

The Transcendental Stupidity of Architecture

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Abstract

This article discusses, within the transcendental empiricism of Deleuze's philosophy, how stupidity comes to be seen as a positive possibility for thought. Nomad architecture, which is contrasted with the state science of architecture, has a certain stupidity about it, but this is nothing other than the stupidity which allows us access to the groundless ground, the field of the real, which can be perceived as a depth within the forms which architecture creates as an aftereffect. Examples are given, including that of the 2017 Grenfell fire and Anne Querrien's nomadic architectural work.

Keywords

Deleuze, nomadic, stupidity, transcendental, empiricism

Empirical stupidity

Architects sometimes do stupid things, and the consequences can be serious. On 14 June 2017 a fire occurred in a twenty-four-storey block of flats in London, spreading from one flat across the exterior and back into the building

in many locations, causing the deaths of seventy-two people. The immediate cause of the Grenfell fire was a defective fridge. The reason it became a disaster was a design decision on the part of Studio E Architects to cover the façade of the building in combustible materials, making up the thermal insulation and the outer cladding material. The cladding material was a so-called aluminium-composite panel, which is largely polyethylene – a highly flammable plastic. The technical building codes in the UK (known as Approved Documents to the Building Regulations) ruled out the use of such combustible materials as follows: 'In a building with a storey 18m or more above ground level any insulation product, filler material (not including gaskets, sealants and similar) etc. used in the external wall construction should be of limited combustibility.'¹ The wording of the rule is fairly straightforward. Even if it were not, or even if the rule did not exist, one might well regard it as simple common sense that cladding tall buildings in flammable by-products of the petrochemical industry is a stupid thing to do. As one lawyer noted in the public inquiry into the disaster, the polyethylene cladding is 'now openly described by some in the industry as petrol' and 'our understanding is that the ignition of the polyethylene within the cladding panel produces a flaming reaction more quickly than dropping a match into a barrel of petrol.'² [Fig. 1]

Stupid actions have hinterlands, which may also be populated by stupidities. For instance, one might inquire as to why in the case of Grenfell architectural training did not have the desired effect, given that the UK architecture profession is controlled by statute and registration precisely in order to ensure architects are properly trained so that they do not make stupid decisions resulting in loss of life or property. The reason is that although there are statements in the criteria for UK architectural education that require architecture students have knowledge

of building codes, the practical implementation of these criteria in UK universities has generally not lead, over the last forty years, to students being trained in the building regulations.³ Therefore a UK architect can, and usually does, come into the profession without having been taught the building regulations. Specifically, they will likely not have had a training to either acquaint them with the above paragraph about non-combustible materials, or to inform them about the logic behind that rule. Nor are there any specific requirements that their continuing professional development training subsequent to entry into the profession should give them this detailed knowledge.⁴

In turn, apparent strategic stupidities like this lack of training are enabled by a lack of clarity of language in the relevant regulations. For instance, in its criteria for architecture courses the Architects Registration Board states: 'The [architecture student] will have the ability to... understand the constructional and structural systems, the environmental strategies and the regulatory requirements that apply to the design and construction of a comprehensive design project.'⁵ I have no doubt that architecture students generally do have the *ability* to understand the regulatory requirements, of which the building regulations are part. But what good is it to have this ability if at no point in the training of an architect are they required to make use of this ability to actually understand – or, more clearly put, have knowledge of the contents of – those building regulations?

Nomadic stupidity

What have such surely purely empirical examples of stupidity got to do with architectural theory? One of my theses here will be that a properly architectural philosophy, or thought, does not or should not make the conventional distinction between theory and practice. It is often remarked that the discipline of architecture is a strange combination of art and science, or a strange combination of theory and practice. In that it joins other oddly positioned disciplines – disciplines that do not fit neatly into prevalent categories, being essentially transdisciplinary.⁶ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari give a name to such disciplines: they are nomad sciences, in contrast to the royal or state sciences which do have such a neat categorical character. They have that categorical and rule-led character because the state gives them that character as part of its project to control and tame nomad sciences, and it is the nomad sciences that come first, both empirically and by right. Architecture has a particular place in this philosophy in relation to the question of the distinction between a nomad and a state science, precisely because architecture so easily slips into the role of a state science, a science that respects the theory/practice distinction but

also a science that is bound by rules and categories. Deleuze and Guattari famously distinguish the 'smooth space' of nomads and nomad sciences with the 'striated space' of the state and its associated state science; the rules and categories of the state science are part of the striations that are being referred to here.⁷

Deleuze and Guattari take the work of Anne Querrien in relation to architecture in order to provide examples of nomad science within architecture. It is worthwhile quoting here at length given the density of the text:

The work of Anne Querrien enables us to identify two of these moments; one is the construction of Gothic cathedrals in the twelfth century, the other the construction of bridges in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. [Footnote giving the source: Anne Querrien, *Devenir fonctionnaire ou le travail de l'Etat* (Paris: Cerfi). We have drawn from this book, as well as from unpublished studies by Anne Querrien.] Gothic architecture is indeed inseparable from a will to build churches longer and taller than the Romanesque churches. Ever farther, ever higher . . . But this difference is not simply quantitative; it marks a qualitative change: the static relation, form-matter, tends to fade into the background in favor of a dynamic relation, material-forces. It is the cutting of the stone that turns it into material capable of holding and coordinating forces of thrust, and of constructing ever higher and longer vaults. The vault is no longer a form but the line of continuous variation of the stones. It is as if Gothic conquered a smooth space, while Romanesque remained partially within a striated space (in which the vault depends on the juxtaposition of parallel pillars). But stone cutting is inseparable from, on the one hand, a plane of projection at ground level, which functions as a plane limit, and, on the other hand, a series of successive approximations (squaring), or placings-in-variation of voluminous stones. Of course, one appealed to the theorematic science of Euclid in order to find a foundation for the enterprise: mathematical figures and equations were thought to be the intelligible form capable of organizing surfaces and volumes. But according to the legend, Bernard de Clairvaux quickly abandoned the effort as too "difficult," appealing to the specificity of an operative, Archimedean geometry, a projective and descriptive geometry defined as a minor science, more a mathegraphy than a matheology. His journeyman, the monk-mason Garin de Troyes, speaks of an operative logic of movement enabling the "initiate" to draw, then hew the volumes "in penetration in space," to make it so that "the cutting line propels the equation"... One does not represent, one engenders and traverses. This science is characterized less by the absence of equations than by the very different role they play: instead of being good forms absolutely that organize matter, they are "generated" as "forces of thrust" (*poussées*) by the material, in a qualitative calculus of the optimum.⁸



Fig. 1: The Grenfell Fire, London 2017. Source: https://twitter.com/Natalie_Oxford/status/874834909004746753/photo/1.

What is interesting about the career of Anne Querrien is that she attends to historical research that has theoretical implications in an essentially transdisciplinary manner that allows those theoretical concerns to impact back on the so-called history so that the manner in which the history is viewed is itself transformed. This bespeaks a desire to cross boundaries – in other words, to be a nomad, specifically an architectural nomad – and the word ‘desire’ here must be given a specifically Deleuzian/Guattarian understanding in the sense that for them, desire is predicated not on a lack for a desired thing, but is rather a field, an element (in the sense of ‘being in your element’), a space wherein something happens, where the becoming that is proper to the nomad is given reign. Deleuze and Guattari will give this space of desire many names, including the plane of consistency and body without organs; this space of desire is closely aligned to the smooth space of the nomad. Querrien’s transdisciplinary desire extends to architecture itself – or rather, to a nomadic architecture that in very concrete fashion questions the way in which architecture as a state science traps communities and funnels capitalism in a destructive manner, as shown by her interview *Making a Rhizome, or Architecture after Deleuze and Guattari*, where she and her colleagues outline a community-led collective practice of convivial architecture (invoking Ivan Illich) that ‘rather than looking for the material value of profit, ... creates the conditions for a liberating experience that changes both the space and the subjects.’⁹

Returning to the long quotation from Deleuze and Guattari, one notes the following. First, the Gothic, thought as a nomadic science, does not operate by means of the form/matter, hylomorphic method. In this, as so often, the authors follow Gilbert Simondon’s philosophy, where the static theory of formed matter, of all the capitalist-friendly formalisms that tend to dominate architecture and its discourse, is fundamentally called into question and ruled out. See in particular in this regard Simondon’s *The Position of the Problem of Ontogenesis* where from the outset the hylomorphic (or any other essentially static, being-orientated view) is cast aside in favour of considering the real genesis of things from a metastable pre-individual reality – a metastable reality that is nothing other than the previously mentioned plane of consistency and body without organs, or desire.¹⁰ ‘Dynamic relations’ come to the fore.¹¹ There is an inherently differential quality to this nomad architecture, and this is hinted at a page earlier by Deleuze and Guattari when they point out that differential calculus, as it grew up in the seventeenth century (with Newton and Leibniz), was deemed to be a ‘Gothic hypothesis’ with only parascientific status, precisely because it involved a dynamic, nomadic approach

to mathematics.¹² Second, there is an engagement with the hand, with the ‘journeyman’, with the artisan. This is not the architecture of the architect, but the architecture of interplay between the various forces at work on the building site, including those of the plan and the drawing but also including those forces that are not strictly part of the discipline of architecture: the force of the will of the craftsperson, respected in the specificity of what they can bring to the more open and thus inherently transdisciplinary project. This is exactly the same transdisciplinarity that Querrien herself deploys in her collective projects; in her case it may not involve skilled craftspeople, but it does involve the community of which the architectural project is (or should be) part. Third, there is an ‘operative logic of movement’; this means here a logic of how the artisan acts, a peculiar mixture of intertwined theory and practice whereby the ‘practice’ turns back on the ‘theory’; this is an immanent art, whereby that which controls the movement is not external to the process but is part and parcel of it, in contrast to the ‘transcendent’ models of architecture whereby the hand of the craftsperson is controlled by external means – for instance, the architectural drawing or the BIM model. But I mention here this operative quality because history, here, pace Manfredo Tafuri, is also operative not in an ideological sense but in the sense of not being an abstract disinterested survey, as Tafuri seems to demand.¹³ History, and the way of interpreting history, is directly and politically related to the present practice of architecture, as evinced by Querrien. Finally, and above all, representation is declared entirely irrelevant for this nomad architecture: ‘One does not represent, one engenders’.¹⁴ What is being stated here is that architecture, considered in its transdisciplinary character, has nothing to do with representation. This is linked to the earlier point about immanence and transcendence: representation operates non-immanently, positing a reality transcendent to the matter at hand (in this case, architecture) which then comes to be represented in it. That transcendent reality may be society, culture, or an idea. In contrast, Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy is one of immanence, one that deconstructs completely the realm of representation; representation becomes irrelevant for this way of thinking about architecture. In Gilbert Simondon’s terms, this means that architecture is inherently *transductive* – another ‘trans-’ – that is related to our theme of the transdisciplinary. Here there is a transductive rather than representational relationship between society and architecture, in the sense Simondon expresses when he says that ‘the [transductive] relation does not spring up from between two terms that would already be individuals’, that is, terms that would already be in existence.¹⁵ Rather, the transductive relation of architecture means that society is

co-created with the spaces, and that architecture indeed is this co-creation or interplay of society and environment such that these two things do not precede the relation that the architect (whatever collective that is) sets up. To look at it the other way around: if society is deemed to pre-exist architecture, then the relationship between the two would indeed likely be one of representation, and as such architecture would be consigned to a state science, not a nomadic one. We can again take Querrien's work as a concrete example of precisely this – an example that perhaps not co-incidentally largely involves women rather than men – where, as already noted, her colleague states that this nomad architectural activity 'creates the conditions for a liberating experience that changes both the space and the subjects'.¹⁶ The subjects here are not conventional fixed subjects (in fact, one could say that they are not subjects at all in the sense that subjects are usually subject to the notion of a more or less fixed identity), but rather sit in transductive interplay with the space whereby both space and subject change dynamically. So an architecture, here, that in principle and primarily:

- has nothing to do with representation
- has nothing to do with giving form to matter
- has nothing to do with the architect as controller of the design
- has nothing to do with a disinterested analysis of history.

Now what is remarkable in the context of Deleuze and Guattari's discussion here is that this nomadic approach is explicitly characterised by them as stupid. They say that 'from the point of view of the State', this 'eccentricity, necessarily appears in a negative form: stupidity (*bêtise*), deformity, madness'¹⁷ In other words, according to the authors, the approach I have outlined to architecture here is stupid, and to take this approach one necessarily has to be stupid – at least, taken in the sense that the state would understand the situation. I say this is remarkable because the use of the term '*bêtise*' is rare in *A Thousand Plateaus* and to my knowledge this is the only instance where it is used in a substantive, philosophical manner. As such, it represents the end point of a trajectory in Deleuze's work regarding stupidity that leads from his *Nietzsche and Philosophy* book in 1962, through *Difference and Repetition* in 1968 to this moment in the exposition of nomadology.¹⁸ I will now follow this trajectory in order to show why this stupidity is not simply the view of the state, but rather has the character of a structure of thought. What appears as negative from the point of view of the state will be revealed to be, according to Deleuze, a positive possibility of thinking.

Stupidity – a positive structure of thought

In *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, stupidity is already introduced as something with an ambiguous status, prompted

by Nietzsche's words: 'Concretely, is there not a kind of baseness, meanness, stupidity etc. which becomes active through going to the limit of what it can do? "Rigorous and grandiose stupidity..." Nietzsche writes (BGE 188)', and this stupidity can in turn be transformed by means of the eternal return: 'Laziness, stupidity, baseness, cowardice or spitefulness that would will its own eternal return would no longer be the same laziness, stupidity etc.'¹⁹ Recall here that the test of the eternal return is that one should try to bring into existence only that which one wills to return again and again to eternity. If stupidity willed its own eternal return, then it would be transformed, which is possibly just another way of suggesting that, taken to the limit of what it can do, it will become active.

(We could discuss here the mystery of the eternal return in relation to architecture. How could the architect take the test of the eternal return? What might architecture be such that the architect wills its eternal return again and again for eternity? For surely, whatever we might design, if it were to return again and again for eternity it would lose all strength, it would become stultifyingly boring, no? But this depends on our ontology of architecture. The state architect, who works with forms, creates forms from matter, within a representational milieu, that is, who works with a fixed ontology of being, will no doubt fail this test of eternal return. But the nomad architect creates transductive relations, as noted above; she has a transductive ontology whereby the terms of the relations that make up architecture are co-created with those relations, or rather are a side-effect of those relations – relations that are inherently dynamic, inherently a question of constant becoming rather than fixed being. Those terms would be the things like the form of the building, or the nature of the societal interactions – the affordances – that the building entitles, but always maintained within the dynamic of becoming. It is such a dynamic that will stand the test of the eternal return, and it is the greatest of architecture (both celebrated and mundane) that does indeed withstand that test, the test of the question: could I return time and time again to it for eternity, for the simple reason that the 'I', for such works, at each return becomes an other.)

In fact, for Nietzsche, 'stupidity is a structure of thought as such', and this structure reveals that the philosophically dominant way of thinking (which Deleuze calls the 'image of thought') is wrong to claim that what is opposed to thought is mere error.²⁰ Errors are trivial, 'puerile' matters such as '3+2=6' or 'saying "Hello Thaetetus" when one meets Theodore'.²¹ Stupidity is altogether more complex than simple error of this type, and it therefore points to an alternative philosophy wherein 'truth is not the element of thought'. This is Nietzsche's project: to displace truth, make it a mere after-effect of broader forces, forces

which themselves, in their interaction, in fact make up the element of philosophy (in the sense of 'being in your element'). We have come across this element already: it is what Deleuze, taking over Nietzsche's essential thought, names as desire, the plane of consistency or the body without organs. And we have also come across the purveyors of truth: truth is set up and guaranteed by state science. The task of a nomad science, by contrast, does not valorise truth, but operates by means of this other transductive image of thought.

Deleuze further notes in respect of stupidity that for Nietzsche, 'the state of mind dominated by reactive forces, by right, expresses stupidity and, more profoundly, that which it is a symptom of: a base way of thinking.' But Deleuze's own views on stupidity are either different to this, or undergo a transformation in the period between the writing of his book on Nietzsche in 1962, from which these words are quoted, and the publication of *Difference and Repetition* in 1968. As we will see – and this is typical of the movement of Deleuze's thought – he extirpates the negative, aristocratic, scornful tone relating to stupidity which we see here in Nietzsche. In this, he stays true to a deep current elsewhere in Nietzsche's thought of the destruction of nihilism, where Nietzschean nihilism is defined (in almost complete opposition to the usual definition) as the depreciation of our world in the name of some higher transcendent reality (truth, God, Platonic ideas/forms and so on). This depreciation of how we actually are – the 'empirical' reality of our existence – is something both Nietzsche and Deleuze cannot stand. In Deleuze's case he takes this further, in my view, than Nietzsche, and asks in effect: if stupidity is an inevitable part of the 'structure of thought as such', if we cannot escape it, then by what right should we depreciate it?²²

The following passage from the conclusion to *Difference and Repetition* summarises the importance of stupidity (*bêtise*) for Deleuze's whole project:

The fact is that to ground is to determine the indeterminate, but this is not a simple operation. When determination as such occurs, it does not simply provide a form or impart form to a given matter on the basis of the categories. Something of the ground rises to the surface, without assuming any form but, rather, insinuating itself between the forms; a formless base, an autonomous and faceless existence. This ground which is now on the surface is called depth or groundlessness... That is why the matter-form couple is not sufficient to describe the mechanism of determination... In fact, this couple is completely internal to representation, serving to define its first state as this was established by Aristotle. It is already progress to invoke the complementarity of force and the ground as the sufficient reason of form, matter and their union. More profound and

threatening still is the couple formed by the abstract line and the groundlessness which dissolves matters and breaks down models. Thought understood as pure determination or abstract line must confront this indeterminate, this groundlessness. This indeterminate or groundlessness is also the animality peculiar to thought, the genality of thought: not this or that animal form, but stupidity (*bêtise*). For if thought thinks only when constrained or forced to do so, if it remains dumb [*stupide* – translation modified] so long as nothing forces it to think, is it not also the existence of stupidity [*bêtise*] which forces it to think, precisely the fact that it does not think so long as nothing forces it to do so?... Thought is the highest determination, confronting stupidity [*bêtise*] as though face to face with the indeterminate which is adequate to it. Stupidity [*bêtise*] (not error) constitutes the greatest weakness of thought, but also the source of its highest power in that which forces it to think.²³

This is a dense passage, sitting as it does in the conclusion of the book where the concepts outlined here have already been covered in more detail. But I think it is possible to summarise what is being said here in the following terms which can be related to architectural thought. As before, the form-matter way of thinking about how things come to be – how they are determined from out of something indeterminate – is inadequate. In fact, that way of thinking, going back to Aristotle, is representational, and as I noted above representation, in this nomad way of thought, has no validity. For architecture, representational ways of thinking, and seeing architecture as essentially the creation of architectural forms in some material (the hylomorphic method), are temptations that are difficult to avoid, on pain indeed of the accusation of stupidity by those representing (again, a question of representation) state science.

When something is created – when it comes to be – this means that whatever the pre-existing indeterminate realm, it is given a determination. For architects, that would mean the creation of a new work of architecture: that creation is an act of determination on the indeterminate. Now, the indeterminate is therefore the ground out of which that creation occurs, its basis, but when determination happens the ground does not simply disappear: on the contrary, it rises up and appears, as it were, 'between the forms' – as a sort of depth or groundlessness. This indeterminate ground (which is groundlessness) is what we previously named the plane of consistency, desire, or the body without organs: Deleuze delights in taking names from other aligned philosophers and placing them side by side, naming the same thing with many names (a habit which can cause much confusion). It can be called both ground and groundlessness because it is a metastable transductive field or element (in the sense of 'being

in your element') made up not of anything substantive, but rather of those relations – sets of differences – which we previously mentioned and of which substantial matters are an after-effect. In its dynamism it does provide a ground, but because it is not substantive that ground is groundless. We saw earlier with Anne Querrien how you can have a politically effective and active architectural practice which is posited on such a non-substantive, transductive ground.

Now it is thought itself (also named as 'abstract line' – a naming which we will simply take as a naming here, for reasons of space) which is determination in the purest manner. It is by means of thought that we create something out of the groundless ground, just as Querrien and her colleagues create a new architecture of a people to come by means of their thought. And it appears that Deleuze is positing a second groundlessness, a second indeterminate realm – which consists of the interplay between thought and the first groundlessness. There is a very peculiar doubling-up here, and I think the meaning of this is that Deleuze does not want to separate out thought from this groundlessness, but nevertheless must do so in order to express himself. And what is being expressed is Spinoza's dictum – for Deleuze, Spinoza is the prince of philosophers – that the mind and the body are the same thing.²⁴ Again, it is this indeterminate, this groundless ground that will be named the plane of consistency, desire, or the body without organs. And here it is given another surprising name: stupidity – of a bestial kind (hence the reference to animality) – that is, *bêtise*. Now it is *this* stupidity that is referenced that one time in *A Thousand Plateaus* in relation to nomad thought, and is the same stupidity that is required to think architecture as nothing to do with representation, form, disinterested history or design control. It is only this stupidity – this groundlessness of the transductive relation – which 'forces us to think'; it is at once a weakness of thought, and its greatest strength.

Transcendental stupidity

Stupidity is a structure of thought, and as such it is a transcendental question for Deleuze. What does that mean? Andrew Pollhammer, who coined the term transcendental stupidity, contrasts Deleuze's notion of transcendental with that of Kant, from whom he steals the term: 'As Deleuze sees it, Kant's philosophy is not transcendental enough to the extent that it is concerned with mere conditions of *possibility* for objective cognition rather than with *genetic* conditions of *real* experience.'²⁵ For Deleuze, Kant's objective cognition begs the question because it fails to address the basis – the groundless ground – on which such objective cognition for an already-established

unified subject comes about. That basis is the real – reality as such – and it is the genetic – that is, developmental, dynamic – conditions of that real experience which are the subject of transcendental questions. Earlier on in the chapter of *Difference and Repetition* devoted to the topic of the image of thought Deleuze has made clear the connection between this and stupidity, when he states that 'stupidity is never that of others [he means, it is a stupidity of philosophy] but the object of a properly transcendental question: how is stupidity... possible?'²⁶

The answer comes immediately:

[Stupidity] is possible by virtue of the link between thought and individuation. This link is... established in a field of intensity which already constitutes the sensibility of the thinking subject.... [Individuation] involves fields of fluid intensive factors which no more take the form of an I than of a Self. Individuation as such, as it operates beneath all forms, is inseparable from a pure ground that it brings to the surface and trails with it. It is difficult to describe this ground, or the terror and attraction it excites.... It is the indeterminate, but the indeterminate in so far as it continues to embrace determination, as the ground does the shoe..... Stupidity [*bêtise*] is neither the ground nor the individual, but rather this relation in which individuation brings the ground to the surface without being able to give it form.²⁷

The term 'individuation' returns us here again to Gilbert Simondon, from whom Deleuze directly takes this word. Individuation means the same thing as 'determination' did above. The 'fields of fluid intensive factors' are the same element, the same plane of consistency or body without organs previously mentioned, that is, the same groundless ground out of which something determinate is created, comes into being – or rather, comes into dynamic becoming. When Deleuze says that individuation does not take the form of an 'I' or a 'self', this again invokes the transductive relation whereby what occurs on 'our' side of the relation is not a fixed subject related to a fixed object (which might be an object, with a certain form, of a work of architecture, thought through the lens of state science). To relate this back to Anne Querrien's work, I noted above that nomadic architecture creates, as she says, 'the conditions for a liberating experience that changes both the space and the subjects', and therefore that these 'subjects' are not really subjects in the fixed sense of that word; they are rather the result of an individuation not taking the form of an 'I' or a 'self'.²⁸

It is not that we cannot interpret architecture in terms of form. Of course, that remains possible. It is just that form, and its concomitant matter, no longer has the last or first word: there is nothing foundational or intrinsic about them, they are aftereffects, consequences. Among all

the forms of architecture there remains, for the nomad, a depth, a relation, which is brought to the surface by a certain stubborn stupidity, a groundless ground out of which the creation of the new work of architecture occurs as an event – the determination or individuation proper to a nomadic architecture of the type Querrien essays – and this depth hovers around, haunts the forms and remains there as the possibility for the new to ever renew within the eternal return.

Transcendental empiricism

In the history of philosophy, empiricism is contrasted with the transcendental. The one relates to specifics, and is as distant as it can be from the breadth of the question about the conditions for the real which, for Deleuze, is the transcendental question. I started this essay with an apparently empirical instance of stupidity – the Grenfell fire. This concerned not the type of nomadic architecture that I cited in Anne Querrien's work, but rather a state architecture, commissioned from the state (this was a block of flats owned by the local municipality), and designed within the auspices of a common-or-garden view of architecture as the design of the construction, or in this case upgrading, of a building. In what way does this empirical example relate to the transcendental questions I have raised?

For Deleuze, there is no contrast between the empirical and the transcendental. Rather, his project is one of creating a transcendental empiricism, in other words to overcome the split between these two realms of thought. He defines transcendental empiricism as follows, earlier on in *Difference and Repetition*:

Empiricism truly becomes transcendental... only when we apprehend directly in the sensible that which can only be sensed, the very being of the sensible: difference, potential difference and difference in intensity as the reason behind qualitative diversity. It is in difference that movement is produced as an 'effect', that phenomena flash their meaning like signs. The intense world of differences, in which we find the reason behind qualities and the being of the sensible, is precisely the object of a superior empiricism.²⁹

What we sense in the world is something very simple, something childlike: we sense differences of intensity, variations, constant becoming, every moment something different. It is only out of this field of intense differences (desire, plane of consistency, body without organs...) that the diversity of movement and phenomena occur, as an 'effect', an aftereffect. It is the perception of this field, this 'intense world of differences', that constitutes a transcendental empiricism, and that points us to the fact that even the most 'empirical' of instances will not be divided from

this field of differences without a loss of understanding.

We can relate our discussions back to the Grenfell instance in the following manner. Clearly, the building regulations which the architects were dumb enough not to follow are an instance of the state science of architecture. The state intervenes in architecture for good reason: in this case, for reasons of safety. As Deleuze and Guattari point out, there is a nomad quality to Gothic architecture, but the reason why the state stamped on that nomadic quality was, at least in part, to do with public safety:

Certain of these requirements are translated in terms of "safety": the two cathedrals at Orleans and Beauvais collapsed at the end of the twelfth century, and control calculations are difficult to effect for the constructions of ambulant science... safety is a fundamental element in the theoretical norms of the State.³⁰

The same goes for Grenfell and the building regulations: they are there for public safety, it was ever thus. There is nothing uninteresting or unimportant about building regulations for a nomad architecture. Within a transcendental empiricism, these empirical instances of state science take equal place. What becomes apparent in Deleuze and Guattari's account is that although the nomad science of architecture, as of every science, is the primary creative ground of architecture, a groundless field to which we must return as architects time and time again in order to create the new at whatever scale we are working at the time, there is no escaping, and no benefit to trying to escape, the other side of the coin, namely state science. Which is to say that the 'smooth' (which gives the possibility for the new) and the 'striated' (the realm of rules, of organisation) have equal value. There is always a plane of organisation (a place of rules, of order, of striation and hierarchy) as well as a plane of consistency, although the latter is primary (and must remain so) and always 'grins through' the former if we know where, or how, to look. Anne Querrien's work as an architect does not dispense with the striated; rather, she and her colleagues know how to play in the smooth space of a nomadic architecture at the same time as necessarily engaging with the state to undermine it where, at that instance, they can do so by virtue of the groundless depth – the plane of consistency – that can be perceived between the fixed forms of the state.

As Deleuze and Guattari say: 'never believe that a smooth space will suffice to save us.'³¹ This means: do not believe that as an architect you can – or should – get away with anything other than *transcendental* stupidity.

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Notes

1. *The Building Regulations 2010, Fire Safety, Approved Document B, Volume 2 – Buildings other than Dwellinghouses*, 2006 Edition with 2007, 2010 and 2013 amendments, Section B4, page 94, paragraph 12.7, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-approved-document-b>.
2. Jane Wharton, 'Grenfell Tower was so dangerous "it was like throwing match into petrol"', *Metro*, 5 June 2018, <https://metro.co.uk/2018/06/05/grenfell-tower-dangerous-like-throwing-match-petrol-7607068/>.
3. *Prescription of Qualifications: ARB Criteria at Parts 1, 2 and 3*, Architects Registration Board, 2010, <https://arb.org.uk/information-for-schools-of-architecture/arb-criteria/>.
4. The Architects Registration Board did introduce a Continuing Professional Development scheme in 2024 and set two mandatory topics that have to be covered by the architect. One of these mandatory topics is fire safety. However, there is no specific requirement for knowledge of the building regulations to be covered in this training. See <https://arb.org.uk/architect-information/cpd/> and in particular the FAQs.
5. *Prescription of Qualifications: ARB Criteria at Parts 1, 2 and 3*, p. 4, paragraph GC1.2.
6. For the topic of the 'trans' in architecture, see the rich essays in 'Trans-Bodies / Queering Spaces', *Footprint* 21 (2017), <https://journals.open.tudelft.nl/footprint/issue/view/567>.
7. Nomad and state sciences, and smooth and striated space, are outlined by Deleuze and Guattari primarily in plateau (i.e., chapter) 12 of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia: A Thousand Plateaus*, entitled '1227: Treatise on Nomadology – The War Machine'. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Capitalism and Schizophrenia: A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 351–423.
8. *Ibid.*, 364.
9. Anne Querrien, Constantin Petcou and Doina Petrescu, 'Making a Rhizome, or Architecture after Deleuze and Guattari', trans. Doina Petrescu, in *Deleuze and Architecture*, ed. Hélène Frichot and Stephen Loo (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 262–275, 266. The reference to the French translation of Ivan Illich's work is on the same page: Ivan Illich, *Tools for Conviviality* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973).
10. Gilbert Simondon, 'The Position of the Problem of Ontogenesis', trans. Gregory Flanders, *Parrhesia* 7 (2009): 4–16. This text

forms part of the introduction to Simondon's *L'individuation psychique et collective (Psychic and Collective Individuation)* which has more recently been translated into part of *Individuation in Light of Notions of Form and Information*, trans. Taylor Adkins (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2020), 1–14.

11. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 364.
12. *Ibid.*, 363.
13. See chapter 4, 'Operative Criticism' in Manfredo Tafuri, *Theories and History of Architecture* (New York, Harper & Row, 1976), 141–70. Or perhaps we are in fact following Tafuri when he ends this chapter by saying that 'the result will be an operative criticism raised to a higher level'.
14. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 364.
15. Simondon, 'The Position of the Problem of Ontogenesis', 8.
16. Querrien, Petcou and Petrescu, 'Making a Rhizome', 266.
17. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 354. The full sentence states: 'From the standpoint of the State, the originality of the man of war, his eccentricity, necessarily appears in a negative form: stupidity, deformity, madness, illegitimacy, usurpation, sin.' I have quoted selectively in order to omit the reference to the 'man of war' and the question of the war machine, which would take us along a different path which space does not permit. Suffice it to say that the war machine and nomadology are closely linked, as the title of the plateau/chapter ('1227: Treatise on Nomadology – The War Machine') indicates.
18. Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006 [1983]); Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (London: Continuum, 1994).
19. Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 66. The Nietzsche quotation is from Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin Books, 1973 [1886]). As before, the word stupidity translates the French word *bêtise*. The original German word in Nietzsche is 'Dummheit'.
20. Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 105.
21. *Ibid.*
22. *Ibid.*
23. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 275. The translator, Paul Patton, included the first *bêtise* in his text; the other citations of the original French are mine. This is important because Deleuze also uses the term *stupide* here, to make a distinction which is not evident from the translation and which has not (as far as I am aware) been picked up on in other commentaries on the question of stupidity in Deleuze.
24. Benedict de Spinoza, *Ethics Proved in Geometrical Order*, trans. Michael Silverthorne and Matthew J. Kisner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018 [1677]), 48. The relevant passage reads: 'thinking substance and extended substance are one and the same substance'.
25. Andrew Pollhammer, 'Between Natural Stupor and the Thought of Stupor: On Gilles Deleuze's Transcendental Stupidity', master's research paper, Concordia University, August 2017,

p. 20, original emphasis, https://spectrum.library.concordia.ca/id/eprint/983013/1/Pollhammer_MA_F2017.pdf. This paper includes a comprehensive literature review relating to the theme of stupidity in Deleuze.

26. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 151.

27. Ibid., 151–52.

28. Querrien, Petcou and Petrescu, 'Making a Rhizome', 266.

29. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 56–57.

30. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 374.

31. Ibid., 500.

Biography

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