in.'' Scully highlights the essential conclusion for changing the only possible path in revitalisating modernism in architecture. Scully directly diagnoses the self-destructive process of modernity which can be saved only through the appropri-ation of its necessary contents in a new shape of architec-tural articulation which we can consider as postmodern. As a result, writers such as Jameson, Huyssen and others see Venturi's discourse, but also his architectural practice, as postmodern.

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[2] Aron Vinegar, *I am the monument, on Learning from Las Vegas*,The MIT Press, Cam-bridge, Massachusetts/ London, England, 2008, p.3

The discernment of Venturi's viewpoints can lead us to the conclusion that if we would consider Le Corbusier's book *Versune Architecture* (1923)as a paradigmatic book for the discourse of modernity in architecture, then Robert Venturi's book *Contradiction and Complexity in Architecture* might be considered as a paradigmatic book for the discourse of postmodernity in architecture. For this reason, Vincent Sully is right when in the preface of this book he asserts that this is 'the most important' book after that of Le Corbusier. Scully here is also right when he treats these books as complementary, like books which complete each other in time[3] because they advance architectural practice by enriching it with the contents and experiences of the new society which is gaining the shape of a growing fragmentation in the process of complexity.

1. **The gentle manifesto for the difficulty of inclusion**

Robert Venturi accepts the challenges of actuality's growing demands through the gentle discoveries of compromise and avoidance of the fixed modernist program. Venturi begins his book with an ironisation of the manifesto as a modernist reference but named 'The Gentle Manifesto', through which he almost openly expresses his distance from the "absolutist rhetoric" of modernist manifestoes that had cemented language upon iron structures of exclusive discourse. Venturi, from the beginning, tells of the different path he has taken, the path of compromise and general inclusion so as to avoid the rigid and limiting schemes of architectural planning. This ironisation

expresses a natural consequence which must undo everything from the illusory heroism of modern architects who have taken on their shoulders the weight of forming society through arbitrary forming of space. Scully, who states the "ironic colouring" of his work and the "non-heroic stance", writes that Le Corbusier, too, used irony, but the latter was stern like the smile of iron teeth. "Venturi", affirms Scully 'shrugs his shoulders ruefully and moves on."[4] Scully here figuratively grasps an important element in Venturi, which is offered to us with unpretentious, but sufficiently rich architectural solutions. What distinguishes Venturi and makes him an emblematic creator in architecture is precisely the discovery of these solutions which are reflected even in his easy simple planning and easily contextualised in the cultural aura he has built. Furthermore, for this authentic architectural expression, Scully affirms that "his buildings were prepared to get along with other buildings in the city, to take up their roles in a gentle comedy of citizenship rather than in a melodrama of pseudo-heroic aggression."[5] In most of Venturi's works the model of participatory uniqueness is affirmed, interwoven with the authentic experiences of architectural context. Because of this, they are not spectacular and do not enter in the order of works which are characterised with any dramatic monumentality.

Works such as *VannaVenturi House* as well as the *Sainsbury Wing of the National Art Gallery* in London are direct expressions of a return to context, the historical and the discovery of acceptable compromises to preserve continuity through culturally associative elements.

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[3] Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*,Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1966, p.8

[4] Ibid., p.10
[5] Ibid., p.31

Even though unpretentious, Venturi's attitude, let us say without imposition, throws into question the correspondence of modern architecture's program with the actual living context. What Venturi does consists in the discovery of solutions and answers for the necessities of the time: the return towards context and the inclusion of traditionally discarded contents, and the favouring of complexities and contradictions which give life to architecture. This a direct consequence of the all-inclusive attitude which opens the perspective for different treatments and for the reorientation, freshening and enriching of the architectural discourse with which the postmodern architectural practice will identify as well.

The emergence of these discoveries is initially bound with the freeing of discourse from the exclusive language of modernism and its redefinition, because the latter is the plane where architectural descions are considered and architectural practices rub against each other.

Therefore, Venturi writes that "architects cannot allow themselves to be intimidated by the moral puritanic language of Modern orthodox architecture".[6] Venturi from the beginning opens a new chapter for treating the problem in architecture – with the brave and contesting expression of the dominant discourse in architecture, but also on the identification of complex forms and contradictions which carry the necessary tension of architectural vividness suppressed by modernist puritanism. Such a discursive expression is inevitably reflected in the appropriation of new, different and more flexible principles in the personal practice of Venturi.

These inclusive principles, which Venturi takes as his starting point, open new horizons for enriching architectural practice for him. Venturi writes: "I like elements that are hybrid rather than 'pure', 'compromising' rather than 'clean', 'distorted', rather than 'straightforward', 'ambiguous', rather than 'articulated', 'perverse' as well as impersonal, boring as well as 'interesting', conventional rather than 'designed', accommodating rather than excluding, redundant rather than simple, vestigial as well as innovating, inconsistent and equivocal rather than direct and clear."[7] This discourse established in the impurity of ambiguous expression in architecture, clearly contests the practice established in the excessive enthusiasm of modernism which has reduced architectural planning to a simplified, rationalist and functionalist narrative. This discourse, henceforth, directly contests the epochal vision of Le Corbusier, the impact of which was extraordinarily high, but on the other hand he shakes the radicalised vision of Mies van der Rohe, in which there is always the necessity of finding clear forms which lead to ideal and final solutions – in that which, according to Jencks, would reflect the perfection of the ideal Platonic world. In Venturi's stance we do not find such an enthusiasm with the new which would discard tradition, neither with purity, nor with the ideal solutions of the heroic period of modernism. Simply, we have a non-heroic solution in conventional relations and the compromise which modern architects had excluded completely from their practices.

The uncompromising tendency of unconventional modernism, empowered in van der Rohe's doctrine "Less is

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[6] Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, p.16

[7] Ibid.

more", for Venturi remains, simply, the inversion of the necessary thesis for architectural expression that "more is not less". This, naturally, does not remain a simple rhetorical game in the architectural discourse, but is also a determination for the paths in which important solutions in architecture will be found. These are the compromising solutions on which the complexities and contradictions, often inevitable in architectural planning, are grounded. Venturi affirms that "the architecture of complexity and contradiction has a special obligation towards the whole: *it's truth must be in its totality or its implications of totality.*"[8] Here Venturi articulates the new architectural gesture, decontaminated from the exclusive modernist premises, in which the architectural practice of orthodox modernism is reduced. In this saying of Venturi, on the other hand, are included a new experience and sensibility necessary for the time:a new opportunity for a mature treatment of the variability of experiences and contexts irreducible in a restricting and violent formula. Mature treatment does not imply final solutions, because as unpretentious and inclusive, this discourse, in fact, allows the appearance of tensions and contradictions without the weight of a necessary solution. This is because the final solution is imposing and exclusive. Thus writes Venturi: "If some problems prove insoluble, he can express this: in an inclusive rather than in an exclusive kind of architecture there is room for the fragment, for contradiction, for improvisation and for the tensions these produce."[9] The levels of complexities and contradictions appear parallel with the difficult process of including fragmented elements of life in contemporary societies. Inclusive architecture in Venturi does not function so as to diagnose complexities and contradictions, but instead applies in a balanced manner architectural practices which are formed in the difficulty of inclusion. Venturi is conscious of this when he affirms that "growing dimensions and levels of architecture in urban and regional planning add to the difficulty."[10] It is more than clear that Venturi does not operate with the notions of complexity and contradiction only in the narrow technical aspect of architectural realisations, but he lays them in a wider social dimension because they "reflect the complexities and contradictions of living." The expression and reflection of condition in architecture in this case completely differentiates the architectural discourse of Venturi from the unitary discourse of modernism. The many impulses which create the complex mosaic of living and architecture, at the same time impose changes in the path of architecture; the latter is not carrying the great mission of intervening in space "from above" anymore, to model it with disregard, but to gently and respectfully intervene in the inherited elements which create unique architectural complexities.

2. Breaking Order

This line of treatment results in the same approach to order, where the latter is not anymore a goal in itself, an attempt towards the final achievements of architectural solutions in the general forming of society. Even though imposed by the demand of establishing a rational and stable order after the irrational destructions in the last century, the heroic attitude of modernists as an expression of

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8 Ibid.
9 Ibid., p.17

10 Giulio Carlo Argan, *Studije o modernojumetnosti,*Nolit, Belgrade, 1962, p.163

the persistent goal of finding salvation in the calm, formal and rational order has been devalued in simplified models of architectural form. Rationalism is not an accidental discovery in architecture, but a desperate expression of European culture: modernist architecture "was not rational only through the quality of its technical and formal processes, but because it shows the self-defense of consciousness against irrational order."[11] The rational and logical orders are constructions of consciousness, which, as a unitary instance, orients the social process as well as architecture – a premise of the Enlightenment presupposed in modernity as a direct Cartesian inheritance which is reflected in the rigorous geometrical systems of modernist forms. Herefrom, we have this objective of establishing an ideal and formal order in modernist architecture. However, in Venturi we find the evident distancing from this treatment of the matter of order and a different confrontation with it.

Venturi affirms that "the valid order accommodates the environmental contradictions of a complex reality." At this point Venturi contests completely Mies van der Rohe's conclusion and the demand "that from the miserable confusion of our time order must be created", by referring to Kahn who had affirmed that "with order I do not understand orderliness."[12] The gentle and ironic discourse of Venturi is not part of the great mission imposed by the modernist demand to change society, which had been born from the "bitter conscience" (Argan) of the experiences of the two world wars, and which were completely reflected in the demand for order in European architecture. Because of this, Venturi easily poses the question: "Should we not look for meaning in the complexities and contradictions of our time and acknowledge the limitations of systems?" to affirm that "These, I think, are the two justifications for breaking order: the recognition of variety and confusion inside and outside, in program and environment, indeed, at all levels of experience; and the ultimate limitation of all orders composed by man".[13] This stance is consequential in the development of a clear premise of Venturi which we know as *messy vitality*. The affirmation of mess instead of order has a meaningful importance in Venturi's discursive determination, with evident consequences in the treatment of architectural practices. The affirmation and establishment of order is the perennial objective in which we have grounded all the values of modernity. Order is a many-dimensional category in modernity's self-understanding. It is a category in which are reflected all ethical, political and social objectives of modernity. Herefrom even modernist architecture is only a reflection of modernity's desired perfection, in the establishment and discovery of order. Jeremy Till, who sees modern architecture as an expression of modernity, writes that "Le Corbusier and the others are not the cause of modernism; they are a symptom of modernity", because "the making of order in space can be seen as part of a wider making of order in society."[14] Only in this wider context can Mies van der Rohe's or even

[11] Argan's theory, that of differentiating modern architecture in Europe which has a rational base and that in America which has an organic one, is quite interesting. He sees the rationalist movement in architecture as a European expression because of it experiencing the two wars. Hence he writes: "The rationalist movement is mainly discussed only in the aspect of stylistic and technical renewal. In reality, it shows the maximum of efforts which European culture invests to preserve or regain the possibility of leading in social life." G.C.Argan, Ibid., p.167
[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid., p.41
[14] Jeremy Till, *Architecture Depends*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts/London, England, 2009, p.33–34

Le Corbusier's stance regarding order be understood. The ethical, political and social character of order in modernity is imposed as an imperative of the time – by thus discarding the contigent and the ambiguous as threatening alternatives for society in general. This interconnection between the modernist architectural objectives about order with his necessary presupposition about modernity, Till makes evident and clear when he writes that "Purity takes on other dimension, it signifies what is pure, the removal of remains, whiteness. It is not accidental that the beauty of modernist architecture is so often associated with pure forms, the elimination of decoration and white walls. And it is also not accidental that purity is so often associated with a somewhat moral order..."[15] Thus in the tradition of the vitruvian triad a new concept of the modern is over-built with direct consequences on modernist architecture. Simultaneously the formal perfection imposed by this objective of modernist architecture will condition the exclusion of unwanted elements with the violent intervention in architectural contexts. "The three terms such as beauty, purity and order form the triangle; in fact the Bermuda triangle which eliminates whatsoever might threaten the formal (and social) order. Herefrom foreign objects, dirty, low, which are supposed to be amoral, are disregarded in the pursuit of purity."[16] Venturi with his attitude only got out of this triangle's closure, and with his insistence to break order, has at the same time freed architectural practice from the imposed and inadequate limitations so as to confront the complexity of today's society. This different

and new discourse is more than clear in Venturi's attitude. As a possible answer to the exclusive attitude there remain conventional solutions. Hence he necessitates the rethinking of conventional elements[17] which can be inspiring even in their banality, because of the alternative possibility of their usage and integration in architectural planning. A different perception of conventional elements of architectural context is Venturi's objective, because, according to him, "Present-day architects, in their visionary coercion to find new techniques, have left aside the obligation of being an expert of existing conventions."[18]Venturi, in the unpretentious breadth of his discourse, considers his attitude and view as "limited", but, he thinks that this is just as important as the "visionary view which did not manage to realise itself." Here Venturi is not preaching an arbitrary discovery, but, simply, he refers to another known artistic experience: that of Pop Art, which had beautifully contextualised banal quotidian elements, extracting from them other inspiring artistic meanings. The contextualisation of banal elements from everyday life simultaneously amounts to another important turn from the elite orientation of art towards the massive one. This, on the other hand, is a direct expression of the tension between "elite platonism" and "democratic idealism", as Jencks would say in a simplified manner so as to name the conceptual schemes of the tendencies on which the unitary modernist orientation or the pluralist postmodern orientation are grounded. The consciousness created on this articulated opposition initially in an artistic expression, as is the Pop-art one, will traverse and influence Venturi's architectural

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[15] Ibid., p.30
[16] Venturi writes that "An architect should use convention and make it vivid. I mean he should use convention unconventionally. By convention I mean both the elements and methods of building. Conventional elements are those which are common in their manufacture, form and use." Robert Venturi, Ibid., p.42

[17] Ibid., p.43
[18] Ibid., p.44

discourse just as well. An adequate artistic expression can recontextualise conventional elements and strip them of their banality and vulgarity. They remain thus only through inadequate architectural treatment. Venturi affirms that: "Pop Art has demonstrated that these commonplace elements are often the main source of the occasional variety and vitality of our cities, and that it is not their banality or vulgarity as elements which make for the banality and vulgarity of the whole scene. But rather their contextual relationships of space and scale."[19] Venturi here is thinking of the impact that Pop Art can have even in the method of city planning in the conventional manner or in the usage of conventional elements. It is more than clear that Venturi is not looking for the arbitrary modelling of context, but simply the return of the latter with all the elements of banality and mature intervention in their treatment. Hence he poses a question: "Cannot the architect and the planner, by slight adjustments to the conventional elements of the townscape, existing or proposed, promote significant effects? By modifying or adding conventional elements to still other conventional elements, they can, by a twist of context, gain a maximum of effect through a minimum of means. They can make us see the same things in a different way. "[20] Only with this respectful attitude can we avoid brutal interventions in context, and allow breath to the many elements which make up the architectural diversity and richness of a place in which different experiences and attitudes are layered in time.

3. The new decoration of complexity

With Venturi, and with some of the stances which have been articulated simultaneously and in different places, such as Aldo Rossi's work *L'architetturadellacitta*(1966), an indicator which increases awareness for the necessity of freeing architectural practice from modernist gravity, to venture on a natural research of expression in postmodern variety, has started to reveal itself. Defining Venturi's attitude as postmodern is not only a simple arbitrary fiction so as to divide styles just as cheese is cut with a knife. If we would refer to the different essential aspects of articulating the postmodern discourse in philosophy we will find many parallels which would support the thesis for the paradigmatic and discursive change of architecture in Venturi's work. Thus Jean-Francois Lyotard who some years later would write his known work *La Condition Postmoderne: Rapport sur le Savoir* (1979), in his later developments for arguing about the concept of postmodernity often refers to architecture and the changes expressed in the specifics of style in postmodern architecture. By arguing that postmodern architecture "is charged" for the small modifications in space and for giving up "the global reconstruction of the space in which man dwells", Lyotard describes postmodern architecture as "a sort of everythingness, richness of quotations, borrowed elements from earlier styles or periods, classical or modern, with little care for what's around."[21]Lyotard's definition of postmodern architecture does not differ at all from what we find in Venturi: postmodern architecture is defined as the discovery of new equilibria with the inclusion of many elements. Further-

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[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.

[21] Jean-Francois Lyotard, *Postmodernaprotumacenadjeci*,AC, Naprijed/Zagreb, 1990, p.104

more, we see how this discovery of equilibria is not a simple consequence of eclectic determination in picking up the elements, as it would seem at first sight. This equilibrium is a necessary expression of the growing complexity and the attempt to open the path for expressing dispersive forms of life which reflect on architectural forms. Thus we see how the notion of complexity in Venturi's discourse is not accidental. In Lyotard, complexification is an inevitable part of the condition he defines as postmodern. Hence Lyotard writes: "I would say that something like fate does exist, as an unwanted orientation towards a complex condition, ever more complex."[22]Lyotard calls this "the new décor" and considers that before us is the duty of "making humanity able to accommodate to the complex means of emotions, meanings and work..." We see that Venturi, not accidentally, uses the concept of complexity, treating architecture as part of this complexification process which must be crowned with the new décor. Venturi explicitly states this when he writes that "Orthodox Modern Architects have tended to recognize complexity insufficiently or inconsistently. In their attempt to break from tradition and start all over again, they idealised the primitive and the elementary at the expense of the diverse and the sophisticated. As participants in a revolutionary movement, they acclaimed the newness of modern functions, ignoring their complications. In their role as reformers, they puritanically advocated the separation and exclusion of elements, rather than the inclusion of various requirements and their juxtaposition."[23] The application of modernity's exclusive logic, in fact, has only created the unnecessary gap between

the time's demands and the reductive solutions of architecture. Venturi's line of argumentation touches on the base principle of modernity, because, as Lyotard affirms, "the very idea of modernity is in a close correlation with the principle that it is possible and necessary for tradition to be cut off and for an absolutely new way of thinking and living to appear." Because of this, only through the appropriation of open and inclusive logic, can the gap between architecture and life, between architecture and the actual necessities of today's society be overcome. This is a new impulse of inclusive architecture, in which "there is room for the fragment, for contradiction, for improvisation and for the tensions these produce."

The insufficient knowledge of complexity results in vulgarising tendencies of treating space in order to achieve the reduced simplicity of desired forms. Imposed simplicity, on the other hand, leads to a violent simplification. Because of this, the determination of inclusive architecture is important, for the *both-and* attitude which the *either-or* logic has neglected from the architectural practice of modernity. Exit from the exclusive scheme of the *either-or* tradition can hardly be considered as a simple discursive extension of modernism. On the contrary, here we have a complete discursive interruption between two, as Venturi calls them, traditions of architectural thought. About this he writes: "We are disciplined in the *either-or* tradition and lack the mental agility – to say nothing of the maturity of attitude – which would allow us to indulge in the finest distinctions and the more subtle reservations permitted by the tradition of both-and." [24] The *either-or* logic on

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[22] Ibid., p.107
[23] Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*,p.16

[24] Ibid., p.23

which modern architects have planned has impoverished architectural practice, has simplified and homogenised it by crowning the whole modernist tradition in a monotony. The opposition of these traditions, the *either-or* with the *both-and,* is evident in the famous formulations expressed by Mies van der Rohe as *Less is more* and by Venturi as *Less is a bore.* "The mental agility" of inclusion is here not only directed at the differentiation of the architectural layers between the two traditions, but it must be a sort of reestablishment of the lost connections between architecture and society. Because the architecture of inclusion, in fact, evades the danger of "dividing architecture from life experience and what society needs." The radicalisation of the modernist tradition's stance on architecture, in a way, deforms its intended premises in an acceptable aesthetic of the simple – which were self-evident premises of Mies van der Rohe's architectural planning. Radicalisation results in simplicity's extreme simplification. Simplification cannot and must not be an architectural aim, even less an aim of today's society. Lyotard writes of this as well when he affirms that "the demand of the simple seems today, mainly, like a promise of barbarity."[25] Despite the fact that this stance sounds harsh for an evaluation of modernity, this conclusion must be considered in the context in which Lyotard puts it. Lyotard thinks that the heterogeneity of language games, discursive regimes and the freeing of particularities must be allowed, and that these must not be subordinated to any violent reduction in any universal judgement which in reality is inapplicable in the incommensurability of language games. This expresses the complex situation which imposes, according to Lyotard, a

new sensibility, refined and necessary to live their incommensurability, while, according to Venturi, this situation expresses the complexity which must be realised in the difficult unity of inclusion and the possible evasion of the violent unity of exclusion.

The incommensurability of language games, which Lyotard takes as an argument for the impossibility of their reduction to a single universal judgement, in this case is equivalent to the incommensurability of architectural elements, which must not be excluded or subordinated to a universal architectonic premise. The scheme with which Lyotard depicts the change in freeing the many contents of language finds its general application in the freeing of architectural contents in Venturi. This scheme does not remain applicable only in the affirmation of the complex architectural context with historicist references, but also on the affirmative discoveries of the new type of contextual experiences of Las Vegas. Here we see a consequential development of Venturi's discourse so as to include the new urban type which is developing in Las Vegas, from the linguistic position of treating architecture.[26]

On the other hand, Venturi's thought, however bitter for modern architecture, is part of the attempt to rediscuss the role which architects have thought they have in relation to space, power and politics, for which Michel Fou-

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[25] Jean-Francois Lyotard, *Postmodernaprotumacenadjeci*,p.108

[26] Here we do not elaborate on the important aspects of Venturi's viewpoints in his work *Learning from Las Vegas*, where the analysis of architecture through communicative signs which Venturi, Scott Brown and Isenour define as "counter-spatial" architecture because "it is an architecture of communication through space; communication dominates in space like an element in architecture and townscape" (*Pouke Las Vegasa*, p.9). Despite the importance of the aforementioned work, we consider that *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* remains the work with the most impact in rethinking the premises of modernism in architecture.

cault had affirmed that "they are not the owners of space" and they are not part of the relations in which power is capillarised. Despite their good intentions architects cannot be carriers of fundamental change in society through the reformation of space, because "there cannot be any success" with the "simple ordering of objects in space", to paraphrase Foucault.[27]

In his work *Learning from Las Vegas* Venturi writes: "in principle, the world cannot expect from the architect to build its utopia, and in fact, the architect must not bother with that which must exist, but that which is – and how to contribute in the improvement of that which is. This is a role more modest for architects than the Modern movement wished to accept: however, in the artistic aspect, this role promises much more."[28] Even though Venturi mentions a somewhat reduced concept, such as that of the world, we can understand this as a conceptual substitution so as to express the deeper relations in which the complex power strategies that architects lack are interwoven. Architects do not have the power to change society and they must not aim at that unrealisable effort.[29] Either way, this is not an unimportant change in the architectural discourse as well as in the architectural treatment of space which is already and clearly correcting its objectives. At the same time this offers the possibility of an adequate treatment of space, a contextual and useful treatment, inclusive and not exclusive. Cannot this be considered also as a complete redefinition of architecture's aims? What is it and which architecture is it, that in its discourse does not allow for "being frightened by the moral puritanic language of Modern orthodox architecture" Which is the perspective of an architecture deprived of the absolute demand for the new?

Architecture must discover in itself a richer and more complex perspective which unstoppably continues its search for richer and more acceptable forms.

Because this perspective already appears to us full of varieties of inherited contents, which modernist rationalism and universalism threw somewhere behind, to empty the space in which they modelled arbitrarily and violently. Because of this, the return and appropriation of those contents does not also imply the regression of architectural practice, but the establishment of today's practice in a wider context in which we have the interweaving of experiences that enrich architectural planning.

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[27] See Paul Rabinow, *Foucault Reader*, Pantheon Books, New York, 1984, 'Space, Knowledge and Power', p.239–256

[28] Robert Venturi, *Pouke Las Vegasa,* GK, Belgrade, 1988, p.128

[29] It would be interesting if the relation between architecture and revolution that Le Corbusier spoke of in his known saying "Architecture or revolution" were analysed, where he considered that architecture was that which through the reformation of space could revolutionise society, something which has remained as an unrealised objective of the modern movement in architecture. Naturally, in Venturi's discourse this relation of architecture and revolution is not presupposed at all. This relation is also analysed by Neil Leach in his edited work *Architecture and Revolution: Contemporary Perspectives on Central and Eastern Europe,* Routledge, London/New York, 1999