



Above  
**Frank O. Gehry &  
 Associates**, Santa Monica  
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The congruence between the scientific search and the design process may not be related to any similarity between science and architecture but stem from the fact that both are research processes. Both are arguably looking for an explanation of some future event; an event which does not occur randomly.

Gombrich concludes his statement that the artist 'can criticise his forerunners'. Indeed he must. Partly, in order to refrain from simply creating novelty for its own sake. This has, as a rule, a low value in terms of building stepping stones to the future. Mainly, though, to create experiments which satisfy the needs of the present, physically and emotionally, and which are experiments which can be continued into the future. This is not to claim an evolutionary sequence; architecture does not 'improve' 'or develop', it simply is an experiment at a particular time. If it survives it is judged with historical hindsight to have been an appropriate hypothesis.

Gothic, for instance, turned out to be a daring and robust innovation when it originated in the Ile-de-France in the 12th century. It lasted for nearly four hundred years, spreading to Germany, England and later Spain, and somewhat weakly in Italy. It was revived in the 19th century. Post-modernism, on the other hand, was a brief escapade at the end of the 20th century that seems to have left few discernible traces. The error elimination step occurs also, it seems, at a much longer time cycle than that of an individual design project.

It is highly crucial to architecture that criticism can and does occur at various stages, that it is one of the necessary steps of the process. It is probably even more crucial in fields outside architecture and none more so than in politics. The worst excesses of the last hundred years have been staged because of a belief in an unchallengeable and uncritical correctness. The essence of dictatorship is the suppression of criticism; democracy is – or should be – the possibility and encouragement of criticism. Or to make a possibly exaggerated claim, the way we design – the way we recognise problems, produce tentative hypotheses, that are in need of criticism and which, for the time being, become the best surviving answers – might be taken as a model for our political conduct. If the present era is the age of democracy, then it is by corollary also the age of criticism.