

MODULE TITLE: Cultural Context of Architecture VII

MODULE CODE: ARC 731

HAND OUT No: 31 - *Husserl and Phenomenology*

Essential Reading:

Dreyfus H L, *Husserl Intentionality and Cognitive Science*, Bradford MIT Press, Cambridge + London, 1982

Dreyfus H L, *Being in the World*, Cambridge Massachusetts and London England, MIT Press, 1997

Students should read the Editor's Introduction to the *Phenomenology Reader (PR)*, edited by Moran D and Mooney T, Published by Routledge 2002 a copy of which will be on the website.

There is a slight alteration to the description of phenomenology as given, however, and that is that I prefer students to understand phenomenology as inclusive of serendipitous and subliminal experiences. The importance of this is that whilst we can agree that phenomenology requires an effort to be conscious of consciousness as being conscious of the appearance of 'things' it is in the free association of those things that phenomenological effort works to align 'things' to each other free from structured couplings that wait to seduce and invite¹.

You will note that according to page.1 of *PR* Husserl aimed to avoid constructivist system-building – and this links strongly to Lacan's sense of all representative links to reality being constructs, structural systems that couple the appearance of a thing to a thought or deed as performance. Some of you who are familiar with the Situationist International² will have some thoughts about this. The problem noted by the situationists is that of prescription, the writing of documents that precede action particular when those documents are written by a chain of command working from top to bottom whilst those they are written for are otherwise free to act according to their whims and fancies. Typical of SI examples would be the tourist guide that 'tells you how to consume a city or even a country' rather than you finding out for yourself according to your own situation.

Phenomenology seeks to restore the richness of the world as experienced (*PR*. p.2)

Many interpretations actually get in the way of any architectural development of Husserl's proposed phenomenological effort because the effort is directed towards what might be called method rather than play. The most usual directions are those that push phenomenology towards spectacle rather than as a material mechanics.

Examples are Norberg Schultz C, *Existence Space and Architecture*, Studio Vista, London, 1972, Norberg Schultz C, *Genius Loci*, London, Academy Editions, 1980, and Day C, *Building With Heart*, Green Books, 1990 in which the appearance of the picturesque and romantic images provide spectacle rather than any direct and conscious relationships between an individual and experience. The point is that direct and conscious relationships are not immediate but recursive in which individuals relive the moment of experience as situated in the world as individuals and not as

¹ By seduce and invite I am translating lack of effort and the use of 'historical' outcomes into metaphorical terms, it is the nervous system that stands ready to re-cognise 'things' and place them in context 'as previously' or 'as before'.

² McDonough T (ed), *Guy Debord and the Situationist International*, Cambridge Mass London, MIT Press, 2004

spectators of some spectacle made for them. The fact that there are others in the world makes it incumbent upon every individual to decide to what degree that fact matters to them. The resulting equation forces individuals to transact with the world which is to say acting on the world as interactive relationship rather than some chess board with moves.

Students should read:

Psychological Influences Understood in Architecture_Wiki Site (PIUA)

It covers several areas of interest that keep cropping up in architectural discourse such as Gestalt and Behavioural Studies. Comments such as part-and-whole will keep cropping up in discourse and are a direct reference to Gestalt theory, for which read PIUA. It also refers to the psychologist William James who is partly responsible for pragmatics along with the American psychologist Charles Peirce and behaviourism which is still influencing environmental design disproportionately when compared to human needs generally.

Students should get the question right on the development from Kant to the present day understanding that people have – people who have authority over them (sic). Immanuel Kant 1729-1804 is credited with resolving issues of *rationalism* and *empiricism* that had developed from Descartes' introduction of consciousness in the 17th Century into arguments between Leibniz and Hume on what lay behind the two sources of thought, some immanent logic or some inevitable cause. Opinions framed attributions of *thought* or *action* to events performed at the time and included extending those events beyond anything that was known for sure that could be checked out by any individual to what we can call metaphysics, what lays behind what can be checked out.

Kant pointed out that the individual is the author of any interpretation such that concepts of thoughts by the individual and causes acting on the individual are subsumed or transcended into an isomorphic procedural and declarative interaction such that it can be known to others. What this means is that the individual is a producer of interpretations and understandings based on his or her situation in the world. This does not mean that they are right or wrong but that they are authors of a narrative or narratives when called upon to speak or write *declarations* and *procedures*. The resources that we draw upon in order to speak and write are *free* or *licensed* and if licensed are so licensed by whom? We may also ask about the nature of freedom when as individuals we depend upon resources in order to think or act.

Jean Piaget 1896 – 1980 raised significant issues about licensing in his work on 'structuralism' that included concepts of *accommodation* and *assimilation* in connection with what I call *performance-boundaries* that correspond to limitations upon thought and action provided for others or by others and that apply to the individual or not.

The Bretton-Woods agreement after the second 'world' war (sic) set aside much interesting diversity in favour of harmonisation and the pursuit of common values in favour of a reduction in conflict which while laudable for its humanistic desires removed much of the blue sky under which truth might flourish in the world of academic research and replaced it by a number of competing islands (in place of ivory towers) whose professors compete for money based not on truth but on providing added value to the emerging economy. Inevitably that means efficiency but more than that it means obtuse terms of reference so that a cultural hegemony is effective and a Diaspora of clones goes to work in any part of the world without any need to seek local licenses for thought and action.

Please look at the following web sites:

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

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

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

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