arq (2014), **18.1**, 39–46. © Cambridge University Press 2014

A philosophical reflection on notions of surface and superficiality in architecture draws on the writings of Deleuze and Guattari and others to propose a different approach to surface, image and appearance.

What is surficial thought in architecture?

S. Yahya Islami

In the early twentieth century, Modernists problematised ornament in their refashioning of architecture for the industrial age. Today, architects are formulating different responses to image and its (re)production in the information age. In both discourses of ornament and image, surfaces are often the perpetrators: visual boundaries that facilitate false appearances, imprisoning humanity in a shadowy cave of illusion. The negativity and shallowness associated with superficiality is also closely related to the separation of images from the real, where the former is seen to be a deficient representation of the latter. Such views follow a familiar metaphysical model characterised by the opposition between inside and outside and the opaque boundary that acts as a barrier. This model determines the traditional philosophical approach, which follows a distinct hierarchical order and a perpendicular movement of thought that seeks to penetrate appearances to get to the essence of things.

This paper is a philosophical reflection on notions of surface and superficiality to arrive at a different approach to surface, image and appearance in architecture. Given the significance of visual (re)production and communication in contemporary society, I propose a different model of thought based on surface as that which simultaneously produces, connects and separates image and reality. This non-hierarchical approach is *surficial philosophy*, which relates to Earth, to geology and topology, and a diverse set of concepts from the thickness of the crust to the smooth fluidity of the seas. The result is an unfamiliar, polemical model of thought that does not define surface as a limit or barrier, rather a *medium*, a pliable space of smooth mixture. In this approach, difference is not in the opposition between the two sides of a boundary line, rather it occurs upon and within the surficial landscape that consumes categories, promoting nomadic movements of thought, which offer greater flexibility towards creativity and new possibilities in architecture.

On surface and the superficial

For most people, sight is their initial mode of interaction and surfaces are the first place of contact with architecture. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines surface as 'the outermost part of a material body' or 'the uppermost layer' or 'an exterior of a particular form or "finish"'.[1] Yet, surface often suffers from accusations of hiding what lies behind it. Expressions like 'it was not as it appeared on the surface' or 'to scratch the surface of something' imply that the true reality of things lies behind surfaces, which must be therefore ruptured and penetrated.

'Surface effect' conjures up multiple meanings, but notions of illusion and impression are often implied.[2] Surface effects are generally visible and constitute the appearance of objects. The term 'appearance' conjures up notions of 'image', which is defined as 'an artificial imitation or representation of the external form of any object', or 'an optical appearance or counterpart of an object'.[3] The etymology of the word connects it to the Old French word *imagene*, meaning 'artificial representation' and to the Latin word *imaginem,* meaning 'copy, statue, picture, idea, appearance', from the stem of *imitari* 'to copy, imitate'.[4] In this way, image has always been defined as an imitation, a copy and mere appearance, and very much secondary to the real, authentic object.[5]

While surface implicates exteriority, its derivative, the 'superficial', has much more negative undertones: 'usually denoting that part or aspect of anything which presents itself to a slight or casual mental view, or which is perceived without examination; outward appearance'.[6] Thus, superficial implies shallowness and insubstantiality, both physically and intellectually. This may be a reference to the geometric definition of surface: 'a magnitude or continuous extent having only two dimensions (length and breadth, without thickness)'.[7] But, there are other definitions of surface that allow it some thickness.

The English language philosopher, Avrum Stroll offers an intriguing insight into the usage of the word 'surface' in English. Stroll investigates the

doi: 10.1017/S1359135514000281

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135514000281 Published online by Cambridge University Press

definition of surface through what he calls the 'geometry of ordinary speech', which is used to arrive at a series of 'theorems' based on a 'common-sense point of view'. Stroll's findings demonstrate that there can be abstract and physical conceptions of surface.[8] One of the physical conceptions, which is taken from an ordinary person's point of view ('OS model'), defines surface as part of the object deep enough to become marked and scratched. Thus, in this conception, surface is a boundary that has a *thickness* upon (and within) which various physical operations can be performed.[9]

Despite this, however, surface is often thought of in conjunction with the superficial, and the superficial often betrays surface by associating it with insubstantiality, thinness and masking. In most cases, superficiality is an undesirable characteristic since no one wants to be accused of being concerned with only the obvious characteristics of something, lacking thoroughness or attention to detail, or depth of understanding.

The legacy of Platonic thought

Ideas about surface, image and appearance date back to the earliest thinkers and philosophers, but none has been more influential than Plato. In his philosophy Plato attempts to create an ordered structure of reason that prevents the sophist or 'any other creature' from *escaping* its logic.[10] By 'capturing' the sophist in the system, Plato concludes that sophistry is inferior to philosophy because it is an art of *imitation*:[11] an act of *image making*, of the *appearance making* kind, which is ultimately uninformed and insincere.

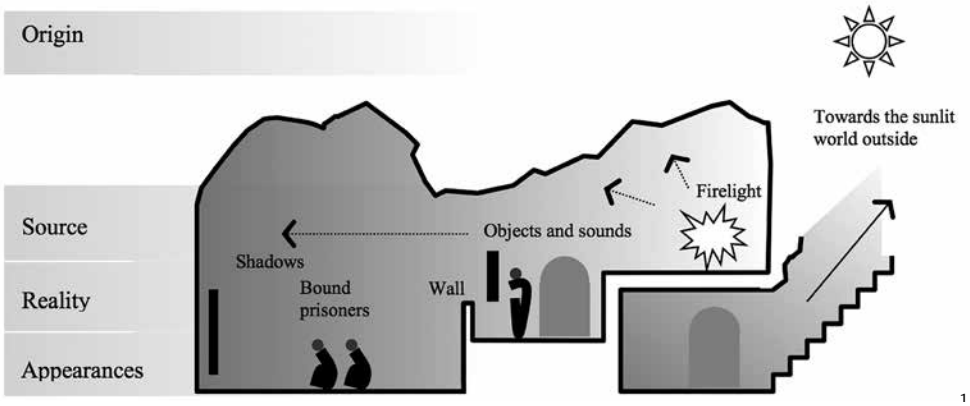
Thus, in *Sophist,* Plato differentiates between two forms of image making: 'the art of making likenesses, and phantastic or the art of making appearances'.[12] Plato defines 'likenesses' as faithful copies of the original, while 'appearances' are defined as intentional distortion of reality, either to beautify or gain power through manipulation of the spectator.[13] Therefore, appearances are images as *phantasms* or deceitful constructs that deviate from reality, while likenesses on the other hand, are images that attempt to represent reality, but are often deficient in their representation.

In Plato's metaphysics images are imitations and they are judged according to degrees of faithfulness to original models. This model of thought is both simple and powerful and has affected many other thinkers, too. For example, if for Plato there are two categories of image, for Jean Baudrillard there are four, but images are again judged according to degrees of faithfulness to an original reality: (1) image as a reflection of reality; (2) image as a perversion of reality; (3) image masking the absence of profound reality; (4) image as simulacrum, which 'has no relation to any reality whatsoever'.[14] According to Baudrillard, it is the mass dissemination of the fourth category of image which is responsible for 'hyperreality': a condition in which depth and meaning are lost to superficiality.[15]

Thus, despite having four conceptions of image, Baudrillard's categorisation follows the Platonic system of thought. This is because Baudrillard sees images as *copies* of reality and therefore in an inferior relationship to an originary concept which is reflected, denatured, masked or ultimately destroyed. The cynicism towards surfaces, images and appearances evident in Baudrillard's theories is a legacy of a familiar *transcendental hierarchy* inherited from Platonic thought,[16] which in the case of the third and fourth phases of the image evokes 'melancholia' and 'nostalgia' for a reality that is no longer in the image.[17]

The Platonic division follows a hierarchical logic based on *degrees of similarity*, which regulates every judgement and fuels the determination to distinguish essence from appearance, reality from image, original from copy, and model from simulacrum. In these binary hierarchical divisions, the secondary elements are not only judged by their similarity to original models, but they are also subordinated to the primary elements that are often beyond visual perception.

This hierarchy based on transcendence (transcendental hierarchy), which causes the devaluation of image, surface and appearances in much theoretical discourse, inspires a *perpendicular movement of thought*: either one of uncovering essence by penetrating surfaces, images and appearances, or one of discovering the originary idea through ascent, distancing and distillation. This understanding of images, combined with a definition of surface based on thinness (not thickness) determines the traditional epistemological position which considers surface



1 Section through Plato's cave, showing the imprisonment of humanity and the hierarchy of concepts

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135514000281 Published online by Cambridge University Press

and its effects (images and appearances) as masking or denaturing the reality of things. In this worldview, surfaces are opaque boundaries which not only act as barriers, but also facilitate false appearances. Therefore they must be transcended or surpassed in order to arrive at the essence of things.

The withering of aura (Walter Benjamin),[18] the accumulation of the spectacle (Guy Debord),[19] the precession of simulacra (Baudrillard) are all concepts that warn against false appearances and a hallucinatory hyperreality that destroys lived reality.[20] Such theoretical reflections on the contemporary media-saturated condition share a common theme: the *binary hierarchical separation* of image from reality. They follow a traditional metaphysical model in which images, and the new technologies that facilitate their (re) productions, operate much like the walls of Plato's cave, imprisoning humanity in a shadowy world of illusion *[1]*.[21]

The prospect of *surficial* thought

Many have attempted to undo the Platonic structure of reason. Jacques Derrida, for example, destabilises the Platonic system of thought through deconstruction. The 'sure play' that presents itself in deconstruction may be seen to result from an anxiety about the destruction of metaphysics and to be simultaneously a preventative measure against falling back into metaphysics.[22] But deconstruction maintains, it may be argued, *the trace of transcendence*, which is transcendence manifested in a different way. Derrida's theory gives significance to the play of images since each image (signifier) can become a model (signified) to other images that make up reality. However, since Derrida 'maintains Plato's definition of the simulacrum (or writing, the *pharmakon*) as a copy of a copy',[23] images continue to be *artificial reproductions of a quasi-origin* that is not only absent but also impossible to fathom. In this reading, the Derridean approach theorises a world of 'myths and counter-myths' in which image and reality are both polluted (by a medicine-poison),[24] which is why both must constantly be put under erasure. In this philosophical approach, negation and denial becomes a perpetual process.

Another approach is possible, which rather than limiting play to the deconstruction of traditional models (i.e. 'limited to the *substitution* of *given* and *existing, present,* pieces'),[25] allows it to create new models of thought that could simply be a transformation of previous ones, or a *re-construction* of present pieces. This alternative approach follows the view that metaphysics is not a homogeneous corpus that is dying (or coming to a closure) but instead a heterogeneous 'Body without Organs' that is in continuous transmutation.[26] Consequently, the overcoming of Platonism does not necessitate the end of metaphysics, rather *the end of Plato's metaphysics*, which must be replaced with other models of thought.[27]

Utilising Gilles Deleuze's work, it is possible to define image making as 'genuine creativity' or the further production of reality, not imitation or copying. This would mean that in fact the images of a building reproduced through the mass media create a *different reality*, which parallels the physical and contextual reality of the architectural object. When the motives of such imagery are recognised as more than mere representation of physical objects, then they become extensions of (architectural) creativity as they allow the designer to participate in the global economy of image that is as real as any physical object.

Conceiving images in this way necessitates a shift from the familiar logic of transcendence based on similitude, to *immanence based on difference*.[28] In this philosophical approach, creative productivity becomes an essential element of a process, which is particularly useful for 'thought and art'.[29] For this reason, the overcoming of Platonism does not signal the implosion of meaning onto the superficial surface, but rather the *explosion of sense across the surficial plane*.

If Platonism focuses on origins and the depths of things by sacrificing surface and surface effects, surficial philosophy proposes a model of thought based on the exteriority of surface. In such a model of thought, surface represents the non-hierarchical plane of immanence that battles against the transcendence of Platonic height or Nietzschean depth. When the incorporeal is included in the corporeal surface, the superficial assumes a thicker dimension and a greater significance. No longer defined as a two-dimensional abstraction associated with shallowness or insubstantiality, superficial becomes surficial,[30] evoking the geographical milieu associated with the complexity of terrestrial life:

> *It is no longer a question of Dionysus down below, or of Apollo up above, but of Hercules of the surface, in his dual battle against both depth and height: reorientation of the entire thought and a new geography.*[31]

Here, surficial is proposed as an alternative to the superficial, encouraging a different approach to surface and its effects. If superficial implies shallowness and insubstantiality, *surficial* is defined as that which is 'of or pertaining to the surface of the earth'.[32] Surficial implies geology, materiality and stability. It implies thickness, and is connected with the ground upon which life occurs. Surficial allows for a more stable understanding of surface, which is not compromised by the depth that the term superficial lacks. Moreover, if superficial implies temporariness, the term surficial evokes the longevity and permanence of geological features.

The practitioner of surficial philosophy escapes the popular image of the philosopher as a 'being of ascents [...] with his head in the clouds [...]'.[33] He does not think vertically, distancing himself in order to gain ideal height, nor does he think perpendicularly to penetrate appearances and discover hidden reality. Instead, a surficial philosopher floats across the surface, engaging with events and expressions and processes of transformation. Moreover, such a thinker does not leave the Platonic cave; 'on the contrary, he thinks that we are not involved enough or sufficiently engulfed therein.'[34]

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135514000281 Published online by Cambridge University Press

A surficial approach to surface creates an alternative model of thought and a different understanding of images and appearances. Avrum Stroll's exhaustive analysis of the term in the English language demonstrates that there is not one answer to the question '[w]hat is surface?', as that definition would not be able to accommodate the various usages of the term in everyday language. This is because even though surface is a boundary term, 'the conception of being a boundary is ambiguous in exactly the way that the conception of being surface is' and therefore, '[w]e shall have to live with this result.'[35] In the absence of a comprehensive conception of surface, or a complete theory of visual perception,[36] an alternative approach towards theory becomes necessary.

This paper assumes one such approach that does not expect theories to define reality in an impossible clarity, but instead, by accepting them as conceptual constructs, anticipates further thought, exploration and analysis. From this point of view, falsifiability of theories does not indicate their superfluity, but rather their *temporal zone of operation* within the evolutionary continuum of thought pushed forward by processes of testing and experimentation. While reality perhaps cannot be contained within any one theory, theories remain necessary for interaction with the complexity of reality. Consequently, surficial theory attempts to shift the emphasis from *definition* to *proposition*, in order to arrive at a new interpretation of surface and a new understanding of ornament, image and appearance in architecture.

Surface as *medium*

Combining Stroll's 'physical' conceptions with James Gibson's 'theory of surface layout',[37] one can arrive at an understanding of surface that does not define it as a masking barrier (as depicted in the Platonic cave) but as the *facilitator of seeing*. This is not depthless superficiality (as depicted in Baudrillard's hyperreality), but rather a thick surficial system, within which diversity and difference proliferate. If traditional metaphysical models define surface as a line of separation and its effects as marginal categories, the proposed conception of surface considers it as *medium*: a means to an end and an in-between milieu that is more than a 'logical limit or conceptual limit' of a category, entity or object.[38] In the resultant epistemological position, the traditional penetration of surface (to uncover a deep and hidden reality) transforms to surface exploration since depth is either thickness or an effect of surface layout. In this model of thought, emphasis shifts from surface/depth opposition to an *exploration of surface/surface relationships [2]*.

Surfaces are borderline mediums in which both 'images' and 'reality' become experientially apparent. The smooth process of becoming that occurs at the surface level is precisely why surface is both a noun *and* a verb. Utilising Deleuze's philosophy, and by appropriating concepts such as the 'fold',[39] 'smooth space', 'plateau', or 'the sea', it is possible to adopt a different strategy that maintains the distinction between image and reality, but abolishes their hierarchy by placing them side-by-side.[40] This alternative approach is based on the exteriority of the topological surface that abolishes transcendental hierarchy by flattening difference to the same plane of immanence.

Combining surface with the concept of the fold creates a topological model that replaces the dichotomy of the Platonic model with the complexity of the Möbius strip.[41] If the traditional model of proposition is based on the Platonic circle (which creates the interiority of essence and obeys the centrality of the origin), this surficial model *unfolds essence unto the surface* that has no interiority (or exteriority in the traditional definition of the word which would place it in opposition to interiority).[42] Thus, if the traditional model is characterised by the separation of the inside from the outside, the proposed model is defined by the continuous transformation of *the one side that becomes many sides*. In the proposed model, boundary is a spatial topography that promotes nomadic movements of thought that explore surficial conditions.

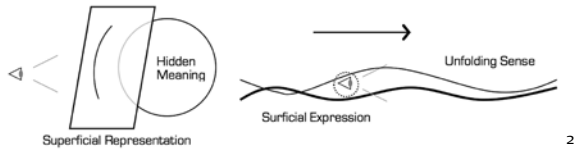
Thus, surficial philosophy is based on creativity, which extends itself through its inevitable end. Since there is no anxiety about the demise of concepts or theories, death is not accelerated in anticipation of rebirth (Baudrillardian theoretical violence)[43] nor is it delayed through theoretical 'pharmakons' (Derridean deconstruction). Instead it is considered as a necessary element of a continuous process of becoming that is already at work in every production. Destruction like any other aspect of reality (like the fold of a Möbius strip) exists within the continuum and not at the end of things, because there is no beginning or end, but always a progressing middle, which consists of a mixture of 'birth[s] and disappearance'.[44]

This is an alternative philosophy that does not *judge essence* according to preconceived transcendental categories, but instead *values events* according to their immanent potential.[45] This is because judgements are 'the products of an active and temporary selection, which must be renewed'.[46] The result is a univocal philosophical approach in which surface is the thick border between traditional binary oppositions and the middle which is 'by no means an average; on the contrary, it is where things pick up speed'.[47]

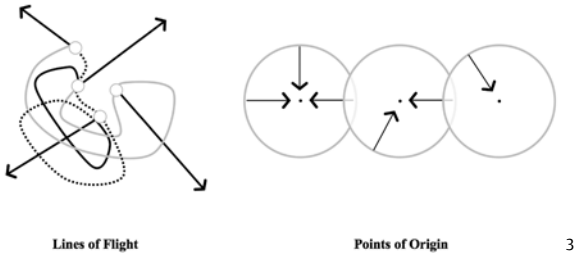
In a surficial model of thought, emphasis shifts from gravitational points of origin that pull everything inwards to vectors and lines of flight that shoot out in different directions. In this approach, the question of origin is not solved by making origin abstract, or absent, or making the absence of origin the origin. Instead, the solution lies in thinking *laterally, horizontally* and expansively by embracing becoming as the continual process that transforms any originary concept *[3]*.[48]

For Deleuze, 'the surface and that which takes place at the surface is what "renders possible"'.[49] Surface is therefore a verb, not just a noun. Thus, in

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135514000281 Published online by Cambridge University Press



2



3

2 Two different approaches to seeing (in architecture): detachment and perpendicularity of seeing in traditional models of thought compared with the haptic voyage of the eye in surficial thought

3 From a philosophy based on gravitational points of origin to a philosophy based on exploratory lines of flight

surficial philosophy essence is found in events and emphasis shifts from truth to proposition, which is complemented by 'sense' as '*both the expressible or the expressed of the proposition*'.[50] The concept of 'sense' encourages an understanding of words beyond their denotation and promotes the activation of words as expressive verbs.[51] Therefore, surface is no longer treated as a name or a term of stasis, but rather a powerful intensity with expressive potential. In this philosophical approach, surface is not only surficial (i.e. more than superficial) but it is also *surfacing*: expressing the actualisation of the virtual and the complexities of the terrestrial plane.

A surficial model of thought may be unfamiliar and require new concepts and continuous elaboration. Yet, it constructs a complex attitude that generates a more *pliable* approach towards a rapidly transforming era. In this alternative philosophical approach, the criterion is more creative and less juridical, being more concerned with pushing forces to the limits of their potential, rather than capturing them within a pre-established logical system. Moreover, images and appearances are *re-production*, not reproductions of different reality, which does not indicate the implosion of meaning caused by superficial effects, but rather the explosion of sense across the surfaces of expression. From this surficial point of view, it is surface that generates 'image' and 'reality', 'virtuality' and 'actuality'. Thus, reality is not to be found beyond opaque visual barriers, by thinning out the outer layer or making it literally transparent. Instead, one senses reality by studying surface layout and surface effects. In this process, the seduction of false appearances is replaced by the desire to produce, *the desire to surface*.

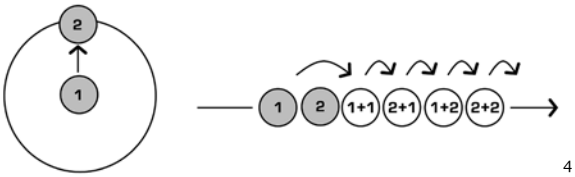
Surficial thought and architecture

Relating the principles of surficial philosophy to architectural theory has significant consequences. First, it inspires a renewed interest in ornament and the ornamental, surface and the superficial, and other concepts that have been subordinated to 'primary' architectural categories. This becoming process inspires inter-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary interaction as architecture attempts to evolve beyond its familiar definitions. This can include architecture becoming-skin, becoming-surface, becoming-smooth and so on. Aided by new technological possibilities, a surficial approach to architecture is affirmative of unfamiliar desiring machines of production that operate along new lines of flight.

Moreover, a non-hierarchical philosophy changes the process through which things are judged. Rather than comparing creative production against values set within long-term memory, judgement is carried out according to values acquired from short-term memory. This means that art is valued according to its own micro-histories and lines of development, not against a transcendent time-line that resides in the distant past or in the distant future. This way, the value of an object is determined through a sensitised process that is more in tune with the entity's immanent potential.

Finally, a philosophy of surfacing flattens hierarchy in favour of a more pliable approach that exploits unexpected opportunities. This means that concepts are not contrasted in order to determine an order of superiority based on pre-established notions of originality. Instead, all concepts are compared in order to expand horizons and to offer alternatives. In other words, oppositional relationships are set up momentarily with the knowledge that there are many other such set-ups that can be proposed at any one time. Oppositional pairs rise and fall as abstract machines break free from the circularity of traditional thought. The consequences for architectural theory are a liberation of creativity from established hierarchies and a more positive attitude towards experimental endeavours, while simultaneously remaining open to criticism, negation and death as an important element of development *[4]*.

From a surficial point of view, image making is not 'imitation art' but instead, production or



4

4 Abstract thought and abstract machine of thought: circularity of transcendental hierarchy compared with dynamics of surficial approach based on difference, repetition and transformation. For architectural design, the latter strategy suggests a continuous redefinition of established categories and the relationship between them

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135514000281 Published online by Cambridge University Press



5a



5b

5 Two different movements of thought in relation to surface: *a* Perpendicular thought; surface/depth opposition; surface as barrier-boundary *b* Surficial thought; surface-surface relationships; surface as medium-milieu

re-production that creates more reality. Thus, the images of architecture re-produced in magazines and mass media are not merely spectacular manipulation, but also participation in an alternative reality produced by images and the technologies that disseminate them. This in turn suggests that the production of an architectural image (whether through ornament, skin, or surface design) is not a secondary task in comparison with the primary task of designing the structure (function or materiality) of architecture, but rather, as Gottfried Semper implied, an immanent element of architectural design.

An architecture that is sensitive to such intricacies positively engages in image making. Such architecture might imply a primitive approach, as it will be accessible to the everyday person, but primitivity need not be interpreted as naivety or backwardness. Instead, such primitivity is not only highly postmodern (and therefore relevant to the agenda of opening up architecture to the public and removing it from its pedestal as high art) but it is also sympathetic and affirmative of the rapidly transforming socio-technological condition with all the possibilities that it offers. Frank Gehry's Bilbao Guggenheim Museum displays such nomadic primitivity, a surface art of the yurt in which surfaces are not barriers to seeing and skin is not secondary to structure. Instead, seeing is haptic, skin *is* architecture and it is sense (not meaning) that is expressed.

In this surficial approach architecture becomes 'constructing surfaces under the sky rather than building volumes under the Sun'.[52] Surfaces are no longer superficial barriers as defined by the epistemological tradition. Instead, they transform into *mediums* for visual interaction and the very place upon which human expression occurs. Thus, surface is liberated from its opposition (and subservience) to depth, and the light of inspiration need not emanate from a distant source or from within, it can also emanate from the surface in-between. In this model of thought, architecture returns to a nomadic simplicity that possesses an intimate connection with the surficial plane as it folds and unfolds to become the ornate carpet, the hearth, floor, wall, roof and screen. Categories become pliable and seeing requires close-range vision and a haptic eye, since architecture deliberately occurs at the surface, not somewhere beyond it *[5]*.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135514000281 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Notes

1. *Oxford English Dictionary*, <www.oed.com> [accessed December 2008].
2. Ibid.: 'A visual or acoustic device used to convey atmosphere or the illusion of reality in the production of plays, films, or broadcasts' or: 'The impression produced on a beholder, hearer, or reader (formerly esp. by a work of art or literature); the impression produced by a picture, building, costume, etc., viewed as a whole; the look that a collection of features has for effect: for the sake of creating a telling impression on the minds of spectators or hearers.'
3. Ibid.
4. See: *Online Etymology Dictionary*, <www.etymonline.com> [accessed December 2008].
5. The etymology of image can be traced back to eleventh and twelfth century: '*imagene* = Provencal: *image, emage*, Italian: *im(m)agine*, Spanish: *imagen*, Latin: *imago*, *imagin-em* imitation, copy, likeness, statue, picture, phantom; conception, thought, idea; similitude, semblance, appearance, shadow; apparently containing the same root as *im-itari*: to imitate'. See *OED* [accessed January 2009].
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. See: Avrum Stroll, *Surfaces* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), pp. 11–12.
9. Ibid. pp. 39–60.
10. See: Plato, *Sophist,* trans. by Benjamin Jowett (Montana: Kissinger, 2006), p. 80.
11. Sophistry comes from the Greek word *sophos* meaning 'wise man, clever'. Sophists were therefore 'wise men' who gradually became renowned and distrusted for their clever rhetoric. Philosophy has a similar definition to sophistry, but it implies a more modest attitude. While the sophist is the 'wise man', the philosopher is the 'lover of wisdom' coming from the Greek word *philosophos: philos* 'loving' + *sophos* 'wise, a sage', <www.etymonline.com> [accessed April 2009].
12. See: Plato, *Sophist*, p. 82.
13. For Plato an image is a good copy while appearance is malicious phantasm:
    STRANGER *And what shall we call those resemblances of the beautiful, which appear such owing to the unfavourable position of the spectator, whereas if a person had the power of getting a correct view of works of such magnitude, they would appear not even like that to which they profess to be like? May we not call these 'appearances', since they appear only and are not really like?*
    THEAETETUS *Certainly.*
    STRANGER *There is a great deal of this kind of thing in painting, and in all imitation.*
    THEAETETUS *Of course.*
    STRANGER *And may we not fairly call the sort of art, which produces an appearance and not an image, phantastic art?*
    THEAETETUS *Most fairly.*
    Plato, *Sophist*, p. 81.
14. Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. by Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), p. 6.
15. Ibid, p. 30.
16. Transcendental hierarchy is used here to describe a hierarchical system that *inspires* transcendence, i.e. going above or beyond appearance. It also refers to a hierarchical system *based on* transcendence, i.e. the philosophical belief that essence lies beyond appearances.
17. Baudrillard, *Simulacra*, pp. 6–7.
18. Since the advent of mass media, writers and critics have been analysing the effects of new technologies on notions of authenticity, creativity and social change. One of the most influential essays on this theme is Walter Benjamin's 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' (1936), in which he argues new technologies have removed the false sense of awe and reverence that one might feel in front of original works of art, thus making them accessible to the masses. With this Benjamin declares: 'that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art'. Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections,* ed. by Hannah Arendt, trans. by Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), pp. 211–45 (p. 221).
19. If in 1936 Benjamin celebrated the withering of aura, by 1967 Guy Debord and others began to highlight the misappropriation of mass media under capitalism. Debord saw the modern society as one in which lived life is quickly becoming a represented life by 'an immense accumulation of *spectacles*'. Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle,* trans. by Ken Knabb (London: Rebel Press, 2006), p. 1.
20. Debord's concern for the negative effects of mass media continues in Baudrillard's theories which translate the society of the spectacle into a *society of the simulacrum.* In *Simulacra and Simulation* (1985) Baudrillard states that in modern society there has developed a condition of appearances without reference to any origin or reality and not merely a separation from the real. He therefore declares the 'precession of simulacra and of indifferent forms'. Jean Baudrillard, *Seduction* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), p. 161; *Simulacra*, p. 1.
21. See: Plato's 'Allegory of the Cave', in Plato, *Republic,* trans. by Robin Waterfield (London: Oxford University Press), 514a–520a.
22. '[...] all these destructive discourses and all their analogues are trapped in a kind of circle. [...] There is no sense in doing without the concepts of metaphysics in order to shake metaphysics. We have no language – no syntax and no lexicon – which is foreign to this history; we can pronounce not a single destructive proposition which has not already had to slip into the form, the logic, and the implicit postulations of precisely what it seeks to contest.' Derrida, 'Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences', in *Writing and Difference*, trans. by Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 278–93 (pp. 280–81).
23. Leonard Lawlor, 'The Beginnings of Thought: The Fundamental Experience in Derrida and Deleuze', in *Between Deleuze and Derrida,* ed. by Paul Patton & John Protevi (London: Continuum, 2003), pp. 67–83 (p. 69).
24. Derrida, 'Structure', p. 285.
25. Ibid., p. 292.
26. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia,* trans. by Mark Seem, Robert Hurley and Helen R. Lane (London: Athlone Press, 1984), p. 15.
27. In Daniel Smith's words, 'if Derrida sets out to undo metaphysics, Deleuze sets out simply to *do* metaphysics' because there are latent potentials in metaphysics that have not yet been actualised. Daniel W. Smith, 'Deleuze and Derrida, Immanence and Transcendence: Two Directions in Recent French Thought', in *Between Deleuze and Derrida*, pp. 46–66 (p. 50).
28. Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. by Paul Patton (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), p. 264.
29. Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, ed. by Constantin V. Boundas, trans. by Mark Lester and Charles Stivale (London: Athlone Press, 1990), p. 60.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135514000281 Published online by Cambridge University Press

30. Surficial is a geological term defined as 'of or relating to the Earth's surface'. See: *OED*.
31. Deleuze, *Logic,* p. 132.
32. See: *OED* [accessed January 2010].
33. Deleuze, *Logic*, p. 127.
34. Ibid., p. 128.
35. Stroll, *Surfaces*, p. 64.
36. Stroll concludes that we can only have 'piecemeal' realism when it comes to understanding visual perception. Ibid., p. 179.
37. Ibid., pp. 53–57. Gibson's theory proposes that the perception of depth is not achieved by interpreting two-dimensional images *formed in the mind* (abstract), but rather through a direct experience of *surfaces in space and time* (physical). In this theory, objects are set against a surface background, rather than floating in empty space or air. Thus, depth, distance, shape and other attributes of objects are determined by analysing surfaces in relationship to other surfaces that make up the visual field. Thus, Gibson's unique theory proposes that depth or height is an *effect of surface layout*. James J. Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (London: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1986), pp. 147–49.
38. Stroll, *Surfaces,* p. 46.
39. Deleuze takes Gottfried Leibniz's ideas and applies them to a Baroque house. By doing this, he uses architecture to explore philosophy and simultaneously offers a way of exploring architecture through philosophy. In the Baroque sacristy that represents the Monad, the fold facilitates the connection between the two floors: the physical world as the bright lower floor and the metaphysical world represented by the dark upper floor. Leibniz's impossible connection between these two worlds is made possible by the *fold,* not just as an architectural feature of the Baroque, *but also as a philosophical concept and process*. See: Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque,* trans. by Tom Conley (London: Athlone Press, 1993), pp. 28–30. See also: Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *The Monadology*, trans. by Robert Latta (London: Forgotten Books, 1968).
40. Deleuze and Guattari refer to such concepts in most of their writings. But notions of Earth, strata, layers and belts are elaborated in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massumi (London: Athlone Press, 1988), while in *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia,* the notion of the earth as a Body without Organs is expanded. The earth continues to remain a strong conceptual force in their philosophy.
41. The Möbius strip is a complex geometry, but it is not abstract or imaginary. As a topological geometry, the Möbius strip is a surface *with only one side* that creates many sides. Such a topological model offers an alternative to familiar Euclidean geometries that have inspired traditional models of thought for centuries. The circle (or the sphere) for example, forms an impassable boundary (a double-sided surface) that masks and separates the inside from the outside. The Möbius strip, on the other hand, is the boundary condition that facilitates a smooth transition from one category to the other. In this model of thought, surface is not a barrier or a limit, rather a single-sided topology that generates many categories. It is also a folding geometry that actualises the formula 'Pluralism = Monism'. See: Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* p. 20.
42. In Andrew Ballantyne's words, 'Deleuze and Guattari draw attention to a spatial contrast – a move from confinement to expansiveness [...].' Andrew Ballantyne, *Deleuze and Guattari for Architects*, ed. by Adam Sharr (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 62.
43. 'Theoretical violence, not truth, is the only resource left to us.' Baudrillard, *Simulacra*, p. 163.
44. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* p. 118.
45. Ibid., p. 22.
46. Ibid., p. 10.
47. Ibid., p. 25.
48. 'A line of becoming is not defined by points that it connects, or by points that compose it [...]. A point is always a point of origin. But a line of becoming has neither beginning nor end, departure nor arrival, origin nor destination; to speak of the absence of an origin, to make the absence of an origin the origin, is a bad play on words. A line of becoming has only a middle. The middle is not an average; it is fast motion, it is the absolute speed of movement. A becoming is always in the middle; one can only get it by the middle. A becoming is neither one nor two, nor the relation of the two; it is the in-between, the border or line of flight or descent running perpendicular to both.' Ibid., p. 293.
49. Deleuze, *Logic*, p. 186.
50. Ibid., p. 22.
51. Deleuze writes: 'The duality in the proposition is not between two sorts of names, names of stasis and names of becoming; rather, it is between two dimensions of the proposition, that is, between denotation and expression, or between the denotation of things and the expression of sense.' Ibid., p. 25.
52. Manuel Gausa and others, *The Metapolis Dictionary of Advanced Architecture* (Barcelona: Actar, 2003), p. 577.

Illustration credits
arq gratefully acknowledges:
Author, 1–4
El Camino College, 5b
Baz Ratner, 5a

Author's biography
S. Yahya Islami is Assistant Professor of Architecture at the University of Tehran. He is an architect researching and teaching architectural theory and design philosophy. Yahya studied at the University of Edinburgh, and has taught architectural design, digital design and interior architecture at the University of Edinburgh, Cardiff University and University of Tehran. Yahya has worked as a freelance architect for projects ranging from interior design to urban design, and has been the director of many national and international workshops. He is co-founder of the Masters of Interior Architecture, Advanced Computing in Architecture and the Computational Design Community (CDC) at the University of Tehran.

Author's address
y.islami@ut.ac.ir

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135514000281 Published online by Cambridge University Press