**CLASSICAL ARCHITECTURAL THEORY**

**ARC 1015**

**VITRUVIUS**

*De architectura*

Book 4, Ch. 1, sec. 5-6 (pp. 54-55)

Book 4, Ch. 2, sec. 1 (pp. 56-47)

**LEON BATTISTA ALBERTI**

*On the Art of Building in Ten Books* (1485)

Book VI, Chapter 1

Examples of ancient temples and theatres have survived that may teach us as much as any professor…. anyone who happens to build nowadays draws his inspiration from inept modern nonsense….

Book VI, Chapter 2

Graceful and pleasant appearance derives from beauty and ornament alone, since there can be no one, however surly or slow … who would not be attracted to what is most beautiful, seek the finest ornament at the expense of all else, [and] be offended by what is unsightly, shun all that is inelegant or shabby.

Book IX, Chapter 5

Beauty is that reasoned harmony of all the parts within a body, so that nothing may be added, taken away, or altered, but for the worse…. beauty is some inherent property, to be found suffused all through the body of that which may be called beautiful…

When you make judgments on beauty, you do not follow mere fancy, but the workings of a reasoning faculty that is informed in the mind.

…Beauty is a form of sympathy and consonance of the parts within a body, according to definite number, outline, and position, as dictated by the absolute and fundamental rule in Nature. This is the main object of the art of building, and the source of her dignity, charm, authority, and worth.

**ANDREA PALLADIO**

*The Four Books on Architecture* (1570)

Forward

Guided by a natural inclination, I dedicated myself to the study of architecture in my youth, and since I always held the opinion that the ancient Romans, as in many things, had also greatly surpassed all those who came after them in building well, I elected as my master and guide Vitruvius, who is the only ancient writer on this art. I set myself the task of investigating the remains of the ancient buildings that have survived despite the ravages of time and the cruelty of the barbarians…

Chapter I

Beauty will derive from a graceful shape and the relationship of the whole to the parts, and of the parts among themselves and to the whole, because buildings must appear to be like complete and well-defined bodies, of which one member matches another and all the members are necessary for what is required.

Chapter XX

I assert therefore that, since architecture imitates nature (as do all the other arts), it cannot endure anything that alienates and distances it from what nature herself permits…. And though variety and novelty must please everybody, one should not, however, do anything that is contrary to the laws of this art and contrary to what reason makes obvious; so we can see that the ancients also made variations, but that they never departed from certain universal and essential rules of this art.

**THOMAS U. WALTER**

***Lectures on the History and Philosophy of Architecture (1841)***

Lecture II: On Greek Architecture

[The Greek Orders are] the Alphabet of classical Architecture, and we have no more need of a new one, than we have of additional letters in the formation of words or a new note in the musical scale. . . . it should therefore be remembered, that as the orator uses the Alphabet to produce the words he requires to convey his ideas;—and as the musician employs no other tones and semitones than those comprised in the musical scale, few and simple as they are;—so must the architect be content in the practice of columnar architecture, with the principles that nature dictates; all of which are fully developed in the three orders.

Lecture V: On Modern Architecture

Ancient nations knew comparatively but little of each other;…. ancient architecture will therefore be found to consist of but few principles, although in some instances those few were carried out to the utmost degree of perfection:—…nothing can be more perfect than the proportions of Grecian Architecture, and nothing more exquisite than its execution, but to see one Greek temple is to see a thousand….

None of the architecture of the present day can however be said to posses a decidedly distinctive character amongst any people who mingle with the rest of mankind; nor is it probable that any nation will ever again practice a mode of building peculiar to itself, exclusive of other styles.—The arts of printing and engraving, and the rapidity with which knowledge is every where diffused will undoubtedly prevent such a result;—these arts present every thing which has been rescued from the shades of antiquity, together with all the most important developments of more modern genius, to the view of every civilized people…. We shall have to suppose some intelligent nation to be separated from the rest of mankind, and deprived of all recollections of the styles and modes of building which now exist, before we can imagine a people capable of originating a style entirely independent of the forms and proportions which are now familiar to all the World.

**DEMITRI PORPHYRIOS**

***Classicism is Not a Style*** (1983)

“The Constructional Logic of Vernacular” & “Classicism: The Symbolic Elaboration of Vernacular ”

Classicism is not a style. Its lesson lies in the way by which it raises construction and shelter to the realm of the symbol.

The idea of vernacular has nothing to do with stylistics. It rather points to the universal ethos of constructing shelter under the conditions of scarcity of materials and operative constructional techniques.

By invoking vernacular, one does not seek the primitivism of pre-industrial cultures [or] the temptation to turn one’s back on contemporary society in order to return to some pre-industrial order…. Instead, the essential meaning of vernacular refers to straightforward construction, to the rudimentary building of shelter, an activity that exhibits reason, efficiency, economy, durability and pleasure.

When applied to making of shelter, these constructional *a prioris* give rise to a set of constructional forms: as for example the gable which marks the sectional termination of the roof and thus point to the primary experience of entry….

Yet architecture cannot remain at this ‘starting point.’ Its vocation is to raise itself above the contingencies of building by commemorating those very contingencies from which it sprung in the first place. What distinguishes a shed from a temple is the [power to raise] construction and shelter to the realm of the symbol…