

The model, its object and architecture's correlation

One constantly gets the feeling reading Badiou that he is echoing Kuhn. Badiou's concept of "model" derives from a persistent Kuhnism. By Kuhnism I mean that the heart of Badiou's philosophy, which is a sort of philosophy of history, or significant moments in history, seems to be an extension of *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, the structure of which is applied more generally to what he terms the truth-procedures of art, science, love and politics.

Granted, this is a gross simplification; but then the reduction of the multiple to the One, and more specifically, the reduction of a thinker's position to a succinct gobblet of information, a short entry in the encyclopaedia, is itself a habit of Badiou – both a strength and weakness of his method. We might therefore be forgiven for turning that habit onto its author.

What happens at the moment of revolution of these truth-procedures? According to Badiou's first book, the model is created. The model is the moment of the intersection of the specific time and place with the universal. It is thus Platonic, he says, in the sense of *metaxu* (or *metaxy*) – the participation of the idea (the universal) with its sensible embodiment; and the way, for Badiou, that the model allows the universal, or the idea, is in its setting-out to constitute a *possibility of formalization*.

In the interview in *The Concept of Model*, Badiou provides Picasso's cubism of c.1913 as an example of the creation of a possibility of formalization within a specific painting, or series of paintings, which open up a space previously inaccessible and unrealisable within the pre-existing world. Other favoured examples of models are Schoenberg's splitting open of the possibilities of music with the 12 tone technique, or the moment of revolution in politics. According to Badiou, these models possess the nature of events, and there is for him the question of a *fidelity* to these truth-events, asking - to what extent do subsequent artists, politicians, composers, or subjects respond adequately to the demand that this new possibility of formalization places upon them?

For instance, in architecture, it would be easy to show how the work and manifestos of Le Corbusier in the period of 1915 through to 1930 would represent one such model, a new possibility of formalization present within specific works which therefore participate (*metaxu*) in the universal... concerns all made explicit in his writings of that time, from the Purist manifesto to the five points and *Vers une Architecture*.

The question of fidelity of the response to this architectural possibility still resonates 100 years later, and could be interpreted via the tripartite typology of fidelity to the event/model which Badiou gives at the beginning of *Logic of Worlds*, : true to the event, reactionary to it, or merely indifferent.

To situate this with respect to the specifics of this milieu:

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one could say that the model, in finding the gaps in the encyclopaedia of the world, as Badiou puts it in *Being and Event*, and presenting something that has no sense in relation to that pre-existing world, *makes visible* something which was only previously latent within the situation. Badiou puts it in terms of set theory; such a thing is unrepresented in the situation – it does not *belong* to the set, but is *included* in the set;

2

this concept of model is specific to Badiou. It does not relate, on the same structural level, to the concept of model succinctly outlined by Rheinberger in, for instance, his essay *Making*

Visible. Rheinberger's concept of model is more conventional; and all the better for being so as he, in contrast to Badiou, deliberately limits the displacement of common terms.

Rheinberger's *schematizing mechanism* visualises some "thing" in a different medium to that thing. The other medium may be a graphical one, a mechanical one, or as he nicely puts it, *in silico*. His concept of models does not, in the manner of Badiou, explain the history of scientific and other revolutions; rather, they are part and parcel of the day-to-day method of science itself. Yes, they do make visible something which was not previously presented within the situation, (prior to the model, or, to put it another way, was not available within the pre-existing encyclopaedia), but the situation here is not, as it was for Badiou, the history of science, or other truth-procedures, but rather science itself in its internal work. Badiou's model is operating at a meta-level of discourse. Rheinberger's is not, although of course his essay is;

3

Rheinberger's model is one type of epistemic object, as he names it. It sits alongside other epistemic objects – such as preparations, which have the character of the *enhancement* of a "thing" within the same material as that thing (eg. by staining a material or changing its visual contrast) rather than the model's *schematism* using a different medium. The characteristic of epistemic objects is *participation* and *mediation*. But, again, by way of contrast with Badiou, what Rheinberger is invoking here is not a Platonic *metaxy* of the idea with its specific realisation/revelation, the conjunction of the universal and a particular, but rather the mediation between the knower and the known - in so far as the epistemic object is not given as such and does not fall one and nude*, ready-made from the sky, but rather, in some way, has to be constructed by someone.

This foregrounding of the relation between the knowing and the known, characteristic of epistemic objects, in general, and of Rheinberger's notion of model in particular, sets him clearly against any sort of scientific positivism, and places his work firmly within what Badiou's disciple (a term Badiou defines rather carefully) Quentin Meillassoux will call "correlationism." For Rheinberger, it is the correlation between the knower and the known which is of interest in the study of the history and philosophy of science: to deny the primacy of this correlation in the name of a belief in the facts (or the laws) *per se* is naïve. This is in contrast to Meillassoux in his book *After Finitude*, where in the name of supposed non-epistemic "arche-fossil" objects of science (i.e. objects of knowledge which definitively pre-exist the knower, such as the big bang) he calls into question correlationism; albeit that elsewhere he acknowledges it is only *through* correlationism that the autonomous, non-correlated Real (the "arche-fossil") can be found.

This perambulation leads me to the following brief questions and remarks with respect to "architecture":

When we speak of "architecture", to what are we referring? Are we, in the manner of Badiou, engaging in a meta-discussion of the history of architecture, of movements,

* to use a phrase of Derrida - *un et nu*. I have tried to avoid him (and footnotes), but Rheinberger's invocation of the trace forces my hand. In any event, what the concept of the epistemic object does is to undermine the notion of "nature"; and such a deconstruction of nature (we could say: deconstruction is always a deconstruction of what is deemed to be natural – hence its intense political import) is Derrida's most persistent theme. See in particular *Qual Quelle* in *Margins of Philosophy*. Shouldn't Derrida always be consigned to footnotes?

revolutions or styles in architecture? In which case, the notion of model will refer to something like Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye as the intersection of, and participation between, the universal and the particular, and the opening up of a new possibility of formalization within architecture as an ongoing discipline. Or are we, in more mundane fashion, and at a lower logical level (or type, to use Bertrand Russell's terminology), referring to a work of architecture *itself* – that "thing" (but is it a thing?) which we visit, inhabit, attend to, ignore..?

If we choose to observe the latter, then we are operating at the level of the epistemic object. In which case, the study of architectural artefacts might be enriched by taking on board the question of what the epistemic objects of architecture are. In what way, when studying architecture (as scientists study their material), do we make a "preparation" by means of enhancement or contrast of the thing itself and thus create epistemic objects of study? In what way do we create models (in another medium) through schematisation to describe architecture and thus create for ourselves, in a correlationism between knower and known, another series of epistemic architectural objects?

Such a discussion would perhaps be a deconstruction of the existing, latent enhancements and schematisations used to study architecture; and the positing of new types of preparations and models (or other epistemic objects) for such study. There would therefore be an aura of hermeneutics about this exercise: the clarification of the pre-structures and prejudices of our architectural judgements.

At the limit, the structure of this situation cannot be overcome. The structure is that of correlation. Taking Rheinberger as a guide, we referred to the situation of the study of architecture, in analogy to the study of the objects of science. The correlation in that study-situation is that between knower and known. But the study-situation is a particular one. We are always already in a situation with architecture *without* explicitly studying it; and this means that the "knower and known" tend to fade – at the limit, they disappear – and what is retained is the correlation, the interplay. Another way of saying this is that architecture *is* correlation; it inhabits or is the "middle ground" of which Goethe speaks (as Rheinberger reminds us). We may use epistemic objects to study architecture; but architecture *is already* something like an epistemic object in its very being – with the proviso that we evacuate the question of knowledge and with it the object leaving only the differential movement to attend to.

Such attention is rare!

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