

Dear All,

Please see below the speech delivered by HRH The Prince of Wales last night at the Royal Institute of British Architects in London.

<http://www.princes-foundation.org/index.php?id=694>

Mr President, Ladies and Gentlemen, I suspect the only reason I find myself here today is because your President, Sunand Prasad, who was a student of Keith Critchlow who founded my School of Traditional Arts, invited me. I felt I should oblige him. I daresay he may be regretting his invitation by now... As if the media are to be believed - it is a wonder to find this hall seemingly fully occupied!

But it is, after all, the Royal Institute of British Architects' 175th anniversary - on which I can only offer you my sincere congratulations - and it does seem that a tradition is emerging whereby I am asked to join you in celebrating a significant anniversary every 25 years. In another 25 years I shall very likely have shuffled off this mortal coil and so those of you who do worry about my inconvenient interferences won't have to do so any more - unless, of course, they prove to be hereditary!

Now there is something I've been itching to say about the last time I addressed your Institute, in 1984; and that is that I am sorry if I somehow left the faintest impression that I wished to kick-start some kind of "style war" between Classicists and Modernists; or that I somehow wanted to drag the world back to the eighteenth century. All I asked for was room to be given to traditional approaches to architecture and urbanism, so I am most gratified to see that, since then, the R.I.B.A. itself has initiated a Group for traditional practitioners.

To my mind, that earlier speech also addressed a much more fundamental division than that between Classicism and Modernism: namely the one between "top-down" and "bottom-up" approaches to architecture. Today, I'm sorry to say, there still remains a gulf between those obsessed by forms (and Classicists can be as guilty of this as Modernists, Post-Modernists, or Post-Post-Modernists), and those who believe that communities have a role to play in design and planning.

For millennia before the arrival of the modern architect, human intervention in the environment often managed to be beautiful, irrespective of stylistic concerns, because the "deep structure" of those interventions was consonant with a natural order, and therefore generated an organic, Nature-like order in the built world. And this is not just ancient history: as I recently pointed out in another context, there is still an echo of this sort of intervention to be found in so-called "slum cities", such as Dharavi in Mumbai, where the work of Joachim Arputham and the Slum Dwellers' Federation, whom I met there in 2006, has so well demonstrated the power of community action.

I hope we can avoid any such misunderstanding this evening of what I have to say - and to be helpful I propose to speak of "organic" rather than Classical or Traditional

architecture. I know that the term "organic architecture" acquired a certain specific meaning in the twentieth century (as I was reminded only a few days ago when I visited Erich Mendelsohn's Einsteinturm on the hills near Potsdam), but perhaps it is time to recover its older meaning and use it to describe traditional architecture that emerges from a particular environment or community - an architecture bound to place not to time. In this way we might defuse the too-easy accusation that such an approach is "old-fashioned", or not sufficiently attuned to the zeitgeist.

This term "organic architecture" might also serve to distinguish what I am talking about from the "mechanical", or even "genetically-modified", architecture of the Modernist experiment - about which I will have more to say shortly...

Geoffrey Scott, writing as the First World War broke out, was most eloquent about the way in which buildings can mirror our selves: "the centre of Classical architecture", he wrote, "is the human body... the whole of architecture is, in fact, unconsciously invested by us with human movements and human moods ... We transcribe architecture in terms of ourselves." In this sense, and above all in today's world, it is surely worth reminding ourselves that Nature herself is a living organism; Man is a living organism, each of us a microcosm of the whole - mind, body and spirit. Because of this, what we refer to as "Tradition", and the architecture that flows from it, is a symbolic reflection of the order, proportion and harmony found within Nature and ourselves.

There are equivalents to this in non-Western traditions also. In traditional Islamic architecture geometry is understood in ways both quantitative and qualitative, the combination of the two reflecting the complex order of Nature: its quantitative dimension regulated the broad form and construction of a building; its qualitative Nature established the more discrete proportions of architectural form. In this way the relationship between the architect and the surrounding world was one based more on reverence than arrogance; and both quantity and quality were each given their due attention.

Clearly, many people "out there" who aren't architects, planners, developers or road engineers think about these matters rather differently from the professional mindset. When you provide them with an alternative vision based on the qualities represented by a living tradition, and with the quantitative element playing a more subservient role, people tend to vote with their feet. But the trouble is that nine times out of ten they are never allowed an alternative, and they are all forced instead to become part of an ongoing experiment.

So I wonder if it might be possible to construct a series of seminars held jointly by this Institute and my Foundation for the Built Environment to explore whether we could ever come up with a more integrated way of looking at our alarmingly threatened world; one which is informed by traditional practice, and by traditional attitudes to the natural world?

After all, Nature, traditionally understood, is far, far more than a simple source-book of forms. One of the most important series of books of recent times, in my view -

Christopher Alexander's *The Nature of Order* - is both a compendium of living patterns seen in Nature, absorbed over millennia into human traditions of building, and a brave search for the underlying principles that give rise to these patterns everywhere we look. It reveals, as well as anything can, why we can often recognize Nature, and our own reflection more readily in a classical column, or in a humble farm building well-constructed, than in some glitzy new waveform warehouse. There have been architectural form languages and pattern languages practised over millennia that nourished humanity, and sustained human society, just as much as did our spoken languages.

But, still, we cannot entirely blame architects who think that mere imitations of Nature are sufficient: it is one of the legacies of the long Modernist experiment that we find ourselves so cut off from the real pulse of the natural world. To quote from the Victoria and Albert Museum's foreword to its recent exhibition on Modernism: "Modernists ... believed in technology as the key means to achieve social improvement, and in the machine as a symbol of that aspiration." In many ways this emphasis on technology has brought us "social improvement", and many significant benefits, but the side-effects caused by quite unnecessarily losing our balance and discarding and denigrating every other element apart from the technological are now becoming more and more apparent.

Perhaps we ought not to forget that Modernism was an urban movement. It did not arise in rural areas and I very much doubt that it could have done so. For Modernism largely rejected the influence of Nature on design. It preferred abstract thinking to contact with the patterns and organic ordering of Nature. Indeed, the exploiting of abstract concepts soon became the hallmark of Modernist architecture. The problem for us today is that this approach now lies at the heart of our perception of the world.

In so many areas, the only serious goals seem to be greater efficiency, inducing ever more economic growth, and increasing profits. Not to achieve these goals is to be marked down as a failure. The trouble is, these goals were only ever going to be possible if the apparent clutter and inefficiency of traditional thinking was swept away. It was only ever going to be possible if the bio-diversity in Nature was reduced to a much more manageable mono-culture. And it was only ever going to be possible if the inner world of humanity - our intuition, our instinct - was ignored, or over-ridden.

Instead, we conform more readily to the limited and linear process of the machine. Such is our conditioned way of thinking along purely empirical, rational lines that we now seem prepared to test the world around us to destruction simply to attain the required "evidence base" to prove that that is what we are indeed doing. And then, of course, it is all too late for the Sorcerer's Apprentice to summon back the Master to cast the necessary spell to restore harmony and balance.

Nature, I would argue, reveals the universal essence of creation. Our present preoccupation with the individual ego, and desire to be distinctive, rather than "original" in its truest sense, are only the more visible signs of our rejection of Nature. In addition, there is our addiction to mechanical rather than joined-up, integrative thinking, and our instrumental relationship with the natural world. In the world as it is now, there seems to

be an awful lot more arrogance than reverence; a great deal more of the ego than humility; and a surfeit of abstracted ideology over the practical realities linked to people's lives and the grain of their culture and identity.

Over the past 100 years, I think we might possibly agree that the old way of doing things literally fragmented and deconstructed the world into a series of "zoned" parts, without any inter-relationship or order such as is found in Nature. The difficulty I face, however, in asking you to consider the Modernistic approach of the twentieth century as flawed, and needing to be replaced, is that, clearly, this fragmented approach has produced so many great benefits. It is, however, hard to square these benefits with all the evidence that tells us that if we continue with "business as usual" we will fail to solve, indeed we are likely to compound, the deeply complicated and serious problems that this approach has already created. I feel that our philosophical response and our spiritual response to this problem are just as important as our empirical one. Empiricism does not deal with meaning, so if we rely upon it to undo all the wreckage we have caused, it will! not be enough - because it can only reveal the mechanism of things. I know, by the way, that many contemporary architects agree with this critique of the flaws in the modern movement philosophy. Just as I know that a considerable number produce some very interesting and worthy buildings. In fact, two which I have seen recently are I. M. Pei's new museum of Islamic Art in Doha, and David Chipperfield's remarkable restoration of the Neues Museum in Berlin which I saw two weeks ago.

And if we are to respond philosophically and spiritually, as well as empirically, architecture is uniquely placed to help us do that. This is why, faced by such a broad range of interlinked challenges, I would like to suggest that members of this Institute might consider this question of refocusing and changing our perceptions and thus help change the course of our approach.

Let me point out that I don't go around criticizing other people's private artworks. I may not like some of them very much, but it is their business what they choose to put in their houses. However, as I have said before, architecture and the built environment affect us all. Architecture defines the public realm, and it should help to define us as human beings, and to symbolize the way we look at the world; it affects our psychological well-being, and it can either enhance or detract from a sense of community. As such, we are profoundly influenced by it: by the presence, or absence, of beauty and harmony. I don't think it is too much to say that beauty and harmony lie at the heart of genuine sustainability. I believe that precisely because the built environment defines the public, or civic, realm it should express itself through the fundamental ingredients that define a genuine civilization - in other words, those civic virtues such as courtesy, consideration and good manner! s.

It was when I was a teenager in the 1960's that I became profoundly aware of the brutal destruction that was being wrought on so many of our towns and cities, let alone on our countryside, and that much of the urban realm was becoming de-personalized and defaced. The loss was immense, incalculable - an insane "Reformation" that, I believe, went too far, particularly when so much could have been restored, converted or re-used,

with a bit of extra thought, rather than knocked down.

I suspect that there are few among you here this evening who would now try to defend such things as the soulless housing estates that characterized that time. Albeit that they were pursued with the best possible motive. One of the problems that I think needs to be acknowledged is that so often we find the kinds of communities that work best cannot be built, due to the specialised and reductive nature of the modern planning process. The design standards imposed by the highway engineering profession, for instance, are particularly damaging to community as they ensure the dominance of the motor vehicle over the pedestrian, even within the neighbourhood. If I may say so, your profession could be of great help with this challenge of converting the planning and engineering professions, as surely you have noticed that the well-proportioned neighbourhoods of the Georgian and Victorian era hold their value far better than the monocultural housing estates of the past fifty years.

Indeed, compare these current rules with those established centuries ago right here, around Portland Place, by the Howard de Walden and Portland Estates. Those rules were intended to make good neighbours of us all - in regard to heights, rhythms and materials of building - and it is because of these firm and universal rules that this Institute can today enjoy being in such an enviable headquarters building. And who, looking at the sheer exuberance and inventiveness of 66 Portland Place, could argue that such rules inhibit creativity?

The organic/traditional approach - based on sensible "rules-of-thumb" rather than the more detached and bureaucratic way of ruling "by the book" - is a living thing, which doesn't deserve to be called "old-fashioned". It is better described as a process of continuous renewal - like those Japanese temples which are ever-renewed, yet remain ever themselves; or our - in my case rapidly ageing - bodies for that matter, the cells of which are continually replaced without replacing the thing that makes us uniquely us. And, as this very building testifies, Tradition has space for as much creativity as we can bring to it. The historian, F.A. Simpson - whom I remember well when I was an undergraduate at Trinity College, Cambridge and he was a very senior Fellow - once wrote that "the mind of Man can range unimaginably fast and far, while riding to the anchor of a liturgy."

My School of Traditional Arts, in Shoreditch, works hard to inspire its many students not just to copy the patterns of the past, but to conjure their own interpretations of traditional patterning by keeping within the overriding discipline of the grammar of its geometry. This is essential, for even wisdom can die if it is allowed to become mere mechanical repetition, devoid of love or any real understanding. Unfortunately, however, the culture of architecture schools in general still overwhelmingly encourages students to focus on the exciting and the new, at the expense of the truly "original" - which should always point to our common origins - and of evidence-based lessons of history and place. Indeed, traditional buildings and projects are still looked down on today by most teachers; too often dismissed out of hand as "pastiche" or worse. The sad truth, I feel, is that virtually all Schools of Architecture and Planning have persisted in teaching an approach which

is deliberately counter-intuitive to the human spirit and to the underlying patterns of Nature herself of which, whether we like it or not, we are a microcosm. By so doing they have deliberately thrown away the book of grammar that contained, as it were, the "syntax of civic virtues." It was because of this situation that I founded my original Institute of Architecture, to be succeeded by my Foundation for the Built Environment which is soon to launch an MSc in Sustainable Urbanism Development at Oxford. It will be an inter-disciplinary post-professional degree and, in addition to that, my Foundation's Graduate Fellowship in Sustainable Urbanism and Architecture is entering its second year, along with an expanding Traditional Building Craft Apprenticeship Scheme.

Since the 1960s I have gradually become convinced that the "experiment" on our towns and cities that had such a profoundly negative effect on me at that time - and not just on me, I can assure you - is only a small part of a much larger experiment that touches every aspect of our lives.

I don't believe I am the only one to mind about this; nor the only one to feel that the giant experiment (which has been unfolding at increasing pace over the last half-century) with our built environment, with our communities, with our identity, with our very sense of belonging, has gone too far and that it is no longer sustainable in the circumstances in which we now find ourselves.

The fact that these circumstances are in some ways a natural consequence of this larger experiment - being conducted in all walks of life - needs, I think, to be recognized and stated plainly. The trouble is that very few people dare to call it into question, for the very good reason that if they do they find themselves abused and insulted, accused of being "old-fashioned," out of touch, reactionary, anti-progress, even anti-science - as if it was some kind of unholy blasphemy to question the state of our surroundings, of our natural environment, our food security, our climate and our own human identity and meaning. Little wonder, then, that most people shy away from pointing out that the Emperor isn't actually wearing very many clothes anymore.

The crisis in the banking and financial sector - devastating though its consequences will be for some - has at least brought to light something of the short-termist, unsustainable, and experimental nature of the way many professionals now operate in the world; a kind of surpassing cleverness in the devising of products and systems that no-one really understands. At a time when, believe it or not, we are hearing calls for a return to old-fashioned, traditional banking virtues, might these calls not apply equally to the manner in which our built environment gives physical expression to the way we do business and live our lives, as essentially social beings?

Nothing argues for a re-evaluation of our way of doing things more than the state of the planet. Some twenty years ago - shortly after I made A Vision of Britain - I made another B.B.C. film called Earth in Balance in which I interviewed the then Senator Al Gore. I don't think many people paid much attention to that film. It's amusing watching it now! His subsequent bestseller, Earth in the Balance, played an important part in framing the debate before the Kyoto Conference on climate change. At that time, I argued that a

rebalancing of priorities from short- to long-term was needed and that short-term thinking was at the root of the environmental crisis. I may have thought that then - I am convinced of it now! Sustainability matters. Durability matters even more. And perhaps more than ever, it matters now; for surely it must be true that the twin crunches of credit and climate together have highlighted the dangers of the short-term view - "consume today and let someone else pay tomorrow for the throwaway society."

As over 60 per cent of our carbon emissions can be attributed to the built environment, all of us who are involved with the making of place have a great responsibility. Climatologists speak, and speak urgently, of the need to flatten the curve of rising emissions - starting now.

Not only that, but the great irony is that many of the social challenges we hoped economic growth would solve still remain deeply resistant to resolution, even after so many years of "growth". Experience now tells us that poverty, stress, ill-health and social tensions could not have been ended by economic growth alone. At the heart of this dilemma is the issue of global urbanization, as more than sixty per cent of the world's population will live in cities by 2030. And what kind of cities will they find themselves inhabiting? The primary response so far to this accelerating urbanization has been to view it as a short-term challenge of scale, and to respond to it by building bigger, more and faster, rather than questioning whether and to what extent such development - still based on an outmoded paradigm of planning and design - is actually sustainable, economically, socially and environmentally. Some, at least, are beginning to regard the growth of shanty-towns - a highly-visible consequence of rapid urbanization - as more than just a nuisance that needs to be cleared away, in the same way as the "slums" of our British cities were cleared in the 1960s, but as a possible clue to how we might respond better to growth in the future - from the bottom up.

The trouble is that we seem to have become programmed to see the individual elements of a problem only in isolation - which means that, often, in curing one problem we create many more. We see this way of thinking only too clearly in those flashy new buildings where just by adding a windmill, some solar panels, or other such "bling" to a high-rise glass tower it is considered to make everything "green". My Foundation has always been committed to finding a more integrated approach to greening building, inspired by traditional environments in which even such things as the alternate planting and paving of courtyards - encouraging the movement of air, so obviating the need for air-conditioning - and the clever placing of verandas or porticos, can make a building greener. The Foundation's Natural House, now under construction at the Building Research Establishment's Innovation Park, is an attempt to introduce a new model for green building that is site-built, low-carbon and easily adapted for volume building. It remains, however, recognizably a house. It doesn't wear its "green-ness" as if it was the latest piece of haute couture; it is much more concerned with what works on the High Street in terms of good manners and courtesy.

I must say, I find it baffling that we still consider "whole-istic" thinking to be a kind of alternative New Age therapy when, in fact, to see things in the round and take account of

the impact upon the whole is the only effective way of addressing the many, seemingly intractable problems we now face, especially if we hope to solve them without compounding our troubles with yet more chaos and destruction. More and more of the world's problems seem interconnected, so it would be wise, would it not, to consider - in architecture as much as in any other field - the wider implications of our actions rather than constantly narrowing our focus and reducing our ambitions down to the one element and its one outcome. Yet this is the way we have tended to operate ever since it became the conventional way of thinking about the world.

It seems to me that the only way to tackle this narrowness of vision is through collaborations across disciplines and divides. Your current President has encouraged your Institute to take an active role in addressing climate change in the run up to the Copenhagen conference, and if there is a compelling reason for my own Foundation to cooperate with you in the future it surely has to be around causes such as this. I can only say that along with many others I look forward to seeing a new, binding and fair treaty to emerge from the Copenhagen conference.

In bringing such matters to bear upon buildings and places, what is needed, it seems to me, is a three-stage approach: first, a grounding in precedent, building upon what has worked well in the past; second, an understanding of locality, the specific "D.N.A.", if you like, of a place, incorporating local intelligence and community input; and third, the incorporation of the best of new technology.

As an enthusiastic proponent of "Seeing is Believing," I realized 20 years ago that I myself had an opportunity to "give room" to an alternative way of doing things. I set out to try to embody these principles in the development - undertaken by the Duchy of Cornwall, under the guidance of the master-planner, Leon Krier - of an area on the edge of the town of Dorchester. There, over recent years - and increasingly on other sites owned or part-owned by the Duchy - I have sought to follow what I regard as a golden rule: which is "to try to do to others as you would have them do to you"; in other words not to build something that I would not be willing to live in or near myself. The other day an architect friend of mine asked "How many Pritzker Prizewinners are not living in beautiful Classical Homes?"; and we all know what he was getting at. Surely architects flock in such numbers to live in these lovely old houses - many from the eighteenth century, often in the last remaining conservation areas of our towns and cities that haven't yet been destroyed - because, deep down, they do respond to the natural patterns and rhythms I have been talking about, and feel more comfortable in such harmonious surroundings - even though, presumably, they don't all feel the need to wear togas to do so?!

Poundbury has challenged contemporary models for road design by introducing shared spaces, and designing for the pedestrian first, and only then the car; and it has challenged the conventional model of zoned development by pepper-potting affordable and private-market housing, and integrating workplaces and retail within a walkable neighbourhood. Thus we can enhance social and environmental value, as well as commercial. Why on earth all this should be considered "old-fashioned" and out of touch, when we took the



greatest trouble to sit down and consult with the local community twenty years ago, is beyond me - for we find, so often, that communities have the best answers themselves if they can be engaged in a meaningful way. My Foundation has discovered this time and again in conducting planning exercises in places as far afield as China and Saudi Arabia. For what is tradition but the accumulated wisdom and experience of previous generations, informed by intuition and human instinct, and given shape under the unerring eye of the craftsman, whose common sense provides the organic durability we so urgently need?

I pray that a new and developing relationship between this Institute and my Foundation for the Built Environment can enable us to work together to create the kind of organic architecture for the twenty-first century that not only reflects the intuitive needs, aspirations and cultural identity of countless communities around the world, but also the innate patterns of Nature. As Sir John Betjeman wrote with such prescience back in 1931 - "The Revolting phrase 'The Battle of Styles,' wherein architecture is now considered a fighting ground between old gentlemen who imitate the Parthenon and brilliant young men who create abstract designs, can only have been coined by stupid extremists of either side. There is no battle for the intelligent artist," he wrote. "The older men gradually discard superfluties. The younger men do not ignore the necessary devices of the past. Both sides find their way slowly to the middle of the maze whose magic centre is tradition."! ;

Nowadays we might, perhaps, more accurately speak of "the young men who imitate the Parthenon - or who are, at any rate, beginning to value the lessons of history once again - and the old gentlemen who create abstract designs", but the underlying message remains the same. If we can find the right path, perhaps you would care to accompany me to the middle of the maze?!