

CONCEPT OF UNITY IN ARCHITECTURE
-THE MANIFESTATION OF SPIRIT OF PLACE-

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In 1854, "The Great White Chief" in Washington made an offer for a large area of Indian land and promised a "reservation" for the Indian people. Chief Seattle's reply, published here in full, has been described as one of the most beautiful and profound statements on the environment ever made:

How can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land?

The idea is strange to us.

If we do not own the freshness of the air and the sparkle of the water, how can you buy them?

Every part of the Earth is sacred to my people.

Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every clear and humming insect is holy in the memory and experience of my people.

The sap which courses through the trees carries the memory and experience of my people. The sap which courses through the trees carries the memories of the red man.

The white man's dead forget the country of their birth when they go to walk among the stars. Our dead never forget this beautiful Earth, for it is the mother of the red man.

We are part of the Earth and it is part of us.

The perfumed flowers are our sisters, the deer, the horse, the great eagle, these are our brothers.

The rocky crests, the juices in the meadows, the blood of the pony, and the man, all belong to the same family.

So, when the Great Chief in Washington sends word that he wishes to buy our land, he asks much of us.

The Great White Chief sends word he will reserve us a place so that we can live comfortably to ourselves.

He will be our father and we will be his children.

So we will consider your offer to buy land.

But it will not be easy.

For this land is sacred to us.

This shining water that moves in streams and rivers is not just water but the blood of our ancestors.

If we sell you land, you must remember that it is sacred blood of our ancestors.

If we sell you land, you must remember that it is sacred, and you must teach your children that it is sacred and that each ghostly reflection in the clear water of the lakes tells of events in the life of my people.

The waters murmur is the voice of my father's father.

The rivers of our brothers they quench our thirst.

The rivers carry our canoes and feed our children.

If we sell you our land, you must remember to teach your children that the rivers are our brothers, and yours, and you must henceforth give the rivers the kindness that you would give my brother.

*We know that the white man does not understand our ways.
One portion of land is the same to him as the next, for he is a stranger who comes in the
night and takes from the land whatever he needs.
The Earth is not his brother, but his enemy and when he has conquered it, he moves on.
He leaves his father's graves behind, and he does not care.
He kidnaps the Earth from his children, and he does not care.
His father's grave, and his children's birthright are forgotten.
He treats his mother, the Earth, and his brother, the same, as things to be bought, plundered,
sold like sheep or bright beads.
His appetite will devour the Earth and leave behind only a desert.
I do not know.
Our ways are different from yours ways.
The sight of your cities pains the eyes of the red man.
But perhaps it is because the red man is a savage and does not understand.*

*There is no quiet place in the white man's cities.
No place to hear the unfurling of leaves in spring, or the rustle of an insect's wings.
But perhaps it is because I am a savage and do not understand.
The clatter only seems to insult the ears.
And what is there to life if a man cannot hear the lonely cry of a whippoorwill or the
arguments of the frogs around a pond at night.
I am a red man and do not understand.
The Indian prefers the soft sound of the wind darting over the face of the pond, and the smell
of the wind itself, cleansed by a midday rain, or scented with the pinon pine.
The air is precious to the red man, for all things share the same breath - the beast, the tree,
the man, they all share the same breath.
The white man does not seem to notice the air he breathes.
Like a man dying for many days, he is numb to the stench.
But if we sell you our land, you must remember that the air is precious to us, that the air
shares its spirit with all the life it supports.
The wind that gave our grandfather his first breath also receives his last sigh.
And if we sell you our land, you must keep it apart and sacred, as a place where even the
white man can go to taste the wind that is sweetened by the meadow's flowers.
So we will consider your offer to buy our land.
If we decide to accept, I will make one condition - the white man must treat the beasts of this
land as his brothers.*

*I am a savage and do not understand any other way.
I have seen a thousand rotting buffaloes on the prairie, left by the white man who shot them
from a passing train.
I am a savage and do not understand how the smoking iron horse can be made more
important than the buffalo that we kill only to stay alive.*

*What is man without the beasts?
If all the beasts were gone, man would die from a great loneliness of the spirit.
For whatever happens to the beasts, soon happens to man.
All things are connected.
You must teach your children that the ground beneath their feet is the ashes of our
grandfathers.
So that they will respect the land, tell your children that the Earth is rich with the lives of*

our kin.

Teach your children what we have taught our children, that the Earth is our mother.

Whatever befalls the Earth befalls the sons of the Earth.

If men spit upon the ground, they spit upon themselves.

This we know - the Earth does not belong to man - man belongs to the Earth.

This we know:

All things are connected like the blood, which unites one family.

All things are connected.

Whatever befalls the Earth - befalls the sons of the Earth.

Man did not weave the web of life - he is merely a strand in it.

Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself.

Even the white man, whose God walks and talks with him as friend to friend, cannot be exempt from the common destiny.

We may be brothers after all.

We shall see.

One thing we know, which the white man may one day discover - Our God is the same God.

You may think now that you own Him as you wish to own our land, but you cannot.

He is the God of man, and His compassion is equal for red man and the white.

The Earth is precious to Him, and to harm the Earth is to heap contempt on its creator.

The whites too shall pass, perhaps sooner than all other tribes.

But in your perishing you will shine brightly, fired by the strength of the God who brought you to this land and for some special purpose gave you dominion over this land and over the red man.

That destiny is a mystery to us, for we do not understand when the buffalo are slaughtered, the wild horses tamed, the secret corners of the forest heavy with scent of many men, and the view of the ripe hills blotted by talking wires.

Where is the thicket? Gone

Where is the Eagle? Gone.

The end of living and the beginning of survival.

End of Extract from The Irish Press of Friday June 4th, 1976.

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Abstract

This Dissertation calls attention to the evidence of a perfectly interconnected system of all the creations of existence on earth. Perceiving this interconnectedness has been established as the destination of “Dwelling”, the manner in which we, the human beings exist within this system. The recognition of this oneness or unity of all is considered universal and spelled out as the *summum bonum* of existence.

Architecture, a fundamental aspect of dwelling, is determined as a process converging upon this selfsame ultimate goal implying it to exist harmoniously within the system of existence. At this juncture, a perceptual framework is brought in which personifies the site, nature or the system of existence, and treats the world as a ‘being’ or a ‘consciousness’. Subsequently, the nature is distinguished as a pre-existing place which has its qualitative, intangible total phenomenon, its own guardian spirit, parallel to a human being, which is termed the “spirit of place” or ‘*Genius loci*’ in Latin. Capturing this spirit of a place is distinguished as the key to penetrate the system of existence.

The task of the Architect is demonstrated as penetrating this system by means of concretizing the spirit of a place in to buildings or man made places. In view of that, the building or the man made place is recognized as a tool or a device conducing to the perception of unity, which is the ulterior motive of Architecture.

The essay distinguishes our era as a dark era of spiritual crisis, where the authentic qualitative values of dwelling and Architecture are being fatefully covered up by the illusive, self-centered, divisive worldview of mankind. The present human being is identified as an unbalanced being who has lost his unity - the supreme ideal of existence. Thus, the essay stresses on the need of regaining the lost unity in order to safeguard our world from the massive catastrophe, to which it is heading rapidly.

Preamble

The origin of this dissertation has its deep roots in the crisis of the contemporary world; the crisis brought about by the wonders of Science and Technology or rather due to the change in man's perception of the world, which has engulfed all means of our existence. What we see today is a 'non-man world' where the authentic man is hastily vanishing. The man of contemporaneity lives in illusion, far from reality such that the real meaning of living as a human being or rather his pride of place in the world is not being acknowledged. He lives in a world where physical, quantitative and materialistic aspects dominate over qualitative realm. Architecture, a fundamental aspect of man's being in the world, being no exception from the reality of existence, has taken its share of battering as well.

The true sense of Architecture is not known to the man of contemporaneity. In this materialistic world, it has become a mere tool of form and function, which provides shelter and protection, solely catering to the physical, quantitative aspects of human beings. For many, it is a device of expressing their status, wealth and prosperity. Fatefully, qualitative and artistic realm of Architecture is obscured today. Above all, the agonizing truth is that the pride of place of Architecture within the reality of existence, has been totally forgotten. The site, or nature, is recognized as a lifeless physical entity comprised of mere 'things' or 'objects'. Man today does not know that every spec of dust, every drop of water, every single tree and ray of sunlight is part of one single reality, within which he himself exists. He is entrenched in the blind belief that Architecture is a process of converting the 'lifeless site' into a 'place' where humans can attain dwelling. The addiction to this 'thingly' perception has lead almost all of the present day Architects to enforce their will upon the world by way of extreme exploitation. Thus the face of the planet earth, the only home for man in this universe, is being rapidly changed putting into stake the existence of all creations including man himself.

This dissertation probes into the manner in which Architecture becomes an aid for the realization of man's pride of place within the existence, and thereby gaining the lost order of our world.