

Images and Architectonics of the History of the Contemporary Architecture*

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Abstract—The Russian historiography as an independent field of history predictably deals with its own studies of the facts. The established attention to methodological issues of the history of the contemporary architecture would be possible only in case that we can merge the search for the answers to the questions “What?” and “How?” in a single research environment. At that, the affirmative component (“What has been done”) fixes a certain problem that has formed in historical methodology as a whole, while the activity related component (“How should it be done?” is viewed on the basis of architectural materials. The study serves as the basis for a comprehensive view of the history of the 20th-century Russian architecture. At that, it is also built-in the context of modern directions in the historical science having an interdisciplinary structure and focused on the contemporary intellectual history issues.

Keywords—*history of architecture; contemporary history; historical methodology; intellectual history; 3d language space; modern; movement; kinematics*

I. INTRODUCTION

The life of historical methodology as a valuable independent direction of the Russian science has been rather dramatic. It was rapidly developing from the first half of the 19th century till 1923 when the fundamental work on the methodology of history by A. Lappo-Danilevskiy [1] cumulating its essence (as of the 1910s) was republished. Then there was a “break” in research of the methodological issues of history till 1964. But in 1964 the division of historical methodology was created in the Institute of History of the Science Academy of the USSR. In 1969 the first results of research by the employees of the division managed by M. Gefter and the engaged experts that were all like-minded, were summed up in the book “Historical Science and Some contemporary Issues: Articles and Discussions”. [2] However, the book’s publication draws the line under systematic studies of the historical methodology, once more.

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Beside the enthusiastic employees of the division who withdrew into “the shadows”, the attention to the historical methodology issues was localized mainly within the borderlines of the “sectoral” historical science. In the context of architectural knowledge focused on the time most close to our days, it was clearly expressed in the works by A. Ikonnikov, S. Khan-Magomedov, A. Strigalev, V. Khazanova, V. Glazychev, A. Gutnov, M. Barkhin, V. Loktev, A. Kaplun, and others. For the purposes of our study, we should note and fix the fact that in 1960-70ies the methodology of the history of the contemporary architecture was in the focus of researchers’ attention. It is an important circumstance as far as in the 20th century the perception of architecture as a professionally brought-up means of acquiring the structure (pattern) of the whole in the reality of the world perception dynamics is becoming sustainably authoritative again. Why again?

Because we can remember, inter alia, the words by Immanuel Kant about the role the image of the House played for him at the stage of conceiving comprehensive image of a new work and emerging of its future structure idea [3]. L. Tolstoy, when revealing the idea and the structure of the novel “Anna Karenina”, it his letter to N. Strakhov fixed the attention on the fact that, as the author, he is especially proud of the novel’s architecture, its elaborate arrangement preventing everybody from guessing where the author had placed “the keystone” holding the novel’s structure [4]. The words by A. Einstein about the arrangement of the Gothic cathedral in Ulm (the city he was born in) were well-known starting from 1960ies in Russia as well, thanks to the book (about Einstein) by B. Kuznetsov [5]. In the 21st century, the number of examples of the methodologically focused attention to architectural comprehension of historical dynamics in its most versatile substantive manifestations is growing rapidly. I am going to refer only to one of them: The creative work by the modern classic of drama Tom Stoppard is based on architectonic opportunities of form and sense creation in a piece of literature to be performed on stage. (According to theorist of drama who studies Stoppard and his own confession).

II. THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE IMAGE AND THE IDEA

The Soviet studies of science were based on the belief that methodological issues of fundamental science “belong” to philosophy and are successfully placed and implemented within dialectic and historical materialism not necessarily in regards to immersion into history.

The historical science, as well as almost all other sciences, was rather definitely differentiated: divided into fundamental, lawmaking research, answering in the most general way to the set of questions covered by the notion “How to do?” and accumulation of the knowledge focused on the search for the answer to the question “What has been done?” In rare cases it also led to the question “How it has been done?” (How the new has been created? And it was a scientific and not an organizational or ideological question). The efforts of the researchers to find answers to the two types of questions were distributed unevenly and had different relevance. Concerning the historical knowledge, such situation surely led to the development of historiography as an independent scientific knowledge domain in history. And architectural criticism was not an exception. The history of Soviet architecture established and grew up to a serious research discipline, mainly historiographic in its essence.

However, there have been few scientific studies that focused of the problems of structure, arrangement and systematically assembled integrity forming around the search of the answers to the question “How to do?” They looked almost “accidental” and always individual and personal, and the historical science was not in a hurry to include them in its domain and they were considered to be just theoretical. The reference to historical knowledge and, which is more important, to the methodology of historical knowledge and/or the establishment of substantiated (within the limits of history) grounds for the methodology of the contemporary history, interpreted, *inter alia*, as the methodology of the history of contemporary architecture, was, on default, out of the limits of the historical science [6].

So, what new and novel things have appeared in methodology and cannot be left out of focus of historical knowledge, as well? Firstly, it is the inevitable consideration of dynamics, regularities of conditions for movement, including the movement through the time. However, the spatial aspect of perception also becomes increasingly important. But what kind of perception is that? I would say it is the perception of everything. The spatial and dynamic perception of “chronotop” has logically “pushed” the notion of “place” to the foreground. It works actively in the most versatile spheres of science and creation, both intellectually and artistically comprehended [7]. It has quite naturally become almost the central point for the history of the history of the contemporary architecture. It has also predetermined the growth of the methodological role of architectural and urban-planning history in the identification of evolution of the integrity of the arrangement of the historical knowledge as the dialogue of artistic image and intellectual idea, acquired in the course of time.

III. SOURCES OF THE METHOD

In 1923 M. Ginzburg published the book “The Rhythm in Architecture” (it is notable that the book was published by the publishing house “Among Collectors”) that, as long as the related work “Style and Epoch. The Problems of the Contemporary Architecture”, has become in the course of time famous all over the world. There is a good reason to deem the said works by M. Ginzburg the baseline for all methodology-focused studies of the history of contemporary architecture. The author’s purpose in the “Rhythm...” was to describe in geometrical parameters the condition of moving through the space comprehended from artistic and aesthetic points of view, therefore, the book may be perceived an introduction to the theory of the present-day architectural shaping, similar to “Kinematics of Mechanisms” by N. Mertsalov that was published at the same time and served as the introduction to the theory of machines and mechanisms. However, Ginzburg wrote that machines and engineering facilities may be methodologically equal to the theory of architectural shaping, “expressive spatial solution which is a real feature of architecture”.

“Rhythm in Architecture” is sort of plastic hinge, the index of transition between two systems (from science and development to artistic and aesthetic) of theoretical description of spatial movement.

The book “Style and Epoch” is about the contemporary architecture perceived by the author in the context of his times the beginning of emergence of the new architecton movement, is aimed at the future. This is why Ginzburg used as an epigraph for his study the words from the book by H. Wölfflin “Renaissance and Baroque” attracting attention to the idea that “the old transforms drawing everything after it..., a new style becomes a fact” and integrates the transformation, the transition from “the old” to “the new” into the logics of artistically comprehended evolutionary approach capable of overcoming and substituting revolutionary perception of creative work characteristic of Ginzburg’s time. In this work, Ginzburg implements the constructivist approach, ascending to I. Kant’s ideas, understanding of thinking as a synthesis (continuity) of time: the past, the present, and the future are perceived jointly.

IV. SCOPE AND SUBJECT OF THE STUDY

With regard to the present-day problems of the methodology of history, and, more correctly, the problems of the methodology of history that characterizes and fixes the contemporary time, such a section of history as “intellectual history” comes to the foreground [8]. The subject of research within its limits focuses on the problems of the life of ideas and people who implements them. It is this section of the methodology of the history of the contemporary architecture that our research is also focused on.

How has it affected the formation of the scope and the subject of the study?

The scope of research is expanding as the problems of a city arrangement are brought to the foreground. What reasons are there for it? The arrangement of the city = the

architectonics of the city become (historically consistently) the resulting mechanism for the dialogue of the demands of culture and the capabilities of civilization.

There are many circumstances, described from historical point of view and clearly understood, that help to reveal the content of the methodology of history just focused on the set of problems “How to arrange?” Keeping intact the dignity of scientific and creative work in our country was methodologically correctly and naturally focused on the search for intellectual gaps in which the “New” was emerging. It is quite clear that, first of all, the search was focused around the problems of the language [8], the visual language, the language of the analysis of creative work, etc. [9]. We can show in time sequence, how this process was implemented (going deeper and at the same time striving for perfection – upwards), moving from the plane of fixation of certain events (such as the general plan of a city) to the spatial world outlook.

For architectural criticism, it is necessary to identify and show that architecture becomes methodologically necessary for a regular and rationalized participant in acquiring a new three-dimensional knowledge of the essence of history, merging with the present day within the limits of the history of contemporary architecture. Since the attention to the three-dimensional construction is a professional duty of architecture, for the architectural criticism this problem becomes an “experiment on itself”. What is the purpose of the experiment? To understand the role and place of architecture in a modern, intellectually-oriented world order.

For the country that is historically sustainably focused on literature, a focus on the description of what has already taken place (and not only in fiction) predetermines mainly the social understanding of the world. Adding (incrementing) “architecture-centrism”, focused on the problems of the internal structure of the subject, gives the opportunity to look for logically organized ways of creative shaping leading the future [10].

The purpose of this study is to record that in the 20th century in Russia there was a steady trend for of considerate and committed focus on architecture, choosing the most versatile areas of research, sometimes rather remote from the real architecture.

V. CONCLUSION

It is quite possible to methodologically correctly enroot the methodology of the history of the contemporary architecture into the domain of the studies of science if you bring together in the common research space the search for answers to the questions "What?" And "How?" is made upon creation of the whole (both an image and a form).

Immersing layer-by-layer in the comprehension of the content sequence of interest in fragmentary attention to methodological problems, we can find the basic anchor for “return” to the present day. This makes it possible to build a parabola of the methodology of the history of contemporary architecture. As far as the “cumulative principle” of archeology of knowledge, providing for the loss of the

priority interest in the periodization of history, evaluative in its nature, is made a keystone there are grounds for substantiated identification of both the origins and the substantive principles of the research focus on the problems of arrangement of an ultimately perfect shape, including an architectural shape.

The study paying equal attention to finding answers to “What?” and “How?” questions, i.e. To the issues of historiographic and methodological immersion into historical material, provides for convincing demonstration of the dual nature of the sculptural, in its essence, modeling of the “new”, connecting into the dialogue of the whole the problems of search and affirmation of an artistic image and an intellectual idea. The inseparability of the image and the idea in shaping makes architectonics a full-fledged baseline in the arrangement of the whole. We are speaking here about the arrangement of any entirety. Architecture, emerging out of a multi-dimensional understanding of the essence and capabilities of architectonics for interpretation of transformation of those regularities that historically lead to the creation of the values of present-day shaping in various branches of scientific knowledge and artistic creativity, goes to the foreground as a major “tool” of methodological research [11].

Architecture gives a researcher (in any field of research creativity) the opportunity to create and fix in mind an integral three-dimensional image of the future (desired) result of creative efforts. This is the reason for present-day historians of architecture inevitable need to turn to most versatile branches of knowledge and art, primarily those in which the most vivid and valuable experts (and researchers) fix their attention on architectonic problems and images of architecture as a necessary driver encouraging their creativity, new artistic and intellectual discoveries.

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