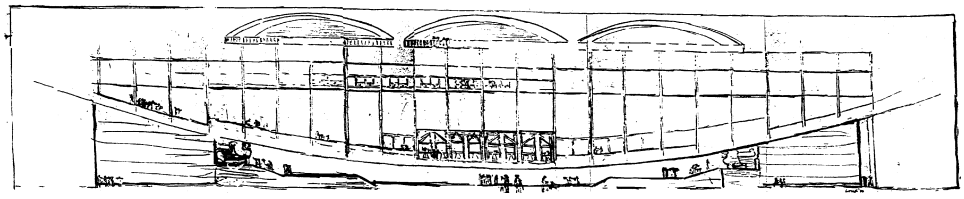

Above
Louis I. Kahn, Palazzo dei Congressi, Venice, Italy 1968–74; perspective 1970

past. It was in fact this recognition of history without facile imitation of its earlier forms that marked their major contribution. Scarpa said that in Venice he was at the junction of Europe and the Orient being influenced particularly by Hoffmann and the Vienna Secession and by the architecture of Japan, as well as by Frank Lloyd Wright, himself indebted to Japanese art and architecture. Kahn's architecture, on the other hand, might appropriately be described as 'doric': an architecture of simplicity, mass and seriousness that stemmed from a deep understanding of the characteristics of Graeco-Roman building.

Individuality of varying degrees has been evident in all artistic creation. We ascribe a work of art to a particular artist because of tell-tale signs in the work. This is true even when the output of contemporaries appears to be quite close.

Recently, for example, Frank Gehry and Daniel Libeskind are contemporaries who both pursue a non-orthogonal architecture for the same building type – the museum – yet create answers that show their personal signature. This an age-old phenomenon which it would not be worth mentioning were it not that critics in some sectors of the public often clamour for a more anonymous architecture, for a conscious and thus unattainable vernacular.

The sequence of P_1 to P_2 stems from Karl Popper's attempt to define the nature of science and to describe the characteristics of significant research. The controversial outcome was the line of demarcation between science and non-science where science is always potentially falsifiable. This went against the accepted position that scientific theories represented ultimate truths. In Popper's view they were only the best and

most rigorously corroborated statements at a particular time. The line of demarcation in no way implies a value judgement; both sides were important. Popper made this abundantly clear: 'Man has created new worlds – of language, of music, of poetry, of science; and the most important of these is the world of moral demands, for equality, for freedom, and for helping the weak' (Popper, 1944/66). Art – and thus architecture – might also have been included on that list.

Clearly architecture as a totality is not falsifiable. We cannot establish that the structure of a building, its function, its services, its appearance, its symbolism and the variety of other aspects can all be falsified together and thus invalidate the building as a whole. Architecture is firmly on the non-science side of the line. All past efforts to claim that it was a science have failed.

Yet, and perhaps paradoxically, the claim is being made that the sequence of scientific research and the sequence of the design process show many similarities. I would, in fact, argue that it represents the closest parallel that we can find. Nor am I alone in such a belief. Ernst Gombrich in his 1956 Mellon lectures on 'the visible world and the Language of Art' (which became the book *Art and Illusion*) said:

> 'The description of the way science works is eminently applicable to the story of visual discoveries in art. Our formula of schema and correction, in fact, illustrates the very procedure. You must have a starting point, a standard of comparison, in order to begin that process of making and matching and re-making which finally becomes embodied in the finished image. The artist cannot start from scratch but he can criticise his forerunners.'
> (Gombrich, 1960/77, p.272)

Gombrich was primarily discussing the work of painters and his examples came from painting and drawing. His statement is, however, equally relevant to architecture.