

The Flesh Of Mostar Bridge: Merleau Ponty's body -toing and froing- on Heidegger's Bridge

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Abstract

Demolished by Croatians in 1995 during the Balkan War, the affordances that Mostar Bridge encompassed underneath were so transcendental that it was rebuilt with all its values in 2004 at its same place in Mostar/Bosnia-Herzegovina. In the 16th century when the bridge was first constructed, it was not a 'thing' beyond being a structural connector between two banks of Neretva River; it was silent. But as time passed by, as carrying a number of bodies, wars and narrations on it, the bridge expanded, proliferated and transformed. It was no longer a silent bridge which the bodies only crossed over; and it could not have simply the initial -physical and functional- meanings of its structure. As German philosopher Martin Heidegger specifies in his text 'Building, Dwelling, Thinking' dated 1971, the bridge has started to gather the symbolic meanings attributed to itself by the bodies crossed over; and it has transformed into a flesh of the world, from objective and orientated bridge into phenomenal and bodily experienced bridge. After now, it is both a carrier of the bodies and of their feelings. Its meaning is now beyond any appearances regarding to its practical intention, as Heidegger states. It seems to be whispering the thousand-year-old deep thoughts.

When French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, influenced by Heidegger's philosophy, describes the concept of 'world's flesh' -as an intertwining of the flesh of the body with the flesh of the objects- in his text 'The Intertwining-The Chiasm' dated 1964, he also discusses 'the bodily experience' as a way of questioning the object's/place's causality. Based on this context, in the study, Merleau-Ponty's conceptualization of body ambiguously moves -by toing and froing- in the events, meanings, relationships and forms on/around the bridge; it bodily experiences the bridge; and it exposes a narration. Rather than intending to anchor a specific problem or to create a general discourse, the study attempts to reveal the awareness of the expansions which the bridge's narration of transforming into a 'thing' enables, through Merleau-Ponty's idea of the flesh.

References

- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1968). 'The Intertwining-The Chiasm', in *The Visible and the Invisible*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, pp. 130-55. [Original French edition published in 1964]
- Heidegger, M. (2001). 'Building, Dwelling, Thinking', in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, Translated by Albert Hofstadter, Harper Perennial Classics, New York, pp. 141-60. [Originally published in 1971]