

Abstract

Rykwert Symposium

On the Nature of Security (011)

In his *On Adam's House in Paradise*, Joseph Rykwert traces successive engagements in the question of the origin of architecture as this question opens to the more primordial one of the origin of being human. Being human and the primitive hut, whether articulated by Vitruvius or Le Corbusier, have a complex and essential relation and one that opens a space for articulating an understanding of the meaning of 'nature' in whatever epoch or era.

With this paper I aim to address Rykwert's reference to Laugier's *Essay on Architecture* and his understanding of the primitive hut. While Rykwert mentions that Laugier described himself as a *philosophe*, that is to say, associated with what we term the Physiocrats, the paper aims to amplify the significance of the French Physiocrats, particularly in the writings of François Quesnay, on the first systematic understanding of what we now call economics. It is not simply that this invention of economics held that all wealth derived from nature, from cultivation and the land, to the extreme exclusion of manufacture as a source of wealth. Nor is it simply that this economics held the fundamental productive unit to be the family. In both of these we would simply see Laugier's quaint image of the primitive hut as an all too literal manifestation of physiocratic economy.

Rather, with Quesnay, a new horizon of an understanding of the human emerges, one that displaces the rule of Mercantilism that had dominated the 17th century, and that relocates the essential nature of the human. There develops, in the 18th century, a new term for understanding precisely what seems to escape the sovereign exercise of power. That term is 'population.' This paper will critically assay the extent to which a bifurcation in an understanding of territory, power and sovereignty, that revolves around the human as subject and as population, opens a radical engagement with Laugier's understanding of 'origins,' impacting on the discourse of origins in architecture that unfolds in modernity. Particular reference will be made to Michel Foucault's 1977-78 lectures at the College de France, *Security, Territory, Population*.

On The Nature of Security

A promise and a memory. These concluding words of Joseph Rykwert's *On Adam's House in Paradise* confirm the utopian yet concrete and essential concern of his work: how do we humans approach the guarantee of renewal as a "constant of human development." Paradise, in this sense for Rykwert, is the name we give, beyond the actualities of history or archaeology, to an originary becoming that cleaves in its coming to appearance, what has been, "taken from the past" and what is yet to come, a promise, a guide to a future. This originary situatedness is what Rykwert names as the primitive hut, for anyone concerned with building. Thus he suggests:

In the present rethinking of why we build and what we build for, the primitive hut will, I suggest, retain its validity as a reminder of the original and therefore essential meaning of all building for people: that is, of architecture.

We have a sense that this small book, dealing with what seems to be a topic on the margins of the broader concerns of architecture, engages us with a questioning on the essential relations of building to humanity. In its systematic probing of the originality of the questions of origins, it enables an understanding of how we might consider that word 'architecture' in relation to the most general question of human practices of development. "Architecture" is the name we give to the original and essential meaning of building. Architecture, precisely in this sense is paradisaical for Rykwert; every building essentially opens us to the disclosure of the 'primitive hut' or originary question of building such that a pastness and futurity come to appearance.

But, is this how Rykwert proceeded in his text, and is this how we now proceed in response to an essential questioning posed by that text? The final lines of his text throw up a paradox:

I believe, therefore, that it [a desire for renewal] will continue to offer a pattern to anyone concerned with building, a primitive hut situated permanently perhaps beyond the reach of the historian or archaeologist, in some place I must call Paradise. And Paradise is a promise as well as a memory.

Would he now want to retract the work of the historian that he is in order that we might engage an accessible region to the primitive from his text? Would the very erudition of his text as historical and anthropological not now close off a possible glimpse of Paradise, of the Hut as such? Or would we rather take another line of engagement, a questioning of the architectural as an essential meaning of building from another point of view entirely, from the point of view of politics, as a political question of becoming human, a question of the polis, of policy and police. It seems to me that this small book by Rykwert opens a very important space for analysis, a space in which the question may be asked: how does building become political? Yet, while it opens that space, the text never quite enters it. And if this symposium asked for a considered relevance of Rykwert's text to our immediate situatedness, to where we are now, how would its relevance open to the politics of this question of a here and now?

I would like to pose some preliminary mapping of that space of a politics, which might also in the same move provide severe limitations to this book while also opening it to some new horizons of engagement. We have a particular focus on the 18th century, in a history of the present that locates in the late 18th century a transformation of understanding the State that inaugurates for the next two centuries what might be termed the fundamental crisis of governmentality. I would suggest that the question of architecture as the fundamental or essential question of human building was intimately concerned with the articulation of a transformational political understanding of the human, in a manner that is closed off for us today with respect to the discourses of architecture. This leads us to then question, on the one hand, what are the essential agencies of the architectural today and in what manner might the

question of architecture as an essential questioning of human building become again essentially political.

I just mentioned a term: “crisis of governmentality,” and suggested that transforming events in the 18th century inaugurated a crisis that we still live with. To put it very simply, it is the question “what is the role of government?” If anyone thinks this is no longer a critical question, ask yourself how indifferent you were to last week’s national election, where the opposing factions defined their differences essentially on the role of government. For whom? For society, or civil society. “Governmentality” is a term developed by Michel Foucault in the late 1970s that concerns analyses of the overall governance of a State, and the conflicting role of government in governance, in the sense that government needs to continually ask whether it is intervening too much or too little in the functioning of a nation, or in the functioning of society. The crisis of governmentality that emerged in the 18th century and is still our concern is the conflict between liberty and security, between two ways of limiting public power in the rights of man or in governmental practice.

Although he does not directly address this issue in the sense that it becomes the focus of Foucault’s lecture series at the College de France in 1978, I suggest that we are able to see the articulation of this fundamental difference in Rykwert’s study when we engage with how he articulates the differences between Jean Jacques Rousseau and Marc-Antoine Laugier concerning the primitive hut. And it is here that we come to recognise the embeddedness of the question of architecture in the articulation of fundamental understandings of the political. This of course leads us to a questioning of the governmentality of architecture, not the regulatory procedures that institute, sanction or enable specific practices, but rather how the “conduct of conduct” to use a term by Foucault, is maintained with respect to the architectural: broad procedures for directing human conduct, or a rationality immanent to the micro-powers of the discipline. More exactly, what are the corresponding forms of resistance or counter conducts that constitute the crises of governmentality of the architectural? If we think we have now moved to something obscure and far removed from our initial concern with Rykwert, let me suggest a definition of politics from Foucault’s 1978 text: “Politics is no more nor less than that which is born with resistance to governmentality – the first uprising, the first confrontation.” Return no doubt to a question of origin precisely in terms of a cleaving that resides in the disclosure of a promise as well as a memory.

What is that great transformation in the 18th century that I have alluded to? Firstly, we need to emphasise what underwent transformation. The 17th century governance of a State was dominated by an understanding of Sovereign power as a disciplinary mechanism of confinement, segmentation and rational order. The sovereign’s relation to his subjects was sanctioned in law. Population, as a notion, was little used except as an aggregation or collection of juridical subjects in individual and collective relationships with a sovereign will. Governmentality of the State constituted saturation by governmental intervention. Crucially, Rousseau’s 18th century concern with a Declaration of the Rights of Man will constitute a discourse of right precisely as a continuation of this understanding of sovereign power. Human right is constituted on the basis of each individuated sovereign subject. The social contract is constituted on the aggregated rights of man.

In his 1978 text Foucault stresses the emergence of another mechanism of governmentality that challenged the dominance of mechanisms of discipline, in what he terms apparatuses of security. If disciplinary mechanisms are primarily concerned with the rational ordering, segmenting and confining of individuals, spaces, programmes and practices, such that a sovereign will has circumspection over all, apparatuses of security are concerned with circulations and flows, primarily those of goods and money, but also of spaces and subjects. Apparatuses of security were constituted around the convergence of a series of inventions that took hold in the 18th century. Firstly, the disciplinary mechanisms of sovereign power established statistics as a mechanism of rational order of the state. With the established practices of statistics, it was discovered that aggregations of humans follow laws that enable practices of control at a level greater than that of individuals. Hence, from statistics on morbidity with respect to disease it was possible to predict the number of deaths in epidemics, or the scale of harvest from one season to another based on production and consumption patterns and so on. Crucially, there emerged a new entity on the horizon of knowing, that of population that had laws that could not be assimilated to simple aggregation of individuals.

More significantly, population was a domain that escaped the purview of the sovereign. Disciplinary mechanisms that attended to the individuated subject and the essential nature of this subject missed entirely this other nature, more essential for the circulation of wealth. Security referred precisely to the question of risk as the calculation at the level of population concerning what needed to be done. From the point of view of those inventing this new horizon of disclosure of a State, nothing was more crucial than establishing the relations between population, government and security. What is absolutely crucial is the utterly new notion of “nature” that this invoked. It was the Physiocrats who developed this technique of “economic government” as a technique specific to the management of populations. The “naturalism” of the phenomena dealt with was economic liberalism, the “art of exercising power in the form of the economy.” It was Francois Quesnay who developed the first published work on economic theory, the *Tableau economique*, in 1758, providing the foundations of the ideas of the Physiocrats. As Foucault suggests, for the Physiocrats, man is nothing other than a figure of population.

This “nature” constitutive of population enters into the field of techniques of power such that the sovereign must deploy reflected procedures of government within this nature, with its help and with regard to it. “Population” is at once a milieu or medium in which governance happens but also an element in the governmentality of the State. The discourse of liberalism, based on the naturalness of the nature of population, inverted the fundamental question posed by 17th century Mercantilism. The question became, why do we need government at all? If economic circulation follows natural principles, why is it necessary to govern? Physiocratic economics coincides with the emergence of “civil society” or “society” as the problematic of governance. The question then becomes with respect to society, why is government necessary, in what respect can it be dispensed with and in what areas are its interventions pointless or harmful? This is the fundamental crisis of governmentality coinciding with the invention of the discourse of liberalism and the understanding of governance as the ordered and securing domain of economic interests. As Foucault stresses, Liberalism was not a utopic dream but a tool for the criticism of reality.

I suggest that if we read carefully Laugier's quaint image of the primitive hut, and the contexts in which it is produced, certainly there may remain questions over the extent to which the image maintains a legacy of classical mimesis or attempts to make a break just as there are questions around the extent to which this little hut may or may not easily sit alongside Rousseau's idyllic river, as Rykwert suggests. However, I would suggest that the "nature" presented by Laugier is neither that we associate with Rousseau, nor that we associate with the perfected nature of Classical Mimesis, nor that concerning an individuated and humble dwelling of an individuated family. Rather, and in keeping with something fundamental to Quesnay's thinking, Laugier is suggesting that architecture is essentially concerned with the natural circulation of wealth in two senses. Firstly, wealth is primarily derived from the soil, from agriculture, rather than from the labour of artisans. Secondly, inasmuch as Laugier's hut presents no partitioning, no confinement, nothing of a contrivance other than what is essential structure, he is concerned with circulation and an understanding of what is essential to building at the level of population. Architecture becomes an apparatus of security rather than a mechanism of confinement.

We need only be reminded of one of the most pervasive and popular texts on civil society at the time, Adam Ferguson's *Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1755-56), translated into French in 1783. Foucault notes from Ferguson: "If the palace be unnatural, the cottage is so no less." Foucault comments:

That is to say, the primitive cottage is not the natural and pre-social expression of something. We are not closer to nature with a primitive cottage than with a palace. It is simply a different distribution, a different form of the necessary intertwining of the social and the natural ... So we have the principle that civil society is an historical-natural constant for humanity.

If the governmentality of the State since the 18th century has faced the crises of liberalism, of a fundamental question of the State's relation to society, it has faced this in the competing techniques of power constituted on the discourse of the rights of man and on governmental practice, which is to say a struggle between the limitations of power based on an abstract invocation to human rights or on the concrete practices of the rights of the governed. In a sense, but a very real sense, I think the discourse of architecture for the past two hundred years has, for complex reasons, aligned itself with the individuated sovereignty of a discourse of rights, rather than the concrete practices of the rights of the governed. Which is to say, perhaps, that the discourses of architecture most often approach what is most essential to building, as the fundament to human development, precisely in terms of the individuated building, to be aggregated as the humanism or humanity of architecture, while the genuine political economy of its practices are left in the hands of other governmental agencies and determinations.