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Notes:

- [1] Scott, Geoffrey. *The Architecture of Humanism: A Study in the History of Taste*. W. W. Norton & Company, 1999 (Originally published: 1914). Print. Epilogue 1924.
- [2] McEwen, Indra Kagis. *Vitruvius: Writing the Body of Architecture*. MIT Press. 2003. "Fabrica and ratiocinatio", as described by Vitruvius, are the continuous practice of creating architecture and the reasoned train of thought leading to it, respectively.
- [3] Johnson, Paul-Alan. *The Theory of Architecture: Concepts, Themes & Practices*. John Wiley & Sons, 1994.
- [4] Geoffrey Scott says, "I set out to show how untenable were the 'first principles' to which the teaching and the criticism of architecture usually make appeal. And I sought to indicate how those fallacies arose." Scott, Geoffrey. *The Architecture of Humanism: A Study in the History of Taste*. W. W. Norton & Company, 1999 (Originally published: 1914). Print. Epilogue 1924.
- [5] Cogito ergo sum is a Latin philosophical proposition by René Descartes. The phrase originally appeared in French in his 'Discourse on the Method', so as to reach a wider audience than Latin would have allowed.
- [6] Alexander, Christopher. *The Timeless Way of Building*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979. Print.
- [7] Žižek, Slavoj. Rumsfeld and the Bees: How to explain the Global plunge in Hive Populations. *Wildlife, Opinion, The Guardian*, 27 June 2008.
- [8] Koolhaas, Rem. "The Generic City". Koolhaas, Rem, Bruce Mau, and Jennifer Sigler. S, M, L, XL. Rotterdam: 010 Publ., 1995. Print.

ARCHITECTURE + THEORY

That difference between architecture & Architecture

“Ratiocinatio.” Book One, Chapter One, Vitruvius. And yet, centuries later, in 1914, Geoffery Scott writes, “Theory, the attempt to decide architectural right and wrong on purely intellectual grounds, is precisely one of the roots of our mischief. Theory, I suppose, was what made the chatter on the scaffolding of the tower of Babel.”^[1] Some might disagree, but many will concede that architectural theory, in our trans-disciplinary times, has come to represent little beyond an obsolete rhetoric distraction from that otherwise designed as impractical or impossible; or a form of double-speak, for an exclusive intellectual faction in academia, one that is noticeably unsuccessful in devising corporeal architecture; or simply a convoluted language that no-one really understands or cares to understand. Is this statement really a profound realization? Or is it now a universal notion that architectural theorists, critics, and academicians, have, time and again, attempted to battle? Or perhaps, this is, de facto, THE problem in Architecture that we ought to battle? For, today, centuries after Vitruvius first claimed that “the knowledge of the architect is brought into being by fabrica and ratiocinatio^[2]”, we find ourselves asking, “Is there, in fact, really a need and place for theory in architecture?”...

Some are quick to dismiss the question. Mark Linder says, “Architectural Theory is no discipline, the most we can say about contemporary architectural theory is that it can be called architectural theory.”^[3] Admittedly, a reasonable accusation. Architectural Theory is not, for the most part, in fact, architectural. It emerges as an optional supplement, more often than not, as an afterthought, one that lingers condescendingly in the peripheral precincts of the profession, not impacting the physical act of construction to any significant degree. For all its claims, it is not self-sustained as an authority, in that it relies significantly on stable disciplines outside of Architecture itself - mathematics, science, philosophy, art, politics, or computation - for existential justifications. Further, these aspects are usually not, and possibly even rightly so, included in a comprehensive sense in an architectural curriculum, so that a significant amount of contributory

learning happens outside the classroom. Commonly speaking, theory is believed to confuse, exhaust, contaminate, and distract. And yet, properly understood, it can be intelligent, constructive, enriching and empowering. The leading practices that are universally acknowledged - the ones that make it into the pages of history, the ones that become the heroes of budding student architects, and the ones who receive globally reputed honors, are, more often than not, the ones that can be, directly or indirectly, traced back to their strong academic inclinations, their relationships to the so-called “falacies^[4]” of discourse, or their stimulating tendencies to articulate the deep-structures of their work in more comprehensible forms. Needless to say, it is impossible to overlook the prevalent behavioral pattern of the industry and all associated markets, towards these practitioners. Now, critical thought may manifest itself in the form of lectures or dialogues, treatises or books, position papers or competition entries, or even physical exhibits or artistic installations, but they all remain grounded in one fundamental idea - that creating Architecture is like tracing a twig through a pool of water. The perceived ripple is what one witnesses in its wake. But it's form, it's direction, it's very life comes from a narrative much more complicated than that. Theory IS that narrative, that cerebral alignment to a realm beyond just what architects do, and to one that grapples with what architecture is, or can become.

Descartes' “Cogito Ergo Sum - I think; therefore, I am.”^[5] Without thought, there is no Architecture. Although, in discipline, architecture is a negotiation of constraints; in deliberation, it is a sequence of reflections - reflections of the world that it exists in. Granted, these reflections, maybe pre-conceived, subjective, and almost entirely shaped by personal preferences; but they transform perception, sense of place, and the sense of purpose, in the mass-audience it is projected to. What we decide to do, how we do it, and the reason we do it that way - these determinants stem from such reflections, consciously or unconsciously. Certainly, there is something that constantly makes architects decide on their directional pronouncements in decision-making. Sir

Christopher Alexander begins his book with a dedication - “To you, mind of no mind, in whom the timeless way was born^[6]”. He describes, what he calls, “the quality without a name^[6]”. Objective and precise, to him, this quality is the root criterion of life and spirit in a building. It becomes important to situate the various subconscious agents, that continuously shape architecture, within the realm of ideas accepted universally as existent, so as to succeed in achieving that “quality” of identification and connection with the audience. This occurs with the recognition of how peripheral theories and disciplines are constantly informing the built-form and vice versa. What Architecture forms is only the tip of the iceberg. Theory articulates the layers that exists within.

Slavoj Žižek talks about Donald Rumsfeld's theory of knowledge - “There are known knowns. These are things we know that we know. There are known unknowns. That is to say, there are things that we know we don't know. But there are also unknown unknowns. There are things we don't know we don't know. What Rumsfeld forgot to add was the crucial fourth term: the “unknown knowns” - things we don't know that we know, all the unconscious beliefs and prejudices that determine how we perceive reality and intervene in it.”^[7] Narratives in Architecture stem from this fourth component. Away from the realm of the visual, the “unknown knowns” continuously function within the deep-structures, the soul, the spirit of architecture. The built-forms, as demonstrated, not only reflect these underlying deliberations rather substantially - at times as pre-mediated inspiration, at times as an afterthought, at times more evident, while at others, more abstract and obscure - but also, speak to the user subconscious. Much like Rem Koolhaas' understanding of Identity, this quality “centralizes, it insists on an essence, a point.”^[8] And, it is this very quality, we argue, that differentiates all that is, against better judgment, classified as architecture, from that which stands apart as Architecture with the capital 'A'!