

MODULE TITLE: Cultural Context of Architecture VI
MODULE CODE: ARC 711B1
HAND OUT No: 28
Essential Reading: -

Epistemic Shifts

The term is derived from the work of Bachelard
<http://www.vusst.hr/ENCYCLOPAEDIA/bachelard.htm>
(Sic)

If we stick to the basic features of the module thus far we have language and behaviour, revolution (towards democracy) arising out of the propensity for individuals to think. There is then the problem of designing for thinkers rather than 'people'. Then we have social and cultural propensities to wish that people and things were like something, termed hegemonies,
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hegemony#Theories_of_hegemony
and finally the hypothesis that Heidegger in thinking about dwelling is actually thinking about wisdom (gained by experience) rather than living in a hut!

During our meeting last week (the 14th November in 2007) we emphasized language as the basic cause of intelligence, it is what makes us appear intelligent, and recursivity
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Recursion#References>
which we can take to mean nesting or quoting or even repeating-but-with-added-otherbits so as to get the idea that the repeat of a function in order to complete another function is clever, do this, with this and this, to get this at least that seems to be the idea.

We spoke about mind and I made the suggestion that mind may well be simply the reference we make to recursive actions carried out by our neural organisation that do not seem to be totally controlled by us, rather like walking, we do not have to think about it in general – just occasionally tweak it a little – it is a general propensity we have to walk, and to think. This is to say something like we have a mind *like* a computer but acknowledging that the computer (mind) is not doing anything it is us, it is our computer and if you bust it up you have wires and metal and plastic. Then why not simply call it a brain, well problematically it is not the brain that makes us clever, loads of animals have brains but they do not have language in the way that we do, they have protolanguage, sounds that seem to mean something however experiments have shown that for example an ape will make a noise about food or danger whether or not an infant is in the vicinity, so the idea of communication is not about making a noise so much as expecting another person to **know** that the noise is about something like food or danger.

This knowing can be acquired either by genetic input, as in the case of much of the animal world who are born ready for living as what they are, but it is online hardwired as they say, whereas we human beings seem to need a lot of support after birth and this includes getting us up to speed on what we need to know, so instruction is also important. The concept of conditioning is one in which reward and punishment, very much a part of education, conditions the individual. Where this is not done by force or superstition we can use the word hegemony to indicate the control that is willingly-ish followed.

All may be well if there is an economic or sustainable life by allowing social and cultural hegemony, the control socially or culturally as interactions with people or artefacts, to flourish, however for several reasons this may not remain economic or sustainable (economic in a homeostatic way not just or even at all financial)
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homeostasis>

there can be catastrophic failures of normality when individuals break away from conditioned responses and this has been described by – Thomas Kuhn – as a revolution http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Structure_of_Scientific_Revolutions and is associated with the term – paradigm – a model of the way things work

catastrophic failures like revolutions and paradigm shifts are closely associated with Bachelard's thinking on epistemic shifts, the notion of learning from the way we do things whilst also questioning what it is that we are learning and why it is that doing things *this* way remains important – for whom and for what?

Arendt's notion of revolution and of social space is that of constant discovery and planning as an interaction essential to the well being of the basic labouring and working necessary to keep alive (labour) and sustain living (work). The plan is both a means to an end and also a straight jacket for everyone involved in it, by its nature it removes the possibilities that exist without it. Understanding when the plan must remain and when to replan and even tear up the plan and rethink everything calls for wisdom, the experience of replanning and planning and seeing outcomes that work and that do not work, thus the place of dwelling for intelligent beings is wisdom, the ability to take advantage of the plan without having the plan take advantage of those it is meant to keep alive to possibilities that exist for planning and so on, recursive isn't it! The plan constantly re-planned using parts of the original plan in the new plan and so on.

Just look at what Karl Mannheim wrote [Mannheim K, 1936, **Ideology and Utopia**, London, Routledge, 1966]

The aim of these studies is to investigate not how thinking appears in textbooks on logic, but how it really functions in public life and in politics as an instrument of collective action. [p.1]

The concept of the thinking of one superbrain (ideology) and the reification of form or matter (utopia) as being the pinnacles of achievement rather than a warning to the unwise has moved on very little partly because these radical thinkers who give the alarm, tend to be constantly opposed by the established accumulations of plans and those who have the advantage within them when they are not interested in radical thinking because it destroys plans – all quite obvious really but interesting when we are beginning to actually believe that change is inevitable and learning how to deal with change, epistemic shifts, is actually good for us.

See a bit about Mannheim at

<http://www.leedstrinity.ac.uk/depart/media/staff/ls/Modules/Theory/Mannheim.htm>