

Truth, Beauty, and Goodness Beyond the Obvious

Michael Benedikt
University of Texas at Austin (USA)
mbenedikt@MAIL.UTEXAS.EDU

If, as ideas or ideals, *truth*, *beauty*, and *goodness* constitute a complete set of worthwhile human pursuits, what room is there for “spirituality?” Certainly, most spiritual-philosophical traditions offer us windows to their appearance if not paths to their realization, concentrating on one or two of them in the belief that the other(s) will either be formed as a result or be produced along the way. But what of spirituality per se? Is it a practice, a method, or a desired outcome? And what is the role of “complexity,” whose increase (or is it decrease?) lies at the very heart of the ideas of transcendence and spiritual evolution?

Architectural discourse is replete with these themes, but they lie buried today beneath clever locutions, worldly ironies, technological fetishism, and what seem like common sense, *realpolitik* assertions. Can we excavate our ideals nonetheless? Can we speak about them again at the risk of embarrassment?

I hope so. For truth, beauty, and goodness *can* all too easily be treated naïvely and predictably, and that’s why embarrassment is risked. For this session, then, papers are invited that address truth, beauty, and goodness in architecture—and the family of related questions I gestured to above—in non-naïve ways. For truth is often complicated, beauty neither pretty nor elegant, and goodness surprising in its demands. Then too, we know that spirituality can be found in places, and among people, far from religious or educational institutions. But is that true? And if it’s true, how and why?

Contributors should feel free to address architecture as space or built place, as an activity/practice/profession, as a phenomenon in consciousness arising somehow out of shelter-building, as a complex social functionality, as an art, and/or as an armature for philosophical discourse.