Deconstruction as a Mechanism of Creativity and its Reflections on Islamic Architecture

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Abstract
Creativity is the ability to produce work that is both novel and appropriate. The conflicts and conundrums of modern times demand high levels of creativity from the architect; the success of architectural solutions rests on the metaphor by which the oppositional states are resolved as forms in the imagination of architect-designers. Creativity, with all its social and physical connotations and implications, is therefore the guiding concept in architectural philosophy and practice today. In order to teach, criticize and foster creativity in architecture however, there ought to be a consensus on what is actually creative. This article foregrounds that architectural creativity is predicated upon deconstructive thought and exemplifies this assertion historically via a re-reading (analysis) of the Shah Faisal Mosque designed by Vedat Dalokay in Islamabad.

Keywords: Creativity; Deconstruction Philosophy; Jacques Derrida; Architectural History; Islamic Architecture.

1. Introduction: Creativity
Systematic inquiry into creativity occurred from the 1950s onwards and aimed towards a more fundamental understanding of human creativity. Inquiries in that regard adopted psychometric, cognitive, psychodynamic and pragmatic approaches to define creativity (Durling 1996 [1]; Durling 2003 [2]). Only this final category has dealt with design fields to a certain extent. In fact, very few researchers from a design background have undertaken empirical studies on creativity and have investigated knowledge concerning the underlying intellectual and social drivers of creativity.

Creativity is a broad and vague concept, nevertheless. The criteria of creativity vary from one discipline to another. In engineering, for example, creativity be predicated on some functional improvement in a given product: the product may be made cheaper, safer, stronger, or to perform better, or to assume more functions, and so on (Berkun 2003) [3]. Some creativity, for that matter, may be a systematic affair with serious implications for success and failure, as opposed to creativity in artistic domains, which may value the difference, the eccentric, and sometimes even the frivolous. The role of creativity in the sciences, on the other hand, is best understood by referring to Henri Poincaré (1908) [4]: “… It is by logic that we prove, but by intuition that we discover”.

Although creativity has been defined as ‘an illumination’, ‘a kind of awareness’ by Polanyi (1958) [5], and, as ‘effective surprise’ by Bruner (1962) [6], creativity in the final analysis is the ability to produce work that is both novel and appropriate. As quoted by Durling (2003) [2], Guilford (1950) [7] posits that ‘an important and persistent feature of all creativity is the ability to set aside established conventions and procedures’. Therefore creativity has recently been re-defined as the act of producing ‘the unexpected’ and ‘the extraordinary’ by deconstructionist architects, e.g., the ‘shock’ of Tschumi (1991) [8].

Since creativity is a dynamic thought process in action, in referring to its processes some prefer to use such phrases as ‘imaginative leap’ or ‘intuitive leap’, which embody an image of a fragment of possible worlds, instead of the more passive concept of creativity. ‘As a human behavior, creativity is a rapid intuitive deduction that owes its power to the infirmity of our powers of reasoning’, says Medawar (1969) [9], who adds, ‘That creativity is beyond analysis is a romantic illusion we must outgrow. It can not be learned perhaps but it can certainly be encouraged and abetted.’

1.1 Relationship of Design and Creativity. Design in architecture is an act of transformation, and in that
sense it is the highest form of our practical adaptation to our environment. Design transforms the land and adapts it to the emerging needs of the society. Design is also a form of communication in which constructs, concepts, and mental pictures of reality existing in the mind of the designer are transformed into visions of future realities via the language of architectural composition.

Based on this view of architecture, for any architectural work to be distinguished as creative it must transform, must cause a change in the environment, and perhaps a shift in views in the discipline as well. Styles and trends in architectural history emerge from clauses of consensus among architect designers on established conventions and procedures of their times. But time is always in a state of flux. Movements and events change their character over time – the most important impetus for creativity of all. This situation necessitates differences both in approaches and in solutions. Eventually architecture perennially transforms itself to meet the demands of the times creatively.

Thus the crucial concepts with respect to creativity in architecture can be pinned down as transformation, time/space and ‘difference’ - an observation which immediately brings to mind Jacques Derrida and his definition of difference.

2. Différence as Metaphor for Creativity

Derrida employs the French word différencé while endeavoring to demonstrate how speaking (saying) is no more significant than writing. The word is used as a pun, given that in spoken French the word différencé can mean either to differ from something or to defer to something. Culler (1982) [10] defines difference as a universal system of dissociations, discriminations, distances and differences between things. It is the point where those concepts/words which exist in the same vocabulary start to differ and deviate in terms of meaning.

The fundamental theories of architecture such as the classical-based on Plato’s Metaphysics and Pythagoras’s mathematics - as well as the Modern-based on scientific Positivism - used to operate on canons (ideos) and gained their power from repetition. No two Renaissance churches of the 15th Century Italy are identical; neither are any two Seljuk mosques of the 11th Century, but all mosques of a certain period are the same; so are all the churches, with nearly imperceptible differences which defer to the imminent changes.

By introducing the word différance into philosophy Derrida (1988) [11] proposed a powerful modification of the ordinary notions of identity and difference: ‘Any single meaning of a concept or text arises only by the effacement of other possible meanings, which are themselves only deferred, left over, for their possible activation in other contexts’ (Derrida, 1988) [11]. The implication is that when the deferred takes over, the text is no longer the same; a new identity, a new meaning, a new building style might have been achieved. This understanding reverberates with the ideas of deconstructionist historians who yearn for deferred or neglected evidence and/or meanings (White 1973 [12]; Southgate 1988, 2001 [13]; Jenkins 1991, 2003 [14]; Munslow 1997, 2006 [15]).

‘Trivial insignificance signifies a possibility… Insignificant trace is the mark of a difference a priori’ posits Derrida (1988) [11]. This idea may be likened to the concept of ‘MA’ (a short imperceptible interval) in Japanese dramas during which the subject matter changes, or probably draws from the term ‘inflection point’ in Deleuze’s philosophy, which implies an insignificant signifier of drops and rises in speech (Cache, 1995) [16].

In architecture, at the point where the inaudible is heard a noticeable break with the past might be taking place. It betrays itself by the absence of a rule or an element of design, the reversal of design hierarchies or trivialization of the past canons and conventions at the level of such major taxonomies of architecture as nature/culture, plan/façade, interior/exterior, communal/private, and so on. Similar emancipating and creative strategies might be valid for architectural history writing too.

In this brief essay, Derrida’s major discourse might be inter-contextualized by saying that ‘the creative is that which a différence a priori is’. Two elements of a system of signs or ideas, or an idea displaced from its original-historical context, facilitate the sensing of Différence. One cannot conceive of “old” without “young”, no “up” without “down”, no “day” without “night”, no “happy” without “sad”, and so on. One major différence introduced by Derrida is the presence/absence opposition. Derrida eloquently shows how their major difference is their inter-dependence. It is impossible to imagine some kind of absence without a reference to the principle of presence and vice versa. Absence is ‘the condition of being different of all possible differences’ says Derrida (1988) [11], and this conception might be the strongest case to start with in this essay for the purposes of making a convincing argument.

The mark of creativity might be the absence of some conventions and/or exclusion of some rules in architectural design. For instance, Benedikt (1992) [17] points to the corner windows employed by F. Ll. Wright and Mies van der Rohe as examples of the absence of corners, which strongly and ironically point to the presence of the corners which they are meant to abolish. In other words the absence of corners more declaratively pronounces their presence. They are gone but not gone.
'Traces' and 'Zombies', thus labeled by Derrida, indicate a state of indeterminacy and point to absence and/but presence at the same time. In addition to such dichotomies as the intelligible/sensible and the mind/body, 'playing over the limits' is another realm of difference pointed out by Bernard Tschumi (1996) [18]. Another interesting concept which should be mentioned here is the 'in-between' concept suggested by Eisenman, which can be employed for displacement and dislocation of existing architectural theories, discourses and canons (Grosz and Eisenman 2001) [19]. When the oppositions suggested by Heidegger and Derrida are interpreted in the discipline of architecture they become more manageable: structure/decoration, abstraction/figuration, figure/ground, form/function, interior/exterior and so on, and with these as a frame of reference, architecture can then start discovering the 'in-betweens' by dissolving these oppositions through negotiation and compromise.

The canons of the earlier periods in architecture were also based on certain dichotomies in which one side was valued over the other, as in Western metaphysics and literature: Egyptian architecture champions the columns, Roman the wall; Gropius valorizes served spaces, Kahn, Eisenman and Hadid valorize the servant spaces, this architect is socially responsible, that architect is merely formalist, etc. [17] Therefore reversal of hierarchies in design might be considered another trace of creativity. Valuable hierarchies in architecture might include: function/form, plan/volume (mass), intelligible/sensible, marginality/centrality, served/servant, fixed/flexible, stable/flowing, repetitive(Iterable)/unique, fit/misfit, discovered/invented, concept (mind)/vision (body), material/transcendental, concept (referent)/sign, and so on.

Similarly, in other disciplines, such as history, creative writing employs higher presentational qualities, values the sensible over the intelligible, and brings up marginal records, evidences and micro-testimonies. Such work tries to unveil unique cases as opposed to the repetitive. Such toil also shows signs of creativity, because such an endeavor necessitates it, in turn.

Pioneering a preference for an architectural taxonomy over the complimentary or substitutive other(s) so as to cause an unprecedented change in the overall conception of a particular space's organisation can be considered a strong trace of creativity. For instance, Max Berg's design of the roof of a sports facility as a lace-like concrete structure can be taken as a strong sign of creativity, given that traditionally roofs had to elicit a feeling of closedness and protection, whereas Berg's structure inflicts a feeling of limitlessness, of being 'open to the sky'. Gehry dissolved the contradiction of rectangular and organic forms in the Bilbao Guggenheim, and Eric Owen Moss refuted the force of gravity in his Box House. Deconstructionist architecture is an argument that identifies which terms of hierarchy (concepts or metaphors) are valued over which in the past, and for the purposes of reaching a 'better truth' looks for ways such hierarchies can be undone and/or overturned, or how some polarity can be reversed. One such polarity is marginality and centrality.

The word margin indicates nearness to the limits and edges but bears an uncertainty and ambiguity as to its being in or out. Centre, on the other hand, implies depth and focus with regard to dense meanings. The centre is where programs and activities take off to the extent that they are demarcated by an edge. This polarity can be likened to the thing and its shadow, the mask and its mold, the earth and the horizon. 'This is not a simple case of mixed metaphors, but rather of one metaphor that ricochets with and within, its own imagery'(1)

The decoration of rooms by F. L. Wright and Mies van der Rohe are contrasted by Benedikt in this respect. The former architect makes rich use of walls and thus emphasizes the periphery. The latter, by concentrating on the centre and leaving the periphery empty as a corridor, openly values the centre.

Kahn’s placement of book shelves, reading tables and personnel at the Exeter Library with respect to natural light obliterated the established rules of library design which had lasted for centuries and thereby contributed to a more efficient and productive understanding of library design. As mentioned above, the success of architectural solutions rests on the metaphor by which the oppositional states are resolved as forms in the imagination of architect designers. And creativity is that which while addressing the dichotomies upsets the pre-determined hierarchies and rules, and achieves a higher level of solution, as did Kahn.

Another important set of opposites in architectural design is the inside/outside polarity. These are interdependent oppositions. But unlike presence and absence they are material entities, although the human conception of both might be quite relative. Binary concepts such as inside/outside might exist in other complex systems and come up as a grave issue in defining the borders of disciplines, or in system/environment relations (Knodt 1995) [20]. In philosophy, although Kant favored framing the disciplines, Derrida rejected doing so and introduced the concept of “parergon” to refer to blurred, random and perhaps circumstantial limits between entities. In the contemporary practice of architecture the parergon, borrowing the term from Plato and Derrida, has been a major issue. In recent architecture the interface between inside and outside is ever more frequently made of glass, a practice which itself dissolves borders. Nevertheless the design of the partition between the inside and outside has always been a locus for
creativity in architecture. Questions concerning the limits of transparency and opacity, and where and how one should favor the former or the latter, await an answer from architects. An insignificant sign of creativity might perhaps be an actual or virtual balance maintained between such conflicting and/or competing pairs of architectural concepts as these.

Dislocating the ‘ideos’ per se through syntactic and semantic plays might also be a very creative undertaking (Eisenman 1988) [21]. As has been acknowledged by Saussure (1915) [22] the signifier and the signified are inseparably tied together, although the relationship is contextually and arbitrarily conventionalized. Questioning, upsetting or distorting this interrelationship might yield baffling and interesting results. The signified becomes emancipated from the signifier, and this separation leads to shock, confusion and perhaps catharsis in the audience. As has been underscored above, the dominant meaning of architecture resides in the history of architecture. The significance of plan typologies, formal relations, decorative styles and so on owe their lasting value to repetition over the years. Repetition (iterability) warrants meaning. To cause new meanings to be born is creativity in itself, and an architectural work which has the power to realize such an outcome is a creative product. Dissolution of relationships between the signifier and the signified might be illustrated through dislocated plans, sections or building elements in architecture.

Conventions in architecture repeat themselves as long as social patterns continue. Nevertheless the flow of times requires transformation of approaches in physical design so as to accommodate the new, the invented, the reversed, and the multiplied. Therefore Tschumi (1991) [8] suggests that architects ought to follow very closely the changes of time and should design accordingly. Thus any design which foresees possible changes in the flows and thus invents a future is the most creative of all. ‘Event architecture’ is proposed by Bernard Tschumi in this sense.

All of these concepts are elaborated in the definition of architectural creativity via appropriate architectural examples from the past and the validity of deconstructionist thought in architectural creativity is verified by Gür (2008) [23]. Now with all of these deconstruction concepts in mind, mosques as Islamic places of worship, most especially the Shah Faisal Mosque will be re-read below in order to back up the argument of this essay that architectural creativity is predicated upon deconstructive thought and that Shah Faisal Mosque is a good example.

3. Shah Faisal Mosque (2)

Mosques, palaces, caravansaries, tombs and castles are the basic building types of Islamic architecture. Mosques, which are the congregation areas of the Muslim world, and which embody religious messages, are the most privileged among these. In the context of both Islamic religion and architecture, mosque architecture, with all the creativity it requires, is not immune from Western rhetoric on creativity. Therefore the following study attempts to show how Islamic worship buildings can be read via the philosophy of deconstruction, one of the recent resourceful philosophies of West.

3.1 The Fundamental Meaning of the Mosque.

Islamic thought can be conceptualized as a system of thoughts that acknowledge alternative views on the relationships of man and space (Izutsu 2002) [24]. Islamic buildings are predicated upon the framework illuminated by this thought and on a certain moral ordinance. The meaning conveyed by the Islamic building is imbedded in the elements of the building and on the extent to which these integrate with the space enclosed within and without. In the Koran and the early religious texts mescid is the first word used for the worship space, and it is speculated that words such as mosque or mosquée are derived from mispronunciation or different pronunciations of this word (Önkal and Bozkurt 1993) [25].

According to Islam, Hz. Muhammed’s, the prophet’s, house is assumed to be the first mescid, and its courtyard plan sets the prototype for mosque designs. This house served as a religious and political gathering place for his first believers (Hasol 2002) [26]. However, Namaz, the basic ritual of Islam, demands no particular rules to be attended to during worship; thus, any place, even the natural environment, is a potential mescid in Islam (Grabar 1987) [27]. In the first official mosque of Islam, the Kaaba, no mihrab, minbar, minaret, shadervan or demarcated open spaces are used. These emerge slowly in the tradition of mosque design. These elements are symbolic entities which aid the praying crowd in associating with the concept of God (Aazam 2007) [28].

However the direction of the Kaaba designates the major virtual direction during the Namaz, the qibla to which the praying individual or group should turn their faces. This virtual direction mediates between the soul and God, integrating them into a harmonious whole. For this reason the location of the mosque is the basic metaphor in Islamic architecture. In Islamic communities the religion used to be a significant property and a strong sign of identity (Mardin 2008) [29], and mosques used to serve as a forum as well (Serjeant 1997) [30].

Constituent parts of the mosque can be divided into two major categories for purposes of exploration. The interior of the mosque consists of the main congregation area, the side congregation area and the last congregation area, which serves late-comers and stands for the entrance; the mihrab (a niche in the...
mosque indicating the direction of Mecca); the minbar (the pulpit, minber); the muezzin’s pew (muezzin mahfifil); the pew of the royalties (hünkär mahfîl); and the sermon lectern (vaaz kürsüsü). In the exterior space are minarets, the court, the shadervan (water tank with fountains) and ablation seats.

Mosque design has a past which is spread over a vast geography. Any attempt to categorize or epitomize mosques or to speak in terms of historical stages would have been rejected by deconstructionist historians who declare that categories, classes, epitomes, types or even stages are all invented by historians (Munslow 1997) [15]. ‘History and past are not ontologically co-terminous - “the past” is now only to be imagined, as it does not exist. History is created as a representational substitute for the past in the here and now’ (Munslow 1997) [15]. Nevertheless a selection of mosques from the Ottoman world reveal that the principles of tevhid (coming together and uniting), qibla and forum were univocally adhered to as religious conventions and canons in mosque design. Some innovative advances made through the ages include such types as the Court-Cloister (Revaklı), the Ulucami (flat or single hinged roofs with arbitrary small domes or no domes), the Single-domed, the Multi-domed, the 19th and the early 20th Century Eclectic (single domes), the Modern (regular and irregular plans), and the Postmodern-Eclectic (Table 1).

3.2 The Analysis. The Shah Faisal Mosque marks a turning point in the history of mosque design and has drawn severe criticism from some conservative Turkish architects on that score (Cansever 2007) [32]. The architectonics employed in the design of many of the architectural elements, such as the dome (shell), mihrab, minbar, side aisles, last congregation space, minarets, entrances, courts and façades have been totally re-interpreted in this specific case, constituting an excellent example for différance and the creativity embodied therein.

3.2.1 General principles. From a philosophical perspective the most outstanding metaphysical issue in Islamic thought is the concept of “Being” (Izutsu 2002) [24], given that in Islamic philosophy “Being” is a dynamic holistic state in which oppositions and polarities co-exist (Cansever 2007) [32]. Secondly, in Islam God requires no intermediary; therefore the religious space is neither mystic nor metaphorical. On the contrary, it is quite clear and solid. God is interpreted at a highly abstract level and the space is freed from all connotations except the vacuum nestled within. In Islam God is represented by nothingness and pure light, both of which strongly point to the presence of God. Absence here corresponds to absolute presence. In much of Islamic architecture space is defined by light, which adds a cosmological dimension to human interpretation (Nasr 1992) [33]. The Shah Faisal Mosque strongly points to the presence of God through the absences it creates. According to Naz (2005) [34] Dalokay has designed an unbiased and eternal form by longing for a lucent and crystalline space. He cross-references the treatises of the Koran and the Modern Age (Naz 2005) [34]. He makes use of the potential of the region and the possibilities of the advanced technology of his times in designing a building for worship purposes and to serve as a forum at the same time (Figure 1). The mosque, floating on the borders of the celestial and terrestrial, is not an object of art but an experiment for believers and worshippers, and its “in-between” state resolves the polarities gracefully (Durmuş 2009) [31].

Moreover, this mosque is Modern and non-Modern at the same time: with a concern for creating a form in respectful conformity with the principle of ‘tevhid’ the structure is designed from the outside in (Durmuş 2009) [31]. This approach contradicts the Modern canon of working from the inside (the plan) out (Figure 2), as professed by Le Corbusier (1923) [35]. Thus it upsets the Modern hierarchy of priorities from as early as the 70s, as it does in many other respects, discussed below.

3.2.2. Dome. As illustrated in Table 1, the tendency towards single-domed mosques has survived to date due to advances in structural technology which allow covering large spans without dense columnation. A multiplicity of forms for bridging large spans is used all over the world for different purposes. As noted by Goodwin (1971) [36], domes are embedded with significant meanings in the Western world and the eye is oriented to them by means of the enticing decorations of the drum. The evolution of Islamic architecture (Table 1) makes it apparent that the dome is merely a technical means to create an unimpeded space of worship in a context in which being in the first row during the Namaz is most highly valued. Nevertheless over time the dome gained certain significance and has been transformed into a conveyor of religious meaning. In early examples it might have been somewhat associated with the Pantheon’s cover, implying a welcome to all gods (Kuban 1997) [37]. But a dome has not necessarily implied a welcome from all connotations except the vacuum nested within. In Islam God is represented by nothingness and pure light, both of which strongly point to the presence of God. Absence here corresponds to absolute presence. In much of Islamic architecture space is defined by light, which adds a cosmological dimension to human interpretation (Nasr 1992) [33].
Table 1. The relationship between plan and dome within the main mosque types (Durmuş 2009) [31]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Dome Type</th>
<th>Plan</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mosque Type 1</td>
<td>Court-Cloister (Revaklı)</td>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image3" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosque Type 2</td>
<td>Ulucami (Flat or single hinged roofs with arbitrary domes or no domes)</td>
<td><img src="image4" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image5" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image6" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosque Type 3</td>
<td>Single-domed</td>
<td><img src="image7" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image8" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image9" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosque Type 4</td>
<td>Multi-domed</td>
<td><img src="image10" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image11" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image12" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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(to be continued).

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Mosque Type</strong></th>
<th><strong>Mosque Type 5</strong></th>
<th>19th Century - the retreat to the single dome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ortaköy Mosque</strong></td>
<td>Ortaköy Mosque (1854)</td>
<td>Istanbul, Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Modern (irregular plans)</strong></td>
<td>Modern (irregular plans)</td>
<td>The modern movement in Turkey showed its effects in the early 20th century, first in small-scale mosques. This minimal approach questioned the dome of the various stylistic variations. The Kınalıada mosque is an example of this category. The irregular plan and the small scale of this mosque, laid out in a southeast/northeast direction as a cross, has an increasingly narrowed yard. The interior of the mosque is made up of a polygon with six unequal sides.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kınalıada Mosque</strong></td>
<td>Kınalıada Mosque (1964)</td>
<td>Istanbul, Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Modern (regular plans)</strong></td>
<td>Modern (regular plans)</td>
<td>Vedat Dalokay’s proposed mosque for Pakistan’s capital, Islamabad, was awarded first prize for the project. The worship area, based on a square plan, is covered by an eight-sided octahedral, and a triangular pyramidal concrete skin is supported by four concrete carriers. The dome, built with a triangular shell, contains 90 square meters of openness, and yet it is surrounded by four minarets that are 90 meters high. It is among the most important examples of Turkey mosque architecture in the modern sense.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shah Faisal Mosques</strong></td>
<td>Shah Faisal Mosques (1976-86)</td>
<td>Islamabad, Pakistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Postmodern (Eclectic)</strong></td>
<td>Postmodern (Eclectic)</td>
<td>The project proposed by Cumhur Keskinok was accepted by TEK (Turkey Electricity Authority) and built in Ankara Gölbâş. The approach to the mosque is provided along the axis symmetry of the structure. The plan consists of an octagon framework established via eight double structural elements. The mosque, applied at the local scale, represents a return from the modern to the traditional.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TEK Mosque</strong></td>
<td>TEK Mosque (1986-88)</td>
<td>Ankara, Turkey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The main characteristics of this type of mosque: arch material and interior and exterior decoration, especially on the stairs, have a baroque effect. The Ortaköy mosque, built by Abdülmecid for architects Garabet Balyan and Nigoğos Balyan, consists of a harim section, a main area with a square plan and a space that opens off the northern part of the main space.
The Islamic architecture that bonds internal meaning with external forms and that builds architecture with moral significance has done so using a number of geometric forms (Nasr 1992) [33]. The dome simply serves as a roof to protect the congregation from the physical environment on the one hand, with its centrality and celestial connotations inside enriching the ‘Being’ with the presence of God on the other (Nasr 1992) [33]. In other words, as a compositional element, a constituent of the architectural whole, the dome has gained its meaning through repetition, as many other forms, figures and styles have done throughout history (Figure 3).

The Shah Faisal Mosque is a square covered with eight-faced triangular shells, without the traditional dome and side aisles. Nevertheless the overall structure traces a huge dome placed on the four corners of the square. The mosques distances itself from the traditional vault-dome system, upsetting the collective memory, but so strongly underlining the idea of the dome, that while there is no dome, there is yet a stronger dome.

3.2.3. Side aisles. Fundamental to Islamic philosophy is the creation of an unimpeded holistic space wherein a maximum number of prayers can congregate and line up in the first valuable rows. Therefore the central push to the sides instead of to the back formerly required more lateral space, which created the architectural problem of covering the side extensions. Traditionally this problem has been solved by the use of smaller domes on each

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side of the mosque, resulting in a range of external forms. In the Shah Faisal Mosque the large span is bridged via a competent structure which eliminates the side aisles by carrying the limits of the inside to the edges, overlapping with the structural borders (Figure 4). The center and sides co-operate to form an excellent whole. In this mosque, the traditional masonry walls which formerly served as load-bearing elements rather than to separate the space into meanings also melt into air; memories of traditional dome undersides are sharply upset; the roof replaces them with its much larger glass elements as compared to the past, and allow light to flow in (Figure 5). The idea of the mosque interior has been totally dislocated at the Shah Faisal Mosque. The periphery being visually obviated to the centre dissolves the marginality/centrality polarity through declining beams, and by way of a smooth koram the space becomes ‘One’. There are no side aisles. But because of the decreasing height of the ceiling there are side aisles (Figure 6). Evoking Derrida’s zombies, the side aisles are dead, yet alive.

Furthermore the choice of the structure in this mosque shifts the significance from the mihrab to the dome, undermining an important Islamic canon, and upsetting the traditional hierarchy.

3.2.4. Mihrab. In the development of mosque concepts the mihrab has gained symbolic meaning from very early times on (Grabar 1987) [27], although it does not appear in the earliest designs. It has joined in the procession as a niche which denotes the qibla (kiblah) and serves as the pulse of worship and connotes God. In time it became a regular element of the design of the holy space (Burckhardt 1976) [38].

In the Shah Faisal Mosque the mihrab, rather than being designed as a traditional niche, has been designated as an entire south wall (Figure 7). The mihrab has thus been deconstructed in scale, material and form. The kiblah naturally retains its value but the ideas of mihrab has been totally disrupted and dislocated. Rather than playing the role of an altar it has been domesticated and secularized. Rather than an object, it is turned into a structural and sculptural element. There is no mihrab,
but there is a mihrab, more powerful and colorful.

3.2.5. Minbar (Pulpit). The minbar (pulpit) is the bench placed on the right side of the mihrab on an elevated platform where the hutbe (discourse) is delivered at Namaz times. The form of the minbar at the Shah Faisal Mosque is simply a “shock”. Although the traditional canon of elevating the minbar is preserved the form itself is extremely sculptural and statuesque, disrupting all existing visions of the minbar (Figure 7).

3.2.6. The last congregation area. The last congregation space is the elevated platform with a roof annexed to the main building on the entrance façade. This element merges with the cloister in courtyard typologies. In the other types of mosque it is merely an element which forms the entrance façade.

The last congregation space at the Shah Faisal Mosque is a reinforced concrete canopy which consists of seven pieces supported by columns and is half the height of the main building (Figure 8). In this way a very old tradition is reinterpreted via the employment of new materials and techniques. An inevitable space of worship is preserved but a totally new form and matter is protracted from it. It is there not to separate inside and outside but to serve as a preliminary and preparatory space for the main space by dissolving the borders between the two (Figure 9). The court idea is totally abandoned; the ideos is dislocated and displaced.

3.2.7. Exterior elements. The effort to make the call for prayer (azan) from the highest point of the area’s topography caused minarets to rise. Contrary to the traditional examples, the body, balcony (şerefe, sherephe) and the coif (külah) of the Shah Faisal Mosque’s minarets are composed as a single element (Figure 10). However as far as the number and placing of the minarets, the mosque is in line with tradition, and these recall the minarets of Ottoman mosques (Durmuş 2009) [31].

In great mosques the shadervan - the ablution area - is an important part of the traditional scheme, because ablution is an important ritual for Namaz (Gönençen 1999) [39]. For the Shah Faisal Mosque the ablution space is interpreted in a more isolated way congruent with modern terms of privacy (Figure 11). This solution creates a new conception of inside/outside.

Vedat Dalokay, the architect, made use of the location, and some features of the environment likely supplied some hints for the design. The shape of the overall dome replicates that of the hills surrounding it, for example (Naz 2005) [34] (Figure 12). The architect himself
contends that the simple basic form of the Kaaba inspired him to a large extent (Dalokay 1990 [40]; Şenyapılı 1969 [41]). But we believe that the inspiration came also from within.

![Fig. 10. Exterior elements (minarets) of the Shah Faisal Mosque (left).](image1)

![Fig. 11. Exterior element (ablution area) of the Shah Faisal Mosque (right).](image2)

![Fig. 12. The feature of the dome and the hills surrounding the Shah Faisal Mosque](image3)

### 3.3 Concluding Statement for the Case

In terms of the particular structure of the Shah Faisal Mosque, points which differ from tradition and which evince creativity can be summarized as follows:

- The Shah Faisal Mosque approaches the dome not as an architectural shape but as a theme. The common shape and uses of the dome have been rendered through a new syntax.
- The hierarchical value is on the dome; other forms have secondary importance. Meaning becomes difficult as long as the sign repeats.
- The construction is a trace; it points to a dome but the dome is as if absent. Also, the framework of the building is drawn as if with a dome.
- Bearing walls are not used; the dome is also a factor which encloses the whole building. Because of this shift, there is a deconstruction of structural hierarchy.
- With side stages destroyed, the inside-outside boundary has been moved to the place where the inside terminates.
- The last congregation area is preserved as an idea, but is formally deconstructed. With the last congregation area’s form, the inside-outside boundary is melted.

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A wall surface undertakes the mihrab’s role. The mihrab is deconstructed in terms of scale, material and form with respect to the idea of qibla.

The mihrab and minbar depart from traditional examples and point out crucial differences.

To summarize, Dalokay’s Shah Faisal Mosque is a deconstructionist interpretation of the Ottoman central space tradition. In keeping with the principle of tevhid the mosque displays a consciousness of the truth of the individual being as an extension of nature; and this is the reason for the existence (raison d’être) of the being (Nasr 1992) [33]. Centrality is achieved by the employment of appropriate techniques and materials which have made bridging large spans possible. The mosque has reiterated the dominant meaning of ‘the mosque’ by utilizing and repeating the tevhid idea but by deconstructing and questioning the elements of the mosque, and has thus subjected the imbedded meanings of elements to argument.

A “proper” history would have brought up documents concerning the competition or procedures involved in work acquisition; would have presented the orthographic set, the materials employed and the land covered; and probably would have compared the subject visually with its contemporaries through photographs. An architectural history course, constrained by time, would have rendered the subject to students in an even more concise fashion, leading students of architecture to blind interpretations if any. In the above case all the inquiry has been mediated by deconstruction principles and the principles of différance, reversal of hierarchy, shock, and dislocations because these are utilized boldly if inadvertently in the innovative conception of the Shah Faisal mosque so as to underline the differences it realized in the conception of mosque design.

Also such elaboration on the case has made clear that Islamic buildings are also affected by creative moves; that creativity is an all-encompassing term incorporating plan and appearance; that creativity is achieved by thinking in terms of themes (the dome, the mihrab, the minbar, side aisles, the last congregation space, etc.) rather than relying on typologies adopted from the past; that innovative syntaxes may still convey the dominant meanings, and may even reinforce them better.

4. Conclusion

This re-reading of a religious building might have made clear that the basic oppositions and terms of deconstructionist philosophy are appropriate tools for an investigation of creativity. In the Shah Faisal Mosque creative instances coincide with deconstructionist terms with no imposition or compulsion. These can be made full use of in architectural criticism, especially in dealing with formal situations.

This analysis has also demonstrated that deconstruction is by no means a new concept in architecture. Inadverently, may be the idea of deconstruction and the différance phenomenon existed in architecture, both scientifically and philosophically speaking, long before being articulated by Derrida. It may be argued that it has always been with the discipline of architecture and perhaps always will be. It has probably been a mode of creative thinking exercised throughout the history of architecture.

Lastly, the study unintentionally but quite convincingly demonstrated that Islamic places of worship are affected by creative attacks and Islam is not an obstacle to creativity. On the contrary: there is every reason to acknowledge the richness and possibility of Islamic architecture both as found in standing examples, and as imagined in what may be yet to come.

Notes

(1). Benedikt, referring to Walden Pond, p.18.
(2). ‘Shah Faisal Mosque’ subheading is an enlarged part of the second author’s (Serap Durmuş) master thesis which is under the supervision of the first author (Prof. Dr. Şengül Öymen Gür). And also the thesis was partially sponsored by TÜBİTAK (The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey).
(3). See the Ulucami model, Table-1

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Visual Document References

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**Figure 2.**
http://slaza.deviantart.com/art/King-Faisal-Mosque-Islamabad-5613347

**Figure 3.** http://www.panoramio.com/photo/11503281

**Figure 4.**

**Figure 5.**
http://k43.pbase.com/g4/18/75718/2/61481625.ISL_1 081.jpg

**Figure 6.**

**Figure 7.**

**Figure 8.**

**Figure 9.**
http://blogs.denverpost.com/captured/wp-content/photos/morenatti0015.jpg

**Figure 10.**
http://www.superstock.com/stock-photos-images/156 6-395129

**Figure 11.**

**Figure 12.**