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Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism Details

Date : Published April 21st 2005 by Archabbey Publications (first published January 1st 1951)

ISBN : 9780970821652

Author : Erwin Panofsky

Format : Paperback 166 pages

Genre : History, Art, Architecture, Philosophy, Art History, Nonfiction, Historical, Medieval, Religion, Theology, Christianity, Reference

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Steve says

Enjoyable and interesting in it's own way. Panofsky maps out Gothic architecture against medieval theology.

says

To know Gothic is to add this little work to your vaulted interior brain.

Jessica says

So I decided that it would be culturally irresponsible of me not to take advantage of a course offered this semester in which we will spend the bulk of the semester reading The Divine Comedy. And thus the Gothic.

I have to give props to Panofsky for being slightly funny... he called some scholars "ignoramuses," I laughed. I also have to say that he was clear enough so that a Gothic ignoramus such as myself was actually able to decipher the meaning of Scholasticism and Gothic.

I wish I had known some of this background when I went to the Notre Dame... I would have sounded hella smart!

Craig W. says

In any age ideas consciously or more often unconsciously give shape to the tangible products of society. Edwin Panofsky discusses how characteristic ideas of Scholastic theology and philosophy of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries manifest themselves in Gothic architecture. He asserts that the relationship between theology and architecture is not merely a parallel development nor the specific influence of key individuals but a general and diffuse influence

High Scholasticism sought to demonstrate the unity of truth, faith and reason as mutually supportive. The influence was not so much the application of doctrine as the provision of a modus operandi. Three principles are described, the clarity of truth, the organization of truth and the integrity of the parts. For each principle, Panofsky cites examples of the application of these principles in early and high Gothic churches. The examples chosen show a progress development toward what he calls the "final solution" (an unfortunate choice of terms), viz. the ideal and complete Gothic structure.

It may appear to someone unfamiliar with various theories of the origin of Gothic architecture that Panofsky is guilty of reading a lot into the minds of the builders. Unfortunately there is little contemporary literature to tell us what they really thought. Therefore, the contribution of Panofsky is not so much to overthrow other theories, but to show that ideas that drove one branch of knowledge, could filter into other disciplines. We

see this in our own day, just to pick one example, in the Zen influence on product designs from Steve Jobs and Apple.

This brief book (90 pages) was a lecture delivered in 1951. As such it is brief and tantalizing rather than satisfying to anyone inclined to be skeptical. That this is still in print after 60 years means it deserves a read. There are 60 figures and photos to illustrate the architectural examples.

Andrew says

Author attempts to show connection between High Gothic architecture and High Scholasticism. Most Gothic architects trained in the same area within one hundred miles of Paris and therefore were trained in similar ways and had run-ins with the scholastic thinkers who also thrived in this area. Looking at architecture from Early, High (roughly 1200-1250 AD), and Late Gothic periods, the author finds several points where the architecture parallels Scholastic thought, especially during the High period. This is mainly illustrated by explaining floor plans and colonnade styles. Cathedrals became progressively more vertical and simplified. The "final" style is of a cross with two towers at near the entrance at the nave. Scholastic writers emphasized organization in their books and "clarification for clarification's sake," which Panofsky also sees in the parallel architectural forms, the unconcealedness of buttresses, and glorious light pouring in from the windows. Panofsky also stresses the Scholastic desire to work from authorities (citationality) and to utilize disputando to resolve contradictions - this is Scholastic dialectics. However, Panofsky's explicit historical evidence for architects using Scholastic reasoning and methods isn't very strong, as it is illustrated by only one document and the dubious correlations of proximity. Perhaps there is more to buttress (sorry for the pun) this claim, but it is not provided for in this lecture or in its notes. Lastly, many seem to be attributing this book as the "source" of Bourdieu's habitus, however, the term is not used one time in the text. The argument for parallelism of philosophy and art, as he himself explains, did not begin with him. In fact, he simply finds this period serves as a very good and consistent example of such a crossover. My point is that habitus is found in Aristotle and a number of Scholastic thinkers, and while Panofsky provides an example of a relationship between place or culture and how architects and artisans might behave, he was not the first to originate the term or the concept.

Octavio says

Cada vez tengo más claro que los buenos libros de historia son aquellos que carecen de toda científicidad. Absueltos de ésta, quedan dos géneros posibles: la historia como discurso estético y la historia como discurso político. El segundo suele ser execrable por su fogosidad y su utilitarismo, y porque normalmente se sirve de la tergiversación cuando no de la pura mentira. El primero, en cambio, siempre deleitará a los espíritus delicados, y es el único por el que merece la pena seguir apreciando ese viejo cajón de sastre (y de desastre) que es la historia de los hombres, y que Heródoto comenzó a poner en negro sobre blanco allá cuando los dioses no habían abandonado a los hombres.

Monica says

I don't know if the book touches on it but it's interesting to think that for a country that denounced Catholicism England embraced such a religious style in it's buildings.

ehk2 says

origins of Bourdieu's 'habitus'

Don says

An exploration of similar themes in two contemporaneous disciplines. Found it in the Ireland Library on the campus of St. Thomas University in Saint Paul, MN. Read it for a project in a Medieval Art class.

Moses Operandi says

Panofsky's thesis about a causal connection between Gothic architecture and scholastic thought is fascinating, but I find it difficult to reach his level of certainty. He's out on the skinny branches.

Tina says

"It is surely rather fanciful"
<https://ruthsdesignblog.files.wordpress.com/>

TaleofGenji says

I registered a book at BookCrossing.com!
<http://www.BookCrossing.com/journal/11137703>
