

MODULE TITLE: Cultural Context of Architecture VII

MODULE CODE: ARC 711B1

HAND OUT No: 29

Essential Reading:

Read the Maturana extract given:

Maturana A + Varela, *The Tree of Knowledge*, Shambhala, Boston and London, 1998
Various pages

The difficulty for architects is to see architecture as something that interests them and also defines them within various contextual relationships fixed by what they do and what they do it in. The structure itself is a definition of its parts, the usual part whole relationship, which through no fault of its own is irrevocably losing its reality for however long it remains fixed as a structure.

During the Middle Ages, Vienna was home to the Babenberg Dynasty and in 1440 AD became residence city of the Habsburg dynasties from where Vienna eventually grew to become the capital of the Holy Roman Empire and a cultural centre for arts and science, music and fine cuisine. In the 16th and 17th centuries, the Ottoman armies were stopped twice outside Vienna (see Siege of Vienna, 1529 and Battle of Vienna, 1683).

In 1804, Vienna became capital of the Austrian Empire and continued to play a major role in European and World politics, including hosting the 1814 Congress of Vienna. After the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 Vienna remained the capital of what was then the Austro-Hungarian Empire. During the latter half of the 19th century the city developed what had previously been the bastions and glacis into the Ringstraße, a major prestige project. Former suburbs were incorporated, and the city of Vienna grew dramatically.

See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vienna>

Logical positivism (later and more accurately called logical empiricism) is a school of philosophy that combines empiricism, the idea that observational evidence is indispensable for knowledge of the world, with a version of rationalism incorporating mathematical and logico-linguistic constructs and deductions in epistemology.

Logical positivism grew from the discussions of a group called the "First Vienna Circle" which gathered at the Café Central before World War I. After the war Hans Hahn, a member of that early group, helped bring Moritz Schlick to Vienna. Schlick's Vienna Circle, along with Hans Reichenbach's Berlin Circle, propagated the new doctrines more widely in the 1920s and early 1930s.

See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Logical_positivism

1. experience is the only source of knowledge
2. logical analysis performed with the help of symbolic logic is the preferred method for solving philosophical problems

The problem with this is, as discussed in Maturana (reading extract) is that in order to have a symbolic logic the structure and its parts must have fixed relationships at the level of material objects in such a way that both the objects and the structure remain certain. This rules out serendipity and the subliminal and so it also rules out reality which is full of serendipitous and subliminal perturbations of sedimented relationships.

The issues for architects are not clear to us if we look at the role architects play within a structured relationship according to the structured rules and axioms as set out by such a structure however we are the architects and thus our reality is very much open to the serendipitous and subliminal perturbations of everyday life. As the structured relationship of any definition of what an architect is takes us further and further away from the reality of the everyday we become less and less relevant to reality and more and more located within a scripted and fixed structure whose parts dictate to us how we used them for so long as we link ourselves to that structure. The most obvious concrete form of that relationship is the one we know as identity and social hierarchy in which we play out our architectural practice according to an identification of our role and the place we have in society and the belief that other individual will approve of getting it right and disapprove of getting it wrong.

The practice of creativity has to decide between

- 1 playing with levels of tolerance that exist on an axis perpendicular to that of the social hierarchy and cultural hegemony of any structured whole, which gets more difficult the more the creative practitioner finds themselves part of the very hierarchy they are playing around with, and
- 2 practicing an existential hermeneutic phenomenological effort to create new objects out of serendipitous and subliminal experiences that threaten the status quo and thereby remove many possible opportunities there might otherwise have been for personal advancement by removing the hierarchy by removing the very basis on which it operates which is the structured whole that is dissolved by the lack of its objects, rules, axioms and boundaries and
- 3 practicing an existential hermeneutic phenomenological and social effort to observe boundaries, axioms, rules and even objects that exist whilst at the same time managing the introduction of the results of serendipitous and subliminal inseminations so that an existing social action and cultural hegemony can remain intact yet relevant to what is real.

We must also remember the problems of plurality in social action which means that whilst objects appear to us all they are functional in different ways amongst second person groups (social groups) who can acknowledge the third person quantitative values but not second person functions without second person knowledge. This requires tolerance and a phenomenological location for all first person individuals who must negotiate their behaviour according to the number and tractability of second person groups which may be large in number and obtuse in their interpretation of meaning.

The phenomenological location of first person individuals is the transmitted field, which is the place of appearance of all phenomena for human beings as a species and from which biochemical change finds its way according to the hegemonic influences within the immediate environment that may encourage rapidity and habit or contemplation and exploration.