

MODULE TITLE: Cultural Context of Architecture VI
MODULE CODE: ARC 711B1
HAND OUT No: 21

Essential Reading:

Buy this if you can – No Alibis at No.83 Botanic Avenue should have copies for sale

Gelernter M, Sources of Architectural Form, Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 1995

See also for more theory

Weibenson D, Theory and Practice from Alberti to Ledoux, Arch. Publications, 1982

Hays K ed, Architectural Theory Since 1968, MIT Press, 2000

Indeterminate Certainties

Indeterminate certainty represents the relationship between knowledge and its function. The purpose of knowing is to do, to act correctly or to have the power to do so. Those who have explored the world and searched the body for clues to the whereabouts of knowledge, the holy grail of power, found that knowledge did not exist. In its place they found that knowledge is the intrinsic links between phenomena that allows doing and the power to do and analysis and planning and so on, all very useful abilities, more so if there is a capacity to make complementary equipment for such plans and actions.

The stages of knowledge depend on the number of bodies incorporated in that knowledge. If we include the world then it is frankly unlikely that we can have a knowledge of all knowledge. At one time there was a scholar called Erasmus who was meant to be the last scholar who knew everything there was to know (in other words before freedom of thought was introduced)

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erasmus>

So the first stage of knowledge would be the place in which we come to be seen as people making selections from phenomena that appear to us, and possibly many others like us. The next stage of knowledge will be the place in which people are seriously considering forming intrinsic links between such phenomena. The next stage will be the place in which people are becoming known by the links they have selected and the fourth stage is that in which people are literally intrinsic to their selections.

Such a model of knowledge depends upon the product of knowledge, power; once again and like knowledge power is not some force or substance but a reference to access and the denial of access to knowledge and/or the actions that flow from it.

But first we need to look at the reason for the problem of knowledge and why it is not a straightforward question of determinate facts causally linked. It is because the body is intimately involved in knowledge and so the body has to form links between phenomena in the same way in order to correlate knowledge between bodies. When there is no suspect causal linkage other than what we call space in order to achieve this we must assume that knowledge only occurs intersubjectively in the third and fourth segments of our diagram in appendix 1. This is because it is the only time that behaviour can be both declaratively and procedurally apparent. In the second segment it can be glimpsed but not fully understood or 'articulated' because the interpretation is not clear, the phenomena are not selected unequivocally and the links are not held with any value of note, people are ambivalent.

What tends to make people firm up their selections is often some sustained work providing for their basic metabolism so that they sediment into relationships¹. These relationships are normal for people because they set themselves up wherever people can 'make a living'. We can see the kind of

¹ Schutz A, On Phenomenology and Social Relations, Wagner H (ed), University of Chicago Press, 1975

problems this can cause when there are global changes that destroy 'ways of living' such as with large industrial processes such as coal mining and ship building. People suddenly find that their knowledge is no longer adequate and they lack the power to find any alternative. This is in part what Arendt ² warns about in her work, the lack of political or social action to take care of such situations.

Appendix II shows why the body provides such problems when it is granted its abilities of sentience (perception) and sapience (understanding). The work of Wundt, Brentano and Husserl led to the development of cognitive science, which is not something we will delve into in any great depth in this module, but it allows sentience and sapience to have some working relationships with space such that we can begin to understand why the peculiarities of phenomenology actually make understanding human behaviour a lot easier once the phenomenological approach itself is valued. This is not to say that human behaviour may then be predicted as an author predicts an actor on the stage!

Politics

We must include in the model an allowance for the political belief which is to say the belief in the way in which people are allowed to be sapient and sentient. This introduces many of the problems discussed by Gelernter (see above) as problems of the origins of knowledge as if knowledge is a substance rather than intrinsic links between phenomena that relate to being in the world as body and world relationships of one kind and/or another.

Most political problems are caused by confusion over the provenance of knowledge, the character of knowledge and the willingness, sometimes the capacity, to allow freedom of thought. In order to make a start on the political issues we can categorise politics into four categories:

Whig politics – the belief in the use of power (Machiavelli N, *The Prince*, Penguin, 1981)

Liberal politics – the belief in the use of rationality (Lakoff G, *Moral Politics*, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 2002)

Socialist Politics – the belief in egalitarian relationships (Kagarlitsky B, *The Return of Radicalism*, London and other places, Pluto Press, 2000)

Accomplished Nihilism – to be discussed (Vattimo G, *The End of Modernity*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1985/1988)

Hopefully this and the other documents will be on the web by the time of the second meeting.

² Arendt H, *The Human Condition*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1969