After the World Trade Center: Architecture at the crossroads.

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This article addresses important insights concerning architecture on the part of the philosopher Karsten Harries, as well as issues raised by various contributors in a recent book on the aftermath of the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City. Focusing at length on some of the most important of these contributions, it sets out to analyse and elaborate on them in a broader framework, namely what one may learn from these attacks about architecture, particularly concerning its representational function, and more generally regarding its ethical, social and political implications.

In his book, *The ethical function of architecture* (1997), the American philosopher, Karsten Harries, presents a persuasive, if novel, contemporary philosophy of architecture. The themes that he addresses pertain to what has been described by various thinkers and architectural theorists as a crisis in contemporary architecture. Harries attributes this crisis to what he regards as the forgetfulness, on the part of architecture, of its vocation or true function, partly because too many people approach architecture as if it comprises a literary text. He grants that architecture can and should be interpreted, but insists that architecture possesses a "language" (note the scare quotes) of its own, which functions differently from that of literary works. More particularly (Harries 1997: 99; 118-119), he points out that architecture is an art of representation in a very specific sense. One could say that building becomes architecture by "representing" itself.

Harries (1997: 2-4) does not want to give up the hope expressed by Giedion, that architecture should embody a valid way of life for our time. The question is, of course, how architecture should understand this mode of living, and how it should give expression to it. And besides, what *is* a "valid way of life" for the present time? We live in the era of postmodernity, characterized by divergent cultural practices. Did Giedion mean that there should be only one way of life for all people, and if so, would this be desirable? Is cultural diversity not precisely a good thing, that does justice to what is peculiar to different human groups, communities and individuals? Or is architecture capable of articulating an ethos or worldview which gives concrete shape to cultural diversity?

Whatever the answer to these questions may be, it would be an indication of whether architecture is today still able to fulfil its *ethical* function. This "ethical" function is related to the word "ethos", and hence, when attributed to architecture, indicates its capacity to impart to the people who inhabit architectural works (buildings) a sense of "place", an ethical disposition or orientation in the world (Harries 1997: 4). So, for example, when one "feels at home" in a specific building, or when an interior space allows one to use it well for its assigned purpose (whether it is to sleep, or to study, or write), one may say that it satisfies the ethical requirement to transform impersonal "space" into human "place". Conversely, when a building makes one feel uneasy or insecure – especially at an affective level, rather than intellectually - it may well be a sign that it has failed to fulfil this role. (Some deconstructive buildings, for example Behnisch's Hysolar Institute in Stuttgart,

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Germany, tend to unsettle one intellectually, without necessarily relinquishing their "ethical" function in the process.) The question arises, of course, *how* architecture succeeds or fails to satisfy "ethical" criteria in this unusual sense, something Harries addresses along various trajectories, including that of architectural representation. As remarked earlier, Harries understands architecture as building which represents itself (as building).

At first blush it would seem as if this claim is hardly defensible. After all, realistic painting and film are representational arts, but architecture? By means of an incisive analysis of Gothic church-architecture, as well as the Enlightenment thinker, Laugier's appeal to the "primitive hut", as model of nature as well as of reason (which should underpin all architecture, according to Laugier), Harries (1997: 102-115) illustrates that architecture does indeed function representationally, albeit not in the usual sense of rendering a recognizable image or reproduction of something else. In fact, architecture performs a double representation – what Harries (1997: 118-125) terms "representation" and "re-presentation", respectively. What is it that is represented by architecture? And in what sense is it re-presented? The answer may be succinctly stated as follows (Harries 1997: 118) architecture "represents" itself by "re-presenting" itself. This ostensibly cryptic statement means that, firstly (and as stated before), building becomes architecture when building says something about itself, or, as Harries (1997: 118) also puts it: "Architecture is building that speaks to us of its essence". This implies that an architectonic work differs from mere building insofar as a self-referential element has been incorporated into the former. For example, if a building has been built in such a way as to give it the appearance of a ruin (reminiscent of, or representing romantic

building principles by re-presenting them), it has become architecture (Harries 1997: 4). This is the dual representational element in architecture, which Harries (1997: 98) distinguishes from a symbolic function by insisting that both representation and symbol stand for, or signify something, but a symbol need not resemble that which it signifies, while a representation does resemble what it represents in some way (albeit not literally). One may say, therefore, that different architectural works "re-present" themselves *as* representational (of building) by means of, among other things, the novel presentation ("re-presentation", that is) of materials which are employed in distinctively architectural fashion - as columns, for instance – in this way drawing attention to themselves in this dual sense. This is why Harries (1997: 121) says:

> We can distinguish buildings that merely presuppose a regard for the properties of materials from architecture that re-presents these materials and thereby reveals their properties: the heaviness of stone, the glitter of metals, the brightness of colors. Re-presenting its materials, the work of architecture reveals its being. ... Representation here means quite literally re-presentation: the builders of the Parthenon took up, worked, and re-presented the marble from Mount Pentelicus.

Needless to say, architecture in this sense of representing historical or traditional ways of building by re-presenting such building in an innovative manner, serves the ethical function that Harries attributes to architecture by "repeating differently" earlier ways of human orientation in the world. By insisting on the ethical and representational aspects of architecture, his work casts welcome new light on what has always been the most problematical member of the arts-family, given its ineluctable pragmatic dimension of being inhabited or used. Such articulation of the ethical and representational functions of architecture in different ways at specific historical moments is important, even if it is not done in

precisely the philosophical manner that Harries has chosen. This becomes especially clear in the wake of the destruction of architecture whose representational or symbolic meaning was too conspicuous to ignore. In the multi-perspectival book, *After the World Trade Center – Rethinking New York City*, (Sorkin & Zukin 2002), a number of architects, urbanists, anthropologists, historians and other social scientists offer their reflections on the significance of the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York. Although at first sight these may seem to be restricted to the place and character of architecture in New York, as well as to its relation to this city's inhabitants, this is not the case. I would like to show that the significance of this event goes far beyond New York City, and involves the representational function of architecture in its relation to the whole of humanity.

When one considers the sheer heterogeneity of ethnicities referred to by the editors, Michael Sorkin and Sharon Zukin (2002: vii), on the part of the 50000 people who worked in the World Trade Center, and of the approximately 3000 who died on September 11, the trans-ethnic significance of this catastrophic event is brought into sharper focus. These ethnicities included people of Italian, Irish, Jewish, Indian, Pakistani, Carribean as well as Mexican extraction, to mention only some, and represented a wide spectrum of religious affiliations, including Muslim, Christian, Jewish and Hindu. When, given this cosmopolitanism, one reflects on the unique social status of New York City "...as a place of tolerance and freedom, where poor people can get an education and rise in the world (Sorkin & Zukin 2002: vii), it is more than a little ironic that the attacks were launched against the twin towers. The attackers presumably saw these globally familiar buildings as a symbol of an unacceptable (if not damnable) social, cultural and economic system, and in the process ignored (or were ignorant of) precisely what makes New York such an unusual city – a veritable microcosm of the earth's cultures and peoples, al striving to live and work together, even if not always harmoniously.

On the one hand, Sorkin and Zukin (2002: vii) note the solidarity among New York's citizens in the aftermath of the attacks, but on the other they also reflect soberly on the tensions between various stakeholders about the future of the site where the twin towers once stood. That there should be vast differences between the side of the rich and powerful and that of representatives of residential communities on the issue of what should be done with the site, is not surprising. Again, this strikes one as microcosmic in its significance – it correlates with the global tension between the wealthy, multinational, corporate "world", and what Hardt and Negri (2001) call "the multitude" (Marx's proletariat or workers). Hence, the extent to which ordinary people are able to influence the decisions about the "architectural" future of the site where the towers once stood, would be a barometer for the prospects of doing so on a global scale.

This is why one of the questions raised by various contributors in Sorkin and Zukin's book, namely, what should be (re-) built where the twin towers once stood, is so important. It is no exaggeration to say that the outcome of this process of decision-making will be symbolic of what is realistically achievable all over the world in the form of what one might call a kind of "policy" regarding architecture or building in this sense. That it is bound to be a process fraught with all kinds of difficulties, is undoubtedly the case, especially if one considers the "discursive"[1] distances that separate not only ordinary workers and representatives of the corporate world, but

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what David Harvey (2002: 57) refers to as three distinctive discourses: the local, the national and the international, respectively. These discourses, he shows, have been largely incompatible in the different ways September 11 has been construed by each. The local discourse, for example, focusing on issues such as personal loss and grief, deflected attention away from both the national and the international discourses in the wake of the event. The national discourse, construing it as an attack on "freedom", "American values" and the "American way of life" rapidly assumed the shape of a consensus, despite the fact that the perception from abroad (the BBC, for instance) soberly affirmed the symbolic significance of the attacks insofar as the buildings represented financial, economic and (in the case of the Pentagon) military power on a global scale. Harvey (2002: 64-66) leaves one in no doubt that the latter perspective – the international – was accurate in a crucial sense by tying it to the Keynesian insight into the "psychology of the market", that is, the confidence (or lack of it) on the part of both entrepreneurs and consumers in capital as a process of flows and circulation. By striking successfully at the twin towers as symbolic heart of the global system of capital, the attacks undermined this confidence, thus severely aggravating the already existing recession in the American (and particularly the New York City) economy.

I have referred to the symbolic significance of the World Trade Center more than once. This raises the question: how, or in what manner, do buildings function symbolically? It will be recalled that symbolization is a species of signification, which Harries distinguishes from representation. Mark Wigley – whose chapter, "Insecurity by design" (Sorkin & Zukin 2002: 69-85), is one of the most thought-provoking of the collection –

touches on the heart of the matter by similarly questioning the significance of the representational function of architecture. (I should point out that Wigley seems to use "representation" in the sense that Harries [1997: 98] uses "symbol" and "symbolization".) At the outset, he suggests a number of reasons why, after the catastrophe of September 11, 2001, there was such a widespread sense of shock. It was not, he argues, because of the number of people killed – such numbers are, after all, common on our planet with its genocides, diseases and famines. Symptomatic of the fact that something else was at stake, he points out, people turned to architects (normally "marginal" figures) for answers. Wigley (2002: 70) calls this a "kind of disciplinary therapy" in the face of all the confusion surrounding the destruction of the WTC twin towers; architects usually design "culturally reassuring" objects, of the kind which had suddenly, traumatically, through their collapse become the source of the most profound distress. Why is this the case? Other buildings have collapsed as a result of attacks in the US and elsewhere, but never before has such an event stimulated such a debate about architecture. Wigley's (2002: 70) subsequent reflections on the significance of this recent instance of the "ancient intimacy between architecture and violence" casts light on the question, why the fundamentalist fanatics had targeted *these* buildings for destruction, but in the process he also illuminates the often overlooked relationship between people and *buildings* everywhere. I believe one should take note of his (and others') thoughts in this regard lest we, too, take architecture so much for granted that we fail to appreciate its function in our lives as we should.

Echoing the work of Bachelard (in *The poetics of space*, 1969), Wigley reminds his readers of the fantasies that people have about buildings – something from which the

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twin towers were not exempt. In the simplest of terms, buildings are implicitly grasped as protective edifices which, given their strength or solidity, allow their vulnerable human occupants to have life. This is why, as Wigley (2002: 71) puts it, "...fatal collapses are international news – death by architecture is intolerable". Closely related to this, is the cultural "knowledge", that buildings "sustain[ing] a collective sense of time" – they are intended to outlive us, or, as Karsten Harries has put it, architecture offers protection against the "tyranny of time". Architects may not always be aware of it, but they "...craft time when they craft space" (Wigley 2002: 71). It is therefore not difficult to understand the degree to which the shelter provided by buildings exceeds the physical realm and enters the emotional-axiological sphere. Small wonder then, that so many people showed all the signs of grieving over the twin towers after their destruction – they were, as Wigley suggests, really grieving for themselves.

There is a reason for this intimate connection between architecture and humans, of course. Wigley (2002: 71) calls it the "...kinship between body and building". Again, it should not surprise us. To be able to relate to buildings at the level of what Harries describes as the *"ethical function of architecture"* in the sense outlined earlier, such a kinship must be presupposed, otherwise buildings would be incapable of providing an edifying sense of place, of belonging (or *not* belonging, in the case of architecture that fails as such) in the world according to specific parameters of orientation variously "embodied" in architecture.[2] It is no accident that I have used the word "embodied" here – buildings are able to *embody* certain ideals or images valorized by people because of this intimate, and ineluctable, bodily connection between them and those who inhabit them.

Another way to talk about this, is to draw attention to the "representational force" of buildings (Wigley 2002: 71), or the manner in which buildings project an "ideal image" of the human body, in this way functioning as extensions of the latter. In this regard, buildings are reminiscent of the Freudian concept of the ego or (relatively) stable self – which is always destabilized by the workings of the unconscious, of course – the house in which one lives represents some kind of "stable" image of yourself, whether you like it or not.

These thoughts enable one to understand why the terror attacks against the World Trade Centre have been so "successful" (note the scare quotes!) from the terrorists' point of view.[3] In Wigley's words (2002: 71-72):

> Terrorists...play with these basic fantasies about architecture, wounding buildings as often as people. Damaged buildings represent damaged bodies. And it is the representation that counts...This tactical use of images of assaulted buildings plays with precisely the representational capacity of buildings that architects have devoted themselves to for millennia. In this, the terrorist shares the expertise of the architect. The terrorist is the exact counter-figure to the architect...The terrorist mobilizes the whole psychopathology of fears buried beneath the architect's obsession with efficiency, comfort, pleasure.

He goes on to point out that, given this representational function of architecture, the real threat of terrorism is (understandably) to buildings which represent a much larger number of people than those who occupy them. From this angle it is clear why the twin towers were targeted: they were part of the *World* Trade Centre, precisely, and therefore represented a *global* community of a certain kind, against which the terrorists wanted to make a symbolic gesture of a commensurate magnitude. As Neil Smith (2002: 98) has remarked, the reason for targeting the Pentagon at the same time is quintessentially the same:

> The targets themselves were international icons: the

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World Trade Center, symbol of global financial power, and the Pentagon, home as much as symbol of global military power.

Wigley's discussion of the relationship between people and architecture explains why so many of the references to the twin towers after the catastrophe had the form of personification, where the buildings were described as having been "hurt", "wounded", "tortured", and their "death" was proclaimed (Wigley 2002: 72). Again, one should not be surprized. The language used in these instances is very telling – it reflects accurately the "…unconscious association between [human] body and building…" (Wigley 2002: 72). The twin towers' collapse was so traumatically frightening, Wigley suggests, because this conflation became "literal" when the buildings and the bodies of thousands of its occupants were virtually instantaneously "compacted" into an incredibly dense heap of rubble.

The towers, which had been designed to "produce" a global audience, towering above the city and "facing" Europe, did just that. In the process, they became ambiguous icons, in so far as they were not only "looked at", but also "looked back" (Wigley 2002: 73). This is why the twin towers were "…an architecture of image that was understood, and enjoyed" (Wigley 2002: 74). Ironically, as Wigley reminds his readers, the popularity that these buildings enjoyed among ordinary people was never understood or shared by architects – especially those (of postmodernist sensibility) who slated them as exemplars of the "…inhumanity of modern architecture". The point is that the conspicuous display of affection on the part of the public for these Gargantuan buildings, before and after their demise, cannot simply be downplayed as the result of the successful manipulation of public opinion by corporate spin doctors. Wigley suggests a reason for this (2002: 74):

Precisely because their brutal scale didn't fit into their surroundings, they perfectly belonged in a city of refugees and misfits of every kind, the city that is at once the most and the least American. People experienced the buildings not as part of some distant power but as an intimate and tangible part of the domestic life of a dispersed global community.

All of this strikes one as being supremely ironic when it is remembered that what Wigley (2002: 74) terms the "key symbolic role" of the WTC "…was to represent the global marketplace". Paradoxically, these highly visible buildings were an expression of something that is, in its so-called postmodern phase of development, entirely invisible, abstract and without locale, namely the "market" (of advanced capitalism). This is entirely consonant with the (perhaps surprising) fact that architecture has for some time not been the "storehouse of collective memory", as it used to be – that role has been taken over from it by electronic data-storage and processing, or archiving. And yet, if this role-transfer had been complete, the reaction to the loss of the twin towers would not have been as traumatic as it was. The "vestigial system of architecture had more force than anyone expected" (Wigley 2002: 75). Neil Smith (2002: 107) casts further light on this where, in the face of both conservative and "progressive" claims that power in the "network society" of today knows no centres and no boundaries (finance capital moves freely in its deregulated form; power is supposed to be "spatially fluid"), he points out that September 11 reaffirmed that New York *is* "an imperial center",[4] and that national borders have been shown to be far from irrelevant. Clearly, the spatial aspect of architecture – its capacity to modulate space representationally – is far from "outdated"; it is an inalienable part of human existence.

Wigley's analysis of the representational system at work in the twin towers of the WTC is not only revealing as

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far as the symbolism of "generic" corporate buildings goes; it prepares the way for his suggestion of something far more radical, and critical, concerning what is desirable on the part of architecture "after the World Trade Centre". In a nutshell, his analysis of what, and how, the twin towers "signified" in terms of corporate "meaning", together with his anticipatory diagnosis of (probably) yet another emerging architecture of forgetfulness, predicated on an illusory belief that architecture *can* provide security or protection against threats of various kinds (including further terrorist attacks) points to the urgent need on the part of architects as well as ordinary people to realize that such an architecture is a pipe dream, and that architects should embrace what one may call an architecture of human finitude.[5]

But how does Wigley get to this point? He describes the WTC as "...a hyperdevelopment of the generic postwar corporate office tower" (Wigley 2002: 75). Briefly, the characteristics of this kind of architecture included the following:

- The typical "corporate building" represents an invisible, spatially diffuse organization in a visible, spatially localized manner.

- Characteristically, the building bears no sign (in the literal sense) of any company. (That is no longer necessarily the case, in the case of late modern or postmodern corporate buildings, of course.)

- As a consequence of the absence of a literal sign, the building signifies that the corporation is "an open network". Wigley (2002: 75) links this with the twin towers' "anonymous gridded façade" which functions like an "empty classification system" capable of organizing anything. "The corporate building is never more than a certain kind of façade" (Wigley 2002: 76).

- In this way the type of *corporate* building in question here, as the word's etymology indicates, "embodies" an abstract

body – the corporation, which is an invisible entity in the form of a "collective network", brought into visibility by the building(s).

- Significantly, just as the corporation "veils" the concrete bodies of the people it connects, so the corporate building veils or conceals the bodies of those who occupy or work in it – their identities are irrelevant (Wigley 2002: 75).

- The typical "curtain wall" of the corporate building screens out the workers inside it; the diurnal reflections prevent visual access to the interior, while nocturnally the interior fluorescent lights become visible, again to the exclusion of the workers. In this way the unimportance of the workers is emphasized once again (Wigley 2002: 76).

- Contrary to a building like the Pompidou Centre (art museum) in Paris, the workspaces in the corporate building, extending the "logic" of the façade, hides the "guts" of the building scrupulously by means of suspended ceilings. In a certain sense, Wigley (2002: 76) points out, this kind of building has no interior; instead of working in "rooms", employees are distributed through landscape-like spaces.

The twin towers realized this "logic" of the "neutral screen" and the "culture of the invisible body" to an optimal degree. Tellingly, although the lights suggested that they were occupied at night, this did not suggest the presence of people. Just as tellingly, given the transportation systems that interconnected below the shopping level, together with the electronic communications systems that interconnected above the viewing level of the twin towers, the "spaces of consumption" sandwiched between these "frames" were usually filled by the materiality of anonymous bodies. This anonymity pertained to those who worked there – workers tended to know only those who worked on their "own" floor. Ironically, in the aftermath of the collapse of

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the towers, the identities of the employees who worked there were finally revealed, comprising a wide spectrum of nationalities, fields of expertize, professions and income levels.

Strangely enough, though, even after the collapse no attention has been given to the workspaces these workers occupied – instead, the exterior images of the buildings have appeared innumerable times on television screens and in photographs. Which should not surprize anyone – after all, the interior space, in the form of uninterrupted "slices" of workspace stretching from the central service core to the outer glass curtain on each floor, was designed with brutal efficiency in mind. Functionalism to the nth degree. Interestingly, though, because each floor's occupants were allowed to organize their floorspace as they chose, the homogeneous façade concealed an internal heterogeneity that was never really explored or investigated regarding their differences (Wigley 2002: 80). What was important as far as the twin towers' instantiation of the representational logic of corporate buildings was concerned, was that homogeneity was emphasized – there was no depth and each side was similar, so that there was no distinction between front, back and sides. They were obviously intended to be seen "as pure façade" (Wigley 2002: 80), "a pure, uninhabited image floating above the city...in some kind of sublime excess, defying our capacity to understand it" (Wigley 2002: 82).[6]

The upshot of Wigley's remarkable analysis of the representational function of the twin towers comes to light when he points to the fact that, when the façade(s) of the buildings came down, the faces of the employees who had died or were missing "came up" in the shape of photographs and photocopies displayed all over Manhattan, exposing not only their identities, but also

their mortality. The façade had been torn down – but only temporarily, if Wigley is correct. He suspects that when "architecture rises again"..."Another defensive screen will be placed between us and our fears" (Wigley 2002: 83).

What does he mean? As he puts it (2002: 85): "Architects are in the threat management business", implying that, as Lyotard would put it, preference will probably again go to a kind of memorializing through architecture (among other things) which will facilitate a forgetting (and a forgetting of forgetting) of the trauma and an exploitation of new opportunities to make profit out of it. Moreover, the kind of architecture that architects are likely to come up with, will probably again be of the kind which, like the deceased twin towers, will exemplify "insecurity by design" – the kind of insecurity which is deeply bound up with an unwillingness to acknowledge human frailty and vulnerability, projecting instead an image or façade of global power, and, unavoidably – if this option is chosen – of placelessness. Interestingly, Wigley (2002: 83) invokes a psychoanalytical dimension to collective trauma when he suggests that, after the twin towers' collapse, there is a collective sense that "...everything changed that morning" – perhaps a sign that people may "...no longer be able to repress certain aspects of contemporary life" (Wigley 2002: 83). What these aspects may be is further clarified where he claims that certain things about contemporary life were exposed in a disturbing fashion on September 11, for instance the everyday illusion that architecture is finally capable of keeping danger at bay. "Security is never more than a fragile illusion", he says (Wigley 2002: 84). "Buildings are much stranger than we are willing to admit". Hence his fear that architects will once again willingly "collaborate on the production of images of

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security, comfort, and memory" (no doubt of the "memorializing" kind).

In the place of this kind of architecture, Wigley envisages an architecture of a fundamentally different kind – one which does not trade in illusions but embraces the fragility of human life, as reflected in the representational system that would underpin it.[7] His concluding words express this idea well (Wigley 2002: 85):

> But the only architecture that might resist the threat of the terrorist is one that already captures the fragility and strangeness [Heidegger would say 'uncanniness'] of our bodies and identities, an architecture of vulnerability, sensitivity, and perversity. Ignoring this, architects will unwittingly get on with the job of making the next targets.

In other words, the kind of architecture that attracts threats of violence, is an architecture that denies our connection with the processual cycles – including life and death, or constitution and dissolution - of the earth, to which we are inextricably bound through our bodies. Architecture which projects corporate images of anonymity and global power is an architecture that is, in the final analysis, "inhuman". Sharon Zukin's (2002: 21) passionate exhortation, in the face of the tensions and conflicts of interest about the future of the site, resonates with Wigley's insights where she says:

> But let's not rebuild in arrogance. We don't need more superblocks and mammoth centers, we need many, smaller centers. We need to rebuild a lower-scale Downtown where life hums and throbs on every block. This is what the World Trade Center has taught us.

In other words, we need to rediscover what Harries refers to as the ethical function of architecture, not forgetting the connection between this and architecture's representational function in both Harries's and Wigley's senses of the word. Only if this can be done, may we look forward to a kind of architecture that represents the ethos of an inclusive, non-hierarchical humanity in

the place of the anonymous power that the World Trade Center symbolized.

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Notes

[1] I am using the term "discourse" and related terms such as "discursive" here in the largely Foucaultian sense of language as the medium where power and meaning (or knowledge) converge. Harvey (2002: 57) recognizes this, too, where he says: "A certain power resides in discourses".

[2] To gain a more concrete sense of what Harries has in mind here, one could look to the history of architecture. For example, think of the different manner that Gothic architecture embodies these parameters, as opposed to 19th-century eclectic architecture, or some of Gaudi's evocative cave-like modulations of architectural space, or modern architecture of the Mies van der Rohe variety, or postmodern architecture like those buildings designed by Graves, Venturi or Moore, or, again, deconstructive buildings such as the Behnisch Hysolar Institute in Stuttgart, or buildings designed by Peter Eisenman, or Zaha Hadid – in each case, the ethical function of architecture is executed differently, or the "kinship between body and building" is articulated with different effects.

[3] Harvey (2002: 65) puts it as follows: "What bin Laden's strike did so brilliantly was to undermine confidence by hitting hard at the symbolic center of the system and exposing its vulnerability".

[4] Hardt and Negri (2001: 54-59) would disagree here. For them, the "centre" of the new "Empire" is simultaneously everywhere and nowhere.

[5] This is reminiscent of Nietzsche's exhortation – in *Thus spoke Zarathustra* (1984 :252-253; 268-269) - that humankind will only be able to overcome the "spirit of revenge" against human powerlessness to undo past events, that is, time, if they affirm their lives in their entirety, including the pain and suffering, to the point of accepting their own mortality.

[6] Quite accurately, Wigley adds that: "The unfathomable trauma of their destruction simply deepened the mystery" (p.82). Elsewhere, I have elaborated (Olivier 2002) on this aspect of the destruction of the twin towers of the WTC in terms of what may be called the "terrible sublime".

[7] Needless to say, this "fragility" or vulnerability would be embodied *representationally*, not structurally as far as the actual building structure and firmness of the buildings in question are concerned. What is at stake is *how* architecture signifies and *what* it represents in the process. Cf. in this regard Olivier 1992 and 1993, where two kinds of architecture compatible with these precepts are discussed.