



CHRISTIAN NORBERG-SCHULZ'S INTERPRETATION OF HEIDEGGER'S PHILOSOPHY

Care, Place and Architecture

HENDRIK AURET

“Auret offers a convincing, supportive counter to recent critical studies that undercut Norberg-Schulz’s work, claiming it is a misreading of Heidegger. The book is a timely contribution to architectural theory, especially environmental hermeneutics and architectural phenomenology.”

David Seamon, Kansas State University, USA

“The book provides a comprehensive consideration of Norberg-Schulz’s lifelong search for a deeper understanding of how architectural work is related to life. Auret’s research is attentive and thorough, and he presents his work regarding the ‘art of care’ as a way towards designing and appreciating architecture as an art of life.”

*Gro Lauvland, Norwegian University of Science and
Technology, Norway*

“Auret has provided significant insight into a crucial ‘blind spot’ in Norberg-Schulz’s interpretation of Heidegger’s fundamental ontological account of human being. Far from resigning himself to accepting that Norberg-Schulz’s work is terminally vitiated by this omission, however, Auret has managed to breathe new life into the Norwegian’s work instead.”

*Bert Olivier, University of the Free State,
South Africa*



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Christian Norberg-Schulz's Interpretation of Heidegger's Philosophy

Christian Norberg-Schulz's Interpretation of Heidegger's Philosophy investigates the theoretical contribution of the world-renowned Norwegian architectural theorist Christian Norberg-Schulz and considers his architectural interpretation of the writings of German philosopher Martin Heidegger. Though widely recognised as providing the most comprehensive reading of Heideggerian philosophy through the lens of architecture, this book argues that Norberg-Schulz neglected one of the key aspects of the philosopher's contributions: the temporal nature of being-in-the-world as care. The undeveloped architectural implications of the ontological concept of care in his work prevented the fruition of his ultimate aim, transforming the 'art of place' into an 'art of living'.

This book seeks to realign Norberg-Schulz's understanding of time as continuity and change to present a holistic approach grounded in Heidegger's phenomenological philosophy; architecture as art of care. Aimed at academics and scholars in architectural theory, history and philosophy, *Christian Norberg-Schulz's Interpretation of Heidegger's Philosophy* surveys the implications and significance of Norberg-Schulz's works on architectural criticism in the late 20th century.

Hendrik Auret is a senior lecturer at the University of the Free State (UFS), South Africa, and registered as a professional architect. In 2007 he won the National Corobrik Architectural Student of the Year Award, the title accorded the best master's design dissertation from all South African architecture learning sites. Hendrik received his Ph.D. in architecture from the UFS in 2015. This is his first book.

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Care, Place and Architecture

Hendrik Auret

First published 2019
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Auret, Hendrik, 1983- author.

Title: Christian Norberg-Schulz's interpretation of Heidegger's
philosophy : care, place and architecture / Hendrik Auret.

Description: New York : Routledge, 2019. | Series: Routledge research in
architecture | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2018025917 | ISBN 9780815378266 (hardback) |

ISBN 9781351232791 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Norberg-Schulz, Christian. | Heidegger, Martin,
1889-1976—Influence. | Architecture—Philosophy.

Classification: LCC NA2500 .A89 2019 | DDC 720.1—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2018025917>

ISBN: 978-0-8153-7826-6 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-351-23279-1 (ebk)

Typeset in Sabon
by Swales & Willis Ltd, Exeter, Devon, UK

Cover Image: Interior view of the Stabekk church during construction
(Norberg-Schulz, NAM 14) (Photograph courtesy of © CNSarchives @
CNSarchives.com).

This book is partly derived from the thesis with the title “Care, place and architecture: a critical reading of Christian Norberg-Schulz’s architectural interpretation of Martin Heidegger’s philosophy” of Dr H.A. Auret, 2015, University of the Free State.

Short extracts from this book were first published as part of an essay entitled “Architectural phenomenology and the tyranny of lived experience” in the *South African Journal of Art History*, Volume 30, Number 3, 2015: 112–122.

For Marnel



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Preface

Since the mid-1970s the Department of Architecture at the University of the Free State (UFS, Bloemfontein, South Africa) has pursued the ideas of Christian Norberg-Schulz (1926–2000). The Free State province may seem like a strange place to encounter the thoughts of a Norwegian architectural theorist, but in a country finally grappling with *both* the demands and delights of cultural diversity, while still bearing the strain of old tensions, it may appear as if only one thing is shared by inhabitants: the place itself.

The UFS is still in the midst of the nationwide transformation from the *Apartheid* system, during which the university was a predominantly white and Afrikaans-medium institution, to the multi-cultural and multi-lingual ‘open’ democratic society which has been in the making since 1994; a path of reconciliation which continues to pose hard questions. Amid the range of cultural heritages acknowledged in the post-liberation reality, it is understandable that Norberg-Schulz’s theory of place continues to play an important role for architects. His concept of *genius loci* envisions a form of ‘stability’ capable of uniting all those inhabiting a place through works of architecture based on shared meanings; works inspired by an inclusive ‘voice of place’. The idea that co-habitation could be translated into meaningful works of architecture continues to promise a way towards building works of architecture expressing the life of the place. And yet, something seems to be missing. Consider your surroundings and ask yourself if contemporary works of architecture have found the key to creating meaningful, appropriate and inclusive urban environments?

I believe a crucial aspect of mortal life in place has been obscured, veiled in the way Norberg-Schulz architecturally translated the writings of the German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889–1976). What follows is an attempt to lift this veil and explore one of the most potent architectural possibilities left mute due to Norberg-Schulz’s dedication to the message of his erstwhile mentor, the Swiss architecture historian Sigfried Giedion (1888–1968).

Literary conventions

Regarding the capitalisation of the term ‘Being’: in contrast to some recent translations (Stambaugh, 2010; Rojcewicz & Vallega-Neu, 2012), I chose to capitalise the word ‘Being’ when referring to the ‘concept of Being’. The main argument against capitalisation is that, in German, all nouns are capitalised, and that the act of capitalising ‘Being’ in English carries too many connections with a “transcendent Being” (Stambaugh, 2010:xxiv). However, the German words Heidegger used for ‘Being’, *Sein*, and ‘a being’, *Seiend*, are different in nuance and thus differentiated, thereby safeguarding the ‘ontological difference’. In many translations this approach is also adopted where special significance is bestowed on everyday terms (e.g. ‘Moment’ and the ‘Open’). Heidegger’s philosophy often engaged with the ‘problematic’ aspects of the divine. To ignore these mysterious allusions, as misguided or bothersome, entails a “levelling down” (Heidegger, 1938a:493–494/388) of the strange ‘holding sway’ of Being. In direct quotations the lack of capitalisation will be observed.

In-text references to Martin Heidegger’s *Being and Time* (1927a) are based on the pagination used in the original German edition, which has been included in subsequent translations. In all other cases, where the original pagination was included in a new edition, I cite the original pagination followed by the page number of the particular translation being used (e.g. Heidegger, 1938a:188–189/148).

Preserving the chronology of works

Another challenge involved making apparent the chronology of works and lectures by Heidegger and Norberg-Schulz. In some instances, considerable lengths of time elapsed between the completion of a manuscript or a lecture course and its publication, or the date it was eventually translated. In order to clarify the development of their approaches, the ‘dates’ used as in-text references refer to the year in which manuscripts were completed or delivered as a lecture course. The particular edition used as reference is indicated in the Bibliography. This approach to referencing has also been applied to other ‘iconic’ works.

Limitations

Martin Heidegger and Christian Norberg-Schulz engaged language poetically. For each, their mother tongues contained ‘embedded knowledge’. It is, therefore, unfortunate that I am neither able to engage directly with the German Heideggerian source material, nor the Norwegian writings of Norberg-Schulz. While I gained valuable insights into the deep meanings of certain concepts by speaking Afrikaans as my mother tongue, it is only through close scrutiny of sources and commentaries that some concepts became accessible.

Acknowledgements

Foremost I would like to thank Walter Peters and Pieter Duvenage for their questions, kindness, insights and improvements. My work stems from the theoretical tradition of the UFS School of Architecture where I was introduced to the work of Norberg-Schulz by Jan Smit, Petria Jooste-Smit and Gert Swart. Others who contributed to my 'approach' include Kobus du Preez, Ora Joubert, Marguerite Pienaar, Henry Pretorius, Jacques Laubscher, Pieter Venter, Alet van der Merwe, Gerhard Bosman, Martie Bitzer, Rudolf Bitzer, Carmen Dickens, Jan Nel, Zack Wessels, Hein Raubenheimer, Jako Olivier and the indomitable Jan Ras. Special thanks to my colleagues Jonathan Noble, Wanda Verster and David van der Merwe for their astute comments on the 'final draft'. I would also like to single out Bannie Britz and Pattabi G. Raman, who were mentors to many. Professor Raman saved me from architecture and suggested designing 'parsimoniously'. Professor Britz's assertion that 'architecture must dignify the human condition' served as a catalyst.

During research trips to Oslo, I had the pleasure of meeting scholars, colleagues and former friends of Norberg-Schulz: Gro Lauvland, Karl Otto Ellefsen, Aina Dahle, Jan Digerud, Per Olaf Fjeld, Thomas McQuillan, Neven Fuchs-Mikac, Beata Labuhn, Rolf Gerstlauer, Elisabeth Tostrup and Anne Marit Vagstein. I would like to thank them for their generosity and encouragement. Dr Lauvland's expertise has been invaluable. Thanks are due to the staff at the archive of the Norwegian National Museum—Architecture for arranging access to their excellent collection. Others who assisted my research include Øyvind Isachsen, Jørn Christensen, Marit Åsleien, Eric Norberg-Schulz and Sareh Saeidi.

I am grateful for the thoroughness displayed by Bert Olivier and Nic Coetzer, who made insightful recommendations. In addition, thanks are due to Graham Livesey, Catherine Hamel and Branko Kolarevic at the University of Calgary for letting me test ideas in a new place; Jacques Raubenheimer, Annamarie du Preez and Janet Whelan, who helped in their unique ways; Anton Roodt, Madelane Gerber and my friends at Roodt Architects for being committed to a high-quality work environment; and Calvyn du Toit, who drew my attention to the challenges posed by 'islands of meaning'. This

book would have been impossible without the tirelessly professional support provided by the team at Routledge. Special thanks to my editors, Grace Harrison and Aoife McGrath.

Finally, to my saviour God, the source of all creativity, who has taught me what it means to hold something close and keep it safe; my family and friends, who have supported me and never (openly) doubted that I would finish this project; Andries, Heili, Lida and Mia, for opening my world to new realms of care; and my wonderful wife, Marnel. Your quiet confidence makes all the difference. I love you and I am deeply grateful.

Abbreviations

AHO	Arkitektur- og designhøgskolen i Oslo (the Oslo School of Architecture and Design)
BDT	<i>Building Dwelling Thinking</i> (1951)
BT	<i>Being and Time</i> (1927)
CoD	<i>The Concept of Dwelling: on the way to Figurative Architecture</i> (1984)
CtP	<i>Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)</i> (1938)
ESA	<i>Existence, Space and Architecture</i> (1971)
ETH	Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule
GL	<i>Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture</i> (1979)
IiA	<i>Intentions in Architecture</i> (1963)
MiA	<i>Meaning in Architecture</i> (1966)
MiWA	<i>Meaning in Western Architecture</i> (1974)
NAM	See 'Archival material' section (all archival material reproduced courtesy of © CNSarchives @ CNSarchives.com)
NL	<i>Nightlands: Nordic Building</i> (1993)
OCA	<i>Order and Change in Architecture</i> (1989)
OVE	<i>Order and Variation in the Environment</i> (1966)
PLP	<i>Architecture: Presence, Language, Place</i> (2000)
PMA	<i>The Principles of Modern Architecture</i> (2000)



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1 Introduction

Some years ago, I scraped together the courage to ask one of my mentors, the respected South African architect Professor Emeritus Bannie Britz (1936–2013), what architecture was all about. Later that day he replied: “Architecture must dignify the human condition”. His words have fascinated me ever since; what is the nature of this ‘condition’ and the extent to which works of architecture are able to ‘dignify’ it?

During the latter part of the previous century this line of questioning enjoyed the scrutiny of one of the most influential architectural thinkers of our times. In the work of the Norwegian architect, theorist and architectural historian Christian Norberg-Schulz (1926–2000), the way we live in the world and give a voice to, or dignify, places through building became the driving force behind a formidable theoretical edifice. His most influential theoretical works include *Existence, Space & Architecture* (1971), *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* (1980), *The Concept of Dwelling: On the Way to Figurative Architecture* (1985) and *Architecture: Presence, Language, Place* (2000). These books drew heavily on the work of the German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889–1976). So much so that Norberg-Schulz’s work is widely acknowledged as the most comprehensive architectural interpretation of Heideggarian phenomenology.

The writings of Martin Heidegger had a profound and multi-faceted influence on 20th century thinking. In contrast to the Cartesian division between subject and object, Heidegger formulated human existence as concerned participation in a concrete world of life. He called this intimate entanglement ‘being-in-the-world’. Us, the entangled ones, he called *Dasein*; the ones who are *there/here*.¹

Architects rarely see themselves as philosophers, yet Heidegger had a marked influence on architectural thinking and practice. Arguably, the magnitude of his impact may in large part be attributed to the fact that architects were introduced to his philosophy by Norberg-Schulz. Inspired by Heidegger’s understanding of human existence as being-in-the-world, Norberg-Schulz formulated an approach to architecture he summarised as the “art of place” (2000b:221). The art of place defines architecture as ‘the making of meaningful place’, and constitutes one of the formative beacons of architectural phenomenology.²

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Norberg-Schulz made Heidegger's thinking architectural, but usually this appropriative approach presents some drawbacks. Mostly, architects lack the training and background needed to decipher the intricacies of philosophy. Heidegger may be quoted in academia, but rarely on a construction site. And yet, in Norberg-Schulz's case one encounters an architectural thinker gifted enough to thoughtfully engage philosophy, a teacher shrewd enough to recognise the ideas that will assist architecture students in designing buildings and a writer able to plainly, succinctly and forcefully express these ideas in written form. In terms of exploring the way people build their lived spatiality as places, Norberg-Schulz's contribution remains unequalled – in scope and insight, but also in terms of sheer architectural applicability.

Norberg-Schulz's influence is undeniable, but the time is ripe to question his reading of Heidegger. That is the aim of this book: to interrogate and augment the theoretical contribution of Norberg-Schulz, by considering the cogency of his architectural interpretation of Heidegger's philosophy. Importantly, this enquiry will not be conducted from *without*, searching for different theories of place, but from *within* the 'dialogue' between his own work and the writings of Heidegger. This implies being guided by Norberg-Schulz's ultimate architectural goal, expressed in the closing pages of his last book, *Architecture: Presence, Language, Place* (PLP, 2000b), where he stated that the "art of place" – designated in Norwegian by the term *stedskunst* – had to become the "art of the experience of living" (*livskunst*) (2000b:356).³ In one sentence Norberg-Schulz revealed the latent trajectory of his entire theoretical contribution *and* finally made sense of one of his favourite everyday expressions. Beyond making meaningful places, architecture had to manifest the full significance of what people mean when they say that life "takes place" (1979b:6; 1984a:75; 2000b:27). If architecture could concretise this 'taking place', then it would be 'true to life' and facilitate 'authentic dwelling'.⁴ It would become *livskunst*. What should dwellers demand from architecture, if it is to manifest the taking place of human life?

In *The Ethical Function of Architecture* (1997) the philosopher Karsten Harries (b. 1937) proposed that works of architecture need to safeguard human life against two fundamental trepidations: the "terror of space" and the "terror of time" (1997:226). In general terms, understanding architecture as *livskunst* aspires to safeguarding human life against these terrors by concretising our presence within a particular space and time.

Did Norberg-Schulz follow Heidegger in the way he addressed these terrors architecturally? Before answering this question, it is important to point out two caveats: first, few architects have ventured into the philosophically dense Heideggarian source material, instead trusting Norberg-Schulz's reading. Much good has come of this. In contrast to the monotony of Internationalism, architects at last had 'permission' to dwell on the peculiarities of their own places. Second, it is important to recognise the autonomy

of Norberg-Schulz as a thinker. He had his own architecture-driven intentions. Moreover, he did not see himself as a philosopher. However, the possibility of *livskunst* is so deeply embedded in Heidegger's philosophy of being-in-the-world that one would expect profound connections and assume an overall correspondence. Yet, there is a fundamental discrepancy.

The most general assumption underpinning Norberg-Schulz's approach is that life takes place between earth and sky, a predominantly spatial interaction. But in his book *Being and Time* (1927a), Heidegger suggested an equally fundamental fact characterising human 'betweenness': being between birth and death. Indeed, it is the temporal nature of existence which mediates human interaction within the Heideggarian fourfold⁵ composed of earth, sky, mortals and divine. No longer observers nor subjects, people participate as mortals. This is not meant to imply that Heidegger neglected the spatial dimension of existence. He later described the intertwined spatio-temporal nature of our lived situation as an "abiding expanse", or "*verweilende Weite*" (1945:114/74 & Davis, 2010:xiv). Besides enquiring about the 'expansiveness' of spatiality, Heidegger tried to understand the 'ecstatic' nature of our lived temporal reality by referring to the 'abiding' way any human being 'is' being-in-the-world. His illuminating claim is that mortals live time as care.

Heidegger believed that "care" or "concern", the two main facets housed in the German term *Sorge*, always already⁶ saturate the human being and constitute the "existential meaning" of its Being⁷ (1927a:41). *Sorge* recognises both the concerned nature of human existence and the fact that humans are the ones who 'cultivate' or 'take care' of things. Care, by describing the way a human being is "concerned about its very being" (1927a:12), engages with the 'ground' of what makes existence meaningful. *For the being of care, space as always already lived as place and time is always already lived as care.*

On first inspection, it may appear as if Norberg-Schulz neglected the concept of 'time' by focusing on the architectural implications of understanding 'spatiality' as 'place'. However, a more comprehensive study shows that he fully acknowledged the influence of time (he was, after all, also a distinguished architectural historian); just not Heidegger's account of human temporality.

Norberg-Schulz's theory of place, deeply indebted to Heidegger's thinking, offers a persuasive response to the 'terror of space', but in terms of the 'terror of time' he substituted the ecstatic temporality of Heideggarian care with a different understanding of time; an approach he inherited from the Swiss architecture historian and critic Sigfried Giedion (1888–1968). Giedion mentored Norberg-Schulz during his studies at the *Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule* (ETH) between 1945 and 1949 and understood time as "continuity and change" (Giedion, 1941:859). The notion of continuity and change may have made it possible to describe the way the 'spirit of the place' endures amid change, and offered a potent antidote to the

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neglect of architectural history sanctioned by the Modern Movement, but it remains aloof to the rich lived temporal reality of *Dasein*'s concerned being-in-the-world. This is the principal shortcoming of *stedskunst*. Caring for our places is more important than ever, but Norberg-Schulz's approach towards the 'terror of time' has crippled the architectural project of 'making meaningful place' as *livskunst*.

I believe that there is a way to overcome Norberg-Schulz's one-sided reliance on continuity and change and once again breathe life into architectural place-making. Architecture, besides being the 'art of place', is also an 'art of care'.⁸ Architects need to be mindful of time, instead of continuously trying to overcome or transcend it. This demands a certain measure of humility and restraint, but also calls for the most resolute dedication to unveiling the Moment of revelation; the moment when the unique living of a shared way of life finds affirmation in architectural *making*. As an art form finely attuned to such moments, care constitutes the poetic 'measure-taking'⁹ which draws *stedskunst* and *livskunst* into contiguity. Architects could shy away from questioning Being and merely accept place and care as 'that which is'. But if we want to build the richness of what is nearest to us, if we are to dignify being-in-the-world, then we have to engage equally with the space-place and time-care relationships, and on their own terms. Grafting the art of care into Norberg-Schulz's art of place opens a new way towards understanding and appreciating architecture as *livskunst*.

1.1 Martin Heidegger and Christian Norberg-Schulz

Are the writings of Martin Heidegger still relevant? The German philosopher Günther Figal (b. 1949) described Heidegger's colossal influence as follows: "Thousands of treatises have been and are being written about him; the conferences, seminars, and lectures on his philosophy are countless" (2009:2). In addition, the renowned American philosopher Robert Mugerauer proposed that Heidegger's ideas are directly relevant to some of the most pressing contemporary challenges. Dilemmas as varied as the "existential problems of each individual person", the potential confrontations facing the world in terms of "massive forced emigration-immigration and refugee displacement", combined with the reliance on "technologies consuming and controlling life itself", and even the ensuing threat of "ecological disasters on a global scale", can all be considered in terms of his philosophy (2008:xv). Instead of waning, the significance and impact of Heidegger's thought has endured and diversified.

Christian Norberg-Schulz produced one of the first, and arguably still the most influential 'architectural translation' of Heidegger's philosophy. Mugerauer described Norberg-Schulz as "a very sensitive reader of Heidegger's German" (2008:579), and the Greek architect Pavlos Lefas (b. 1955) adjudged his contribution to be one characterised by "rare insight"

(2009:131). To these voices of approval, the Norwegian architect and academic Gro Lauvland added that his theoretical contribution is “both radical and even more important today than [when] it was written” (2009:38). Moreover, the veracity of Norberg-Schulz’s place-bound interpretation has recently been corroborated (indirectly) by the Australian philosopher Jeff Malpas (b. 1958), in his excellent study of the role of place in Heidegger’s philosophy entitled *Heidegger’s Topology: Being, Place, World* (2006). Malpas echoes Norberg-Schulz’s architectural interpretation of the prominence of place in Heidegger’s writings and argued that “Heidegger’s work provides us with perhaps the most important and sustained inquiry into place to be found in the history of Western thought” (2006:3).

Both Heidegger and Norberg-Schulz continue to exert significant influence in their respective fields. However, while Heidegger’s works have been the subject of exhaustive questioning, Norberg-Schulz’s interpretation of Heidegger’s philosophy has not received the close scrutiny it deserves. This book, while acknowledging and reappraising the contribution of Norberg-Schulz’s theoretical project, contends that his reliance on continuity and change limited the potential of his theory to provide guidance for architects engaged in the contemporary challenges described by Mugerauer. By way of introduction, the following subsections sketch a brief outline of the personal milieu holding sway over Heidegger and Norberg-Schulz’s work.

1.1.1 Martin Heidegger (1889–1976)

Martin Heidegger was born on 26 September 1889 in the rural German town of Messkirch in the state of Baden-Württemberg. In 1911 he enrolled as a student of Philosophy at the University of Freiburg and by 1919 he was made a research assistant to the founder of the philosophical school of phenomenology, the German philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859–1939). Husserl presented phenomenology as a method to describe phenomena and tried to explain how this revelation occurs as a product of human intentionality.

In the years that followed, Heidegger began to lose his unquestioning admiration of Husserl’s work and shifted the focus of his own phenomenological investigations towards the writings of another German philosopher, Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911). The Heidegger scholar Richard Polt summarised those years well by saying that Heidegger, during the period preceding his fame, struggled to creatively fuse “the systematic rigour of Husserl with Dilthey’s sensitivity to concrete existence in order to develop a phenomenology of historical life” (1999:16). In 1923, Heidegger left Freiburg and was appointed lecturer at the University of Marburg (Lahn), where he refined his own interpretation of phenomenology. In 1927 he published the results of his research in a book widely reckoned to be one of the most influential works of philosophy of the 20th century: *Being and Time* (BT).¹⁰

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Central to Heidegger's philosophy in BT is the question of 'Being'. What it means to 'is' – to be, or exist – and why the fact that we are 'here' matters to us. In this monumental book he argued that people are temporally and spatially 'being-in-the-world'; neither as scientifically detached or rational operators, nor as subjects dealing with 'pure' objects, but concerned-caring beings whose existence matter to them.

BT brought Heidegger worldwide renown, and in 1928 he returned to the University of Freiburg as the successor to his mentor. In the politically tumultuous spring of 1933, at the comparatively young age of 43, Heidegger was elected as the rector of the University of Freiburg. Two weeks later he officially became a member of the National Socialist German Workers' Party. Heidegger's affiliation with the Nazis remains a point of contention.¹¹ When the National Socialists tried to force their agenda on the new rector, he resigned his post only one year after his appointment, yet he retained his party membership to the end of the Second World War. Heidegger's initial attraction to the Nazi Führer's revolution, the events leading up to his appointment as rector, the way he tried to preserve the 'integrity' of the movement while in office, the events surrounding his resignation, and his testimony before the denazification committee after the Second World War, involve a complex series of events, letters and conversations which have been closely scrutinised in other publications.¹²

Recently, a new and particularly harsh light has been cast on Heidegger's political life by the publication of his 'Black Notebooks', a name referring to the colour of his notebooks. These meditative works reveal the extent of Heidegger's troubling political opinions. The historian Richard Wolin (2014) argued that Heidegger's thinking was deeply tainted by anti-Semitism, racism and an inability to acknowledge the horrific consequences of Nazi rule. In a way, Wolin suggested that Heidegger buried his head in the sand of his 'history of Being'; a self-composed history giving substance to a troubling ideology.¹³ However, one could argue that the truly dangerous undercurrent of Heidegger's thinking consists of failing to acknowledge, or conveniently forgetting, that such a danger is there. That is why Polt proposed it "a blessing that Heidegger's life makes it impossible for us to be completely comfortable with his writings" (1999:164). Acknowledging the danger in Heidegger's thought guards against uncritical discipleship. Despite the questions raised by his political affiliations, the troubling nature of his political life actually corroborates the legitimacy of his philosophical reflection on human life as care. It is impossible to accept Heidegger's philosophy unquestioningly; people are unable to avoid taking a stance. Things and actions matter to us. We are beings of care, living amid concern-full things, empathetically inhabiting a concrete world.

During the 1930s Heidegger's thoughts underwent what has been called a 'turn'. The extent and nature of this 'turn' is, however, still a disputed matter among philosophers.¹⁴ Heidegger's later works seem even more expansive in scope than the luminous beacon that BT has become. Yet, each

investigation was guided by the questioning of Being. In the context of this book it is proposed that, in his later work, Heidegger did not ‘turn away from care’, but significantly expanded its scope in terms of poetry, language, thought, technology and questions of identity.

After the war Heidegger was banned from teaching due to his Nazi involvement, but the teaching ban was rescinded in 1949. During the winter semester of 1951–1952 he delivered his last lecture course, later published as *What is Called Thinking?* He retired from the university that same year, but spent the following years (c.1952–1969) delivering numerous lectures and publishing various influential works. During his last years he focused on organising his philosophical contribution (*Gesamtausgabe*), which has still not been published in its entirety. Heidegger died aged 86 on 26 May 1976, and is buried in the town of his birth.

1.1.2 Christian Norberg-Schulz (1926–2000)

Christian Norberg-Schulz was born on 23 May 1926 in Oslo, Norway. After completing his secondary education in 1945 he was chosen to attend the ETH in Zurich (Ellefsen, 2009:117),¹⁵ where he was “among a select circle” that regularly met at the home of Sigfried Giedion (Postiglione, 2004:282), who had a profound influence on the young Norwegian. Giedion’s belief that modern architecture had to be imbued with a “new monumentality” (Giedion, 1958:25) and a “new regionalism” (1958:138), as ways to “bridge the fatal gulf between the greatly developed powers of thinking and greatly retarded powers of feeling” (1958:vi), became cornerstones of Norberg-Schulz’s theoretical approach.

After graduation, Norberg-Schulz returned to Norway and put his modernist education into practice. On various occasions he partnered (c.1951–1956) with the pioneering, but older, Norwegian modernist architect Arne Korsmo (1900–1968)¹⁶ and played an important role as a co-founder of the Norwegian CIAM¹⁷ delegation known as PAGON (Progressive Architects Group Oslo Norway) in 1950 (Postiglione, 2004:284). Despite his close involvement with Norway’s top modern architects, Norberg-Schulz’s conception of Modernism was always more comprehensive than the functionalist devaluation that characterised modern architecture in the years that followed. He believed that the intentions guiding the modern pioneers had to be augmented by “a more profound understanding of spatiality as a ‘taking place’ of life” (Norberg-Schulz, 1980c:176). In later years he acknowledged that, while “such an understanding” had already been formulated by Heidegger, he was at the time unaware of his work and relied, “in the meantime”, on “psychology and sociology for help” (1980c:176–177).

Between 1952 and 1953, as a Smith-Mundt Fulbright scholar at Harvard University, Norberg-Schulz studied the writings of the German-born art theorist and perceptual psychologist Rudolf Arnheim (1904–2007)

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(Otero-Pailos, 2010:154). Arnheim's focus on *Gestalt* theories and the psychology of perception, combined with Giedion's belief in systematisation, were key sources of inspiration for Norberg-Schulz's first major publication, *Intentions in Architecture* (IiA) (1963). While IiA brought him international attention, and formed the core of his Ph.D. thesis, awarded in 1964 by the Norwegian State Polytechnic in Trondheim (Postiglione, 2004:282), he ultimately conceded that his "research in the fields of psychology, sociology, and static mechanics . . . did not yield the hoped-for results" (Norberg-Schulz, 2000b:15). Consequently, in the wake of IiA, his theoretical approach underwent a transformation inspired by reading *Mensch und Raum* (1963) by the German philosopher Otto Friedrich Bollnow (1903–1991).

Bollnow's work introduced Norberg-Schulz to Heidegger's philosophy and allowed him to recognise "the possibility of defining the existential foundations of architecture" (Norberg-Schulz, 2000b:15). Norberg-Schulz's second major theoretical work, *Existence, Space and Architecture* (ESA) (1971a), can be seen as a transitional work that still draws on certain aspects of his psychological research, while bearing witness to his preliminary forays into Heideggerian phenomenology.

Recently, in an effort to recast his turn to phenomenology in visual terms, the American architect, artist and theorist Jorge Otero-Pailos (b. 1971), argued that Norberg-Schulz was profoundly and permanently affected by the work of Arnheim and the photographer, designer and writer György Kepes (1906–2001). However, Norberg-Schulz himself later derided these visual studies as "interesting, but . . . of no assistance to students when it came to design" (2000b:9). Rather than fortifying what Otero-Pailos called an "obsession with visual thinking" (2010:161), his involvement with these visual thinkers contributed to steering him in a different direction.

Besides being a writer, Norberg-Schulz was also an influential teacher and editor. In 1963, he was appointed as lecturer at the *Arkitektur- og designhøgskolen i Oslo* (AHO). Along with various international commitments¹⁸ he continued teaching at the AHO until 1994, when he chose to retire due to ill health (Postiglione, 2004:282). From 1963 to 1978 he also served as editor of the Norwegian architecture journal *Byggekunst* (The Art of Building). During these years he published prodigiously in Norway. His writings included "international reports" of his travels that, according to one of his former students, Karl Otto Ellefsen, illustrate how he increasingly came to value the unique character of particular places (Ellefsen, 2009: 116–117 & 139). Norberg-Schulz's understanding of the concreteness of place, already prominent in his 1969 article "The Concept of Place", proved a fruitful way to advance the ideas presented in ESA (1971a) and culminated in the publication of *Genius Loci* (GL) in 1979.

GL was a ground-breaking work that pioneered the phenomenological approach to architectural design. Deeply indebted to the philosophical writings of Martin Heidegger,¹⁹ the book proposed that the meaning of 'natural



Figure 1 Christian Norberg-Schulz: influences and interactions (author). 1: The dates and events in the left-hand column are largely based on Norberg-Schulz's curriculum vitae (NAM 17); 2: Postiglione, 2004:282; 3: Ellefsen, 2010:116.

places' should be disclosed by works of architecture constituting meaningful 'man-made places'. Thus, works of architecture have an "existential purpose" (Norberg-Schulz, 1979b:18).

The next challenge was to find a way to build the "existential space" of inhabitants (Norberg-Schulz, 1971a:12), and thereby embody the mysterious *genius loci* (spirit of the place). In the wake of his participation in the 1980 Venice Biennale, Norberg-Schulz was convinced that the answer could be found in the linguistic concerns driving postmodern architecture. He believed that the goal of Postmodernism was to express individual interpretations in terms of "timeless" principles constituting a "language of architecture" (1988:14). Specifically, he identified a correspondence between