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A Semiotic Approach to the Parthenon as a Pillar of Modern Democracy

1. Introduction

Let us suppose that one needs to represent "democracy." What does one do in such a case? To render things easier, let us suppose this someone is an architect. An architect would probably look for the most convenient architectural sign, if not for any other reason than as a starting point in order to develop one's own approach to the task. The first thing which comes into our mind would be the most exposed visual sign of "democracy," the "classical portico" – "porch."

The world's first purpose-built parliament house was the Irish Parliament House in Dublin, today the Bank of Ireland. The work on the building began in 1729, based on the designs of the amateur architect Sir Edward Lovett Pearce. Based on Andrea Palladio's proposed reconstruction of the colonnaded terraces of the Roman temple at Palestrina, the building was semi-circular in shape, colonnaded by Ionic columns, while three statues fronted the main (south) portico, representing Hibernia (Latin for Ireland), Fidelity, and Commerce. The building was further extended, to both the east and west, and a new portico was added at the east, by James Gandon, in the 1780s. At the request of the peers, Gandon used Corinthian columns in order to distinguish their entrance from the main one. Rolf Loeber asks if the "wide acceptance of classicism in eighteenth-century Ireland [was] due to the architect's persuasion of their patrons, or had the patrons already been predisposed to classical styles of art?" (Loeber 1979, 49) Where did it all come from?

In the three centuries since then many parliament or courthouse buildings have been erected in the neoclassical style all across the world. To mention but a few of the best-known examples, we would identify the four Courts in Dublin (1786–1802); the White House, as well as the Capitol, in Washington DC (works began in 1872 and 1873); the Bundestag in Bonn; and the Reichstag in Berlin. Buildings of this kind in the Pacific and Asian areas, as well as in South America and Africa, were also built. As a matter of fact, in most of the cases "the link between popular architectural trends in Britain and their adoption in British colonies [throughout the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries] is true for most classical styles." (Arthur 2004, 22) Arthur further emphasizes that:

> Historical trends for classical styles were copied in Britain and its colonies, predominantly because of their associations with the Roman Empire and the message of power, order and structure they impart to their observers. Governments in the 19th century wanted to associate themselves with powerful and orderly societies, such as the Romans, and they did this by using classical style for their important public buildings. (Arthur, 84)

Referring to Freeland, Arthur further stresses that, for example, "in Britain academic debate reached a truce when Gothic style focused on ecclesiastical buildings and schools, and classical style focused on government and commercial buildings." (Arthur, 25) In the USA "the Capitols were clearly seen by their creators as powerful statements of American democratic beliefs, vigorously developing after the War of Independence." (Cope 2001, 84)

Here, it is useful to consider Erwin Panofsky's analysis of the classical "temple front," as given in *The Ideological Antecedents of the Rolls-Royce Radiator* (1963). While we probably should not take Panofsky's analysis of the radiator in question more seriously than he himself did, but as a "metaphorical prelude, a peripheral ornament toward a finite and specific characteristics of English art," as put by Bialostocki (1986, 132), or as a specimen of his whimsy, "written in the crisp and lucid language," as Gombrich (1996, 29) pointed out still demonstrates the possibility of applying an iconological approach to objects different than artworks. While the second level of interpretation was omitted in his case, as suggested by Bialostocki, it was defensibly done so, since the essay is neither about the "temple front" as a motif (it is just a metaphor), but about its style, nor is it about the

Silver lady, but about the figurine's style. Therefore, Bialostocki concludes, "what we interpret as a sign is not so much the image but its style." (Bialostocki, 133) Gombrich laments over Panofsky's seeking for "ideological antecedents" of both the sculpture and the "temple front" in the national spirit of the English, thus attributing the features of the irrational, the rational and the triumph of both (technical precision in Bialostocki) to English Gothic (Palladian in Bialostocki) architecture, while not shedding "the racialism that so marred German tradition." (Gombrich, 29) Those contrasting principles are accompanied by "another 'antinomy,' that between the irregular layout of the English gardens and the strict regularity of the Palladian country houses they surround." He further draws attention to Lovejoy's article on "The Chinese Origin of a Romanticism," in which Lovejoy "anchored the development of the English garden in an essay by Sir William Temple, 'Upon the Gardens of Epicurus' [...] where Panofsky would have found an explicit description of the contrast that concerned him..." in order to ask, "Are, then the ideological antecedents of the radiator to be found in China rather than in England?" Gombrich emphasizes that

> To be sure, Chinese and Japanese buildings are no less symmetrical than are Palladian villas, but it may be more relevant to remember that it was the Renaissance architect Sebastiano Serlio who made the distinction between rustic masonry, 'a work of nature,' and the classical order as 'the work of human hands', a distinction that survived in the Italian cult of the grotto and the grotesque. (Gombrich, 29)

Be it for the Parliament House or the Supreme Courts – the landmarks of the governing power of a state, thus referring to democracy, as "the noblest form of government we have yet evolved" (Mailer 2003, 49) –, it is an undeniable fact that most of those buildings throughout the world have been erected in a so-called "neoclassical" architectural style. The main pattern, norm, or the "essence," is to be found in the Greek Parthenon as an icon of Western civilization, and a symbol of the classical world. To be more precise, it is just about one particular part of it = the portico, or the porch, a structure attached to the exterior of a building forming a covered entrance: that is to say, an element that does not even have any structural role.

1.1 From an architectonic sign towards a process of signification

How does the Parthenon stand for democracy and why is it so?

Is it for the Golden Ratio as a system of rational/harmonious/human proportions and, if so, is it still that appealing, is it still aesthetically pleasing to our eyes and mind? Is the implementation of neoclassical style in a modern contemporary city just a visual manipulation regarding the nation's identity, as well as democratic politics? What is it that makes the Greek pillars so appealing to modern democracies? Is democracy a civilization's Golden Ratio, or just an eye/mind spectacle/manipulation? (We are not asking if there is any democracy now or then.)

Such a representational issue, no doubt, creates a semiotic relation, which can be seen in its twofold dimension. Firstly, as an object to represent, as in the "democracy" and "classical portico" cases, and secondly, as a relational process based on a *subjectivization context by determined social realities,* as in the cases of the polysemantic deduction of such concepts. We shall consider here semiotics as a methodology, or as one of the possibilities to analyze the architectonic signs, in the shape of a firm ground of processing meaning in some of its constituent units. The field of the artistic and aesthetic expression in turn, as a tool of representation has already shown that its elements can consist of a wider range of meaning(s), seen as a multifold semantic universe.

No matter how a semiotician should approach it (either, as we said, in two dimensions or in more than two), it is evident that it is the subject who makes things "visible" in the way he/she wishes to. If we take such a predisposition to be true, also taking into account the skepticism which might appear, then, its justification would seem indisputable. In other words, each such hypothesis is believed to be true, if such a truth finds its justifying grounds in an attempt of founding a theory. It is therefore to conclude, that such kind of *conditioning* based on the impartial social reality should belong to an epistemologically treatable field. (Goldman 1986)

Our suppositions however, based on *modalities,* which are not only psychologically and intuitively minded but receptionally as well (in case one takes social interaction as its grounds), can doubtlessly create relations which can be seen through the eyes of a semiotician. Thus, as shall be seen, one would ask: can exemplified architectonic signs bring about a univocal representation of their functioning, or semiotic processes would have to *intervene towards a transformational process of their elements,* so as to bring about such a semantic status as metaphorization, as one of its optionalities, in terms of reaching their final result?

If one considers such a view as a part of the general semiotic process, one can see how such entities become subjectivized – gradually, even if one takes a simple conversion process as a sample, on the basis of the semiotic preconditions taken into consideration. Concretely speaking, the concept of "democracy" seen in its abstraction gets thus concretized in relation to the architectonic signs, seen as an objective ground, or a contextual social reality. In a procedural aspect (either syntagmatically or paradigmatically, or seen also from other aspects), in terms of its aspectualization – such as "*wanting-to-be*," "*not-wanting-to be*," and/or the subjective ground or level, as opposed to the objective one – one finds grounds for decent meaning deduction. (see Greimas and Fontanille 1993; emphasis added)

The result of such a process to be performed is signification, seen as semiotic systems processing signs which need to render themselves more complex so as to manifest their result: the meaning.[1] The procedure of the gradual *de-modalization* of the already *modalized* objects, as representing various architectonic styles, has to be semiotically preconditioned by the subject, thus creating semiotic squares, ready to gain new semantic predispositions. Our aim in addition is to show how such a relationship between the terms (as exposing and presenting concepts of democracy/non-democracy, for instance, or other proper taxonomic terms as a direct consequence of an architectonic process) can be seen in terms of what one may wish to make to express a determined meaning. In order to reach such a goal, one must undergo processes of transformation to the extent of modalization, so that questions may arise: do I see the Parthenon as denoting democracy or not? Do *I believe* that the classical portico relates to univocal courthouses processing policies, or their functioning may run other levels of their semiotically interpretable entities? Such questions in turn firmly lie on epistemological grounds because of the *justifiability of believed or non-believed "truths."* As far as this kind of epistemology's justifiedness is concerned, in terms of the semiotic approach, here is what Greimas and Fontanille have to say:

> Thus, the possibility of narrative syntax, considered as a set of operations affecting discrete units, is based on a rational epistemology

1 Such a term as "meaning" is, as it is understandable, brings a semantic analysis. It should be understood however that, in our case, the subject-object relationship has to be taken into consideration, a fact that gives epistemological significance to such a discussion. In conclusion, one has to point out, as shall be seen, that the *transferability* of such structures makes meaning *transferable,* thus enabling a metaphorization process.

> that establishes the first articulation of signification (e.g. the semiotic square) as terms that are simply abstract positions manipulated by a summoning subject. When all is said and done, we are dealing with a classical epistemological model that sets into relationship a knowing subject, as operator, and the elementary structures as representations of the knowable world. The subject of theoretical construction can know and categorize only if the horizon of meaning is divided into a series of discrete elements. (Greimas and Fontanille, VII)

Finally, one has to ask: is it, as a result, an issue that one has to understand through its denotation or connotation? There is no doubt in saying that the transformational process, which renders the terms in discussion, should be analytically identified for the purpose of creating the necessary semiotic relations.

In conclusion, the semiotic view can render such concepts as *manipulation* for instance (if one wants, as its final meaning among other issues in our sense, or to be more precise: *a passionate manipulation* as a consequence of an actantial relation), as it in turn epistemologically expands the semiotic domain, in terms of what *may be semiotically interpretable*. A question may then follow: has such kind of changeability as well as transformation in the semiotic sense of the word been created by the subject exclusively so as to render the semiotically-derived units in the shape of a newly created and contextualized social reality? If such "knowing subject" comes to his/her exclusive existence, as we noted, here is what Greimas and Fontanille suggest:

> "In addition, if, at the epistemological level, we examine the conditions in which signification can appear as discrete units (in the semiotic square, for example), the very same problematics arise. We have to ask ourselves, naively and as though we were projecting, what the mode of existence of a subject operator would be prior to its first summons. As epistemological subject, it would also have to experience a virtual instance before being actualized, as knowing subject, through the discretization of signification. The resemblance between the trajectory of the epistemological subject and the one identified for the narrative subject (virtualization, actualization, realization) is not surprising, since the contamination of description by the object described is a well-known phenomenon, at least in the social sciences." (Greimas and Fontanille, XIX)

In such a fashion, one may establish an analysis of the "semiotic styles" as Greimas and Fontanille rightfully claim. What one sees as a result is the *semio-narrative* level; the result of a deductive method in rendering meaning. Then, if such conceptions are already modalized, one may ask: are the Greek pillars (for instance) opposed to modern democracy, and why? Can one thus render their process of metaphorization?

The first problem in reference to the known contradiction between *seeming and reality* that may come to one's mind is exactly the *negation* of the architectonic object: seen as a representational process aimed at its functioning. Consequently, a lack of meaning is what occurs. If such is the result, as soon it shall be analyzed, then one can speak of a semiotic relation from the very start. Or better: the process of conceptualizing and perceiving meaning(s) which might initially represent a brand new reality is of a semiotic nature, since it creates relations which *might intentionally alter the state of such an object through the receiving (viewing) subjects, through tension of the mentioned relations.* In conclusion, thus, it produces a new micro-semantic universe which is by all means semiotically treatable.

In our view, such would be the method towards the signification process, still to be resolved in this paper. There is no doubt in saying, however, that the given concepts, within their presumed deep structure, into their present states, the state of their affairs, can further be rendered passionate, thus gaining a new status which by moving or transforming themselves from one state to another, can be seen and/or transformed as subjectivized items, alongside their initial state. This can be exemplified by creating the so-called simulacra which may be suitable to the process of such a transformation: where, for instance, the Parthenon (within its first negation) has no meaning in the first axis, and has connoted meaning in the second axis.

Owing to the fact that semiotics may also be intended as *a possibility of a multiple meaning deduction,* it is also necessary to emphasize that this is not the only semiotic process to be regarded in this context. Out of such presented dichotomies, one may also represent in the frames of logical procedures of inferring meanings. Such an issue, by all means belongs to the logics of science in its *triadic Peircean* shape. One may in turn see the Parthenon as an architectonic sign (within its Firstness) which may stand *as referring to something else* (our paraphrasing of Peirce) within its Secondness, or as a symbol of Thirdness, which relates to the way how one, "the interpretant," may look at it. (see Pierce 1960)

2. On Perceiving Architecture

There is nothing novel in the assumption that buildings convey meaning. They might mean different things to different people. It is in this manner that Neil Leach highlights "the need to acknowledge the agency of the interpreter and the perspective from which interpretation is made." (Leach 2003, 127) While Nelson Goodman in *How Buildings Mean* stresses that "A building is a work of art only insofar as it signifies, means, refers, symbolizes in some way..." (Goodman1985, 643), William Whyte in *How Do Buildings Mean?* asserts that "Architecture is widely perceived to possess meaning: to be more than mere structure." (Whyte 2006, 154) Hence, the inclination toward a particular form of architectural style is rather psychological – thus more ready to be manipulated than an aesthetic one.

Discussing the questions of interpretation with regard to our awareness of the ideological manipulations of the architecture, and "the difficulty of agreeing on the nature of the architectural statement," Russel Cope argues that "layers of meaning may need to be uncovered in order to pinpoint the fundamental determinants of statements on architectural styles." (Cope 2001, 84) Suggesting Hitchcock and Seales' *Temples of Democracy* as an "excellent introduction to the range of social, political and ideological factors" underlying the capitols of various states in the United States, Cope extracts the conclusion that "capitols were clearly seen by their creators as powerful statements of American democratic beliefs, vigorously developing after the War of Independence." (Cope, 84) In the U.S. Capitol Building guide (2003), in the "vocabulary" section, one would find the description of *U.S. Capitol Building* as "a government building which symbolizes American democracy and freedom;" and a description of *symbol* as "an object or picture that represents a much larger idea" (2). It has further been said that "just as Augustus Pugin's neo-Gothic nineteenth-century churches were intended to articulate Christian values and inspire a Catholic revival, so Norman Foster's rebuilt Reichstag was intended to express a commitment to democracy through its architectural form." (Whyte, 155) In the very same light, stressing the symbolism of buildings by claiming that "outer design should represent the inner meaning of the building," Patrick Joyce indicates that "the Houses of Parliament in London were held to represent the Ancient Constitution, and the Law Courts in London the Common Law." (Joyce 2003, 152)

In an overview of the mechanisms underlying architectural perception and recognition, Alexander Koutamanis focuses on relationships between style and

image, representation and recognition. "General cognitive mechanisms," he asserts, "that determine object recognition make prominent elements equally well perceivable to all." This is why "such elements can be used to define classical architecture." (Koutamanis 2006, 384) While most people are "capable of immediately recognizing architecture as classical even in ruins," Koutamanis says, the "immediate and unambiguous recognition of objects and parts," such as Doric, Ionic and Corinthian columns, despite their being complex structures, is "even more impressive". It is the combination of *transversality* and *colinearity* to which Koutamanis ascribes the underlying principle that "allows us to distinguish not only between columns and their superstructure or base in a colonnade but also between the various components of a column." (Koutamanis, 385) However, "identifying an element as classical," Koutamanis argues, "refers to general principles such as symmetry and tripartition" but it also "presupposes acquaintance with the classical canon." (Koutamanis, 390)[2]

3. On the Parthenon and its architectonic features

What does this "classical style," as applied to architecture, actually mean? Considering the most obvious meaning, Summerson suggests that "a classical building is one whose decorative elements derive directly or indirectly from the architectural vocabulary of the ancient world;" these elements being "easily recognizable, as for example columns of five standard varieties, applied in standard ways." (Summerson 1963, 7) This apparently superficial definition makes a usable distinction between classical architecture and classical references. As a matter of fact, ancient Greek architecture has been recognized as one that established new aesthetic standards. The Parthenon, in particular, has been recognized as the one "measured with a degree of mathematical exactitude not found in earlier structures, in which we find the earliest design principles that codify with precision different column orders, capital types, height and width requirements, and appropriateness of external decoration". Furthermore, the same principles are said to be "embedded in Greek philosophical thought and have created a timeless, universal concept of beauty that has been revived countless times through history." (Palmer 2008, xlvii)

2 For establishing harmony throughout the structure see Tzonis and Lefaivre 1986.

Our intention in this essay is not to give a detailed description of the Parthenon, or any of the buildings mentioned. Yet, some basic information is required. Which characteristics or elements of the Parthenon might be used in order to be semiotically treated?

The Parthenon was designed by architects Iktinos and Kallikrates, and was built on the Acropolis in Athens, as a part of a bigger complex dedicated to religious festivities. The construction of the temple took place from 447 BC to 438 BC, during the rule of Pericles. The Acropolis (Ακρόπολις; *akros, akron,* edge, extremity + *polis,* city) is a site located on a high rocky outcrop above the city of Athens, thus dominating the city, while allowing oversight. Such a position produced all the significance it gained through time, being the city's most important citadel, a traditional seat of Greece's ancient rulers, and a place of worship, consecutively. The Parthenon itself was built to honor *Athena Parthenos*, the city's patron deity. However, the Parthenon as the most formidable and most enduring building from ancient Athens has become a symbol of classicism, thus the symbol of the classical ideas, including democracy. Or, to be a bit more precise, as suggested in the *Historical Dictionary of Architecture*, "Many Renaissance and later neoclassical buildings found across the western world have been modeled on the Parthenon, not only for its aesthetics, but also because its architecture came to symbolize general prosperity, democratic principles, and honest leadership." (Palmer, 3)

3.1. Ratio

The Parthenon is an octastyle (having eight frontal columns in the portico), peripteral (having columns on all sides) building, applying the ideal ratio of a "dynamic rectangle," which is a "root five rectangle." It means that a ratio of width to length is 1:2.25 (4:9, computed with the Babylonian method), which equals to the ratio between columnation and intercolumnation, where the intercolumnation should measure 2.25 diameter interval, according to Vitruvius. It was Vitruvius, the Roman architect, who gave a description of the proportions of the human body based on the canonical tradition in art, further extended in the Renaissance by Leonardo da Vinci and Albrecht Dürer. Robert Tavernor says in his Introduction to Vitruvius's *On Architecture:* "Vitruvius describes the design of temples through the analogy of the proportions and modularity of the perfect human body." (Tavernor 2009, xviii) Or rather, as Protagora has put it, "of all things the

measure is man…" Measure and balance, along with law, were the most important principles of the ancient world. Pythagoras stressed proportion in philosophy and music, Polykleitos in sculpture, and later on Vitruvius in architecture. Thus, according to later comments (Galen), in the *Canon of Polykleitos* we find that

> …perfection in proportion comes about via an exact commensurability of all the body's parts to one another: of finger to finger and of this to the hand and wrist, of these to the forearm to the upper arm: of the equivalent parts of the leg; and of everything to everything else. (As cited in McCague 2009, 25)

There are numerous accounts that the proportions of the human body neither did, nor were able to serve as a model for the orders, in relation to the importance of geometry and proportion in architecture. Tavernor suggests that as "Architecture became global […] the Vitruvian architectural tradition [became] abandoned as a totality." (Tavernor, xxxv) Yet, some aspects of this tradition "are still used to lend authority to the outward appearance of buildings" (Tavernor, xxxv), if not in terms of proportion than at least in terms of cultural meaning.

Just as the main purpose of proportion is to establish harmony throughout a structure, it might be said that to establish harmony is the central purpose of democracy, as well, that is: to accomplish objectives that best serve the interests of the people, in terms of their human rights, living standards, and quality of life standards, and that reflects their highest aspirations.

3.2. Columns

The Parthenon is the most famous example of a Doric temple, applying the Doric order as the most austere of all. But, as Rhodes suggests, "it is not pure Doric, and should perhaps be viewed more as a building of vital transition in the history of Greek architecture" (Rhodes 1995, 74) For this reason, it refers to "the reunion of Athens and her East Greek sisters occasioned by the Persian Wars," as well as to the nomination of Athens as "the new cultural and intellectual center of the world, a role inherited from Ionia…" Rhodes argues that "The intricately planned Ionicisms of the Parthenon are crucial contributions to the creation of a truly international style of architecture on the Acropolis and point to Athens as the first

great cosmopolis of the Greek world." (Rhodes, 76) There are five orders, Doric, Ionic, Corinthian, Tuscan and Composite, recognized as the "five basic elements in the architectural grammar of Antiquity." (Summerson 1963, 13) An "order" is the "column-and-superstructure" unit of a temple colonnade. We find the earliest written description of the orders in Vitruvius (*De Architectura*), which became "the code of practice of a Roman architect of the first century A.D. [...] In the middle of the fifteenth century, the Florentine architect and humanist, Leon Batista Alberti, described the orders, partly with reference to Vitruvius and partly from his own observations of Roman remains. It was he who added, from observation, a fifth order – the Composite – which combines features of the Corinthian with those of the Ionic." It could be said that it is, nearly a century later, Sebastian Serlio who promoted the orders in the way we know them since, and who started their "long career of canonical, symbolic, almost legendary authority." (Summerson, 9) However, it was the Romans who further developed the orders by bringing them in the process of designing of arched and vaulted public buildings (amphitheaters, basilicas, or triumphal arches). As Summerson demonstrated, it was "as if they felt that no building could communicate anything unless the orders were involved in it. To them the orders *were* architecture". What is even more important,

> "They [the Romans] invented ways of using the orders not merely as ornamental enrichments for their new types of structure but as controls. The orders are, in many Roman buildings, quite useless structurally but they make their buildings expressive, they make them speak; they conduct the building, with sense and ceremony and often with great elegance, into the mind of the beholder. Visually, they dominate and control the buildings to which they are attached." (Summerson, 14)

Ancient Romans were, in fact, the first people to appreciate and emulate classical Greek architecture, but they used it not only for religious inspiration, but also to cultivate an image of political power and superiority. It is in this way that the Capitol in Washington D.C. made use of columns that was "immediately understood to recall the original form of democracy as established in Ancient Greece." (Palmer, 79)

Therefore, "while we must incorporate these essentials in our idea of what is classical, we must also accept the fact that classical architecture is only recogniz-

able as such when it contains some allusion, however slight, however vestigal, to the antique 'orders'". (Summerson, 8)

3.3 Optical distortion (illusion)

Although all the lines of the Parthenon building, including the columns, do seem to look perfectly straight, they are not. Due to the science of optics, structures built with straight lines tend to look slightly distorted. Therefore, "some of its structural lines were deliberately curved and slanted" (Diggins 1965, 127) by the architects Kallikrates and Iktinos. Most of those distorted lines are vertical ones (columns), and some of them are horizontal lines, thus producing an effect of straightness and solidity, while also producing the desired effect on the viewer. Still, reasons for this kind of intervention in formal irregularity might occur due to site specificities, as well. Thus, assuming "the architect to be the guardian of the rules of beauty, the proprietor of special problem-solving instruments, and the dextrous negotiator in the conflict between the canon of form and deformation," in their *The question of autonomy in architecture* Lefaivre and Tzonis trace the advancements in some aspects of solving deformations in the design and production process. Regarding early attempts to "canonize" corrections of optical errors, the authors note that "Just as Vitruvius had tried to compensate for what the eye cheats us of, Serlio attempted to make up for what the site takes away." (Lefaivre and Tzonis 1984, 25–42) According to them, what Alberti would name an offense "to the Eye" and "to the Mind" regarding architects' failure "to satisfy our immoderate Desire for Perfection," for Serlio "Regularity of form is not an objective state of the product, but a subjective state of the mind." (Lefaivre and Tzonis 1984, 31)

4. On the Semiotics of the Parthenon

As has been mentioned, we are interested in the process of subjectivization, which occurs after the process of aspectualization, thus attempting to render a "knowing subject" that then transforms itself into *possible passions* and, as Greimas and Fontanille say, into a *semiotics of passion*. Naturally, such a task needs further elaboration in this paper, in terms of its graduality and procedures. Such graduality,

as one can easily note, should by all means take into account the contextual circumstances, as Eco frequently puts it. (Eco 1968) One may certainly ask why. We may immediately respond to such a question: such circumstances would allow our object of analysis to be seen in *different contexts*, which is one of the points where they become subordinated to further procedures. Finally, such a view can contribute to the subject's *becoming passionate*, because of the following:

> There would therefore exist two forms of 'state,' and the same difficulties arise once again. State is first of all a 'state of affairs' of the world that is transformed by the subject, but is also the 'state of feeling' of the competent subject about to act, as well as a modal competence itself that at the same time undergoes transformations. (Greimas and Fontanille, XIX)

As has already been clarified, the architectonic objects that contain signs in themselves, were created in the past. One has to conclude that *such a text had a context. It would deduce the logically expected definitions.* Concretely speaking, in what historical context was the Parthenon built? No doubt, the question was previously answered. Yet: is such context in full concordance with the present democracies (seen as semiotic objects in our sense of the word), or not? If not, one has to conclude that a semiotic process has to occur so as to render its proper meaning.

This way, the task of a semiotician, in this context, is to define the text/context relations which are otherwise historically and architectonically featured, which in turn would attempt to provide an answer to the following question: is such a precision (within the Parthenon's architectonic features) reflected *inter-actionally* in what it represents? Or, better: does it process equivocal or unequivocal messages? If, as we may be encouraged to suggest, *unequivocal messages* are processed, then semiotics should doubtlessly play its part in deriving the meaning or meanings it represents.

Hopefully it is clear by now that in terms of the objects described, one can notice the messages unequivocally transmitted due to the inadequacy of the text and context relationship. Concretely speaking, if the pillars as described above belong to a period *adapted to the context* (either architectonically or essentially), they have been *de-contextualized* in the present times. If one perceives a situation in such a way, then doubtlessly *the cognizing subject*, after viewing it, and as described, passing through the notion of tensitivity (in a determined period of

time), *becomes passionate, thus deriving a taxonomy such as despair is*. This conclusion (after the earlier described lack of meaning as a result) is due to several reasons: facing such architectonic styles, obviously the cognizing subject becomes an impassionate one, thus witnessing a process of manipulation. This situation obviously becomes possible (as one of the semiotic possibilities) during the tensitivity period in terms of the object first (which is the Parthenon itself), within its state of affairs, and then the impassionate subject (the one believing it to represent democracy, initially), within its state of feelings after the transformability's occurrence. Manipulation as a matter of fact, or better, the *impassioned subject* being manipulated as a final result of the process on its surface structure, is only sufficient in terms of a de-contextualized Parthenon, and emerges as both the psychological and logical result of the process.

5. On representing democracy

As was mentioned before, in the *Historical Dictionary of Architecture* we read that it is

> ...attention to mathematical detail, focused on symmetry, harmony, and proportionality that provides the Parthenon with an enduring beauty called the 'classical' aesthetic. Many Renaissance and later neoclassical buildings found across the western world have been modeled on the Parthenon, not only for its aesthetics, but also because its architecture came to symbolize general prosperity, democratic principles, and honest leadership. (Palmer, 3)

We find some basic notions on "democracy" in the *Britannica Online Encyclopedia*. The term "democracy" is derived from the Greek *dēmokratiā*, which was coined from *dēmos* ("people") and *kratos* ("rule") in the middle of the fifth century BC during the Classical period, in which the Parthenon and the Acropolis itself obtained their present meaning to denote the political system that the citizens of Athens began to develop under the leadership of Cleisthenes. Since then both theory and practice of democracy have undergone profound changes.

5. Conclusion

Just as the Parthenon is a symbol of the Classical world, so is democracy its most valuable product (invention). Democracy is considered to be the closest to an ideal form of government, in terms of demonstrating its superiority to any other form of government by possessing a number of features that most people, whatever their basic political beliefs, would consider desirable. Yet, since Aristotle, political philosophers generally have insisted that no actual political system is likely to attain, to the fullest extent possible, all the features of its corresponding ideal. Thus, whereas the institutions of many actual systems are sufficient to attain a relatively high level of democracy, they are almost certainly not sufficient to achieve anything like a perfect or ideal democracy, but may only produce a satisfactory approximation of the ideal. Taken that the ultimate form of democracy was established through the French and American revolutions, and is today confronted by the phenomena of globalization, societal fragmentation and differentiation, as well as by different forms of transnational interactions, it becomes obvious that democracy becomes reduced to a technique or a form of regulation. (see Blokker, 2008) The very same process might be applied to antique temples and buildings. As Giedion noticed, in the nineteenth-century architects tried to imitate earlier periods and their forms, but "everything they put their hands on turned to dust rather than to gold. Today we can see why." (Giedion 1967, 5)

This can finally witness our semiotic view as well: the transformational processes, as we stated earlier, prove the amount of the interpretability by the side of the subject. Such interpretability, as it is semiotically perceivable (and/or possible), undergoes the aforementioned transformability through the initial despair to the extent of being manipulated. Then, as a conclusion, the process itself can render all social contexts interpretable: be they art creations as our case aimed at a determined functional purpose. Uniting the two, and moreover, this being the usual starting point at each process of semiosis, renders definitely as a result as one of its meanings: a manipulative subject as Greimas and Fontanille claim, and/or manipulation as a consequence of the *subject of doing*.

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