Introduction

To what advantage can an analysis of the "history of modern architecture" be converted to a "history of the idea of modernity in architecture?" To write a history of modern architecture is to write a relatively 'safe' history; the phrase retains an assurance of a tradition in the making. But little reassurance is offered, at least at first glance, by a history of the idea of modernity in architecture (not least because of the unstable juxtaposition of 'modernity' and 'history'). This latter history throws into question, for example, the works of some theorists who claim to have developed more nuanced views of twentieth-century architectural modernism.¹ Can modernity itself be profitably historicized for a richer understanding of architecture in our century?

Modernity: The Word as Historical Formation

Twentieth-century scholarship, beginning with the British New Left, has shown that everyday words like "economy," "society," and "culture" are, in fact, complicated historical formations. Each term embodies complexes of meaning that have evolved in response to particular conditions they have been enlisted to describe.² A pivotal change in the modern evolution of the word "culture," for example, came with Matthew Arnold's insistence that the word fulfill a dual function, both individual and societal. In his 1869 work Culture and Anarchy (written in the aftermath of mid-century Continental revolutions and subsequent unrest in England), Arnold advanced one famous definition of the word "culture" as the individual "study of perfection" in literature, philosophy, and in "all the best that has been thought and said in the world."³

At the same time, "culture" was affixed to the notion of a general advancement of society that would promote collective harmony. In this dual usage, referring to the individual and to the collective, Arnold's employment of the word "culture" marked a decline in the term's traditional associations with agriculture that had emphasized the "cultivation" of animals or crops. Increasingly, the emerging word stood either for an interior matter of self-education and improvement in the arts, or it pointed outward to designate a collective, what Raymond Williams has referred to as a "whole way of life."⁴ With accelerating modernization, the word "culture" eventually assumed a multiplicity of meanings, denoting institutions, education, or the state of whole societies, as well as the innermost personal qualities of human creativity, erudition, or a general sense of elevation above humanity's "baser" inclinations.

The word "modernity," too, represents a strong candidate for Raymond Williams' list of incredibly rich and complex historical formations.⁵ Likewise, a history of the idea of "modernity" in architecture could begin to untangle some of the "complexes of meaning" it, too, has accumulated. This short essay on an immense topic begins by tracing some of the concepts and phenomena that evolved to comprise
the term "modernity." It then sketches several examples of how the term has been understood, reconfigured, and reworked in the historiography of modern architecture, notably in movements such as the Art Nouveau, sachlichkeit (objectivity), and a few others. Pointing to some of the linkages between architectural modernity and its neighboring cultural fields, it is nevertheless difficult to imagine this analysis in a way that is not simply a caricature of an all too vast subject. Nevertheless, a historicization of the idea of "modernity" in architecture, properly carried through, might offer a few moments of salutary self-reflection -- especially in an age when much postmodern theory that is not dependent upon a program of "play" tends to shade, instead, more darkly toward nihilism.

**Traditions of Modernity: Philosophical and Artistic Roots**

Some recent historians and theorists of architecture have undertaken serious revisions of the history of architectural modernism. The German architectural theorist Fritz Neumeyer, for example, introduces a recent work on Mies van der Rohe with the assertion that "the research of our time has to occupy itself not only with modernism's break with tradition, but also with the complex and contradictory underground network of historical roots that nourished it." Though provocative at first, Neumeyer's statement retains the view that a distinct modernist "break" with tradition did, in fact, occur, inaugurating thereafter the notion of a definitive "modernism" for our century's architecture.

Neumeyer's passage also contains an awareness, however, of modernism's inherently complex and dual character. On the one hand, modernism's "break with tradition" entails an overcoming of the recent past: it implies that modernism seeks a progressive, new self-grounding, a transcendence of historical context, or an aesthetic redemption or reconciliation to be achieved by a conscious thrust into the future. On the other hand, since the historical roots of the past also supply the substance for modernism's break with tradition, Neumeyer's view suggests connections to the past from which modernism cannot entirely escape. Committed modernist architects of Neumeyer's "break" have usually compensated for this fact by reaching for inspiration over their own recent, historically contentious periods to access the plenitude of a distant, mythologized past, or appealed to a Nature or Order that is somehow eternal.

Where modernism's determined drive toward the future derives from those perceptions of modernity that Baudelaire identified in 1863 as "the ephemeral, the contingent" -- conditions fundamentally ungrounded -- appeals in modernism to the distant past draw on Baudelaire's "other half [of art] which is eternal and immutable."

Modernity to Baudelaire, in fact, is a condition that implies a kind of art, as his poetic formulation makes clear: "By 'modernity' I mean the ephemeral, the contingent, the half of art whose other half is eternal and immutable." This equation of modernity with a kind of aesthetic experience is a theme that recurs often in subsequent discussions of modernity, and is certainly still with us in designations like modern painting, modern dance, modern literature, modern architecture -- the branches of modern culture. Late-twentieth-century scholarship's ongoing consideration of Baudelaire's 130-year-old definition helps to affirm its prescience, particularly as a
definition based on perceptions of urban experience. Assessing this equation of modernity with urban life, the historian Carl E. Schorske writes in his account of the "idea of the city":

Somewhere about 1850, there emerged in France a new mode of thought and feeling which has slowly but forcefully extended its sway over the consciousness of the West...Earlier urban thinking had placed the modern city in phased history: between a benighted past and a rosy future (the Enlightenment view) or as a betrayal of a golden past (the anti-industrial view). For the new culture, by contrast, the city had no structured temporal locus between past and future, but rather a temporal quality. The modern city offered an eternal here and now ["hic et nunc"], whose content was transience, but whose transience was permanent.\textsuperscript{12}

Part of the problem for modern architects, who are presumably interested in understanding the city, has been to develop ways to address the modern city's condition of transience, to glorify or resist it with the embrace of such ideals as the "spirit of movement," machine production, and "organic" or "expressionist" design.\textsuperscript{13}

Modernity's persistent duality -- that of transience juxtaposed alongside permanence -- has led many theorists of modernity to return to Hegel. Hegel's dialectical outlook has been of particular use in struggles to define modernity as either a cultural or philosophical problem. Marshall Berman, for example, has argued for a distinct view of modernity as an ongoing "dialectic of modernization and modernism" extending over the past two centuries. In the term "modernization" Berman accepts the sociological definition of the process by which scientific knowledge and accelerating industrialization have transformed societies, economies, and their concentrations of power in profound and unending ways. "Modernism," by contrast, is described as the array of cultural, and especially aesthetic responses that individuals have made to modernization. Modernism seeks to articulate, in Berman's words, a "variety of visions and ideas that aim to make men and women the subjects as well as the objects of modernization, to give them the power to change the world that is changing them, to make their way through the maelstrom and make it their own."\textsuperscript{14} Berman takes a broad and essentially optimistic view of the idea of modernity, arguing that far from being a period which has come to closure, it has instead suffered from simplistic reductions that perceive modernity in terms of "rigid polarities and flat totalizations."\textsuperscript{15}

Robert Pippin's book, Modernism As A Philosophical Problem, builds on Berman's readings of Goethe, Baudelaire, Gogol, and others by extending them in a philosophical direction.\textsuperscript{16} In particular, while delineating the challenges modernity posed to numerous Western philosophers, Pippin identifies modernism's important debts to 19th-century Romantic traditions. Romanticism, among other things, lent increasing strength to a historical conception of time, a conception that distinguished its own particular period, the modern period, as different from the ancient past. Yet an added dimension of this conception of time developed among the Romantics as well; the new conception was the Romantics self-conscious awareness of their time as qualitatively different from the period immediately preceding them in the eighteenth century, the self-defined period of the Enlightenment. With this awareness Romantics tended to elevate qualities of fragmentariness, particularity, and emotion in reaction to the Enlightenment's perceived rationalism, academicism, and universalist
tendencies. Judgements of Enlightenment self-conceptions -- seen as overly optimistic and objective explanations for a human existence that often tended toward the banal -- were often tendered in Romantic art, which offered a means of escape from the rational world into a "truer," subjective, interior world of spirit or emotion. Philosophers like Hegel took up the examination of divisions in the modern self that had been identified by Kant in his critiques; these could be reconciled in Hegel's view by forming dialectical components of a historical process situated within a greater, gradually unfolding Absolute. These notions of the artist's retreat to a preserve within, and the perception that a divided, fragmentary self (later society) had somehow to be reconciled, were to acquire increasing significance as dilemmas of modernity as the nineteenth century advanced.

Elaborating further on Baudelaire's contribution to the nineteenth century's growing current of "aestheticism," Pippin explains how the poet's works exemplify a kind of conversion of Romantic notions of art and beauty into the actual agents, *sui generis*, of redemption in modern life. Writing about his experience of wandering the streets of Paris, Baudelaire "takes the general modern idea of a self-making to a kind of extreme," so that "the fact that much in modernity is a mere self-assertion, a kind of vain celebration of human power, is no longer perceived as a problem, but as a solution." Baudelaire's work marks a point in the nineteenth century when art began increasingly to be cast as a last "true" preserve of human autonomy and integrity: since all human relations came ultimately to be tainted by the compromises and demands of "civilized" society, only individual art and creativity could redeem an essential human purity, or restore a primary connection to Nature. No longer carried out primarily for royal patrons, artworks were executed by artists living increasingly by and for their art; authentic artworks presented a means of access to the purity of an artist's vision. Whereas the Romantics placed an emphasis on art as a means of heightening or elevating experience, modernism, as Pippin indicates using the example of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, lowers the status of the artwork, or at least subordinates it to the emerging belief that "it is the transforming act of imagination that is of importance completely of itself, and not for any moral or romantic reasons."

Pippin also explains one of the key features in an emerging modernist sensibility using a Hegelian dialectic of "independence" and "dependence." To Pippin, individual searches for autonomy and self-direction (independence), which define the modern era in philosophies reaching back to Descartes, and later Kant, confront the dilemma of being unable to free themselves of social constraints (dependence). Searches for the autonomous satisfaction of human desires, which philosophers like Hobbes or Hume saw as ultimately grounded "naturally" in objective human states, are better understood for Pippin in their "historical and social contingency" -- in the way analyzed, Pippins suggests, by Hegel, or more radically by Nietzsche, and analyzed by Rene Girard in his study of the development of the modern novel. Such a contingent view of desire permits a contextual and developmental, rather than static, analysis of modern individual experience. Over time, individuals emerging from an Age of Faith had to learn to negotiate autonomy and desire in the absence of what Girard calls "external" reassurances of what is desirable, such as had existed in past appeals to
divine covenants or aristocratic ideals. These latter ideals had reflected the knowledge of "to ariston," or what was best in society.\textsuperscript{24}

With rising sets of beliefs promoting the equality of individuals over ancient hierarchies (as in the Declaration of the Rights of Man), modern society came increasingly to conduct its affairs on a leveled field of "mediators," at least in comparison to previous centuries. As Girard shows in an array of modern novels and contexts, socially embedded human authority figures furnish what are at once examples for emulation and objects of jealousy, vanity, and competition in social intercourse; socially constrained individuals have little choice but to seek to overcome their limitations and "become the object of imitation" themselves. In Girard's analysis there is for Pippin an important recollection of Nietzsche's concept of \textit{ressentiment}, that alienation from society's contradictory behaviors which gives rise to the philosopher's crisis and eventual self-created morality. But more importantly for Pippin, the ideas articulated by Baudelaire, by Nietzsche, and especially by Girard intersect. Taken together, they reveal a linkage "between the dawning sense of a failure in the social promise of modernization -- individual autonomy and collective rationality -- and the appeal of a radically autonomous, self-defining "cult" of art."\textsuperscript{25} The rise of self-determination, emerging alongside a paralyzing sense of "contingency," produce a modernism laden with "intimations of the crisis mentality."\textsuperscript{26} Reconciliation to this situation is a persistent theme for modernism, achievable only, Pippin submits, within the "dialectic of independence and dependence" -- a potential autonomy realized within self-imposed conditions.\textsuperscript{27}

One way, then, to temporalize the idea of modernity in architecture is to recognize that historically during the nineteenth century, the idea of modernity itself increasingly picked up associations with human searches for self-grounding in settings seen as ungrounded because their forms (physical, social, economic, political) were ever-changing, or at least changing at increasing rates. At the same time, reactions to changes with the advance of time were conditioning the belief that artistic acts held a privileged status, insofar as the artistic imagination held out promises for human legitimation or authentication -- Baudelaire's "self-making" as a "solution" to the modern dilemma. Betrayed by earlier Enlightenment and Romantic efforts to discover a basis for autonomous human action, it was left to those moderns of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to seek to "create" solutions to compensate for the shortcomings of individual and collective rationality.

Given their social, economic, political, and technological constraints, prominent architects of twentieth-century architectural history have achieved prominence in part through the way they have claimed to overcome the instability and contingency of their social and historical contexts. At the same time these architects, exemplified by someone like Le Corbusier in his \textit{L'Esprit Nouveau} period, but also by Adolf Loos and perhaps Mies van der Rohe, have successfully drawn legitimacy from claims to have accessed deeper-running, eternal historical currents in which they could claim to have grounded their age. In this way these architects acted in ways consistent with the dilemmas of modernity as they were being grasped at the years around the turn of this century. I am not suggesting the criteria for definitions of modernity in architecture need be aesthetic -- only that the traditions were there and able to be tapped.
Moreover, in architects like Walter Gropius and Le Corbusier, we witness the ability to capitalize on the tradition of the cultured individual artist who claims he will improve twentieth-century modern culture as a "whole way of life." Finally, there is the long line of historians of the tradition of modernity in architecture who have stood ready to make the most out of the artistic and aesthetic solutions preferred by the architects. The Art Nouveau offers an example of how architectural historians have championed architect-creators for their establishing a style which, if not entirely "modern" by the normative standards of the historians, was at least of revolutionary significance in overcoming the past.

Art Nouveau Architecture Within and Outside Modernist Historiography

Twentieth-century architectural historians like Henry Russell Hitchcock have been credited for their fidelity to the "understanding that the architectural historian should begin and end his researches with built form...". In studies that emphasize individual creativity over social processes, and the style of buildings over the cultural context in which they were produced, Hitchcock himself has concluded that "...it is more humanistic, and at least as true to the detailed facts, to consider modern architecture as deriving from the individual activities of a few leaders rather than from some Hegelian historic necessity." Hitchcock admits to seeing a certain "proto-modernity" in nineteenth-century architecture, fragmentary efforts that never bore fruit because "leaders of various successive movements rarely intended to break with the past entirely." Hitchcock's criteria for modernity are clear -- only a complete break with the past will serve "true" architectural modernity.

Hitchcock's tradition of interpretation is upheld in William Curtis's more recent work, *Modern Architecture Since 1900*, which borrows Hitchcock's assertion that "Art Nouveau was actually the first stage of modern architecture in Europe, if modern architecture be understood as implying primarily the total rejection of historicism." Extending Hitchcock's view, Curtis asserts Art Nouveau's "drastic break" with tradition, a break necessitated by a stifling and "degraded Beaux-Arts Classicism widely practised in the 1870s and 1880s." Though he cites Nikolaus Pevsner's and others' indications of an Art Nouveau sensibility in such areas as the graphic arts and painting, Curtis nevertheless draws the conclusion that the Art Nouveau creations of a figure like Horta were, in fact, "revolutionary." The accounts of Curtis and Hitchcock alike cast Art Nouveau architects like Victor Horta and Hector Guimard as the restorers of a personal creativity to a profession overburdened by the demands of eclecticism. Houses like Horta's own at 12 Rue de Turin in Brussels in 1893, in Siegfried Giedion's eyes, "roused Continental architecture from its lethargy at one blow." Works such as this are seen as early lights for later architects, who quickly spread the Art Nouveau style to nations such as Germany (Jugendstil), Italy (Stile Liberty), Spain (modernismo), and the Austria (Secession). The historians' accounts draw upon applying the very "cult of the artist" criteria that appeared as part of the accumulated meaning of modernity outlined by Robert Pippin.

But examined in the contexts in which it was produced, the Art Nouveau appears far less amenable to such generalization, let alone as such a radical stylistic or
"revolutionary" break. The term itself was used in a variety of contexts to denote quite different developments within the same decade, and within different national settings. The well-documented case of France between 1889 and 1900, as Deborah Silverman points out, shows that the term "art nouveau" was first used as a proud designation for monumental structures, and underwent changes of meaning in accordance with a radically changing national setting. The 1890s are notable for the emergence of new attitudes toward relationships between the arts, French culture, and the economy, all of which acted in the context of changing social and psychological realities as well. Thus, planners, officials, and the press joined in touting the Gallery of Machines and the Eiffel Tower as an "art nouveau" inaugurated with the 1889 Paris World's Exhibition. They used this term in conjunction with what Silverman has called the "technological optimism" of the time, and to announce the arrival of a modern architecture matching the confidence of a French Third Republic exactly one century after the French Revolution. The gigantic wrought iron buildings were thus an embodiment of modernity achieved under the modern democratic state, evoking France's expansion of heavy industry in the context of laissez faire economic policies. Deborah Silverman's careful work tracks boosterist "art nouveau" rhetoric even further into official territory, where an ideological program included "the assault on religious mentalities by the inculcation of civic morality and secular science."34

Within a decade in France earlier usages of the term "art nouveau" and the modernity they signified had been virtually turned on their head. By the time of the Paris World's Exhibition of 1900, the art nouveau had been consolidated into a "craft modernism" with an emphasis on luxury decorative arts, as opposed to industrial or applied arts. Organized under a Central Union of the Decorative Arts, artists, artisans and a coalition of progressive young republican officials invoked far older French design traditions -- in particular, a rococo-derived style moderne dating back to interior designs of the 1720s -- to support the "decorative arts as a source of national integration and international preeminence."35 The new style moderne of the 1890s turned its back on the monumental urban symbolism of only a few years previous, instead emphasizing organic, feminine, vitalist forms that reached their fullest expression in private, interior spaces.36

Whereas the Art Nouveau in France became part of a larger project for affirming national culture, in Belgium the Art Nouveau innovations of Victor Horta and Henry van de Velde were connected to a program for radical social change. The term "Art Nouveau" itself had appeared in articles in the Belgian journal, L'Art moderne, beginning in 1884; it acquired its radical meaning in connection with figures like Henry van de Velde, who was a disciple of William Morris in England, and who preached that the elimination of divisions between the classes must begin with the elimination of distinctions between the arts. This movement for artistic and craft unity took place outside the established Salon environment and, equally different from the French experience, involved a Gesamtkunstwerk or "total-work-of-art" cultural program (in buildings like Horta's Maison du Peuple of 1898). The Gesamtkunstwerk approach also proved popular in the Secession movement of Belgium's fellow Catholic country of Austria. Silverman distinguishes the specificity of the Art Nouveau's absorption into the French established culture by noting that "in fin-de-siècle Austria,
resources for integration eluded the agents of politics and culture," contributing to the fractiousness of that country's programs for modern architecture.\textsuperscript{37}

The appellation "Art Nouveau," whose individual exponents have been credited with taking the first steps toward originating a modern architectural style for our own century, was in actuality an extremely malleable term. As Silverman explains, in France the burgeoning organic decorations that filled up later Art Nouveau French interiors can be seen more convincingly as the complex embodiment of a modern retreat from the crowded, impersonal boulevards of the \textit{fin-de-siècle} French capital. In their emphasis on florid, highly personalized interior decoration, producers and consumers of the Art Nouveau turned their backs, in effect, on the momentary contacts and selfhood of the Baudelairean \textit{flaneur}, who engaged in a "drunken spree of vitality" achieved by "bathing himself in the crowd."\textsuperscript{38} Emile Zola, who had concurred with the positive technological outlook that reigned at the 1889 exposition, observed in 1896 that "Modern society is racked without end by a nervous irritability. We are sick and tired of progress, industry, science."\textsuperscript{39} The 1890s French Art Nouveau seems to have appealed to a different kind of modern, psychological urban reality, one that still bowed to the vicissitudes of modern production and a national agenda, but which also absorbed the observations of a Charcot or Freud concerning human nervous responses to the crowded, bourgeois city.\textsuperscript{40}

In the absence of cultural or geographical specificity, traditional historians of modern architecture remain free to bracket an autonomous history of aesthetic developments; this is certainly overreaching, but perhaps traditional methodology is itself symptomatic of modernity's crisis of autonomy and lack of wholeness in the way that this historiography constructs images of both autonomy and continuity.

\textbf{Sachlichkeit}

Julius Posener, an important historian of Berlin architecture, has written that "The years prior to 1904 belong to the Jugendstil."\textsuperscript{41} In Berlin's avant-garde circles this was certainly true, but in the year 1902 Germany saw the publication of a new appraisal of the situation in architecture, Hermann Muthesius' \textit{Stilarchitektur and Baukunst [Style-Architecture and Building-Art]}.\textsuperscript{42} A work that mingled history, criticism, and cultural polemic, \textit{Stilarchitektur and Baukunst} made plain Muthesius' utter dissatisfaction at the embrace of empty, eclectic stylistic copyism ("Stilarchitektur") by German architects, instead of an intelligent, thought-out art of building that was appropriate to its time ("Baukunst"). The lack of such a distinction penetrated, in Muthesius' view, down through the design thinking of every level of production, contaminating the decorative arts with "shiny objects" that only Germany's barbarian-bourgeoisie could mistakenly adopt as tokens of their wealth.\textsuperscript{43}

Muthesius, an architect and Prussian civil servant absorbing the lessons of industrialization in Britain since 1896, believed he had gained an inside track on how, in one great sweep, Germany could reform its arts and crafts education, transform its architecture, redirect its approach to industrial production, and eventually improve the quality and output of all goods produced in the domestic German economy. Though it would take several years before culminating in the arts, crafts, and industrial union
known as the Deutscher Werkbund, already in the late 1890s and in his 1902 book Muthesius had elaborated the concept of a *sachliche kunst*, an objective or realist art that would finally serve as a true modern alternative to the reigning but ultimately vacuous style-based paradigms of historicism and Art Nouveau (Jugendstil).\textsuperscript{44}

More than just the equivalent of the English term 'objective' or 'realist,' *Sachlich* condensed into one term such ideas as rationality, functionalist *Zweckmaessigkeit* [the most direct satisfaction of need], attention to material qualities, and the processes appropriate to the workmanship of materials. Originally applied to describe 19th-century works of "pure constructional expression" such as iron bridges, Muthesius added the word *kunst* after *sachlich* to imply that objective processes would lie at the heart of any truly new, modern aesthetic goals in building and production. His arguments gained some legitimacy from a German context in which Europe's fastest-paced industrialization could be seen transforming every aspect of social, economic, and political life.\textsuperscript{45}

In a post-1890 genealogy of the term 'modernity' in architecture, it is surely the new awareness of process as something quintessentially "modern" that is significant for architecture at the opening of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{46} Handcrafts were being replaced on a seemingly daily basis with machinery that was exponentially more productive, and whose processes extended the work of the hand in previously unimaginable ways. Earlier socio-economic arrangements that amounted to "whole ways of life" were altered so that, as Frederic Morton writes, "The human contact a master craftsman had once had with his men and his clients dissolved for the manufacturer into the abstractions governing factory efficiency."\textsuperscript{47}

The changes in human individual and collective experience are important: they give rise to what Morton and others have described as a crisis of "self-authentication," especially among the industrial and commercial middle classes.\textsuperscript{48} A growing sense of alienation felt by many city-dwellers was exacerbated by class distinctions and by economic practices that engendered anonymity. Interested observers of the dislocation engendered by Europe's fastest process of industrialization took inventory of the effects on individual experience, community identity, and even moral and religious integrity. These observers comprise the tradition of German sociology, several of whose members had much to say about the loss of selfhood and social coherence brought on by Germany's explosive growth.\textsuperscript{49} Mourners of the loss of community, as in the case of Ferdinand Toennies, would find architectural anti-modern support in figures like Paul Schulze-Naumberg -- an architect whose idealizations of preserved German home towns conformed to the same nostalgia for guilds and other islands of community advanced by Toennies.

To take a more international view, volatile politics within arts movements of various countries overlapped with pre-World War I policies that spurred economic competition among Europe's highly competitive powers. Thus, the internally conflicted but nonetheless highly influential German Werkbund would help lead the way in Germany's organized drive for cultural and economic modernization. Burgeoning architectural journals helped spread international ideas during this time, while political and economic expansionism further encouraged German architects to look for "modernity" in industrial materials and processes.\textsuperscript{50} Architectural battles
within the Werkbund were played out along lines that pitted defenders of the Romantic "artistic creator" position, like Henry van de Velde, against the pragmatists such as Hermann Muthesius, who held fast to the notion of merging the arts and industry into an aesthetic and economic synthesis of 'modernity.' Muthesius prevailed with the support of his Werkbund allies, affirming the Werkbund as the institution in charge of finding a modern national style for Germany.

The other side of this coin could be seen as the "craft modernism" of the Central Union of Decorative Arts in France; a nation that the seekers of a modern style in Germany sought to surpass, but not to emulate. In any event, Muthesius was certainly not alone in his views on machines. The Italian Futurist leader Marinetti affirmed that the future of Italian democracy was to be a democracy of "giant locomotives ...racing cars ...Antoinette monoplanes ...(and) immense meeting halls and bathrooms designed for the rapid daily care of the body."\(^51\) Lionel Trilling borrows from Banham's study to advance the point in his work, *Sincerity and Authenticity*, that Marinetti most dramatically established the machine "and the mechanical as the authentic principle of modern life."\(^52\) Marinetti made this declaration on foreign soil while ridiculing the British obsession with Ruskin, whose "sick dream of a primitive pastoral life" was as inauthentic as the outdated notion of the "organic." The Futurists made high priests of mechanics, romanticizing their powers over motors which themselves seemed "as if they had personalities, minds, souls."\(^53\)

In nations like Britain, however, neither the German nor the Italian ideas of modernity in architecture held nearly such great appeal; nor was there much evidence of optimism toward industrial practices as a font for architectural creativity. A much more established empire with traditions that some historians have argued were an impediment to innovation, Britain displayed ambivalence toward ideals that Germany had embraced.\(^54\) English innovations seemed devoted to anti-urban designs that would further the values of a static way of life in natural surroundings -- as, for example, in the Garden City Movement or in Hampstead Garden Suburb of 1912.\(^55\) Even C.F.A. Voysey, a leading light for architects abroad searching for progressive trends in English architecture, proclaimed himself a traditionalist who was simply trying to rid domestic designs of an overbearing stylistic eclecticism. As an admirer of Pugin, Voysey valued traditional craftsmanship and the integrity of craft work, which his houses and furniture from the turn of the century display.\(^56\)

The severity and simplicity of Voysey's works set them apart, encouraging the visiting Hermann Muthesius to popularize them in his book, *The English House* (1904), as hallmarks of "simplicity" and "rationality" whose roots in the wisdom of old master masons made them "revolutionary" in the context of present-day, cacophonous eclecticism.\(^57\) Assuming importance to *Sachlichkeit* principles of modernity that Muthesius was promoting at home, Voysey's works were also taken as evidence of ancient traditions whose reemergence assured groundedness and authenticity in the uncertain present. Muthesius' reading of Voysey stuck: the elderly architect would later blanch at the thought of having been labeled by Pevsner a 'pioneer' in his work, *Pioneers of the Modern Movement From William Morris to Walter Gropius* (1936). To the end, Voysey insisted his works made "no claim to anything new."\(^58\) It is notable how the absence of representational eclectic elements left an opening for Muthesius to
project onto Voysey's work a multivalence that pointed simultaneously toward the hopeful future and the plenitudinous past, fulfilling the recipe for modernity outlined in this paper's introductions.  

Where Ancient History is lacking for builders of a culture in ascendance, one can be fabricated -- as the Beaux Arts "White City" edifices of the 1893 Chicago World's Columbian Exhibition demonstrate. Not simply a fantastic exercise in imagining a past, American Beaux Arts classicism was in some American cities actually at the center of debates about architectural "modernity" through the 1920s. On Philadelphia's Fairmount Parkway (to become Ben Franklin Parkway), for example, an American Champs Elysées was to cut a diagonal through William Penn's original grid plan to the picturesque Fairmount Park, acknowledging with a grand avenue the founding role the city had played in the establishment of the republic. Paul Cret and Fiske Kimball, both leaders in the Philadelphia architectural and academic tradition, were also at the center of opposing constellations of architects interested in realizing their modern classical visions.

Cret's Parisian Beaux Arts training may have prompted his contention that the French tradition furnished the tools of a scientific, problem-solving approach for laying out modern institutional buildings. Rational, functional determinants were at the center of Cret's modern views, the classical garb seen as an international vocabulary of a venerable historical evolution. Kimball, on the other hand, emphasized classicism's vocabulary of forms as Neoplatonic expressions of artistic beauty. Classicism fulfilled strict visual criteria through its geometric purity, "mathematical simplicity, and Dorian harmony" that were a priori modern. Recent experiments with the structure of the tall building were dismissed as insignificant, romantic searches that were as false in the present as they had been in the past. Kimball's views were based on that conception of culture in which formal artistic creations embodied the highest expression of a society. Individual cultivation as well as a more collective advancement were measured, as with Matthew Arnold, by the word "culture." By Kimball's calculation "modernity" was the province of the most artistically advanced at the end of a cultural continuum; Fairmount Parkway was to be graced by abstract forms whose beauty and variety of expression were the architectural equivalent of Cézanne's depiction of increasingly abstract forms in post-Impressionist painting.

Kimball applied this same calculus in his study of early Anglo-American domestic architecture. Here, evidence that functional determinants of form had begun to bow to formal aesthetic influences in seventeenth-century houses was taken to mean that a general advance in culture had occurred.

**Modernist Tradition**

No survey of the idea of modernity in twentieth-century architecture, even one as incomplete as this, would be adequate without a consideration of the Modern Movement's leading historian, Sigfried Giedion. Giedion's close cooperation with and sponsorship by Walter Gropius (for Harvard's Charles Eliot Norton lectures of 1938-39) marks a watershed in the advancement of a certain idea of modernity in architecture. For the remainder of this paper I will skim the tops of a few post-World
War I themes, particularly as they relate to Giedion’s major work, *Space Time and Architecture*.

The First World War marked the end of a European dynastic epoch, and brought the creative and destructive capacities of the inhabitants of modern mechanized nation states to new levels. Ideas of modernity in architecture after the war reflect the subjective, post-traumatic inclinations of German expressionist visions, as well as the reassertion of a Handwerk ethic of arts united with crafts in the Arbeitsrat fuer Kunst and the early incarnation of the Bauhaus. The paper architecture of the former, together with the human rather than machine-based practice of the latter, reflected the productive capacities of a hobbled nation under the siege from the twin forces of revolution and economic devastation. Similarly, Willett tracks the coincidence between trends in artistic and architectural values with the condition of the spasmodic, slowly recovering German economy in the years up to and following the stabilization of Weimar Republic currency in 1924.

In France, a conservative streak befitting the self-satisfaction of a victorious power is seen by Kenneth Silver and John Willett to condition ideas about modernity in architecture. Le Corbusier’s embrace of the machine is perhaps the quintessential reworking of the relationship between the arts, industrial production, and large-scale media organization by an architect after the First World War. Building on earlier critical foundations laid by Adolf Loos, Le Corbusier learned some of the lessons of the Viennese architect’s polemical technique and extended them into a full-scale, mixed media campaign for industrial modernity in the pages of *L’Esprit Nouveau*. But where historians like Stanislaus von Moos have shown that Le Corbusier reworked Loos’s formulations from their craft-based ethic into a full blown industrial purism, he betrays a lack of awareness of Loos’s background and urban cultural context that is typical of architectural historians who turn away from the larger social and cultural processes that go into the making of buildings. For example, his statement that Loos’s arguments "functioned at an often questionable level of seriousness" ignores Loos’s participation in a *fin-de-siecle* proliferation of approaches to language for which Vienna is justly famous. Figures like Loos, Karl Kraus, Peter Altenberg, and Ludwig Wittgenstein (all friends of the architect) made up a constellation of Viennese cultural innovators interested in the potential for language to effect fundamental cultural reform. Given the effect of their treatments of language on twentieth-century thought, it would be more worthwhile to investigate techniques which Le Corbusier may have carried forward into his Purism from accomplished avant-garde writers like Loos.

In his book, *Space, Time and Architecture: The Growth of a New Tradition*, the historian Siegfried Giedion struggled to impart coherence to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries’ great variety of spatial and constructional developments. In a massive historical sweep through Western history, Giedion charts building and planning traditions beginning with the Renaissance with the deftness and confidence of another diagnostician of culture within a modernist tradition, Sigmund Freud, whose psychoanalytic model Giedion seems to have combined freely with the methods of his teacher, Heinrich Woelfflin, and with those of Giedion’s fellow-Swiss guiding light of unified theories of art, architecture, and institutions, Jakob Burckhardt. Although Giedion’s work disavowed any interest in "the split personality
as a psychopathic case," his adoption of numerous psychoanalytic terms and concepts can perhaps be understood as the adoption of a methodology conceived in the spirit of modernism to justify another idea of modernity in architecture, typified by Gropius's Bauhaus or Hitchcock's and Johnson's coterie of International Style architects.73

Shifting in scale between analysis of the individual and society in ways that Freud was fond of doing in his own writings,74 Giedion argued that the central problem of design in the mechanized twentieth century was that "thinking," as represented by science, had gotten ahead and out of step with "feeling," as represented by art, and as such the two were in need of reintegration. This integration was to be realized by studying the lessons drawn from the "constituent facts" of an era, defined by Giedion as "those tendencies which, when they are suppressed, inevitably reappear."75 Thus, because he is "considering architecture as an organism," it is possible for Giedion to understand the architecture of the nineteenth century as "smothered in a dead, eclectic atmosphere," with evidence of future developments preserved "for a hundred years" in the constituent facts of engineering constructions.

All that while, construction played the part of architecture's subconsciousness, contained things which it prophesied and half revealed long before they could become realities.76

With this history, there are at least two aesthetic achievements appealing to our taste: those of the modernist architects fashioning Giedion's "new conception of space," and that of Giedion's own considerable synthetic literary achievement. Such criticism is actually not fair given the sheer volume of illustrative architectural and planning material that Giedion does present in an often interesting, orderly pattern; there are valuable lessons for students in this work and its sequel, Mechanization Takes Command, once one escapes from beneath the weight of the works' psycho-historical determinism.77 With reference, finally, to Giedion's ephemeral "transitory facts" of unlasting fashion, it is significant that the first example he uses to illustrate these ephemera is the furniture of the Second Empire in France.78 This is the very same furniture which Deborah Silverman showed artists and furniture designers like the brothers Jules and Edmond de Goncourt creating as they revived earlier rococo furniture of the eighteenth century, which would be reworked again to inspire the creators of Art Nouveau in its craft modernist guises.79 In the national tradition of, for instance, Kenneth Silver's post-World War I French return to traditional cultural values, surely the furniture of the Second Empire would be transfigured into constituent fact material of a very different kind of history. As Paul Greenhalgh notes, historicism in furniture designs persisted very much as "the preferred approach of the core of the design profession."80 Historical styles could not be made to go away during international exhibitions at the height of the International Style period in the 1920s and 1930s, "even when an exhibition brief was sent to manufacturers actively discouraging them, as with Paris in 1925, 1937 and New York in 1939. Indeed," Greenhalgh continues,

the ability of historicism to survive the attacks of generations of designers, critics and historians can be witnessed by a visit to any departmental store at the present time, where classical, baroque and rococo details remain in furnishings, defiant and popular as ever.81
The priorities of any modernity in architecture seem always to have maintained the radical stance of seeming to overcome the past and founding a new method, a new transcendence of historical conditions. But with the passage of time, each context demands its own overcoming anew, its replacement by the next modern, or its replacement by claims of having achieved the postmodern. Postmodern theory may have foreclosed notions of modernisms that came to rely on unitary positions, but even in multiplicity the essential question of finding ways to effectively be modern seems to remain.
Endnotes

1 Charles Jencks' discussion of six such traditions of twentieth-century modernism is a good example of such a more nuanced view. His analysis usefully extends beyond stylistic considerations to open a discussion about the 'multivalence' of buildings, their manifold spaces and significations. *Modern Movements in Architecture* [New York: Anchor, 1973]. Far less convincing is his effort to force modern architecture into a rigid semiotic system in *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture* [New York: Rizzoli, 1977].

2 Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society: 1780-1950* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1958]. For architectural historians, Williams' elaboration of the concept of culture as at once a "whole way of life" and an interiorized preserve of "the arts and intellectual life" is of equal importance to another of his insights: that "culture" has long been studied apart from material social life instead of being understood as part of material social processes which are themselves constitutive in cultural practice. *Marxism and Literature* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977], p.19.


4 Ibid., also pp.319-26.

5 His book *Keywords*, to which I have not been able to gain access, might well have one.


7 Neumeyer, p.xx.

8 Standard accounts can rightfully defend such formulations as necessary simplifications or conventions; this essay supposes that an uninterrogated convention of a modernist "break" is precisely the locus of a great deal of confusion about modern architecture. On "conventionalism" see Anderson (note 6).

9 The issues of "self-grounding," "overcoming," and "self-assertion" in modernity are taken up in debates by figures like Karl Lowith and Hans Blumenberg. Karl Lowith
advances a "secularization theory" of the modern era, in which modern ideas like "progress" can be traced to Judeo-Christian concepts of providence or eschatology, which both imply a drive toward final outcomes. Hans Blumenberg counters Lowith's challenge to the modern age's qualitative difference, its "legitimacy," by locating the bases of progress in a human curiosity that directs actions performed outside the expectation of transcendant intervention from some external or divine force. Finally, Reinhart Koselleck summarizes the possibility of modernity this way: "It was only when Christian eschatology shed its constant expectation of the imminent arrival of doomsday that a temporality could be revealed that would be open for the new and without limit."


11 Baudelaire quoted in ibid.


13 Otto Wagner's textbook *Modern Architecture* (1896) as well as the Futurists make movement a criterion and a virtue of modernity; numerous figures from Hermann Muthesius to Richard Neutra advance the virtues of machine production; "organic" formulations surface in the rhetoric of Wright, expressionism in Taut, etc. etc.

14 Berman, p.16.

15 ibid., p.24.


18 Pippin, pp.31-32.

19 Pippin, p.33.
One version of this appears in Terry Eagleton's account of "The Rise of English:"
"Having lost his patron, the writer discovered a substitute in the poetic." Terry Eagleton, 

Pippin, p.33. Also Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* [Cambridge, MA: 
Harvard, 1971], p.99. Two figures that emerge historically in reaction to the increasingly 
bourgeois urban world, the bohemian and the dandy, are explored as self-aestheticizing 
characters negotiating the city and its society. The bohemian lives in the spirit of 
rebellion against the emerging bourgeois world of which he is a part, seeking like 
Baudelaire to merge with an anonymous crowd. The dandy, by contrast, is a character of 
cultivated condescension who looks down upon the urban life he cannot escape. Jerrold 
Seigel, *Bohemian Paris: Culture, Politics, and the Boundaries of Bourgeois Life,
1830-1930* [New York: Viking, 1986].

Pippin, p.34.

Pippin uses Girard's discussion of a "triangulation" of desire in *Deceit, Desire and the 
Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1988], to show its 
"resonance with Nietzschean and Hegelian themes" that Pippin regards as, central to 
modernism as a philosophical problem. Pippin, pp.34-35.

Ibid. The aristocrat, derived from *aristoi*-*krates*; *aristoi* means the best, the elite; *krates* 
means power. In Paul Rabinow, *French Modern: Norms and Forms of the Social 

Pippin, p.36.

Ibid.

Ibid., p.39, 153.

Helen Searing, "Henry-Russell Hitchcock: The Architectural Historian as Critic and 
Connoisseur," in Elizabeth Blair MacDougall, ed., *The Architectural Historian in 

Henry Russell Hitchcock, *Architecture: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* 

Hall, 1982], p.21.

Ibid.

Ibid., p.22.


35*ibid.*, pp.9, 25.

36*ibid.*, pp.23, 141. It is interesting to note, on the one hand, Silverman's disclaimer that art nouveau in architecture has an entirely separate history (p.10), while on the other hand, Henry Russell Hitchcock proclaimed that "The Art Nouveau is not primarily an architectural mode." Hitchcock, p.284. This mutual disavowal can be seen as an indication of the term's instability, a malleability that is most likely equally due to the blurring of roles of the artist, artisan, and architect during the decade of the 1890s. With a concentration primarily on interiors, Art Nouveau in art, crafts, and architecture were quite close in proximity as well as in materials and aesthetic expression. This is, finally, the decade when Henry van de Velde, Peter Behrens, Bruno Paul, and Richard Riemerschmid all crossed over easily from being graphic artists to architects, causing the kind of confusion in terms that would encourage both Hitchcock and Silverman to heavily qualify their use of terms.

37Silverman, pp.210-11; quotation from page 215.

38Baudelaire as quoted in Carl E. Schorske, "The Idea of the City in European Thought: Voltaire to Spengler," p.110. By 1858, Martin Jay points out, discussion of the *flaneur* had shifted to a newly emergent *badaud*, a "mere gaper" so transfixed by the changes of the modern city that his individuality disappeared entirely. Martin Jay, in *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* [Berkeley: UC Press, 1993], p.119. The notion of the "individual," originally indivisible from a community whole, now appears indistinguishable from a mass or crowd -- an indivisibility by disappearance.

39Silverman, p.6.

40*ibid.*, pp.36-7.


43 Muthesius' mocking account of what had become of the "gentleman," (no longer an expert and patron of the arts, but at best an empty aesthete), and his designation of the bourgeoisie as the "Barbarians" of culture echoes the language of Matthew Arnold, who designated the upper classes as "Barbarians" bereft of the capacity for serious thought, and the middle classes as "Philistines" preoccupied with the pursuit of money and its material rewards. Muthesius, pp.22-3. Arnold's views receive a treatment different from that of Raymond Williams in Mark Girouard, *Sweetness and Light: The 'Queen Anne' Movement 1860-1900* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1977].


45 ibid.


52 Marinetti espoused these views on foreign soil in a speech to the Lyceum Club in London in 1912, quoted in Trilling, pp.128-9.
Marinetti quoted in Banham, p.123.


Anthony Sutcliffe, Towards the Planned City: Germany, Britain, the United States and France, 1780-1914 [Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981].


Gavin Stamp and Andre Goulancourt, The English House, 1860-1914: The Flowering of English Domestic Architecture [London: Faber, 1986], p.16. Also Simpson, pp.62-3. Voysey lived until 1941, reaching the age of 83. Similar acontextual appropriations of architectural works are common to even later, "critical" histories of modern architecture that mingle formalist interpretation with historical contextualization. This occurs, for example, in the statement that Adolf Loos's "white unadorned prism(s)...anticipated by at least eight years the so-called 'International Style.'" Kenneth Frampton, Modern Architecture: A Critical History [New York: Thames and Hudson, 1985], p.93.

I am not using the word 'multivalence' in the sense that Charles Jencks does in his book, Modern Movements in Architecture. Although he claims that certain buildings are "reinterpreted anew by every generation," his actual application of the term has to do less with historical perspective or depth, but rather with interpreting individual buildings in terms of imaginative creation of parts whose many linkages and associations modify them and make for rich, rather than "univalent" architecture. Jencks, p.14.

This mecca of modern architectural history deserves more than a one-liner, though David van Zanten's review of interpretations of the Chicago School assures that "Every generation has gotten the "Chicago School" it deserved...and we today need our own." Van Zanten's suggestion that multiple human responses to the American city, reflected in architecture, deserve not to be dichotomized ("Sullivan 'good', Burnham 'bad"), but rather viewed as parts of parallel processes, is a useful way of viewing the idea of modernity in architecture as well. David van Zanten, "Chicago in Architectural History," in MacDougall, ed., p.96.

62 ibid., pp.9-10.

63 Brownlee, p.6.


66 Willett, pp.49, 80-2.

67 Moos, Curtis, Silver; classical purity and the machine.

68 von Moos, pp.55-6.

69 von Moos, p.56.


72 Giedion discusses Burckhardt on pp.3-4; Discussions of Giedion's relationship to Woelfflin appear in Sekler (see note 67), p.269; and in Kenneth Frampton, "Giedion in

73This distinction could be challenged, since Freud's psychology was conceived as a science carried out in an Enlightenment spirit of rational inquiry: Freud himself asserted that "there is a general enmity between artists and those engaged in the details of scientific work." And yet, within the definitions of modernism outlined in part one of this paper, I think Freud's psychoanalysis can be fitted into an 'open' modernist frame such as, for example, Marshal Berman's. Freud's highly unconventional techniques and concepts, moreover, possess aesthetic qualities that were later easily absorbed by figures like André Breton of the Surrealist movement, and would prove useful, as I am trying to show, to architectural historians of modernism like Giedion. Freud quoted in Peter Gay, Freud: A Life for Our Time [New York: Anchor, 1988], p.317.

74Such shifts are easily identifiable in what is probably Freud's best known work, the essay Civilization and its Discontents of 1929, where he observed that "it is impossible to overlook the extent to which civilization is built upon the renunciation 'of instinct, how much it presupposes precisely the nonsatisfaction of powerful instincts. This 'cultural frustration' dominates the large field of social relationships between human beings." Sigmund Freud, Civilization and its Discontents [New York: W.W. Norton, 1961], pp.51-2.

75Giedion, p.18.

76ibid., p.24.

77Sigfried Giedion, Mechanization Takes Command: A Contribution to Anonymous History [New York: Oxford, 1948]. In this work a psychological integration model is also still in command, and technologization has been demoted. A remade "Corbu" was prompted to write in his May, 1948, letter of thanks to Giedion: "My dear Giedion, Many thanks for your great book, with its disturbing and menacing American title ...One can take a more optimistic attitude to the subject of your book if one admits that the works of the first machinist era must be swept away like so much shit: the villes tentaculaires and all the other things..." Le Corbusier quoted in Frampton, "Giedion in America: Reflections in a Mirror," pp.48-9.

78Giedion, Space, Time and Architecture, p.19.

79Silverman, pp.17-29.


81ibid., p.160-1.