

THE POLITICS OF CRITICISM

Authority, Architecture and Authorship

The Matrix is a system. That system is our enemy. But when you're inside, you look around, what do you see? Businessmen, teachers, lawyers, carpenters. The very minds of the people we are trying to save. But until we do, these people are still a part of that system, and that makes them our enemy. You have to understand, most of these people are not ready to be unplugged. And many of them are so inured, so hopelessly dependent on the system, that they will fight to protect it.^[1]

At a fairly delicate juncture between the imagination of art and the ethics of social responsibility, balances a universe of a profession - Architecture. It is fashioned with rules, emotions and discretion, all at once. It is objective and subjective, concurrently. It is crisis and revolution, simultaneous. There is an issue crucial to it. As design inevitably stomachs the impressions of numerous perspectives, agendas and statutory requirements, continuously employed, challenged, and manipulated by its creator based on external stimuli, who should ultimately monopolize content and ethics? What might contesting a claim of authorship imply to the authority in profession and academia? And what might it mean for an individual to challenge a system?

Time and again, civilization has expressed an apprehension about the reliability of knowledge in the world, as we know it. Nietzsche, skeptical of its origins, points out, "In some remote corner of the universe, there once was a star on which clever animals invented knowledge... That was the most arrogant and the most untruthful moment in world history."^[2]

Introducing, the protagonists: Power and Rationality. Throughout history, their relationship has been dynamic and somewhat asymmetrical. The result is a cycle of control, cognizance and chaos! Typically, Rationality has been perceived as "well-defined and context-independent"^[3]. However, as 'rationality' turns into 'rationalization', and soon into

a 'mediated rationality', one realizes that Rationality is, de facto, context-dependent, and that the context for Rationality is nothing but Power.^[3] There consistently remain, amidst those in Power, lingering doubts regarding the reliability of novice judgment and a strong belief in the need for external guidance - "an enlightened despotism"^[4] - that inevitably indulges in systemic regulations to exercise control. In academia, it is the institution; in the profession, regulatory bodies. While the inherent failure in independent Rationality is the uncertainty associated with diverging ideas and the possibility of error or corruption, Power assures an indeclinable promise of order, an illusion of more stability than what, in fact, can exist. The victor is obvious. But, is it really?

Perhaps, there is a certain experience and assurance that accompanies Power. However, today, success in the profession or academia has become an agreement never to question its content, to perpetually be optimistic of grand promises and to overlook the potential for revolution in its lived details - to succumb mutely to Power and render Rationality passive! This lopsided collaboration results in discrediting prospective courage and difference, and the production of a blind cookie-cutter following that ignores its rights, and swallows its inner intuitions that question why such a "society of control"^[5] should function in the manner that it does. While the forces of Rationality hold the power to question the pronouncements of Power, for most part, they remain unassuming and compliant, owing to the fear of negative repercussions. And so, "the effective truth of the matter"^[6], as opposed to "the real truth of the matter"^[6]; "the truth of the orator"^[7], rather than "the truth of the scientist"^[7], becomes the framework for the customization of professional and academic ethics. The result is an unhealthy illusion of justice and righteousness. The following submissively relates itself to a form of positivism, upholds an established credence, and rejects any potential rational

evaluation. This is not only threatening to universal intellectual privileges and creative freedom, but is disturbing when considering the ramifications of what Power, when concentrated in the hands of an unchallenged few, can achieve - Dystopia!

At the onset, The Foucault-Habermas debate^[8] reveals two sides of the coin, the two levels of operation. Foucault's concerns lie predominantly with the explication of Power and how it is required to function and inevitably manipulate, to maintain order. Habermas, on the other hand, voices out the capacity and relevance of Rationality, attempting to decipher how Rationality is simultaneously, both, formed by and manipulated with the mechanics of Power. "The point of such an analysis is not to conclude that these systems that we function in, are cynically used by certain forms of thought and action, but to challenge how they have come to be inserted into particular systems, for what reasons and to which ends."^[9] Rationality is to be thought of as, not something that is a weapon against Power in the absolute sense, but as something that is capable of sensibly crafting its own contention as per the nature of Power that it faces. The point, then, is to fashion Rationality for a Power that Power cannot unjustly negate in combat; to shape Power with a Rationality that coincides with the greater good of uncorrupt progress; and to unplug ourselves from the shackles of any system that makes us so hopelessly dependent that we can no longer question the ideologies forced upon us.

This is your last chance. After this, there is no turning back. You take the blue pill - the story ends, you wake up in your bed and believe whatever you want to believe. You take the red pill - you stay in Wonderland and I show you how deep the rabbit-hole goes.^[1]
