

# Architecture, or Human versus Animal

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Mostly attributed to Renaissance and Antiquity, humanism is believed to be the ideal that gives priority to human being and considers it as the center of the universe and measure of all things, including architecture. In the architectural scope often appearing really as “the measure”, remembering the famous Leonardo da Vinci’s Vitruvian Man, a human body-based proportion system, or Le Corbusier’s Modulor which pursues it after centuries. Yet, one of the main suggestions of this paper will be that the human body is not a measure of architecture, but rather architecture is the measure for Man.

Vitruvian Man is not any random body, pursuing the definition given by Vitruvius, Leonardo has depicted an *ideal* human being. The human body which Vitruvius advises that one should follow the proportions of while building is not any ordinary person, it is not a woman, nor a child, nor an old, fat or short man., but rather the *idea of man*. Only this ideal model could be the measure for architecture. Thus, Renaissance intellectuals and architects believed in micro and macro cosmos theory that human body (micro cosmos) is the analogy for the universe (macro cosmos). So any malfunction of the body is the malfunction of the universe. Therefore, the deformation of the body is the break of the Order. That’s why art movements like Dada has attacked the human body and proportion, the divine aesthetics during the years of World War I, because by this they attacked the humanly order, the Order that they blamed for causing the war.

In mythology, Man gains his humanity by killing the animal/monster. Theseus, mythical founder of Athens - where lies the roots of humanism not for a surprise- kills the Minotaur while Oedipus kills the Sphinx, then achieves the throne. These myths represent the mankind killing its animal side, as animality stands for chaos and disorder<sup>1</sup>; so once gone, remains the *pure* human, now more close to matching the Vitruvian Man.

Monument and monster comes from the same Latin root “monere”, which means “to warn, advise, remind, show”. Mankind kills the monster to become Man, then fulfills himself through the monument. Monument (or architecture) supersedes the animal which has been killed. It becomes an analogy for the ideal human being which has defeated its animal side. Yet, according to Bataille, man can only fulfill himself by liberating his animality, because it is only with his animal side that he can resist to any kind of authority<sup>2</sup>, and this is what Arts (excluding Architecture of course) achieved in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Cent. This paper will try to discuss this animality and architecture relationship through the ideal of the human body and Order.

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<sup>1</sup> Hollier, D., *Against Architecture*, 1990, pp. 61-62; he discusses the subject mostly based on the thoughts of Bataille, G.

<sup>2</sup> Bataille, G., “Architecture”, *Documents* 1, 1929

and; Bataille, G., “Beyond Seriousness”, *The Unfinished System of Nonknowledge*, 2001, p. 217