

Memory and Monuments: A Philosophical Vision of Architectural and Natural Memorials

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Abstract: The article attempts to philosophically analyze a very important and always topical problem of the relationship between memory and monuments as guardians of the centers of human culture in its past and present. The phenomenon of memory is viewed through the prism of the modern recipient's perception of the "dialogical" relationship between "bygone times" and the current socio-cultural situation. Memory, quantitatively consisting of memories of specific things, events, images, etc., takes on the character of a holy substance, transforming various attributes into monuments. It is emphasized that the memorial functionality of a monument consists in the preservation and identification of the spiritual quintessence of some historical or individual-personal phenomenon, not really repeated, but able to be phenomenologically reproduced in consciousness as an intentional object. Containing a memorial meaning, the monument reflects the culture and history of a particular era. It becomes an object of a value relationship, serves as a mediator and bearer of continuity in the dynamic dialogue of cultural cycles. Referring to historical examples of the development of architectural and natural works, we outline the philosophical and phenomenological contours in the aesthetic interpretation of memorial objects.

Keywords: monument, memory, cultural memory, dialogue of cultures, architectural and natural landscape/monument, phenomenological aesthetics

Memory as a phenomenon, born and formed in human consciousness on the basis of irrational reconstruction and sensual "restoration" of past events, is fixed over time in various memorial things called monuments: sculptural groups, busts, memorial plaques, architectural structures, musical and dramatic works, etc., as well as in the natural landscape and its individual fragments. The judgments of the French historian Pierre Nora (1984) on the problems of memory sound more than convincing that memory and recollection are transformed into

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holy substances and are contained in specific things, such as space, gestures, images, objects of the surrounding world. The memorial functionality of such attributes consists in preserving and identifying the spiritual quintessence of some historical or individual-personal phenomenon, which at the moment has gone into otherness and cannot be really repeated, but is able to be phenomenologically reproduced in consciousness as an intentional object. Being the objective result of human activity, a monument to a high degree reflects the culture and history of a particular era, becomes an object of value attitudes and, therefore, it serves as a mediator in the dialogue of cultures. Any object, if it contains a memorial meaning, acts as a kind of carrier of continuity in the dynamics of cultural cycles.

In this regard, the problem of the genesis of memory and monuments has always attracted many famous philosophers at various historical times and became the subject of their scientific and analytical research, taking into account the specifics of a particular philosophical school. Thus, Hans-Georg Gadamer (1991) argued that “a work of art is capable of “talking to a generation” and it is necessary to “understand the meaning of what is being said”. Earlier, Hegel in his “Philosophical Propedeutics”, discussing the human will and spirit, distinguishes two types of memory, namely: productive memory and reproductive memory. The philosopher calls productive memory as Mnemosyne and emphasizes that the highest creation of this type of memory is language. The reproductive memory consists in signs memorizing the meaning of the facts they are connected with (Hegel 1971, 191-193).

The typology of memory was interestingly and differentiatedly developed by Mikhail Bakhtin, who singles out “memory of the future”, “memory of a genre”, “memory of history”, “eternal memory”, “aesthetic memory”, “ontological memory”, “cosmic memory”, “memory of the past”, “objective memory”, etc. (see Bakhtin 1996; 2003).

From the point of view of Pierre Nora (1984), the interaction of memory and history is expressed in modern culture in three forms: memory-archive, memory-duty and memory-detachment. A cultural monument that is physically preserved, but has not taken a place in new functional connections, the author specifies, finds itself outside life, outside of time and is not included in the number of living aesthetic values. The solution of this issue requires the definition of the real, “worthy” role of the monument in the foreign cultural time frame.

“When firmly established knowledge is shaken, each discipline considers it its duty to verify the foundations, to turn to its formation” (Ibid, 29). The main thing in this process, the author believes, is the fragmentation of history-memory into private, privatized types of memory, atomization of general historical memorials and linking them with individual psychology, with “my” memory. And this happens because memory is always less able to be retained in the collective consciousness than in the individual. “Interest in the places where it takes root, concentrates, finds forms of expression for the wasted capital of our collective memory, awakens our sensitivity to it” (Ibid, 62). Therefore, the individual turns into a bearer of memory, a person-memory, capable of stirring up, stirring up the collective consciousness with his memories and thereby intensifying the search for genealogy in the interests of solving today’s problems.

Memory has been approached from different perspectives, i.e. sociological, moral, semiotic, phenomenological, etc. (Maurice Halbwachs, Elena G. Trubina, Yuri M. Lotman, Edmund Husserl).

As a basis for the philosophical analysis of memorial objectivity, the phenomenological aspects of memory and monuments as a phenomenon in consciousness and as an object-related act are singled out. At the same time, we emphasize the special role that an intentional object plays in the formation of the phenomenon of a monument, considering the correlativeness and intentionality of consciousness, the sense of evidence and “experiencing the truth”, the phenomenological reduction and the ‘life world’ (Motroshilova 2001). Specific objects of the material world, events or facts of purely ideal origin, gradually acquire a memorial semantic content and, thus, turn into monuments. As an example, we will try to use the category of “architectural and natural monument”, which determines the appeal to the phenomenological and aesthetic method of Roman Ingarden (1962), who firstly presented an architectural work as a phenomenon.

The concept of “architectural and natural monument” expands the memorial-subject area of the architectural object as such, the “territory of the monument” by introducing additional “background” fragments of nature into the spatial environment, which have a direct independent aesthetic and memorial meaning. In synthesis with architectural structures, it is precisely such elements of nature that are capable to generating various architectural and natural genres: a Russian artistic memorial estate, an Italian historical villa, a Japanese symbolic garden,

an English castle in its sentimentally aestheticized natural environment, a French palace and park ensemble, etc.

The scientific character of the aesthetic and artistic self-sufficiency of nature is confirmed by facts from the history of philosophical and aesthetic thought. Making architecture in its synthesis with nature, and taking into account the subject of phenomenological analysis, it is also necessary to focus on modern aesthetic concepts of the environment, primarily on environmental aesthetics, which is very popular in Western humanities (Bychkova 2003, 520-521). The aesthetic value of the landscape for architecture is revealed against the background of the growth of urbanization. The landscape is viewed as an integral phenomenon with social and aesthetic value, subject to protection, and therefore, to a certain extent, memorialized. An important fact is that the aesthetic value of the landscape is increasingly called upon to be taken into account in the economic planning of the development of territories and the use of natural resources. In this context, environmental aesthetics focuses on the problem of aesthetic perception of the landscape, giving it a special psychological characteristic that helps to distinguish it from the traditional perception of art. The whole palette of sensations is significant: sight, touch, hearing, smell. Even muscular and internal physiological sensations are involved in the aesthetic assessment of the landscape; the sense of movement also plays a huge aesthetic role. Factors such as distance, mass, volume, time, color, lighting, sound, smell, etc. form the basis of the aesthetic perception of the environment.

A significant contribution to the development of the philosophical interpretation of an architectural and natural monument is made by the phenomenological school headed by A.-T. Tymieniecka. In the mirror of phenomenological analysis, the “esoteric addiction to the native place”, “home”, “garden”, the surrounding landscape are interpreted (see Tymieniecka 1997; 2003).

The striving for a serious analysis of the memorial and personal, artistic, aesthetic, and moral values stored in the memory of the people irrepressibly testifies to the rehabilitation of historical consciousness. “In the genre of a monument, the poet builds his image in the future distant plan of descendants... In the world of memory, the phenomenon appears in a completely special context, in conditions of a completely special regularity than in other conditions, or in the world live vision and practical and familiar contact ” (Bakhtin 1975, 462).

The past, captured in architectural and natural images, begins to sound like a story, which captures the feeling of an event, spiritual involvement in a specific historical period of time, getting used to the human consciousness of hoary antiquity, and, therefore, there is a dialogue between the past and the present. In this regard, it is very important “the ratio of times.” Valuable merits do not belong to the future, but “serve the future memory of the past, serve to expand the world of the absolute past, enrich it with new images” (Ibid.). It is in the depths of this tendency that a person’s irresistible aspiration to his own “recognition” in the past, with an organic need to protect his native origins, arises. Living material for such “recognition” is stored in memory reservoirs, in its architectural and landscape objectivity.

Acting as a mediator between the subject-viewer and the subjective value systems of the past, an architectural and natural monument as an artistic phenomenon allows one to join the spiritual world of “other significance”. The immortality of massive cultural, artistic, historical and memorial sections takes place in it. This is deposited in the form of figurative ‘sediment’, since over time the semiotic status of a monument object rises, often in parallel with a decrease in its ‘material’ significance as such. In a foreign cultural situation, communicative contact with the ‘faces of history’ contained in such works is carried out through sensory and rational cognition of it. There is a kind of overlap of the subject’s existing knowledge on those layers of images, ideas that arise in the process of direct communication with the artistic and meaningful nature of the monument. We can say that under the scalpel of our perception-cognition, in this case, it is not so much the historical or certain facts of a personal or creative nature available at one time that fall under the scalpel, but rather their transformations in the perception of people of different historical periods. An architectural and natural monument in this regard makes it possible to learn the history of natural relics, memorial and personal documentaries, the manifestation of philosophical, aesthetic and religious views, since all this over time accumulated in it in the form of transformed ‘layers’, different in their spiritual wealth. Like any other artistic and memorial object, an architectural and natural monument exists due to the ‘historicization’ of memory, which is inherently present in all preserved documentary objects.

Documentation should play the main role in the preservation of architectural and artistic landscapes. The remaining documentary ‘things’ (old trees, garden pavilions, paths, ponds, fountains, etc.)

testify not only to the “heyday”, but also to the entire culturally significant history of such a work (Likhachev 1981, 27). In a monument, the ideal is always crossed with the material, but at the same time “tribute” is given to the ideal; it dominates the spiritless “purity” of impersonal materiality. Yuri Lotman noted that “a thing is always given in direct contact. Therefore, a relationship of ‘personal acquaintance’ arises between it and the person associated with it; so, it is included in the sphere of direct emotional perception” (Lotman 1986, 7). Human perception is always looking for spiritual evidence in various material forms.

Renewal and actualization of the past imprinted in the monuments of architectural and landscape culture can be revived through the efforts of recollection, primarily of an individual one, capable of infecting public thought. At the beginning, this is carried out at the level of philosophical and aesthetic efforts of a theoretical scientist or the local experience of a professional practitioner, and then flows into a broad channel of collective thinking. For example, the first person who saw in the works of Russian garden and park art a “storehouse of memorials”, different in quality, style and content, and called to protect the vulnerability and “crispness” of gardens and parks from time and human vices, was D. S. Likhachev. Objectively believing that everything should be built on a moral foundation, on the basis of a specific philosophy of nature, in a scientific study of the integrity of the universe, the great scientist argues: “The rational principle of the earth is in the vegetation growing on it. A reasonable beginning of vegetation serves the transformation of the earth into a blooming garden – with the paradise as prototype” (Likhachev 1991, 15).

The intellectual process of preserving memorials embedded in architectural and natural works is by no means limited to the actions of individual patriots, even if these actions are carried out at a theoretical or practical level. This mechanism “works” also thanks to the mass movements of “walkers in history”, the purposeful actions of some public organizations. There is a kind of overlap of a narrow theory on the individual practicalism of enthusiasts, and then the branching of this connection into a multitude of theoretical searches and a breadth of practical implementations. Memory-recollection seeks to penetrate a wide mass audience and turn it into a memory-collective, memory-society. The reference is to: meetings on the protection of cultural and historical monuments of architecture, in the active work of the Society for the Study of the Russian Estate; active creative activity of many

departments of landscape architecture in universities; the struggle of Muscovites to preserve the old Moscow boulevards; aspiration of modern “Robinsons” on weekends to the crumbling memorial estates, etc. The bibliographic scope of research of the conglomerate of the Russian estate is constantly increasing through the tireless work of the best representatives of the humanitarian elite of the 20th and the early 21st centuries (Ibid.), striving to “restore the stereometry of analytical vision, examining the Russian estate illuminated and consecrated by historical memory” (Sternin 1998, 248). Variations of the museumization of the estate space fully allow holding music festivals: “Sheremetyevo Seasons” in Ostankino, Kuskovo; “Open Air Concerts” in the Arkhangelskoye estate; and numerous exhibitions, as well as literary evenings in Ostafyevo, Melikhovo, Tsaritsyno, in the Museum of Estate Culture in Kuzmino Zakharovo - Bolshiye Vyazemy, etc.

The manor philosophy is also “written” by talented young Russian architects, who, on the high crest of the architectural and economic wave, create the concepts of an exclusive construction fashion. Some of them pragmatically aptly turn their creative eyes to the genre model of an old Russian manor, an English historical castle or an Italian villa, giving rise to an ultra new manor style of “architectural archeology” (see Kharit 2001). Memory-duty flows from the soul of a person and a people, it is powerful in its movement, as it is able to “decree eternity”, to reunite the past strata of culture with current spiritual searches.

In order for an architectural and natural monument to be a preacher of past realities, bringing to our consciousness the truth of the historical consonance of times, it is necessary to imagine the past in its detachment, to think of a radical boundary between the present and the past. The increase in the content-aesthetic value of such a monument is due to the significant influence of the cultural-temporal distance, which makes the work mysterious and requiring interpretation. This is a kind of remotely detached form of the historicization of memory.

Addressing memory-distance, the interpreter, in order to understand the memorial language of nature in synthesis with architecture, “keeps” the past in front of him at a distance that allows filtering out historical and cultural meanings. At the same time, the interpretation of the values of an architectural and natural monument is carried out through the excitement of a memory-debt. The past is now approaching in our self-consciousness, now it is pushed back again, but the one who understands always thinks of its “other nature”. Such maintenance of the polar relation of “proximity-alienation” at a

distance makes it possible to penetrate into the multi-valued texture of the monument.

The distance, which allows us to determine the true value specificity of the monument, arises when we turn for this purpose to objectified “calmed down” forms of memory as explanatory arguments. In relation to an architectural and natural work, can be old engravings, drawings, watercolors, plans-schemes, old guidebooks, photographs, theoretical and practical descriptions of Russian estates, poetic and prosaic figurative-landscape sketches, etc. A peculiar type of materially established memory serves as a museum. The 2004 *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts* developed a unique thematic typology of museums. Natural and memorial museums are highlighted in a separate chapter as modern fixers and keepers of memory (see Kharit 2001). Being an independent value object, the museum makes it possible to state, at a certain distance, moving “horizons” between the past and the present of an architectural and natural work. Used as functionaries describing the “fate” of a monument, the museums themselves thus fall into the category of “places of remembrance”, becoming objects of symbolic ritual. The exhibition at the Pushkin Museum on Kropotkinskaya in Moscow, entitled “Tsarskoe Selo - A favorite of two centuries” narrated about an outstanding monument of architecture and landscape gardening art of the 18th century. A similar exposition is a memorial “suite” dedicated to the unity of nature and the human soul.

An important source of knowledge about the everyday life and artistic wealth of the old Russian noble estate became the pages of the famous magazines of the early 20th century: *Old Years*, *Apollo*, *Capital and Estate*, *World of Art*, *Golden Fleece*, etc., as well as memoirs stored in the counts and princely archives, telling about the “noble nests”, about the inner content of “Russian estates for the common good and in memory of the past” (Zlochevsky 1992, 82). The objectification of values in their “calm” state reaches through time to the modern interpreter-recipient.

The memory of the architectural landscapes of the past is conveyed by various documentary sources, for example, descriptions made by tsarist ambassadors abroad. “A typical monument of the world outlook of people of the era of the beginning of Peter the Great’s reforms” – thus A. Fedorov-Davydov (1953, 15) calls the description of P. Tolstoy. This is not a statement of personal experiences, not a sensual landscape image, but a statement of objective facts from the sphere of

foreign architectural and landscape creativity. On the contrary, the descriptions of artistically arranged landscapes in Seville by the envoy Potemkin (Ibid.) and Boboli Likhachev (see DUBYAGO 1963) are distinguished by “memorial emotionality”. For example, Sofievka’s past is evidenced by the popularizing essays of its first historian F. Tamiri, the notes of the Russian traveler I. Dolgoruky, paintings by the Scottish artist V. Allan, and many documentary-figurative sketches in Polish magazines (see Lypa 1948). All this in the modern artistic and cultural environment imposes a memorial imprint on the Sofia masterpiece, making it a monument of architectural and landscape culture.

An architectural and natural monument is interpreted at a distance by means of such sources as plans, drawings, maps, and atlases, which are also comprehended in a memorial-figurative way and carry documentary information. The Atlas of Remizov and the drawings of Fomin, made with a high degree of visualization, are called cartographic monuments of paramount importance (Fedorov-Davydov 1953, 19-20). Visual “places of memory” are plans of large artistically transformed landscapes made by Salzman, drawings by V. Folkuera, who depicted Babylonian and Mexican floating gardens with great imagination (Regel 1896, 5-11). The memorial content of the architectural and natural monument “settles” in engravings, watercolors, and landscape paintings. Thus, the works of the 18th century artists A. Zubov, N. Chesky, A. Ukhtomsky, S. Galaktionov, S. Shchedrin, and A. Ostroumova-Lebedeva serve as one of the sources that testify to the past and convey the primary and subsequent memorial spirituality of many architectural and natural works. A whole cycle of drawings depicting landscapes, palaces and pavilions of Peterhof, Oranienbaum, and Tsarskoye Selo belong to the creator of the urban landscape M.I. Makhaev.

The most realistic and visual representation of the history of an architectural and natural work, its philosophical memorial-figurative life is given by photographs. Their cognitive value is calculated by the fair share of true, thorough information that the photographic image is able to convey to the viewer. Interesting research in this regard was carried out by Christine Doell, who regards old photos as a documentary source of architectural and landscape art. To some extent, the photo itself turns into a “place of memory” and indirectly explains another memorial: the architectural landscape. Most of the historical photographs of the state of New York are the only document that

characterizes the visually regional architectural and natural image. These old photographs capture “the ephemeral beauty of the surrounding landscape ...; its former functionality and artistic style are revealed, and, most importantly, a person-creator, a worker appears here with his own eyes” (Doell 1986, 131).

An architectural and natural work at a historical “distance” is memorially comprehended by means of an aesthetic image not only in old photography, but also in its modern performance. For example, a collection of inimitable photographs taken by Japanese artist-photographer Haruzo Ohashi is a kind of memorial hymn to the Japanese garden. The author skillfully conveys in photographic images the dialectic of nature depending on the season and emphasizes the “refined delicacy of the landscape” (Ohashi 1986, 3). The material and ideal existence of nature is memorialized in photography: “The garden never ends” (Ibid, 5-7). A classic architectural and natural work, which has become a monument of Japanese culture over the centuries, is reproduced, that means it can be explained by modern means of artistic interpretation.

In British culture, the so-called “Great British Heritage Pass” method and the “The Treasure Houses of England” route are widely used for the development of “historical tourism”, which allow the modern viewer not only to get acquainted with the relics of past centuries, such as old English castle or historic country English house / park, but also to directly plunge into the ‘real’ atmosphere of the preserved heritage. So, the viewer sees the majestic architectural and landscape space of Blenheim, an outstanding historical monument. In the artistic image of the palace, surrounded by a luxurious Italian garden with fountains, sculptures and sheared shrubs, and then a serene English park, the modern visitor is able to see many memorial “layers”. He can take part in a musical opera show held on the territory of the palace, see and hear the noise of the “memorial” waterfall, “talk” with three hundred-century trees-monuments and “comrades-in-arms” and “friends” of representatives of eleven dynasties, witnesses of the great battle of Blenheim in 1704 year, etc. (see *Historic Houses and Gardens* 2004).

Thus, the remotely detached form of historicization of memory indicates the possibility of effective “working out” of the relationship between the past realities of an architectural and natural monument and its new memorial state. The comprehension of the ‘horizons’ of memorials is carried out at a temporary ‘distance’ and is mediated by

an appeal to hardened objectified forms of memory. One who learns history in the categories of memory replaces the 'dryness' and prosaicity of historical realities and things with the adequacy of their figurative meaning, which allows people to communicate with each other through cultural monuments. "History is always a problematic and incomplete reconstruction of what no longer exists. Memory is always an actual phenomenon, a connection that lives in the eternal present...; it feeds on vague memories that encompass a lot or are not connected with anything separately - concrete or symbolic, accessible to the senses in all their movements, shading internal censorship or projections, ...recollection into a sacred place, while history supplants recollection and makes it prosaic... Memory by its nature is multiple and capable of multiplying, it is pluralistic and individualized. History, on the contrary, belongs to everyone and to no one, and this determines its orientation towards the universal. Memory is absolute, and history knows only the relative" (Nora 1984, 28).

Thus, the process of building up the memorial meaning in an architectural and natural work is aimed at a philosophical understanding of memory, it indicates the spiritual obligation of preserving memorials both on the part of the individual and the society as a whole, capable of reviving the past through the efforts of memory, due to which the process of updating and renewing the past takes place of its 'dissolution' in the modern socio-cultural situation. The past and the present are not separated, but mutually conditioned and complementary. Monuments can help a person to regain, to 'restore' the lost natural feeling - a sense of the environment, its aesthetic empathy. Therefore, the memorial-patriotic suite of an architectural-natural work always sounds in high tones and with renewed vigor.

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