On Architecture, Aesthetic Experience and The Embodied Mind

Seven Essays

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On Architecture, Aesthetic Experience and The Embodied Mind: Seven Essays

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For Gustaf, Cornelia and Frej
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Introduction

As I sit down to put the finishing touches to this introduction, it is with wonder that I look at all the texts on the table in front of me. To write a PhD thesis was certainly not my intention when in 1983 I chose to become an architect. I was curious about the role of architecture in human life and the artistic problems caused by the construction of the built environment. During my education I felt very absorbed, as the questions that appealed to me proved to be even more exciting than I could ever have guessed. At this time, a lot of emphasis was placed on students’ drawing, and we were given ample individual supervision. We thus had favourable opportunities to develop preparatory practical artistic skills.

Aesthetic Awareness

I did, however, recognise one large problem with the architectural course. Although I was mainly devoted to the practical artistic aspect of the work, I wanted deeper theoretical discussions about the aesthetic value of architecture. For instance, one key concept in the discussion of aesthetic value (and also in my essays) is aesthetic experience. We never touched on the lively debate that had taken place around this issue during the twentieth century, which I think could have enriched our capacity to understand the values we were actually trying to reach in our architectural projects. The word experience was often mentioned, without a deep theoretical awareness of its rich aesthetic value and content. There was talk about sharpening one’s senses, or to develop sensitivity to architectonic values, but only rarely did we discuss what this really meant, and it certainly never happened that we took the step of looking at the biological aspects of the process of experience. Also, the concept of architecture was too often used without it being specified what was meant by it. Many equated architecture with building; others argued that architec-
ture emerges in the tension that arises when human beings interact with architectural objects.

In my opinion, the teaching was well planned regarding the issues concerning architectural objects as physical phenomena—their proportions, material, function, place, history, and so on. But the aesthetic/ethical value of architecture was not as carefully thought about. The pedagogy, which included an awareness of architectural value in relation to human beings and society, was surprisingly poor, and was seldom related to any knowledge that was distinct from, but relevant to, the field of architecture. We did not, for instance, study any philosophy, even though—by constituting our built environment—architecture raises deep philosophical questions. I found especially that the pedagogy on the dynamics of our human capacity for the experience of architecture lacked depth, despite the fact that this type of knowledge is as fundamental to architects as is the knowledge of construction techniques and different building materials. The confrontation between technical and experiential perspectives concerning the value of architecture was, unfortunately, presented without sufficient rigour or incisiveness. Consequently, I found it a big problem that the aesthetic/ethical discussions about architecture were conducted mostly on a shallow theoretical level.

Of course, there were also persons who really tried to sort things out and inspired us to develop our own aesthetic thinking. I remember especially one occasion when one of the professors drew a symbolic picture of a house. He began to draw small bulges here and there on the house and said something about when architecture emerges, human life is made visible against matter. I found this interesting; far more interesting than the numerous discussions we had, which were purely about form.

My fellow students and I became skilled at drawing, but we lacked a language to discuss the deeper meaning of architecture. This had the consequence that we were rather bad at analysing and arguing about architectonic values, which we managed to
present as drawings and as built models. Our ability to relate our (private) drawing work to a broader (public) perspective of the surrounding world was insufficient. Instead, we developed a kind of “quiet practical skill,” which, I believe, is a kind of unfortunate illiteracy. To communicate with the surrounding world, architects themselves need to understand—intellectually and linguistically—what they do, and to be able to speak for their ideas. As qualified architects, we had not developed such a solid aesthetic foundation that could help us critically place our skill within a theoretical perspective. Thus, despite many other good aspects of my architectural education, I found that there was a lack of a well-considered pedagogy with the aim of giving students the necessary aesthetic/ethically awareness.

Theoretical insecurity may cause a narrow outlook: a fear of that which lies outside the usual “architectural knowledge”, which may cause barriers against the other forms of knowledge that could enrich the architect’s attempts to create good architecture. Unfortunately, I see tendencies towards this behaviour within my profession. Fear of or an unwillingness to adopt wider theoretical perspectives is always destructive. The practical artistic work of the architect will, of course, benefit from an expansion and an active criticism of theoretical arguments: a rich aesthetic discussion. This may seem obvious, but unfortunately, persons within the profession who consider themselves theoreticians, as well as persons who consider their work practical and artistic, sometimes mount a sad defence of special interests. I hope and think that the situation is now changing towards a more open-minded attitude. When I meet young students I can see proof of this positive trend and an increasing willingness to discuss the esthetical/ethical issues of architecture in relation to its formal aspects. A well thought-out pedagogy within aesthetics/ethics, related to the practical artistic work of the architect, can, of course, help the current situation even more. It is important to prepare the ground for a broader discussion about the
meaning of architecture to make architects more cogent and prominent in the public debate. Of course, it is also essential to recruit students with varying social backgrounds in order to achieve a livelier debate about architectural value pluralism.

**Experiencing Architecture**

After a few years of apprenticeship in a well-established research group within architecture, at the Royal University of Technology, I applied for a research grant from The Colour Science Foundation. The result of my work in the field of *Colour and Architecture* has been some papers on colour theory and a licentiate’s dissertation about the experience of colour and architectural pedagogy (Dahlin 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999) (Dahlin and Billiger 2001). Through my work on my licentiate’s dissertation, I came to reflect increasingly on the deeper meaning of *experience* in relation to the concept of *architecture*. After completing my licentiate’s dissertation I put to myself the grand philosophical question whether there really is such a thing as “architectural experience”. And if there is, is it possible to describe its aesthetic consequences in relation to the intimate interconnection it has with all the other activities and events of life?

Johan Ludwig von Goethe’s chromatics, as presented in *Zur Farbenlehre* (1810) and Ludwig Wittgenstein’s *Remarks on Colour* (1977), were important sources for my licentiate’s dissertation. The careful reading of these thinkers increased my will to focus the rest of my studies on the relevance of current knowledge about human consciousness and the problems of experience for the aesthetics of architecture. I started to investigate the field of architectural experience more urgently. Consequently, I read all I could find within architectural theory on this issue. In searching for a theoretical platform, extensive research into the literature about consciousness and philosophy also aroused an increased interest in the representatives of classical as well as modern pragmatism. Within pragmatism, the process of experi-
ence is central. This means an approach that includes interpretative aspects, as, to some extent, the subject actively shapes all experience. It is thus a question of an active process—a creative process—not the passive reception of sense impressions. As a method, Pragmatism allows unorthodox interdisciplinary perspectives to attain useful knowledge for specific purposes. This has far-reaching consequences for an approach to aesthetics. It also became apparent that the process theories of pragmatism corresponded well with the concept of the embodied mind, which is adopted by some of the most influential researchers into human consciousness. This is a view that sets wholly to one side all kinds of a priori knowledge, and which rejects the division of the human being into body and mind.

*Experience* is in its nature evasive, subjective, and dependent on the situation in which it takes place. This has led to commentators sometimes trying to circumvent the difficulties it causes within aesthetics. If we take the philosophers John Dewey, Nelson Goodman, and Richard Shusterman seriously, we accept the meaning of this value pluralism (Dewey (1934) 1980) (Goodman 1978) (Shusterman 2000). To investigate the complexity of the concept of aesthetic experience in relation to architecture, the focus needs to be directed towards the actual encounter with the architectural object, dependent as it is on the particular situation in which it takes place. This in turn leads to the attention being drawn to the value of experience, and this value being increased. When experience is considered as central for aesthetics, we also have to deal with withstanding philosophical issues concerning the first and third person perspective. Experience is something that, in its nature, is private, but it also includes important similarities that have to do with our common capacity for experience and the ongoing communication and evaluation of our experiences. As Wittgenstein has radically shown us, the role that language plays in this objectification of our experienced worlds is thus of particular interest in the development of an aesthetic
awareness, when experience is discussed. But it is also important to understand what is beyond or before language, which is now, at least in some respects, reachable through new sorts of scientific empiricism.

Today, famous neurologists such as Antonio Damasio, Gerald Edelman, and Susan Greenfield take an interest in the subjective creation of meaning in the process of experience. Humanist and scientific perspectives thus meet within the study of human consciousness. But it is not only philosophers and scientists that care about human experience. An enormous industry is built around our fascination for human experience, which persuades us to buy more and more advanced forms of extraordinary experiences in order to enrich our lives. We visit film palaces and adventure baths and travel to exiting places around the world. Architecture is, in some respects, part of that experiential industry that expanded during the 1980s and 1990s into an enormous business. It has become—more and more—a distinguishable sector, dealing with extraordinariness and artificiality. This sector also comprises popular music and literature, sports events, television, and so on. Experience has thus come to be associated with something opposite to everydayness: the antithesis of ordinary life. It is important to make clear that this use of the word experience is far removed from the rich definition process philosophers and current embodied mind researchers give the concept.

The strange and rich phenomenon that is called human experience is—in the current situation—aesthetically both problematic and weighty. When experience as a phenomenon is worshipped and used commercially, a critical aesthetic discussion is demanded. The early analytic aesthetic tradition neglected human experience as too complicated and risky. But even though human experience is problematic in the field of aesthetics, it also proved—for John Dewey and Richard Shusterman, for instance—to be extremely interesting, and in need of further investigation. Aesthetic value is undoubtedly connected to experience,
and all the complications that follow with it. According to these thinkers, its value pluralism should be investigated carefully and with passion. Furthermore, I think the aesthetic discussion about experiential values can today be radically enriched by current knowledge from the field of human consciousness.

An important side effect of my research is that, as time has past, I have come to increasingly reject the tendency to make irresponsible statements about the ingenious, intuitive, and inaccessible skill of the architect. These myths, which still prevail within the profession, create insecurity about the content of the individual’s expertise and a narrowness of outlook in the assessment of the works of other architects. It also creates an attitude of superiority towards society at large with regard to architectonic values other than those that successful architects promote. This does not mean that I reject that magical force that human beings can experience in their encounter with architectural objects, nor do I deny that some architects are very skilled in their ability to arouse this force. The aesthetics of architecture is deep and rich. It is not controlled by banal cultures of geniuses, but by the value pluralism and dynamics of human experience in relation to actual or imagined architectural objects. Aesthetic/ethical values contain public as well as individual perspectives; prosaic as well as grand ones; poetical as well as political value scales. The aesthetics of architecture is intimately connected with all the different perspectives and values of human life. It is dependent on human beings’ unique imagination and their will to ard capacity for reshaping matter into houses, bridges, roads and big cities, in relation to their body and their advanced consciousness. In the following essays I intend to describe and discuss some of the experiential aesthetic richness and problems that is related to architecture.
The Essays

The essay form came to stand out as the most fruitful to be able to tackle the complex field of knowledge related to architectural experience. This form allows experimentation in which different views can be placed in juxtaposition within a limited discussion. The barriers between different disciplines can be overcome. The purpose of the thesis is to challenge the architectural-aesthetic perspective by discussing the modern study of human consciousness in relation to architectural theory and pragmatism. The essays can, certainly, be read individually, but there is a value in presenting them together. In different ways, the texts correspond to one another, both with respect to content and style. My work on the individual essays has also overlapped. There are parallels between them, rather than there being a linear structure, in which they were completed one after the other.

The further I have come with my research, the more interesting the complex of problems to do with experience and consciousness have appeared from the perspective of architecture. There are many topics within this extensive field that can be elaborated. My studies could have continued much further, and maybe they will, but it is time to present the current material to public scrutiny. My intention is that it should be possible to criticise and develop the arguments in the essays. In places, the essays also contain personal descriptions of particular events. The purpose of these descriptions is to make the abstract arguments more comprehensible. I see these essays as contributions to an aesthetically/ethical discussion about the value of architecture. I place the thesis within the movement that during the last decade has developed around the theme of Art and the Mind, or rather an extension of this theme which could be called Architecture and the Mind. On the theme of Art and the Mind, extensive activity is already taking place, thanks partly to the expansion of interdisciplinary research within the study of human consciousness, with actors from many different fields of research. I think Architecture
and the Mind has potential to develop into an important field of research. It can radically deepen and challenge the architectural debate and architectural research, as well as architectural pedagogy, if the most recent research into the nature of human consciousness is related to questions dealing with architecture.

In my thesis I have thus turned far away from architectural theory for my sources, in order to be able to discuss the problems of experience and the consequences of these for architectural theory. Without claiming to be an expert in either the study of human consciousness or aesthetics, I have, as an architect, taken the liberty to cross-disciplinary boundaries in this study. This has been necessary and very interesting. The thesis consists of seven texts, and this introduction.

In the first essay, Pragmatism, Aesthetics and Architecture, I explain my choice of theoretical platform, and discuss pragmatism and John Dewey’s aesthetics in connection with architecture. The meaning of pragmatism’s focus on experience is confronted, with the emphasis on the sublime, and the artist as a genius, by analytical aestheticians. The view of experience is extensive among pragmatists. They embrace the different parts of the process of experience, including interpretative aspects, as experience is always—to some extent—an active creation. In the spirit of William James and John Dewey, and according to the basic outlook of pragmatism, I believe that no dominant and absolute truth can be attained. Knowledge is not final, but consists of revisable suggestions that can be tested against their usefulness. There are many different kinds of knowledge, depending on intention and usefulness. Richard Shusterman’s discussion of the concept of aesthetic experience is taken up in direct connection with Dewey. In conclusion, I present some basic conditions for the aesthetic experience of architecture, inspired primarily by Dewey.

In the second essay, On the Process of Consciousness, I discuss the idea of consciousness as a process from the perspective
of a few selected philosophers and researchers within the study of human consciousness. At the end of the nineteenth century, William James and Henri Bergson argued that consciousness is a subjective and coherent stream or flow in constant change. For a time, these two were very influential, and were also influential in the field of art and literature, but with the twentieth-century movements of positivism and behaviourism, they came to be questioned. Among other things, they were accused of irresponsible irrationalism. “If Bergsonism we accept everything but continuity,” Gaston Bachelard exclaimed (Bachelard 1950 2000, 28-9). Bachelard, on the other hand, stressed the value of discontinuity and rhythm in experience. Towards the end of his life, Bachelard recommended a phenomenological method to describe the poetic imagination, in tension with his own belief in rationalism as a method. The purpose of this was to capture something of the immediate value for the individual of, for instance, an experience of art, which lies beyond the reach of usual scientific methods.

The subject of consciousness, as a contemporary scientific problem, is also broached in this essay, with inspiration from some modern scientists. Is it possible to scientifically investigate consciousness, which in its nature is subjective? Many researchers today argue that one needs to consider the particular in the problem of consciousness, and try to develop methods which both utilise measurable results and subjective descriptions of experience. Thus one can say that “the poetic imagination,” with which Bachelard argued that scientific rationalism could not concern itself, is today also considered highly relevant from a scientific perspective. This makes parts of the prevailing study of human consciousness interesting to aesthetics in a new way. Parts of the philosophy of mind today discuss the ways in which we create meaning about our environment and ourselves. This new approach directly connects to the process philosophers James, Bergson, and Dewey of a hundred years ago. In particular, mod-
ern researchers refer to James, but Dewey is the only one of the three whom has applied process theories to aesthetics.

Essay number three, *Architecture and Human Centrality* consists of a discussion of the significance of experienced values, in which I compare the architects Steen Eiler Rasmussen’s and Peter Eisenman’s approaches to architecture. Rasmussen has emphasised the significance of the experiencing human subject for the concept of architecture, whereas Eisenman has challenged this theory and instead talked about an autonomous architecture, independent of “human centrality.” The provocative central question of the essay is: Is it possible, or even desirable, to maintain that architecture is something which exists in itself, and which does not need human interaction to consolidate its value?

*Architecture and Sense Experience* is the forth essay. It outlines an experiment in which Juhani Pallasmaa’s view of architecture and consciousness is compared with neurologist Antonio Damasio’s model of “the making of consciousness.” Pallasmaa and Ignasi de Solá-Morales were inspired by the philosopher Gianni Vattimo’s theories of “weak thought” and have applied these, in different ways, to the field of architecture. Pallasmaa talks about “fragile architecture,” de Solá-Morales about “weak architecture.” Both stress the value of the subtlety of experience in relation to architecture. Damasio also talks about “dynamism and fragility” when he describes human consciousness. I juxta-
pose these thinkers with each other in the discussion of architecture and aesthetic experience, and I find a fruitful and stimulating correspondence.

The fifth text, *Pompeii in My Mind* x 2, consists of an experiment, in a more literary form, which is based on two trips to Pompeii. I try to illustrate something of that experiential dynamism which emerged, in relation to my body, emotionally, and intellectually, in these encounters with the unearthed city from antiquity. The described situations are, of course, extreme, and not comparable to common architectural experience, but this fact
also challenges everyday views. We compare all the time what we are going through in our lives. Extraordinary events in our lives are evaluated with reference to common situations. In that respect, architectural experiences are intimately connected to the full value variations of lived experience. The purpose of the text is to show the dynamics between different perspectives and intentions in the architectural experience. The focus of the essay is the movement between that which is to do with the subject’s individual life history and that, which has a more universal value. The first encounter is characterised by the symbolic meaning of the story of the city hit by disaster, and the sensorimotor experience of walking round the town. Before the second trip, a foundation of knowledge is built up by means of history texts and drawings of the city. This leads to a displacement of the content of the experience towards a more active interpretation of the architecture. This does not, however, prevent emotional surprises, which strongly affect the private body-related architectural experience, from also occurring.

In the sixth text, The Embodied Mind and Architecture, I discuss the significance of the concept of the embodied mind in relation to architecture. The theory of the embodied mind emphasises the bodily aspect of experience, which is necessary in aesthetic discussions about architecture. It mirrors an anti-dualistic approach to body and mind and process thinking about human consciousness (which connects to the process philosophers mentioned above). The modern researchers into human consciousness, to whom I relate, emphasise that reason is dependent on emotions and bodily functions. Body and consciousness is thus seen as a connected system, and a lot of what comes to have significance in our lives takes place on an unconscious or subconscious level. The role of language, and its connection to bodily experience in the construction of consciousness, is discussed, as is the scale between distinct and indistinct aesthetic values. Because we actively control our consciousness, we can direct our
attention towards that which is useful to us at a particular moment. We react, however, to a greater number of things than we can formulate in our thought. Damasio describes different levels of consciousness, and the ways in which what takes place on these levels interacts in a complex system. Among other things, he talks about three key levels of consciousness. That which takes place beyond our consciousness constitutes unconsciousness: that which is to do with survival at a bodily level. Core consciousness is the basic consciousness, which we have in common with animals. Extended consciousness expresses that which is specific to human beings. In the conclusion of this essay, I make use of Damasio’s division into three types of consciousness in order to test a model theory around the concepts of basic spatial experience, unreflecting architectural experience, and architectural awareness.

The final essay, The Varieties of Architectural Experience, consists in part of an elaboration on a previously published article. The article was written as a sketch of the thesis in the autumn of 1999 (Dahlin 2000). My main sources in this text are the philosophers William James and Roger Scruton, whose theories I compare in a critical discussion about the value pluralism of architectural experience. The text contains a number of freer personal examples in order that the abstract arguments concerning the individual and the general; the everyday and the extraordinary, may become comprehensible. The large variation between different definitions of the concept of architecture is exemplified in order to illuminate the flexibility of those definitions. This shows what is difficult in aesthetics that is based on experiencing architecture “correctly,” and, instead, speaks for a pluralistic approach. Different aesthetic levels of architectural experience are presented in the form of a number of categories, and so are different kinds of aesthetic experiences. The purpose of these categories is to illuminate the aesthetic breadth and depth of architectural experience; to show that architectural experience is con-
nected to both the bodily and the conceptual, and that it can be both distinct and fragmentary. But above all, the categories are meant to show that architecture affects and is affected by the sum total of the continual creation of meaning within our lives.
1 Pragmatism, Aesthetics and Architecture

Aesthetics is a branch of philosophy in which the meaning of art is investigated and discussed. The aesthetics of architecture is tangential to many other fields of knowledge, which are concerned with architectural objects, such as technology, history, politics, and economics. Aesthetics also touches upon different types of knowledge about human beings as biological, psychological, and social beings. Within aesthetics, there are different movements, which are grounded on diverse philosophical foundations. In this essay, pragmatism comes to the forefront: a philosophy, which emphasises dynamic experience as the foundation of values. My intention is to demonstrate that this emphasis has broad pluralistic consequences for the aesthetics of architecture.

Within the field of architecture, values are continuously displaced. This occurs for a number of reasons. During the late twentieth century, the development of technology and the transformation of social structures have taken place extremely rapidly. Hence the attempt to develop stable values within architecture—which previously had been obvious—has, in part, had to give way. Instead, a high degree of flexibility in many built environments is wanted both because the functions demand this, and because our view of the human being and her or his interaction with the environment has changed. Human beings are now expected to move, change jobs, and travel to a far greater extent than earlier generations. In post-modern society, questioning harmony, stability, and wholeness has created space for other sorts of values in architecture, values which promotes the dissolved, the flexible, and the non-permanent.

The role of the architect has also changed dramatically over the last decades, not least through the use of increasingly advanced computer technology in the planning stage. The notion of
the architect as a divine artist has been increasingly abandoned in favour of an approach in which the architect is seen rather as a technical/artistic designer and co-ordinator of a number of areas of expertise and products: a uniting force in the design process. Could pragmatism be useful in handling a modern, rapidly changing, composite, and dynamic foundation of values within architecture? Yes, I think so, and in the end of this essay I have summarised some of the important points of why I think so. The question about the topicality of pragmatism within architecture is implicitly focused on, even though, to a large extent, the content has no direct connection with architecture.

Modern pragmatism’s view of aesthetics takes us back in history to the exponents of classical pragmatism: William James (1842-1910) and John Dewey (1859-1952). An introductory quote from Dewey will convey an initial indication of the significance of the idea that the dynamics of the concept of art may not be explained via rigid forms of classification. Instead it has to be understood in relation to the complexity and depth of experience, as “art is a quality of activity” (Dewey 1934) 1980, 224).

The attempt at rigid classification and definition is not confined to the arts. […] If, however, we regard such terms as picturesque, sublime, poetic, ugly, tragic, as marking tendencies, and hence as adjectival as are the terms, pretty, sugary, convincing, we shall be led back to the fact that art is a quality of activity. Like any mode of activity, it is marked by movement in this direction and that. These movements may be discriminated in such fashion that our relation to the activity in question is rendered more intelligent. But tendencies of experience do not have limits that are exactly fixed or that are mathematical lines without breadth and thickness. Experience is too rich and complex to permit such precise limitation. The termini of tendencies are bands not lines, and the qualities that
characterize them form a spectrum instead of being capable of distribution in separate pigeonholes. (Ibid.)

**Aesthetics**

According to Sven Erik Liedman, the concepts of *aesthetics* and *technology*, both important within the field of architecture, acquired their present meaning during the eighteenth century. *Technology*, in its modern sense, represents the resolute and the outspoken, or—on the whole—the practical, whereas *aesthetics*, and with that art, stands for the evasive and the ethereal; the diverging and the Bohemian: the impractical. Technology, Liedman argues, has for the most part been considered fairly unproblematic, whereas aestheticians constantly investigate the foundations of their discipline and question the meaning of art (Liedman 1997, 352). Today, however, a change is taking place. Liedman argues that the border between art and technology is being erased. Art is no longer seen as something divine and unattainable, and in opposition to the practical and the rational (Ibid. 401). This makes demands on aesthetics to approach the practical and the human everyday activity, associated with the art object. Within the field of architecture, Ignasi de Solà-Morales, among others, calls for a return to forms of discussions about the value of architecture based on the practical. He emphasises early examples, such as the architects Viollet-le-Duc, Gottfried Semper, and Otto Wagner (de Solà-Morales 1996, 143):

Experience, history, and project are interwoven throughout their writings, which reveal nothing other than the verbal articulation—transmissible and logical—of a practice. It is not criticism, it is not history; it is not a treatise; nor should it be. But it is an endeavour to escape the isolation of the professional studio, the closed domain of works, projects and pure experience, in the hopes of finding a word worthy of being heard. (Ibid.)
From pragmatism’s aesthetic perspective, the type of knowledge, which these architects reflect, is central. It makes the work of aesthetics instrumental and practicable. Before seriously focusing on pragmatism in this essay, I want to give a (sweeping) exposition of the rise of modern aesthetics. Around 1800, the Romantic cult of the artistic genius reached its peak and the earlier natural vicinity to the practical and the manual increasingly dissolved. Art could be liberated from the idea of mimesis; that is to say, art no longer needed to imitate or reproduce nature. Liedman describes this “drama” of modernity by means of two pairs of concepts: useful and free, modern and timeless (Liedman 1997, 375). This revolutionary process was, however, initiated even earlier. The German philosopher Alexander Baumgarten (1714-1762) is often called the father of aesthetics. His work *Aesthetica* (1750-58) is based on the notion of sense impressions, for which he tried to establish a system of laws. Significant in Baumgarten’s philosophical activity, according to Liedman, is that, coming from the rationalist tradition, he opened the way for an interest not just in empirical knowledge (which was already solidly established in the British tradition, which had affected German thinking), but also in poetry, art, and the imagination. Baumgarten did not celebrate abstruseness, but he maintained that there were phenomena with which one could only come into contact through more indirect ways than by means of pure thinking or pure observation (Ibid. 358-9).

In reality, says Richard Shusterman, Baumgarten had wider ideas of what aesthetics is than what is known about him today. Baumgarten wrote: “Aesthetics (as the theory of the liberal arts, the science of lower cognition, the art of beautiful thinking, and the art of analogical thought) is the science of sensory cognition” (Baumgarten (1750-58), quoted in Shusterman 2000, 264). Baumgarten thus stressed the idea that aesthetics is related to sense experience, which ought to bring aesthetics close to the bodily. But Baumgarten, who rather denies that the body has any
particular significance, however, never makes this connection. Also during the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, the body and the sensorimotor have played a minor role within aesthetics. Dewey’s argument in *Art as Experience* (1934) provides an exception. He argued that aesthetics ought to be founded on a comprehensive view of the human being, and rejected simplified and dividing accounts in terms of body and mind; emotion and intellect; individual and society. The human being is one of many living beings, and is controlled by instincts, needs, and feelings, as well as the intellect. The bodily and the emotional, according to Dewey, can thus never be ignored in aesthetic discussions.

During the later part of the twentieth century, a newly awakened interest in the body appeared within art and aesthetics. Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Michel Foucault have been particularly significant in this development. The feminist movement has also, in different ways, emphasised the bodily. According to Shusterman, however, the problem of the significance of the bodily has been with us ever since Baumgarten’s days. Shusterman proposes the idea of a body-centred discipline, which he calls *somaesthetics*, and which he argues is partly based on the aesthetic tradition deriving from Baumgarten. But *somaesthetics* goes even further by also embracing a crucial feature, which Baumgarten omits from his program: the cultivation of the body. Modern philosophy far too often displays the same sad somatic neglect, according to Shusterman (Shusterman 2000, 263).

The different movements within aesthetics during the twentieth century can in part be brought back to the traditions from Kant and Hegel. Derived from Hegel is a basic approach founded on holism and historicism with which Dewey sides (to be simplistic). Analytic aesthetics is, on the other hand, primarily Kantian in its nature (Ibid. 5-6). Kant believed that that which possesses the highest degree of aesthetic perfection is natural beauty; but a genius can, by means of free creativity, create works of art which in their beauty can compare with the unaffected beauty of
nature (Lübcke 1988, 286). Both Hegel and Kant give prominence to the subject who experiences reality, but Hegel argues that the life of the individual is interwoven with a common life: a collective fate. Hegel wants to join a theory of reality as a whole to a theory of the conscious subject. Thus, in contrast with Kant, Hegel maintains that reality is not a thing or an object beyond experience, but is the extensive connection, which becomes apparent in experience (Ibid. 211).

The chief object of art in modern society, Hegel argues, is, apart from the immediate pleasure, which it can give, to constitute an object of our thought. It is through philosophical reflection that the real nature of the work of art appears. Hegel thus places the aesthetician above the artist, as art cannot operate without its theoretical motivation and explanation. Art has, of course, also become the object of massive interpretation, and the object of a number of academic disciplines (Ibid.). The similarity between Dewey and Hegel, which it is important to stress, is to do with their understanding of the value of art’s integration with society at large. From Dewey’s point of view, art is even the cornerstone for a well-functioning civilisation.

The material of esthetic experience in being human—human in connection with the nature of which it is a part—is social. Esthetic experience is a manifestation, a record and celebration of the life of a civilization, a means of promoting its development, and is also the ultimate judgement upon the quality of a civilization. For while it is produced and is enjoyed by individuals, those individuals are what they are in the content of their experience because of the cultures in which they participate. (Dewey (1934) 1980, 326)

Dewey’s aesthetics derives from an “embodied mind thinking,” at the same time as he promotes the social and everyday aspects of the significance of art. This contrasts with the view of art held
by followers of analytic aesthetics, according to which it is an exclusive phenomenon, which demands aesthetics to explain the meaning of art intellectually. Shusterman has compared Dewey's view of aesthetics with that of advocates of analytic aesthetics: a comparison, which reveals Dewey's exceptional position.

Analytic aesthetics, at least initially, was largely an attempt to apply the logically rigorous and precise methods of scientific philosophy to the wayward and wooly realm of art, to clarify its murky concepts and the confused methods of interpretation and evaluation through which it is evaluated and appreciated. Dewey, though intensely appreciative of science and its gifts to civilization, could not help but regard scientific experience as thinner than art. For art engages more of the human organism in a more meaningful and immediately satisfying way. (Shusterman 2000, 11)

In *Art as Experience* (1934), Dewey applies pragmatism's pluralistic approach within aesthetics. This experiment stands out, historically, as a solitary event. It is the only work in Dewey's prolific production, which deals with aesthetics, nor does he ever discuss other aesthetic works. Dewey's aesthetics has been rediscovered thanks to the fact that modern pragmatists have emphasised its contemporary relevance. A continual discussion of Dewey's theories is taking place in aesthetic journals. These discussions focus on the subject. However, not the solitary and outcast human being (as with Heidegger), but the civilised and creative human being, actively shaping the society of which she or he is a part. Paradoxically, according to Shusterman, compared to Dewey, analytic philosophers were very little engaged with the issues of aesthetics. Analytic aesthetics has, however, dominated the second half of the twentieth century, and only sparse interest has been devoted to Dewey's aesthetical theories right up to the newly awakened interest of today. According to Shusterman
aesthetics was a very central concern of pragmatism’s most active and influential twentieth-century figure, John Dewey. But, Shusterman continues it was of only minor philosophical importance to the major analysts: Moore, Russell, and Wittgenstein. [...] In short, there is nothing in aesthetics by any of the analytic patriarchs that can compare with the comprehensive scope, detailed argument, and passionate power of Dewey’s *Art as Experience* (1934). (Shusterman 2000, 3)

Analytic aesthetics follows the Romantic and the modernist tradition of defending the value and autonomy of art by identifying it with “fine art,” connected with the sublime and the genius. Dewey rejects this tradition, attacking it with designations such as “the museum conception of art” and “the esoteric idea of fine art.” Aesthetic concepts ought to be considered as instruments which it is possible to challenge and scrutinise (Ibid. 18) (Dewey (1934) 1980, 12, 90). Dewey thus wants to radically reform our concepts of art, because he believes that these could actively help us achieve a richer aesthetic experience. This approach challenged traditional aesthetics. “Dewey’s privileging of art over science on a fundamentally naturalist and empiricist philosophical base was both brave and a therapeutic gesture in an increasingly technological world whose dominant cultural hero was the scientist” (Shusterman 2000, 11). Shusterman outlines a number of ways in which Dewey’s aesthetics differs from analytic aesthetics: “Dewey [...] insisted that ‘the final measure of the quality of [...] culture is the arts which flourish,’ while for analytic philosophers the ideal and paradigm of human achievement was, instead, science” (Ibid.). The experience of the work of art is entirely central to art, according to Dewey. *Art* is both art object and experience; the value of art is continually created in the process of experience. Aesthetic value touches on both the general and the deeply private in the meaning of art. Shusterman summarises Dewey’s radical view of art in the following way:
For Dewey, the essence and value of art are not in the mere artifacts we typically regard as art, but in the dynamic and developing experiential activity through which they are created and perceived. He therefore begins by distinguishing between “the art product”—an object like a painting, sculpture, or printed text that, once created, can exist, “externally and physically,” “apart from human experience”—and “the actual work of art [which] is what the product does with and in experience” (Dewey 1980, 167). With this privileging of aesthetic process over product, art gets defined as “a quality of experience” rather than a collection of objects or a substantive essence shared only by such objects, and aesthetic experience thus becomes the cornerstone of the philosophy of art.” […] Just as “an esthetic product results only when ideas cease to float and are embodied in an object,” so the work of art as aesthetic experience results only when one’s “images and emotions are also tied to the object, and […] fused with the matter of the object” (Dewey 1980, 280). But notwithstanding the necessity of art’s fixed objects, Dewey privileges what Adorno later describes as “the processual essence of aesthetic experience and of the art work,” the fact that “works of art exist only in acta,” “in lived dynamic experience.” (Ibid. 25-6)

After linguistic analysis caught on during the 1940s and 1950s and dominated for a few decades, aesthetics has again, since the 1970s, been drawing nearer to art. This has in turn led to the gulf between pragmatism and analytic aesthetics being narrowed, as experience again has become a more central concept. Ethical and social questions have also become more topical for aesthetics. Despite this, or rather because of this, Mary Devereaux argues that aesthetics during the twentieth century has become increasingly peripheral within philosophy.
Aesthetics is marginal not only in the relatively benign sense that it lies at the edge, or border of the discipline, but also in the additional, more troubling, sense that it is deemed philosophically unimportant. [...] As is evident from the works of Plato, Aristotle, Hume, Kant, Nietzsche and Hegel, questions of art and beauty were once regarded as essential concerns of philosophy. [...] As recent work in aesthetics moves closer to the arts and to other fields, it comes to be viewed as moving further away from the central projects of philosophy. (Devereaux 1997)

According to Devereaux, ethical philosophers have, however, begun to turn towards art, and vice versa. “We might say, with slight exaggeration, that we are experiencing an ‘ethical turn’ in aesthetics and an ‘aesthetic turn’ in ethics” (Ibid.). Not least post-structuralism and feminism have, during later decades, shown the need for and the possibilities of expanding the scope of aesthetics, and seen the value of art as part of lived experience, rather than as an intellectual work, conducted from the outside. About feminist aesthetics, Devereaux says the discovery that aesthetic standard presented as timeless and universal are in practice neither timeless nor universal—that they largely reflect beliefs and values typical of European patriarchy—has led to a more critical, historically grounded analysis of artistic concepts, institutions and practices generally. This in turn, Devereaux continues has resulted in a broader and deeper understanding of the many social and cultural variables that contribute to prevailing notions of taste, aesthetic value and artistic genius. (Ibid.)

The increased interest in including everyday values—and the full scope and plurality of experiential value—within aesthetics has clear similarities with William James and John Dewey, in the early twentieth century. Another contemporary epistemological change within science and philosophy, which corresponds with pragmatism, is concerned with the view of human consciousness.
The widespread use of the concept of the embodied mind now also reaches the field of aesthetics to an increased extent. I thus find a number of reasons for investigating pragmatism’s contemporary relevance for the aesthetics of architecture.

Pragmatism and Pluralism
The pragmatists argue that our picture of reality varies because we are controlled by our purposes. Human consciousness is partial. The meaningful selection of experienced impressions in our encounter with the surrounding world is dependent on our purposes. There is thus an extensive flexibility and complexity associated with experience as a phenomenon and as a foundation of knowledge. One of the important consequences of pragmatism is that it leads us to consider pluralism because it challenges the idea of an absolute and final truth. Rather, it encourages an approach, which derives from life’s multiplicity of events and the differences between experiencing individuals.

Traditional philosophies have emphasized the eternal, the absolute, the fixed, the precise, the general, the common, the same, and the one. They have sought synthesis, completeness, finality, and system. James resisted all this. In response, he championed finitude, relativity, charge, vagueness, particularity, individuality, difference, and plurality. He declared himself a friend of the concrete, the incomplete, the imperfect, and the messy—in short, a friend of real experiences and real lives. Life exceeds logic James wrote, and experience boils over our categories and neat theories. (Stuhr 1999, 41)

A pluralistic approach upholds the value of the individual’s perspective. The moment we speak about things from perspectives, which involve a number of persons, this means that we talk about groups of individuals, each of whom has her or his own world of experiences connected to the history of her or his own life. “In
philosophy (and in other reflections) we may talk about Experience of Life or Being or Reality or the Environment or the World, but these are simply groupings of unique experiences, individual lives, multiple beings, different realities, many environments, and plural worlds” (Ibid.). James maintained “Our accounts of truth is an account of truth in the plural” (James 1995, 104). In A Pluralistic Universe (1909), James emphasised that the universe can never be seen as something which is finalised, but that it is something continuous, which can never be synthesised within a stable whole.

James and Dewey recommend that scientific theories should be understood instrumentally: as intellectual tools for the guidance for future activities, not as finalised truths about the ways in which the world is constituted. James defines “the true” as that which in the long run is most fruitful to be used as a foundation for action (Lübecke 1988, 274). This implies a flexibility and plasticity of the concept of truth, and the possibility of displacements. Knowledge does not intend to mirror the world as it is, as, according to the pragmatists, this is impossible. Knowledge is to actively form an idea—with a useful meaning—of the surrounding world. This meaning can and ought to continually be questioned and scrutinised. Thus, the human being’s picture of the world is never static, but always dynamic.

The pragmatists question the dualistic tradition derived from Descartes. They built on to the empiricist tradition originating with Hume and Locke, but came to view this as inadequate. The idea of “pure” sense experience was questioned instead the pragmatists argue that the foundation of knowledge is much more complex. In Treatise, Hume (1711-1776) formulates a radically sceptical approach, which implies that, in reality, human beings have no reason for the conviction that the content of consciousness can provide access to an outer world or to the past, since this belief is dependent on the idea of causal inference. Thus, Hume
not only questions the individual consciousness—the individual self—but also the consciousness of other human beings.

It must be some one impression that gives rise to the idea of self, that impression must continue invariable the same, through the whole course of our lives, since self is supposed to exist after that manner. But there is no impression constant and invariable. Pain and pleasure, grief and joy, passions and sensations succeed each other, and never all exist at the same time. It cannot therefore be from any of these impressions, or from any other, that the idea of self is derived; and consequently there is no such idea. (Hume, quoted in Quinton 1998, 32)

Although John Stuart Mill and the British empiricist tradition inspired James, there is one decisive difference concerning the definition of experienced reality. James argues that his predecessors did not go far enough. They maintained a divided thinking about the human being and the world. The quote above mirrors Hume’s own frustration with the consequences of this line of argument: that the variations of experience are so large that pure experience cannot be found, and thus that the idea of the self cannot be seen to have a foundation capable of sustaining any weight. The empiricists do not see the experience of the surrounding world as a part of the immediate flow of life, as do the process philosophers: James, Dewey, and Henri Bergson. The parts of experience have no absolute boundaries, but lead on to and colour future parts, which are also reflected in previous experience. The experience continues perpetually, but also consists of numerous parts of experience determined by particular situations. Inasmuch as superposition and transmission interconnect the parts of experience, the idea of a constant self is maintained. James considers the relations between the things, which are experienced and the experiencing person to be as real and immedi-
ately experienced as the things themselves (James 1996, viii). This overthrows the distinction between experience and interpretation, and makes the concept of experience both dynamic and troubled to handle.

The pragmatists challenge older empiricists and question the one-sided emphasis on sense experience by focusing on the entire complexity of the process of experience. The stress on experience as a basis for knowledge led, as has been mentioned earlier, to a revolutionary approach that discards the idea of a passive observer registering an outer reality. John E. Smith summarises the import of James’s and Dewey’s criticism of empiricism in this respect.

The idea that experience is all passive receptivity overlooks two most important facts: first, that the experiencing subject is active in encountering the world through selective attention and judgment and in transforming the materials of experience into knowledge; second, that experience is cumulative and enables us to establish habitual patterns of behavior and, even more important, to acquire practical skills that mean knowing how to do a great many things, stretching all the way from agriculture to diplomacy. The old empiricism was limited to knowing that this or that happens or that some facts is so; it had no place for knowing how. (Smith 1999, 8)

Dewey claims that parts of the significance of our experience of the world are transformed into an integrated part of our self. These values are present when we encounter new experiences. Experiences in the form of things and events pass, but some aspects of them remain, and are integrated with the self. The situation which arises at a particular moment is unique, but the present is also linked to experiences of past and future experiences (Dewey 1980). Dewey and James thus observe the dynamic
changeability of experience without finding themselves espousing extreme solipsism (as Hume did).

Pragmatism’s view of the experiential based encounter with the world through the creative process of experience is fairly close to the late Edmund Husserl’s phenomenology. There are, in the approach to “active” experience, similarities between pragmatism and phenomenology. I do not intend to enter deeply into this comparison and all its nuances. It is, however, important to point it out, as phenomenology has played an important role within architectural theory. Jan Bengtsson has stressed that the main purpose of phenomenology is to do full justice to the network of interconnections and ramifications, which exist between subject and object. A phenomenology which only carries out descriptive and comparative investigations of the object side, but “forgets” the subject, is not phenomenological in Husserl’s sense (Bengtsson 1988, 23). The interconnections, which Bengtsson describes, can be compared with James’s talk of relations. Phenomenology’s concept of intentionality corresponds well with pragmatism’s emphasis on purposes and the idea that the experiencing person’s attention, which is controlled by the will, to some extent, controls the content of the experience. Neither those who are usually mentioned as representatives of phenomenology nor those mentioned as pragmatists can, however, be captured in any simple comprehensive description, as there are big differences between the approaches of these different philosophers. (Those who are usually mentioned as phenomenologists within architectural theory also represent a very large spectrum of methods and ideas, and are not always well-informed when it comes to phenomenology as a philosophical movement.) Those who base their theories on pragmatism and phenomenology, however, have in common that they focus on the experiencing subject.

The critique of pragmatism has, to a large extent, been concerned with the pluralistic approach: that pragmatism cannot say where we should go or how we should go. Pragmatism is not an
actual theory, but rather a method for continually reacting to philosophical problems, while avoiding fortifying “truths” in theories. This is similar to Luis Menand’s claim that theories cannot tell us where to go: only we ourselves can decide this. Menand turns against that simplification which suggests that we act as we do because we are part of a particular culture and a particular social group. Certainly, we form part of a cultural and social context, which explains some of our actions, but within these groups, we also make different choices. Our choices, Menand says, “seem to arise, in the end, out of the mysteries of personality, which are a scandal to theory. All we can say is that we seem to have, as naturally associated beings, a powerful social incentive to rationalize and justify the choices we make” (Menand 1997).

To the artist, the emphasis on the subjective perspective of experience is necessary and widely accepted. To the researcher, the subjective within experience constitutes a difficulty, which needs to be treated methodologically, in favour of the generalisable and the repeatable. This leads to a situation in which the questions and results of research seem fairly limited from the perspective of the artist. Within aesthetics, it is, however, necessary to bridge this gap. Aesthetics needs to manage to comprise both individual and general values; both artistic and scientific perspectives. Pragmatism allows for pluralism and accepts the individual perspective of experience as a foundation for meaning, without losing the cultural, the political, and the social perspectives. The relation between aesthetics and pragmatism may not be obvious, but it is of central importance, Thomas M. Alexander points out.

The difficulty arises from the popular tendency to equate pragmatism with a utilitarian concept of practicality and the aesthetic with the intrinsic value of beauty aside from consideration of use. This prejudice reflects the very set of dichotomies between means and ends, practise and theory, and life
and art that pragmatism is designed to overcome. Pragmatism’s radical rethinking of nature, experience, reason, meaning, expression, value, individual and community is often best illustrated in its treatment of the nature of the aesthetic. Pragmatism insists on understanding the actual in the light of the possible. Not only does this comprehend the world in terms of process governed by an experimental rather than fixed teleology, but it stresses the role of imagination and creativity in human experience. (Alexander 1999, 160)

Richard Rorty draws attention to Heidegger, Wittgenstein, and Dewey as the most influential philosophers during the twentieth century. According to Rorty, what these three have in common is that they want to abandon the view that knowledge is representation, which is made possible by certain mental processes, and made understandable by a general theory of representation. (All three of them have also been important to modern aesthetics.) Wittgenstein and Heidegger are more preoccupied with the individual aspect of this change, whereas Dewey discusses the social consequences (Rorty 1980). Rorty describes Dewey’s work in the following way: “He wanted to sketch a culture that would not continually give rise to new precision of the old problems, because it would no longer make the distinction between Truth, Goodness and Beauty, which engender such problems” (Rorty 1996, 86). Rorty expresses a hope that we can now see that the accusations of “relativism” and “irrationalism,” which once were brought against Dewey, are only defence reflexes from the philosophical tradition, which Dewey attacked. These accusations, Rorty continues, have no significance if one takes seriously the critique which Dewey, Wittgenstein, and Heidegger raised against “mirror imagery” (Rorty 1980, 6, 13). Dewey had a vision of a new kind of society. A society in which culture was no longer dominated by “the ideal of objective cognition but by that
of aesthetic enhancement.” In this culture, art and science would be “the unforced flowers of life” (Rorty 1980, 13).

Alexander also stresses the significance of Dewey's theories of art's integration with civilisation. He writes: “It is the whole aim of Dewey's philosophy to put forward the ideal of a democratic civilization that will take as its primary aim to render human existence as full of meaning as possible, to take an aesthetics of human existence seriously” (Alexander 1999, 172). According to Dewey, art and architecture is part of human life, and if it is excluded from everyday life it looses its meaning. It is therefore never possible to avoid human centrality in aesthetics, but it is possible to investigate and describe the experiential foundation.

**Aesthetic Experience**

The concept of *aesthetic experience* has been vigorously debated and defined in a number of different ways, for instance, in the *British Journal of Aesthetics* and the *American Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. Shusterman has conducted an investigation into the historical development of the concept of aesthetic experience, and has taken a stand in favour of the use and development of the concept, which is connected, to Dewey’s theories. Around 1900, process philosophers, such as James, Bergson, and Dewey, played an important role in making aesthetics develop in a way, which is based on the complexity of subjective experience. Art and experience were united in the concept of *aesthetic experience*, which at the time of the last turn of the century led to “enormous cultural importance and almost religious intensity” (Shusterman 1997).

Aesthetic experience became the island of freedom, beauty, and idealistic meaning in an otherwise coldly materialistic and law-determined world; it was not only the locus of the highest pleasure, but a means of spiritual conversion and transcendence; it accordingly became the central concept for explain-
ing the distinctive nature and value of art, which had itself become increasingly autonomous and isolated from the mainstream of material life and praxis. The doctrine of art for art’s sake could only mean that art was for the sake of its own experience. And seeking to expand art’s dominion, its adherents argued that anything could be rendered art if it could engender the appropriate experience. (Ibid.)

Shusterman talks about four features that are central to the tradition of aesthetic experience, and whose interplay shapes, yet confuses, twentieth-century accounts of this concept. First, aesthetic experience is essentially valuable and enjoyable. Shusterman calls this its evaluative dimension. Second, it is something vividly felt and subjectively savoured, effectively absorbing us and focusing our attention on its immediate presence, and thus it stands out from the ordinary flow of routine experience. This he calls its phenomenological dimension. Third, it is meaningful experience, not mere sensation. This is the semantic dimension. Forth, it is a distinctive experience closely identified with the distinction of fine art, and representing art’s essential aim. He calls this the demarcational-definitional dimension (Ibid.).

After Dewey, Anglo-American theories have increasingly come to move steadily from the first to the third of these categories: from the evaluative to the semantic, according to Shusterman’s model. He surveys criticism against and varying definitions of the concept of aesthetic experience that have been posed by Walter Benjamin, Arthur Danto, Monroe Beardsley, George Dickie, and others. He talks about a displacement of the content of the concept of aesthetic experience towards a linguistic interpretation, which occurred during the twentieth century. Shusterman argues, however, that this displacement carries with it a watering down of the concept’s wider and deeper meaning, which Dewey once gave it.
Dewey’s essentially evaluative, phenomenological, and transformational notion of aesthetic experience has been gradually replaced by a purely descriptive, semantic one whose chief purpose is to explain and thus support the established demarcation of art from other human domains. Such changes generate tension that make the concept suspicious. Moreover, when aesthetic experience proves unable to supply this definition, as Danto concludes, the whole concept is abandoned for one that promises to do so—interpretation. (Ibid.)

The issue of how the concepts of experience and interpretation relate to each other has given rise to many discussions. To base aesthetics on experience leads, according to Hans-Georg Gadamer, to the idea that a work of art is perceived as a momentary event: “a hermeneutic nihilism” (Gadamer 1997). Gadamer, however, talks about the concept of experience as a term for a momentary event, which does not correspond with the way in which Dewey uses the concept, as Dewey includes the entire dynamics of the process of experience, including the interpretation. Still, Gadamer’s account of experience, to some extent, touches on Dewey’s aesthetics, as Dewey talks about aesthetic experience as a phenomenon which can appear as a demarcated momentary phenomenon. But the experience is always contextual. It is not solitary, but linked to the unique life history of the experiencing person, and to language: to the cultural and public context in the society of which the experiencing person is a part.

Another participant in the aesthetic debate, Alexander Nehamas, criticises Shusterman for confusing the close connection between experience and pleasure with aesthetic value. According to Nehamas, the aesthetic value-foundation is exceedingly complex, and he suggests, as an alternative, that value should be separated from pleasure. Pleasure may be a basis for value, but value is also determined by many other factors. Nehamas claims that “Value is not as closely tied to experience as pleasure is,”
and further argues that the important question to pose is: “why we value the arts?” Shusterman answers Nehamas’s question by emphasising that experience is important within aesthetics, partly because of the pleasure of experience, but also because intense feelings are important and are part of the experience. Shusterman argues that the multiplicity of aesthetic value cannot be divorced from experience. “The varieties of aesthetic experience (and of its pleasures and nonpleasure-centered values) need more careful exploration” (Shusterman 1998).

Simo Säätelä is also sceptical of the concept of experience. He prefers to talk about aesthetic reaction to aesthetic experience, as he creates an extensive argument on this subject in relation to Wittgenstein’s philosophy. Säätelä argues that reaction shows more explicitly that it is a directed activity carried out by the subject, which leads up to the aesthetic.

An aesthetic reaction is not merely an experience, i.e., something suffered, instead, it is something done, an action within a form of life. It is directed towards an object and is not merely a causal reaction to a certain type of stimuli. It must be identified in terms of its object, and the reason for calling it aesthetic is that we can intelligibly see it as a reaction of the sort we are prepared to call aesthetic. (Säätelä 1998, 177-8)

John Dewey includes active actions in his concept of experience. He emphasises (like Wittgenstein) the human being as active and directed in her or his creation of meaning about herself/himself and the world. Much of the controversy in discussions about aesthetic experience is to do with a complex of problems related to the drawing of borders between different concepts. How far does the concept of experience reach? Is interpretation part of experience? Are reactions and value possibly aspects of a broader definition of the concept of experience?
According to Shusterman, Dewey’s chief purpose with establishing *aesthetic experience* is not to divorce art from other aspects of life, but rather to bring it back to its connection with the life process. Dewey’s aim is to break down barriers between aesthetics and real life. He argues that the value of art does not consist of the artefacts in themselves, but in the dynamic and developing experience-based activity through which works of art are created and experienced. Dewey thus differentiates between *art and art product*. The art product can, once created, exist separate from human experience. Aesthetic experience liberates art from object fetishism and its connection with “fine art.” Aesthetic experience, Dewey argued, can appear within activities such as science, philosophy, sport, or cooking, as well as in relation to art products (Shusterman 1997).

Despite the difficulties with different definitions of the concept, Shusterman argues that it can be fruitful to maintain the concept of *aesthetic experience*. By investigating and developing the concept, we actively turn towards those forms of experiences, which are, by this activity, intensified. Rather than defining art or righteous critical opinions, the concept is directed, and reminds us of what is worth searching for in art and life (Ibid.). In *The Human Habitat: Aesthetic and Axiological Perspectives* (1998), Pauline von Bonsdorff discusses *aesthetic experience*. She argues that we cannot use “objectivist models of perception” when investigating aesthetic experience:

Subjective experience includes and relies on shared contexts, but these cannot be reduced to general structures. Individual experience is crucial in establishing and transforming our vision of the world and our platforms of action. Taken the importance of actual experience, it is no wonder that aesthetic experience fits badly in the mechanistic and objectivist models of perception. It always exemplified what does not fit these models, so that one may suspect that its granted autonomy
could have been a way to shuffle it to the side, if also to rescue it. The aesthetic also opens questions which are hard to answer in isolation from the totality of the perceptual process. (von Bonsdorff 1998, 92)

If aesthetic experience is to be investigated and described, we need a dynamic form of model theories. The most recent study of human consciousness—represented by Antonio Damasio, Gerald Edelman, and Susan Greenfield, among others—has developed dynamic “embodied mind” models. These are of interest for aesthetics, as they allow for active, subjective creation of meaning, as well as overthrow the division into body and mind; reason and emotion. This form of embodied mind argument about consciousness can open new forms of interdisciplin ary investigations into value pluralism and the depth of the concept of aesthetic experience. This fits well with pragmatist aesthetics. The neurologist Semir Zeki experiments in this direction, with his discussion of aesthetic experience. He bases his work on the way in which our brains work, and talks about common “aesthetic constancies” in experience. He argues that artists have always tried intuitively to elucidate or challenge these “aesthetic constancies” (Zeki 1999).

Within aesthetic experience, it is valuable to investigate and describe the whole field between the common and the unique. Modern study of human consciousness can provide useful knowledge about the common for the aesthetic debate. The unique, however, gives the individual the ultimate meaning of the art experience. The unique in aesthetic experience is central and is certainly both evasive and difficult to capture, but none the less important to consider. In his Nobel Prize lecture in 1987, Joseph Brodsky talks about aesthetic experience as something fundamentally private, which can provide a foundation for ethical actions. He expresses a hope that we human beings possess possibilities to take in new aesthetic realities which not only may en-
rich our lives, but which may also make us mentally stronger. There is thus ample reason to continue developing the discussion about the content and effect of aesthetic experiences, if we heed Brodsky.

On the whole, every new aesthetic reality makes man’s ethical reality more precise. For aesthetics is the mother of ethics. The categories of “good” and “bad” are, first and foremost, aesthetic ones, at least etymologically preceding the categories of “good” and “evil.” If in ethics not “all is permitted,” it is precisely because not “all is permitted” in aesthetics, because the number of colors in the spectrum is limited. The tender babe who cries and rejects the stranger who, on the contrary, reaches out to him, does so instinctively, makes an aesthetic choice, not a moral one.

Aesthetic choice is highly individual matter, and aesthetic experience is always private one. Every new aesthetic reality makes one’s experience even more private; and this kind of privacy, assuming at times the guise of literary (or some other) taste, can itself turn to be, if not a guarantee, then a form of defense, against enslavement. (Brodsky 1995, 49)

**Architecture and Aesthetic Experience**

The philosopher Nelson Goodman posed the question *When is Art?* instead of the usual question *What is Art?* (Goodman 1978). Like Dewey, his intention was to angle the discussion about the meaning of art so that it would include a more active perspective, which would place aesthetics in relation to the flexibility of experience. Goodman maintains that the important problem for our understanding of the role of art is to investigate the ways in which we continually create meaning about the art objects in all the varied situations of life. The question about the meaning of art thus comprises both knowledge of the art object and of the subject’s consciousness, including the relation between these and
society. When experience is emphasised in relation to aesthetics, it is important to consider and investigate human consciousness.

Both Goodman and Dewey represent a form of radical pluralism. Goodman describes his method as a recognition of “multiple worlds through recognizing the validity of multiple points of view, multiple histories, or, in sum, multiple world-representations” (Shusterman 1997, 12-3) (Goodman 1978). Goodman emphasised “art’s cognitive value and philosophy’s creative art of ‘world-making’” (Shusterman 1997, 13). The consequences of Goodman’s and Dewey’s approaches are radical, as the value of art becomes far more dynamic and pluralistic than when it is only defined as synonymous with particular art objects. At the same time, the concept of art becomes complex and elusive.

As human beings and the artefact of art (including architecture) are part of a culture—a society—aesthetic experience is always both contextual and private, both located within the individual and constituting a part of society. From Dewey’s and Goodman’s perspectives, the value of art (architecture) penetrates the values of private life as well as social life generally. From this point of view, art (architecture) touches us on all levels: as bodily and emotional beings; as thinking persons; and as parts of social life.

For Dewey and Goodman, what matters in art is not the object but how it functions in experience. Dewey’s challenge to the fetishization of art’s object was to redefine art in terms of dynamic experience and process. Goodman’s complementary strategy is to redefine the very question “What is art?” into the question “When is art?” The real aesthetic issue is not what properties an object permanently has but how it temporally (even if ephemerally) functions in organizing and symbolizing experience. (Goodman 1978, 67-70) (Goodman 1984, 142-5, 182) (Shusterman 1997, 134)
The question *When is art?* challenges the idea that there can be an eternal, static truth about art. In the dynamic process of experience of art, there is instead room for a rich pluralistic set of values—of a continual creation in the encounter with the world—which has many different dimensions. According to Goodman, the parts of the continual process of “world-making” simply cannot be brought together into a unified idea of the world, nor of art. Shusterman says: “Hence there is no place for a firm distinction between world and world-representation. Nor is there any real substance in talking about the one world which stands outside its different but correct representations.” According to Goodman, the one real world thus dissolves into a multiplicity of world-representation, or more simply, multiple worlds (Shusterman 1997, 132). Where then does this aesthetic pluralism, recommended by Dewey and Goodman, lead us if it is applied to architecture? Architecture is a form of art, which most palpably intervenes in human beings’ continual everyday “world-making,” and at the same time represents economic values, as well as political symbolic values. Because aesthetics, in the spirit of Dewey and Goodman, ultimately rests on a foundation of experience, it is not to be seen as an intellectual phenomenon working from the outside. Rather, aesthetics constitutes an active part of that process of the creation of value on which the concept of architecture depends. Architectural debate and criticism are thus included in the aesthetic movement around the significance of that which is built: a movement, which continually shapes and reshapes the concept of *architecture*. Thus, aesthetics and art (here architecture) are not divorced from one another, but are interconnected phenomena. Furthermore, to a large extent, aesthetic discussions are conducted by practising artists themselves. With respect to architecture, however, participants other than architects and architectural researchers also conduct a lot of aesthetic conversations. Architectural objects are to a high degree part of everyday life and concern many actors, both in the proc-
ess of building, and when the buildings are handed over to the public as finished buildings. This whole field contains numerous architecture-aesthetic conversations, from a variety of perspectives, and for different purposes. Architecture concerns us, whether we want it to or not.

The question _When is Architecture?_ in the spirit of Goodman and Dewey, leads us closer to the significance of the creative process of experience which takes place in us in our encounters with architectural objects. The creation takes place in different ways, both in the mind of the architect (and in other participants in the building process), when a building is planned, and in the mind of those who encounter the finished building. Thus, the meaning of architecture cannot be found only in the physical conditions of the architectural object, but is connected to the complexity of human life. The aesthetics of architecture is thus interconnected with everyday experience, as well as extraordinary events. Architecture colours our lives in a radical way, maybe more so than any other art form, but our lives also colour architecture. Goodman and Dewey describe the extensive significance of architecture for the actively experiencing human being:

A building physically alters our environment, but as a work it may, through various avenues of meaning, inform and reorganize our entire experience. Like other works of art—and like scientific theories, too—it can give new insight, advance understanding, participate in our continual remaking of a world. (Goodman 1986)

Physically, a statue is a block of marble, nothing more. It is stationary, and, as far as the ravages of time permit permanent. But to identify the physical lump with the statue that is a work of art and to identify pigment as on a canvas with a picture is absurd. What about the play of light in a building with the constant change of shadows, intensities, and colours, and shifting
reflections? If the building or statue were as “stationary” in perception as it is in physical existence, they would be so dead that the eye would not rest on it, but glance by. For an object is perceived by a cumulative series of interactions. (Dewey 1980, 220)

Architecture, Dewey further argues, is a remarkable example of the interplay between the human being and her or his surroundings. Matter is transformed in the building process in order to convey different purposes. Human life is also changed because of that which is built, in a way, which lies far beyond the architect’s capacity for anticipating such effects. Architectonic works can thus contribute to a transformation of the continuous experiences of life of human beings more directly and more extensively than any other art form, with the possible exception of literature (Ibid. 231). In Dewey’s view, the extensive importance of architecture for human beings contains a great challenge and responsibility for architects and others involved in the building process. Aesthetics and ethics lie close together in pragmatist aesthetics, and above all, the value focus is on the architectural objects, those who create architectural objects, and those who experience them, not primarily on their theoretical interpreters. In the spirit of Dewey, aesthetics is not introverted, without influence, but is a tool to continually make visible and question the dynamic meaning of architecture. The purpose of aesthetics, in the architect's view, is ultimately to create good architecture, and to increase the consciousness of the significance of architecture for our lives and the significance of our lives for architecture. If we place aesthetics outside lived experience: it then becomes flat and empty of meaning. It can neither be separated from private or the bodily values, even though aesthetic in itself is public.

The aesthetics of architecture should continually search for knowledge, both around the physical artefacts of architecture, and around the human being’s experience of architectural ob-
jects. In Dewey’s process theories, there are no absolute truths about architecture, but the contemporary perspective on the value of architecture needs to be developed and continually reviewed. Aesthetic values cannot be excluded from the conditions of everyday life and our deeper experiences, which are connected with survival. Human beings create meaning by relating to the entire content of their lives in a continual process: to their private life histories, to their social context and to the society of which they are a part. This implies an extensive aesthetic value pluralism, which is certainly not the same as value nihilism. Experiences of art and architecture are not seen as separate phenomena: aesthetic experiences are linked to the human being’s body and mind; individual and social being; and emotional and intellectual being.

Finally in this essay I have tried to summarise some of the most important basic conditions for the aesthetic experience of architecture. Primarily I have been inspired by the pragmatist John Dewey in *Art as Experience* (1934):

1. **The Embodied Mind**
   Body and mind are indivisible. The sensorimotor system constitutes a foundation, on which the human being creates meaning about herself or himself and her or his surroundings, based on experience. The bodily is thus of fundamental significance for the aesthetics of architecture, and cannot be entirely excluded from the intellectual. Both intellect and emotion help the individual understand the experiential based aesthetic experience in the encounter with architecture.

2. **Individual and Cultural Being**
   Private and cultural value perspectives are intertwined in the process of experience. The human being is an individual with an embodied mind and a private life history. The individual is also a social person participating in a culture, and coloured as a person by her or his participation in a culture. The individual contributes to this, and, with her or his personal profile, leaves marks in the
surrounding culture. This leads to an interconnected view of the individual and culture. Within architecture, this interplay is of great aesthetic importance.

3. Experience is an active process
In virtue of our capacity for intentionality, we can actively turn towards an architectural object and focus on its significance. We choose actively some events, which then stand out as distinguishable and significant in the flow of our consciousness. This can in turn lead us to a deeper aesthetic awareness and the opportunity to discuss and compare experienced values in public.

4. Background experience
Fragmentary, more or less subconscious experiences of architecture also affect architectural value. In some way, they colour our thoughts, emotions, and actions. The body reacts to far more things than we can handle with our limited consciousness.

5. Everydayness
The aesthetics of architecture cannot be separated from everyday problems. Also more “exclusive” experiences are interconnected with and evaluated in relation to the everyday. We cannot escape architecture; we are forced to use it.

6. Dynamism and value pluralism
There are many different kinds of values present in the experience of architecture, which are dependent on the purposes of the experiencing person. Some of these values are very flexible, whereas others are more stable. Some of these values are connected with sense experience and perception, and thus linked directly to the physical conditions of architectural objects. Others are associated with activity and specific events. Yet others can, for instance, be about a deeper understanding of a building’s construction, or its historical or symbolic significance. Thus a number of parallel value scales may occur within the experience of architecture.

7. The role of language
Language is a social construction that is part of a culture. The concepts we use to describe architectural experience are alive, flexible, and in close contact with the embodied mind. Language is used also in the private formation of meaning, and this contributes to the cultural colouring of aesthetic experiences of architectural objects. Language provides the possibility of reflecting on and communicating the content and value of private experiences of architecture in general discussions about architecture. Once we have conquered a language, we experience with language. Language gives us access to a world of symbols, which stimulates our rich imagination in our experiences of architecture.
2 On the Process of Consciousness

Consciousness is one of those metaphors with which we daily surround ourselves: a magnificent and complex one. Many different attempts have been made, and will continue to be made, to describe its rich content in more detail. But with dynamic concepts such as consciousness, experience, or architecture, consensus is hardly desirable. It is rather through a continual confrontation of different types of understanding of these concepts that the significance of the content-related flexibility and instability of these concepts can be illuminated. Within the philosophy and the science of mind, we allow ourselves to propound bold hypotheses about consciousness that are then vehemently criticised by other researchers. William Lyons describes the situation in the following way: “Philosophy of mind over the last hundred years has been a scene of intense, almost frenetic, activity. There have been more theoretical changes, confrontations, coups and revolutions than in the previous two thousand years” (Lyons 1995, xlv).

In this essay, I have extended my area of interest to include philosophy and modern research into the nature of consciousness. My inquiry into the history of philosophy led me to some of the philosophical movements which evolved around the beginning of the twentieth century, and which emphasised experience: primarily pragmatism and phenomenology. To some extent, these movements overlap with the ways in which some of the modern study of human consciousness, which I am particularly interested in, emphasise a view of consciousness as a process.

In this text, I have focussed my discussion on the accounts of experience and human consciousness formulated by the philosophers William James (1842-1910), Henri Bergson (1859-1941), and Gaston Bachelard (1884-1962). I will conclude with a discussion of some of the issues raised in contemporary debate about experience and consciousness by philosophers as well as by scientists approaching the topic from the perspective of biol-
ogy. A direct treatment of the significance of the nature of experience for architecture will have to be put to one side in this essay to leave room for a full discussion of certain aspects of the works of these philosophers and scientists. With respect to James, I will primarily highlight some aspects of his *The Principles of Psychology* (1890) as well as some of his later thoughts about radical empiricism. James was also a leading person within the emergence of pragmatism as a philosophical movement.

Bergson was a friend and contemporary of James. Among other things, I will discuss Bergson’s concept of *duration*, which may be reached by means of the method of *intuition*. I have derived my material from works by Bergson such as *Time and Free Will* (*Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (1889)) and *Matter and Memory* (*Matière et mémoire* (1908)). Bachelard started out as a rationalist in the field of natural science. In several books he criticised the philosophy of Bergson. In *Dialectics of Duration* (*La Dialectique de la durée*), Bachelard criticises Bergson’s concept of duration and the use of intuition as method. He emphasises instead the fundamental heterogeneity at the very heart of lived, active, creative duration. In order to know or use time well, we must activate the rhythm of creation and destruction, of work and repose (Bachelard 2000, 29). Towards the end of his life, primarily in *The Poetics of Space*, (*La Poétique de l’espace*) Bachelard abandons his rationalist past and formulates accounts of the capacity for poetic imagination in the context of phenomenological method.

**For and Against Process Theories**

The extensive activity of the twentieth century concerning attempts to develop an account of human consciousness has focused on the questions concerning the private nature of consciousness. The so called process philosophers brought into focus experience and vitality. What connects these philosophers is the fact that their theories were continuations of the empirical tradi-
tion which derived from, among others, John Locke and David Hume, and that they focused on private experience. They emphasised the meaning which an individual creates within the world, not as an illusion, but as something that for the experiencing individual is true, related to the events and activity of her or his own life. The process philosophers explicitly distanced themselves from the tradition initiated by Descartes which involves a division of the human being into reason and emotion, body and soul. At the same time, they were inspired by Cartesian and Kantian ways of placing the human, experiencing, and thinking subject as the centre of knowledge about the world. The process philosophers were also inspired by Darwin’s theory of evolution. To these philosophers are usually counted, among others, Charles Sander Peirce, William James, Henri Bergson, A. N Whitehead, and John Dewey (Scruton 1997, 372). The process theories that were developed in the late nineteenth century anticipated, to some extent, contemporary theories of consciousness, which are grounded in biology. But the road there has not been straight; it has had to confront some serious obstacles.

Around 1900, experiential processes and the nature of human consciousness were the focus of much activity within a number of philosophical and psychological movements in addition to pragmatism. Sigmund Freud formulated the basis of psychoanalysis. Edmund Husserl, inspired by Franz Brentano, established the idea of a phenomenological method, which enabled phenomena to be described, in their full complexity, based on the way they are experienced. The purpose was to capture the “essence” of phenomena. Husserl’s phenomenology inspired influential philosophers such as Marin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. (Within architectural theory, for instance, Christian Norberg-Schulz has adopted this tradition (Norberg-Schultz 1980).)

Our capacity for connecting the fragments of sense experience into comprehensible wholes in our encounter with the world was
the key interest of the gestalt psychologists. Within this movement (inspired by, amongst others, William James), attempts were made to formulate laws about perception. Gestalt psychology emphasised a holistic approach: the idea that a whole is greater than the sum of its individual parts, and thus that the characteristics of the whole cannot be reduced to the characteristics of the individual parts. (The work of the gestalt psychologists has attracted attention among architectural theorists. Sven Hesselgren, for instance, has contributed to this tradition (Hesselgren 1969).)

A strong reaction against the focus on “experience” and “consciousness” as a process came with the advent of behaviourism, a movement within psychology that first made an impact through John B. Watson’s, Behaviorism, in 1913. Behaviourism called into question everything that was, in any way, connected with the ideas of thinking, consciousness, and the emotions. The behaviourists thus came to be fundamentally opposed to process philosophers, phenomenologists, and gestalt psychologists. This opposition contributed to a situation in which, for a time, these latter movements became increasingly neglected within the study of human consciousness. James B. Watson claimed:

The time seems to have come when psychology must discard all reference to consciousness; when it need no longer delude itself into thinking that it is making mental states the object of observation. (Watson 1913, quoted in Lyons 1995, 29)

Behaviourists maintained that the only things amenable to scientific study were connections between stimulus and response. The movement rejected any form of introspection, understanding, or empathy as the basis of method. They argued that only studies conforming to scientific principles, based on publicly observable behaviour, would make possible a scientific psychology with
objective methods and results (Gärdenfors 2000, 27) (Lübcke 1988, 189, 61). However, the strict boundaries of what was to be classified as scientific, as defined by the behaviourists, came to be questioned. Ludwig Wittgenstein wrote in Philosophical Investigations (1953):

How does the philosophical problem about mental processes and states and about behaviourism arise? —The first step is the one that altogether escape notice. We talk of processes and states and leave their nature undecided. Sometime perhaps we shall know more about them—we think. But that is just what commits us to a particular way of looking at the matter. For we have a definite concept of what it means to learn to know a process better. (The decisive movement in the conjuring trick has been made, and it was the very one that we thought quite innocent.)—And now the analogy which was to make us understand our thoughts falls to pieces. So we have to deny the yet uncomprehended process in the yet unexplored medium. And now it looks as if we had denied mental processes. And naturally we don’t want to deny them. (Wittgenstein 1953, remark 308, quoted in Dennett 1991, 462)

The late Wittgenstein’s emphasis on language and its relationship with consciousness and experience came, eventually, to have an extensive impact on the philosophy of mind. He meant that what happens in the inner world of a human being is not entirely inaccessible and private, as public language permeates our way of thinking. Language, which in its nature is social and historical, is part of what we experience. The language games that we actively develop and use, both in conversation and in thought, emanate from a human being’s interaction with the world. That language is nevertheless characterised by some kind of stability is due to the fact that our institutions and relationships are caused by our being involved in various forms of activity, in practice, in recur-
rent behavioural patterns determined by rules (Lundequist 1998, 1). (Within architectural theory, for instance, Roger Scruton is inspired by Wittgenstein, even though he is also influenced by Sartre's existentialism.)

Cognitive science, which emerged at the end of the 1950s, utilizes developments concerning our understanding of human consciousness from neuroscience, psychology, as well as philosophy. The emergence of cognitive science led, among other things, to the complex of problems that gestalt psychology had earlier brought into focus, and these again became topical and were developed further (Gärdenfors 2000, 27). Dynamic human consciousness, with its private nature, has surely again come into focus in contemporary debate within the expanded study of human consciousness.

The purpose of the brief introduction above has been to capture some idea of the intensity and importance of the twentieth century debate concerning experience and human consciousness. Now it is time for a deeper discussion of the ideas of the earlier mentioned thinkers Bergson, and James.

**The Stream of Consciousness**

A little more than a hundred years ago, William James and Henri Bergson devised theories of human consciousness. By means of these theories, they attempt to describe the nature of consciousness independently of the traditional way of seeing the mind as a kind of entity in own right, disconnected from the bodily. They side with evolutionism. Both James and Bergson describe consciousness as a *process*, a *flow*, or a *stream*. In *Principles of Psychology* (1890), James introduces his ideas about the stream of thought or consciousness. James argues that every individual consciousness is in a state of perpetual flux, but which, nevertheless, may be perceived as a continuum in virtue of the connections between different states of consciousness, which are affected by the emotions. In this work, he anticipates the founding
ideas within gestalt psychology, as well as behaviourism (Lübecke 1988, 274). Philosophers such as Dewey and Wittgenstein came to be inspired by James. Also, contemporary theorists relate their works to James’s (Damasio 2000) (Edelman and Tononi 2000). In a famous quote, James argues for the private and pluralistic nature of existence, and illustrates his theories with an example of the individuals in a lecture-room.

In this room—this lecture-room, say—there are a multitude of thoughts, yours and mine, some of which cohere mutually, and some not. They are as little each-for-itself and reciprocally independent as they are all-belonging-together. They are neither: no one of them is separate, but each belongs with certain others and with none beside. My thought belongs with my other thoughts, and your thought with your other thoughts. Whether anywhere in the room there be a mere thought, which is nobody's thought, we have no means of ascertaining, for we have no experience of its like. The only states of consciousness that we naturally deal with are found in personal consciousness, minds, selves, concrete particular I’s and you’s.

Each of these minds keeps its thoughts to itself. There is no giving or bartering between them. No thought even comes into direct sight of a thought in another personal consciousness than its own. Absolute insulation, irreducible pluralism, is the law. It seems as the elementary psychic fact were not thought or this thought or that thought, but my thought, every thought being owned. Neither contemporaneity, nor proximity in space, nor similarity of quality and content are able to fuse thoughts together, which are sundered by this barrier of belonging to different personal minds. The breaches between such thoughts are the most absolute breaches in nature. (James (1890) 1950, 225-6)
James describes the core complex of problems concerning the relationship between the individual and the general in continuous experience. This is the difficult question that has to be discussed if one chooses to focus on experience in developing an understanding of aesthetics, which James’s close friend John Dewey does in *Art as Experience* (1934). Our own experience is certainly private, but this experience is also linked to an experiencing collective of individuals who continuously experience and respond to the same reality. It is, however, not certain that my experience of, for instance, a room corresponds to yours. If we experience the same object, our experiences, despite the possible variations in our experiences, are also linked through being directed towards the same object. The large degree of variation, and the simultaneous coherence of experience, is emphasised by both James and Bergson. James discerns, in *Principles of Psychology*, five characteristics of the process of consciousness, of which at least the first three are recurrently referred to by modern researchers:

1) Every thought tends to be part of a personal consciousness.
2) Within each personal consciousness thought is always changing.
3) Within each personal consciousness thought is sensibly continuous.
4) It always appears to deal with objects independent of itself.
5) It is interested in some parts of these objects to the exclusion of others and welcomes or rejects—chooses from among them, in a word—all the while. (James (1890) 1950, 225)

As mentioned earlier, James was, at this time, not the only one to describe consciousness as a process characterised by being private, varied, and continuous. In France, Bergson formulated similar theories in the equally famous work *Time and Free Will (Essai sur les données immédiate de la conscience*) (1889). Bergson talks about two different aspects of how we are con-
scious of life: “as we perceive it directly or by refraction through space” (Bergson 1910, 137). He writes about the practical need to see surrounding objects as tolerably stable, disregarding the changes we actually experience, even if this means a division of our self into two parts. He uses the metaphor of a walk through a town to describe the division:

When e.g. I take my first walk in a town in which I am going to live, my environment produces on me two impressions at the same time, one of which is destined to last while the other will constantly change. Every day I perceive the same houses, and as I know that they are the same objects, I always call them by the same name and I also fancy that they always look the same to me. But if I recur, at the end of a sufficiently long period, to the impression which I experienced during the first few years, I am surprised at the remarkable, inexplicable, and indeed inexpressible change which has taken place. It seems that these objects, continually perceived by me and constantly impressing themselves on my mind, have ended by borrowing from me something of my own conscious existence; like myself they have lived, and like myself they have grown old. This is not a mere illusion; for if to-day’s impression were absolutely identical with that of yesterday, what difference would there be between perceiving and recognizing, between learning and remembering? Yet this difference escapes the attention of most of us; we shall hardly perceive it, unless we are warned of it and then carefully look into ourselves. The reason is that our outer and, so to speak, social life is more practically important to us than our inner and individual existence. We instinctively tend to solidify our impressions in order to express them in language. Hence we confuse the feeling itself, which is in a perpetual state of becoming, with its permanent external object, and especially with the word which express this object. In the same way as the fleeting duration of our ego is fixed by
its projection in homogeneous space, our constantly changing impressions, wrapping themselves round the external object which is their cause, take on its definite outlines and its immobility. (Bergson (1889) 1910, 129-130)

James and Bergson were familiar with each other’s texts. James helped introduce Bergson to an American audience in articles and through participating in the translation of Bergson’s *Creative Evolution* (1911). This friendship thus helped to link the English-speaking and French-speaking worlds at the turn of the century, in the context of inquiries into the complexity and dynamics of experience. In 1927 Bergson was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, which contributed to the influence he came to have on many of the artists and literary writers of the 1920s, among them Marcel Proust. James and Bergson thus acquired a broad audience, within science and philosophy, as well as within the arts, for their account of consciousness as a process.

**Experience—A Fluctuating Material**

James emphasises the idea that experience depends on the way in which the self is constituted. In his view of the self, James discusses experience by referring to various categories of the empirical self. “The Empirical Self of each of us is all that he is tempted to call by the name of me. But it is clear that between what a man calls me and what he simply calls mine the line is difficult to draw. We feel and act about certain things that are ours very much as we feel and act about ourselves” (James (1890) 1950, 291). However, James argues further that the boundary between that which is me, and that which I regard as mine, is not obvious. “We […] are dealing with […] a fluctuating material. The same object being sometimes treated as a part of me, at other times as simply mine, and then again as if I had nothing to do with it at all” (Ibid.). According to James, it is thus possible to talk about what constitutes the self, what emotions the
self gives rise to, and what activities this in turn gives rise to. What constitutes the empirical self, James defines as:

(1) The Material Self: The innermost part of the material self is the body. Then come the clothes, the family, and the home.

(2) The Social Self is about confirmation from others: “A man has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize him and carry an image of him in their mind.”

(3) The Spiritual Self: The inner, subjective being of a person, “the result of our abandoning the outward-looking point of view, and of our having become able to think of subjectivity as such, to think of ourselves as thinkers,” or the active element in all consciousness, “a sort of innermost centre within the circle, a sanctuary within the citadel, constituted by the subjective life as a whole”. (291-6).

Bergson describes the self or the ego as a necessary conception of a solid and coherent unit, which stands in contrast with the flexibility of experience. Events stand out from the stream of experiences and demand attention, they stand out from the continuity of the background, by which they are, in reality, shaped. Every event has sprung out of the flowing substance of our whole physical existence (Bergson (1911) 1998, 3). Through the mediation of memory; an organism’s history is constantly in the present, even though this is sometimes only experienced as a vague feeling.

In reality, the past is preserved by itself, automatically. In its entirety, probably it follows us at every instant; all that we have felt, thought and willed from our earliest infancy is there, leaning over the present which is about to join it, pressing against the portals of consciousness that would fain leave it outside. The cerebral mechanism is arranged just so as to drive back into the unconscious almost the whole of its past, and to admit beyond the threshold only that which can cast light on
the present situation or further the action now being prepared—in short, only that which can give useful work. (Ibid. 5)

Bergson emphasises the importance of memory in the experience of the present throughout his work. He emphasises the idea that we are the condensation of the history which we live from birth to death. Bergson attacks experimental psychology, particularly the doctrine of parallelism: the idea that every psychic condition corresponds to a neurological condition. Those that subscribe to parallelism wholly reject the idea of a difference between body and soul. Bergson, on the other hand, recommends the rehabilitation of a dualism between body and soul, between matter and consciousness. Our bodies act, whereas consciousness remembers. In its autonomous experience, our consciousness does not discern the temporal differences and vacant spaces which characterise our perception of material things. As a result of this, consciousness can retain the past in its entirety, so that it always remains part of the present (Chimisso in Bachelard 2000, 8).

Between the affection felt and the image perceived there is this difference, that the affection is within our body, the image outside our body. And that is why the surface of our body, the common limit of this and of other bodies, is given to us in the form both of sensations and of an image. (Bergson (1908) 1999, 234)

In his radical empiricism, which was influenced by Bergson, James argues that we only need presuppose pure experience (James (1912) 1996). Knowledge can be explained through the relations between different elements of pure experience; reality is constructed by the human being in interaction with her or his surroundings. The flow of sense experience is broken down into things, and then, through our will, we create meaning. James talks about a pluralistic philosophy, which can be compared, to a
form of mosaic. The individual parts are joined in an integrated image, which is real to the human being, whereas universality is seen as an abstraction. Thus, the whole cannot precede the parts or the actual integration, which James considers a part of the experience (Ibid.). Through observing the relations and the selections that arise between the experiential elements of a continual stream of experiences, as real as the sense impressions themselves, James wants to avoid ending up in the impasse that earlier empiricists ended up in. From the boundless possible ways in which a human being may interpret her or his environment and infuse it with meaning, arises a conception of the world in which the individuality of the human being cannot be disregarded. James thus rejects all thinking of the human being as a passive observer of an unchangeable world. The human being has with her or his will an immense capacity to actively create meaningful knowledge about the world, a will that also precludes the idea of observation per se. In one of his letters to Bergson, James writes: “It may amuse you to see a formulation like your own that the brain is an organ of filtration for spiritual life” (James, quoted in Cooper 1992).

As said earlier, James describes the nature of the process of consciousness as private, coherent, and perpetually fluctuating. He claims that experience, which is ultimately determined, by individual sense experience, constitutes the foundation of the human being’s idea of reality. However, according to James, the sense experience consists of fragmentary parts and the connections between them: the relationships between those parts are actively created by the experiencing human being.

Here I must add that James’ theory that the experienced whole cannot precede the parts, and that the actual integration is understood as a part of the experience, is an extremely interesting idea with which to confront architectural theory. The emphasis on wholeness has become a kind of mantra within certain circles within architectural theory, and is sometimes used without re-
lection and necessary clarification. This search for essence during the twentieth century has in turn led to counter-reactions, which have led to a dismantling of wholeness into emptiness and nihilism, where lasting values about architecture can no longer be maintained. Probably, there is now time for a new turn in architectural aesthetics and a new view of experiential values. My conviction is that the dislocation of the current architectural aesthetic debate depends on what happens in the field of human consciousness, even though we might not be able to gain an overview the consequences of this connection right now. The ideas of William James on creative experienced values—which are now a hundred years’ old—surely seem to be more and more relevant if we listen to current researchers on the embodied mind. I will now return to the theories of Bergson and James for a while, but I am also going to mention some of the criticism that has been raised against them. Finally, we will focus on current research on the embodied mind.

The Core of Existence
Consequently James rejects the idea that there is an optimal truth about the real world. We suggest what we believe is true and actively reshape this picture of truth, both within ourselves and within the public domain; for instance, in the form of art and science. Thus James does not talk about an optimal encounter with the world which may be arrived at through any particular method, such as, for instance, Bergson’s notion of intuition. Rather, James describes our creation of meaning in terms of the ways in which the world works, and tries, within pragmatism, and like his friend Dewey, to describe the epistemological consequences of this view of knowledge. Bergson, on the other hand, argues that there is a lasting truth about the world, one which consists precisely in variation or movement; a continuous creation of something new. This reality, he argues, can be reached by means of intuition.
Bergson is sometimes referred to as a new vitalist, because of his emphasis on the importance of the unique vitality, which he termed *Elan Vital*. He argues that there is a reality that lies beyond our spirit, but yet appears to it immediately. On this point, common sense is more right than the idealism and realism of philosophers. This reality is, according to Bergson, motion. There are no complete things, but only things that are being formed; there are no fixed states, but only states that change. Our consciousness of our own person in its continual flow, takes us into the innermost part of a reality. Bergson maintains that based on the patterns of this reality, we can imagine all other realities. All reality is tendency if we let the word tendency signify a continual change of direction (Bergson 1903) 1992, 97).

James also talks about consciousness being in constant change: “no state once gone can recur and be identical with what it was before,” “no proof that an incoming current ever gives us just the same bodily sensation twice.” This does not mean that our experience presents itself as a continual encounter with new objects or spatial situations. Although there are differences between the ways in which we react to objects on different occasions, we can still recognise that we experience the same object a number of times. For instance, James says that our spatial perception is dependent on a complex construct that is built up from numerous different sense experiences. These are immediately integrated with our earlier experiences into comprehensible pictures. Because of this, James maintains, it is hard to understand how spatial perception can be constructed, and that, as a result of this, many have come to the conclusion that it must originate from some higher intuitive or synthetic faculty. James firmly rejects this.

According to Bergson, the metaphysical *intuition*—the deeper insight—is not possible without material knowledge, (Ibid. 114-5). In *Creative Evolution*, Bergson argues that a theory of knowledge that does not place the intellect in the context of the general
evolution of life, can teach us neither how our body of knowledge has been constructed, nor how we can extend it or reach outside it. It is necessary, Bergson argues, that the two different investigations—the theory of knowledge and the theory of life—are integrated through a continual cyclical process (Bergson (1911) 1998, xiii). This emphasis on reason as something evolutionary and interconnected with basic needs was considered provocative at the time Bergson wrote it.

Like James, Bergson wished to oppose those who emphasize intellectualism instead of life. In *Creative Evolution* (1907) he tried to view the whole universe in developmental terms parallel to those which he had invoked to account for consciousness. The whole universe is to be seen in historical terms, and every stage of it is a development of what has gone before. Every cosmic event, like every conscious event, is unique in that it brings its total history with it. It cannot be repeated because no other event can have the same history. The situation over the universe is similar to what holds good over the life of an individual. Hence, the emphasis on life appears here too. (Hamlyn 1988, 287-8)

Like Nietzsche, and in the tradition of Darwin and Freud, Bergson considers the strength of biological instincts to constitute the core of existence. Thus, the instinct actively affects all action, even the intellectual. The role of emotion is highly significant in this context, as this mediates the significance of the instincts to the intellect, so that the human being can act as practically as possible in particular situations. Bergson argues that within contemporary science as a whole, a lack of understanding of experience is widespread. He maintains that through worshipping a quantitative way of observing experience, which is prevalent within the sciences, we lose its aspect of being a connected lapse of qualitative differences. The lapse, or being, Bergson terms *the*
concrete time, the immediately given, which we immediately experience or live within. Bergson argues that by describing the immediately given by means of the method of intuition, philosophy can become more stringent. A. Aarnes maintains that Bergson’s philosophy is epoch-making within a number of areas. It carries within itself a revitalisation, which has impressed, not only philosophy, but also literature and art; the outlook on mankind and culture; and ways of investigating expressions of culture. Aarnes thus detects traces of Bergson’s legacy within aesthetics, philosophical anthropology, and cultural philosophy (Bergson 1992, 6).

The contemporary French philosopher Gilles Deleuze has summarised Bergson’s philosophy in Bergsonism (1967). Deleuze emphasises what he sees as constituting the different stages in Bergson’s thinking: duration, memory, and Élan Vital. Deleuze talks about Bergson’s importance today (in an epilogue from 1988, in a later edition of Bergsonism), and then discusses the connection to modern biological study of human consciousness. “To continue Bergson’s project today”, Deleuze says, “means for example to constitute a metaphysical image of thought corresponding to the new lines, openings, traces, leaps, dynamisms, discovered by a molecular biology of the brain: new linkings and re-linkings in thought” (Deleuze (1966) 1997, 116-7).

The Rationalist Criticism

Some critics accuse Bergson and James of irrationalism. This charge also implies an accusation of political irresponsibility. Karl Popper was one of those involved in the battle about the boundaries of science. He talks about a critical rationalism in favour of an uncritical or all-embracing rationalism. The reasons he gives are moral. Popper expresses a fear that irrationalism can lead to the romantic idea that a selected elite should gain ascendancy, in contrast with the rationalistic idea that all human beings
are equal. The irrationalists’ emphasis on emotion and passion, Popper fears, could lead to a situation in which we believe that human beings for whom we do not harbour strong feelings are worthless. It is necessary to confront this feeling with a moral based on reason.

Popper maintains that an abandonment of respect for reason, argumentation, and other people’s views, and an assertion of the “deeper” levels of the human being, lead to the idea that thinking is only a superficial manifestation of that which exists in this irrational depth (Popper 1997 (1983), 34-47). Popper, however, admits that every discovery contains an irrational element or “a creative intuition,” in Bergson’s sense (Ibid. 144). Popper writes of Bergson:

An oracular irrationalism has established (especially with Bergson and the majority of German philosophers and intellectuals) the habit of ignoring or at best deploring the existence of such an inferior being as a rationalist. To them the rationalist—or the “materialists,” as they often say—and especially, the rationalist scientist, are the poor in spirit, pursuing soulless and largely mechanical activities, and completely unaware of the deeper problems of human destiny and of its philosophy. And the rationalists usually reciprocate by dismissing irrationalism as sheer nonsense. Never before has the break been so complete. And the break in diplomatic relations of the philosophers proved its significance when it was followed by a break in the diplomatic relations of states. (Popper 1983, 33-4)

The pragmatist philosopher Richard Rorty argues instead that there is a playfulness, which characterises much of the philosophical activity around the beginning of the twentieth century, and which confronted and contributed towards the demise of the work of both Descartes and Kant. Rorty puts forward some of the unusual persons within modern philosophy, among others, James
and Dewey, who broke new ground by maintaining that they did not believe in a higher essence.

On the periphery of the history of modern philosophy, one finds figures who, without forming a “tradition,” resemble each other in their distrust of the notion that man’s essence is to be a knower of essences. Goethe, Kirkegaard, Santayana, William James, Dewey, the later Wittgenstein, the later Heidegger, are figures of this sort. They are often accused of relativism or cynicism. They are often dubious about progress, and especially about the latest claim that such-and-such a discipline has at last made the nature of human knowledge so clear that reason will now spread throughout the rest of human activity. These writers have kept alive the suggestion that, even when we have justified true belief about everything we want to know, we may have no more than conformity to the norms of the day. They have kept alive the historicist sense that this century’s “superstition” was the last decade triumph of reason, as well as the relativist sense that the latest vocabulary, borrowed from the latest scientific achievement, may not express privileged representations of essences, but be just another of the potential infinity of vocabularies in which the world can be described. (Rorty 1980, 367)

Bachelard argues that the task of the philosopher consists of discovering “in the impersonal part of the person […] areas of repose and reasons for repose, with which he will make a philosophical system of repose” (Bachelard 2000 (1950), 18). Nevertheless, he, later in life, chooses to challenge this—his own doctrine—through a number of boundary-crossing experiments: he formulates phenomenological tests to be able to speak legitimately about the value, for the individual, of personal experience. In the 1930s, however, he writes that the intuitive is a product of desires and the imagination, and that this impedes the de-
velopment of science. Intuitive knowledge, Bachelard maintains, is private, whereas scientific knowledge is always “inter-
rational,” that is to say, developed in the context of the interplay between a number of individuals. He thus talks about two different types of knowledge and opposes Bergson’s idea of a total, durable, complete knowledge with intuition as its methodology.

In two books, Bachelard turns directly against Bergson’s philosophy, formulating a strong critique, while at the same time presenting his own view of human experience. The first book was *L’inuition de l’instant* (1932), in which he discusses Bergson’s concept of intuition. In the second book, *The Dialectics of Duration* (*La Dialectique de la Durée*) (1950), he criticises duration. The critique of immediate knowledge is a lasting theme in Bachelard’s work; however, he also argues for his own concept: that of poetic imagination. To understand this concept, it is important to touch on some of Bachelard’s extensive criticism of Bergson, who, Bachelard argues, lacks any understanding of the force of discontinuity and destructive tendencies.

One could say that Bachelard holds an “anti-Rousseauian” philosophy: for him, human nature is not naturally good, and certainly the human mind is not: it is not able to know if it is untrained. In order to attain scientific knowledge, the mind has to fight against “easy intuitions.” Bachelard returns many times to the necessity of revising “first knowledge” or “first intuitions,” for they are generally wrong. (Chimisso in Bachelard 2000, 6)

Bachelard maintains that science and art develop through being placed in opposition to one another, like reason and imagination. At the same time, art and science have to be understood in relation to each another. Science itself presupposes the imagination. Bachelard’s concept of science is dynamic and dialectic. He maintains both that science arises though a breach with everyday
experience, and that it should be seen as a process. This process is characterised by corrections of erroneous assumptions, breaches with earlier theories, and an elimination of contradictions. The transitional periods thus become decisive, as it is there that the meaning of the founding concepts change. Science is production and its object is constructed, Bachelard argues, and thus it questions what is given (Lübcke 1988, 53).

Bachelard engaged in a polemic against empiricism and positivism, which he considers yet another expression of all too narrow ideologies within which science has to be accommodated, and which, in reality, put up obstacles that the researcher has to try to overcome. He maintains, like James and Dewey, that experience cannot be accommodated in any simple structure as it is not simple in its nature, but consists of complex and dynamic relations. Knowledge, based on experience, is also shifted periodically by new scientific praxis.

Bachelard is said to have inspired modern thinkers as diverse as Roland Barthes (1915-1980), who with his contributions to semiology became a central figure within structuralism, Michel Foucault (1926-1984), who stressed the importance of differences rather than that of identity and coherence in a dislocation of a structuralist perspective, and Jacques Derrida (b 1930), who has deconstructed Western metaphysics. Above all, Pritz-Påhlson maintains, Bachelard’s works on scientific theory have had a significant—but perhaps not always noticed—influence. Althusser’s theory of generalities, or T. S. Kuhn’s theory of paradigm shifts in the rise of the sciences, could hardly have evolved without inspiration from Bachelard and his insistence on a counter-intuitive development of our knowledge (Pritz-Påhlson in Bachelard 1994, 10).

P. A. Heelan compares Bachelard with Charles S. Peirce, one of the founders of American pragmatism. Heelan argues that the similarity is located in the way in which they created a breach with the prevailing tradition of the philosophy of science: Peirce
around the turn of the century in the Anglo-American tradition, and Bachelard around the time of the Second World War in France. Heelan also refers to the contemporary pragmatist Rorty, who in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1980) develops an immense critique of the idea that knowledge is a passive representation of an unchangeable reality. Bachelard and Pierce were both originally scientists, and their philosophical criticisms are grounded on this fact. Bachelard attacks the philosophical establishment as it has been since the time when Descartes considered himself to have the sole right to legitimate and interpret the sciences. Instead, Bachelard argues, philosophers need to understand that the specialised sciences are sources of real epistemological developments (Heelan in Bachelard (1934) 1984, ix).

Philosophy’s lesson is to learn from such discoveries that it itself is the source of unconscious bias (“epistemological obstacles”) to new knowledge, that only the creative imagination can break through such obstacles. In making such “ruptures,” the poet and the scientist—not the philosopher—are the expert practitioners. (Ibid.)

In *The New Scientific Spirit* (*Le nouvel esprit scientifique* (1934)), Bachelard criticises the role of the ideologies, among them traditional philosophy. He argues that the ideologies often put obstacles in the way of scientific research by introducing scientific theories to scientists and the public in the form of obsolete philosophy, which appeals to and promotes the Western intellectual upper classes. From this perspective, both positivism and empiricism try to assert the value of limited ideologies for the sciences. Both generate their own share of the epistemological obstacles which practising scientists have to overcome. According to Bachelard, there is a possibility that we can maintain an epistemology within the breach between realism (the empirical) and rationalism (what is formulated by reason). This can make possi-
ble a dynamic handling of these opposites, and a study of the dualistic process in which science simplifies reality and complicates the rational. The gulf between explained reality and applied thought is reduced. Nevertheless, the area in which philosophers need to try to discover how scientific proof can be established is restricted (Bachelard (1934) 1984, 10). Bachelard describes an attempt to show the new epistemological connection between simple and complex ideas.

There are no simple phenomena; every phenomenon is a fabric of relations, there is no such thing as a simple nature, a simple substance; a substance is a web of attributes. And there is no such thing as a simple idea [...] no idea can be understood until it has been incorporated into a complex of thoughts and experiences. Application is complication. Simple ideas are working hypothesis or concepts, which must undergo revision before they can assume their proper epistemological role. Simple ideas are not the ultimate basis of knowledge; after a complete theory is available, it will be apparent that simple ideas are in fact simplifications of more complex truth. (Ibid. 147-148)

This emphasis on complexity and scepticism about simplicity involves both possibilities and dangers. One possibility we gain is that we allow the complex to be described in a complex way, whereas simplicity and clarity will sometimes have to stand back so that the complex will not be reduced. The danger, of course, consists in that the descriptions become esoteric and not available for constructive criticism.

The dialectical is, however, fundamental to Bachelard’s theory of knowledge. He argues that knowledge always emerges in a dialectic exchange or discussion; even solitary knowledge develops through an inner discussion within the individual. Knowledge about something means a consciousness about a mediation
that demands an order. Human beings evaluate past events; select and organise them; and use them as knowledge outside of life (Chimisso in Bachelard (1950) 2000, 9). Bachelard argues that “In vain do we try to differentiate between understanding a process and living it” (Bachelard (1950) 2000, 53).

On Duration

Bergson argues that philosophers, despite obvious differences, agree about the need to separate two widely different methods of gaining knowledge about a thing (Bergson (1903) 1992, 57):
- To circle round a thing—this method stops at the relative and can be reached through analysis and concepts.
- To penetrate a thing—this method can reach the absolute through intuition.
Bergson argues that it is in virtue of confusion about the roles of analysis and intuition that discussions between different schools and conflicts between different systems emerge (Ibid. 71). Metaphysics, if it can be counted as a discipline, and not just a thought game, transcends concepts to reach intuition, which in turn can enable us to get in contact with the pure flow of the present. Concepts are necessary in as much as the other sciences are dependent on these, but within metaphysics, we have to strive for liberation from all rigid and complete concepts. Instead, we have to create alternative concepts, which are elastic, flexible, almost fluid, and which can be adjusted to the lightness of intuition (Bergson (1903) 1992, 69).

When Bergson talks about the absolute and the relative, Aar-nes explains that he does not mean what we nowadays refer to when we talk about the absolute, in the sense of the highest, that which comprises everything, or the divine. Bergson uses the word in conformity with its etymological sense: absolutor from absolvere = separate, place to oneself. The intuition thus opens a door into that which is separate, that which does not belong to any species or art, or is a final term in some kind of relation. The
opposite is the relative: that to which we are related or have to conduct ourselves. The *absolute* signifies that for which there is no concept, that which is the Other in relation to the insight. To some extent, we can control the *relative*, we can incorporate it in our knowledge, which can be increased, and to which we can discern no end. In the presence of the absolute, however, the quantitative aspect disappears; words more or less lose their meaning (Aarnes in Bergson 1992, 21).

The *intuition* provides an opening in life—to the living—whereas our habitual perception, and the discursive intellect, is focused on the lifeless. The intuition opens up towards the living, towards the flexible, towards *duration*. Where possible, the intuition is an uncomplicated process. The most important thing, according to Bergson, is not intuition itself, but the aim of the intuition, that is to say, *duration*, which is something more than, and something different to, a limited state of consciousness. Duration is an essence, a force, or energy. The intuitive insight is resistant to conceptualisation, as ideas always result in a simplification and generalisation of experience. The idea is a device, which does not take along the individual. It can be compared to a sieve, in which only the coarser grains remain, whereas the finer ones run out (Ibid. 19).

If we take into account the role of habit in our experience of architecture, this Bergsonian line of argument is fairly difficult to digest. Of course, concepts can be a limitation, but they can also widen our outlook, help us achieve heightened and more concentrated experiences. If we also allow concepts to be dynamic, and not always clearly defined, they are rather an aid than an obstacle. I think Bergson’s theories about intuition roughly divide existence into good and evil, whole and fragmented, flexible and static. Bergson says that intuition is indescribable and beyond the everyday. This expression has, as far as I understand, the consequence of dividing existence into the banal and the divine. But life can be both banal and divine at the same time, both painful.
and beautiful, for, as Bachelard says, “Life is never absolutely and unconditionally at risk” (Bachelard 1950) 2000, 27). And it is, in my opinion, significant to keep this in mind when discussing architecture.

Bachelard writes, in *The Dialectics of Duration*, that “Of Bergsonism we accept everything but continuity” (Ibid. 28). Instead, Bachelard talks about developing a Bergsonian discontinuity. There is, he says, a fundamental heterogeneity at the heart of everything living—an active, creative duration—and to acquire knowledge, and to be able to use time well, we need to activate the rhythm of creation and recreation, of work and rest (Ibid. 29). All experiences contain a dualism of events and intervals of emptiness. The Bergsonian continuity is thus a problem, according to Bachelard. Complex life demands a basis of pluralistic duration which neither has the same rhythm nor the same solidity in its sequences, nor the same degree of continuity. The psychic continuity is not seen as a given, but as created, duration is constructed.

How poorly are such temporal moulds as these expressed by a continuously, regularly flowing duration! How much more real, as the basis of temporal effectiveness, must seem the concept of rhythm! (Ibid. 20)

Bachelard argues that duration and the concept of time is dependent on the understanding of the concept of rhythm. The phenomenon of duration is in fact constructed by rhythms: rhythms, which are not necessarily based on any uniform or regular time. Through understanding that rhythm is the fundamental concept of time, we need paradoxically to rely on varying rhythms to possess any form of duration. We have to find a resonance for exceptional events that we experience, if they are not to mark us deeply. Without harmony, without well-ordered dialectics, without rhythm, no life or thought can become stable and secure.
Calmness is thus a favourable vibration (Ibid. 21). Bachelard emphasises that Bergson wrote nothing of risks: risks, which have no purpose or reason. He has not written about the strange emotional play, which sometimes leads us to destroy our security, our happiness, and our love. Nor has Bergson dealt with the exalted feeling which drives us towards danger, news, death, and emptiness (Ibid. 27).

According to Chimisso, Bachelard wanted to show that our personal history is neither the memory of continuity, nor contains the completeness of our past, but rather, consists of collected memories. To Bachelard, our personal history is the sum of our actions. Its continuity is not a reality apprehended through an immediate intuition, but rather a construction realised by reason, which we attach to our particular actions (Chimisso in Bachelard 2000, 9).

**Poetic Imagination**

In *The Poetics of Space (La poétique de l’espace)* (1958), Bachelard explains that his epistemological strategy has come to change, which, to him as a rationalist, has led to a “minor daily crisis.” The objective position, which result in the personal interpretation being omitted, has proved inadequate to characterise the poetic image. The prudent scientific attitude in itself leads to a denial of the immediate dynamics of our imagination. “I have come to realize,” Bachelard writes, “how difficult it is to break away from this ‘prudence’” (Bachelard (1958) 1994, xviii). In the phenomenology of the imagination there is a paradox: how can an image, sometimes very unusual, appear as a concentration of the entire psyche? How can—without any preparation—this particular short-lived incident constituted of an unusual poetic image, react on other consciousnesses, and reach into other hearts? How can this communicable flexibility come about? (Ibid. xix)
It seemed to me, then, that this transsubjectivity of the image could not be understood, in its essence, through the habits of subjective reference alone. Only phenomenology - that is to say, consideration of the onset of the image in an individual consciousness - can help us to restore the subjectivity of images and to measure their fullness, their strength and their trans-subjectivity. These subjectivities and transsubjectivities cannot be determined once and for all, for the poetic image is essentially *variational*, and not, as in the case of the concept, *constitutive*. (Ibid.)

Bachelard surrenders to the meaning of the personal—the force of the unique in experience, and the fantastic in moments of heightened emotions—not in a way which accepts intuition, but in a way which forces him to question the foundations of rationalism. Bachelard was inspired by surrealist tendencies, and rather than simplicity, he increasingly came to emphasise complexity. Contemporary phenomenological currents and psychoanalysis also came to influence him. Towards the end of his life he devoted himself to free experiments, the objective of which was to try to ascertain the significance of the human being’s ability to imagine through memories, dreams, and day-dreams, and the importance of bodily co-ordination with the surrounding world, independent of reason. He came to maintain the significance of the *poetic imagination* at the core of the existence of human beings through a number of experiments in which he addressed the significance of imaginative literature and poetry. The controversy concerning rationalism he described in his introduction to *The Poetics of Space*:

A philosopher who has evolved his entire thinking from the fundamental themes of the philosophy of science, and followed the main line of the active, growing rationalism of contemporary science as closely as he could, must forget his
learning and break with all his habits of philosophical research, if he wants to study the problems posed by the poetic imagination. (Ibid. xv)

Bachelard oscillates from the scientific theoretical to the more intimate sphere in order to investigate private knowledge: the poetic antithesis to the public sciences. He develops theories about the imagination (l’imagination), emphasising how science is dependent for its life-force on the imagination. For Bachelard considers public science to be dependent on the individual imagination, even though the two are in an antithetical relationship. By examining the extent of this polarity, he fulfilled his dialectical-epistemological life-work. Bachelard draws our attention to the fact that, if we want to study the poetic image, we have to be open and receptive at the moment the poetic image emerges.

If there be a philosophy of poetry, it must appear and re-appear through a significant verse, in total adherence to an isolated image; to be exact, in the very ecstasy of the newness of the image. The poetic image is a sudden salience on the surface of the psyche, the lesser psychological causes of which have not been sufficiently investigated. Nor can anything general and co-ordinated serve as a basis for a philosophy of poetry. The idea of principle or “basis” in this case would be disastrous, for it would interfere with the essential physic actuality, the essential novelty of the poem. (Ibid. xv)

The present is conclusive for the poetical. The poetic image does not spring out of an inner compulsion. It is not an echo of the past. Bachelard’s concept of the poetic image is thus radically different from Bergson’s concept of the durable present, which contains the memory of the past. However, Bachelard explains how the lustre from a poetic image can make the distant past re-
verberate. According to Bachelard, to be able to describe the poetic act itself—the spontaneous poetic image, the emotion of being within that image—we need a phenomenology of the imagination: a study of the phenomenology of the poetic image, as it appears as a direct manifestation of the heart, the soul, and the being of a human being, encountered in its actuality. The only possibility of performing this investigation is to use a phenomenological method, as we have nothing in terms of which we may anticipate a poetic image: not culture in its real sense, and certainly not perception in a psychological sense. The poetic act has no past: at least, no recent past through which to trace its incubation and expression (Ibid. xv).

If I try to transfer Bachelard’s arguments about the poetic imagination to our encounter with architectural objects, we can understand it as an experience, which stands out as something extraordinary. An experience that completely occupies the experiencing person, and pushes aside everything else for that unique moment. A fusion within the situational event, which pervades or penetrates the entire thought, emotion, and body of the experiencing person, in conformity with what John Dewey describes as “having an experience” (Dewey 1934) 1980). It is not often that situations this powerful arise in our encounters with architectural objects, but they do occur. These experiences also acquire a lasting effect, even if, as Bachelard stresses, they emerge instantaneously. They constitute very important exceptions from the mass of everyday experiences. It is desirable for the architect to be able to give rise to such powerful experiences through her or his work. These experiences, however, constitute only a small part of experience, although they are a foundation for the aesthetics of architecture. To try to describe and communicate this type of experience, like other less dramatic experiences, and the tension between them, I believe is of the outmost importance for the development of the architectural aesthetics.
Through his critique of Bergson’s theories of duration, Bachelard provides a way of differentiating human experiences. When experiences of architecture are discussed, the emphasis on the significance of rhythm, and pauses between events, is important. The philosopher Bachelard is one of those who actively questions the autonomy of continuity and harmony. His thoughts about discontinuity, which were formulated partly as a reaction to Bergson, have been picked up within modern French philosophy by philosophers such as Foucault, Derrida, and Deleuze, who have in their turn influenced contemporary architectural theory. Bachelard has, in late works such as *The Poetics of Space*, shown that we do not need to choose between either an idealist aesthetic approach, which one-sidedly celebrates harmony and continuity, and a complete dissolution of these values in favour of disorder and discord. When we discuss architectural experiences, I believe that values of stability, continuity, and harmony, as well, of course, as values of discord, instability, and discontinuity, have to be represented. The fixed, as well as the fragile; and the harmonic, as well as the discordant, contain scales of experiential qualities that are of importance for the aesthetics of architecture. Bachelard’s confrontation with the scope of rationalism is inspiring with regard to our understanding of experience. His idea that, as artefacts, science and art stand simultaneously in a relationship of both opposition and interdependence is inspirational. The purpose of aesthetics is, I believe, to find oneself right in the cross-fire between art, science, and philosophy. It may do this today in a new kind of way, as bridges are being built and obstacles are being demolished in our pursuit of an understanding of human consciousness.

**Current Ideas on the Process of Consciousness**

Over the last few years, I have read books and articles on modern research into the nature of human consciousness, and, at the same time, tried to keep focused on the experience of architecture.
From the great variety of current work on human consciousness, I have chosen two books, written by neurologists, on which primarily to focus. The first one is *A Universe of Consciousness: How Matter becomes Imagination* (2000) by Gerald M. Edelman and Giulio Tononi, and the second one is *The Feeling of What Happens: Body, Emotion and the Making of Consciousness* (2000) by Antonio Damasio. Both Damasio and Edelman/Tononi develop models, which clearly adopt evolutionist perspectives, and both of them have scientific foundations. Damasio emphasises the problem of the self. He argues that emotions play a significant role. Edelman and Tononi explain more thoroughly, in their hypothesis, how the active process of differentiation in the brain emerges on a micro level in what they call “neural Darwinism.” Edelman and Tononi are thus more focused on the process within the brain, whereas Damasio, in the above-mentioned book, emphasises the importance of a complete view of the organism, and talks about the interplay between the self and its environment.


Neurologists, philosophers, and psychologists no longer stand on isolated islands when it comes to the study of human consciousness. Cognitive research, which emerged at the end of the 1950s, utilises philosophical, psychological, and neurological
research, and is thus striving to bridge the gaps between these disciplines. Within pure philosophy, however, one encounters scornful remarks, such as Scruton’s characterisation of this research as “the premature science of mind,” which needs not be considered (Scruton 1998, 9). In a review of the neurologist Susan Greenfield’s book, *The Private Life of the Brain* (2000), I read, that “Her theories and conclusions about how the brain works seem premature and incomplete—though no more so than those of any of the other books in this field, such as Daniel Dennett’s *Consciousness Explained*” (Davidson 2000). Greenfield reacts by claiming that the philosophers get stuck in different definitions of the concept of consciousness, whereas she considers the scientists to be more pragmatic in their approach (Greenfield 2001).

Today, the fundamental conflicts concerning the possibility of researching the nature of consciousness, as I understand it, primarily stand between different views of knowledge, rather than between different professions. Privacy and generality are, now as before, a crucial problem within the debate. Increasingly, advanced technical measuring instruments, which can also reveal the bodily reactions of which we are not directly conscious, has led to a situation in which researchers have got access to more and more “hard data” than before. These facts, however, provide little information about the full significance of the process of creating meaning for the experiencing person, that is to say, uniqueness in the pattern of values of that which has been experienced. Introspection was prohibited by the behaviourists in the early twentieth century because it was considered to be incapable of conveying any reliable knowledge. To completely preclude introspection, however, means to close off the possibility of a deeper understanding of the inner world of the self and the value of its continual interaction with its environment. From an aesthetic perspective, I see this question as decisive in determining whether or not the results of the study of human consciousness can be con-
sidered interesting and useful. If research into the nature of human consciousness only comprises the measurability of the biological processes, and does not concern itself with the description of the inner world, this kind of research can scarcely be said to be dealing with consciousness. Today, many that are studying human consciousness have reacted against such a limited perspective. There is, however, controversy about what methods one should use to reach the content and complexity of the inner world. The difficulty lies primarily in how one may connect introspective evidence with measurable results about, for instance, how the signal system of the body works.

Many modern researchers into the nature of human consciousness take an interest in mental processes, and have developed increasingly advanced methods of measurement to ascertain their underlying biology. But how far do we get, and how far do we want to get? Are we today ready to demystify consciousness, to uncover the biology of the self? Can we explain the mystery of consciousness by knowing the workings of neurons, synapses, and chemical processes in the brain, and how these interplay with the rest of the body? Can we explain the origins of the rich capacity of human consciousness through an evolutionary perspective? Today’s researchers into the nature of consciousness assert: yes, we are, by degrees, uncovering the mystery of consciousness. This, however, does not mean that we will cease to be amazed by the unique and fantastical aspects of having a consciousness that is flexible and plastic. By understanding how the complex underlying biological structures, which make our individual consciousness possible, are constructed, some researchers believe that our wonder at and reverence for life will instead increase. Darwin himself expressed doubt: “But then arises the doubt: can the mind of man, which has as I fully believe, been developed by the lowest animal, be trusted when it draws such grand conclusion?” (Darwin 1859, quoted in Edelman 1992, 42).
In 1993, John Searle argued that if we believe that it seems impossible to explain consciousness with electrobiochemical processes—in neurobiological terms—it is important to remember that similar mysteries have previously existed within the sciences. A hundred years ago, it seemed extremely mysterious, and for some, metaphysically impossible, that life could be measured by mechanical, biological, and chemical processes. But now we know that we can do such calculations, and that the problem of how life originates from biochemistry has been solved to such a degree that we now find it hard to imagine that it had previously seemed so impossible. Searle maintains, however, that previously, electromagnetism had been mystical. In the universe as Newton conceived it, there did not seem to be any room for the phenomenon of electromagnetism. But with the development of the theory of electromagnetism, the metaphysical anxiety disappeared. Once we have established the fact that states of consciousness are caused by neurological processes, we can automatically address the issue with scientific investigations. We thus remove the discussion of consciousness from the claim of philosophical and metaphysic impossibility (Searle 1993).

In 1995, Crick’s book *The Astonishing Hypothesis: A Scientific Search for the Soul* was published. He defines the astonishing hypothesis as “The hypothesis that a person’s mental activities are entirely due to the behavior of nerve cells, glial cells and the atoms, ions, and molecules that make them up and influence them” (Crick 1995, 271). This hypothesis is astonishing to many, Crick believes, for three distinct reasons. The first reason is an objection to the reductive approach: the idea that it should be possible to explain a complex system by explaining how its parts act and how they integrate with one another. In a system with many layers of activity, this process may need to be repeated a number of times from different points of view. In response to this criticism, Crick argues that reductionism does not at all need to be the idea of a rigid process of explaining fixed ideas on differ-
ent levels. It may, instead be an idea about a dynamic interactive process, which modifies the concepts of different levels, at the same time as that knowledge is developed. The second reason for the astonishment, according to Crick, is to do with the peculiar nature of consciousness. We have, for instance, an inner picture of the outer world. How can this be reconciled with the appearance of neurons? The difficulty of knowing whether other human beings experience exactly the same qualia (plural of quale, philosophical term for the subjective quality of mental experience: for instance, the redness of red or the painfulness of pain (Crick 1995, 277)). The difficulty with communicating, for instance, the redness one person experiences to another person ought also to imply, some would say, that there is a problem with reductionism. In neurological terms, however, it can be impossible to explain that a person sees red if, and only if, a set of neurons is activated in a particular way. If it is shown that the neural correlate for red is exactly the same in one person’s brain as in another’s, it would be scientifically plausible to assume that both persons see red in the same way. How precise one can be in this assumption depends on the complex process of which seeing red is part. If previous experience plays a role, and if the previous experience differs between different persons in a decisive way, it is not possible to presuppose that both persons see red in exactly the same way. According to Crick, however, it is of crucial importance to first understand the neural correlates, and to then understand the varying forms of consciousness. The third reason for astonishment about the hypothesis is to do with our experiencing that we have a free will. Can we actually find a neural correlate of events which can show consciousness? (Ibid. 10)

Much has happened over recent years within the study of human consciousness, since Searle’s article and Crick’s book, and one could even say that Searle’s prophecy is about to be realised. Even if there is still much that we do not know about the process
of consciousness, a clear change in attitude has taken place, and an increased acceptance of the scientific legitimacy of the field.

**Private Experience as a Scientific Problem**
Thus, there is no prevailing consensus within the study of human consciousness, neither regarding a definition of the concept of consciousness, nor regarding methods with which to investigate consciousness. On the contrary, there is still severe opposition with respect to fundamental issues, which are built into different current models of consciousness. The greatest issue is the question of the first-person and third-person perspectives. Edelman and Tononi emphasise the fact that the study of human consciousness needs to be treated as an exceptional case within the sciences.

There is something special about consciousness: Conscious experience arises as a result of the working of each individual brain. It cannot be shared under direct observation, as the physicist's object can be shared. Thus, studying consciousness presents us with a curious dilemma. Introspection alone is not scientifically satisfactory, and though people’s reports about their own consciousness are useful, they cannot reveal the working of the brain underlying them. Yet, studies of the brain proper cannot, in themselves, convey what it is like to be conscious. These constraints suggest that one must take special approaches to bring consciousness into the house of science. (Edelman and Tononi 2000, xi)

Already around 1900, James emphasised a perspective in which the privacy of experience is given a central place, in order to create useful knowledge about the human being’s interaction with her or his environment. This approach came to be questioned by purists, who could not accept the idea that consciousness should be given exceptional treatment which, according to Edelman and
Tononi, is needed today for the scientific development of the study of human consciousness. There are, I believe, many important points of contact between Henri Bergson’s, William James’s, and John Dewey’s process theories, on the one hand, and the modern study of human consciousness, on the other. This also leads into the aesthetics of pragmatism. I believe that this is an important connection to stress within aesthetics, as it enables new types of approaches, to which I will return. But first: an example of some hot-tempered discussions between Searle and Dennett.

In *Consciousness Explained* (1992), Daniel Dennett, who is inspired by Wittgenstein, presents what he calls a “heterophenomenological method,” which consists of avoiding the private. Dennett’s method amounts to an evasion of the private through a process of interpreting subjective descriptions of consciousness. He establishes precise premises to achieve neutrality in the assessment of the content of these linguistic descriptions, simultaneously with studies of the brain’s activity. He believes that there is a possibility to discover underlying, general meaning in that which is individual to every human being. The method has been vehemently criticized by, among others, Searle, who argues that Dennett’s line of argument in fact leads to a denial of the character of subjective consciousness. Dennett in turn accuses Searle of making unscientific claims about “ontological subjectivity” (Denett in Searle 1997, 118).

The study of human consciousness is an exceptional case within science. Thus, the methods also need to be allowed to mirror this, to be able to provide useful knowledge about the dynamics of human consciousness. Is it necessarily an obstacle that we need our individual experience in order to know what we want to investigate within that which we experience? Can we disregard personal experience when we talk about consciousness? Crick stresses that what are of most meaning to human beings are subjective experiences. He therefore encourages brain research-
ers to engage themselves in investigating consciousness to a greater extent. The difficulty with many philosophers’ arguments about consciousness is that they represent a perspective from the outside. Crick maintains that the language of the brain is the language of neurons, and argues not only that it is essential to understand neural activity in order to understand consciousness, but that it is possible to come closer to the key to the problem of consciousness through experimentation. Crick argues that as scientists are working with tentative ideas, so philosophers should be prepared to reconsider their theories about human consciousness if scientific results point in a different direction to their theories (Crick 1995, 255-8).

Damasio argues that it is necessary to adopt a third-person perspective, as well as a first-person perspective, in order to investigate human consciousness. The information includes how the brain works; observable and measurable reactions to which conscious processes give rise; and subjective evidence about that which is contained within the private sphere of consciousness.

Consciousness is an entirely private, first-person phenomenon, which occurs as parts of the private, first-person process we call mind. Consciousness and mind, however, are closely tied to external behaviors that can be observed by third persons. We all share these phenomena—mind, consciousness within mind, and behaviors—and we know quite well how they are intercorrelated, first because of our own self-analysis, second because of our natural propensity to analyze others. Both wisdom and the science of the human mind and behavior are based on this incontrovertible correlation between the private and the public—first person mind, on the one hand, and third person behavior, on the other. (Damasio 2000, 13)

For aesthetics, it is crucial to engage with our inclination to oscillate between private and public perspectives. We experience
within ourselves; we react so that others can read our reactions. We communicate the contents of our inner worlds to others, and read others’ reactions. This happens continuously in our lives, and is of crucial importance to us. We can without any major difficulties move between experiencing; reflecting on what we experience; communicating experiences; being acquainted with what others communicate; and reading others’ reactions. We can agree or we can have opposite opinions about how we experience different situations. We can increase our knowledge about the world and each other by discussing our experiences. This ability is extremely complex, and is also amenable to development.

Edelman and Tononi argue that because every conscious state is an integrated whole, perhaps the most notable characteristic of conscious experience is its extraordinary differentiation and complexity. The number of conscious states that can be made accessible within a short space of time is immensely large. Even if, for instance, we only consider our capacity to perceive visual images, we can discriminate between numerous scenes within the space of a single second. Usually, the inception of a state of consciousness contains an extremely rapid selection within a repertoire of possible conscious states, which are as large as one’s experience and power of imagination. Edelman and Tononi proceed to emphasise that the differentiation within a repertoire of possibilities demands specific information, in order to reduce uncertainty. Despite the fact that it is often taken for granted, a particular conscious state in front of billions of others can thus constitute a correspondingly large amount of information. The information makes the difference, in so far as it is this, which leads to different consequences in terms of either thought or action (Edelman and Tononi 1998). Edelman and Tononi stress the difference between different brains and their variability. Thus, they also react against all comparisons between brains and computers.
Darwinian principles turn out to be important even for a basic understanding of brain functions, especially given the enormous variation in the structure and function of individual vertebrate brains. [...] no two brains are alike, and each individual’s brain is continually changing. Variations extend over all levels of brain organization, from biochemistry to gross morphology, and the strength of myriads individual synapses are constantly altered by experience. The extent of this enormous variability argues strongly against the notion that the brain is organized like a computer with fixed codes and registers. (Edelman and Tononi 2000, 81)

Consciousness is a private phenomenon, which cannot be observed by a third person, says Damasio. It is therefore important not to try to study consciousness from a purely external position, lest the inner point of view is seen as hopelessly flawed. The study of human consciousness demands both outer and inner points of view. The inevitable indirectness of consciousness does not provide any reason for any ignorance about mental structure or underlying neural mechanisms. Damasio points out that this can perhaps worry purists, who maintain that what others cannot observe, cannot be scientifically reliable. Consciousness is, however, subjective, and the force of science originates in its ability to objectively verify the reliability of the subjectivities of many individuals (Damasio 2000, 83).

Damasio argues further that consciousness occurs in the inner spheres of the organism, rather than in the public, but that it is also associated with a number of public manifestations. The solution to the problem of method concerning the privacy of consciousness is based on the natural human ability to continuously read the inner conditions of others by observing their outer behaviour; the private reporting of mental conditions; and control of the correspondence with comparable private experiences. The
modern approach to studying the biological basis of private human consciousness, is according to Damasio:

[…] based on the following assumptions: that the process of the mind, including those of consciousness, are based on brain activity; that the brain is a part of a whole organism with which it interacts continuously; and that we, as human beings, in spite of remarkable individual traits that make each of us unique, share similar biological characteristics in terms of the structure, organization, and function of our organisms. (Damasio 2000, 85)

To regard consciousness as a process within each and every one of us, and at the same time as part of a greater evolutionary process, can help disengage architectural theory from the all too narrow conceptual lines of argument. A more dynamic approach in which the pluralism of experience is emphasised in aesthetic and ethical architectural discussions can open the door to new forms of investigation concerning human experience and the evaluation of architecture. With an increased knowledge of the findings and possibilities of the study of human consciousness, interdisciplinary approaches to the investigation of problems from an architectural perspective may be possible. I believe this could entail interesting discussions about methodology, which may in turn lead into new forms of aesthetic/ethical questions about consciousness and experience. The excursion into the modern study of human consciousness, which has been reviewed in this essay, shows that the privacy of consciousness cannot be excluded from a discussion about human experience and consciousness. Nor within aesthetics can experience or consciousness be ignored, as they form the basis of the meaning we create within our lives and of how we do this. I therefore see no opposition in being inspired by, for instance, both the neurologists Antonio Damasio, Gerald Edelman and Giulio Tononi and by the philosophers William
James, Henri Bergson, John Dewey, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Gaston Bachelard, and Ludwig Wittgenstein when discussing our experience of architecture. Of course, I do not claim that these thinkers all agree, but that they have all delivered diverse and important contributions to our understanding of the process of consciousness.
3 Architecture and Human Centrality

During the twentieth century, human beings have changed the physical world in a dramatic way, not least with architectural objects. With respect to architecture, a number of eras can be identified: one of these is, of course, early modernism. Another important shift took place around 1960. This shift was related to a number of different factors, technical, socio-political, and ideological. Within Western philosophy, structuralist thinking evolved at this time partly as a reaction against existentialist-phenomenological values that had predominated since the Second World War. There was a turn away from placing the conscious, experiencing human being so obviously at the centre. Michel Foucault, for instance, argued that one should focus on differences rather than identity and coherence. The “humanism” of subject philosophy was questioned in favour of a structuralist thinking, in accordance with which we needed to identify unconscious characteristics at the level on which structuralist analyses operate. It thus provided a dissociation from the conscious level—the subject’s experience—in favour of the idea that the subjective level is in fact determined by structures working unconsciously. This structuralist displacement of ideology came to have a noticeable impact on city planning, and coincided with new possibilities for mass production within the construction industry. Structuralist and post-structuralist thinking came to appeal to many architects, among them Peter Eisenman.

In this essay, I have chosen to illustrate the shift from the attempt to place human experience at the centre of the meaning of architecture, to a conception of architecture as autonomous from the human being with an inherent meaning that lies beyond human consciousness. By confronting Steen Eiler Rasmussen’s (1898-1990) and Peter Eisenman’s (born 1932) different views on architecture and human centrality, my wish is to show something of the architectural-ideological importance of this shift for
the contemporary situation. Rasmussen has adopted a sort of common sense philosophy based on values close to the existentialist-phenomenological tradition prior to the shift, whereas Eisenman has made use of the late twentieth-century structuralist, post-structuralist, and deconstructionist philosophies. Today, there are also unorthodox combinations within architectural theory of the inspiration provided by philosophers from different fields. Ignasi de Solà-Morales, whom I also will return to later in this essay, is an example of this. He is inspired by both Martin Heidegger’s phenomenology and Gilles Deleuze’s post-structuralism in formulating his architectural theory, and attempting to re-establish the importance of the subject without proclaiming the death of the object (De Solà-Morales 1996).

**Questioning Human Centrality**

Is it relevant to talk about a serious controversy concerning the role of human centrality in defining the concept of architecture? This was my main question in this essay, when I as an experiment started to compare the different ideas of the architects Steen Eiler Rasmussen and Peter Eisenman on this issue. I saw Rasmussen as representing a humanistic tradition, in the sense of stressing the value of human experience in architecture, especially in *Experiencing Architecture* (Rasmussen 1993 (1957)). Eisenman, on the other hand, early proclaimed himself a “non-humanist,” thereby challenging and avoiding the dependence on human centrality in architecture (Eisenman 1998). Despite the opposite perspectives of Rasmussen and Eisenman, I saw them both as concerned with the same central question: the question of human centrality in the field of architecture. Rasmussen stresses the presence of human centrality, whereas Eisenman seems to stress the absence of it. But are their perspectives really as different as I first thought?

Rasmussen claims that architecture has to serve the need of the experiencing human being, whereas Eisenman challenges the
idea that architecture is mainly concerned with serving human needs. The value of architecture is, according to Rasmussen in *Experiencing Architecture*, dependent on the interaction between the experiencing person and the experienced architectural object. Architectural value is seen as an ongoing making, dependent both on the capacity of human experience and the quality of architectural objects. (However, I must add that Rasmussen does not develop his philosophical discussion on human centrality particularly well, he leaves the discussion on a common sense level.) Eisenman, on the other hand, especially in his early texts, talks about architectural value as something that can and should exist, separated from, or beyond, human experience. Eisenman wants to “displace the subject (as both designer and client) since the remaining architectural index is no longer dependent on the iconography or functions of man” (Somol 1999, 17). It is important to note that discussing the theories of Eisenman is complicated, because of their incessantly changing character.

The philosopher Alan Janik, among others, points out that the most serious questions are about disunity of the content of the essential questions. It is necessary to be prepared to follow a discussion within a conflict, even if it leads us to unfamiliar fields. We need to stress what we think is substantial in the actual questions, but we also need to be ready to revise our idea of what the substantial aspect of the question is (Janik 1991, 98-9). I think it is useful to use opposite perspectives, such as Rasmussen’s and Eisenman’s, to deepen the architectural debate. *Human centrality* is an essential question in the context of architectural aesthetics. It is, therefore, extremely interesting to compare the ideas of these two famous architects. Another important aspect of this comparison is that Rasmussen’s and Eisenman’s ideas also represent a shift in architects’ professional attitudes, because of various new possibilities and demands during the late twentieth century. Although I will concentrate on the philosophical aspect of human centrality in this text, this change in architects’ profes-
sional attitudes will also be part of my discussion. First, however, I will give a very short, brief, and subjective presentation of Rasmussen and Eisenman.

**Two Opposing Views**

Steen Eiler Rasmussen and Peter Eisenman have both been among the most influential architectural theoreticians in the Western World during the twentieth century. There are also some important similarities in their professional attitudes. They both combine the traditional role of the architect with writing articles and books, which have been widely read. They have both taught students of architecture, and have had the opportunity to produce building proposals, resulting in some built projects.

Among others, the architects Kaare Klint, Christian Petersen, Erik Lundberg, and Gunnar Asplund have influenced Rasmussen in his work. He also mentions the aesthetics of Henrich Wölfflin, Vilfred Wanscher, and Rudolf Wittkower (Rasmussen 1957, 247-50). *Ordering, wholeness, stability, harmony, sense-experience, identification, utility, and common sense* are some keywords I choose to describe the work of Rasmussen. Eisenman was among Michael Graves, C. Gwathmey, John Hejduk, and Richard Meier one of the “New York Five” a group of avant-garde architects during the 1960s. Since then, Eisenman has had a strong voice in the theoretical discussion of architecture. The philosophers Nietzsche, Foucault, Chomsky, Derrida, and Deleuze have inspired him. Some key words to describe the work of Eisenman are *nihilism, deconstruction, fragmentation, anti-classicism, displacement, universality, uncertainty, diagrammatic, and textual.*

*Experiencing Architecture* by Rasmussen was first published in 1959 (1957 in Danish). Rasmussen explains his purpose in his foreword “My object is in all modesty to endeavour to explain the instrument the architect plays on, to show what a great range it has and thereby awaken the senses to its music” (Rasmussen (1959) 1993 6). Rasmussen also says that architecture is a
“functional art” and that it “solves practical problems” (Ibid. 9). 
Experiencing Architecture has been reprinted many times and is 
widely read and used for teaching purposes. It is important to 
note that Rasmussen and Eisenman are not of the same gener-
ation. Eisenman has, in fact, been a student of teachers from Rasmussen’s generation. Eisenman wrote his (unpublished) Ph.D. 
as a critical response to Christopher Alexander’s Notes on the 
Synthesis of Form. He wanted to shift from an essential formal-
ism to a kind of more open textuality, an interpretative field out-
side function and meaning as a deep structure. “I moved from 
Chomsky to Foucault to Derrida, trying to find a way of forming 
in architecture” (Eisenman 1999, 7) (Eisenman 1993, 133).

Eisenman strongly reacted against the architectural formalism 
maintained by the older generation’s Rudolf Wittkower and oth-
ers (Eisenman 1994, 133). Eisenman says in an earlier text: “Fun-
ctionalism is really no more than a late phase of humanism, 
rather than an alternative to it” (Eisenman 1998 (1976)). Eisen-
man advocates “a real modernist spirit,” a “displacement of man 
away from the center of his world” where “he is no longer 
viewed as an originating agent” and “objects are seen as ideas 
independent of man” (Ibid. 11). De Solà-Morales comments the 
will of Eisenman, Graves, and Hejduk to look at “architecture as 
a universe sufficient to itself, nourished on its own history and 
emerging from the interior of its own rules and protocols” (de 
Solà-Morales 1997, 78). A perspective far away from Ras-
mussen’s assertion: “to bring order and relation into human sur-
roundings is the task of the architect” (Rasmussen (1959) 1993, 
34).

It is not obvious what Eisenman means with humanism: a 
problem that can be partly explained by a confused mixture be-
tween the concepts of humanism and classicism in the field of 
architecture, dating back to the renaissance. Classicism and hu-
manism, says O. Svedberg, remained almost synonymous in the
field of architecture until, at least, the 1930s (Svedberg 1992). A famous example is Wittkower’s *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism* (1949), concerned with architecture from the Italian renaissance. Wittkower’s interpretation was very influential. It gave, says Lefèvre, a conservative “historicist view of neoplatorism” and a concentration on “harmonic proportional systems” (Lefèvre 1994). Thus Lefèvre instead treats “Italian Renaissance Humanism” as an opening in architecture to a “long relativity theory ever since.” “Humanist architecture is a fantastically creative dream-machine, and a nightmare, in potential” (Ibid.).

Humanism has no end. It was invented by freethinkers and is by definition a paradigm in the making, open-ended, risk-taking, and forward-looking in its attempt to formulate a better future without losing sight of those parts of the past that are worth preserving. Humanism cannot be kept still. (Ibid. 3)

This essay is not the place to elucidate this complicated conceptual confusion concerning humanism and classicism. But I think it is important to be aware of it to understand, for example, in what sense Eisenman talks about “an attitude towards architecture that differs in no significant way from the 500-year tradition of humanism” (Eisenman 1998 (1976), 9). In a general way humanism is mostly used ethically, to stress the equal value of all human beings. The fundamental issue for this definition is the assumed fact that we, as human beings, are very much alike, and, consequently, that we have the same human values, independently of age, gender, social status, or cultural background. Von Wright talks about humanism as an attitude that concerns questions of life. A humanistic standpoint is intellectual: it is based, he claims, on a critical and sensible relation to reality. The humanistic attitude has no constancy, von Wright continues, the question “what is humanism?” is always open. Every generation
must try to answer the question from its own premises. A task that is especially important during times of great change (von Wright 1996, 160). The question “what is a humanist architecture?” is, of course, also an open question, important to raise for all generations of architects. The inevitable question is then: do we want a humanist architecture?

De Solà-Morales discusses in “Architecture and Existentialism” (de Solà-Morales 1997, 41-56), what he calls a “humanistic shift” in the European architectural scene of the 1950s. De Solà-Morales describes the growth of a new kind of humanism, with inspiration from phenomenology and existentialism, in favour of the actual human subject, taking into account the personal experienced universe of each individual and also lived knowledge of specific space and time (Ibid.). A new aesthetic platform came to appear in form of a rejection of aesthetic systems based on the nineteenth-century idealist search for beauty and a critique of orthodox modernism. Instead, according to de Solà-Morales, ethical humanism and aesthetic phenomenology influenced architecture during the 1950s. He says that self-realization, experimental production, total aesthetic freedom, and the dissolution of the modern tradition as a rationally elaborated method, all served as points of support for innumerable works of architecture. In these works, the individual experience, the anti-monumental, and the incorporation of anthropologico-vernacular materials and techniques constituted the common ground on which works and architects as apparently dissimilar as Aalto, van Eyck, Rogers, Kahn, Nervi, and Fuller could come together. (Ibid. 55)

**Autonomy and Context**

Rasmussen and Eisenman look differently upon the architect’s profession. When Rasmussen talks about the architect as a theatrical producer who plans the settings for our lives, Eisenman, by contrast, describes the architect as an organiser of information
within an electronic paradigm. Eisenman argues that there was a shift around 1960, when the role of the architect changed. This was a shift in methods practised by architects: from the use of drawing to the use of diagrams, and to what he calls the “information-architects” (Eisenman 1999, 8). The differences between Rasmussen and Eisenman concerning the architect’s profession are thus to do with the central question: “what is architectural value?”

Understanding architecture […] is not the same as being able to determine the style of a building by certain external features. It is not enough to see architecture; you must experience it. You must observe how it was designed for a special purpose and how it was attuned to the entire concept and rhythm of a specific era. You must dwell in the rooms, feel how they close about you, observe how you are naturally led from one to the other. (Rasmussen (1959) 1993, 33)

A new reading […] would do violence to the former categories of architecture as an object of desire (of an aesthetic pleasure), as a reification of man (anthropomorphism and human scale), and as an object of value (truth, origin and metaphoric meaning). Such a dislocation is not necessarily place-specific, time-specific or scale-specific. It does not symbolise use, shelter or structure. The dislocation takes place, then, between the conventional and the natural. (Eisenman 1993, 38-9)

A pedagogical idea is the basis for Rasmussen’s thesis: to teach people to become aware of architectural experience. Eisenman is not interested in pedagogics in this sense. Instead, as we have seen, he speaks of a new form of reading: a dislocation from the traditional architectonic values, away from the perspective where a human being is the centre of his or her world. I want to suggest
that Rasmussen in his late text *Experiencing Architecture* and Eisenman in his early texts seem to advocate two distinct models of the concept of architecture. Here these are presented in a very simplified way as A and B:

A: *Architecture* = the aesthetic value of architecture is determined by the interaction between an experiencing human being and architectural objects (presence of human centrality).

B: *Architecture* = architectural objects have an aesthetic value of their own, independent of an experiencing human being (absence of human centrality).

Eisenman chooses in his early texts to look at architecture as separated from the experiencing human being (B). This does not mean that he denies that there is something that can be called architectural experience. He rather tries to separate the values of architectural objects and experience. He talks about “internal” formal conditions and “external” construction of subjectivity (Somol 1999, 16). In Eisenman’s perspective, there is no need, and no opportunity, for identification in architecture. Architecture must be autonomous. Eisenman wants a pure architectural object, as free as possible from external circumstances (Stähl 1996, 6). Eisenman does not search for truth in architecture in its history, its social role, or in archetypes, Stähl remarks. *Architecture*, in Eisenman’s perspective, means displacement of an ongoing architectural metaphysics (Ibid.). This displacement, I think, leads him, as time goes, a bit closer to Rasmussen’s view on experience as important to architecture.

Rasmussen argues that the experiencing human being always identifies his or her body, feelings, and thoughts by means of his or her environment. This is to do with surviving. Architects have to account for that human beings are naturally part of their environment, and never excluded from interaction with their context.
(A). Rasmussen chooses to compare the work of the architect with the work of a gardener. The gardener must take care of his or her plants, and the architect must take care of the people who are going to use his or her buildings (Rasmussen (1959) 1993, 12).

If they cannot thrive in his house its apparent beauty will be of no avail—without life it becomes a monstrosity. It will be neglected, fall into disrepair and change into something quite different from what he intended. Indeed, one of the proofs of good architecture is that it is being utilized as the architect has planned. (Ibid.)

Rasmussen wrote this in the 1950s. Today, in a rapidly changing society, as we all know, many buildings are not used as they were originally meant to. Many big industry buildings now serve other needs, such as, for instance, cultural activities. Rapid shifts have undermined the “truth” of function for architects to hold on to. The demand for flexibility in our buildings, for them to serve more than one purpose, has increasingly taken over. However, the intention Rasmussen expressed, that the architect must try to make people thrive in their houses, can still be regarded as important, despite the change of attitudes concerning function.

Unpleasantness
Eisenman has spoken about the need for architects to make people feel uncomfortable. He once wanted to express the current disorder and chaos of society in the built environment, while he thought it is not possible to lock out anxiety with secure and stable architecture. An architecture that expresses and permits disorder and anxiety, Eisenman says, deals with the problems and does not pretend that the world is safer than it is (Nygaard 1995, 161).
The German Holocaust Memorial in Berlin was to serve as an opportunity for Eisenman, together with the American sculptor Richard Serra, to remind people of the presence of the anxiety and horror of the nazi-period in a proposed monument. 4000 concrete columns with varying heights, up to 7.5 metres, were supposed to be spaced exactly 92 centimetres apart from one another. Placed within the group was planned a single, white column, intended as both a symbol of collective remembrance of the millions of victims of the holocaust and, simultaneously, of the individual victims (Schubert 1997). The labyrinth was without fixed entry, exit, or centre, and set out to allow room for the passage of only one person at a time. The space was meant, according to Eisenman, to induce feelings of isolation, vulnerability, and disorientation. Serra abruptly withdrew from the project in 1998, but Eisenman proceeded alone, agreeing on a reduction to 2700 columns (Philips 1999). Last summer, after more than 10 years of debate, the construction of the monument was finally begun, scheduled to be completed in 2004 (History Today Ltd.).

The project is “hotly controversial” (Architecture, November 1998). It has been criticised by M. Lind in New Leader. Lind says: “it is chilling that the German government should contemplate selecting, as designers of a Holocaust memorial, two men whose shared aesthetics unites technocracy with torture” (Lind 1998). Lind continues by saying that there are real dangers associated with attempts to use horrifying monuments to evoke the Holocaust. The chief danger, Lind says, is that people will sub-consciously begin to associate, not the Nazis, but the millions they put to death with dreadful and oppressive imagery.

Eisenman and Serra themselves have described the project as “a field of memory.” Their hope is that the visitors will “become lost in space and time” (Sacirbey 1998).

We wanted a surface like a field of wheat or corn that rolled and twisted with the wind. There are moments when you walk
into a field of wheat and you’re fine at the edge, but once you really get in, you become completely disoriented spatially. What we wanted was something that seemed very quiet from the outside. On the street, you can see urban context, but you don’t realize that the ground dips. Suddenly you find yourself no longer able to see the street. The interior pillars are 12 feet high and 2 feet wide. The ground would be of granite chips. You would have a sound—the echo of feet crunching around you like jackboots. The sound and tactility of the whole experience would be strange for a Japanese person who didn’t know anything about the Holocaust or for a child 50 years from now. (Eisenman in an interview in *Architecture*, November 1998)

We don’t want to tell people how to feel, but to ask what’s your meaning in this place? (Serra, quoted in Sacirbey 1998)

Today, Eisenman admits that he no longer needs to pursue his extreme agenda of making people feel uncomfortable in his buildings. “Some projects, like the Holocaust memorial, are going to make people feel uncomfortable. But I don’t personally feel the need to make anybody uncomfortable anymore” (Eisenman in an interview in *Architecture*, November 1998). (It is, of course, important to remember in this discussion that The Holocaust Memorial is an extreme architectural project, which borders on the sculptural, as it is liberated from the functional aspects of architecture.) Eisenman describes the way his attitude has changed:

> When I walk into a room now, I don’t need to dominate the conversation. I can sit on a jury for two hours and not say a word, just let them all talk. I find it hard to believe that I used to think that I needed to make people feel uncomfortable, I
used to think I had to control everything that went on, who was doing what, etc. I have no feeling about that anymore. (Ibid.)

Does this mean that Eisenman no longer sees himself as a non-humanist? In the general significance of the term “humanism,” I guess he never denied equal human value. If we instead talk about a non-humanistic view on architecture as cutting the human centrality, I think there has been a kind of displacement in his attitude as time has past. The difficulties with the shifting of “the universal primary focus from the sensual aspects of objects to the universal aspect of object” are obvious in Eisenman’s description of the Holocaust Memorial (Eisenman 1971). He describes an experiencing human being, uncertain and lost in the built object, but, nevertheless, the meaning of the project is settled by the centrality of the experiencing human being and her or his emotional, intellectual and bodily based identification with the architectural object.

**Identification and Universality**

In his article “Post-Functionalism,” in *Opposition* (1998 (1976)), Eisenman claims, as said earlier, that, modern architecture was never sufficiently modernist, and that it amounted to nothing more than a late phase of humanism. “Shifting architecture from a formal to a structuralistic base, would enable architecture to finally register the insights of the modernist avant-garde, an account which suspends classical-humanism’s centrality of the subject” (Somol 1999, 17). By displacing the author subject (and, ultimately, the static object), Somol argues that Eisenman meant “to shift the primary focus from the sensual aspects of objects” to the “universal aspects of objects” (Ibid.). To catch universality of object, Eisenman has used different methods. In one of Eisenman’s latest books, he explains the possibility of using diagrams, to catch an inner code or structure of “the interiority” of architecture that can make the architect stand freer.
My use of the diagram proposed a different rationale, one that could be both more logical and more involved with a process of architecture somewhat distant from the design process of the traditional author-architect. Such a logic could not be found in form itself, but rather in a diagrammatic process that had the potential to open up the difference between the form/content relationship in architecture and other disciplines, particularly the other plastic disciplines of painting and sculpture. (Eisenman 1999, 49)

There is, as I have pointed out, a rich variety in Eisenman’s reasoning. However, through all of his spectacular buildings and texts, Eisenman has, I think, raised important questions, such as: Is it possible to ignore the sensual aspect and reach something called “a universal aspect of the object” in architecture? Can architecture exist autonomous from the dependence of the reality established by human experience, activity, and identification? Will architecture continue to be legalised by presence? Is there a difference between architectural ideology and theory?

Architecture, the philosopher John Dewey says in Art as Experience (1934), is a notable instance of the reciprocity of the interaction between human beings and their environment. Materials are transformed so as to become media for the purposes of human defence, habitation, and worship. But human life itself has also changed, says Dewey, in ways far beyond the intent of those who constructed the buildings. The reshaping of subsequent experience by architectural works is more direct and more extensive than in the case of any other art, save perhaps literature. They not only influence the future, but they record and convey the past (Dewey (1934) 1980, 231). Consequently, from Dewey’s perspective, there cannot be one “correct” way of experiencing and understanding architecture, because life itself is dynamic and pluralistic. Both Rasmussen and Eisenman would probably agree
with this statement. The dynamism of viewing architecture as a process unites Rasmussen and Eisenman. It is, I think, important to realise this similarity, despite the many differences in their perspectives. Concerning the question of *universality* and *identification*, there is, however, a wide gap between Rasmussen and Eisenman. Rasmussen would, probably, immediately agree with Dewey, that “buildings, among all art objects, come the nearest to expressing the stability and endurance of existence” (Ibid. 230), whereas Eisenman would not. Eisenman says instead that “the new architectural object” must have “the capacity to reveal itself first of all as a text, as a reading event” and that the competence of the reader of architecture is based on knowing how to read architecture as a text (Eisenman 1996 (1984), 533-4).

Rasmussen seems to have had, contrary to Eisenman, a fairly uncomplicated picture of architecture as a natural part of our daily life, surrounding world, history, and culture. The interplay with the outside world is ongoing for the experiencing and reacting self, but there are important basic similarities in the ways human beings experience the outer world, which determine the deeper value of architecture in Rasmussen’s perspective. Rasmussen uses the experiencing human being, with body, senses, emotions, and intellect, as a natural and unquestionable starting point when discussing architecture; however, his discussion sometimes lacks substance. He says that architecture is intimately connected with man’s daily life from the cradle to the grave. Ordinary people produce it for ordinary people, and therefore he wants architecture to be easily comprehensible to everybody. Architecture is based on a number of human instincts: on discoveries and experiences common to all of us at a very early stage in our lives; above all, our relations to inanimate things (Rasmussen (1959) 1993, 14).
Becoming Aware of Fundamental Experiential Values

Eisenman has certainly inspired many architects, and helped to intellectualise and broaden architectural theory by questioning deeply the architect’s traditional demands of harmony, utility, and beauty. Eisenman’s perspective has created a necessary debate. It has forced a consideration of what human centrality can mean today for the concept of architecture. Eisenman has, while trying (at least in his early texts) to deny human centrality, instead shown the opposite: the importance of an awareness of fundamental experiential values for the concept of architecture. Eisenman, and others of his generation, have thus forced us to question the ideals of the older generation in a refreshing way. The normative spirit that sometimes can be traced in both Rasmussen’s and Eisenman’s ideas (in more or less pleasant ways) has, as far I can see, now receded, and it is time to reformulate an aesthetic platform, less ideological and more theoretical. Eisenman, himself says “I no longer believe that knowing is more important than experiencing” (Eisenman, quoted in Zaera-Polo 1997, 20). Eisenman has also stressed, that the theory of architecture has been very pragmatic, only treating issues as how to build buildings, how to site buildings, and how buildings look. Few pay attention to such things as the object, the subject, and the relationship between them (Eisenman 1993, 133). Rasmussen and Eisenman are among the number of architects that have tried to develop a certain kind of fundamental theoretical attitude.

De Solà-Morales claims that contemporary aesthetic experience is not normative. It is not constituted as a system from which the organisation of all of reality might be derived. On the contrary, he means that the present-day artistic universe is perceived from experiences that are produced at discrete points. It is diverse, heterogeneous to the highest degree, and consequently our approximation to the aesthetic is produced in a weak, fragmentary, peripheral fashion, denying at every turn the possibility that it might ultimately be transformed into a central experience.
(de Solà-Morales 1997, 61). De Solà-Morales suggests the production of an event, contrary to the revelation of something existing in permanence, as a possibility to continue contemporary production of place. It is thus not a question of producing an ephemeral, instantaneous, fragile, fleeting architecture, but a place produced out of the meeting of present energies (Ibid. 104).

The experience of today’s human life, with its rich variety of situations and events, globalisation and technology, is a ground for continuously judging architecture in a new way. Many architectural situations of today are, as de Solà-Morales says, weak, fragmentary and diverse, but nevertheless important and necessary in daily life. The fascinating dynamism and plasticity in contemporary life and architectural experience ought to be investigated and discussed aesthetically. To be able to make this architectural discussion even more interesting I suggest the need of useful knowledge based on the capacity of human experience and consciousness. The field of human consciousness is one of the most expansive and vital interdisciplinary research areas today. Current architectural research, I think, can enrich the aesthetic platform by the use of scientific and philosophical models of human consciousness. This could again make possible an experimental and perhaps a bit risky interdisciplinary attitude concerning the contemporary meaning of space and experiential values, which could vitalise the architectural debate.

Human beings create architecture for human beings. This is the simple fact why architecture is a question about the presence of human centrality, and not the absence of it. It is conditioned and vitalised by human life, and it is part of ongoing human experience, for as long as experiencing persons exist and thus react to architecture. I think it is necessary to step outside the internal architectural ideological debate for a moment, and discuss fundamental architectural values of experience in relation to recent scientific research, concerning human consciousness and philosophical issues of experience, in order to revitalise the aesthetic
discussion. I have argued in this text, in the light of Rasmussen’s and Eisenman’s ideas, that we can never exclude human centrality from the architectural debate. It is, on the contrary, an enormously interesting and important field for us to develop much further within architectural research, with the aim of inspiring contemporary architectural pedagogy and practice.
4 Architecture and Sense Experience

This text is inspired by, above all, two writers: Juhani Pallasmaa, an architect who writes primarily about architecture, and Antonio Damasio, a neurologist who tackles questions about human consciousness. Pallasmaa discusses the importance of understanding the complexity of human experience of architecture, and links this with our understanding of human consciousness. Damasio develops a model based on the notion of consciousness as dynamic and as closely related to the body. In this essay, I have attempted to relate the texts of these two writers. Yet another writer is important to my purpose here, and should therefore also be mentioned by way of introduction: the architect Ignasi de Solà-Morales, with his characterisation of “weak architecture.”

When our experience of architecture is seen from the point of view of the architect, there is often a possibility that creative elements may influence the perspective. It thus divorces itself from how, for instance, perception psychologists understand the experience of architecture. The architect carries with her or him ideas about possible changes and improvements of existing architecutonic conditions. Accordingly, the architect poses the questions: What is good architecture? How can good architecture be created? The purpose of utilising current thinking about human consciousness from other disciplines is thus primarily practical: to test its usefulness in order to deepen the discussion about how to create good architecture. Pallasmaa’s texts on architecture and consciousness are permeated by this creative element, which will thus characterise parts of this essay.

Stability and Flexibility in the Human Mind

Damasio develops his account of consciousness against the backdrop of extensive empirical studies of patients with brain lesions, and presents his hypotheses about how consciousness works in his books Descartes’ Error: Emotion, Reason and the
Human Brain (1994) and The Feeling of What Happens: Body, Emotion and the Making of Consciousness (2000). Damasio argues that an increased understanding of our consciousness can enrich our everyday existence. “Perhaps the most indispensable thing we can do as human beings, every day of our lives,” he says, “is remind ourselves and others of our complexity, fragility, finiteness, and uniqueness” (Damasio 1994, 252).

Damasio divides the complex of problems surrounding consciousness into two interconnected problems. The first problem is to understand how the brain instantiates the mental patterns which we call the image of an object. Object can here refer to things as different as a person, a place, a melody, toothache, or a feeling of happiness. The image is a mental pattern within any of the “sensory modalities”: it may, for instance, be an idea of a sound, a tactile image, or an image of well-being. These images convey aspects of the objects’ physical qualities to which the subject reacts. They can also effect pleasure or discomfort, linked to the experience of a particular object, or of a web of relations of which the object, among other objects, is a part (Damasio 2000, 9). The second problem of consciousness is how, in parallel with engendering mental patterns for an object, the brain also engenders a sense of self in the act of knowing (Ibid.). “Consciousness, as we commonly think of it, from its basic levels to its most complex,” Damasio maintains, “is the unified mental pattern that brings together the object and the self” (Ibid. 11). Briefly, according to Damasio, conscious processes involve the organism acting in relation to some object, and the object thus causing a change in the organism. Processes concerning the acquisition of knowledge demand a brain, but also require signalling areas of the body with which the brain can construct neural patterns and create images for the experiencing person (Ibid. 20).

The body, Damasio suggests, provides more than a supporting structure: the body provides a fundamental frame for the images and ideas of the brain. It is therefore necessary to adopt a general
perspective on the individual human being when one talks about consciousness. However, there is also, Damasio argues, a necessary asymmetry in the structure of the brain. Some parts of the brain establish what is stable in the organism’s own body through patterns which are primarily predetermined. Other parts of the activity of the brain are considerably more flexible, and can quickly create changeable images of temporary mental states or reactions. It is important for the well-being of the organism that the inner states of the body remain tolerably unchanged in relation to the variability of its environment. At the same time, changes in the environment and their influence on the organism should also be such that they are registered (Ibid. 22).

In short, the organism in the relationship play of consciousness is the entire unit of our living being, our body as it were; and yet, as it turns out, the part of the organism called the brain holds within it a sort of model of the whole thing. This is a strange, overlooked, and noteworthy fact, and is perhaps the single most important clue as to the possible underpinning of consciousness. […] The deep roots or the self, including the elaborate self which encompasses identity and personhood, are to be found in the ensemble of brain devices which continuously and nonconsciously maintain the body state within the narrow range and relative stability required for survival. These devices represent, nonconsciously, the state of the living body, along its many dimensions. (Ibid.)

Damasio thus assumes that in the interplay with the objects of its environment, which takes place within its consciousness, the organism is richly and multifariously represented in the brain, both in order to maintain stability, and to register changes regarding the surroundings. Such representations are connected to the maintenance of the life process. According to this idea, life and consciousness—particularly those aspects of consciousness
which are involved in the notion of selfhood—are indelibly interwoven (Ibid. 23).

Human beings meet and react to architectural objects, and generate a wide variety of images that connect to these events. Together, the architectural objects constitute an extensive and important part of the objects to which human beings continuously react in their lives. Damasio’s account of consciousness implies that the human being creates meaning about the surrounding world through actively relating her or his own bodily reactions to the objects, and the relations between them. This means that all knowledge created by human beings is ultimately related to individual experience, and the individual body, on an unconscious level. With regards to our understanding of architecture, this has extensive consequences. Because a very considerable part of the bodily capacity for experience is engaged in the encounter with architecture (often on an unconscious level), this account of the way in which the self reacts to objects of architectural objects plays a decisive role in instantaneous evaluation. Damasio argues that the unconscious bodily reactions correspond with the conscious self, with the halo of the system of emotions. According to Damasio’s model, I interpret that the emotions play an important role in the mediation of “unconscious” bodily reactions when, in every day life, we evaluate architectural objects.

Although there are many subtleties within our emotional life, Damasio talks about “six so-called primary or universal emotions: happiness, sadness, fear, anger, surprise, or disgust” (Ibid. 50). Other conditions are also usually referred to as emotional. Secondary or social emotions include, for instance: embarrassment, jealousy, guilt, and pride. There is also what Damasio calls background emotions, which include well being, or malaise, calm or tension. He argues that these belong to the secondary emotions. According to Damasio, “A shared biological core underlies all these phenomena” (Ibid. 51).
Surely enough, there are variable expressions and there are
variations in the precise configuration of stimuli that can in-
duce an emotion across cultures and among individuals. But
the thing to marvel at, as you fly high above the planet, is the
similarity, not the difference. It is that similarity, incidentally,
that makes cross-cultural relations possible and that allows for
art and literature, music and film to cross frontiers. (Ibid. 53)

Damasio argues that the emotional similarity between human
beings—emotional universality—is related to the fact that the
biological function of emotions are the result of long evolution-
ary development, which is very rarely to do with survival. The
correspondence between different individuals and cultures, in
this respect, is proof of this. It is impossible to separate the emo-
tions from the idea of reward and punishment, pleasure and pain,
of advancing or retreating, of personal advantage or adversity.
Emotions are thus impossible to separate from ideas about good
and evil (Ibid. 53-5). This means, as I interpret it, that from
Damasio’s perspective, the emotions are of decisive importance
to aesthetic and ethical issues that are linked to experience. More
stable values, as well as the changeable differences in our dy-
namic and vulnerable experience of the architectural objects, is
mediated by the emotions, which makes it possible that we can
be conscious of their values, and communicate and discuss them
in different contexts. This in turn enables us to compare our ex-
periences of architectural objects, and to illuminate similarities
and differences.

In his article “Our Image Culture and its Misguided Ideas
About Freedom” (2001), Juhani Pallasmaa writes that
“architecture is losing its authentic existential ground and turning
into aesthetized fabrication. Instead of structuring and integrating
experience, our buildings frequently contribute to disorientation
and meaninglessness.” Pallasmaa suggests that this situation may
be addressed through a radical reversal, towards treating experi-
ential values as the focus for architecture again, to avoid what he describes as “flatness.” A building touches us when it contrives to reflect something of what is contained in our humanity, and can echo to the images that are collected in our subconscious (Pallasmaa 2001). Damasio argues that the organisation and structure of the body remain relatively similar throughout life, so that the human being should be ready both to meet the complex changes of existence, and still maintain the experience of a coherent self.

Fragile Architecture and Weak Philosophy
There is a parallel between Pallasmaa’s concept of “fragile architecture” and the way in which Damasio describes how—to be able to behave in relation to both stability and flexibility—consciousness handles the conflicting needs of the organism. Pallasmaa asserts that “Architectural meaning resides in human experience. It is evoked in the acts of occupying and inhabiting space, in one’s experience of space, matter, gravity and light” (2001). In The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses (1996), Pallasmaa describes what he considers to be the timeless task of architecture: “to create embodied existential metaphors that concretise and structure man’s being in the world” (Pallasmaa 1996, 50). In his article “Hapticity and Time—Notes on Fragile Architecture” (2000), Pallasmaa describes the necessity of a sensitive understanding of the inherent dynamics of human consciousness that is involved in the creation of that which is built. He considers this understanding to be lacking in much modern building.

Architectural projects of our day are often impudent and arrogant, and our age seem to have lost the virtue of architectural neutrality, restraint, and modesty. Authentic works of art, however, always remain suspended between certainty and uncertainty, faith and doubt. The task of responsible architects is
to provide resistance to current cultural erosion and to replant buildings and cities in an authentic existential soil. (Pallasmaa 2000, 84)

In relation to his discussion of “fragility” in architecture, Pallasmaa mentions ideas by the philosopher Gianni Vattimo in *The End of Modernity* (1991) (*La fine della modernità* (1985)) (Pallasmaa 2000, 81). Vattimo is, as J. R. Snyder points out, part of that area of the European tradition of nihilism which emanated from Heidegger and Nietzsche, and which has been called “the philosophy of difference” (Snyder in Vattimo 1991, xii). “The philosophy of difference” maintains that distinctions between true and false, essence and appearance, rational and irrational, have to be dissolved. No guaranty nor any firm foundation exists to whose authority we can refer in order to apply these distinctions in a strictly objective way (Ibid. xii-xiii). This approach results in the idea that our experience of the world is wholly constituted by interpretation. Snyder argues that we interpret all our experiences in terms of our own subjective evaluations, and the world we experience is thus a world of differences: a world of interpretations. It is a world of variations among an inexhaustible number of interpretations. The content of this philosophy of differences also characterises works of French post-structuralists such as Derrida, Deleuze, Foucault, and Lyotard. Snyder argues that “the philosophy of difference” thus provides a link between nihilism and hermeneutics (Ibid. xiii).

The philosophy of difference concentrates on the dismantling or deconstruction of all metaphysical truth-claims and all metaphysical systems of logic, but at the same time denies the possibility of a new truth and a new reason that could take the place of what has been done away with: there is no exit, for twentieth-century humanity, from a world of contrasting and often conflicting interpretations. (Ibid.)
Damasio and other modern researchers within the study of human consciousness also argue that we depend on interpretations in our encounters with the surrounding world, and these are always tied to the individual body, individual experiences, the environment, and society. During the twentieth century, an epistemological displacement has taken place. We have departed from an approach in which knowledge is seen as a passive registration of an unchangeable environment, and moved on to an approach according to which knowledge is increasingly seen as a form of active creation, linked to the purposes and context of the experiencing person. According to Richard Rorty, the philosophers John Dewey, Heidegger, and Wittgenstein are connected by their—howsoever different—expression that the view of knowledge as pure representation, made possible by certain mental processes, has to be abandoned: “For all three, the notion of ‘foundation of knowledge’ and of philosophy as revolving around the Cartesian attempt to answer the epistemological skeptic are set aside” (Rorty 1980, 6). Dewey, Heidegger, and Wittgenstein, Rorty points out, have carried us forward to a “revolutionary philosophy” (in Kuhn’s spirit) by introducing a change in twentieth-century thought: a breach with Kant as well as Descartes (Ibid. 6-7).

Post-structuralism’s concepts of experience and knowledge, which to a large extent has emerged from the tradition from Heidegger and Nietzsche, thus have similarities with that approach which was developed by the classic American pragmatists John Dewey and William James. The value of continuous variation—the active creation in experience—was stressed by James and Dewey around the last turn of the century, as well as by post-structuralists at the end of the twentieth century. In his book *Art as Experience* (1934), Dewey develops ideas about the importance of experience for aesthetics. R. Shusterman discusses the similarity between a post-structuralist and a pragmatist view of
experience: “the move from closed work to open, developing textual practice, from criticism as discovery of prior truth to criticism as the creation of enjoyed meaning, is explicitly prefigured in Dewey’s aesthetics” (Shusterman 1992, 31). He points out that the criticism which post-structuralists raised against earlier aesthetics does not apply to Dewey. Rather, he argues, Dewey can be said to have anticipated the post-structuralist view on the dynamics and variation of experience.

Dewey […] repeatedly insists that the unity of aesthetic experience is not a closed and permanent haven in which we can rest at length in satisfied contemplation. It is rather a moving, fragile, and vanishing event, briefly savored in an experiential flux rife with energies of tension and disorder which it momentarily masters. It is a developing process which, in culmination, deconstructively dissolves into the flow of consequent experience, pushing us forward into the unknown and towards the challenge of fashioning new aesthetic experience, new moving and momentary unity from the debris and resistance of past experience and present environing factors. (Ibid. 32)

In Differences (1996), de Solà-Morales has also been inspired by Vattimo (however, above all, he depends on Heidegger’s phenomenology and Deleuze’s post-structuralism). De Solà-Morales discusses the possibilities of transferring thoughts about “weak philosophy” to architecture. In his essay “Weak Architecture,” he describes how the evasive and the peripheral elements of aesthetic experiences can enrich human life, without our attaching a lot of importance on the fact that this takes place at a particular moment (de Solà-Morales 1996, 56). The central aspect of the value of aesthetic experience is not that, in itself, it is dependent on a coherent, clearly discernible experience. The aesthetic values of modern built structures, de Solà-Morales argues, are rather produced from discrete positions, and in different ways penetrate
and colour the otherwise rather incoherent structures of experience (Ibid. 60). He asserts: “In contemporary experience, the aesthetic has, above all, the value of a paradigm. It is precisely through the aesthetic that we recognize the model of our richest, most vivid, most ‘authentic’ experiences in relation to a reality whose outlines are vague and blurred” (Ibid.).

De Solà-Morales links the concept of “weak architecture” to the often fragmentary forms of experience of different events that remain in memory, and penetrate the experiencing individual’s values. De Solà-Morales emphasises the importance of the non-linear in momentary events for the experience of modern architecture, of that which for some reason is left over after the real momentary encounter with architectural objects. The importance of a changed concept of time is stressed by de Solà-Morales, which he finds exemplified in modern urban situations:

What is abundantly clear is that, increasingly, metropolitan culture offers us times as diversity, and the recognition of this is something that an archaeological approach to the language of architecture has manifested in a number of ways. […] This diversity of times becomes absolutely central in what I have chosen to call weak architecture. (Ibid. 68).

De Solà-Morales talks about the value of memory and recollection in relation to the interpretation of architecture: of that which remains of meaning in the encounter with the architectural object, and which thus colours the future life of the experiencing individual. The concept of “weak architecture” captures the idea that this does not often involve well-articulated aesthetic wholes in the form of limited experiences, but rather fragmentary events, in which diffuse, but important, values are yet conveyed.

[T]he present-day artistic universe is perceived from experiences that are produced at discrete points, diverse, heteroge-
neous to the highest degree, and consequently our approximation to the aesthetic is produced in a weak, fragmentary, peripheral fashion, denying at every turn the possibility that it might ultimately be transformed definitively into a central experience. (Ibid. 61)

Pallasmaa called attention to “fragility” as an expression of architectonic knowledge related both to the stability and flexibility of human consciousness. Pallasmaa emphasises the idea that, in accordance with Vattimo’s concepts of weak ontology and fragile thought, we can talk about a weak or fragile architecture and image, contrasting with a form of architecture which is expressed by a strong structure and image. While the latter wishes to impress by a prominent individual image, “the architecture of weak image is contextual and responsive.” Pallasmaa illustrates what he means by “fragile architecture” with examples of buildings which he considers to have this quality: Japanese gardens, works by architects such as Alvar Aalto and Carlo Scarpa, Peter Zumthor, Steven Holl, and Luis Barragán. Pallasmaa describes the qualities of Aalto’s Villa Mairea:

The composition aims at a specific ambience, a receptive emotional state, rather that the authority of form. This architecture obscures the categories of foreground and background, object and context, and evokes a liberate sense of natural duration. An architecture of courtesy and attention, it invites us to be humble, receptive and patient observers. This philosophy of compliance aspires to fulfil the humane reconciliatory of the art of architecture. (Pallasmaa 2001)

Pallasmaa’s and de Solà-Morales’s definitions of “fragile” and “weak architecture” are different, it is true, but above all, they are related: they complement each other in the context of experience and architectonic value pluralism. Ideas about “weak” and
“fragile architecture” challenge the architects’ skill. Pallasmaa argues that the competence of the architect is closely linked to an understanding of experiential values, and thus also to the inherent dynamic vulnerability of consciousness, and its ability to develop varying interpretations. He says: “True architectural talent is not to be found in the realm of formal or spatial fantasy but in an understanding of the essence and hierarchies of the human landscape and mind” (Ibid.). De Solá-Morales talks about “the strength of weakness” which he defines as “that strength which art and architecture are capable of producing precisely when they adopt a posture that is not aggressive and dominating, but tangential ard weak” (De Solá-Morales 1996, 71).

**Contextual Architecture and the Embodied Mind**

Pallasmaa criticises much of today’s architecture. Deficiencies in understanding how our complex consciousness works has, according to Pallasmaa, brought about inhumane tendencies in modern architecture and cities. This is connected with an over-emphasis on visual values, at the cost of other values (Pallasmaa 1996, 10).

The inhumanity of contemporary architecture and cities can be understood as the consequence of an imbalance in our sensory system. The growing experience of alienation, detachment and solitude in the technological world today, for instance, may be related with a certain pathology of the senses. The dominance of the eye and the suppression of the other senses tends to push us into isolation, detachment and exteriority. The “art of the eye” has certainly produced imposing and thought-provoking structures, but it has not rooted humanity in the world. The fact that the Modernist idiom has not been able to penetrate the surface of popular taste and values is due to its one-sided visual emphasis; Modernist design has housed the intellect and the
eye, but it has left the body and the other senses, as well as our memories and dreams, homeless. (Ibid.).

Pallasmaa turns against what he considers to be a denial of the importance of bodily and emotional values in much contemporary architecture. According to Pallasmaa, when buildings lose their plasticity and their connections with the body, they become isolated from the distancing visual sphere. When the value of the tactile is not emphasised, and concern for proportion and details, which are sensitive to the human body, is missing, architectonic structure becomes repulsive, sharp-edged, immaterial, and unreal (Ibid. 20).

Instead of reinforcing one’s body-centred and integrated experience of the world, nihilistic architecture disengages and isolates the body, and instead of attempting to reconstruct cultural order, it makes a reading of collective signification impossible. Only the distancing and detaching sense of vision is capable of a nihilistic attitude; it is difficult to think of a nihilistic sense of touch, for instance, because of the unavoidable nearness, intimacy and identification that the sense of touch carries. (Ibid. 13)

Pallasmaa returns to his view of modern architecture as often expressing an imbalance through an over-emphasis on the ocular—on vision—at the price of other sense experiences. His approach makes space for aesthetic as well as ethical dimensions in how architectural objects are shaped and experienced, and engage with and influence human life. Pallasmaa links the visual to what he describes as an inhuman modern architecture, which has no regard for the rich possibilities of experience for the human being. The buildings are incapable of giving rise to experiences of intimacy: they become dumb. “Our buildings have lost their opacity and depth. Sensory invitation and discovery, mystery and
shadow” (Pallasmaa 2000, 78). Every significant experience of architecture is “multi-sensory,” he argues, “qualities of matter, space and scale are measured by the eye, ear, nose, skin, tongue, skeleton and muscle” (Ibid.).

Experiential values related to architecture are often evasive, and cannot easily be discerned: they may be characterised as fragile and elusive. These values are, however, not for this sake less significant to our lives, or to architects to consider and—in different ways—try to communicate (above all as built matter, but also in the form of words and other expressions). Pallasmaa is inspired by the phenomenological philosopher Merleau-Ponty, in his discussion about the body’s interwoven relation to its environment, in which the role of earlier experience plays a significant role. All experience comprises the act of remembering and comparing. “An embodied memory,” Pallasmaa argues, “has an essential role as the basis of remembering a space or a place. We transport all the cities and towns that we have visited, all the places that we have recognised, into the incarnate memory of our body” (Pallasmaa 1996, 50). Pallasmaa thus uses a rich concept of experience, closely related to Merleau-Ponty’s ideas about the interconnection of the subject with her or his body and surrounding world. A view in which experience means placing oneself in relation to a context. A concept of experience which also includes an interpretative element and the idea of meaning being created by the subject, which are based on ideas about a dynamic consciousness, and which conform with Damasio’s model.

Pallasmaa’s concept of experience is also parallel to the view of experience espoused by the pragmatists, which in turn borders on what modern researchers within the study of human consciousness term “the embodied mind.” Damasio’s two levels of consciousness, described above, of a “core” and an “extended consciousness,” can be related to Pallasmaa’s idea that the human being ought to be able to relate to architectural objects with her or his full capacity for consciousness, both on the basic level,
on which the bodily plays a decisive role, and on the ex-
tended—exclusively human—level. Above Damasio, George
Lakoff and Mark Johnson can also be mentioned, who in *Phil-
osophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to
Western Thought* (1999) refer to Dewey and Merleau-Ponty as
important upholders of “the embodied mind” within philosophy:
“Dewey, no less than Merleau-Ponty, saw that our bodily experi-
ence is the primal basis for everything we can mean, think, know,
and communicate” (Lakoff and Johnson 1999, xi).

Among architectural references, Pallasmaa mentions *Experi-
encing Architecture* (1959) by Steen Eiler Rasmussen and *Body,
Memory, and Architecture* (1977) by K. C. Bloomer and C. W.
Moore. In both these books, the authors describe, in different
ways, the significance of sense experience and the body for the
evaluation of architecture. Bloomer and Moore subscribe to the
psychologist J. J. Gibson’s theory of “senses considered as per-
ceptual systems.” Gibson proceeded from Aristotle’s five basic
senses. Whereas Aristotle talked about vision, hearing, taste,
smell, and feeling, Gibson, on the other hand, talks about “the
visual system,” “the auditory system,” “the taste-smell system,”
“the basic-orienting system,” and “the haptic system” (Bloomer
and Moore 1977, 33) (Gibson 1966).

According to Damasio, our own bodies are a gauge, even for
our most sophisticated thoughts and most grandiose actions; for
our causes of rejoicing and sorrow. Consciousness is an inte-
grated part of the body, and it is dependent on the continuous in-
terplay between the body and the brain. Damasio argues that con-
sciousness must originally have been about the body, or it would
never have emerged. In virtue of the body’s frame of reference,
consciousness can also concentrate on a number of different
things, real as well as imaginary (Damasio 1994). Damasio dif-
ferentiates between being and knowing, and relates this to “kinds
of self.” He describes how our basis *proto-self* constitutes the
life-essential unconscious representation of the body. *Core-self;*
on the other hand, represents the non-linguistic conscious change of the body on the encounter with an object. The underlying mechanism for this changes very little during a lifetime. In conclusion, the autobiographical self is closely interlinked with the individual ability to remember, and constitutes a continuous construction and revision of personal life history. Damasio thus argues that for the process of the creation of meaning of one’s personal life history to take place, there has to be a core foundation. This includes on the one hand, a stable unconscious body consciousness, and on the other hand, a conscious, but “pre-linguistic,” element, which precedes the selection of information (Damasio 2000, 172-176).

Pallasmaa argues that the strength of how architecture affects us is related to “the perpetual unconscious pre-understanding of our existential condition” (Pallasmaa 2000). In accordance with Damasio, Pallasmaa’s line of argument could be interpreted as meaning that the encounter with architectural objects can give rise to a very rich representation of the self. It can give an activation of large parts of the fundamental image of us as bodily beings, which are continuously related to momentary experiences, as well as memories and expectations. Pallasmaa talks about an intensification of the experience of our own existence in the encounter with the architectural object. This may mean that we get confirmation of both the stable and the flexible capacity in consciousness on all the three levels of the self, as described by Damasio.

**Hapticity**
Pallasmaa emphasises the value of the haptic system, the sensitivity of the skin to the experience of architecture, and refers to the psychologist A. Montagu in *Touching. The Human Significance of the Skin* (1971). Montagu emphasises the significance of the skin being touched for our physical and mental health. According to Montagu, the skin is the body’s largest extensively developed organ. The different parts of the skin are well repre-
sented in the brain. Montagu uses the term *haptic*, to which Pallasmaa refers, to describe “that mentally extended sense of touch which comes about through the total experience of living and acting in space.” We thus have a haptic ability to remember what we once have experienced, and to interpret our sense impressions into meaningful overall pictures of the environment which we encounter. “A human being,” Montagu says, “can spend his life blind and deaf and completely lacking the senses of smell and taste, but he cannot survive at all without the functions performed by the skin” (Montagu 1986, 17).

As the oldest and largest of the body’s sense organs, the skin makes it possible for the human being to acquire knowledge about its environment. The skin effectively mediates differentiated information about the surroundings. The face and the hands—as “sense organs”—transport knowledge about the surroundings to the brain, but also transport information to the surroundings about “the inner nervous system.” The skin thus helps the human being both to obtain important experiences about her or his surroundings, and about herself or himself. Montagu refers to A. Virél’s comment on this essential interaction: “The divided mirror that is the skin and nervous system combined thus ends up looking at itself, so to speak, resulting in a confrontation that stimulates a never-ending movement of images and the birth of what is aptly referred to as reflexive thought” (Montagu 1986, 5) (Virél 1980, 12). Damasio talks in a similar way about the significance of the skin. He argues that the experiencing human being has a basic understanding of her or his bodily self, to which all events of life are continuously related on more or less conscious levels. He talks in a similar way to Montagu about the significance of the skin’s role in our understanding of the surrounding world (Damasio 1994, 230).

The first idea that comes to mind when we think of the skin is that of an extended sensory sheet, turned to the outside, ready
to help construct the shape, surface, texture, and temperature of external objects, through the sense of touch. But the skin is far more than that. First, it is a key player in homeostatic regulation: it is controlled by direct automatic neural signals from the brain, and by chemical signals from numerous sources. [...] A representation of the skin might be the natural means to signify the body boundary because it is an interface turned both to the organism’s interior and to the environment with which the organism interacts. (Ibid.)

Bloomer and Moore have been inspired by Gibson’s The Senses Considered as Perceptual Systems (1966) when they talk about “Basic-orienting and haptic systems.” They argue that these two senses are particularly significant for our three-dimensional understanding of the surrounding world, and thus also for architectural experience (Bloomer and Moore 1977, 33-44). They describe the complexity of the so called haptic system:

The haptic sense is the sense of touch reconsidered to include the entire body rather than merely the instruments of touch, such as the hands. To sense haptically is to experience objects in the environment by actually touching them (by climbing a mountain rather than staring at it). Treated as a perceptual system the haptic incorporates all those sensations (pressure, warmth, cold, pain, and kinesthesics) which previously divided up the sense of touch, and thus it includes all those aspects of sensual detection which involve physical contact both inside and outside the body. (Ibid. 34)

Bloomer and Moore argue that Gibson’s emphasis on the body as a whole—in which the different perceptual systems co-operate to produce comprehensive experiences—has led to a questioning of the earlier fixation with the ear and the eye of European aesthetics. However, what is amiss in Gibson’s theories of perception,
Bloomer and Moore argue, is that which is mediated by the body to our personal and cultural memories. They also stress the significance of the mediating role of the emotions in our experience of architecture (Bloomer and Moore 1977, 36). Gibson’s argument about the perceptual is thus fundamental, whereas additional stages or levels also contain considerations about how we actively create meaning in relation to ourselves as individuals, and within a cultural context. Pallasmaa talks about the significance of the haptic memory when we create meaning about architecture. He maintains that the body knows and remembers.

Architectural meaning derives from archaic responses and reactions remembered by the body and the senses. Architecture has to respond to traits of primordial behaviour preserved and passed down by the genes. Architecture responds not simply to the functional and conscious intellectual and social needs of today’s city-dweller; it must also remember the primordial hunter and farmer concealed in one’s body. (Pallasmaa 1996, 45)

As many modern architectural objects lack a consideration of haptic values, the buildings become vulnerable to wearing and ageing. Architecture becomes vulnerable to the passing of time: ageing is not seen as a positive value. As Pallasmaa maintains that, on an unconscious bodily level, human beings identify with the buildings which they experience, this ought to have consequences for how the human beings who reside in these buildings perceive themselves and their own ageing. “Instead of offering positive qualities of vintage and authority, time and use attack our buildings destructively” (Pallasmaa 2000, 79).

On Architecture and the Mind
Pallasmaa’s theories about architecture and Damasio’s model of consciousness make important points of contact. Body and con-
sciousness are seen by both as an integrated whole, in which the sensorimotor system plays a decisive role in the evaluation of the human being’s encounter with the surrounding world. Both emphasise dynamics as well as fragility, which means that consciousness needs to be able to deal with stability as well as flexibility; with obvious information as well as background information.

My conviction is that aesthetic discussion about architecture and consciousness can be enriched by philosophy as well as by a biological study of human consciousness. Those that maintain pragmatism, phenomenology, and hermeneutics, as well as poststructuralism, are of interest in our attempt to deepen aesthetic-architectural questions about experience. Contemporary researchers within the study of human consciousness, who represent an approach built around the notion of the embodied mind, can provide new forms of biologically-based general knowledge about human consciousness processes.

The architects Pallasmaa and de Solà-Morales have turned outside prevailing architectural theory to discuss human consciousness. They have shown that this perspective supplies the architectural debate with valuable knowledge and deepened perspectives. This attitude towards a broad search for knowledge is essential if aesthetics is to reach the necessary depths, as aesthetics deals with the public and the private, the unique and the general.
5 Pompeii in My Mind x 2

For the experiment, which is laid out in this essay, I have chosen to use the form of imaginative literature. The aim of the essay is to describe some of those private experiences constituted by the feelings and thoughts aroused, on two separate occasions, in the encounter with the excavated classical city of Pompeii. I thus use my encounters with Pompeii to illustrate something of the ways in which a person utilises her or his capacity for experience to create relations with places and architectural objects, by building up an increasingly rich and meaningful image. This text is thus in its nature both private and literary, and not conventionally academic.

On the Experiment
By using my own body in the physical encounter with the place, registering sense impressions, proportions, emotions, and thoughts which emerge, and then making notes about them, I can, by means of language, describe essential parts of the direct experience. In this experiment, I do not restrict myself to an intellectual understanding, but also include emotional and bodily, sensorimotor experience. I also try to show something about the ways in which background knowledge, in the form of previous experience, and different types of information about a place—maps, drawings, and descriptions of its history—enrich the imagination. My profession as an architect does, of course, affect my reaction to Pompeii. As a broader interest in the place opens up, through seeing it from a historical, a cultural, a social, and a political perspective, the possibility of a complementary and more general perspective presents itself. The present aesthetic experience of the place will then also be related to history in a way which comes close to one of John Dewey’s statements: “The one who sets out to theorize about the esthetic experience embodied in the Parthenon must realize in thought what the peo-
ple into whose lives it entered had in common, as creators and as those who were satisfied with it, with people in our own homes and on our own streets” (Dewey 1980, 4).

All human experiences of architectural objects have unique features, at the same time as they contain elements of generality. We sometimes need to emphasise the particular, and, to be able to have more general aesthetic discussions; sometimes we need to disregard it. Pompeii is unique as a place, and, because of this, has both advantages and disadvantages as the focus for an experiential experiment. The city is surrounded by a well-known and dramatic history—a remarkable and terrible true story about a city, which was buried, together with its inhabitants, their pets, and all progressive life two thousand years ago. The encounter with this city can thus be said not to be representative of the encounter with other cities, as its fate was extreme and our empathy with the human beings who lived here will initially be primarily linked to the disaster. But, paradoxically, I have come to see that precisely in virtue of being an exclusive example, Pompeii can say something about more everyday encounters with that which is built, as the exclusive is always contrasted with the everyday.

The stories of the example stand out, in part, as distinct experiences of two occasions in Pompeii. When I have later reflected on the private meaning of these encounters for me, their significance has also been linked with the urban environment of Stockholm in which I live on a day to day basis. The differences between the two environments are made up of that which I usually take for granted: encounters with human beings and traffic; all the everyday intentions which characterise the activities and movements of human beings; houses, shops, factories, offices, schools, nurseries, hospitals, places of entertainment, and libraries, bustling with activity. The houses populated by active human beings that, with their presence and their movements towards and away from different goals, leave their mark on that which is built. The amount of artificial lighting, the sounds, and the smells dif-
fer. When I compare Pompeii with the cosmopolitan Stockholm, the scale, of course, is also different. But if I limit my comparison with my hometown, Gröndal, there are about as many people living there as in the Pompeii of antiquity. The comparison becomes overwhelming when I incorporate the disaster into my thinking. The image of the whole of Gröndal’s population being buried in a similar way has the effect that I no longer use abstract images when I think about the ten thousand inhabitants. Instead, I think about as many living individuals, both adults and children, many of whom I have become friendly with.

I am not saying that I will try to stand “clear” of my momentary private responses, and emphasise the present from some “general” perspective, nor that I will try to switch off my own emotions or private thoughts which emerge. I allow an oscillation between the individual and the general, as this is the way in which human beings generally work when they relate to their surroundings. It is very rare for anyone to devote herself or himself to “experiencing architecture” and to fence off the rest of life. The form of directed analysis—which architects use when they are controlled by a well-defined purpose, which means that they are to relate to and possibly also suggest a change in a built structure—constitutes an extreme experiential situation. It is not my main purpose to display the ways in which architects have been trained to experience and reflect on something, which it is their job to change. My purpose is rather, by means of this example, to illustrate how pluralistic and plastic architectural experience is, and how intimately interlinked with the life of the experiencing person it is. I thus see myself as an example of a living human being with a specific life history who arrives at a very particular place, Pompeii, on two occasions, and who is affected in different ways by these encounters. The first encounter with the city was, to a large extent, marked by the myth of the disaster; the second encounter builds on the first, but I here have a richer background knowledge about the city, as I have entered
deeply into some literature which deals with the history and design of the city. I realise that however many times I will return to this place, new reflections will always be attached to the previous ones, and new configurations of meaning will emerge. Differences will stimulate and enrich the comprehensive image of the city. It could constitute my life work to return time after time and add to the web of experience to an ever richer and more detailed pattern, and to try to arrange its content.

It is again something of the evasive and the pluralistic, the flexible and the plastic, in experience that I want to illustrate. To exclude the private is not desirable, as I cannot then establish any definite border between the private and the public in the experience, other than that which fences off as private only that which the individual wants to keep to herself or himself. (Not even this would be a satisfactory distinction, as we are fairly advanced when it comes to reading, or even disclosing, "wordless" reactions in our fellow-beings.) On the other hand, to be controlled by what ought to be private, and thus by that which ought not to be communicated in a PhD thesis, I consider more risky than to be considered "too private" in my descriptions. I choose to let the private and the more general intermix in free descriptions in a way which corresponds to the way we oscillate between these perspectives in our everyday experience. Dewey, again from *Art as Experience* (1934), says: "The oppositions of individual and universal, of subjective and objective, of freedom and order, in which philosophers have revealed, have no place in the work of art. Expression as personal act and as objective result is organically connected with each other" (Dewey 1980, 82).

I thus decided to use myself as a tool, to let sometimes thought and sometimes feeling, sometimes bodily needs and sometimes unpredictable events, direct my experience in Pompeii. My example does thus not aim to explain what Pompeii is like, but only illustrate ways in which the process of experience may appear. With this, I also maintain that there is a general aspect: that, as
active, experiencing human beings who relate both to their individual inner worlds and the common outside world, we work in similar ways. I depict a number of events. These events are, at the same time, also part of my own continuous history of experiences, as these events remain as imprints, ready to be activated in my consciousness. The process that has led up to these descriptions has been preceded by many different selective processes, more or less conscious or reflective in their nature. From selections which have taken place immediately, in a fairly automated way, to those which have taken place at the time of my writing down my experiences, to those which have taken place during a number of edits and proof readings. Hopefully, something also happens in the encounter with the possible reader, and if any reader wants to tell me what she or he has experienced when reading the text, this will cause further displacements of the meaning of the content.

**The First Occasion**

With careful steps we set foot upon the city’s encircled ground through one of the city gates. Conscious of the border we have crossed, we look at trees, houses, and streets, with which we now participate in an interplay, in a different light. With our bodies’ movement and the size of our steps and with all our senses, we carefully register what we are part of. We exert ourselves to sharpen our attentiveness to each detail in the strange, excavated city we are in. We see and comment on form, light, and colour variations which we encounter; every breeze, smell, sound, or temperature change we record. Only once or twice do we look at each other, I and the man in my company. Our attention is directed towards capturing the limited time of our visit and seizing as much as possible of the place with our experience. My thoughts and day-dreams have ceased. There is, however, an undertone to the experience—a dark lyrical picture—to do with our knowledge of the city’s tragic history.
We walk on weathered stones with little puddles between them, which mirrors the blue of the sky. I am ready with the camera and am partly controlled by the search for pictures in my spatial experience. It is sunny and warm. We climb to the top of the large arena, which is intact. We measure its circumference with our steps and our gaze and try to imagine that there once was a rich life here around dramatic events. Now there are only us and a small number of other tourists here. Not far away, Vesuvius broods majestically. The volcano is still sufficiently distant not to be experienced as an actual threat. The disaster in the once so well-organised civilisation is a fairy tale.

The groups of Japanese people who have lined up in front of different scenes and are ready with their cameras hardly disturb the atmosphere, but only makes it yet a little more peculiar. In some way, they fit in where they are, standing in a bunch and smiling among the ruins. Maybe it is the scale? The Japanese people are perhaps more appropriately sized than I and the man in my company. The people of Pompeii were smaller than we are, one can see traces of that, not only from the casts of human bodies, but also from the proportions of the buildings.

Between the theatre quarters and the affluent houses lie the large baths, Terme Stabiane. In the innermost, richly decorated and originally illuminated room, which has a mosaic floor, there are two human bodies in show-cases. Like a spotlight, the sunbeams from a round window-opening hit the innermost wall. To reach the show-cases of the dead, I have to cross the sunbeam with all its whirling particles of dust. To this large room are attached smaller bath rooms. One of these is circular, with a round bath and a round light intake in the dome of the ceiling. For a second, I can imagine what it would be like to splash about there with someone I love. We could have sat on the edge with our feet in the water and conversed in the pleasant light, surrounded by mosaic and rippling water. I think that lust and pleasure must have been important to the inhabitants of Pompeii (at least for the
affluent ones). It hits me at that moment how closely related are lust and uneasiness; comfort and discomfort; beauty and ugliness. I come to think about Dewey’s argument that the aesthetic is ultimately closely related to human survival—to be able to pick the right choice between comfort and discomfort—and that the aesthetic is not a work from the outside: a culturally determined surface of our basic needs.

I note a smile of recognition from a woman whom I meet for the fifth time this day. She has dark hair and subdued clothes. We both look up towards the round window close to the decorated barrel-vaulted ceiling. After some time we get used to the feeble light, in contrast with the bright circular space on the floor, which is formed by the sunbeams penetrating the opening. Further in to the room there are casts of two small human bodies. Once more do our gazes meet. We are about the same age, the woman in the room and I. The ancient bodies are huddled up. The moment becomes emotionally charged and distinct. I engage in a sudden and intense internal struggle to understand the lava stream that buried the people who slept, or maybe made love, or held a sick child in their arms. The identification is there for a moment, but soon grows into an intellectual argument. Pain, choking, weeping, crying, ashes, smoke, and darkness reach my thoughts, but not the depth of my emotions. It is strange to tread around in a large mass grave. Everything is tidy, beautiful, and still. Only the bodies remind us of vulnerability and the struggle against death. The woman follows me with her gaze as I leave the room.

After the intense hours in Pompeii, we take the train to Naples. Outside the window we can follow Vesuvius in an increasingly dusky evening light. The train is filled with people. Both middle-aged well-dressed persons and teenagers dressed in black. I lean my head against the man and close my eyes. It is as if all the impressions and images of the day mix into a muddle in my head. A group of teenagers is sitting not far from us, both boys and girls, maybe 14-15 years old. I do not attach much attention to them,
although they are a bit noisy, and that they open the window next to me is hardly surprising as it is hot in the carriage. At Herculaneum station, I still note that a couple of the boys get off. The others soon follow.

As the train begins to move again something happens very quickly. An arm from nowhere has reached into the carriage, and before I or anyone else has time to react I feel a pain on my throat and see that the hand that disappears out through the window holds one of the two gold chains I was wearing. The young boy, whose hand it was, waves triumphantly with his spoils in front of his friends and disappears, running away from the spot. I am in shock and touch my throat where a scratch shows some trace of the event. There is a commotion and anger in the carriage. Middle-aged Italians call out to some guards through the window. Well-dressed ladies look compassionately at me and gesticulate their anger about the event. The man next to me wants to defend himself, arguing that he could not have prevented what happened. He reacted first when the hand was on its way out of the window.

The next moment, I turn my head and look out through the other window towards Vesuvius and something magnificent and strange happens: all the unsorted sense impressions and imaginary pictures of the two-thousand-year-old disaster are played in my consciousness like a film. I see the lava stream, smell it, hear the people’s desperate cries for help. I see how children, adults, and pets are buried alive, how the houses are laid in ruins. Horses rush about the slippery streets, which soon are not streets anymore. The disaster is there right in front of me, and the carriage is somehow the almost unconscious background to this imagined scenario. My body, emotions, and thoughts are on the streets of Pompeii in 79 AD. I am one of the women who in desperation tries to save herself and her children from the ashes.

The pain on my throat, the wholly unexpected dramatic and awful incident on the train, made the historical tale become real
to me. It brought my identification to life. With ashes in my hair and my lungs, I am thrown between strong agitation and a kind of calm that everything eventually falls into place. I have, since the trip was planned, tried to understand the Pompeii of the time of the disaster, but without succeeding. When I was physically on the excavated streets some hours previously, I did not experience any real presence, but rather a slightly disturbing, but enticing, feeling of unreality. Now I am in the midst of a violent crescendo, triggered by actual danger, and all these parts blur into a whole experience in which I am no longer an observer, but one of the actors in the midst of the disaster.

Little by little, again with my body and consciousness in the carriage, the grief about and fear of the disaster in Pompeii are transformed into a disturbing comparison: that the young thief was only a year or so older than my oldest son. I begin to wonder about the boy’s life and family. A dramatic incident made it possible for me to enter wholly into the fate of Pompeii. For a moment, the boy became a descendant of the surviving children of the disaster. At the same time, a comparison with my own life was made possible. The necklace, from my beloved grandfather, dead for twenty years, the beautifully enveloped blue stone, became one of the cherished things that followed us human beings to our graves in Pompeii in 79 AD.

**Between the Two Occasions**

It is one and a half years after the first trip that I write it down, but it still lives strongly in my imagination. I decide that the description of this experience may form a part of my thesis. After having written down the event, I decide to look on it as an experiment which has been initiated. With the emotional experience of my first trip that I have depicted still living in my memory, I will learn more about Pompeii and the culture of which the city was a part.
I read about life in Pompeii. First, I carefully study city plans and designs of the houses. It is surprisingly easy to understand these. The articulated plan drawings, with their varying scale from the private rooms to the public places, very soon become real buildings to me. I experience an almost magical attraction before some of the drawings. The plans only show the demarcations of the walls; the room formations which they form needs to be augmented with façades and sections. But by having been there, with my body and my consciousness, in the remnants of these houses, I have the memory of the scale made so intensely conscious that it is sufficient with only plan drawings. I carry with me memories of the sizes of rooms, as well as of the texture and colour of the building materials. The contrast which emerges when one moves, step by step, from the public street life into the more intimate and private parts of the house, I have experienced in the actual place, and this experience is brought to life and intensified by the drawings.

Pompeii awakens the imagination. Ruins in general do this, but in this case a whole city has been buried and the continuity of the life of a whole city population has suddenly been disrupted. To hear the tale of Pompeii as a child was very scary. Imagine waking up in the midst of this horror and not be able to save oneself. There was no protection, no mercy, rich as well as poor people and their houses perished. Here wealth was not enough as protection, nor was goodness, nor love; none of the things we as children learn to honour could help these people. There was no happy ending to the true story in which goodness was awarded, but a merciless testimony in the form of a strange excavated city with casts of living human beings.

“Almost as living reality,” Elias Cornell writes of his first encounter with Pompeii (Cornell 1996). Reality cannot be anything but living, however much death it contains. Even in the middle of a disaster or war, reality is there for as long as someone is experiencing it. Pliny the younger experienced and has depicted the
disaster in Pompeii. His uncle, Plinius the elder, died from the volcanic eruption as he was about to rescue a relative. He was, before he was reached by this message, fully preoccupied with closely investigating a very strange cloud formation, which he did not know came from Vesuvius. Plinius the younger likens the cloud to a pine tree, with a robust stem which unfolds its crown to the sky. This cloud then came to enclose the surroundings of the volcano in the complete darkness of a shower of ashes. After a number of days of increasing earthquakes, Plinius left the city of Misenum together with his mother and a larger crowd, to escape the risk of the collapse of their houses.

Plinius the younger describes how the shower of ashes begins to reach him. It is not yet so dense. As he turns around, however, he sees thick dark smoke gushing towards them, like an onrush ing river. Shortly after this, it gets completely dark, not as during a overcast night, but as in a closed room in which the light has been switched off. “You should hear the groaning of the women and children, and the men’s vociferous cries,” Plinius writes. “Some searched for and some retrieved their parents, children, husbands, and wives by means of their voices. Many cried that this was the last and eternal night, which had come to the world (Plinius the younger 1904, 80).

I continue my search for literature from the time, brush up my knowledge of Viruvius’s ten books about architecture, and then find Lucretius’s didactic poem On the Nature of Things (De rerum natura). In Lucretius’s worldview, I am surprised at the correspondence between the view of today’s researchers within the study of human consciousness and pragmatists, and his view of the human being. Like Socrates, Lucretius believed that the most important task of philosophy was to care about the human soul, but because of his materialistic view of the human being, he believed that body and soul cannot actually be separated (Lucretius 1995, 1-21). Here are some stanzas by Lucretius:
Listen: to show you that a living thing’s
Soul is as light as air, is born, must die,
I shall lay forth my hard-won labor of love
In verses worthy of your noble life.
Make sure you merge these two under one term,
So if I need a word and I teach that “spirit”
Is mortal, trust I’ve said that “soul” is too,
Since the two are conjoint in unity

To begin, then, Since I’ve shown that the soul, so thin,
So light, is made of the tiniest atoms, much
Smaller than those which make up the clear water
Or clouds or smoke (for in mobility
It far excels and moves at the slightest touch,
Why not? When it’s moved by the shadows of cloud and smoke,
The sort we see as we lie asleep and dream
Of the breath high over the altar, the drifting smoke—
Such things, no doubt, bring images to our minds).
And now too since you mark that when a jar
Is smashed the water spills away and scatters to the winds
Trust that the soul spills too and perishes
The sooner and melts the quicker into its atoms
Once it’s been drawn away from the human body.
In fact if the body—the soul’s jar—is smashed
Or so attenuated by loss of blood
It can no longer hold the soul inside,
What air do you thing will hold the soul, when air
Is slighter than the body and less confining?

What’s more, we see the body and mind are born
Together, and grow old and weak together.
For as babies toddle about with bodies soft
As I’ve taught. The facts charge on to block the path
Of false reasoning and head off its retreat,
Routing it with a double-pronged rebuttal
(Lucretius)

The Second Occasion
The initial walk leads upwards on one of all the city’s paved streets. We follow the city wall. It is as tall as the street is wide and bricked in a diagonal pattern. Above the wall appear the blue of the sky, but what is concealed behind it I do not know: there are no possibilities of seeing. I wonder about the thickness of the wall. I am faced with a multitude of building materials wherever I look: different kinds and sizes of stones, different types of brick and mortar, and half abraded surface materials. The colour scale is coherent, but still contains an infinite number of subtle variations. The entrances to the houses are here marked with small mosaics of natural stone of different colours. The kerbstones are rough, perhaps to be able to resist the large volumes of water, which must have poured through the city in torrential rain, when the water from Vesuvius and its surrounding mountains reached the city. Traces of polish and paint pigments are visible on some bare inner walls. I am preoccupied with observations of this kind, to do with proportion and building material, the first moments of the walk along Pompeii’s streets. This time, two years after my first visit and now in the company of another man, I do not think at all about the disaster.

There is a warm sunlight which creates sharp contrasts with the shadows. The din of the traffic gets increasingly distant, and the voices from other visitors more manifest the further inside the classical city I get. It is strangely restful to be in a city structure and not have to be attentive to the otherwise so obvious and insistent presence of traffic and advertisements in our modern cities. In a way, it is rather more like strolling in a park or in a huge museum than in a city. It is, of course, the want of the throbbing activity of city life that gives this impression. There is nothing
here to be afraid of today. The people I meet are friendly and are only here to visit and experience the remains of this city, and maybe still more, to be confronted with the myth: the true story of the excavated, well-preserved, choked city. All everyday concerns are removed. There are almost no signs or artificial lighting here. But we see remains of the fast-food kiosks of the time, with their beautiful counters and terracotta containers, and probably there were also signs here showing the menu and prices and information about who lived in which house. The city did accommodate about ten thousand inhabitants, so there must have been seething activity here.

I observe that all other thoughts have been pushed away, as I stop to consult the map to determine how far into the city I have walked. The man I am with takes photographs; I take notes. We communicate mainly with glances and gestures, only occasionally with words. An intense presence is demanded to try to understand that which is, and at the same time to create an image of what the city could have been like. I feel the materials with my hands, stroke them with my fingers, and let my nails scratch a little against the mural surfaces, at the same time as I try the different floorings with my feet. I try to imagine the roofs and ceilings which are no longer there. Now and then, I am interrupted a little by some passing group with a guide. Here and there, there are pictures with reconstructions of what it may have looked like. A stray dog is sleeping against a wall.

In the market place are two show-cases with casts of human bodies. On one of them parts of the skull are preserved. The other one looks like it is wanting to shield its face with hands and arms. The remnants are both seductive and terrifying. The market place is surrounded by richly decorated walls. In the midst of my fascination, standing before the cast of these antique human beings, I begin to wonder about the design of the show-cases. I wonder why the horizontal cases are raised to the waist level of the visitors? What would it be like to meet them without this
protective glass, lying on the ground? The thought of exposing the bodies makes it easier for me to see the market place’s life and movements, staged in my imagination, at the same time as I also allow the consciousness of the presence of death to be let out, which, whether we want it or not, we continually relate our experience to. Because of this, I also come into contact with all the life which is now absent: not only human beings, but commodities and signs; sounds and smells, which must have been part of the city’s life. Left are remains of houses and some traces of choked human beings. The everyday commodities are removed, as are many of the most beautiful mosaics and sculptures. Left are only the traces of that built structure which the people of the time arranged in relation to their lives, and to which these people adjusted themselves: open, wounded marks that leave ample space for the imagination of today’s visitors.

Is it just this which is one of the seductive aspects of visiting Pompeii? That what is absent, the life of the city, by being absent, is made visible to us who live in other modern cities? A well-ordered city, which through a disaster, was buried in a day, and which lies excavated and uncovered in its nakedness might also say something about human life in cities of today. There has been city life here, but without our imagination and our experiences of having been to and lived in other cities, we could not imagine what it was like. We have also read novels and seen films which may help our imagination. The images we create are, to a large extent, based on the experiences we have of living in the time in which we live. The gap in time caused by my experiences’ originating only from a limited time span at the end of the twentieth century can in part be bridged by adding historical facts, drawings, and maps to my frame of reference. To walk the streets of Pompeii arouses a creative process within the visitor, which elucidates the value of this imagination. I experience both a feeling of uniqueness, as this creative process takes place at this very moment within me, and a feeling of universality, as human
life two thousand years ago makes rich points of contact with our individual lives of today, despite historical, cultural, and social differences.

Casa dei Vetti, Vetti’s house, is large and well-preserved. I enter through a hall into the open garden with its surrounding peristyle. It is the first complete house with a preserved roof which I have enter. I feel like an uninvited guest, who curiously sneaks around without being escorted by the host. At once, I am hit by the effect of the small white stone inlays in the otherwise black flooring in the peristyle. I squat down and see that the small bits are two centimetre squares, placed ten centimetres from one another. From these simple patterns emerge longitudinal, transversing, and diagonal patterns, as well as squares. The black absorbs the strong day-light from the open yard, which is surrounded by the peristyle, in which the white reflects the light, which has the effect that the white pieces seem to hover above the surrounding blackness. In the garden are some preserved outdoor furniture and statuettes. As I gaze up at the roof, I see that a protecting wire netting has been put up underneath the wooden construction to holds the tiles in place.

In the middle of the adjacent public atrium there is a swimming-pool, double ceiling height, and a square opening in the ceiling. Three openings connect the room to the inner garden: a tall and wide frontal opening, and a longer, narrow opening on either side of this. Small windowless rooms adjoin the atrium. All doorways have richly ornamented frames. Black, red, and yellow dominate the colour range, here as in most of the houses in Pompeii, although there are exceptions. A moment ago, I went inside the remains of a smaller house, dominated by blue and yellow. It stood out from the rest in a striking way. I speculated that maybe this was to do with the scale: maybe the small house could not bear black-red dominance on the walls. The wall paintings in Casa dei Vetti contain both stimulating details and are at the same time docile to the form of the rooms. They are
divided into three horizontal fields. Were they painted in consultation with the one who designed and built the house, or were they made at a later stage, in consultation only with the owner of the house? This leads my thoughts towards what the building process would have been like at this time. What actors were there, and what collaboration was there between these?

The connections between the rooms in Villa Vetti are refined and vary in scale, from narrow to expansive, from richly illuminated rooms with ceiling lights to rooms with sparse side-lighting and completely dark spaces. Here is also an entire range between being inside or outside. One is sometimes almost outside or almost inside, under a roof, but at the same time next to an open yard, or in a dark room with a central opening in the ceiling. Some floors are substantially illuminated, others rather dark. The degree of illumination affects the feeling of the weight of my steps and their anchorage on the flooring. I can choose to enter certain rooms through monumental entrances or through narrow openings, which are scarcely taller than I am.

After having moved around Villa Vetti’s different rooms and passages, I am ready to step out on the street again. I will just have a look behind a corner before I leave through an entrance other than that which I used to come in. A door with a solid modern look is ajar. I meet some giggling young women on their way out of the room which appears to be about 2 x 2 metres large. It is a windowless chamber. The light from the open door falls softly and beautifully on a statue of a young man with an erected, over-sized penis. By degrees, my eyes get used to the sparse lighting and I begin to discern wall paintings of people making love. I become excited. The erotic tension in the room cannot be escaped. The encounter with my own sexuality becomes at this moment surprising and strong. When our sexuality is awoken, like all strong feelings, it affects our experience of the architecture around us. The erotic is also connected with the encounter with concrete evidence of activity and life: a contact between the
force of antique life and the force of my own life, whose intensity surpasses what I have experienced so far on my visits to Pompeii. Sexuality and the reproductive instinct touch on the universal. Our cultural context is also important in how we view erotic force and its expression. We all know about sexuality’s importance in private life. Again, the question of the private, the cultural, and the universal becomes central for me at a particular moment. The private is even further intensified as the man who is accompanying me enters the chamber.

The impression which the erotic chamber gives is enticing. No violence is depicted here, but only shared enjoyment. As a reaction to my experience as I step out on the street again, my mind is also filled by thoughts of child-birth and power relations between men and women. Who used the chamber? Was it the man and his wife, or powerful men and prostitutes? How did people view sexuality and lust in the Pompeii of antiquity? Did the Greek and the Roman cultures differ? Did people have contraception, and did abortions exist?

In Pompeii much of the built structure which surrounded human life is left. Today, the city seems like a broken, but still tolerably coherent, skeleton, from which the body and the flows have been removed. There are still enough traces of that life which existed here that my imagination works frenetically to create different images of the life within the built structures before the disaster.

For some reason, as I am walking around Pompeii I come to think of the artist Olle Skagerfors’s self-portrait. Mercilessly, he turns himself into the observer of himself as an object. He shows his own ageing, his everyday battle of living and being in relation to himself and his own life. “It is about practicing existence,” was his everyday slogan. Skagerfors’s paintings have affected me on a number of occasions. Earlier the same year, I went to see a retrospective exhibition of his work. The memory of this is thus still present, ready to be activated in my consciousness. It may be
the recreated bodies of two-thousand-year-old human beings; it may be the colour scheme; or perhaps my own battle with being in relation to myself in this exciting place, which arouses the association. The thought of Skagerfors’s painting helps me at this moment to link the dead city I am in to the strength of life. There is also grief in me, which Skagerfors has awoken previously by referring to Delacroix, who says that the day painters lose their knowledge and love of their tools, sterile theories begin, as painters will then instead express themselves with words. This complex of problems reaches me in the midst of the beauty of the mysterious house.

During the time I have been working on my PhD, there has, sadly, been no time for artistic work. Drawing on knowledge about both the embodied consciousness of human beings and the qualities of the architectural objects, I have instead tried to formulate and communicate in words what I believe is important in an aesthetics of architecture. Perhaps it is a huge mistake to even try to do what I am doing. The last thing I want is for my thoughts to become sterile, clear of dirt and disturbances. It hits me at this moment that I no longer so naturally believe in "clarity," that perhaps "clarity" is neither possible nor desirable in the writing of my thesis. After all, it is about something as complex, evasive, and pluralistic as experience. Can this ever be expressed clearly? Perhaps the real challenge lies in trying to get the growth of thought, with all its inherent insecurities, to shine powerfully, without reaping the grass in its garden too violently. Perhaps the unpredictable ramifications are so concealed that the plant I mean to grow risks withering instead of shining brightly, as it would if its surroundings were thinned out. Is it maybe banal to even try to theorise about the dynamics of experience? It may be far more important to be washed away with the dynamics of experience: to cultivate one’s poetic imagination, in the words of Gaston Bachelard. But, I reason to myself, there is probably no contradiction. By focusing on the significance of my experience of
Pompeii, I have not distanced myself from my experience, but rather controlled its direction: emphasised and deepened its value. Besides, I have tried to capture some of the content of the complex experience in words, with the purpose of reaching a dialogue, both with myself and with others.
6 The Embodied Mind and Architecture

Every day when I go to work I pass a place in Stockholm, which is being rebuilt in a dramatic way: Liljeholmen’s Underground station. In my memory there are thousands of superimposed memories connected to this place. These visual images are, however, fragmentary. The occasional powerful event, however, makes itself felt; for instance, an arrest made by the police. Only with difficulty can I conjure up any coherent image of the actual station building. I try to concentrate on reconstructing its proportions and directions, but it is difficult, as I rarely really think about what this building looks like. On some exceptional occasion, I have raised my gaze towards the roof to measure the height of the building and to understand its construction. My head is full with other thoughts when I walk through this place. It is thoughts which are most often to do with the children or work, and which are only interrupted if something unexpected happens, such as my card not working in the gate in the underground station, or running across a friend. Yet at the same time, I know very well what it is like to be inside and move through this building. I have precise opinions about the organisation of the building and how it “suits” my body. I have numerous memories of walking up and down its stairs, using its lifts, and waiting on its platforms during summer, autumn, winter, and spring. I have been in most nooks and crannies that this place has to offer, and I also know what they smell like. Now the platforms are to be decked over. We who are waiting for the trains patiently tolerate the building work which takes place above our heads, and we trust that this building site that continues to work as underground station is sufficiently secure, although for a period it may resemble a flimsy shack. A certain degree of discomfort has, nevertheless, crept into the background of my thoughts, which is related to a repressed knowledge about my, and my fellow passengers’, bodily fragility. Another new feeling, this time one of curiosity
and expectation, has emerged in my mind. It is to do with how
the new complex of buildings, with homes, shops, and under-
ground station, will eventually turn out.

Architecture is closely related to the human being’s body. Ar-
chitectural objects are built artefacts of measurable mass, which
have been designed with human bodies—which will interact with
them—in mind. Human bodies are measurable too, but they are
also interconnected with an advanced consciousness which, be-
cause of our capacity for experience, can extend far beyond the
measurable. The human being experiences architectural objects
with her or his embodied consciousness. This essay will primar-
ily be about the concept of the embodied mind in relation to the
aesthetics of architecture, but it will also be about the aesthetic
role of language.

I will begin with a brief discussion about whether, in architec-
ture, we are now in the process of losing those aesthetic values
that are to do with the body. Are new kinds of “expended” or
“fragmentary” bodily values created by means of new technology
and rapid changes in society? The question is raised in response
to statements by some well-known architects about the contem-
porary situation. This introductory discussion leads up to ques-
tions about whether it is fruitful to talk about stable and flexible
values in architecture, or distinct and indistinct aesthetic expe-
riences.

The concept of the embodied mind is based on seeing con-
sciousness as a biological problem, the emergence of which can
be explained within evolutionary thinking. This has radical con-
sequences for the view on reason and how human beings create
meaning about themselves and their environment. George Lakoff
and Mark Johnson describe the significance of modern cognitive
science:

Cognitive science provides a new and important take on an
age-old philosophical problem, the problem of what is real and
how we can know it, if we can know it. Our sense of what is real begins with and depends crucially upon our bodies, especially our sensorimotor apparatus, which enables us to perceive, move, and manipulate, and the detailed structures of the brain, which have been shaped by both evolution and experience. (Lakoff and Johnson 1999, 17)

As is made clear by the passage just quoted, the view modern cognitive science takes on the embodied mind is relevant when architecture is being discussed, and connects with philosophers such as John Dewey and Maurice Merleu-Ponty, who have been inspirational within the field of architecture.

Furthermore, in the essay, I broach the question of whether linguistic concepts can be understood to constitute an active part of experience and the shaping of basic bodily conditions of experience. How we view consciousness, body, and language has consequences for aesthetics. Are we within or outside language when we experience the surrounding world? Can we, by means of language, sharpen architectural experience?

In conclusion, I describe an experiment: The neurologist Antonio Damasio’s model of different levels of consciousness, with the concepts of unconsciousness, core consciousness, extended consciousness, is related to the concepts of basic spatial experience, unreflecting architectural experience, and architectural awareness. The purpose of this is to test whether it is fruitful to use the models developed within the study of human consciousness to develop useful knowledge within the field of aesthetics. In my conclusion, I also come back to the discussion about stable, flexible, distinct, and indistinct aesthetic values.

**New Bodily Aspects in Architecture**

According to José Oubrerie (who assisted Le Corbusier from 1958-1965), it is time for a change in architecture. He maintains that this new form of architecture had an early advocate in le
Corbusier, but only now, for the first time, is there a real possibility of this new architecture gaining expression. Oubrerie claims that this new architecture depends on new technology, the acceleration of social life, and a new view of the human being.

There can be no typology for there is no slow evolution, no stable ground over a lifetime anymore; no sequences of rooms, no spaces “separated” by walls. Such rigid limits were abandoned initially through the invention of the free plan; this invention can now be extended and practically exchanged in favor of free fluctuations of the three-dimensional spatial continuum itself. We are confronted with a totally new prospective where everything must be (and is being currently) repoposed and rediscovered in a non-Cartesian universe (is it possible?) that has just started to be explored. (Oubrerie 1999)

Oubrerie describes a number of dramatic shifts within the architecture of today. As technical tools, computers enable architects to design new forms of complex architectural objects, which have previously been technically impossible. According to Oubrerie, the human scale of reference is increasingly abandoned, and what is placed in focus is the perception, via the bodily senses, rather than the physical body as a shape. Oubrerie sees Frank Gehry’s Bilbao Museum as an example of this new form of architecture:

A new joyous environment, formally “illogical” and formally dynamic, totally noncontextual, but recreating the context of the city, unconventional even in its apparent material fragility, which makes it look as if it is suspended in the heavy contrasting atmosphere of its surroundings. Bilbao challenges the viewer and the building has quickly conquered the status of a new “wonder of the World.” (Ibid.)
Also Ignasi de Solà Morales mentions Gehry’s work as a contemporary model for a “new” form of architecture. According to de Solà-Morales, Gehry’s buildings completely lack Vitruvian *firmitas*. He claims that they are opaque to the expression of necessities, just as they tell us nothing about the architect’s personality. "They are the opposite pole from any kind of contextual or autobiographical architecture. They erupt at some moment or other, always untimely, always unexpectedly. Each scheme is exhausted in itself, completely on the outside of any normative intention. They do not offer us any method. They do not affirm any absolute truth." (de Solà-Morales 1997, 90)

When, as experiencing human beings, we are offered new spatial situations, such as, for instance, the museum in Bilbao, our frame of reference is also extended by new examples. Our architectonic collection of examples is expanded, which causes the value of the architectural experience to be displaced. We learn to experience and to take a particular type of approach to new kinds of buildings. In the encounter with these architectural objects, a bodily relation emerges, which, as we compare the events and situations we experience continuously in our lives, also influences our experience of more traditional buildings. The new possibilities which technology has brought to human beings have perhaps served to invalidate the existentialistically founded norms of value which were strong within the field of architecture in the mid twentieth century? This complex of problems arouses a number of resulting questions. Have we transferred to a form of architecture and an architectural theory, which have abandoned the experiential perspective of the individual? Can architecture be discussed without being based on the human being’s body-related potential for experience?

In an interview in 1997, Rem Koolhaas commented on the new “amoral possibilities” which computers and cyberspace have contributed to experiences of the concrete in real buildings.
[A]rchitecture in my view, is a profession that consists of concrete entities that are built and have a real existence. Or even though, of course, you can also create a kind of virtual architecture in cyberspace or can have a kind of architectural experiences in cyberspace. But I think the more interesting aspect of architecture is still the more concrete architecture. But nevertheless I think there is an enormous influence of virtuality on architecture and you could say and it is only a partly a caricature that probably out of a sense of insecurity some of the best architects these days are trying to make their buildings immaterial, as if they don’t exist. And trying to endow them with that kind of glamour that computer aided images have, the perfection and the sterility maybe also. So there is in a way a kind of strange simulation of virtuality in real architecture. But what is for me more interesting is the kind of shamelessness and amorality that basically the computer implies in terms of the ability to combine everything with everything else in single frames, that kind of lack of resistance, and the absence of necessity for discipline, that all these are in effect deeply effecting architecture, but the built form of architecture. (Koolhaas 1997)

Koolhaas talks about the trend towards immateriality; Oubrerie talks about the absence of the human body as a reference point for the scale of architecture. Has new technology led to human experience—as well as the architectural objects in themselves—receding from the body? Architecture has often been seen as that art which most of all can offer possibilities of stable aesthetic values. Because that which is built has durability in itself and a scale which makes it possible for human beings to be in it, the human being can relate to the scope of her or his own existence in the experience of architectural objects. Dewey, for instance, describes architecture as that art form which is most capable of expressing existential durability:
No other products exhibit stresses and strains, thrusts and counterthrusts, gravity, light, cohesion, on a scale at all comparable to the architectural, and it takes these forces more directly, less mediat edly and vicariously, than does any other art. It expresses the structural constitution of nature itself. Its connection with engineering is inevitable. For this reason, buildings, among all art objects, come the nearest to expressing stability and endurance of existence. (Dewey 1980, 230)

During the late twentieth century, the stress on durability has been vigorously questioned, and, within some parts of the architectural debate, the role of the experiencing subject has been marginalised. The experiments of transferring constructivist and deconstructivist ideas to built objects are examples of this. De Solà-Morales maintains apropos contemporary architecture that present-day architecture cannot reproduce the permanence produced by the force of the Vitruvian firmitas. De Solà-Morales continues by claiming that the effect of duration, stability, and defiance of time's passing are now irrelevant. He says that "the idea of place as the cultivation and maintenance of the essential and the profound, of a genius loci, is no longer credible in an age of agnosticism, it becomes reactionary" (de Solà-Morales 1997, 103). Instead, De Solà-Morales expresses a hope that the loss of these illusions need not necessarily result in a nihilistic architecture of negation. He suggests that "from a thousand different sites the production of place continues to be possible. Not as the revelation of something existing in permanence, he says, but as the production of an event (Ibid.). He continues by claiming that this is thus not a question of producing an ephemeral, instantaneous, fragile, fleeting architecture. Instead he suggests a defence of the value of places produced out of the meeting of present energies (Ibid.). Place, he says, "is a conjectural foundation, a ritual
of and in time, capable of fixing a point of particular intensity in the universal chaos of our metropolitan civilization" (Ibid.).

Independently of the varying architectural ideals during different times there is always a spectrum between stable and flexible aesthetic experiential values that in some way settle the aesthetic value. Stable values are represented by the basic and bodily: in our capacity for experience, which has been shaped over millions of years. Our sensorimotor system and brains work in a similar way, which constitutes a condition of our being in the world. This makes us experience many of the conditions of the surrounding world in a similar way, from time to time; from person to person. Flexible aesthetic values are to do with our subtle adaptability and capacity to apprehend and behave in relation to changes of the surrounding world. We can compare different situations, which we experience, and understand that the world changes, and that this affects us. Another aesthetic spectrum of experiences consists of distinct and indistinct aesthetic values. This scale is related to the ability to actively direct our attention (intentionality). Distinct aesthetic values demand the focus of our attention. Indistinct aesthetic values demand the ability to apprehend and to some extent behave in relation to background experiences. Within architectural theory, distinct and indistinct aesthetic values have been discussed by, among others, Pauline von Bonsdorff (1998), Juhan Pallasmaa (1996), and Ignasi de Solà-Morales (1997). Different concepts have been used in describing this dynamics of experience: for instance, the opposites foreground/background and strong/weak.

According to my opinion the discussion of so called new aesthetic values in architecture needs to be placed in relation to a rich aesthetic discussion that comprises knowledge about the ability of the human being to experience the objects of her or his surrounding world. This knowledge can in part be developed in relation to current research concerning the embodied mind.
The Embodied Mind

_The embodied mind_ challenges a view of reason as separate from body and emotions. A division between body and soul was most clearly expressed by René Descartes, but in fact mirrors a two-thousand-year-old western tradition, from Plato’s time. By emphasising thought, Descartes underscored the centrality of the problems of consciousness for the human being. He also recommended a clear distinction between mental and material substances, “mind and matter,” and thus a dualistic way of looking at things. Matter, Descartes argued, is characterised by spatial extension, and ought to be accessible to a physical explanation. Descartes characterised the mental, on the other hand, as “being conscious” or, more broadly, “thinking” (Edelman and Tononi 2000, 4) (Läbecke 1988). Edelman and Tononi argue that to begin with, a Cartesian dualism is easy to accept. This changes, however, once one tries to explain the connection between body and consciousness more closely (Edelman and Tononi 2000, 4). William Lyons describes the development of modern philosophy of mind and believes that today, within philosophy and science, we are probably in the process of settling with this form of dualism. “My belief”, he says, ”is that philosophy of mind is on the verge of producing something approaching a definitive account, but it will be a complex and sophisticated account. In our ordinary discourse we will probably still speak as if minds were ghostly drivers of our bodily machines” (Lyons 1995, lxvi-lxvii). Lyons describes the weight of Descartes:

Descartes argued that mind and body must be separate “stuffs,” or substances, for we know with the privileged certainty of subject’s own self-consciousness and introspection that the essence of mind is consciousness. Descartes maintained that we can also come to know, though with less immediacy and certainty, that the essence of body is extension. Just as it probably did in Plato’s time, such a view seemed no more
than common sense with a little bit of theoretical elaboration. Thoughts and the other inhabitants of mind are items in our stream of consciousness, which is what having a mind means from the “inside out,” or subjective point of view. What is more, his theory seemed to make good theological sense. When the body gets old, decays and breaks down, the mind cannot function properly and so leaves behind the bodily wreck, and this is death. The mind, having no extension, and so no parts, cannot be broken up into bits. It cannot decay. It is immoral and enduring, a soul. Certainly it becomes rather mysterious in this view as to how there can be a causal interface between matter and “soul stuff,” which is everything that matter isn’t. But who cares about a mystery or two at the foundations if the superstructure looks fine? (Ibid. xlvi)

*The mind-body problem* has been a subject for heated discussion within philosophy, psychology, and the biological study of human consciousness throughout the twentieth century, and is so still. In this text, my purpose is not to account or argue for the numerous different positions in this extensive discussion. Instead, I try to use some of the most recent hypotheses about consciousness that are based within biology in relation to the aesthetics of architecture. Common to the models which have been inspirational is that they put forward an integrated view, which means that body and consciousness are seen as an advanced and closely interconnected system. Reason can thus not be considered as divorced from the body. Reason and emotion; body and thought are not fundamental opposites, but constitute part of a coherent system.

In *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought* (1999), Lakoff and Johnson describe a number of consequences of the new study of human consciousness. They maintain that cognitive science has established that “The mind is inherently embodied. Thought is mostly uncon-
scious. Abstract concepts are largely metaphorical.” They claim that two thousand years of a priori philosophical speculation about reason has thus been set aside. “A radical change in our understanding of reason is therefore a radical change in our understanding of ourselves.” Lakoff and Johnson assert that reason cannot be divorced from the body; that reason is evolutionary and universal only in so far as it is a capacity that all human beings share. “Reason is not completely conscious, but mostly unconscious. Reason is not purely literal, but largely metaphorical and imaginative. Reason is not dispassionate, but emotionally engaged” (Lakoff and Johnson 1999, 3-4). Is the embodied mind research of significance in our discussion of architecture? Yes, in the highest degree, is my answer, and in this text I will explain why.

The rough distinction which is prevalent within parts of philosophy and the study of human consciousness between reason as the rational and emotion as the irrational is not possible when we apply the model of the embodied mind. This changed view on reason and rationality carries with it epistemological displacements and new possibilities for dynamic and speculative models. The demarcation—the border between what is scientifically possible to investigate and what is not—is moved in concordance with the claim of the embodied mind. This also means new possibilities for the aesthetics of architecture. The discussions about experience and the evaluation of architectural objects can be deepened. That human beings are touched by architecture, not only on the rational and clearly conscious level, but also on emotional and less conscious levels, is not a problem if aesthetics is based on an “embodied mind thinking.” The complex knowledge of skilled architects, which is sometimes claimed to contain elements of “poetic or intuitively artistic values,” does not need to be seen as something mystical. With increased knowledge of the embodied mind, new possibilities of a deeper aesthetic meaning emerge. The intellectual analytical interpretation and the direct,
spontaneous experience are from this perspective not placed in opposition. Nor are culture and the individual placed in opposition, but are in different ways interconnected. The whole range of values between what we usually term intuitive and that which we consider to be intellectual can be simultaneously accommodated, and we understand our dynamic capacity for experience through the model of *the embodied mind*.

There are in this view connections with philosophical movements back in history and to eastern philosophy. John Dewey expresses a similar view on human consciousness and *experience*. He emphasised that an evolutionary perspective with respect to human consciousness does not imply degradation. It rather provides the possibility for a foundation to start out from when the grandeur of the capacity for experience is discussed.

Opposition of mind and body, soul and matter, spirit and flesh all have their origin, fundamentally, in fear of what life may bring forth. They are marks of contraction and withdrawal. Full recognition, therefore, of the continuity of organs, needs and basic impulses of the human creature with his animal for-bears, implies no necessary reduction of man to the level of the brutes. On the contrary, it makes possible the drawing of a ground-plan of human experience upon which is erected the superstructure of man’s marvelous and distinguishing experience. (Dewey 1980 (1934), 22)

**A First Principle**

If we imagine a man who for the first time enters a building, he can read the new spatial situation momentarily and relate it to his own body. He can also relate the event to his own life history. The situation becomes a part in a coherent experience of previous and future experiences. He can momentarily compare the physical room he experiences with and evaluate it against previous experience, and by means of imagination he can associate what he
experiences with unrelated thoughts or ideas. His own body is included to a varying degree in these imaginary comparisons. Quantities of sense information come pouring into him and are dealt with in a selective way to become meaningful in the existing moment. He simultaneously sees, hears, smells, and feels a number of different things. An arrangement of the sense impressions to comprehensible “images” takes place in a process, of the workings of which he is not conscious. He experiences himself as participating in the present, but, in reality, he is himself active in creating this formulated “now.” He moves his gaze around the room and fixes his eye on different details. After having created comprehensive spatial images, he also notes all the more details, such as the design of the door handle, a painting on the wall, an embroidered cushion on a chair, a coat, which has been thrown over the top of a chest of drawers. Sometimes he is satisfied with the visual impression, while now and again he also touches a surface with his hand, or feels the shape of the door handle he earlier saw. Now and again, associations run through his mind. In some ways, the amount of incoming sense information is coordinated into a comprehensible coherent image of him in relation to the room. Concurrently with his interchanging of focus, his conscious thought also changes. In the reading of the whole, he puts one piece with another. The jigsaw becomes increasingly detailed. He notices pieces, and, step by step, he builds up an understanding of the whole, which becomes increasingly focused. The significance of the spatial distance seems clear to him as he moves about through the rooms. When he looks out of the window, he also creates an apprehension of the outer surroundings. He understands how the rooms he is in are related to the surrounding city. He carries within himself a consciousness of the spaces of the city through which he moves every day. It is like an inner map, to which he can relate his own body and this room. He places the map of thought in this room in relation to other important rooms in his life, such as his home, his work-place, and
his children’s school. While he stands looking out of the window, well-orientated in the new spatial situation, he can release his thoughts and emotions to touch on the woman he is waiting for.

Like all conscious experience, the conscious architectural experience demands, that there is someone who experiences the architectural objects. But where is the limit for what we call conscious experience? Can we talk about more or less advanced conscious experience? Thomas Nagel argues: “Conscious Experience is a widespread phenomenon” (Nagel, in Lyons 1995, 161) in his famous essay What it is Like to Be a Bat? Conscious experience, he says, ‘occurs in many levels of animal life, though we cannot be sure of its presence in the simpler organisms, and it is very difficult to say in general what provides evidence of it. No matter how the form may vary. The fact that an organism has conscious experience at all means, basically, that there is something it is to be that organism.” (Ibid.)

Both innate and learnt capacities are used in the process of consciousness, which are interconnected within the individual and actively used in the encounter with the surrounding world. According to Peter Gärdenfors, for instance, the spatial experience is not something innate, but a phenomenon which has to be learnt through an interplay with the surrounding world. The stability of the experienced room is created through the flexible ability of the brain to construct the room. Gärdenfors talks about “the egocentric room” which emanates from the need of the human being to use the room to be able to do things. According to Gärdenfors, the creation of a “room of action” occurs, primarily by means of the sense of sight. The room seems stable even when one moves one’s head, and thus one’s eyes. The brain can very rapidly create a stable representation of the room, which stands still in relation to the changing of directions of the body and varying visual angles (Gärdenfors 2000, 48). The significance of the position and activity of the body for the experience of the surrounding room is also emphasised by Damasio. Whatever hap-
pens in consciousness happens in time and space relative to that condition within time in which the body is, and to that space which is taken up by the body. The things are inside and outside us. Those that are outside, Damasio continues, are static or flexible. The static ones can be close by or far away, or somewhere in between. Moving things can be approaching or retreating, but one’s own body is the reference (Damasio 2000, 145).

The philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty discusses the special role of the human body. He points out the decisive difference between the body and other objects in the world. The body is also a subject. As a subject, one’s own body is not in time and space like trees and bushes, or tables and chairs, but inhabits space and time. For one’s own body, through the interaction and communication with the world, there emerges a lived room and a lived time (Bengtsson 1988, 70-1). Merleau-Ponty argues that the experience of our body couldn’t be placed on a level with the experience of an object. “If I try to think of it as a cluster of third person processes—‘sight,’ ‘motility,’ ‘sexuality’—I observe that these ‘functions’ cannot be interrelated, and related to the external world, by causal connections, they are all obscurely drawn together and mutually implied in a unique drama,” he argues. “Therefore the body is not an object,” Merleau-Ponty continues,

Its unity is always implicit and vague. It is always something other than what it is, always sexuality and at the same time freedom, rooted in nature at the very moment when it is transformed by cultural influences, never hermetically sealed and never left behind. Whether it is a question of another's body or my own, I have no means of knowing the human body other than that of living it, which means taking up on my own account the drama which is being played out in it, and losing myself in it. (Merleau-Ponty 1962 (1945), 198)

He goes on to argue:
I am my body, at least wholly to the extent that I possess experience, and yet at the same time my body is as it were a "natural" subject, a provisional sketch of my total being. Thus experience of one's own body runs counter to the reflective procedure which detaches subject and object from each other, and which gives us only the thought about the body, or the body as an idea, and not the experience of the body or the body in reality. (Ibid. 198-9)

Lakoff and Johnson concur with the tradition from Dewey and Merleau-Ponty by maintaining an interconnected and indivisible perspective on the human organism's body and consciousness. They claim that the embodied mind is part of the living body and is dependent on the body for its existence. The properties of mind are not purely mental: they are shaped in crucial ways by the body and brain and how the body can function in everyday life. The embodied mind is thus very much of this world. Merleau-Ponty used the word "flesh" for our primordial embodied experience and sought to focus the attention of philosophy on what he called "the flesh of the world". In accordance with this, Lakoff and Johnson claim that "our body is intimately tied to what we walk on, sit on, touch, taste, smell, see, breathe, and move within. Our corporeality is part of the corporeality of the world" (Lakoff and Johnson 1999). The mind, they argue further, is not merely corporeal, but also passionate, desiring, and social. It has a culture and cannot exist free from culture; it has a history; it has developed and grown, and it can grow further; it has an unconscious aspect, hidden from our direct view and knowable only indirectly. Lakoff and Johnson claim that its conscious aspect characterizes what we take ourselves as being. Its conceptual system is limited: there is much that we cannot even conceptualize, much less understand. But its conceptual system is expand-
able: it can develop revelatory new forms of understanding (Ibid.).

Encounters with architectural objects penetrate our lives, they enrich and disturb our actions. Whether we want to or not, we confront them with our bodies and our senses, as well as with thought and feeling. Architectural objects can have an infinite number of physical guises with pronounced or subtle variations and differences. Still, we learn at an early stage to categorise them as belonging together, as objects which are built by human beings and which will be used by human beings. We also learn to see differences and evaluate these. By actively fixing our attention on that which is built, we can increase our observation and sharpen our aesthetic awareness.

Architecture absorbs the whole organism, and our evaluations of it are usually based on the sum total of the full complexity of experience. The valuation has many different levels. Sometimes a feeling of pleasure or discomfort arise which calls for the attention of directed thought. Maybe the discomfort is to do with it being too cold, or that, for some reason, the room is experienced as insecure or alien. We apprehend the entire individual building details and the complex wholes, which constitute architecture, at the same time as the events of our lives unfold. Most often, we have the focus of our attention directed towards specific events, but still we apprehend the rooms which we are in and which we pass through more or less automatically with our bodies and senses. Our reactions to the events, which take place in architecture, are interwoven with the experience of architecture, and this gives meaning to whole situations. Most often, however, we experience our encounter with that which is built as a background experience, somewhere in the periphery of the extent of our attention.

Certain buildings remain forever associated with abhorrence or well-being for the individual, because of the impact of some strong event. Others remain anonymous in the memory’s col-
lected repertoire of architectural objects. Common to all encounters with that which is built is that we relate to our private bodies and consciousness. Nor can we simulate an imaginary architectural experience, or talk about architecture without its being related to our consciousness, which is interconnected with our bodies.

In the interface between our own bodies and the outer world, we have well-developed bodily tools which help us read and integrate with the world. We have the sensitivity of our skin; the extension and flexibility of our limbs; our sight and hearing; and our senses of smell and taste, which together make up our advanced sensorimotor system. We also have an advanced brain which co-ordinates and selects immense amounts of sense information. The brain helps us comprehend the surrounding world into comprehensible forms within the space of very short spaces of time, much of which takes place on an automated level. We learn, for instance, to see our environment by means of stimulating the inherited equipment our bodies provide us with, for the seeing through an active interplay with the surroundings.

The work of the architect is artistic and technical and is strongly connected with knowledge about the human being as an individual and a social creature. Our capacity to formulate meaning about architecture depends on the reference to our bodily experiences of architectural objects. The knowledge of the embodied mind is thus of the utmost importance to architects. When we evaluate the experience of architectural objects we obviously refer to the body and our capacity for experience. If we imagine that we are, for instance, in a room, we carry with us experience of our bodies to which we automatically relate our imaginary experience. To imagine a situation in which we experience architecture without a body is not possible. Nor can we imagine an experience of architecture of “pure” embodiment, without the involvement of our complex consciousness. We are
tied to our body and our consciousness, which Damasio expresses thus:

For every person you know, there is a body. You may never have given any thought to this simple relationship but there it is: one person, one body; one mind, one body – a first principle. (Damasio 2000, 144)

Concepts Based on the Body
The linguistic concepts we use to describe the world are connected to our bodily experience. The concepts are determined by and developed for our dynamic capacity for experience. Lakoff and Johnson maintain that this in turn is dependent on sense experiences and how information about this is taken care of in the selective and co-ordinating system of the brain. Our concepts thus fit well with how we function in the world, as they are developed from our sensorimotor systems, which are to do with both our tactile system and motion. Lakoff and Johnson argue that from a biological perspective, it is eminently plausible that reason has emerged from the sensorimotor systems, and that it still uses these systems or structures. This explains why we have the kinds of concepts which we have, and why our concepts comprise the properties they do. When it comes to the concepts of spatial relations, Lakoff and Johnson argue that these ought to be “topological” and “oriented,” as these are basic characteristics of the sensorimotor systems (Lakoff and Johnson 1999, 43).

Our concepts cannot be a direct representation of an objective, external, mind-free reality because our sensorimotor system plays a decisive role in the creation of them. It is also the involvement of the sensorimotor systems which makes the conceptual system retain close contact with the world: “embodied realism” (Ibid. 43-4). If one adheres to the consequences of this view for the aesthetic concept of architecture, it is entirely necessary to keep alive the discussion about experienced values. Oth-
erwise, the concepts of aesthetics risk becoming alienated from
the close contact with the lived world mediated by the sensori-
motor systems when we are in our experiences.

One of the historical important key figures in the changing
view of language during the twentieth century is Ludwig Witt-
genstein, primarily in his late work *Philosophical Investigations*
(1953). Lyons provides a description of Wittgenstein’s view of
language “as embodied”:

[T]he meaning of a sentence did not attach to the words in it
but was a function of the use of words is a particular context,
which in turn was rich in “surroundings.” All words gained
their meaning in this way, as part of a practice or “language
game” in which words were instruments for doing various
tasks. Our vocabulary of mental or psychological terms is no
exception. When we speak of someone deciding or believing
or intending, then we must be attributing these terms on the
basis of observing their public performance or practice, not on
the basis of some privileged access to intrinsically private ob-
jects or acts in their stream of consciousness. (Lyons 1995,
xlvii)

According to Wittgenstein, what is communicated by means of
language when we describe experiences to one another are thus
not entirely private phenomena. Our thoughts are interlinked
through our activity in the external world, which is mirrored in
our language. Language can thus give us a way into the meaning
of the experience, as language is part of the experience. Jerker
Lundequist maintains, in his discussion about Wittgenstein’s sig-
nificance for architecture, ethics, and aesthetics, that art has
something to teach us, but this is not communicated directly or in
an unmediated way, but indirectly and in a mediated way; it
teaches us to experience patterns, connections, and wholes. Most
importantly, art is about the most significant thing of all: how one should live to live in the right way (Lundequist 1998, 22).

John Dewey also emphasises that language gives us a tool to elucidate, reflect on, and communicate our experienced values. By means of language, we can move from the private to the public, but what we formulate is not synonymous with the objects, which we experience. Rather, it is always coloured by our own interaction with the surroundings: the choices and evaluations we make in the actual experiential process. We are both unique individuals and part of a culture.

Feelings make sense; as immediate meaning of events of objects, they are sensations, or more properly sensa. Without language, the qualities of organic action that are feelings are pains, pleasure, odors, noises, tones, only potentially and proleptically. With language, they are discriminated and identified. They are then “objectified”; they are immediate traits of things. This “objectification” is not a miraculous ejection from the organism or soul into external things. The qualities never were “in” the organism: they always were qualities of interactions in which both extra-organic things and organisms partake. (Dewey 1958 (1929), 258-9)

Peter Gärdenfors maintains the hypothesis that through evolution human consciousness has developed to becoming increasingly detached from the present. With a swelling rich inner experience arose the need to be able to communicate, which forced the development of language. It was thus not the need to communicate about the outer objects but about inner reality which caused language, according to Gärdenfors’s theory. The social dimension or benefit of being able to describe inner processes came to generate the development of language through evolution (Gärdenfors 2000). During the twentieth century, the role of language has been a controversial issue between different philosophical
movements. There have been debates about whether language is secondary in relation to experience, or whether, to be meaningful, all experience is interconnected with and dependent on language. Is consciousness possible without language? Is conscious experience of architecture possible without language? And if so, what does this non-linguistic experience of architecture look like?

Damasio (and many with him) believes that language cannot have arisen out of nothingness. Damasio objects to Daniel Dennett’s and others’ view of consciousness as a post-linguistic phenomenon. The problem is, according to Damasio, that Dennett lacks the connection to the fundamental biological core of consciousness, which language is by necessity connected to (Damasio 2000, 188) (Dennett 1991). “The entire construction of knowledge, from simple to complex, from nonverbal imagetic to verbal literary, depends in the ability to map what happens over time, inside our organism, around our organism, to and with our organism, one thing followed by another thing, causing another thing, endlessly” (Damasio 2000, 189). Language, according to Damasio, is connected to “the brain’s storytelling attitude.” “The brain inherently represents the structures and states of the organism, and in the course of regulating the organism as it is mandated to do, the brain naturally weaves wordless stories about what happens to an organism immersed in an environment” (Ibid. 189).

That language is a late phenomenon in human evolution, and that the imagination is probably considerably older, is a hypothesis maintained by Gärdenfors. How language has arisen is a riddle, but we often assume the capacity for language developed 200 000-300 000 years ago. Before that, we communicated with gestures. Gärdenfors argues that most layers of human forms of thought evolved far earlier than the point when we began to speak. “Language is only the icing on the cake of thought” (Gärdenfors 2000, 136). The chief explanation to why human
beings, unlike other animals, have a language is that we have a
well-developed inner world and thus also a rich power of insight.
According to Gärdenfors, well-developed linguistic communication
demands an inner world that also contains an advanced under-
standing of the inner worlds of others. What happens in the
inner world of human beings can be likened to a talking picture,
but other animals have at least a silent film, says Gärdenfors.
What we understand as an inner monologue (or dialogue)
emerges, through evolution, even later, as an inner simulation of
outer speech. Inner speech should therefore be seen as part of the
simulations in the inner world. We imagine saying something
without actually doing it. Inner monologue is a part of what we
experience in the inner world. But how the monologue arises is
concealed in obscurity, in the same way, as we are unconscious
of how things work when we find the words we actually say.
(Ibid. 167)

Gärdenfors has summarised the different components of
thought, and the fact that each of these has an evolutionary func-
tion. Gärdenfors’s main thesis emerges from the idea that the
evolution of an increasingly rich inner world has given rise to
more and more cognitive capacities. This in turn has led to the
development of language and to an ever-keener capacity to trans-
fer knowledge between generations. Much of what is uniquely
human can be derived from how our inner worlds work (Ibid. 8).
Gärdenfors talks about nine different components for thinking,
which he assumes, have emerged during evolution, in roughly the
order in which they are here presented. Some of them human
beings have in common with other species, whereas some are
specific to human beings (Ibid. 16-20).

1 The capacity for sensation—without access to sense experi-
ence the remaining cognitive functions would be nonsensical.
The signals from different senses are treated in the brain in
rather well separated parts, up to a late part, when the signals are integrated to an experience of wholeness.

2 Attention: the capacity for focusing and choosing among the continuous flow—Gärdenfors suggests that perception is like a badly illuminated house in which work is simultaneously taking place in a lot of places, and the attention is like a torch which we can direct at different parts of the house.

3 The capacity for distinguishing emotions—feelings have no particular receptors, which give rise to these feelings, but the experiences which we call feelings are closely connected to different physiological reactions. Feelings belong to the inner phenomena of which we can be conscious and which are essential to our lives.

4 The capacity for memory—Gärdenfors’s reference is to the psychologist Endel Tulving, who differentiates between (1) Procedural memory, which allows for memories of connections between stimuli and responses, which make practical life significantly easier, (2) Semantic memory, which enables us to imagine things that are not perceptually present, and (3) Episodic memory, which enables us to remember individual events and the chronological order in which they have taken place. According to Gärdenfors, the inner world is dependent on the semantic and episodic memories. The three types of memory can also be connected to different levels of representation.

5 The capacity for thought—to be able to reason, plan, and daydream; remember and experience an inner world in which thinking takes place. But we know little about how the processes of thought work in the brain, and readily describe them with metaphors. During the course of evolution, the activities of the brain become increasingly divorced from the directly present environment.

6 The capacity for planning and imagination—to plan is target-oriented whereas to imagine is more like playing with the
possibilities that the inner world offers. Planning involve an awareness of time: we presuppose that something will happen in the future.

7 The image of the self which involves a capacity for focusing on inner processes—it is probably only human beings who can consciously focus their inner processes. The consciousness of death involves an insight into the fact that the body will die and one’s consciousness is likely to disappear once the body no longer works.

8 A free will—we experience that we can control our own actions, that we have alternatives between which we can choose.

9 The capacity for language—does not belong to thought: we are not conscious of how we understand something or what we ourselves are doing when we express ourselves in words. The inner monologue, however, presuppose the capacity for language. Seen from an evolutionary perspective, language is a late addition that is dependent on all other cognitive functions being available (Ibid.).

Gärdenfors’s hypothesis corresponds well with Damasio’s and Dewey’s arguments. It confirms the ultimate value of experience for the development of the cognitive capacities. The hypothesis also confirms the dynamics of experience in which all these capacities work together and are formulated in our inner worlds, of which, moreover, we can communicate value, at least in part. When we have mastered a capacity it becomes integrated with all other capacities in a useful whole.

Are we then “prisoners of description or masters of meaning,” as Edelman and Tononi express it? Or maybe we are both these things? (Edelman and Tononi 2000, 220) Nicholas Humphrey argues that language does not obviously lead us to clarity. In the current stage of our cultural development, there is still a lot, when it comes to consciousness and experience, which the available language cannot fully explain. Humphrey argues that we ap-
precipitate things intuitively: an experience we cannot yet dress in
words in a satisfactory way. Sometimes we lack words, but it
also happens that words and phrases come all too easily to mind,
without being particularly useful. Humphrey points out that “The
mere fact of naming an object tends to give definiteness to our
conception of it.” To name sometimes means a deadlock and that
we experience something as definitive. As an example of an ex-
pression in the category of expressions which promises far more
than it can convey, he mentions Bergson’s concept of Élan Vital
(Humphrey 1993, 9-14). In some contexts, we work intensively
to find “the right words,” those which really can convey the
meaning of what we want to say. The work of the poet is the
most exquisite example of this. A well-prepared lecture is an-
other example.

If we want to convey with words the meaning of something as
complex as an architectural experience, we need a well-
developed language, which can bring to life the richness of the
experience. Through language, we can develop our knowledge,
but the knowledge is not, in virtue of this, synonymous with the
words. Semir Zeki expresses the view that we experience that
language sometimes is not enough to describe, for instance, an
experience of art.

We [...] commonly write of the “unspeakable beauty” of a
work of art and say that “words cannot express its beauty,”
which the brain can nevertheless appreciate visually. Why
should this be so and why should that uniquely human quality,
language, fail relative to vision when it comes to communi-
cating beauty? The reason is perhaps to be found in the greater
perfection of the visual system, which has evolved over many
more millions of years than the linguistic system; it is able to
detect a great deal in fraction of a second—the state of mind of
a person, the colour of a surface, the identity of a constantly
changing object. [...] By contrast, language is a relatively re-
cent evolutionary acquisition, and it has yet to catch up with
and match the visual system in its capacity to extract essentials
so efficiently. (Zeki 1999, 9)

Language is our ordinary way of communicating our “inner
worlds” and is closely linked to our sensorimotor experiences of
the encounter with the conditions of the outer world. It helps us
to sort the values of our own complex experiences. Even if lan-
guage can mean a further reductive step in the process of experi-
ence, it can also make it possible to focus on, for instance, an ar-
chitectural object. A description of an experience in words is an
active selection of possibilities. Both consciousness and language
have limitations. Everything cannot be expressed, but it is fasci-
nating how much of our experience we can transfer by means of
language. Because we have conquered a language, as Wittgen-
stein has shown, we are also active participants in the experience
with our language. This leads to the idea that we fill our inner
worlds with “public meaning.” That we can make the content of
our inner worlds public by means of language also means that
there is a possibility for discovering that we have similar or dif-
f erent aesthetic reactions to public objects.

Lakoff and Johnson maintain that living systems have to cate-
gorise. Because we are neural beings, our categories are shaped
by “the embodiment.” Most of the time, they are not a product of
conscious reason, but a part of experience. We categorise as we
do because we have the brains and the bodies we have, and be-
cause we interact in the world in the way we do. Lakoff and
Johnson maintain that some small percentage of our categories
have been shaped by conscious acts, but most of them have been
shaped automatically and unconsciously as a result of our func-
tioning in the world. Categorisation constitutes the structure,
which differentiates aspects of our experience into discernible
types. It is thus not a purely intellectual phenomenon, which
takes place after the experience. It is rather the shaping and the
use of categories which is the stuff of experience. It is part of what our bodies and brains are constantly absorbed in. We cannot go beyond our categories and obtain pure non-categorised and non-conceptual experiences. By concepts, Lakoff and Johnson mean neural structures, which enable us to mentally establish categories and discuss them. In different ways, we establish very rich conceptual structures in our every day lives. Lakoff and Johnson maintain that an embodied concept is a neural structure which is part of, and utilises, the sensorimotor system in our brains. Many conceptual conclusions are thus sensorimotor conclusions (Lakoff and Johnson 1999, 19-20).

Philosophically, the embodiment of reason via the sensorimotor system is of great importance. It is a crucial part of the explanation of why it is possible for our concepts to fit so well with the way we function in the world. They fit so well because they have evolved from our sensorimotor systems, which have in turn evolved to allow us to function well in our physical environment. The embodiment of mind thus leads us to a philosophy of embodied realism. Our concepts cannot be a direct reflection of external, objective, mind-free reality because our sensorimotor system plays a crucial role in shaping them. On the other hand, it is the involvement of the sensorimotor system in the conceptual system that keeps the conceptual system very much in touch with the world. (Ibid. 43-4)

If we consider the close connection between the concept of architecture and the body, we can read this from descriptions of architecture. In *Experiencing Architecture*, Steen Eiler Rasmussen describes an encounter with le Corbusier’s church in Ronchamp (Rasmussen 1957). When we read this description, primarily of the lighting condition in the church, we can feel what it would be like to enter it. We imagine what it would be like to move around within the building and feel the different
qualities of the room in relation to our own embodiment. The image of the room, which we create, takes place both by means of Rasmussen's words and our own advanced embodied capacity for experience. Surely, Zeki is right when he describes the difficulties in describing with words an experience of art, for instance. But words can also concretise the experience of art for us, because linguistic description is symbolical and arouses our rich capacity for association, linked to the embodied mind. We are in language with our embodied consciousness.

On entering the church the first thing that strikes you is that it is very dark. Gradually you become aware of the walls and you begin to realize that planes surfaces and regularity are no more to be found inside the building than on the exterior. The very floor is like an undulating landscape of stone slabs in an irregular pattern. [...] To the right is a fathom-thick wall pierces by many openings of unequal sizes. From the outside they resemble tiny peepholes but inside they open up into large. White embrasures which cast great deal of reflected light into the dim-lit room. Some of these openings have been filled with glass on which ornaments or inscriptions are painted. [...] Between walls and ceiling there is a very narrow opening which admits just enough light for one to see the rough concrete ceiling against the white plastered walls. [...] what appears to be belfry lights are actually windows which cannot be seen from the interior but which, from high up above the roof, shed a magic light over the curved walls of the apse so that the worshipper's attention is drawn towards it, towards its altar and up above where the light is brightest. (Rasmussen 1993, 214)

**Experiencing Architecture and Antonio Damasio's Model of Consciousness**

In many theories of consciousness there is a rough distinction between primary or basic consciousness—a core—and a well-
developed or extended consciousness, which is connected to the capacity for stability and flexibility. We have our basic consciousness in common with the animals, but the well-developed consciousness is unique to human beings (even though, within different animal species, different degrees of consciousness have developed). Edelman and Tononi talk about primary consciousness and higher-order consciousness (Edelman and Tononi 2000), whereas Damasio chooses to talk about core consciousness and extended consciousness (Damasio 2000). Damasio characterizes core consciousness as a simple, biological phenomenon, which only has one level of organisation. It is stable throughout the life-time of the organism. It is not an exclusively human phenomenon and it is not dependent on memory, reason, or language. According to Damasio extended consciousness is a complex biological phenomenon. It has a number of levels of organisation and it develops throughout the life of the organism. Although Damasio considers the extended consciousness to exist in animals to some extent, it reaches its highest level in human beings. It is dependent on memory and can be enhanced by means of language (Ibid. 16). Damasio says that if core consciousness is an essential foundation for human consciousness, the extended consciousness is its pride. Extended consciousness reaches beyond the present, both forward and backward in time. The present is flanked by the past of memory and the anticipation of the future.

If one accepts Damasio’s hypothesis of consciousness, then the aesthetics of architecture (like all other well-developed forms of knowledge) becomes interwoven with the organism’s complex life-regulating system. Cultural values are thus also ultimately related to a basic level of survival in the individual and the variety of subjective consciousnesses. According to this model, the upper level, which I here term architectural awareness, cannot be cut off from the lower levels of emotions and lesser and unconscious spatial information, such as, for instance, the haptic.
The emotions play a crucial role when it comes to mediating useful information about the architectural objects that the experiencing being encounters. They are sophisticated, advanced tools for the individual, and play a decisive role for fundamental aesthetic and ethical value judgements. An interaction takes place on a number of different levels of consciousness in the evaluation of the encounter with architectural objects. Thus, one can also talk of numerous different kinds of architectural experiences and aesthetic values, more or less advanced and well developed, more or less obvious.

In conclusion of this essay, I present an experiment in which I have been inspired by architectural theory as well as by researchers within the study of human consciousness, above all, Damasio. I try to relate Damasio’s definition of the levels of unconsciousness, core consciousness, and extended consciousness (Damasio 2000, 174) to what I have chosen to call basic spatial experience, unreflecting architectural experience, and architectural awareness. It is important to stress that my argument, like Damasio’s model, is an abstraction. A continuous interplay between the different levels connect them in actual life, which leads to the fact that the levels can never be experienced, but are woven together into images of wholeness, connected to complex patterns of events. The important thing that this experiment shows is that the “lower” levels are also of fundamental importance to the well-developed ones, and thus cannot be omitted in a discussion of the aesthetic meaning of architecture. First, I will show Damasio’s model of how he consider the complex system of consciousness to be constructed:
Levels of Life Regulation (Ibid. 55)

HIGH REASON

Complex, flexible and customized plans of response are formulated in conscious images and may be executed as behavior.

CONSCIOUSNESS

FEELINGS

Sensory patterns signaling pain, pleasure and emotions become images.

EMOTIONS

Complex, stereotyped patterns of response, which include secondary emotions, primary emotions and background emotions.

BASIC LIFE REGULATION

Relatively simple, stereotyped patterns of response, which include metabolic regulation, reflexes, the biological machinery behind what will become pain and pleasure, drives and motivations.

The basic level of life regulation—the survival kit—includes the biological states that can be consciously perceived as drives and motivations and as states of pain and pleasure. Emotions are at a higher, more complex level. The dual arrows indicate upward or downward causation. For instance, pain can induce emotions, and some emotions can include a state of pain.
Unconsciousness—Basic Spatial Experience
The basic and unconscious level—unconsciousness—consists, according to Damasio, of the basic system of life regulation. The reactions to what an organism experiences is mediated by the emotions and feelings, which help in making the unconscious reactions into comprehensible images that can also be made conscious as meaning. According to the table above, Damasio talks about the main concepts of basic life regulation, emotions, and feelings on the level of unconsciousness. On the level of unconsciousness, he also talks about “the proto-self”: “An interconnected and temporarily coherent collection of neural patterns which represent the state of the organism, moment by moment, at multiple levels of the brain. We are not conscious of the proto-self” (Ibid. 174).

I connect basic spatial experience to the level of unconsciousness: the inherent capacities with which we have been equipped and which help us (without our knowing) to react to and behave in relation to space. All the reactions to the architectural objects we encounter—which do not take shape in images which become conscious—remain on this level: the images which are formed on an unconscious level, but which are not made conscious. Here, however, takes place a degree of unconscious selection and judgement in the encounter with architectural objects, connected to survival, but which still, in some way, probably colours the life of the experiencing subject. Emotions and feelings help form “intuitive” unconscious basic spatial reaction on this level, which it is possible to make conscious. Stable aesthetic values are connected to this level and to the level of core consciousness, because they belong together with how the human being—as a biological being—works.
Core Consciousness—Unreflecting Architectural Experience

Core consciousness is a simple, biological phenomenon; it has one single level of organization; it is stable across the lifetime of the organism; it is not exclusively human; and it is not dependent on conventional memory, working memory, reasoning, or language. (Ibid. 16)

Damasio also connects the concept of “the core self” to this level: “The second-order nonverbal account that occurs whenever an object modifies the proto self. The core self can be triggered by any object. The mechanism of production of core self undergoes minimal charges across a lifetime. We are conscious of the core self” (Ibid. 174).

On this level, I choose to talk about unreflecting architectural experience: momentary experiences of architectural objects with body and senses on an unreflecting biological level as an individual living organism. The experience, for instance, of stationary objects and moving objects, form, colour, light, sound, smell, and comprehensible wholes, on a basic wordless level. This level enables one to orient oneself and recognise spatial situations and places with the purpose of the survival of the organism. On this level, architecture cannot have any other meaning than the sum total of the sense experiences it gives rise to in the momentary situation. But this unreflecting, peripheral architectural experience forms the basis for that which is made conscious. On this level, no communication or planning can take place, nor can comparisons with other situations. If it is raining and cold, the organism can experience protection and well-being within an architectural space. However, the organism cannot plan for future needs or appreciate aesthetic values other than those, which have a direct connection with well-being and survival. Many of the fragmentary and indistinct aesthetic values are balanced on the borderline between core consciousness and extended conscious-
ness. The indistinct aesthetic values can potentially be made clear.

Extended Consciousness—Architectural Awareness

Extended consciousness is a complex biological phenomenon; it has several levels of organization; and it evolves across the lifetime of the organism. Although I believe extended consciousness is also present in some nonhumans, at simple levels, it only attains its highest reaches in humans. It depends on conventional memory and working memory. When it attains its human peak, it is also enhanced by language. (Ibid. 16)

On this level Damasio talks about the autobiographical self:

The autobiographical self is based on autobiographical memory, which is constituted by implicit memories of multiple instances of individual experience of the past and of the anticipated future. The invariant aspects of an individual’s biography form the basis for autobiographical memory. Autobiographical memory grows continuously with life experience but can be partly remodeled to reflect new experiences. Sets of memories which describe identity and person can be reactivated as a neural pattern and made explicit as images whenever needed. Each reactivated memory operates as a “something-to-be-known” and generates its own pulse of core consciousness. The result is the autobiographical self of which we are conscious. (Ibid. 174)

On the level of extended consciousness, I choose to talk about architectural awareness: here, in interaction with surrounding culture and society, a deeper understanding of architectural objects can develop during the lifetime of the organism. Here there is also the possibility for the individual to self-reflect. Extended
consciousness makes possible the sophisticated planning of architectural objects: to be able to build them and the satisfaction of experiencing them in a reflective way. Extended consciousness enables our consciousness to move between the present, the imagination, and memories. Through language, images, three-dimensional models, and other forms of representation, we can communicate, discuss, and criticise experiences of architecture. By means of the grand possibility for creativity on the level of extended consciousness, flexible aesthetic values can emerge.

**The Embodied Mind and the Aesthetics of Architecture**

To understand architecture, I maintain that, besides knowledge of the physical characteristics of architectural objects, knowledge of the human being’s embodied consciousness is also required. We cannot ignore the fact that the meaning of architecture is formed by experiencing human beings who reflect on what it is like to be a human being. But I do not see this emphasis on individual consciousness as impinging on the importance of cultural aspects. Significant philosophers as, Michel Foucault and Merleau-Ponty emphasise that the body is the basis of our knowledge. As Jørn Solheim says, the body is the "actual landscape into which the marks of culture are carved, and through these marks or inscribed structures of meaning we encounter and experience the world" (Solheim 2001, 65). However, to master the cultural architectural value, it is also important to understand the body’s and the brain’s own conditions.

Within the research into the embodied mind, much intensive work is done today. Different models are presented which describe how human consciousness works. In aesthetics founded on the significance of experienced values, it is necessary to follow this development and to scrutinise it to see whether its results may be of use. It may also be the case that aesthetics could provide the study of human consciousness with important knowledge concerning the advanced and subtle creation of meaning.
that human beings continuously undertake in relation to their environment. For instance, aesthetics can criticise the crude categorisations that deal with how human beings relate to their existence, or provide ideas concerning creativity.

An important point is that research into the embodied mind can help to remove the aesthetic discussion out of the limited perspective on value and meaning which has characterised the history of aesthetics, in which bodily and everyday aspects often have been avoided. The embodied mind theory shows that the human system of values is connected both with the sensorimotor and with the construction of the brain, and also with the cultural. The results of modern research into human consciousness thus correspond well with the embodied mind theories of the philosophers John Dewey and Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

The experiment in this essay—to use Antonio Damasio’s model to discuss different levels of the complexity of architectural experience—shows that, when it comes to forming aesthetic values, a continuous interplay between different levels of consciousness is necessary for the experiencing person’s development. According to this model, when the aesthetic value of architecture is discussed neither the level of unconsciousness nor that of core consciousness can be ignored, even if the actual aesthetic discussion takes place within the level of extended consciousness. Architectural awareness is dependent on basic spatial experience as well as unreflecting architectural experience. It demands commitment, which involves the body, but also demands the advanced capacity to be able to remember and reflect on experiences. Architectural awareness can emerge for the reason that the dynamics of the embodied mind of the subject stands in relation to the architectural object.

The study of human consciousness does not flinch from that which aestheticians sometimes treat as trivial. It reaches the entire way from the basic, involving such facts as that we are capable of apprehending colours and shapes, to the enormity of being
capable of enjoying entering a building with the complexity of all the different kinds of qualities. Research of the field of the embodied mind can provide new knowledge about the common aspects of human experience, whereas aesthetics can make use of this knowledge and place it against the complexity of the particular, which exists in each situation that is connected to every individual’s unique life history.
7 The Varieties of Architectural Experience

The title of this essay alludes to the philosopher William James’s *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902). James classifies and analyses the wide variety of religious experience from the perspective of a rich exemplification. To highlight the value of the richness of the variation and dynamics of experienced existence is an ambition, which pervades the whole of James’s philosophical life-work. Like his contemporary, Henri Bergson, he emphasises the idea that every individual consciousness is continually changing, but—because of emotion’s mediation of connections between different states of consciousness—is still perceived as continuous. At the end of the nineteenth century, both Bergson and James described consciousness as a continual stream (Hamlyn 1998, 307-10). James’s and Bergson’s views of the consciousness process have obvious similarities with different forms of model theories which have been developed by contemporary scientists. James, in particular, is often cited (Edelman and Tononi 2000) (Damasio 2000) (Greenfield 2000). Around 1900, James, together with John Dewey, was also promoting the development of classical pragmatism. I will have reason to return to Dewey in this essay, in virtue of his work on aesthetics, *Art as Experience* (1934).

This essay is primarily about the aesthetic value pluralism of architectural experience. James has inspired me because of my conviction that the depth of experience constitutes a necessary foundation for aesthetics and ethics. The variety of different kinds of values, linked with experience, is connected with the ways in which we work as human beings. The value pluralism of architectural experience ranges from the most basic bodily conditions at the level of basic survival, which are related to behaving in relation to space, to different forms of emotional reactions and the intellectual understanding of architecture. The field of
aesthetics is constituted by the whole range of values from intimacy to different kinds of public values.

Ideas about architecture, formulated by the contemporary philosopher Roger Scruton, also recur throughout this text. To some extent, I share Scruton’s view of architectural experience, as it is outlined in *The Aesthetics of Architecture* (1979). But like Scruton objects to James’s pragmatism (Scruton 1997, 104-8), maintaining that “pragmatists are just [...] wily casuists like Protagoras” (Ibid. 107), I consider Scruton’s aesthetic approach to be too limited. My understanding of aesthetics is, rather, closer to pragmatism, as expressed, primarily, by Dewey and Richard Shusterman. By way of introduction, I use a few examples to tackle the philosophically and politically important question of individual and public values, connected to architecture. Later, Scruton’s definition of *architectural experience* is criticised, and this criticism leads on to a discussion of the concept of *architecture* and the way it inherently includes the entire spectrum from exclusivity to everydayness.

**Subjectivity**

In our interaction with other human beings and our surroundings, as human beings we develop the necessary social ability of being able to relate to all points on the scale between the subjective and the objective. A person relates experience both to her or his own life history and to that which she or he imagines to have some kind of generality. The quote below—from *The Varieties of Religious Experience* by James—describes the idea of the subjective force which ties together different events into meaningfulness for the experiencing individual. These are ideas that James further elaborates in *Radical Empiricism* (1912). By contrast with the empiricists, who argued that the human being only registers objective facts about her or his surrounding world, James argues that the active self selects and creates meaning in experiences. (An understanding which corresponds well with the view taken
by modern researchers within the study of human consciousness.) According to James, our world of experience consists of two parts: one objective and one subjective. The former can be incalculable and more extensive than the latter, and yet the latter can never be transcended or controlled. The objective part consists of the sum total of all that we can think about at a given moment; the subjective part consists of the inner condition in which thinking takes place (James 1958, 411).

What we think of may be enormous,—the cosmic times and spaces, for example,—whereas the inner state may be the most fugitive and paltry activity of mind. Yet the cosmic objects, so far as the experience yields them, are but ideal pictures of something whose existence we do not inwardly possess but only point at outwardly, while the inner state is our very experience itself; its reality and that of our experience are one. A conscious field plus its object as felt or thought of plus an attitude towards the object plus the sense of a self to whom the attitude belongs—such a concrete bit of personal experience may be a small bit, but it is a solid bit as long as it lasts; not hollow, not a mere abstract element of experience, such as the “object” is when taken all alone. It is a full fact, even though it be an insignificant fact; it is of the kind to which all realities whatsoever must belong; it is on the line connecting real events with real events. That unsharable feeling which each one of us has of the pinch of his individual destiny as he privately feels it rolling out on fortune’s wheel may be disparaged for its egotism, may be sneered at as unscientific, but it is the one thing that fills up on the measure of our concrete actuality, and any would-be existent that should lack such a feeling, or its analogue, would be a piece of reality only half made up.
If this be true, it is absurd for science to say that the egotistic element of experience should be suppressed. (James (1890) 1958, 411-2)

If architectural experience as a phenomenon is to be investigated within aesthetics, we cannot limit ourselves to only describing “objective” experiential qualities. It is also necessary to understand the meaning of the continuous, subjective creation of architectural meaning, as aesthetics is about the meaning of art. I will give an example to illuminate this complex of problems:

If we imagine a man who frequently visits the same building, his experience is constantly varying, at the same time as it is repetitive. There are similarities which bind together the momentary differences, and these are to do with both the stability in the constitution of the particular being and the durability of the built form. The differences are consequences of the ways in which the man’s own life history and mood affect him. They also result from the fact that the building appears in different ways to him, depending on external circumstances, such as the current weather and light conditions. The interplay between differences and similarities are mirrored in the rhythm of his moving through the building with its determined measurements and directions. With his body, he measures distances and space, with his senses he appreciates whether it is warm, cold, or whether there is a draught in the room. He notices noises, light, and colour. He has an active effect on the history of the building by means of that event which consists of his momentarily entering the building. The building also affects him and his own history, as his body, thoughts, and feelings are moved by that which the building conveys. The experience is rich and varied. He can actively make use of his capacity for impressionability and his consciousness of the meaning and extent of the architectural experience. He can also choose to use his experience of the building as merely a passive background experience, and direct his active attention towards some-
thing entirely different. At a certain moment, he feels empty of thoughts and can stand open to observe light and colour impressions in a neutral way. On another occasion, he is elated by love or dispirited by sorrow and interprets the entire encounter with the building through intense personal emotions. On another occasion, he visits the building for a particular purpose, for instance, to collect something he has left there, and the experience is then to a large extent coloured by this action. On yet another occasion, he enters the building and looks around in a manner which is coloured primarily by his professional role as an architect. The qualities of the spatial connections appear clearly to him, and so does the relationship between the outside and the inside. He experiences distinctly the contrasts between details and the whole; the dark and the light; forms, material, and colours; narrow and open space; and rough and smooth surfaces. He bases his evaluation of the building on his professional skill. He considers what ought to be attended to in the building: that the roof needs to be painted; that a door needs to be mended; and that maybe it would be worthwhile to remove an inner wall. On another occasion, he arranges a party and invites friends to the building. He deliberately effects both his own and his visitors’ experience of the building by lighting candles and serving delicious-smelling food. The building is for a time filled with voices, music, and human interaction.

When we investigate the dynamics of architectural experience, we need to communicate with each other in order to compare similarities and differences. Let us suppose that we visit a particular building for the first time and try to imagine the intentions of the architect. We look at plans and read a description of what the architect thought when designing the building. We then relate the architect’s description to our own experience of the building and compare them. Another person may have studied the same documents, and a conversation may ensue between us about, on the one hand, the superficial qualities of the room which we have
visited ard, on the other hand, the individual reactions which the visit has aroused in us. Our perspectives may vary, and we may discuss the qualities of the building; the intentions of the architect—as outlined in her description—and our individual experiences. If only the superficial qualities and the intentions of the architect had been considered in the conversation, and not the values attributed by us as experiencing individuals, the aesthetic conversation would have been less dynamic, without any connection with intimate values.

According to neurologist Susan Greenfield, probably the closest we can come to sharing someone else’s consciousness is through poetry, visual art, and music. However, we know very little about the ways in which individual experience is actually created. She claims that it is frustrating to try to explain the ways in which a sequence of objective neural events can be transformed into a subjective sense experience. In fact, we have no idea how this may be explained (Greenfield 2000, 180). During the last few centuries, Western philosophy has revolved around questions concerning this issue. In his criticism of pragmatism, Scruton draws attention to Kant as the philosopher who has, to date, best formulated the complex set of problems bearing on the fact that, although we cannot entirely liberate our individual perspective, at the same time, we use our judgements as if they were objective (Scruton 1997, 104-8). Scruton summarises his interpretation of Kant with respect to this:

We can know the world only from the point of view that is ours. We cannot step outside our concepts so as to know the world “as in itself,” from no point of view. Nevertheless, our concepts are shaped by the belief that judgements are representations of reality: our concepts are concepts of objectivity, and apply to the realm of “objects.” Without that underlying belief we could not begin to think. At the same time, the belief in an objective order generates the idea of a world seen from
no perspective: the world “in itself” as God knows it. We cannot attain God’s perspectiveless view of things; but the thought of it inhabits our procedure as “a regulative idea,” exhorting us always along the path of discovery. (Ibid. 107–8)

As shown by the previous quote, by William James, he surely also understood the dualism between the subjective and the objective perspective as central. His point, however, was that ultimately, human beings create meaning about their existence, depending on individual experiences of the world in relation to varying experiential intentions. According to James, the passive “divine” perspectiveless world in itself is simply not possible. According to the philosopher Gianni Vattimo, Kant’s idealised subjective perspective is not enough to describe the range of experiential uniqueness within aesthetics. Vattimo argues that Kant does not emanate from the subjective experience in relation to an object, but rather, to that pleasure, which is connected with recognising one’s belonging to a group—that is, humanity itself—as an ideal, which shares the same capacity of appreciating beauty. Much aesthetics since Kant has rested on this foundation (Vattimo 1988, 56). It is extremely unfortunate that aesthetics should be to do with idealised universal values, disconnected from practical life. To architecture, which so manifestly connects with the practical life of human beings, it is disastrous. According to Shusterman, Kant’s three-part division into “pure reason, practical reason and aesthetic judgement” expresses a marginalisation of art:

In this division of cultural spheres, art was distinguished from science as being not concerned with the formulation or dissemination of knowledge, since its aesthetic judgment was essentially non-conceptual and subjective. It was also sharply differentiated from the practical activity of ethics and politics, which involved real interests and appetitive will (as well as
conceptual thinking). [...] As the aesthetic was distinguished from the more rational realms of knowledge and action, so it was also firmly differentiated from the more sensate and appetitive gratifications of embodied human nature, aesthetic pleasure rather residing in distanced, disinterested contemplation of formal properties. (Shusterman 2000, 212)

Rather, we can talk about a rich range of different kinds of experienced values in the encounter with architectural objects than to try to find limits for what is the aesthetic architectural experience. This range of values is dependent on a number of different factors. It may be connected to the current mood of the experiencing individual. The evaluation is connected with the qualities and context of the architectural object. The aesthetic value is determined by intention; the degree of attention that the experiencing person directs towards the architectural object; and the ways in which the experiencing person is affected by her or his encounter with the architectural object. When we enter a church, we have probably another intention than when we enter a supermarket, and this affects the experience. In discussions about aesthetics, idealised values can thus exist parallel to practical and political values, as can the bodily aspects of experience. The range of aesthetic values is thus far richer and more flexible than Kant maintains. Moreover, aesthetic experience is dependent on context, as we belong to a social and cultural community to which we relate our experience. Aesthetic experience cannot be disengaged from life in general. Dewey also expressed this idea in *Art as Experience*, which is summarised by Shusterman:

Dewey further insists that even so-called private mental experience is always more than psychologistic privacy. For experience is always the “interaction of an organism [itself always more than a mental subject] with its environment, an environment that is human as well as physical, that includes the mate-
A human being learns—in an intense way—to experience the world during the first years of her or his life, through her or his interaction with the world. Greenfield describes the peculiarities of the very rapid growth of the child’s brain during the first years of life. She argues that, on the one hand, we already have the neurons (brain cells) which we need when we are born, but that the expansion depends on the connections we build up in the relations that are created in our encounters with our surroundings. We develop those relations which are beneficial to us. Those which are used frequently are intensified, whereas those which are not used can begin to wither away. The network is built up to an increasingly complex and plastic system based on the experiences of the human being.

The more complex the brain, the greater the potential for variations in the neuronal connectivity that underlies its interpretations. The longer the childhood, the more the brain will be able to forge connections that mirror not just the demands of the species or the immediate habitat, but the particular and peculiar history of the individual concerned. As the brain becomes more sophisticated, particularly in primates, the part played by the environment becomes even more marked compared to the generic programming seen in, say, the goldfish. Animals that interpret the world in a way that is beneficial and necessary to the stereotyped repertoire and lifestyle of the species rather than to that of an individual would not need to learn from experience, nor would they need a highly developed mind. They would be at the—literally mindless—dictates of their genes. (Greenfield, 2000, 65)

Can one then read from the neural networks what individuals
have had a “stimulating life”? Greenfield’s answer is a determined no, which is motivated by the following consideration:

After all, an enriched environment, in neurological terms, would have little to do with whether one was on a beach in the Caribbean or trapped on a financially compromised position at home. As far as the brain is concerned, stimulation is provided by conversations, experiences, and encounters, irrespective of material wherewithal. (Greenfield 2000, 63)

Does the built environment matter to human beings at all if experience is as rich and varied as James, Dewey, and Greenfield describe it? I spent a part of my childhood in a 1960s housing estate in the south of Stockholm. Identical flats, regimented in lines, with asphalt yards underneath; brutal materials; and a complete lack of care of the design of details characterised the estate. But I do not see my own and my friends’ childhood as more impoverished than that of other children. We compensated for the lack of stimulation in the built environment with, for instance, long (often-illicit) excursions into the forest; ball games; and intensive collective play. A first kiss against the uncomfortable and rough concrete wall in this area was probably a no less sensual aesthetic experience than if the environment had been a glass-enclosed veranda in a fashionable area. The delicious meals with my Yugoslavian friend may have been even more festive if we had had it in their house in Yugoslavia, and not in an ugly kitchen with the blinds drawn towards the external galleries of the flats. These meals, however, were enjoyed in just this kitchen, in this suburb of Stockholm in the 1970s, and they appear in my memory as important aesthetic experiences.

As children, we probably developed a greater care for each other, as we felt vulnerable and exposed in this architectonic environment. At times, we may also have been excessively brutal to one another, for the same reason. When we grew up and acquired
broader prospects, we could compare our home district with other areas. We certainly experienced enormous treachery from those in power: that we were not worth better housing and physical planning in our local area. Accordingly, friends from my childhood describe how important it has been to them to offer their children richer and more beautiful home environments. With this story, I just want to show that despite the fact that human beings compensate for what is bad in the built environment, improvements can be highly desirable.

Our childhood street has crept into our stream of consciousness during many years with some kind of message: a message poor in stimulation and beauty but rich in social encounters. That the architecture of an area is plain does not, of course, mean that the human beings that live there lead impoverished lives; fortunately, human life is itself too rich for this to happen. Wretched houses do not need to mean that the architectural experiences associated with these objects are plain. Experience of architecture is part of something greater: the continual process of experience, the continual creation of meaning in our individual and social lives. Architectural experience is, of course, connected with the immensity of being a living person. The task of architects is, nevertheless, to create good architecture. This needs to be done in a dialogue with both individuals and society, with a conscious consideration for the different kinds of human beings who daily react and relate to the built environments in their lives. In an article about the value of the home, Juhani Pallasmaa maintains that architecture has become “self-referential and autistic” and that architects often behave as if they have a split personality. If there is a scrap of truth in this, it is high time for architects to reflect on the causes and on what measures can be taken.

[As designers and as dwellers we apply different sets of values to the environment. In our role as architects we aspire for a meticulously articulated and temporally onedimensional envi-
ronment, whereas as dwellers ourselves, we prefer a more layered, ambiguous and aesthetically less coherent environment; the instinctual dweller emerges through the role values of the professional. (Pallasmaa 1994)

**Dynamism**

Our capacity for experiencing is extensive and flexible. Human beings can remember, dream, associate, reflect, and imagine. We can interpret and choose between the possibilities offered to us by our existence intellectually, and also question whether we have made the right decisions and whether we have planned our futures sensibly. Our capacities are continually developing and changing. The brain’s search on different levels and its filtering of certain information leads to an interpretation of what is experienced, even though human beings do not interpret in the same way. Our capacity for interpretation is thus also capable of development (Gärdenfors 1996, 134).

We attach value to experiences, both to those we experience momentarily and those which we carry with us in our memories, and we compare these. Previous experiences can be recreated by our imagining them again. The memory helps us bring them out and our forgetfulness helps us screen our great variety of impressions. By imagining an experience by interpreting our own memories, we can also reach newly constructed experiences. Layers of experiences can thus be created into rich patterns and be linked with previous experiences, marked by the value we have given those, by means of association. We can oscillate between past, present, and future in our stream of thought. Actual experiences of the present are in our consciousness mixed with memories and fantasies, and this makes possible a freedom from the restrictions of time and space. Most often, we can actively control our memory and fantasies when we want to switch on these capacities. I may, for instance, without any great difficulties, recall in memory the encounter of a building which was of
great importance to me in my childhood, and for a moment set aside the present by means of my directed consciousness. When I describe a memory, I activate my imagination by re-living what I re-create. By means of activating a childhood memory, I return (at least in part) to that different embodiment and world of ideas which belongs to the child:

I remember that when I stepped over the threshold to the glass-enclosed veranda of my father’s studio in a late-nineteenth-century manor-house, the light struck me vigorously. Large windows overlooked the lake to the south. The windows were open and the singing of the birds in the large ashes outside filled the air. There was a niche left where a tiled stove had been. This niche was painted green and in it stood a red chair. One can sit there, but no-one does. Instead I sat with pleasure on the broad windowsill and lent out a little over the edge. It was about four metres to the ground. Underneath this window was a door to a tool and wood shed. In there lived a fox with her cubs. The walls of the veranda were light blue, and the paint flaked off everywhere. It was impossible to resist picking at the small flakes of paint. A long sofa stood along the rear wall, covered with some kind of grey plastic. It was uncomfortable and sticky against the skin to lie down on top of it with bare legs, still, I sometimes did, to be able to see straight into the heavens. One could draw with chalk on the floor. I drew hopscotch lines, and the shape of the room changed as I leaped through it. The so-obviously stable surrounding walls appearedpliant and curving as I leaped and the light flickered.

In the memory that is rendered, a specific event appears, mixed with a more interfused experience of numerous encounters with this house. To play hopscotch in the room is a memory of an intensified sense of self connected with the event and the spatial situation, and which has engraved itself on my memory as something significant: an event from my childhood, to which I can return by means of memory. Indeed, I cannot guarantee that
the memory is authentically represented, but I do know that it has an aesthetic value for me in relation to the history of my life. When I communicate it, others can also enter into the situation and recognise themselves there or be surprised at it. James’s contemporary and friend, Bergson, talks about the importance of “get[ting] back into pure duration.”

Hence there are finally two different selves, one of which is, as it were, the external projection of the other, its spatial and, so to speak, social representation. We reach the former by deep introspection, which leads us to grasp our inner states as living things, constantly becoming, as states not amenable to measure, which permeate one another and of which the succession in duration has nothing in common with juxtaposition in homogeneous space. But the moments at which we thus grasp ourselves are rare, and that is just why we are rarely free. The greater part of the time we live outside ourselves, hardly perceiving anything of ourselves but our own ghost, a colourless shadow which pure duration projects into homogeneous space. Hence our life unfolds in space rather than in time; we live for the external world rather than for ourselves; we speak rather than think; we “are acted” rather than act ourselves. To act freely is to recover possession of oneself, and to get back into pure duration. (Bergson 1910, 231-2)

Bergson too thus claims that the shift between the inner and outer world characterises our lives in a radical way. We continually balance our “selves” in order to function well in relation both to ourselves and to the varied situations of our surroundings. This, of course, also affects our encounter with architectural objects. The richness of the imagination, however, does not imply that architectural experience is necessarily intensified over the years, through an increased sensitivity: a consequence of our increasing number of memories and increasing amounts of previous experi-
ence. On the contrary, experiences of the surrounding world can become increasingly routine as we no longer relate to body and senses, but only register traversal ways to reach the goals of our actions.

The attentiveness in our encounters with architecture may be severely limited and blocked by, for instance, everyday stress, or strictly controlled intentions, which determine our experiences. We have, as Bergson puts it, often come to be living more for the outer world than for ourselves. This is not surprising, as we are social beings who need to interact with our surroundings. We can, however, remember that capacity we once possessed in childhood for simultaneously experiencing our being part of the material room and the infinite space: in time, but also beyond time. Moments when we felt we were a natural part of the world and, at the same time, fully occupied with utilising all the possibilities in ourselves in our encounters with the outer world. We rarely reach this intensified sense of self or “pure duration,” but it constitutes significant events in our lives. This magnificent feeling may, however, fill us, for a fleeting moment, in the most unexpected situations in our everyday lives. An example:

On my balcony, on the first warm day of spring. I drink a cup of coffee and read the morning paper. One article describes how little Nepalese girls are transported over the border to India to become sex slaves locked up in brothels. The journalist skillfully takes me into the vulnerability of these girls by describing their situation and allowing their voices to be heard. The photographer’s pictures of the girls become unbearable juxtaposed with the text. The life stories of a number of girls are described: one of them was only seven years old when she was brought to the brothel, another one eleven, a third one is dying from AIDS. The depiction of the environment of the rooms and the description of details of dress and interior contribute to my experience of myself as being emotionally close to the girls, but also almost physically in the room with the girls. The article penetrates ever
deeper into my consciousness, it engages me, and also colours my experience of the balcony in the sun in this peaceful part of Stockholm. The newly planted pansies in my flower-boxes for a moment become flowers of grief for the suffering of the girls: flowers of happiness for those persons who risk their own lives to save at least some of the girls. Suddenly, my own 11-year-old daughter rushes into the flat together with my niece. They grab an ice-cream from the freezer and take a seat in the sun on the balcony. The pictures in the article catch their eye and they begin to read. They read out loud to one another about the fact that hundreds of girls can be locked up in the same house, that they are abused and beaten, that many die after a few years. I look at the Swedish girls in the spring sun and, certainly, the balcony and the buildings around me are still essentially the same, but the story of the Nepalese girls has shaken us and affected our way of perceiving the environment in which we are at that moment.

We have made a lasting comparison. The next time I go out on the balcony, I do not focus on the article. But something of the situation in which we gathered around the article and became so touched by it is still there, and is sieved in among other events, which create meaning in the continuity of our lives. May this be classified as an architectural experience? The different events enter into one another, penetrate, and colour each other in our lives. It is not meaningful to discuss this in terms of a protection of one’s conceptual territory. Above all, this was what Dewey characterises as “having an experience.” It was an event which could be grasped as having a beginning and an end, which constituted a value which could be discerned from the stream of experience, and which affects future events. In most significant events in our lives, architectural objects are present and play a more or less prominent role. This is what makes architectural objects unique among art objects. It is also because of this that the aesthetics of architecture is extremely plastic and rich.

Let me take another example related to the fact that our human
vulnerability and mortality also penetrate the valuation of architecture. We know that the private life—what is unique in our existence—has an end. Through ageing, our embodiment determines this space of time, which becomes increasingly comprehensible to us the longer we live. Paradoxically, we may measure our lives against a future death, even though we do not know exactly when it will occur. We have, however, an approximate length of life to use. We possess a consciousness of death, with all that this implies, in possibilities and limitations which are woven into our stream of consciousness. Death means the end of time to us, but we may still understand that time and space will exist for those persons who survive us.

Recently, at a funeral, my observation of the physical room of the chapel was so intense that I managed to push aside the experience of the annulment of time and space, which was threateningly close. Every detail of the altar-piece, every colour of the flower-garlands, every change of light in the room, every scent, and every sound filled my consciousness, followed by an ever increasing feeling of my own physical presence. By means of my breathing and heartbeats, I tracked measurable time against the immeasurable. I did not hear the actual words spoken by the minister, but heard every variation in the vocal pitch as if it were a melody, rather than a commemorative speech which he delivered. All the surrounding human beings’ outer shapes appeared to me with the same degree of detail as the room of the chapel. I managed, by means of intense observation, to keep my inner feeling of extreme grief at a distance until the end of the ceremony. My grief and my own fear of death almost got the upper hand, but by means of conscious thought I could somewhat balance the strength of these emotions.

My intense observation of the room of the chapel was, to some extent, probably connected with the fact that I am a qualified architect. My education has provided me with knowledge of architecture that I would otherwise not have had, and which penetrates
my way of thinking and my encounters with the surrounding world. Also those experiences which I am not attending to are probably affected by the fact that I have been studying architecture for a number of years. Recently, when, in the midst of the hustle and bustle of everyday life, I opened the book *Carlo Scarpa and the Castelvecchio* at home on the kitchen table, it was a festive occasion to me (Murphy 1990). Neither my children, nor their father, can understand this. It is, however, not hard for my colleagues among architects to understand this joy. Scarpa’s drawings and the pictures from the building moved me and made me forget the everyday bustle around me. In my memory, there were also activated real encounters with Scarpa’s buildings. I can distinctly remember the feeling of walking around the small cemetery Cemertario Brion. The drawings sang to me, they spoke to all aesthetic levels at once: sensorimotor and emotional, as well as intellectual.

Through the active action—whose significance is stressed, for instance, by Jean Piaget (Piaget 1972)—a foundation is provided for an interfusion between the complexity of reality and individual actions into comprehensible structures for the individual. With body, emotions, and thought, the surrounding world is explored and the child’s capacity for seeing more complex connections is expanded through an active participation with the surrounding world. The small child explores the world’s different materials by testing them; for instance, Steen Eiler Rasmussen claims, the child experiences the solidity of the wall by throwing a ball against it. The child learns, through play, to instinctively evaluate surrounding qualities, such as weight, solidity, texture, softness, hardness, colour, and temperature, by means of comparison. With increased experiences of, for instance, holding a stone, and feeling its weight and texture, the child can with only one glance at another stone judge relatively accurately what it would be like to hold it.

Rasmussen describes a visit to the grand church of Santa
Maria Maggiore on one of Rome’s hills, and now he there watched some boys playing ball games. The game was based on the specific conditions of the place, which included the risk that when the ball was out of the defined area of the game, it bounced away, far down the large surrounding steps. Relatively unconsciously, Rasmussen argues, these boys experiences some of the founding elements of architecture by involving them in their game, namely, horizontality and verticality. The boys’ game seized the place, which also affected Rasmussen himself, in his momentary experience of the three-dimensional conditions of the place. At a certain level, Rasmussen points out, most children have a desire to build some kind of protection. It may be an elaborate cave or a primitive den, but often it is just a secret nook in a bush or a tent made out of a sheet over a couple of chairs. This game can be played in thousands of varying ways, but common to these are the enclosure of space for the child’s own purposes. Many animals also create protection, but human beings are pre-eminent in their ingenuity for finding variations of protection to serve different purposes, climates, and cultural patterns. The child’s game continues in the adult’s creation of increasingly sophisticated ways of enclosing space. Slowly, human beings strive to give form to their whole surroundings. “And this—to bring order and relation into human surroundings—is the task of architecture” (Rasmussen, 1957) 1993, 34.

**Everydayness**

She is standing in the kitchen, cooking for the children. She moves within a limited space, back and forth, lifts her arms and takes down food from the fridge and the larder, and gets spices and herbs down from another cupboard. She bends down to get out utensils from one of the lower kitchen drawers. A number of saucepans are on the hob, and the pasta is boiling at the same time as she is watching the sauce. She tastes the food and adjusts her seasoning. One of her children is calling for her, and asks
about something. She answers. Her thoughts move back and forth fairly independently of what she is doing. She is thinking about some particular event, which happened last summer, and for a brief moment she is swimming in tepid water in a small northern forest more. Without interrupting this pleasant thought, she serves the children food and drink. When she has to start talking, the thought is broken off. Not once, during the time from her cooking to her serving out the food, has she consciously considered the kitchen as a room, still, she handles the spatial situation without any problems, and is very familiar with every detail of it.

On another day, she is very tired when she comes home and starts cooking. She is distracted by a recent traumatic event. Earlier the same afternoon, in the waiting room before a mammography examination, sat about twenty women of varying ages on the benches surrounding a long and narrow room, lighted by strip lights. Once with the nurse, she was assigned to go into one of two cubicles, in which she was to leave the clothes, which she had removed from the upper part of her body. Inside the examination room, she found a nurse who helps place the women’s breasts against that pane of glass against which they are to be flattened. When the nurse went out of the room, the machine started to move, and for a few seconds she was fixed to the machine, which is fixed to the room, which is fixed to the house, whose foundations are fixed to the ground. The feeling of discomfort was immense, and the relief was equally immense when the nurse made sure that the machine released its hold. When she went into the cubicle again to put on her clothes, the next woman went in. They did not exchange looks. Of the rest of the room in which the machine’s foot was lowered and raised, she remembers nothing, apart from a vague image of the size of the confined space, of the ceiling height, and the approximate shape of the room, and that it was light, but without windows. To be able to move freely now felt magnificent, and she felt as if she was flying down the stairs down to Skärholmen’s glazed, richly popu-
lated square, with surrounding shops and cafes. Never before had this suburban centre appeared so vital and beautiful to her.

Although she is now standing securely in her own kitchen with her children around her, the event is still partly present and affecting her. Her automated routine in the cooking situation at first works as usual, but now and then her mechanical work is disturbed by her dropping an utensil, burning herself on the frying pan, and taking cinnamon instead of paprika when seasoning. The children are asking questions, but she cannot bring herself to answer them. When she is portioning out the food, she serves her children the wrong plates. Her youngest one gets the largest helping, and vice versa. A glass is dropped on the floor, and suddenly she notices the floor, and the vulnerability of their feet. Glass splinters are everywhere, and she has to turn the children out of the kitchen. She bends down to pick up the larger bits of glass and then gets the vacuum cleaner. She notices that one part of the room with which she has to deal: the floor. Her head is aching and, at this moment, the children’s voices are annoying. There is no space for any thoughts of her own. Her body is tired and heavy when they eventually sit down at the table. The chair feels hard and uncomfortable. Suddenly, however, she sees the illuminated table surface and the things standing on top of it, the children’s faces and hands, the lamp above the table, and the plate in front of her. They appear in the form of very sharp pictures to her. One of the children turns off the light and lights some candles. The automatism of her spatial experience has for a moment been replaced by intense observation. Some green apples in a blue bowl, to which her gaze has attached itself, seem, in the shift between the different light conditions, brownish rather than green, but as she widens her perspective, they regain their greenness in relation to the other colours. A momentary recollection of a still life by Helene Scherbeek passes through her mind. When she and the children start talking to each other about their days, the concentrated observation disappears and is
replaced by an active listening to and participation in the conversation at the table. As she relaxes, she can again experience all the well-known qualities of the room and the home, which, to a great extent, she has created herself. She sees her children.

These kinds of everyday experiences take place continually. They enter into one another, and create wholes and sometimes discernible patterns. Dewey, however, describes how many experiences only reach the initial stage of the process of becoming one experience, entire, with a beginning and an end. Many initiated experiences remain scattered and divided between what one experiences and what one thinks; what one desires and what one gets. The process ceases because of external disturbances or inner lethargy (Dewey (1934) 1980, 35).

In the multitude of everyday experiences, there is repetition: an aesthetics of habits. Everyday activities are permeated by both gloominess and happiness, which are related to the architectural objects in which one spends a lot of time: one’s home, place of work, the local supermarket, or underground station. These places are so familiar, our experience of them is so automated, that we often hardly reflect on them, more than in a purely practical way. Everydayness has been a significant theme within French twentieth-century philosophy, not least through Jean-Paul Sartre’s works. Henri Lefebvre described everydayness as “the most universal and the most unique condition, the most social and the most individuated, the most obvious and the best hidden” (Lefebvre, in Harris and Berke 1997, 26). To study the banal needs not be banal, he argued, and maintained that the concept of everydayness may also include the extraordinary. Lefebvre argues that in the study of the everyday, however, there is the problem of repetition.

In the study of the everyday we discover the great problem of repetition, one of the most difficult problems facing us. The everyday is situated at the intersection of two modes of repeti-
tion: the cyclical, which dominates in nature, and the linear, which dominates in processes known as “rational.” The everyday implies on the one hand cycles, nights and days, seasons and harvests, activity and rest, hunger and satisfaction, desire and its fulfilment, life and death, and it implies on the other hand the repetitive gestures of work and consumption. (Ibid. 32-7)

Lefebvre’s emphasis of the value of complexity in everyday repetition acquires significance in the context of the aesthetics of architecture, as that which is built plays such a large role in the everyday. Everyday events constitute an extensive evaluative element in our discussions about the meaning of architecture. This side of the complex of problems of architecture’s aesthetic is hard to relate to, as it contains large elements of repetition, on the one hand, and of fragmentation and obscurity, on the other. Mary McLeod, for instance, argues that architects need to consider these fragile and elusive everyday values when they create architectural objects. She speaks ironically of some fashionable neo-avant-garde terms within the architectural debate.

From the perspective of everyday life, such neo-avantgarde strategies as “folding,” “disjunction,” and “bigness” deny the energy, humanity, and creativity embodied in the humble, prosaic detail of daily existence. Architecture’s “star-system” validates novelty and arrogance (even as big-name architects have become standardized and repetitive commodities), at the expense of what Lefebvre saw as the initial value of modernity: its relentless questioning of social life. In this context, Lefebvre’s desire to ground philosophy and culture in the everyday—in the ethics of ordinary choices—offers an important check to the deracinated rhetoric and mystical claims that continue to be propagated by the neo-avantgarde. (McLeod, in Harris and Berke 1997, 27)
According to Rasmussen, architecture exists to be lived in and not to be observed from the outside as an object independent of human life. As soon as a building is observed as something abstract without a comprehensible relation to human life, it ceases to be experienced as architecture: “architecture means shapes formed around man, formed to be lived in, not merely to be seen from the outside” (Rasmussen (1957) 1993, 10). Scruton also argues that we search for aesthetic experiences in our everyday lives, and believes that aesthetic competence is included in the practical reason that we need in our everyday lives. Art can help us develop our selves, in dynamic interaction with others in a society (Lundequist 1998, 59) (Scruton 1979). Dewey, who also emphasizes the significance of the everyday, argues in a similar spirit that aesthetic experience is a cultural manifestation—a celebration of life in a civilisation—as aesthetic experience is the product of creative individuals in a culture (Dewey (1934) 1980, 326). All commentators, however, have not considered everyday values to be central to architecture, as has been stressed, for instance, by Scruton, Holl, Lefebvre, Dewey, and McLeod. There have been a number of rigid architectural approaches during the twentieth century, which do not believe that everyday perspectives and the ordinary human being’s aesthetic experience should be incorporated within or contaminate the prestigious concept of architecture. In 1962 Hans Hollein and Walter Pichler described the conditions for an “absolute architecture”:

Architecture is not an integument for the primitive instincts of the masses. Architecture is an embodiment of the power and longing of a few men. It is a brutal affair that has long since ceased to make use of art. It has no consideration for stupidity and weakness. It never serves. It crushes those who cannot bear it. Architecture is the law of those who do not believe in the law but make it. It is a weapon. Architecture ruthlessly employs the strongest means at its disposal at any given mo-
ment. Machines have taken possession of it and human beings are now merely tolerated in this domain. (Pichler, in Conrads 1970, 181)

Architecture is not the satisfaction of the needs of the mediocre, is not an environment for the petty happiness of the masses. Architecture is made by those who stand at the highest level of culture and civilization, at the peak of their epoch’s development. Architecture is an affaire of the élite. (Hollein, in Conrads 1970, 181-2)

These kinds of fascistic celebrations of architects—as if they were supermen—or the suggestion that architecture could be something which in itself exists outside society, emerge now and again. It is necessary to have forceful counter-arguments at hand, as architecture is essentially political and public in its nature. It interferes in the everyday lives of human beings and represents immense economic power. Scruton argues that it is a political form of art, whose results are established as public decisions. That which is built is thus experienced and used by a public which only has indirect opportunities to influence the decisions. Jerker Lundequist refers to both Kolb and Scruton when he describes building as a phenomenon which, independently of the wills of individuals, interfere in their everyday lives. Individuals can only exert influence on what is built via the public sphere of society: through indirect influence; through elected political decision-makers (Lundequist 1998, 44) (Kolb 1987, 90) (Scruton 1979).

The exceptional political position which architecture holds within the arts demands a well-developed aesthetic/ethical debate so that we might be able to illuminate consequences of different approaches such as “absolute architecture,” which has just been mentioned, and which excludes ordinary human beings and everyday aspects of life from the arena of architecture. Neither the
opposite—to exclude élitist perspectives and professionalism from the architectural debate—would be desirable. The whole scale of values, from the everyday to the exclusive, constitutes, on the other hand, the foundation of architectural aesthetics. The richness of human life demands a pluralistic architectural approach which considers the human being as a subject; the architectural object and its qualities; and the relations which emerges between subject and object through the flexibility of experience and the continual stream of events. A rich aesthetic/ethical discussion within architecture is thus needed: one which does not flinch at using knowledge from the wide range of other relevant fields of knowledge.

**Architecture, Truth, and Aesthetics Experience**

James argued for a pluralistic approach. He conceived that a human being’s experience is rational insofar as the subject actively forms its content in relation to itself and as an organism and as a part of a social context. James investigated “creative growth through action, including always the action of understanding, as the key to a meaningful life. James’s work thus represents a profound exploration of our prospects for rendering experience more ‘rational’ so as to achieve a degree of intimacy with existence” (Parker 1999, 209). In *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, James investigates the varying subjective meaning which human beings shape in the form of religious experiences. James argues that there “seems to be no one elementary religious emotion, but only a common storehouse of emotions upon which religious objects may draw, so there might conceivably also prove to be no one specific and essential kind of religious object, and no one specific and essential kind of religious act” (James, 1902) 1558, 43).

James asked whether there is actually any simple and discernible phenomenon that may be characterised as religious experience. Is there anything that can be called architectural experi-
ence? I ask in this essay. If there is, what characterises this experience, and is there a clear idea of what architecture is, of which there is consensus? The answer, in the case of James, was in the negative with respect to religion, and so it is in this investigation of architecture. This, of course, does not mean that religious or architectural experiences do not exist. There are numerous different ideas about what architecture is. As a religious experience is attached to various ideas about religion, architectonic experience stands in relation to a flexible idea of architecture.

In The Aesthetics of Architecture, Scruton was primarily inspired by the philosophers Ludwig Wittgenstein and Sartre (Lundqvist 1998, 46). Scruton’s description of architectural experience is in many ways elucidatory, particularly the summary in the introduction to The Classical Vernacular: Architectural Principles in an Age of Nihilism (1994). There Scruton divides “the human condition” into one biological and one social perspective when he talks about aesthetic experience. The social, he argues, is connected with the human being’s exclusive reason:

This capacity is co-extensive with the art of speech, and is manifest in everything that divides us from the animals: in science, morality, law and institution-building; in personal love, sympathy and laughter; and in aesthetic judgement itself. (Scruton 1994, xiv)

Architecture must make room for our nature as rational beings; it must acknowledge the belief in freedom, and engage in the search for a public realm of values. It must lift itself above the sphere of calculation and present us with a vision of the ends of life. And in doing so it must convey stability and repose. (Ibid. xvi)

Despite an argument which reaches from the sense experience to a conceptual understanding of architecture, Scruton’s view of the
aesthetics/ethics of the architectural experience also have traces of a thinking in terms of the exclusive. Scruton maintains that one can only talk about aesthetic experiential values when the attention of the experiencing person is focused on the architectural object. There are, however, a multitude of experiences related to architecture, which only to a small extent exist in the field of attention, but which we still register. John Searle, for instance, argues that a human being’s field of attention contains a rich scale which reaches from the centre to the periphery (Searle 1993). Scruton’s theories manifest themselves in the half-articulated thesis that architectural experience should primarily be “rational” and “public.” Lundequist summarises Scruton’s view of architectural experience in the following way:

Supported by Sartre’s theories of the imaginary, about the ways in which we create images about phenomena in the world around us, and Wittgenstein’s thoughts about what it means to see something as something in particular, Scruton formulates his own theory that architecture arises from our experience of that which is built when we see a building as architecture. The building is something material, an object; architecture is something mental and concrete, both the experience of the object and the object itself:
—Architecture arises when we can see a building as a meaningful whole—it is our experience of the building, which turns it into architecture. To understand what an architectural experience is is to understand what it is which enables a building’s functions, details, and connections to be shaped, perceived, and used as a moulded whole.
—Buildings and that which is built are, certainly, physical objects, but architecture arises from our engagement with that which is built and that which is being built, in our experience of the values of buildings and environments.
—The architectural experience consists of a relation between
the experiencing subject and the object which is being experienced, and this experience is intentional, as the subject consciously directs his or her attention towards the building. The building is in focus, but the understanding of it presupposes that the interpreting subject can relate it to his or her context. (Lundequist 1998, 46)

In support of his theories, Scruton selects illustrative examples from old, magnificent buildings, and not from modern or from everyday environments. The architect Ignasi de Solà-Morales has a different approach to aesthetic experience in relation to architecture. Inspired by the philosopher Gianni Vattimo (who in turn is inspired by Nietzsche’s and Heidegger’s nihilism), he introduces the concept of *weak architecture* to describe experiences of modern architecture, which, according to de Solà-Morales, is non-linear and characterised by pluralism (de Solà-Morales 1996, 57-71):

> the present-day artistic universe is perceived from experiences that are produced at discrete points, diverse, heterogeneous to the highest degree, and consequently our approximation to the aesthetic is produced in a weak, fragmentary, peripheral fashion, denying at every turn the possibility that it might ultimately be transformed into a central experience. [Ibid. 61]

In *The Human Habitat* (1998), Pauline von Bonsdorff investigates different definitions of aesthetic experience, and discusses the range of these in relation to the built environment. She says:

> Instead of seeking one definition to cover aesthetic experience, it is better to preserve its layers, varieties and complications. This is only an advantage, since one should be able to take the particularity of the experience into account. The situation is complicated: a subjective experience in a concrete and unique
situation with a large number of interrelated components and constituents, where we should not forget the contents, for they are certainly part of what feeds the play of perception, imagination and understanding. (von Bonsdorff 1998, 79)

Von Bonsdorff emphasises the span between powerful, unambiguous aesthetic values, and weaker, more diluted aesthetic values, depending on the nature of the experience.

An aesthetic experience may contain moments of revelation, but an experience may also be aesthetic to some degree without overturning our world view. Some experiences we call aesthetic without hesitation, but experience can also have a weaker aesthetic character, so that it is not only aesthetic. The aesthetic components may go against the expected and habitual, but it may also deepen our understanding and feeling for the mundane. In either case it differs from mere recognition, from an attitude in which things are interesting and relevant only to the extent that I can use them for a certain purpose. Thus the aesthetic, however weakly or humbly present, always activates or enlivens the tissue of the world. (Ibid. 80)

During the twentieth century, many different approaches to architecture and its relation to truth have emerged. This is to do with shifting aesthetic and ethical ideals. These ideological differences also manifest themselves through the ways in which buildings are designed, and hence also the ways in which the experience of these architectural objects is evaluated. One of the revolutionary shifts of truth in the history of architecture was brought about by the emergence of modernism. In Entretiens sur l'architecture (1863-72), Eugène Viollet-le-Duc wrote: “In architecture, there are two necessary ways of being true. It must be true according to the programme and true according to the methods of constructions” (Viollet-le-Duc, quoted in Frampton 1980,
This approach inspired the rising avant-garde movement at the end of the nineteenth century, and led up to the breakthrough of modernism within architecture. In *Words and Buildings: A Vocabulary of Modern Architecture* (2000), Adrian Forty discusses *truth* as one of the most important concepts in twentieth-century architectural debate. Forty exemplifies the changing attitude towards *truth* during the twentieth century with some quotes from famous architects (Forty 2000, 289-91):

"The striving towards truth must be the guiding star of the architect." (Otto Wagner 1896)

"A modern building should derive its architectural significance solely from the vigour and consequence of its own organic proportions. It must be true to itself, logically transparent, and virginal of lies to trivialities." (Walter Gropius 1935)

"Architecture is the reaching out for the truth." (Louis Kahn 1968)

"Architecture is made of two terms that are independent but mutually exclusive. Indeed, architecture constitutes the reality of experience while this reality gets in the way of overall vision. Architecture constitutes the abstraction of absolute truth, while this very truth gets in the way of feeling. We cannot both experience and think that we experience." (Bernard Tschumi 1975)

The changing view of truth as manifested in twentieth-century architecture can also be compared with the changing view of truth within science and philosophy. What is a true statement? To what extent can we trust our sense experience? How large a part of that which we experience as true about architectural objects is culturally determined and how large a part is individually deter-
mined? What role does language play in our experiencing the world and architecture? Are there differences between "passive registration" and experiences in which meaning is actively created, and, if so, what impact does this have on our view of aesthetics and architecture? Different philosophical movements have affected the architectural-ideological discussions about the meaning and truth of architecture. Scruton is one of the few philosophers who have discussed the meaning of architecture in detail. Scruton draws a distinction between "sensuous" and "aesthetic (intellectual) pleasure." This division has the consequence that he maintains that only buildings which encapsulate an idea about architecture can be considered architectural objects. Because there is a large difference between different ideas about what architecture is, Scruton’s theories become, in practice, exceedingly problematic. This often leads to a situation in which only those architectural objects which, according to certain commentators, encapsulate a "correct" idea (which corresponds with their own ideas) about architecture are considered to be architecture. Equally problematic is Scruton’s view that only buildings which encapsulate an idea about architecture can give rise to aesthetic architectural experiences, as these experiences are about understanding the aesthetic intentions of the architect. Scruton maintains that 

lovers of architecture take pleasure in buildings, not in the experiences that are obtained from buildings. Their pleasure [...] is a pleasure founded on understanding, a pleasure which has an object, and not just a cause. And here pleasure is directed outwards to the world, not inwards to one’s own state of mind. The pleasure of aesthetic experience is inseparable from the act of attention to its object; it is not the kind of pleasure characteristic of mere sensation, such as the pleasure of the bath or a good cigar. (Scruton 1979, 112)
Scruton places the significance of the inner experience in opposition to the outer, public one, and chooses to see the public experience as the aesthetic one. But is it really possible to distinguish between the object’s public qualities and the private reactions to which these give rise, and is it really desirable to do this from an aesthetic perspective? Aesthetic experiences of a bath or of a good cigar may, certainly, also reach a very high degree of refinement for the one who has a well-developed sensitivity within this field! Can one distinguish between bodily and intellectual pleasure in the way which Scruton suggests? Is not aesthetics about just this tension between subjective and objective experiential values; between intellect and emotion? Scruton’s theories are highly questionable if one considers both James’s view of experience and the theories of modern researchers within the study of human consciousness, such as Greenfield and Antonio Damasio. To separate experience (including intellectual experience) from the subject is not possible, as the experience depends on the subject. Nor is it possible to differentiate the experience from the object if the experience is about the object. Therefore, experience is, to a varying degree, both dependent on the inner private world and the outer public world. Aesthetics can thus not be placed in exclusively one or the other of these worlds, but spans (or interconnects) both of them.

Bernard Tschumi is one of those who during the late twentieth century questioned the architectural concept of truth, inspired by structuralism. According to Adrian Forty, Tschumi wants to unite reason and bodily sense experience. “Tschumi’s solution to the paradox was suggested by Bataille and Barthes, to surrender rationality and truth in favour of an erotic, sensual, ‘experienced space’ that bridged sensory pleasure and reason” (Forty 2000, 292). Tschumi describes his project Parc La Vilette in Paris: “La Vilette [...] aims at an architecture that means nothing, an architecture of the signifier rather than the signified, one that is pure trace or play of language” (Tschumi (1987), quoted in Hays
2000, 692). Peter Eisenman has also challenged the concept of truth, inspired by post-structuralism and deconstruction. Eisenman is primarily inspired by Jacques Derrida’s theories of language as an infinite play of pictures of meaning. Eisenman has been experimenting with transferring Derrida’s Wittgenstein-inspired ideas about texts to the field of architecture. Both theoretically and in created building projects, Eisenman has challenged the central role of the subject for the meaning of architecture (Forty 2000, 292) (Eisenman 1976).

The questioning of previous ideas of the truth of architecture, which Eisenman and Tschumi may be said to represent by emphasising the “textual” and the “desubjectivised,” has also led to counter-reactions and a return to more traditional ideas about truth in architecture. Forty argues that a common denominator for these new concepts of truth, at the end of the twentieth century, is that they in some way have their foundation within phenomenology (Forty 2000, 292). This is true for Pallasmaa, for instance, and to some extent also for de Solà-Morales. In a way, this is also true for Scruton, who was inspired primarily by Wittgenstein, but also by Sartre’s existentialism (as Sartre was inspired by Husserl’s phenomenology). Scruton, however, associates to the directed attention, as well as to the role of language, a significance that is too rich to correspond with what he in the end defines as correct aesthetic experience. It is a rough and not particularly useful distinction which Scruton draws between sensuous and intellectual pleasures (Scruton 1979, 74). Scruton plays down the importance of smaller intellectual experiential values, which, among others, Tschumi, Pallasmaa, and de Solà-Morales emphasise. Who are, according to Scruton, capable of assessing what (intellectual) aesthetic architectural experience is? Is it architects, or adults of average intelligence who have a judgment well-developed enough? Or is it rather the small group of aestheticians who possess the exclusive capacity for recognising good architecture? There is an opposition in Scruton’s dynamic model
of architectural experience and his theory of intellectual aesthetic correctness. The troublesome and constantly central question of reason haunts these theories. The question about reason is now, in the beginning of the twenty-first century, very pressing because of the result of the study of human consciousness. In 1982, Michel Foucault said that the most important philosophical question to return to is to do with the existence of reason and the possible danger which can exist in an unreflective reliance on it.

What is this Reason that we use? What are its historical effects? What are its limits, and what are its dangers? How can we exist as rational beings, fortunately committed to practicing a rationality that is unfortunately crisscrossed by intrinsic dangers? One should remain as close to this question as possible, keeping in mind that it is both central and extremely difficult to resolve. In addition, if it is extremely dangerous to say that Reason is the enemy that should be eliminated, it is just as dangerous to say that any critical questioning of this rationality risks sending us into irrationality. (Foucault (1982), in Hays 2000, 435)

I believe that also young children, who have not yet developed any advanced language, and persons with different degrees of mental disability are able to have aesthetic experiences of architecture. These aesthetic experiences are perhaps of another kind than the advanced conceptual level which Scruton considers the architectural aesthetic one. I believe that the aesthetic is in motion between many different levels. Also, human beings’ gradual development of their conceptual resources contains a magnificent breadth. Very early on in our lives, for instance, we learn to see the world as spatial, and to categorise objects such as human beings, houses, trees, trains, and so on. The conceptual level, which, for instance, children give expression to, contains very significant values which can be utilised in the rich aesthetic de-
bate within architecture. Not even language constitutes a limit for aesthetics. Reactions that are not formulated with language, but expressed with gestures, facial expressions, or exclamations, I believe can also mediate aesthetic experiential values. As all human beings belong to the public mass at which architecture is aimed, no aesthetic experiences can be excluded. The aesthetic dynamics of architecture we thus find primarily in lived life among all manner of experiencing human beings, not in literature on aesthetics or architectural magazines.

I remember a visit to the Moorish palace Alhambra in the south of Spain together with my then one-and-a-half-year-old son. The joy he experienced and expressed in his encounter with the complex construction of Alhambra, with all its rooms and gardens, I cannot call anything but aesthetic. “Look!” he cried again and again and pointed around and investigated carefully both details in the mosaic patterns and the spatial variations in relation to his own body and capacity for experience. He felt with his hands, he sometimes ran and sometimes walked, he sometimes cried out of joy and sometimes whispered, he discovered differences in the heights and levels of rooms. He showed and searched for confirmation of all his explorations. During all those hours we spent in Alhambra, he had neither time to eat or to do a wee. Constantly, there waited new situations and spatial surprises behind the next opening or wall. There was no doubt that the child found the experience rich and interesting.

A critical assessment of, for instance, placing the architectural object in the context of its style and history, did not, of course, exist in the child’s perspective. Nor did he have an idea of what architecture is, which had been formulated in words. The child, however, had an ability to rejoice at the architectural object in a way which could be clearly separated from the pleasure of, for instance, getting an ice-cream. Was this child’s encounter with Alhambra an aesthetic experience? Was it an architectural experience? I would argue that it was. Furthermore, I believe that in
our lives we gradually build up an understanding of what architecture is which contains many different aesthetic levels. It is thus problematic to limit aesthetic experience in the way Scruton does, but it is, on the other hand, highly possible to discuss the conditions of an aesthetic plurality. I find it far more interesting to investigate the value pluralism of life in relation to architecture than to rank experiences as more or less “correct.” I do not deny that the kind of (intellectual) aesthetic experiences, which Scruton talks about, exist, and that they are important. To maintain that only the intellectual understanding is aesthetic, however, is, from my perspective, to deprive aesthetics of its scope and dynamics. Moreover, how can we know when aesthetic meaning exists? Susan Greenfield writes:

As we grow and see the world increasingly in the light of previous experiences, we develop a personalized inner world of private resources that increasingly act as a retaliatory buffer to the assault of the “booming, buzzing confusion” that previously poured into our brains unopposed. And as we continue to live out our lives as adults, more and more associations pile in and around the objects, events, and people among we are thrown.

This rapidly expanding inner world of personal associations offers an ever-growing framework of reference, an increasing degree of meaning to ongoing experience. The most obvious type of meaning is the culturally and socially accepted identity of objects and people around us. But gradually these objects and people acquire ever more eccentric and intense degree of significance. The more ramifying and multiple the associations, the more “meaning,” or “relevance,” an object will have. (Greenfield 2000, 52)

Different architects have described the range of experienced values in the encounter with architectural objects. Many stress mo-
mentary sense experience. Steven Holl argues that a continual creation takes place in the experiencing person’s encounter with architecture. Human beings experience wholes rather than individual parts, and this is analogous to the way in which our perception works. This in turn means that architects have to be able to imagine, simultaneously, details and wholes in their creation of buildings, as well as the buildings in a continual experiential flow of events. Ultimately, architects do not work with geometrical shapes, but real space, which contains all the qualities of physical reality. It is this qualified skill in architects which can give rise to buildings which challenge human consciousness and conjure up a refined creation of meaning. Steven Holl writes:

When we sit at a desk in a room by a window, the distant view, light from the window, floor material, wood on the desk, and eraser in hand begin to merge perceptually. This overlap of foreground middle ground and distant view is a critical issue in the creation of architectural space. We must consider space, light, color, geometry, detail, and material as an experiential continuum. Though we can disassemble these elements and study them individually during the design process, they merge in the final condition, and ultimately we cannot readily break perception into a simple collection of geometries, activities and sensation. (Holl 1994, 45)

To some extent, Scruton’s division between the literal and the imaginative levels corresponds to what Damasio calls core consciousness and extended consciousness (Damasio 2000). Scruton argues “First, that there is a radical distinction between imaginative and ‘literal’ experience and that the experience of architecture firmly exemplifies the first of these. Second, that the experience of architecture—because it reflects an underlying act of imaginative attention—belongs to the active and not the passive part of the mind” (Scruton 1979, 103). Today, for instance,
Damasio, George Lakoff, and Mark Johnson believe that in their consciousness, human beings have access to (and build up) a complex system of values, in which the information on the lower (unconscious) level convey, by means of the emotions, necessary basic information to the conscious level, on which the information can in turn be processed intellectually. In the differentiation and interpretation of the experience, a dynamic interaction takes place between these levels in the form of a creative development in the individual on a number of levels (Damasio 2000) (Lakoff and Johnson 1999). Scruton means that aesthetic reasoning “depends for its power on something more basic, which is the aesthetic choice itself. The real fact of the matter lies in the primitive expression of aesthetic choice, and that primitive expression subsists without the benefit of reasoned reflection” (Scruton 1979, 134). I agree with this, but when Scruton carries his argument further, and maintains that the meaning of a work of art is primarily located in understanding it in the “right” way—which amounts to assessing whether it may be seen as an aesthetic whole—I believe that he proceeds to an unnecessary hierarchic assessment which strikes a discordant note with his ambition to also consider values other than intellectual values.

Without, like Scruton, ending up talking in terms of correctness when describing the value pluralism of architectural experience, I still think that some kind of classification is possible. It is, certainly, important for every researcher to consider the meaning of an expression by Elias Canetti: “I hate people who build systems quickly, and I will make sure that mine never closes completely” (Canetti 1979, 52). Despite the danger with introducing a system, I choose to present two different attempts to define models, with the purpose of making apparent some of the aesthetic dynamics of architecture. The first one describes different aesthetic levels and is inspired by both Scruton and Damasio; the other one describes different kinds of aesthetic architectural experiences and is inspired primarily by different architects.
The Varieties of Architectural Experience—Aesthetic Levels

- **Innate capacity**, which may be developed to enable the individual’s continuous survival as a part of a surrounding world. It includes, among other things, the sensorimotor systems and the capacity for instincts and emotions.

- **Basic (automatic) spatial perception** is, to some extent, common to both human beings and animals. The fundamental experience of the individual embodiment in relation to space—the capacities for distinguishing between the vertical and the horizontal; for keeping one’s balance; for perceiving light, sound, form, colour, taste, and smell; for feeling differences between different textures; and for experiencing distances, rhythm, and contrast are developed by practice, which is determined by the conditions of the surrounding world. It occupies the attention of very young children, but becomes, with time, increasingly automated, which means that the directed consciousness can be used for other things.

- **Emotional spatial experience**: the emotions’ spontaneous mediation of the significance for the individual of basic spatial perception. This experience does not have to manifest itself in a thought or directed idea, but may rather consist of an immediate emotional response determined by the conditions of the surroundings. This reaction can in turn lead to a directed thought.

- **Conscious spatial experience**: the participation in experience of the directed thought. This experience consists of a conscious reflection developed in a social and cultural interaction: an interpretation of that which has been experienced in different categories. This can in turn lead to the attention being directed more sharply and spatial experience may possibly be
intensified. Conscious spatial experience may be a creation of meaning—primarily in the form of pictures—and does probably not need to be dependent on language.

- Conceptual spatial experience: by means of language, the different parts of the spatial experience are joined into connected conceptually expressed categories, which may be communicated. With an increased capturing of concepts, an increased number of parameters for comparison may be used and parts of spatial complexity may be investigated without losing the comprehensive view. A collection of spatially related concepts are built up, which makes possible comparison and analysis.

- Analytic architectural experience depends on an idea that has been learnt, and on active critical thinking about what architecture is. This capacity has been developed by means of collected experience and knowledge that has been learnt from the other aesthetic levels.

Architecture and Different Kinds of Aesthetic Experience

- Momentary everyday routine fragmentary readings of architectural space, uninterpreted or unconscious.

- Experiences, which, for some reason, stand out as more significant than others, without the individual’s having “chosen” to make them more significant than others.

- Experiences evoked momentarily by a chosen, directed attentiveness towards an object, for instance, a particular room with its specific qualities. Maybe a feeling that something “is right” or, on the contrary, that it is not right.

- Experiences characterised by the fact that attention is directed
towards the qualities of the architectural object, in order that
an intellectual analysis of aesthetic qualities becomes clear,
based on ideas about the concept of architecture which one
has learnt.

- Experiences, which arouse associations with memories of
  previous experiences of architectural objects, and which make
  possible an inner dialogue and comparison between qualities
  in the present situational architectural experience and the ref-
  erence object in memory.

- Experiences of imagined architectural objects; for instance,
  the architect sketching different drafts to find a solution.

- Experiences which are not direct momentary experiences, but
  imagined architectural objects conjured up by, for instance, the
  presentational drawings of other architects, reading literature,
  memories, conversations, computer simulations, and movies.

**Architectural Value**

Viollet-le-Duc reacted against the prevailing classicism within
“Beaux-Art” in the mid nineteenth century. He maintained that it
is not possible to establish any absolute rules within building, as
every situation is unique. To his students, he said that it is not
possible to issue general recommendations, as the knowledge in
question is complex and primarily has to be gained through expe-
rience. He wrote:

A treatise lays down rules, but ninety-nine times out of a hun-
dred you have to encounter the exception and cannot rely upon
the rule. A treatise on building is useful in habituating the
mind to devise plans and have them put into execution ac-
cording to certain methods; it gives you the means of solving
the problems proposed; but it does not actually solve them, or
at least only solves one in a thousand. It is then for intelligence to supply in the thousand cases presented what the rule cannot provide for. (Viollet-le-Duc 1873, 61)

How to formulate the skill of the architect is related to what definition one gives the concept of architecture. Bjørn Linn profoundly discusses different kinds of definitions and argues that some are excluding, such as John Ruskin’s and Nikolaus Pevsner’s, as they argue that only certain buildings with certain qualities may be considered architecture. Elias Cornell’s definition is, on the other hand, according to Linn, more general as Cornell describes architecture as an aesthetic organisation of a practical reality (Linn 1998, 18) (Ruskin 1849) (Pevsner 1943) (Cornell 1966). Le Corbusier proclaimed: “Architecture only exists when there is a poetic emotion. Architecture is a plastic thing. I mean by "plastic" what is seen and measured by the eyes.” (Le Corbusier 1998, 215). “Architecture is the skilful, accurate and magnificent play of masses seen in light; and contours are also and exclusively the skilful, accurate and magnificent play of volumes seen in light. Contours go beyond the scope of the practical man, the daring man, the ingenious man; they call for the plastic artist” (Ibid. 218)

According to Pallasmaa, architecture as a phenomenon is inherently dualistic: it deals with both the world and architecture; with both the concrete reality and the ideal world. Within architecture, according to Pallasmaa, the ideal is expressed in a poetic way and shows a striving for reaching a more cultivated and more human world. Without this idealisation, architecture is reduced to a purely technocratic procedure or to a cynical manipulation of pictures (Pallasmaa 2002). Rasmussen also emphasises the value of everyday utility: “Architecture is a very special functional art; it confines space so we can dwell in it, creates the framework around our lives” (Rasmussen (1957) 1993, 10). “Architecture,” Scruton maintains, “derives its nature from an
everyday preoccupation that has little to do with the artistic intention of romantic theory” (Scruton 1979, 259). On the other hand, Hans Hollein proclaimed that “Architecture is an affaire of the elite” (Hollein, in Conrads 1970, 181-2).

The purpose of the outline of different views above is to illuminate some of the complexity of the concept of architecture. Despite the multitude of different definitions and ideological perceptions, we may still agree that architecture is to do with buildings and with the creation and the experiences of those buildings. It is to do with buildings that are being planned, as well as buildings that are already built. The creative work of the architect has not been the focus of this text, but it is still closely related to the variety of architectural experience. Included in the creative work of the architect is having to imagine the ways in which a building will be experienced and to find possibilities of practically and technically realising certain kinds of experience. The product that the architect creates is not the finished building without the plans, which Rasmussen describes as “simply a set of instructions, an aid to the craftsmen who construct his buildings.” The architect, he argues, “composes the music which others will play” (Rasmussen (1957) 1993, 14). When the building is completed, it is passed over to the public, but it still contains the values expressed by the architect, which can be experienced by the public. At this point in time the actual conversation can begin with the human beings who are de facto confronted with what the architect has formulated in drawings and which has now taken shape in the form of built objects. “Once finished, buildings go their own way,” as the philosopher David Kolb says, and continues:

Public discussion about buildings makes their intended meaning more prominent than in the other arts, but it is the community’s practices, not the architect’s intentions, that are finally important. Building fit into established patterns of living that
are not changeable by critical or architectural fiat. We cannot automatically assume that what the architect intended does in fact rule the interpretation of a building. (Kolb 1990, 128)

Within Kolb’s discussion, there is an important argument against the idea that architecture may include some kind of universal meaning that is disconnected from both human beings and society. Kolb establishes the fact that we cannot know whether the intention of the architect will be apparent to those who, in the long term, will use a particular building. As an idea about a building is transformed from being a product of the architect’s mind to becoming a real building, a dynamics between the architect’s original intentions and the actual reality emerges. Most assessments of architectural objects thus take place in everyday encounters, when things other than architecture are at the centre of human beings’ focus of experience. Architecture is often assessed from the perspective of a “weak” aesthetic experience. As architects, we cannot disregard this, although we often build our arguments from the perspective of a “strong” and directed form of aesthetic experience, connected with architectural objects.

So where is the meaning of architecture located? In the mind of the architect? In the actual architectural objects? In the collected skill of professional architects? In the mass of experiencing individuals? Or maybe in the architectural public discussion? My answer is that the aesthetic values of architecture are, in different ways, located within all these fields. Its aesthetic values have both depth and breath, are both private and public in their nature, and are both “weak” and “strong.” In different contexts, we are interested in different types of values, but as architects, we need to be aware of this aesthetic value pluralism of architecture.

Experiencing individuals and different forms of social structures weave new meaning into that form which the architect has given the buildings. The meaning of architecture is in constant
change: it cannot be determined as something absolute. In this pluralism, I see the rich aesthetic value of architecture. The more we exemplify and attempt to understand the architectonic multiplicity, the richer our foundation gets when we converse about the meaning of architecture. Architects are responsible for an important part of this process of knowledge, and need to be conscious of the whole scale between social and politico-social dimensions, and of intimate individual aesthetic values. Inspired by William James’s and John Dewey’s pragmatism, I maintain that we need to strive for a continuous, creative development within the aesthetics of architecture, which is based on a knowledge of the dynamics of experience. This development is, in different ways, dependent on our active and directed action within pedagogy, practice, research, and criticism within the field of architecture.
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