MODULE TITLE: Cultural Context of Architecture II

MODULE CODE: ARC116B2

HAND OUT No: 7

Ideology and Utopia I

Essential Books for the course

- **Baird G,** The Space of Appearance, Cambridge Ma; London, MIT Press, 2003

Book/s to take a look at

- **Hearn. F.** Ideas That Shaped Buildings. MIT. MA. 2003

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ideology

We must see images as transcendentally completed phenomena that can be put into constructs and programs made possible by our propensity for behaviour such as thought, speech, numeracy and fabrication.

There is a problem with utopia and ideology because they raise the image to the symbolic by locating image within a rational and thus meaningful construct and/or program

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Utopia

Since we cannot know reality and yet we experience it at first hand it is difficult to determine exactly what it is about behaviour that could become so perfect. In fact William Morris wrote 'news from nowhere' [1890], the road to utopia, as an impossible-to-achieve perfection

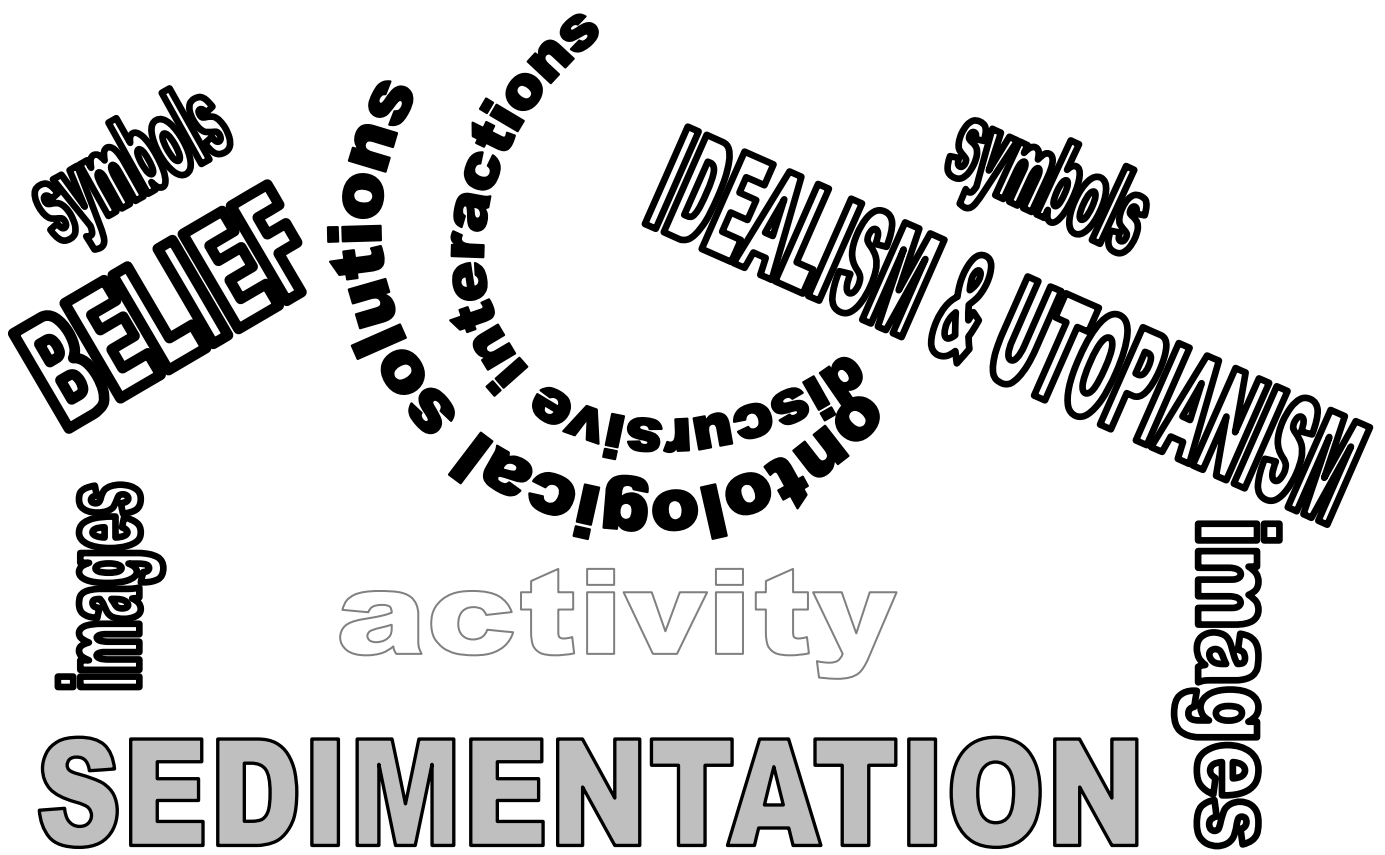http://www.cambridge.org/uk/catalogue/catalogue.asp?isbn=9780521422338

One of the most important texts in regard to ideology and utopia is that of Karl Mannheim - Mannheim K, first published in 1936, Ideology and Utopia, London, Routledge, 1966.

Ideologies and Utopias tend to find a relationship with imperial relationships of all kinds that were gradually challenged by the French 1789 and Russian 1917 socialist revolutions in particular. The socialist revolutions, as opposed to the bourgeois revolutions in England 1640 and America 1775 were more concerned with humanity than with management and extend to the species whereas the bourgeois revolutions tend towards nationalism. Frankly it suits kings and queens and perhaps even academics and philosophers to suggest that perfection is possible demanding that individuals become agents and even slaves to them. The point you should have learnt from semiotics is that our images use space and time so that they go through the body and surroundings in a recognisable way whereas our experience is not so easy to pin down hence the ambiguity and equivocation of experience relative to image.

The diagram below gives some idea of the way phenomenology might deal with the problem. The phenomena can be taken as simply experience. An understanding of it may be attempted by firstly recognition and then rationalisation, by means of various behaviours that include thinking and acting. These behaviours may become valuable by relating phenomena to space and time and other individuals. Thus the ambivalence and equivocation of any phenomena may be reduced or increased

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allowing us to be more or less insistent on the sort of behaviour we find acceptable for ourselves, others and also in and for various situations in which we exist or intend to exist.

symbols
BELIEF
ontological solutions
discursive interactions
IDEALISM & UTOPIANISM
symbols
images
images
activity
SEDIMENTATION

Beliefs and ideologies and utopian models rely on keeping the lid on we could say. The images we are supposed to use in any constructs and/or programs are prescribed. We find that other images are proscribed, or hidden from view, made opaque, by presenting us with an ideology, and/or belief that conceals what is really happening.

One of the largest ideological conceits is of course the narrative itself, sometimes known as historicism and/or scientism, which is the tendency to believe that they explain the real world and all its details and that the world is a steadily unfolding or evolving perfection or at least a narrative rather than a claim made using images that may be solipsistic (self referencing) as images but not as what they claim to refer to and a symbiosis that may be **fruitful** or **sterile** for us.

Please note that in your essay the complexity you are trying to explain exists because architecture is not a thing but a construct and a program that is made by many different individuals and thus it is pluralistic and relative, some correlates with other constructs and programs so that on many occasions there is agreement amongst several groups that in the longer term do not share time and space: architecture plays a large part in this dynamic.

For example people may agree and also disagree that a specific building is good so clearly there is not a good or a not good about the building itself it is made known by the space it takes up, the time we spend in it and around it, and since 500BC by the way we refer to it. What matters is the way it participates in our experience – inevitably what is appropriate will vary according to what is considered important as experience set against meaning (rationalised relationships) not only for the individual but also for others on an inter-subjective basis and also as a resource on several levels, intellectual, physical and economic.