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ELENA BEDREAG
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ZAHARIA-SEBASTIAN MATEIESCU
CORNEL MICU
COSMIN UNGUREANU

Editor: Irina Vainovski-Mihai

COSMIN UNGUREANU

Born in 1980, in Bacau

Ph.D. candidate, "Ion Mincu" University of Architecture and Urban Planning, Bucharest
Dissertation: *Nature and Ruin. (Re)generation in 18th Century Architectural Imagery*

Curator of European Art, The National Museum of Art of Romania, Bucharest
Teaching Assistant, "Ion Mincu" University of Architecture and Urban Planning

Research grants: Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte in Munich, January–August 2010
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Articles on early modern art and architecture history and theory, museum discourse, reviews of temporary exhibitions

Participation in workshops, symposia and colloquiums in Romania

THE IDEA OF A FRENCH ORDER
Ribart de Chamoust and the
Questioning of Architectural Origins

Résumé: Dans la théorie classique du XVIIIe siècle, la notion d'ordre architectural s'est constitué par la distillation graduelle de la formule vitruvienne (*genus*), les interprétations de la Renaissance et les débats de l'Académie. Quoique présente *in nuce* à Vitruve, la possibilité de l'extension du canon des cinq ordres engendre, pendant les XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles, une longue série comprenant des variantes d'un nouveau ordre – l'ordre national. Dans ce contexte, le projet de l'architecte Ribart de Chamoust, développé dans son ouvrage théorique de 1783, porte sur une conception singulière de l'ordre français qui va à l'encontre de la rémodelation décorative de ses prédécesseurs et le définit comme système constructif. En outre, il en imagine une possible adaptation de la « cabanne primitive » à la rigueur cartésienne de l'ordre architectural, en créant des liens avec le discours des Lumières sur la nature.

Keywords: order, ordonnance, Ribart de Chamoust, Marc-Antoine Laugier, Claude Perrault, Vitruvius, origin, archetype, classical canon, tree-column.

1. The Architectural Order: rule and proportion

According to a widely accepted definition, the architectural order is "the 'column-and-superstructure' unit of a temple".[1] Two remarks should be made at this point: firstly, that the order is a "unit", which transcends the mere combination between column and superstructure, and, secondly, that the order is generally associated with sacred architecture. In other words, the order provides the edifice with an identity which – in a very subtle way – pertains to sacredness.

The order is generally referred to as "classical" and, although unceasingly (re)interpreted through the ages, it irrevocably belongs to Antiquity.[2] Moreover, despite the countless versions of Doric, Ionic or Corinthian – the irregularity of which is noticeable even in the antique

architecture itself – there was a constant preoccupation with theorizing a unique proto-type of each of the canonized orders. Consequently, the "classical" order was shaped into an ideal architectural unit, supposedly of utmost perfection and authoritative because of its ancientness.

It is generally agreed that this authority was strengthened, perhaps even more than by the antique examples themselves, by Vitruvius' *De Architectura Libri Decem*[3], the earliest theoretical source, uncontested between 15th and 19th centuries. However, the Vitruvian text became dogmatic only along an impressive tradition of translation, exegesis and editing which reached its zenith in France, in the second half of the 17th century, with Claude Perrault's contribution. His version, more than a simple linguistic rendering, produced a sort of "diptych" which juxtaposed the Latin source and an extensive commentary – both textual and graphical – destined to elucidate the obscure passages and to establish the Vitruvian key-concepts.[4] Among these concepts, that of "order" played a significant part as a theoretical entity already articulated, meant to replace the rather vague term "genus" used by Vitruvius.[5] In a comprehensive footnote, which discerned between the (five) "genres" of temples and the (three) "genres" of columns, Claude Perrault explained his option for "order", which he defined as "[…] a rule for the proportion of columns and for the representation of certain parts which are fitted according to their various proportions."[6]

Apart from the Vitruvian text, the modern authors, especially the 16th century Italian ones, have substantially contributed to the theorization of the architectural order. In 1537, for the first time, Sebastiano Serlio established, in his notorious *Il Qvarto Libro [...] Nel quale si tratta in disegno delle maniere de'cinque ordini, cioè Toscano, Dorico, Ionico, Corinthio, & Composito*, the scheme of the five canonical orders [il. 1], which were specified as such and minutely analysed.[7] Next in line, Jacopo Barozzi da Vignola published, in 1562, a treatise dedicated solely to orders – *Regola delli cinque ordini d'architettura* – lavishly illustrated and largely influential, mainly in France, until the end of the 18th century.[8] Lastly, the Italian contribution reached its peak in 1570, with the famous *I Quatro libri dell'Architettura* of Andrea Palladio, who dedicated a large part of its first book (pp. 15-50) to a thorough analysis of the orders. As a result, towards the end of Renaissance, the "column-and-superstructure unit of a temple" was completely codified, albeit with small interpretative discrepancies, and its "pantheon" was limited to the five known ones, both from Vitruvius' treatise and from later examples.

* * *

The systematization of the antique column types, as achieved by the Italian authors from Cinquecento, was an intermediary (and indispensable) phase towards *a doctrine of architectural order*, which was elaborated in the time of Louis XIV, directly connected with the program of representation of the French monarchy. The classicization of the architectural order occurred, thus, in the second half of the 17th century, within a complex process comprising various stages, such as the comparison between Antiquity and modernity (favorable to the first one, as hypostasized by Roland Fréart de Chambray in his *Parallèle de l'architecture antique avec la moderne*, 1650[9]), the dogmatization of the architectural order (François Blondel, *Cours d'Architecture enseigné dans l'Academie Royale d'Architecture*, 1675), the contesting dispute with the authority of Antiquity (the famous *Querelle des anciens et des modernes*), and, finally, the synthesis undertaken by Claude Perrault and revealed, in 1683, in his book *Ordonnance des cinq espèces de colonnes selon la méthode des anciens*. Paradoxically, Perrault's thesis, although apparently built on the antique exemplariness, was flexible enough to allow the possibility of modern readjustments.[10]

During the second half of the 17th century, in France, the doctrine of order was configured, within the Cartesian paradigm of rationality, according to a type of logic founded on clearness, measure and proportion, which also involved the reorganization of knowledge and it being investigated through a generally valid method. In the field of architecture (part of the larger program concerning the arts), the "architectural order", as a particularization of universal order, was turned into a symbol of authority and legitimacy, and was institutionalized as such.[11] Consequently, the classical French theory of architecture was fundamentally based on proportionality – the order itself was conceived as a rule of proportion – as well as on the concept of "ordonnance", as taken from the ancient treatise and semantically extended.

Rather ambiguous when defining the order as a sort of "gender", Vitruvius resorted to the noun "ordinatione" – translated as "ordonnance"[12] – in order to express the logical arrangement of architectural elements, among which the column itself: "Order (ordinatio) is the balanced adjustment of the details of the work separately, and as to the whole, the arrangement of the proportion with a view to a symmetrical result."[13] Quite interestingly, the term "ordonnance" did not belong strictly to the architectural vocabulary. During the second half of the 17th century it

was rightfully used in painting or garden design, as well as in medicine or finances.[14] Absorbed into the architectural theory, this term was naturally placed in relation with "ordre", even if the initial ambiguity ("genus" / "ordinatio") was not completely removed. For instance, Claude Perrault asserted that "the architectural order is adjusted by order/fitness"[15], while, nine years later, the architect Augustin-Charles d'Aviler considered that each of these concepts had its own, distinct domain of appliance.[16] Furthermore, this clear disjunction was preceded by a curious (and quite strained) attempt to equate "order" ("ordinatio") with "column", somewhat in harmony with Claude Perrault's ideas: in 1675, two years after the issuing of Perrault's translation, François Blondel – the director of the recently founded Royal Academy of Architecture – coined the word "colomnaison" as a substitute for "ordonnance". In his option, he argued that it was the column – the most prominent of all the architectural ornaments – the one that provided the measure and the rule of an edifice.[17]

* * *

Even if entangled in the mechanism of its theorization, the "column-and-superstructure unit" was primarily considered a sort of *"gendered" entity*, construed by certain versions of origin and a specific domain of representation. Furthermore, it was the image of the human body that coordinated the architectural order, to the extent that it configured precise proportions and features, and even a humanly derived architectural vocabulary. The issue of "architectural corporality" as a sort of tectonic organism, in itself part of the wider pre-modern conception regarding the universal mechanism and the analogy between micro- and macrocosm, was approached – mainly in architectural theory – from two viewpoints: the symmetry (understood as mathematical harmony) and, evidently, the commensurability.[18]

Obviously, from the very beginning, the column was a favored recipient for the human analogy, since its uprightness alluded to the humanly allure, biped position or individuality. Within this conjunction, a significant role was played by the nomenclature of the various elements that composed the order. This terminology was either directly borrowing a repertoire already settled down in medicine in the time of Augustus – such as *apophysis* (part of the bone), *astragalos* (vertebra), *basis* (foot), *cephalaios* (head; a term mainly used in its Latin version *caput*), *trachelion* (neck) – or alluding to certain sacrificial practices, through the medium of such terms as *epistylium* (a Latinized Greek word denoting both the entablature and the sacrifice table) and *torus* (a twilled rope).[19] Moreover,

the mythology of the orders itself, primarily describing their origins, was fundamentally grounded on the dialectic death-sacrifice, either in the scenario of military expansion – this is the case with Dorus, the hegemon of a warriors' community believed to have invented the column – or in the key of memorial, in which the discovery of the Corinthian capital was deciphered[20] (the offering basket placed on the tomb of a Corinthian virgin and invaded by vegetation). [il. 2]

The case of the Corinthian capital is particularly relevant for its transfer of creativity, as it was but discovered by Callimachus while created, in fact, by "Nature". It is also very significant because it combines the two Vitruvian patterns for column – the vegetal and the human ones. Finally, the case of the Corinthian capital is also important because of its symbolism of death and extinction, since it is the last of the orders "authorized" by Vitruvius and, consequently, the equivalent of an architectural *nec plus ultra*, symbolically obtained in exchange for a human life.[21] It is thus explainable why, among the ancient orders, the Corinthian was considered a standard for perfection, according to which most of the attempts to design a modern order were asserted. For instance, the architect Augustin-Charles d'Aviler overtly admitted this limit, in the last decade of the 17th century: "[...] one cannot invent a better capital than that of the Corinthian order"[22], an opinion reconfirmed six decades later by Marc-Antoine Laugier.[23]

The relationship between the column proportions and the human ones – and even the connection between its gendered identity and the deity to whom the temple was dedicated –largely commented upon starting with the Renaissance, is itself originated in the Vitruvian text, more exactly in the paragraph referring to the shaping of the Ionic column, for a temple dedicated to Diana, with the slenderness of a woman's body (*muliebrem transtulerunt gracilitatem*).[24] One can also infer that the interpretation of architecture in terms of human proportionality even precedes the Vitruvian text, going back to a wider speculative approach of "man as measure for everything". However, starting with the recognition of Vitruvius' authority în the 15th century, when the profound meaning of Protagoras' dictum must have been already lost, it seems to have been constantly interpreted as if everything is derived from the human scheme and proportions.

During the 17th century, when the Vitruvian tradition reached its peak and the architectural order was being classicized, the issue of humanly derived proportions was unequivocally (re)asserted both by François Blondel[25] and Claude Perrault.[26] Later on, after 1700, as the weight of several key-concepts, such as *ordonnance* or *convenance* (with the

version *bienséance* preferred by the amateurs), progressively diminished and they were exceded by others (such as *caractère*)[27], the interest for anthropomorphism decreased as well, especially when confronted with a strong reorientation of the architectural reflection towards "Nature". Even so, it appears to have been resuscitated in the last two decades of the 18th century, although the analogy with the human body was displaced into the sphere of sensuousness, as proven by the speculation of Le Camus de Mézières on the analogy between architecture and senses.[28]

Consequently, the architectural order – the keystone of the classical French theory – gradually took shape from the initial formula (*genus*), the Renaissance interpretations and the academic theorization during the 17th century. Only when all these stages are cumulatively seen, and when centered on (human) proportionality, can one adequately grasp the meaning of the architectural order as a constructive mode. Vitruvius' treatise, in many instances equivocal, points out, more or less explicitly, two paradigms for architectural order: that of the human body, on the one hand, favored until late 18th century, and that of the tree, re-enacted around 1750, on the other hand.

2. National or (just) classical?

To a certain extent, the doctrinal debate in 17th century France already converted the antique order into a national version of it, insomuch as it was included into the vast program of representing the monarchy. In this respect, quite significant was the option for Vitruvius' text – in stead of the first French treatise, *Le Premier Tome de l'Architecture*, published by Philibert De l'Orme in 1567[29] – as a theoretical foundation for the academic training. Therefore, Claude Perrault's translation, the very first French version of Vitruvius' text, should be regarded as an essential phase in the history of architectural theory, comparable with the issuing of the Vitruvian treatise itself.

The symmetry between these two events was not altogether ignored. On the one hand, *De Architectura libri decem* established – by invoking, in the preface, the imperial authority[30] – a sort of discourse centered on the connection between the architectural program and power; in other words, the Vitruvian text was meant to ground – through a series of standards and principles, through classification, founding myths or historical accounts – a type of artistic activity fundamentally involved into mechanism of the

maiestas imperii.[31] On the other hand, the issuing of Claude Perrault's translation in 1673, two years after the opening of the Royal Academy of Architecture, preceded by more than forty meetings of its members[32], actually meant adopting *that version* of Vitruvius' treatise in particular, as the fundamental text for an art subordinated to the state politics.[33]

The most eloquent example therein was the dispute, in 1665-67, upon the eastern facade of the Louvre, in which the Italian artist Gianlorenzo Bernini was involved among others, and which determined in fact, through the famous colonnade designed by Claude Perrault himself [il. 3], the orientation of France towards a *sui generis* classicism. [34] Quite relevantly, this state of affairs was illustrated, in its comprehensive intricacy, on the frontispiece of 1673 Vitruvian edition. In this picture [il. 4], the personifications of the arts (in the left) are presenting the fundamental text – *Les Dix Livres d'Architecture de Vitruve* – in front of an allegorical group designating the French monarchy. However, there is a most significant detail on the background of Sébastien Le Clerc's engraving, rendered as a sort of emblem for the national (or even universal) architecture: Claude Perrault's colonnade, whose stylistic kernel – the double Corinthian column – is ostentatiously shown on a triumphant architectural object (behind the personified arts), crowned by an equestrian statue which combines that of Louis XIV (an allusion to the one made by François Girardon) and that of Marcus Aurelius from the Capitoline Hill. Within this glorious apotheosis of the French arts and monarchy, displayed on the Vitruvian foundation, one can also observe (in the hands of the personified Sculpture) a very interesting element: the national order, albeit reduced only to its capital, whose importance within the contemporary and future theoretical discourse was cardinal.[35]

* * *

Most likely, the idea of a French order was for the first time formulated in 1567, in Philibert De l'Orme's *Le premier Tome de l'Architecture*. Thus, in the 13th chapter of its seventh book – which, quite significantly, dealt with the Composite – he was arguing the freedom of the French nation to invent its own type of column, just like various nations did in the past.[36] In order to materialize it, the author submitted a column which he had already used, and which was composed of several drums and decorative rings. [il. 5] In fact, De l'Orme did not devise a proper national order, but a method to "translate" the ancient ones into a rather controversial language *à la française*[37], which he saw as a conjunction between necessity – the very structure – and the unrestrained possibility of decoration.[38]

By the time Claude Perrault published his translation, the necessity of a national order was officially proclaimed, in view of which the Academy, prompted by the minister of finances Jean-Baptiste Colbert, had already initiated a competition. The circumstances of its launching are in themselves meaningful. By that time, in 1671, the Louvre was under enlargement construction and the facades of the famous "cour carrée", designed by Pierre Lescot, were supposed to be heightened. Consequently, the new order would presumably crown – vertically, in a symbolical ascensional hierarchy – the other (antique) ones already displayed.[39]

The willingness of the French artists – both architects and painters – towards this competition is proved by the large quantity of projects in the last decades of the 17th century, some of them even outside the contest itself. However, one knows – in their graphic appearance as well – mostly the projects designed by the notorious artists – such as Charles Le Brun[40] [il. 6], Claude Perrault (the design presented on the aforementioned frontispice), Sébastien Le Clerc[41] [il. 7] or Augustin-Charles d'Aviler[42] [il. 8], and some of those more or less known, like Pierre Cottart, Jean Ier Berain, Charles Errard, Daniel Gitttard or Thomas Gobert. With no exception, their solutions were restrained to mere ornamental interventions, using presumed Gallic symbols – such as the lily, some military emblems, the sun, Apollo's lyre, the dolphin – deployed on the surface of the capitals and entablature. This information was provided by one of the competitors, the architect Augustin-Charles d'Aviler: "when the question was to invent a capital for a French order […] they used egrets in stead of foliage, arranged as if they were leaves of acanthus or olives […] quite dwarfed, as their feathers were scarcely accompanied by other ornaments."[43]

The enthusiasm with which the competition was welcomed was recorded, several years later, in the second volume of François Blondel's *Cours d'architeciture*; at the same time, the author was compelled to admit the failure of this enterprise, paradoxically provoked by the exceeding quantity of projects and, more important, by their inadequacy: "I still don't know by what misfortune we received a million different projects […] the majority of which are full of extravagancies and gothic chimeras, or fade allusions […]".[44] While recognizing the impasse, the director of the Royal Academy of Architecture was, in fact, indicating the confines of such an initiative: the order itself, with its entire theoretical scaffolding, with its rules and conventions. In other words, the attempt to invent a new order was foredoomed to implacably fail into the category of the Composite,

as revealed by the same François Blondel: "the most tolerable may be enclosed within the realm of that Architectural Order that we have to name indefinite Composite or Italic, which comprises all the antique examples, and which is not entirely congruous with the other four orders provided, by Vitruvius, with rules […]."[45] Following this revelation, the failure was officially admitted and the competition tacitly abandoned. Nevertheless, the illusion of a French order continued to nurture the architects' fantasy, albeit more in theory than in practice, along the entire 18th century, despite a tardive resolution issued by the Royal Academy of Architecture in 1763, which censured the very hypothesis of an order existing beyond the five canonical ones.[46]

* * *

After 1700, and particularly during the second half of the 18th century, more than ten versions of French order were published, some of which were theorized in various texts. Thus, in his *Traité du beau essential* published in 1752, the architect Charles-Etienne Briseux mentioned the competition seven decades back, in order to present his own vision, inspired by Perrault's colonnade and confined by the perfection of Corinthian.[47] Much more substantial was instead the contribution of Marc-Antoine Laugier from his *Observations sur l'Architecture* (1765), in which he rigorously systematized the conditions that make a modern order possible, the tools and the limitations of such a venture and, eventually, its resulting features – even if not visually rendered. However, there were two issues in his discourse that should to be retained: on the one hand, the urge to take Nature as a guide and, on the other hand, the opinion that the French order should partake in the character granted to France from abroad; according to this reasoning – concluded Laugier – the French order should reflect, through the medium of grace, the most exquisite spirit and the most dainty mores of the French nation.[48] Finally, before the issuing of Ribart de Chamoust's treatise, the last noticeable attempt to draw a national order belonged to Nicolas Le Camus de Mézières, a quite original author advocating the sensuous approach of architecture, who was convinced that the novelty of a modern architectural order derives from ornament and not from proportion. Moreover, in stead of an autonomous proportionality – as established by the Vitruvian tradition – he suggested mixed proportions for the French order, as if it were the resulting combination of the antique/classical ones.[49]

During the second half of the 18th century, and more particularly between 1750 and 1780, the theorization of the classical order reached

its climax in France. It was in this period that the six volumes of the monumental *Cours d'architecture* (1771-77) by Jacques-François Blondel were published, the first of which dedicated considerable room to a thorough analysis of the five orders.[50] By the same time, a number of more or less obscure authors, such as Nicolas Marie Potain, Jean Antoine, Pierre Panseron or Claude Mathieu Delagardette, were reproducing the same tedious discourse, completely lacking inventiveness, in several treatises on antique orders.[51] Nevertheless, the theorization of classical order was implacably declining by that time, a noticeable symptom of this stage being the very growth of the theoretical discourse. Yet, this crisis was not reflected by architectural practice, as the Vitruvian dogma was still fundamental in academic training.[52] One could but approximately evaluate either to which extent the decline of Vitruvianism was intertwined with the decay of the Old Regime, or if there was a direct causality at all. It is indicative, though, that this climate of architectural decadence and political dissension produced such an unusual editorial event as the anachronistic treatise of Ribart de Chamoust, destined to resume and reinforce the idea of a French order.

<p style="text-align:center">* * *</p>

Far from having been invented in the 17th century, the national dimension of the architectural order was, in fact, presupposed from the very beginning: apart from the Composite, all the types of columns were provided with a toponym related either to a community identity (the Dorians and the Ionians), a national identity (the Etruscans), or a geographical one (the tomb of the Corinthian maid).[53] The Tuscan, more than any other order, was efficiently capitalized in various nationalistic discourses which culminated in the 18th century with Piranesi's polemical defense of the Etruscan architecture, in his book *Della magnificenza ed architettura de' Romani* (1761), as a reaction to the enthusiastic discovery of the pure Doric order in Paestum.[54]

Quite similarly, the very possibility of a sixth order was implied by Vitruvius himself, even if he did not specifically describe but the well known triad Doric-Ionic-Corinthian. Thus, in the third book, following an account about the various categories of temples according to the rhythm of their intercolumniation (Lb. III, c. 3, 5), Vitruvius alluded to the possibility that, in the *araeostyl* category, some temples might have their pediments adorned in the Etruscan manner (*earum fastigia tuscanico more*)[55], laying thus the foundation for a future debate on the Tuscan order. Likewise, in the next book (Lb. IV, c. 1, 12), after having described the Corinthian

capital, he referred to the numerous capitals variously termed (*capitulorum genera variis vocabulis nominata*) which are not part of a precise order.[56] Consequently, the Composite – as well as any other modern order – may be included in the series of these "Corinthianized" columns, atypical and very numerous in the Roman architecture of his age and afterwards. Therefore, the Composite was placed and theorized in the span of freedom at the limit of the Vitruvian canon and rules.[57]

At the middle of the 18th century, after the closing of the Colbertian experiment, the sixth (national) order was approached in two ways: by stressing the freedom (and the legitimacy) of its invention, and, on the other hand, by identifying it with the lack of rules and the arbitrary combination of architectural elements. The first approach was advocated by the Jesuit abbot Marc-Antoine Laugier, who considered that the number of orders should not necessarily be limited.[58] On the contrary, as Giovanni Battista Piranesi appears to have considered, the sixth order would only reflect the decay of the good taste in architecture, while originating the "barbarian taste"; this belief is briefly noted in one of his early notebooks (*taccuini*), next to a drawing representing a conglomerate of antique fragments.[59] For Piranesi, who by that time – the '40 and the '50, when, in Rome, under the spell of the new theories concerning the Etruscan civilization – was configuring his own poetics, the sixth order was, in fact, the expression of a total creative freedom. He would defend this position more evidently as the time passed, and especially in his late years, in the book *Diverse maniere d'adornare i camini* (1769).[60] However, the theory of the order as the "absence of order" and as pure combinatory art, was indirectly supported in one of his polemical writings – *Parere su l'Architettura* (1765)[61] – which clearly stated that inventing a new species of architecture, within the Vitruvian rules, would prove a craziness.[62]

Accordingly, during the last decades of the 17th century and along the next one, the debate upon the modern order was carried on in the span between two opposed approaches: a *coercive freedom* on the one hand and, on the other hand, the search for *innovation outside the theoretical scaffolding* of the Vitruvian tradition. Somewhere in-between, towards the end of the 18th century, it should be placed Ribart de Chamoust's attempt to theorize a national order within the Vitruvian rules while, at the same time, outside its known domain of reference – the human proportionality, the founding myths etc. This time, the French order was not searched in the field – familiar, predictable as well – of the architectonic culture, but on the uncertain territory of Nature. Ultimately, such a preoccupation can

be thoroughly deciphered only if adequately related to the perception of nature in the first half of the 18th century[63] and to its impact on the architectural theory.

3. The French Order found in Nature

Indisputably, the (re)evaluation of Nature during the age of Enlightenment was an enormous, collective and multifaceted enterprise. As for the architectural order, particularly relevant was the approaching of Nature either as a guide to a certain way of working (in other words, as an operative principle), or as a sort of repository of "ideal types" destined to be taken over and adjusted to the already existing architectural morphology. The main difficulty, though, was the apparently dichotomic relationship between nature and architecture (as culture), since both of them seem to have been developed as opposite domains if not even two adversarial ones: everything nature stands for deals with irregularity, lack of proportion, timelessness, savagery, apathy, accidental and so on; architecture, instead, is intimately associated with order, regularity, proportion, reason, history, culture, representation, emotion and so forth.

One way to elude the deadlock of this opposition, especially in view of replacing the anthropomorphic pattern of the architectural order with the vegetal paradigm, was by "humanizing" the Nature, by turning it either into a sort of "tutor" – ready to provide the primitive man with essential lessons – or into an abstract and transcendental *artifex*, who would eventually allow the human being only to discover the already created architectural components – such as the acanthus basket turned into the Corinthian capital. Another way would be the "domestication" of Nature, by turning it into a generative instance whose work is essentially geometrical, making the trees spontaneously grow on the outlines of future edifices. Both approaches, as well as the very impulse of returning to nature, were based on a presupposed primitive idealness. Within the architectural discourse, this pursuit of primitiveness brought forth the problem of origin. The temptation to elucidate this mystery inevitably revealed the necessity of recreating *a suitable stage* for primitiveness hence the instrumentality of Nature in the architectural discourse.

Among the various meanings of the word "nature" during the 18th century, its equivalence with another cardinal notion – that of "reason" – seems to have been widely acknowledged: the reason must be something

natural, while Nature, in its operative ways, is assuredly reasonable.[64] A correlative term in this equation, conspicuous as well in the age of Enlightenment, was the *positivity* of nature, from which emerged not only the impulse of searching for a natural grounding of the society – natural ethics, natural law, natural politics etc.[65] – but as well the tendency to cosmeticize (rather excessively) the appearance of the primitive world.

Jean Jacques Rousseau might be considered the promoter of this nostalgic vision, as his theories, related to the origins of social inequity, institutions or languages, are centered on the "state of nature", which must have been a sort of pleasurable solitude, a perpetual *otium* adjusted only by the natural needs.[66] It was not the return to a primordial way of living that was envisaged by Rousseau, but a process of historical reduction, an *a priori* world vision set on the opposition between nature and history: the "man of nature", just like the "state of nature", refers to the condition preceding the organized society, prior to culture or temporality.[67] The "nature" itself, as described by the French philosopher, was not exactly an assembly of elements, but rather *a cognitive horizon*, an ideal mode of relating to reality.[68] Within this ideal configuration of reality, dialectically construed and logically explained (in stead of a scientific explanation), was set the primeval architectonical structure, first in its essential shape – the shelter – and afterwards in a more appropriated architectural hypostasis – the column, the capital, the order etc.

The "primitive hut", as well as its iconic picture [il. 9], was consecrated by the most Rousseauesque of the 18th century theoreticians of architecture[69], the abbot Marc-Antoine Laugier, in a book – *Essai sur l'architecture* – vehemently disputed in the 1750s. In short, taking the Vitruvian paragraph on the origin of architecture as a starting point, he innocently crafted the metaphor of a pedagogic conduct of Nature, supposed to have "instructed" the primitive man in building. In the first chapter of his essay, entitled *Principes généraux de l'Architecture*, Laugier gave a touching narrative about the difficulties the primitive man had to face when trying to find a shelter. Drifting from place to place, he finally stopped in a forest where, while contemplating nature, he discovered the fundamental architectural principles, embodied into a basic combination of "pillars", "beams" and "trusses". In fact, the French abbot was forging the paradigm of the classical temple itself – he actually mentioned, at some point, the Maison-Carrée in Nîmes – concluding that the noblest and most adequate way of building is rooted in a very simple and natural process; conforming to it not only prevents from errors but, at the same

time, ensures the enterprise's perfection.[70] The very placing of this image in the preamble of his analysis, and not as a fortuitous digression, leads to the conclusion that the conjecture of the sylvan origin of architecture was, in fact, the very foundation of his entire theory.

In his text, as he examines the various parts of an edifice in the name of some "everlasting principles" and against the "arbitrary rules" of art[71], Marc-Antoine Laugier appears to be so conspicuously intransigent as to proclaim even immoderate ideas, such as the elimination of each architectural component that conceals its own function, like pilasters, arcades or interior cornices. In turn, every element considered to be essential – namely the column, the entablature and the pediment – is confirmed within the absolute simplicity of its shape. The column, for instance, should be compelled to certain rules, some of which quite radical – like the removal of the base and the direct contact with the ground – as it should reveal the work of Nature, through its circularity, its lack of superfluous ornaments and isolation.[72]

Although he identified the tree trunk with the prototype of the ancient column, the Jesuit abbot didn't push his reasoning further; he didn't envisage the unit (the order), but the component (the column), just like he considered only the geometrical idealness of the prototype and not its particular morphology. The discursive passage from principle to (symbolic) form will be carried out, three decades later, by Ribart de Chamoust.

* * *

On the 21st of September 1776, two years after his crowning as the king of France, Louis XVI was presented a dissertation entitled *L'Ordre François trouvé dans la nature.* Its author was Ribart de Chamoust, apparently an architect (or engineer) supposedly trained by Jacques-François Blondel. There is no certain information regarding neither his biography nor his intentions.[73] It is possible, though, that when he conceived and presented his theory in front of the king, he might have been following the advise given by Blondel in one of his academic discourses, concerning the contribution of architecture to the flourishing of one's nation.[74] The presupposition that Ribart de Chamoust's undertaken was to design an architectural order that would allow France to claim preeminence is, in fact, confirmed by an introductory statement and a conclusive paragraph, according to which the French order was destined to be discovered in the time of Louis XVI.[75]

The text presented in 1776 was published several years later, in 1783. Just like in the case of its authors' biography, it is impossible to know

whether the written and the printed versions were the same or, on the contrary, his opinions were (re)shaped by various editorial events or by his own reasoning during the seven intermediary years. The only palpable evidence, therefore, is the form that this text finally reached: a volume of 56 pages structured in 13 sections and accompanied by 21 engraved plates, rendering the original drawings that minutely provided structural details, compositional schemes, monuments, plans, sections etc. Undoubtedly, assembled in this way, Ribart de Chamoust's book was the most elaborate theory – and the last relevant one as well – on the French order.

A first peculiarity was the very option for a rather anachronistic type of discourse: in a time when architecture was commented upon in essays, letters and even in literary texts, he returned to the obsolete form of the treatise.[76] Evidently, one might invoke the inappropriateness to the contemporary debate, due to his academic training and to the fact that, unlike most of his colleague writers, he was an architect and not an *homme des letters.* At the same time, it is highly probable that he might have intended to provide his own dissertation with a sort of *"classical" authority* – the one established in the time of Augustus as well as in the time of Louis XIV – for which the most adequate form was that of the treatise.

In short, Ribart de Chamoust attempted to demonstrate the primordiality of the French order and, consequently, its supremacy over the ancient ones which, quite significantly, were reduced only to the Greek triad. This confinement might be interpreted, on the one hand, as an intention to isolate the purest architectural orders to which the new one was to be added and, on the other hand, as a chronological threshold compared to which the ancientness of the French order could have been argued. In other words, Ribart de Chamoust was convinced that the French order was as ancient as the Nature itself, and that is goes back in the darkness of time, beyond history and culture, being contemporary to the first trees.[77] The disjunction – in the order of time – between Nature and culture was reflected in the difference between *type*, understood as "the Man's earliest attempts to subjugate Nature", and *archetype* conceived as "the physical objects that the Artist rightly and sensibly chooses in Nature to kindle the fires of his imagination".[78] Just like a modern Callimachus, he discovered, within the realm (and time) of Nature[79], the fundamental principles that configured the French order, and according to which it could have been reconstituted. Therefore, inspired by Nature's laws, he devised a column with creepers trailing in spirals around the shaft, just as if it were a foliage-covered tree[80]; furthermore, the capital was almost identical with the

Corinthian one, except that the acanthus was replaced by the (French) lily; finally, the pedestal was adorned with three volutes resembling an inverted Ionic capital, as if to suggest the roots.[81] Consequently, the result transparently attempted to be the image of a tree, with all its parts – the foliage, the trunk and the roots – schematically rendered. [il. 10, 11]

If up to this point Ribart de Chamoust's description might have not been so convincing, the indisputable argument seems to be the clustering of three columns (as a prominent specificity when compared to the canonical orders, either isolated or paired) supposedly reflecting the natural configuration of tree bunches risen from the same root.[82] [il. 12, 13] Beyond the inventiveness justifying this unusual solution, several aspects should be revealed.

First of all, this practice had already been catalogued by Augustin-Charles d'Aviler as a plausible way of assembling columns and pilasters.[83] [il. 14] Undoubtedly familiarized with d'Aviler treatise, Ribart de Chamoust was resorting to this ternary grouping in order to provide it with a structural-national identity: unlike the ancient orders, the French one couldn't take but *that form*.[84] Secondly, the setting of this ternary module as a composition rule seems to be related to another famous style unit, namely the double column invented more than a century back for the Louvre façade[85]; surpassing it both in innovation and significance would have allowed Ribart de Chamoust to become a sort of Claude Perrault *redivivus*, destined to restore the glory of the times of Louis XIV. Finally, perhaps even more important was the conjunction of two architectural units conceived as particularly indigenous: the (gothic) *fasciculated pillar* and the (Louvre) *ample intercolumniation*[86], which meant, in fact, a more subtle approach of the Greco-Gothic ideal.

*   *   *

The ideal of a synthesis between the two constructive systems was, in fact, pursued along the entire 18th century, being at times formulated by theoreticians such as Michel de Frémin, Jean-Louis de Cordemoy or Marc-Antoine Laugier. The fact that this goal was too extravagant to be fully interiorized and coherently presented was proven by the ambiguous discourse of its supporters. They were either pleading for rationality in building, or making contradictory conjectures, or, at the very utmost, they were fancifully envisioning a coalesced architectural vocabulary.

The questioning of the classical architecture was triggered in 1702 by Michel de Frémin who, in a series of letters concerning "the true and the false architecture"[87], asserted that the ancient orders were, in fact, the

least important part of Architecture, which should primarily be determined by the inner requirements of the edifice and by the particular features of the site.[88] The monuments to which he resorted in order to exemplify his hypothesis – Nôtre-Dame and Sainte Chapelle for "good architecture" and Saint Eustache and Saint Sulpice for "bad architecture" – were eloquent enough to determine his conclusion: the gothic architecture, although prodigal in decoration, is more rational than the classical one.[89] Several years later, the abbot Jean-Louis de Cordemoy challenged even more efficiently the supremacy of the classical architecture. Paradoxically, in doing so, he appealed to Vitruvius, whose treatise he revisited through the medium of Claude Perrault's interpretation.[90] Thus, the French abbot was convinced that the gothic structure proved more clearly the efficiency and rationality that were, in fact, common to the antique architecture as well, supposedly purer than what we imagine since the Renaissance. Moreover, according to him, the essence of architecture was the harmonious balance between simple and isolated elements, and this essence pertained both to ancient and medieval building. Consequently, on the ground of this structural identity, the ideal of a Greco-gothic unity should became possible, and Cordemoy saw it eventually embodied into the church Val de Grâce, provided that the fasciculated pillars were replaced by pure columns.[91] The reader was thus invited to contemplate the virtuality of a stylistic (and chronological) superposition. A few decades later, this superposition was turned into a qualitative juxtaposition by Marc-Antoine Laugier: according to him, the ecclesiastical edifice should preserve its gothic interior, while its exterior should be antiquely designed.[92]

Marc-Antoine Laugier's attitude towards the gothic architecture is rather indistinct. On the one hand, especially during the 1750s, he disapproved of its structural "errors" – such as the fasciculated pillar or the pointed arches – and, on the other hand, he expresses his astonishment for the gothic constructive system as such, to the extent that he even construes its sylvan origin, namely the binding of the branches of ancient trees in a sort of "diagonal rib".[93]

Certainly, this idea was not altogether a novelty. Unprecedented was, instead, the commingle of the two versions of origin – the primitive hut and the primeval pointed arch – that re-enacted, more than a half of century after Cordemoy, the Greco-Gothic ideal. In his 1765 *Observations*, Laugier made another peculiar assertion, namely that the medieval artisans, who lacked a good taste, were unable to imitate other than the most misshapen foliage. Consequently, as the reader was encouraged to admit, there were

two types of Nature: an adequate one, beautiful and uniform (known to have been imitated in Antiquity), and a deformed one, unpleasant and angular (supposedly imitated during the Middle Ages.)[94]

In Ribart de Chamoust's theory, the complex issue of the Greco-Gothic ideal is lessened to the point that it persists, *in abstracto*, only in the ternary shape of the order, as a symbolic suggestion of the medieval clustered piers. On the contrary, his discourse is centered on the direct connection between the column and the tree shaft. Despite the unquestionable discrepancy between the text itself and the illustrative plates, Ribart de Chamoust's ideas seem even more interesting as their visual rendering is a tedious sort of Composite. Consequently, such notions as the "tree-column" or the "sylvan edifice" should be more closely considered.

The idea of a "tree-column" was not unprecedented in France. Actually, it has been outlined for the first time in 1567, in the same primary French treatise published by Philibert De l'Orme. More specifically, in book seven, chapter twelve (just before the section on French order), he described the ancient practice of using tree shafts instead of columns, revealing at the same time his eagerness not only in restoring it, but as well in transferring it into stone.[95] Therefore, he further detailed this type of column, supposedly a close imitation of a tree, as can be seen in the corresponding illustration. [il. 15] In De l'Orme's narrative, even more interesting than this sort of *mimesis* was the curious intertwining of the vegetal and human nature – as it were "female" tree-columns and "male" ones[96] – most probably due to his care not to force too much the Vitruvian dogma. As a matter of fact, his attempt to create a new column was not meant to be an "archaeological" remake, but rather a modern undertaking, "innovative" despite (or due to) its antiqueness.

Apparently, until Laugier's famous *Essai*, the idea of a tree-column was abandoned by the French theoreticians. The "primitive hut" – as an operative principle – did not even concern the architectural order, since it conceptualized a primordial structure that emphasized the function, while drastically confining the form. The unique connection between De l'Orme's tree-column (functionally un-justified) and Laugier's artless pillar (adequate for its purpose) was the *matter itself* as a sort of matrix for the future architectural order.

The last and most ample reevaluation of the tree-column was that of Ribart de Chamoust, who explicitly referred to order and not to any constructive principle. Moreover, when asserting its primordiality, he also included Laugier's conjectures which he interpreted in a "Vitruvian" key,

yet *outside* the Vitruvian dogma. More precisely, even if not included in the series of events (the quest for a shelter, the discovery of the fire, the building of the first huts) presented by Vitruvius as the origin of architecture, the French order *was made to precede the antique ones* on the ground of its primordiality.

In order to enhance its relevance, the column "found in nature" should be considered in relation to the wider theme of the "world's architecture". Even more operative in the case of the French theory in the second half of the 18th century is the metaphor of the "nature's edifice" as a necessary shelter in view of a nostalgic (rousseauesque) abandonment of the institutionalized society/culture/architecture. In this case, a certain sacredness of "nature's architecture" is also to be expected.

* * *

At the beginning of the third section, entitled "L'Ordre François apperçu dans le type Grec, & son développement", Ribart de Chamoust described an interesting – and significant – private experience, which might be taken as the key of his entire discourse: "I was walking in the shadow of tall trees on my estate, in a gorge that leads into the Marne. Young trees, placed three by three in a fairly regular pattern, although planted haphazardly, came into sight. The groups of these trees formed and ordered by their unity *a kind of natural, hexagonal and extraordinary room.*"[97] [il. 16] In this paragraph, apparently reporting an ordinary daily happening, Ribart de Chamoust was presenting, in fact, a conjecture on the primeval regularity of Nature as a necessary support to theorizing the natural (French) order.

The analogy between edifice and garden, within the pattern of a sort of "vegetal architecture", was also formulated by Jean-Marie Morel, the author of a *Théorie des jardins* published in 1776, who denounced, instead, the deformation of the landscape through an excessive use of geometry. More precisely, he argued that a methodological confusion was inescapably leading towards the shaping of the gardens as a series of halls, cabinets and corridors.[98] By that time, the "landscape park" was being already introduced in France, gradually replacing the geometrical gardens. It is probable, though, that Ribart de Chamoust was either not familiarized with the latest fashion in landscape and gardening, or he couldn't accept it.

Another example of a correlative relation between architecture and nature was provided by Marc-Antoine Laugier, who invited his public to "regard the city as if it were a forest"[99]; still, he was not recommending a "natural" *modus operandi* for the city planners, but rather on the contrary.

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Moreover, it is quite unclear whether he referred to a luxuriating grove or a rigorously designed park. Apparently, in Laugier's case, these two realms of vegetation are more or less the same: the wood is a sort of garden whose "parterre", drawn in Le Notre's style, should inspire the structuring of the urban space.[100] Obviously, both the "primitive hut" and the "sylvan city" were following the same eternal rules.

Besides the garden and the city, there is another repository of the analogy between nature and architecture, perhaps the most important one: the "nature-sanctuary", with the correlative form of the "forest temple". The first of them connotes the solemnity of a ritual, while the other implies the direct experience of sacredness. On the one hand, the "nature-sanctuary" could be, for instance, embodied in a sort of "vegetal monument", such as the *Poplars' Island* at Ermenonville (designed in 1776-77), that would connote death, emptiness or regeneration. The metaphor of the "forest temple", on the other hand, may be deciphered in two ways – converting architecture into nature and nature into architecture – both of them mentioned during the 18th century.

In 1714, in a letter inserted in the second edition of his treatise – meant to reply to Amédée Frezier's critiques – Jean-Louis de Cordemoy justified the use of the term "la sainte Antiquité" by invoking a versified epistle of Sidonius Apollinarius describing am ancient church in Lyon, so large that would resemble a "forest of columns" (*Et campum medium procul locatas vestit saxea silva per columnas*).[101] Conversely, the columns of a church are as well turned into trees and branches, as if to confirm Laugier's hypothesis on the origin of Gothic architecture, in a page written by Charles-Marguerite Dupaty in 1785. In his Italian diary, this obscure writer describes his religious experience – when confronted with the baroque churches in Genoa – that led him to meditate on the most beautiful temple in the world, namely the center of a vast and deep forest.[102] In the first case – that of the "forest of columns" (Cordemoy/Sidonius Apollinarius) – transcendency is turned into immanency, while in the second case – the "forest temple" (Dupaty) – the wood is endowed with sacredness.[103]

In Ribart de Chamoust's narrative, the French order "found in nature" was, in fact, created by God himself, seen as the supreme architect of the "mundane edifice".[104] At the same time, the ternary order also personified the three Graces; just like the ancient Greeks had "shaped" their columns according to (three types of) human proportions, the French order embodied the unit of the three goddesses of joy, charm and beauty.[105] Ultimately, this antique (mythological) ternary unit is intertwined with

the triad of Celtic deities – Urd, Werandi, Sculde, the personifications of magnanimity, affability and generosity – which should crown, in Ribart de Chamoust's view, the National French Monument.[106] [il. 17] The sacredness of the French order is thus revealed as a syncretic conglomerate if not, as some critics asserted, in the light of a Freemasonic engagement.[107]

* * *

Undoubtedly, of all the theoreticians of a French order, Ribart de Chamoust provided the most interesting narrative. Despite various inadvertencies and the confinement to the Composite appearance, he was the only author to have envisioned the French order beyond the mere "column-and-superstructure unit", into details such as the proportions of the intercolumniation or the shape of the newels.[108]

The cardinal difference between his undertaking and the previous ones consisted in the *primordiality* of the Order, as well as in the transfer of creativity: he approached the issue of a French order not as something to invent, but as something *discovered in nature*, and therefore ancient as the nature itself. The argumentation that the French order was exclusively "natural" placed him in a twofold tradition: antique (because of its similarity with the myth of Corinthian capital, shaped by Nature) and French (through its derivation from Philibert De l'Orme's theory). Ultimately, his eagerness to configure a national Order, through a complex and multiform narrative, can be understood as the aim to be recognized as a modern Vitruvius. With his devoted work, France, the first nation in the world, could have at last emulated the Roman Empire.
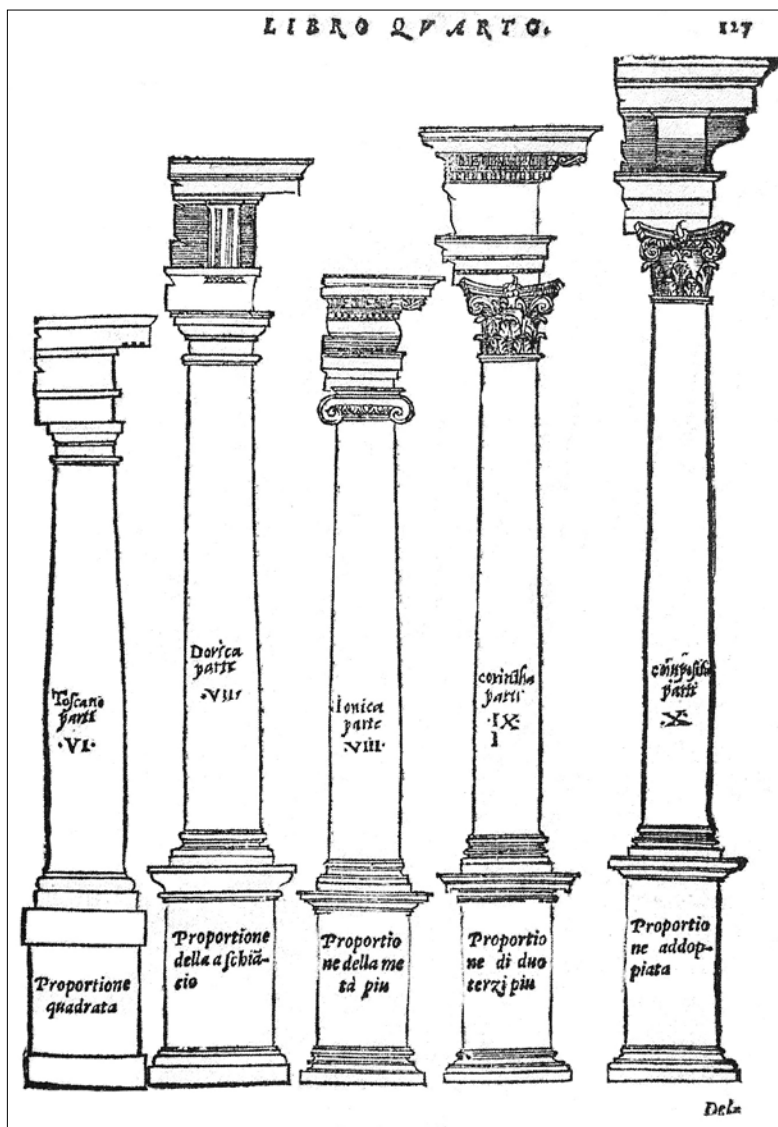
1. Sebastiano Serlio, The Five Orders, (*Il Quarto Libro*, 1537), published in *Tutte l'opere d'architettura et prospetiva di Sebastiano Serlio bolognese*, 1600, p. 127.

2. Georges Tournier (engraver), The Corinthian Order, published in Roland Fréart de Chambray, *Parallele de l'Architecture antique et de la moderne*, 1650, p. 63.
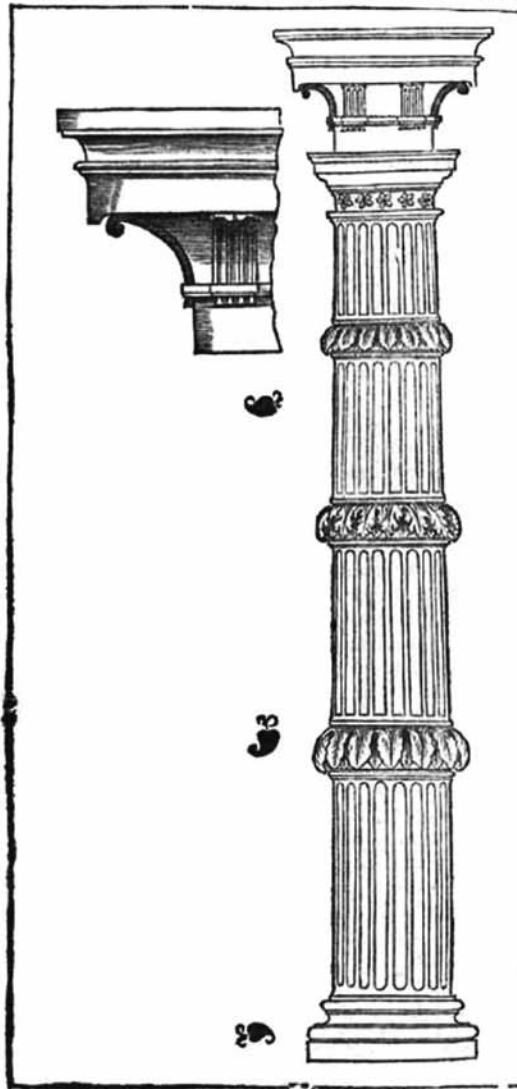
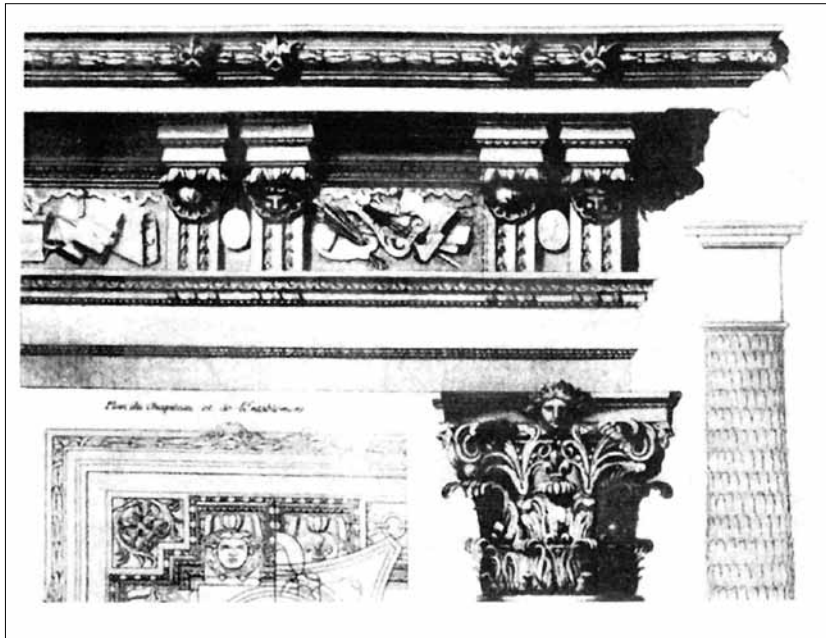3. Claude Perrault, The Eastern Façade of Louvre (the colonnade), 1665-67.

4. Sébastien Le Clerc (engraver), Frontispice, published in *Les Dix Livres d'Architecture de Vitruve* [par Claude Perrault], 1673.
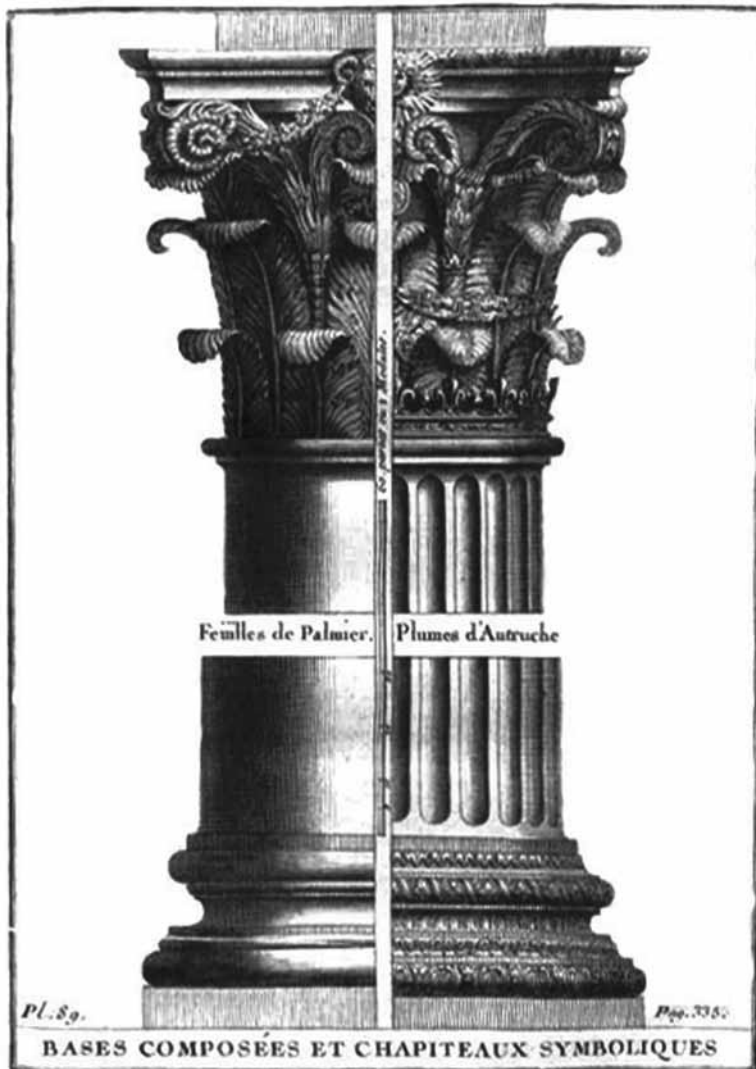
5. Philibert De l'Orme, The French Column, published in *Le premier Tome de l'Architecture*, 1567, Lb. IV, c. XIII, p. 219.

6. Charles Le Brun, The French Order, 1672 (?), published in Pierre-
Jean Mariette, *L'Architecture française*, 1727, III, pl. 559.
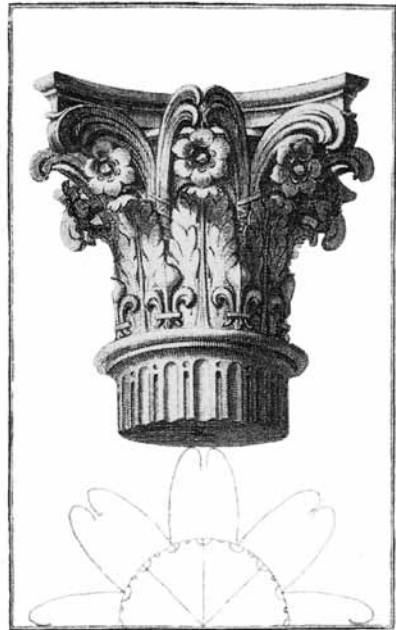
7. Sébastien Le Clerc, The French Order, published in Sébastien Le Clerc, *Traité d'architecture*, 1714, II, pl. 177 & 178.

Feüilles de Palmier.   Plumes d'Autruche

Pl.89.   *Pag.335.*

**BASES COMPOSÉES ET CHAPITEAUX SYMBOLIQUES**

8. Augustin-Charles d'Aviler, The French Order, published in
Augustin-Charles d'Aviler, *Cours d'architecture* (1691), 1738, pl. 89.
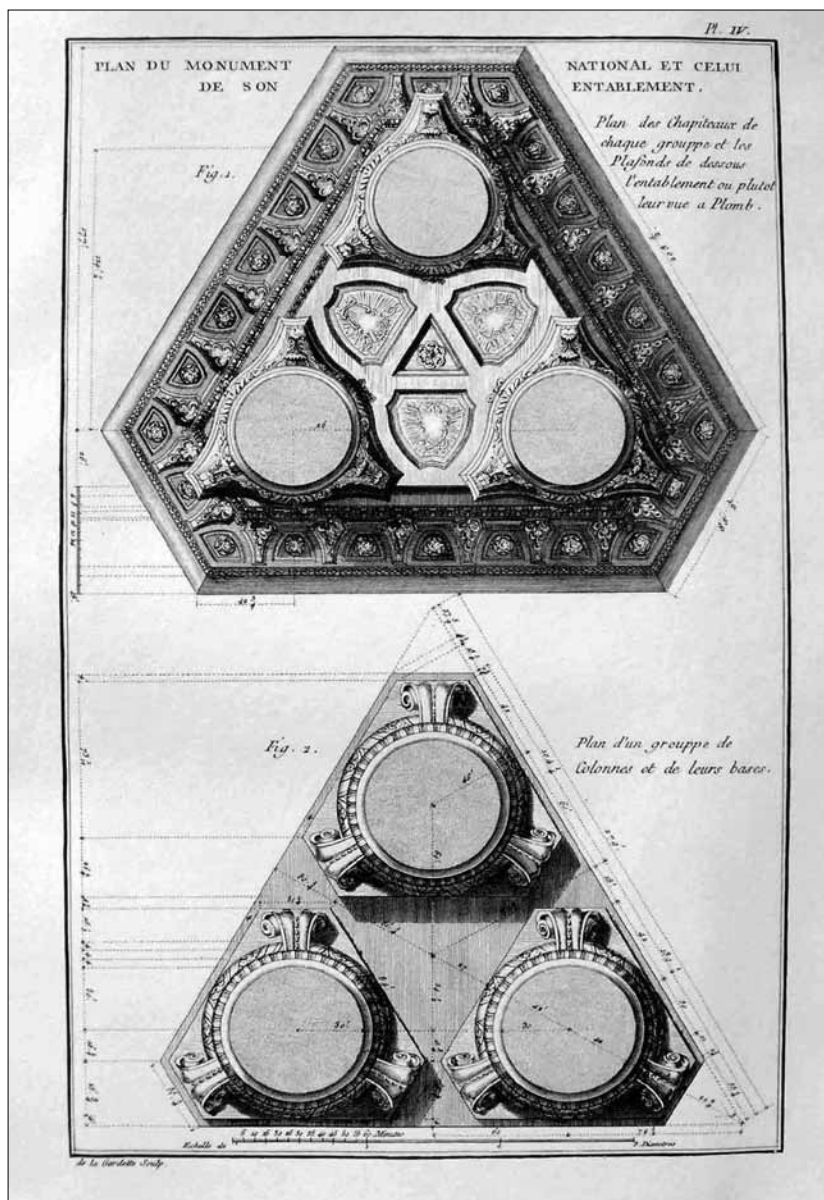
9. Charles-Dominique-Joseph Eisen (engraver), Frontispice, published in Marc-Antoine Laugier, *Essai sur l'Architecture*, 1755.
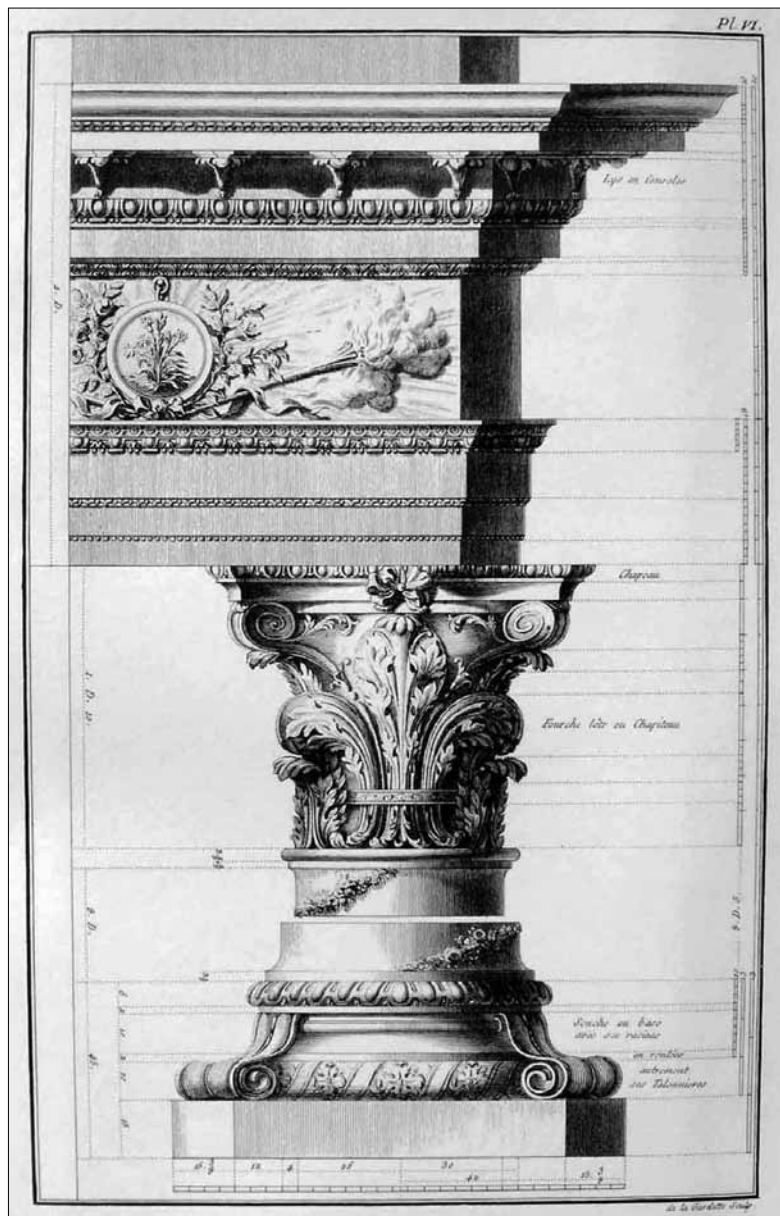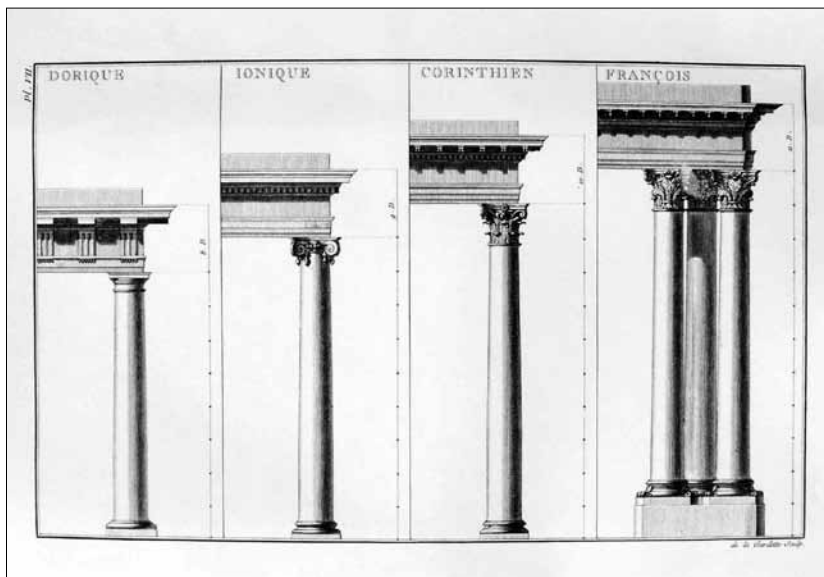
10. Ribart de Chamoust, The French Order, pl. VI, published in
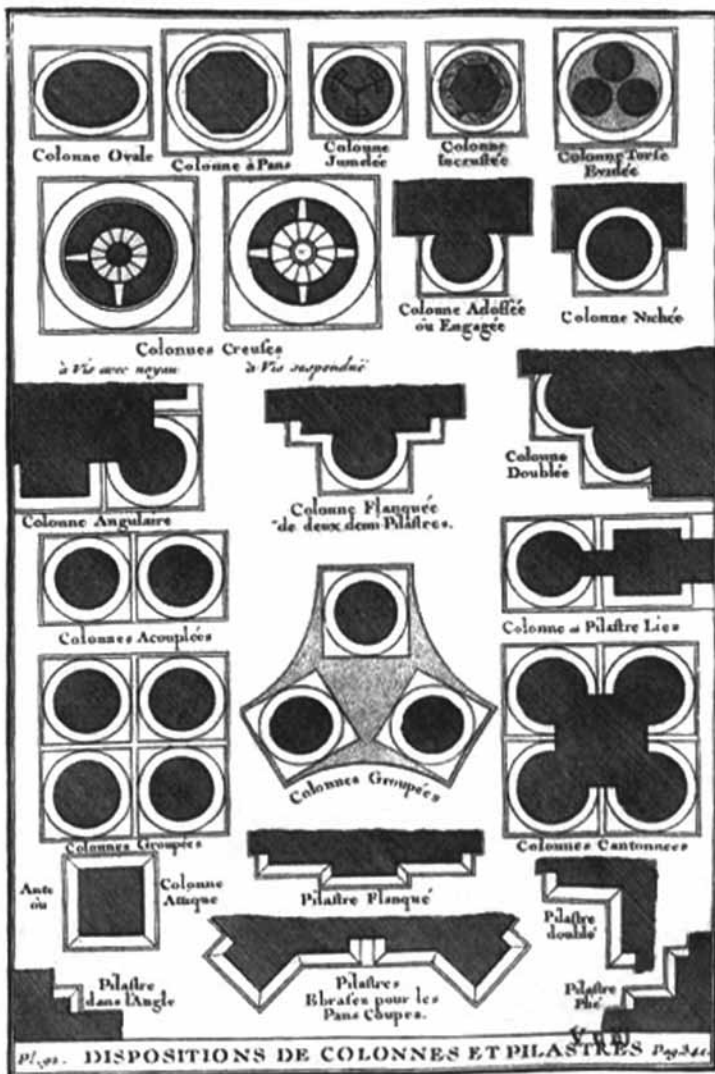*L' Ordre François trouvé dans la nature*, 1783.
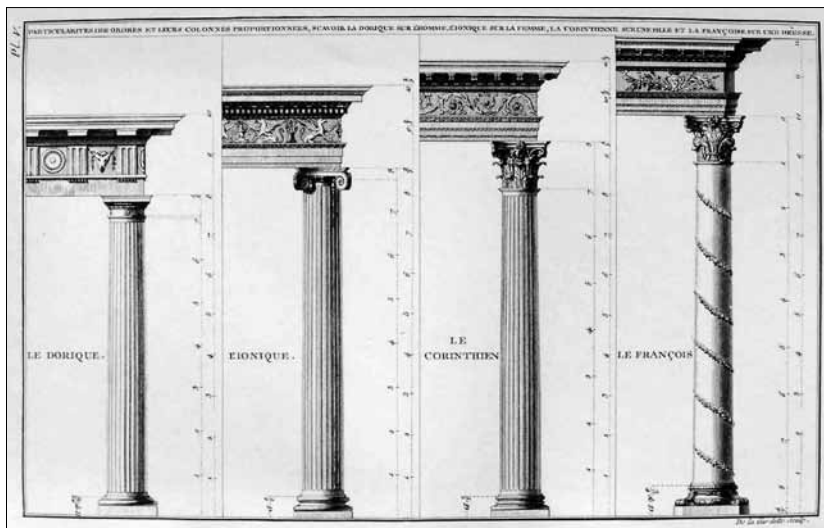
11. Ribart de Chamoust, The Four Orders, pl. V, published in
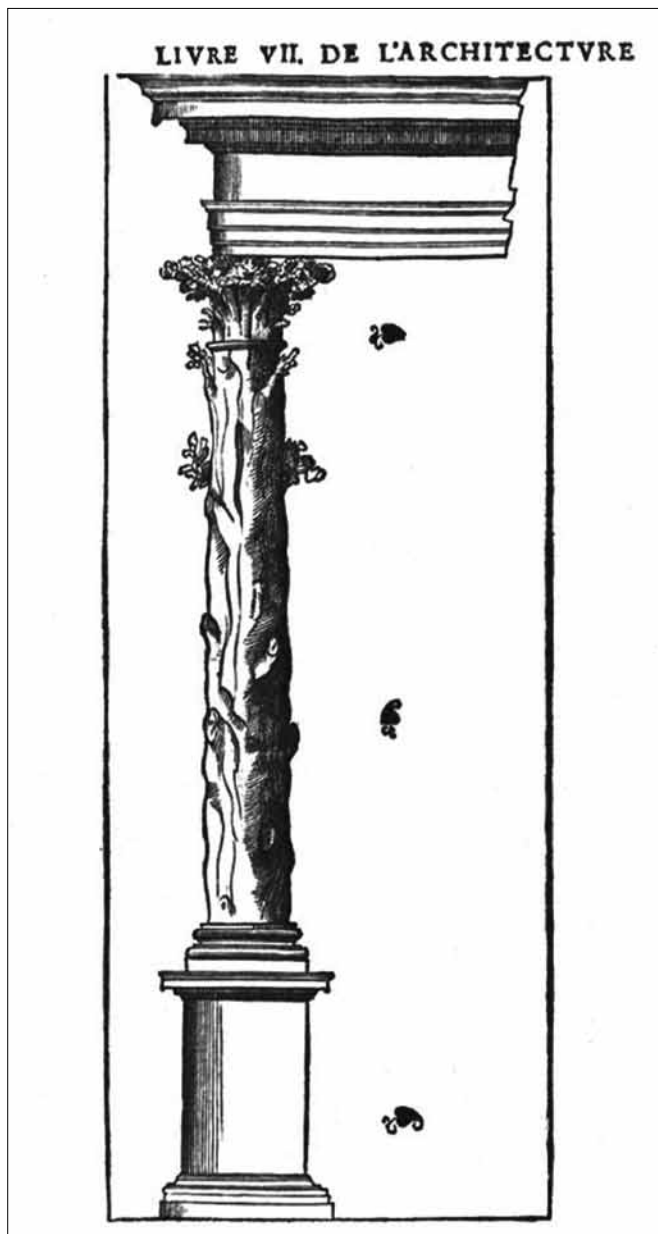*L' Ordre François trouvé dans la nature*, 1783.

12. Ribart de Chamoust, The Plan of the National Monument, pl. IV, published in *L' Ordre François trouvé dans la nature*, 1783.

13. Ribart de Chamoust, The Four Orders, pl. VII,
published in *L' Ordre François trouvé dans la nature*, 1783.

14. Augustin-Charles d'Aviler, Columns and Pilasters, published in
Cours d'architecture qui comprend les Ordres de Vignole, (1691),
Ed. 1738, pl. 92, p. 341.

15. Philibert De l'Orme, The Tree-column, published in
Le premier Tome de l'Architecture, 1567, Lb. IV, c. XII, p. 217.

16. Ribart de Chamoust, The Type of French Order, pl. II,
published in *L' Ordre François trouvé dans la nature*, 1783.

17. Ribart de Chamoust, The National Monument, pl. III, published in
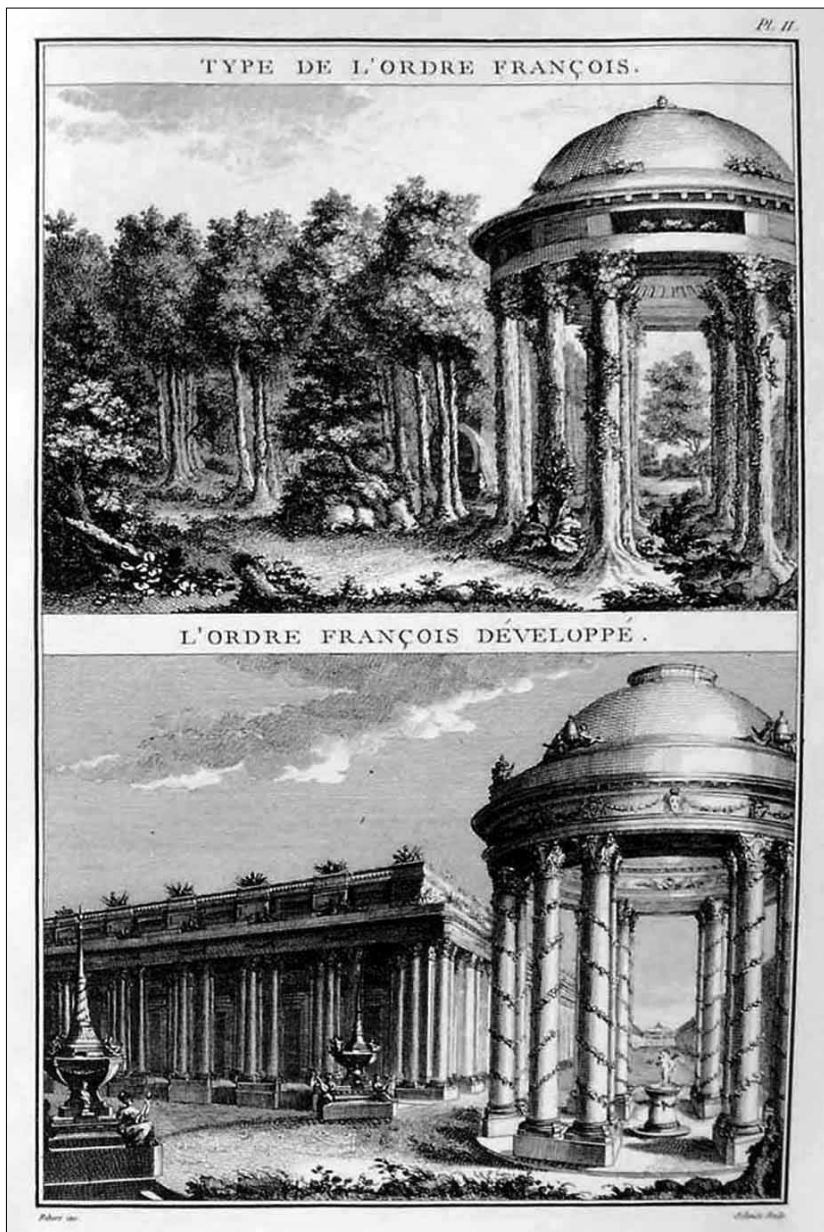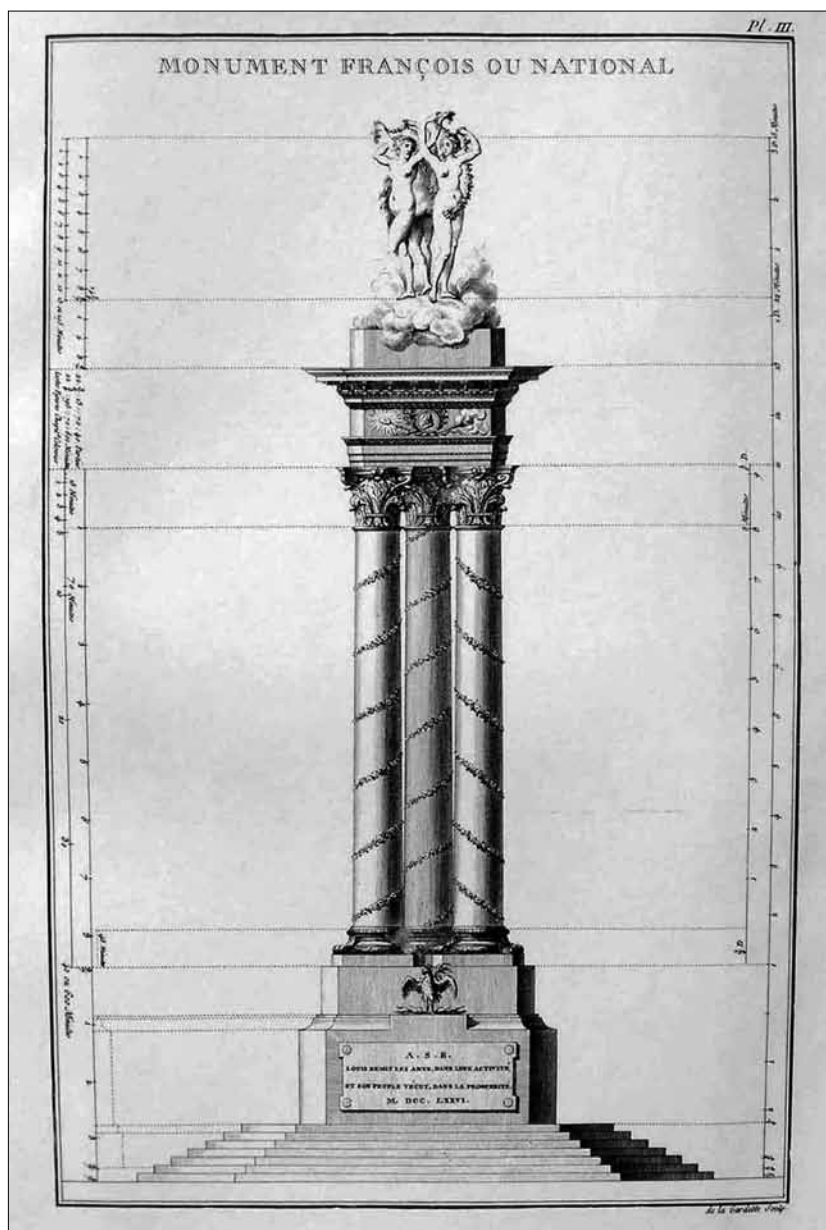*L' Ordre François trouvé dans la nature*, 1783.

NOTES

[1]   Summerson 1993, p. 10. A comprehensive analysis of the poetics of order is to be found in Tzonis & Lefaivre 1986.

[2]   This perplexity is the starting point of George Hersey's enquiry into the 'lost meaning' of classical architecture. See Hersey 1988, p. 1.

[3]   Vitruvius speaks of Doric in Lb. IV, c. 1, 3-6. He refers to Ionic in Lb. III, c. 4, 5-15 and Lb. IV, c. 1, 7. Lastly, the Corinthian is described in Lb. IV, c. 1, 8-11.

[4]   See Vitruve 1673, *passim.* Claude Perrault, who was trained as a doctor, worked more than six years on this translation, benefiting from additional bibliography and – more important – from knowing ancient Greek which, by that time, was indispensable to medicine. See Hermann 1973, pp. 19-22.

[5]   Vitruve 1673, p. 98.

[6]   *Ibidem.*

[7]   With the nowadays sense, the term "order" seems to have been used for the first time in the famous letter sent to pope Leo X, presumably by Raphael and his intellectual circle. See Pauwels 2008, p. 8.

[8]   In 1691, the architect Augustin-Charles d'Aviler published a book entitled *Cours d'Architecture qui comprend les ordres de Vignole*, with numerous later editions. Likewise, Jacques Raymond Lucotte's treatise, *Le Vignole moderne*, appeared as late as 1772, being as well repeatedly re-published. See Garric 2012, 7-10.

[9]   The modern authors, with whom Roland Fréart de Chambray chose to parallel the Antiquity, were Leon Battista Alberti, Sebastiano Serlio, Daniele Barbaro, Pietro Cataneo, Andrea Palladio, Scamozzi, Bullant and Philibert De l'Orme. Moreover, Fréart de Chambray translated for the first time Andrea Palladio's treatise, published in the same year 1650.

[10] Besides the notorious distinction between "positive" and "arbitrary" beauty, Claude Perrault identified three building manners: *ancienne* (formulated by Vitruvius and traceable in ancient Greek architecture), *antique* (suitable to ancient Roman monuments) and *moderne* (displayed since the Renaissance). Moreover, Claude Perrault contested the previous theories on proportion, according to which the proportionality was the source of beauty. Consequently, although rigorously theorized (according to the *ancient* manner), it should be relatively applied. For a relevant analysis of Perrault's theory, see Herrmann 1973, *passim* and especially pp. 95-128 and Rykwert 1980, pp. 33-34.

[11] For a sharp abstract of the classical architectural theory, and of the architectural order in particular, see Fichet 1979, pp. 21-31.

[12] In *De architectura*, Lb. I, c. 2, 1. See Vitruve 1673, p. 9. "Ordinatione" was usually translated in English as "Order", when not as "Fitness".

[13] Vitruvius 1955, p. 25. For a detailed examination of the Vitruvian concept of "ordinatio", see Tzonis & Lefaivre 1986, pp. 9-34.

14   See Aviler 1738, p. 17.

15   Perrault 1683, p. 2.

16   Aviler 1738, p. 17.

17   Blondel 1698, p. 4.

18   Gros 2001, p. 17.

19   Hersey 1987, p. 76. In the age of Augustus, the medical terminology still resorted to ancient Greek. Confronted with the same situation, Vitruvius attempted to transpose the architectural terms from ancient Greek to contemporary Latin. However, the linguistic equation was still a major difficulty during the early modernity, when the architectural vocabulary was shaped. For instance, Philibert De l'Orme was overtly lamenting upon the inability of French to describe architecture. See Szambien 1986, p. 24.

20   Vitruvius tells the legend of the discovery of the Corinthian capital in *De Architectura*, Lb. IV, c. 1, 9-10.

21   This is the interpretation of George Hersey: the death of the Corinthian virgin, before procreation (*Virgo civis Corinthia, iam matura nuptiis, inplicata morbo decessit*), was transferred upon the architectural creativity. See Hersey 1987, p. 73. Furthermore, the author uses the key of sacrifice and taboo in interpreting other (sub)orders such as the Caryatid or the so called "Persian portico".

22   For d'Aviler, the Corinthian seems to be the suitable patterrn for each modern order. See Aviler 1738, p. 334.

23   Laugier 1755, p. 85.

24   *De Architectura*, Lb. IV, c. 1, 7.

25   For instance, when speaking of the Tuscan Order, François Blondel declared that "Les proportions de la hauteur à la grosseur ont esté judicieusement determinées par les anciens Architects, qui imitant premierement la structure du corps humain [...]." Likewise, on the Ionic Order, he stated: "Ensuite ils establirent un troisiéme ordre de Colonnes à l'imitation du corps des femmes [...]." See Blondel 1698, vol. I, p. 9.

26   See Perrault 1683, p. j. Furthermore, Perrault considered that only the difference between Orders remained constant, and not the proportions, since it reflected the analogy with the human proportions. See Rykwert 1980, p. 34.

27   Grignon & Maxim 1995, p. 29; Szambien 1986, pp. 174-200.

28   Camus de Mézières 1780, p. 8. For a theoretical approach of the architectural anthropomorphism, see Szambien 1986, p. 40.

29   Both in practice and in his theoretical vision, Philibert De l'Orme rather contested the Vitruvian theory. See Pauwels 2008, p. 146.

30   Vitruve 1673, p. 1.

31   Romano 1987, p. 17.

32   Herrmann 1973, pp. 19-22.

33   This thesis is convincingly put forward in Dripps 1987, pp. 19-20. Perrault's translation was eulogized by René Ouvard in 1679, in his book *Architecture harmonique. Apud* Herrmann 1973, p. 199. On the Royal Academy of

Architecture as an instrument for the absolutist politics of Louis XIV, see Herrmann 1958, p. 23.

[34] On the voyage of Gianlorenzo Bernini in France, the fate of his project and the decision made by Colbert, see Blunt 1957, pp. 189-191; Pariset 1965, pp. 130-131; Tapié 1980, pp. 225 – 252.

[35] Pérouse de Montclos 1977, pp. 230-231, 240.

[36] De l'Orme 1567, Livre VII, Chapitre XIII, p. 218.

[37] *Idem*, p. 221.

[38] *Idem*, p. 219.

[39] Pauwels 2008, p. 162. Pierre Lescot's enterprise, during 1546-1551, was in itself a crucial stage in the history of French architecture, as it implied the refusal of Sebastiano Serlio's project in favor of a local architect, but also because it announced the principles of the future French classicism. See Blunt 1957, pp. 44-46. The initiative of enlarging the Louvre's facades was triggered by Claude Perrault. See Pérouse de Montclos 1977, pp. 226-227.

[40] The so called „nouvel ordre français de l'invention de Charles Le Brun, premier peintre du roi", from 1672, was illustrated by Jean Mariette in his *Architecture française* (1727). However, his first attempt to invent a French order, for the Apollo Gallery in the Louvre, preceded the 1671 competition with no less than a decade. See Pérouse de Montclos 1977, p. 228.

[41] Le Clerc's project was visually rendered in his own book, *Traité d'architecture* (1714). In 1736, he was accused of designing his version of a French order in a too closely after the plates found in the treatises written by Andrea Palladio and Roland Fréart de Chambray. See Pérouse de Montclos 1977, p. 230, note 40.

[42] Augustin-Charles d'Aviler presented his project in his own *Cours d'architecture* (1691), in the chapter „Bases composées et chapiteaux symboliques", in which he also mentioned the 1671 competition. See Aviler 1738, plate 89 and pp. 334-335; Pérouse de Montclos 1977, pp. 230-231, note 45.

[43] Aviler 1738, p. 334.

[44] Blondel 1698, vol. II, p. 249.

[45] *Ibidem.*

[46] This resolution was published in the eighth volume of the *Procès-verbaux de l'Académie royale d'architecture*, 1671-1793, (10 vol.). *Apud* Pérouse de Montclos 1977, p. 240.

[47] Briseux 1752, vol. 2, p. 131. See Weinberger 2006, p. 48.

[48] Laugier 1765, pp. 270-276.

[49] Camus de Mézières 1780, p. 38.

[50] Blondel 1771, pp. 189-286.

[51] Nicolas Marie Potain, *Traité des orders d'architecture*, 1767; Jean Antoine, *Traité d'architecture ou Proportion des Trois Ordres Grecs, sur un module de douze parties*, 1768: Pierre Panseron, *Élements d'architecture*, 1772; Claude Mathieu Delagardette, *Règle des cinq ordres d'architecture*, 1786.

[52] Garric 2012, 19.

[53]   Pérouse de Montclos 1977, p. 223
[54]   Apart from the confusion between the medieval Tuscan architecture and the presumed Etruscan one, starting with the 16th century, the continuity of the Tuscan order from Antiquity to present day was constantly defended. Moreover, in the early 1600, Vincenzo Scamozzi asserted the precedence of the Tuscan over the Doric, this hypothesis being later often repeated by the Italian theoreticians. See Pérouse de Montclos 1977, p. 224.
[55]   Vitruve 1673, p. 74.
[56]   "On met sur ces mesmes colonnes des chapiteaux qui ont d'autres noms: mais ces noms ne doivent point faire changer celuy des colonnes, puisqu'elles ont les mesmes proportions, car on ne leur a donné ces noms qu'à cause de quelques parties qui ont esté prises des chapiteaux Corinthiens [...]." Cf. Vitruve 1673, pp. 103-104.
[57]   Pauwels 2008, p. 8.
[58]   Laugier 1755, p. 61.
[59]   "La decadenza del buon gusto dell'Architettura o sia sesto ordine dal quale deriva il gusto barbaro fondato su le Rovine degli egizi grezi e Romani, da qui ebbe l'origine il nuovo gusto barbao". *Apud* Bevilacqua 2009, p. 81.
[60]   Bevilacqua 2009, p. 84.
[61]   The dialogue entitled *Parere su l'Architecture* was actually continuing Piranesi's *Osservazioni [...]*, published in the same year, which confuted some aspects of the French theory, voiced by Pierre-Jean Mariette.
[62]   "[...] tre sono le maniere dell'Architettura che coltiviamo, maniera, o ordine, come volete chiamarlo [...]. Il pensare, che le differenti proporzioni possano produrre una nuova spezie d'Architettura, è una vera pazzia [...]." See Piranesi 1765, pp. 13-14.
[63]   For a comprehensive research on this topic see Ehrard 1963, *passim.*
[64]   Still, Voltaire, in his book *Nature. Dialogue entre le Philosophe et la Nature*, published in 1771, reveals his skepticism as for the unerring reason of nature. Cf. Hazard 1946, vol 2, p. 14.
[65]   Hazard 1946, p. 15.
[66]   Starobinski 1971, p. 324.
[67]   Kremer-Marietti 1973, p. 12-13.
[68]   Cassirer 2003, p. 51.
[69]   Kruft 1988, p. 192.
[70]   Laugier 1755, pp. 9-10.
[71]   Laugier 1755, p. 28.
[72]   *Idem*, p. 13.
[73]   In fact, even the years of Ribart de Chamoust's life remain a mystery. However, he was frequently mistaken with a certain Charles-François Ribart, who was a member of the Science Academy in Béziers. See Saint Girons 1990, p. 570.
[74]   Jacques-François Blondel reasserted the parallelism between the issuing of Vitruvius' treatise and its translation by Claude Perrault, by evoking the

similarities of both epochs: "[…] à l'example des siecles d'Auguste & Louis le Grand, nos Ministres, nos Prélats, nos Magistrats ne dédaignent pas de donner quelques instans de leur loisir à l'étude de l'Architecture, qui concure plus que toute autre à faire fleurir l'Etat & la Patrie." Blondel 1754, pp. 48-51.

75   "En me consacrant tout entier à un travail dont les avantages peuvent honorer ma Patrie [...] le plaisir & la gloire d'avoir pu fournir à ma Patrie, un nouveau motif de rivalité avec les Nations les plus célèbres [...]" Chamoust 1783, pp. I-ij. "La découverte de l'Ordre François semble avoir été reservée au Regne glorieux de Louis XVI, surnommé le Bienfaisant." *Idem*, p. 55.

76   The anachronistic approach was pointed out in Kruft 1988, p. 198 and Patetta 2006, p. 16. Concerning the overall transformations within the realm of the books on architecture, as well as in the reading practices and in the (re)configuration of the public itself, see Wittman 2007b, *passim.*

77   "L'Ordre François existe depuis qu'il y a des arbres sur la terre." Chamoust 1783, p. 52.

78   "J'entends par ce mot *type*, les premiers essais de l'homme pour s'assujettir la Nature [...]. Les objets sensibles que l'Artiste choisit avec justesse & raisonnement dans la Nature pour allumer & fixer en même-temps les feux de son imagination, je les appelle *archétypes.*" *Idem*, p. 5. See also Tzonis & Lefaivre 2004, p. 433.

79   "[…] pour les disputer aux Grecs, il falloit, non les suivre pas à pas, mais remonter à la Théorie primitive, c'est-à-dire, à la Nature même." *Idem*, p. ij.

80   The vegetal elements spread on the column's shaft, as a way of decorating the French order, had already been evoked, in 1765, by Marc-Antoine Laugier: "La tige de la colonne au lieu d'être sillonée en cannelures, sera semé de fleurs-de-lis sans nombre, d'un relief médiocre [...]" Laugier 1765, p. 275.

81   The idea of the schematic roots was also put forth in 1728, in a German treatise, namely in Johann Georg Wagner's *Probe der sechsten Säulen Ordnung*. However, there is no evidence that Ribart de Chamoust was aware of the existence of this source. See Weinberger 2006, p. 52.

82   "Considérons présentement chaque grouppe de trois colonnes comme formé par trois troncs sortants d'une même souche, ou plutôt comme crûs avec égalité sur un même tertre [...]" *Idem*, p. 25.

83   Aviler 1738, pp. 340-341.

84   "Dans l'Ordre François, c'est tout autre chose, les colonnes n'y doivent aller que par trois, soit qu'elles existent reelement, soit qu'elles paroissent feintes par des pilastres [...]"Chamoust 1783, p. 25.

85   In the early 1700, abbot Jean-Louis de Cordemoy includes this double column, under the label *dyostyle*, among the five types of intercolumniation mentioned by Vitruvius (*pycnostyle*, *systyle*, *dyastile*, *araeostyle* și *eustyle*), implying that "Cette derniére maniére doit être préférée à toutes les autres [...]." Cordemoy 1714, p. 52.

86   Saint Girons 1990, p. 571; Pérouse de Montclos 1977, p. 238.

[87] Michel de Frémin's *Memoirs* consisted in 48 letters, written in a prolix manner. See Nyberg 1963, p. 217; Tzonis & Lefaivre 2004, p. 260.

[88] Frémin 1702, p. 22."

[89] Frémin 1702, pp. 26-40. Cf. Middleton 1962, p. 282.

[90] The impact of Frémin's "memoirs" over Cordemoy's theory is usually admitted. See Middleton 1962, pp. 282-283; Tzonis & Lefaivre 2004, p. 260.

[91] Cordemoy 1714, p. 109. Cf. Middleton 1962, pp. 284.

[92] "[...] si dans l'intérieur de nos Eglises nous ne ferions pas mieux l'imiter & de perfectionner cette Architecture gothique, en réservant l'Architecture gréque pour les dehors", Laugier 1765, p. 117.
This strange idea was reiterated by Francesco Milizia, in 1781, in his *Principj di Architettura Civile*: "E che male sarebbe imitare e migliorare nell'interno delle nostre chiese questa Architettura Gotica, e riserbare pel difuori la Greca." (tomo secondo, p. 495)

[93] "Il paroit que ces grands berceaux formés par deux rangées d'arbres de haute futaye ont fourni le modélle de l'Architecture de nos Eglises gothiques" Laugier 1765, p. 116

[94] Laugier 1765, pp. 269-270; Queysanne 1990, p. 48.

[95] De l'Orme 1567, Livre VII, Chapitre XII, p. 217. Cf. Pérouse de Montclos 1977, p. 237.

[96] "Et si encores vous y pouvez accomoder le sexe masculine ou feminine: comme si vous desirez façonner voz colommes, imitans les arbres, à la Dorique, vous le faictes apres la mesure de l'homme; à la Ionique, suyvant celle de la femme: & à la Corinthienne, apres celle d'une fille ayant forme & façon plus jolie & mignarde que les autres". De l'Orme 1567, *Idem*, p. 217.

[97] Chamoust 1783, p. 6 (my underline). See also Tzonis & Lefaivre 2004, p. 433.

[98] Morel 1776, pp. 4-6.

[99] Laugier 1755, p. 222.

[100] *Idem*, p. 223. See Saint-Girons 1990, p. 549.

[101] Cordemoy 1714, pp. 193-200 and especially pp. 198-199; See also Nyberg 1967, *passim.*

[102] Dupaty 1788, Vol. I, *Lettre XXII*, pp. 89-90.

[103] Simoncini 2001, p. 187.

[104] "[...] j'ai cherché & crois avoir trouvé cet Ordre dans le livre de la Nature, émané de Dieu même qui est le Maître des maîtres." Chamoust 1783, p. 52.

[105] "Dans les trois colonnes de chaque grouppe, je me suis figure voir les trois Graces [...] & j'ai cru pouvoir mieux faire que de fixer leurs proportions distinctives & leur union sur la stature & la position de ces Déesses." *Idem*, p. 8.

[106] *Idem*, pp. 8-9.

[107] Vidler 1987, p. 150.

[108] Pérouse de Montclos 1977, p. 236.

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