

4.607

Thinking About Architecture: In History and at Present

Instructor: Prof. Mark Jarzombek

TA: Ana María León

M: 9.30-12:30

LECTURE NOTES: OCTOBER 13

If Plato is the prime example of a metaphysical argument and Nietzsche the philosopher who tries to break us from the hold of metaphysics (i.e. our ‘obligation’ to ‘the good’ and its project of demoting our humanity), we have to fill the gap by returning to the Enlightenment. Is a anti-metaphysical architecture possible? If so, should it be resisted? The return to language of “tradition,” “culture” and “vernacular” are forms of such resistance. Should these in turn be resisted?

LOCKE

In opposition to the hierarchical metaphysics of Plato and Medieval and Renaissance theology, Locke proposed a Law of Nature that, though divine in origin, was not metaphysically based, but outside the bounds of good and evil. The Law of Nature does not impose the language of violence and rupture on society. It sort of ‘is.’

For Locke, this means that we are constructed from a tabula rasa and thus born free. As a result, once we understand this, we gravitate toward the Social Contract creating social unities out of individuals. Contracts – not based on Who we are, but What we can provide – is the new language of society. They must be binding and thus become a new type of law created from WITHIN social conversations. There is, unlike Plato, no explicit ideology of rupture, no violence for the sake of “the good.’

There is a historical line from: Locke - The Whig Party – English Colonial Mercantilism - US Constitution – American Whig Party – Anti-Federalism - Republican Party

Nature remains an open-ended theoretical project to this day.

Medieval Metaphysics

(skepticism)

Locke

Idea = good = god



mankind

Body politic

Consensus

(No metaphysical rupture)

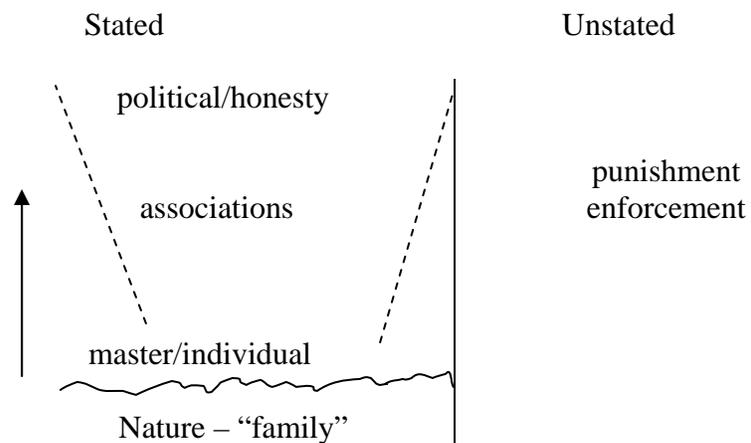
Tabula rasa

Law of Nature (God)



ROUSSEAU

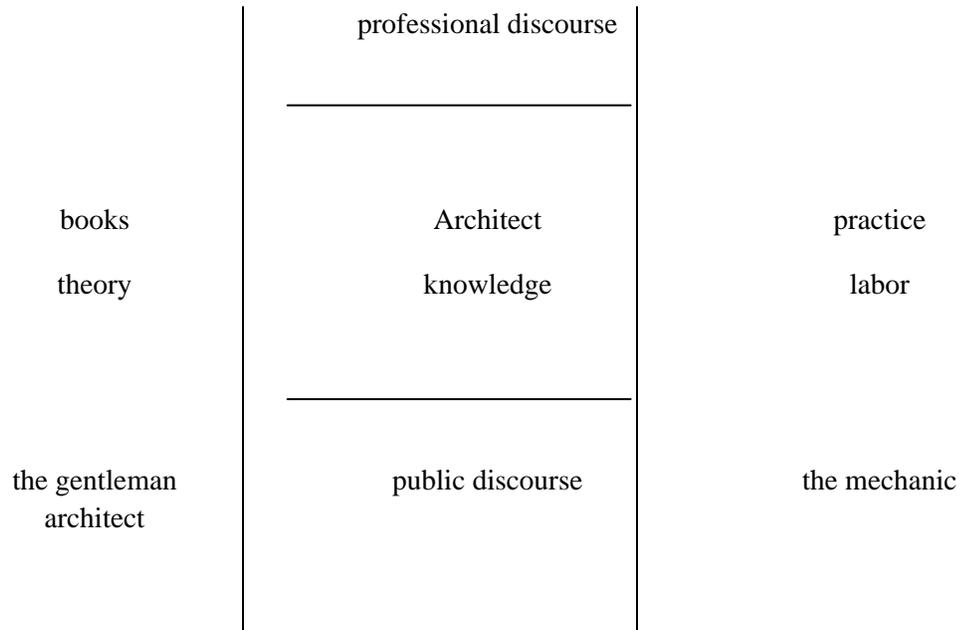
J.J. Rousseau added complexity to Locke's idea of Nature. Brought metaphysics back into play. We are not born 'free' but in essence imprinted by the proto-politics of Family. Only as adults are we technically 'free,' but in truth do not want to be free as such. We create 'associations' by which we reduce our freedom for the sake of social participation. In that sense, the Social Contract is a type of invisible (metaphysical) extension of the (pre-metaphysical) Family. It is a new type of Family. Think here of something akin to a professional organization, based on obligations and honesty. Example is the Athenaeum.



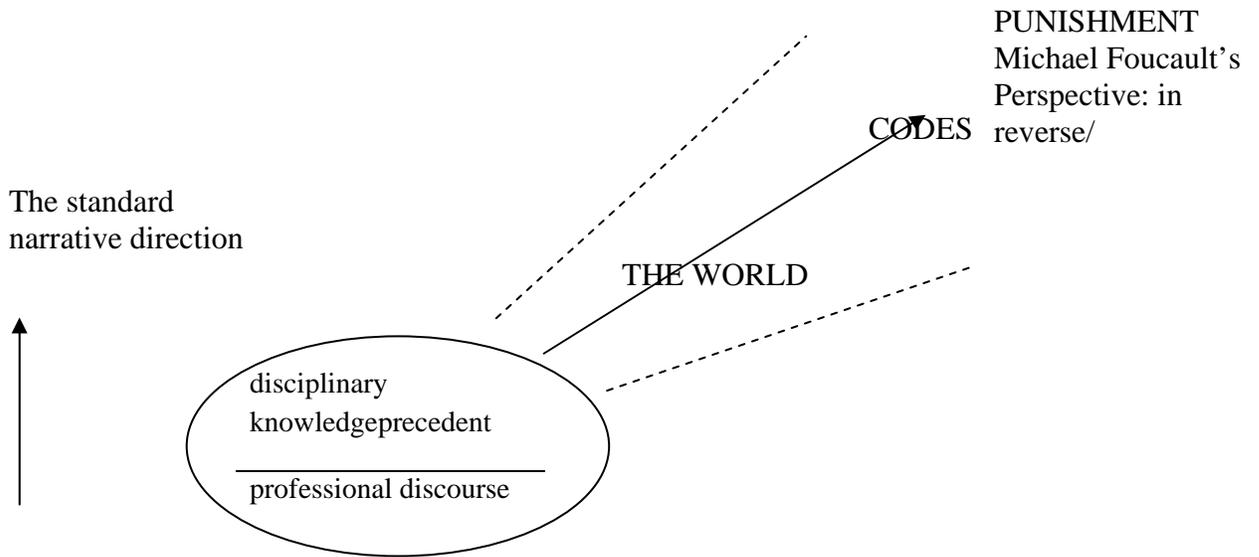
COMMENTARY

The argument about 'social body' that was such a part of the Enlightenment's project ends with a structure that beams itself out into the world at large in the forms of laws, regulations, and codes; and finally punishment. It creates the new categories of the deviant, the criminal, and the dishonest. There has to be ways in which society 'structures' that which escapes its structure. Whereas the usual argument based on the Enlightenment's own privileging of 'body politic' is from politics outward into the world (outward in a positive sense), Michel Foucault works the argument backward from the world-as-punishment to politics.

Benjamin Henry Latrobe



- similar to Lucian, but puts Architect in the middle
- split of the discourse: one professional, one public (Heidegger will try to get rid of the split)



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