SILENCE AND LIGHT

Let us go back in time to the building of the pyramids. Hear the din of industry in a cloud of dust marking their place. Now we see the pyramids in full presence. There prevails the feeling "Silence," from which is felt Man's desire to express. This before the first stone was laid.

I note when a building is being made, free of servitude, that the spirit to be is high allowing not a blade of grass in its wake. When it stands complete and in use it seems like it wants to tell you about the adventure of its making. But all parts locked to serve makes this story of little interest. When its use is spent and it becomes a ruin, the wonder of its beginning appears again. It feels well to have itself entwined in foliage, once more high in spirit and free of servitude.

I sense Light as the giver of all presences, and material as spent light. What Light makes casts a shadow and the shadow belongs to Light. The mountain is of Light, its shadow belongs to Light. I sense Threshold, Light to Silence, Silence to Light, the ambiance—Inspiration, wherein the desire to be, to express, crosses with the possible. The rock, the stream, the wind inspires the will to express, to seek the means of imparting presence. The beautiful in the material is transformed from wonder to knowing which in turn is transformed to the expression of beauty that lies in the desire to express. Light to Silence, Silence to Light cross in the ambient sanctuary Art. Its Treasury knows no favorite, knows no style. Truth and rule out of Commonness, Law out of Order, are the offerings within.

Architecture without presence exists as the realization of a spirit. A work of architecture is made as an offering touching its nature. So also one can say that the realms Painting, Sculpture, Literature, exist in spirit, their natures revealed more by works unfamiliar. The mention of the unfamiliar is the recognition of the singularity of every individual in attitude and talent. But above all the phenomena of realizations of a nature from a singular point of view reveals new images of the same nature. So it is in Nature that diversity of forms evolve from universal order.
Form is the recognition of an integrity of inseparable elements. This is true of Art and Nature. In Nature validity is nonconscious. Every grain of sand on the beach is its natural color and shape, is of natural weight and in its only position. It is part of the constant play of equilibria solely governed by the laws of nature. What man makes, yes, must answer to the laws of nature but is governed in his concepts by rules and choice. The one is measurable. The one is completely unmeasurable. What nature makes it makes without man, and what man makes nature cannot make without him. Nature does not make a house. It cannot make a room. How marvelous that when in a room with another soon the mountains, trees, wind and the rain leave us for the mind and the room becomes a world in itself. With only another person one feels generative. The meeting becomes an event. The actor throws aside his lines of performance. The residue from all his thoughts and experiences meets the other on the equal terms. Even now, though I feel I am saying things differently than I have said before, I have thought about them and is therefore not essentially generative. The room is then a marvelous thing.

Architecture primarily deals with the making of spaces which serve the institutions of Man. In the aura Silence to Light, the desire to be, to make, to express, feels the laws that confirm the possible. Avid then is the desire to know, heralding the beginning of the Institutions of Learning, dedicated really to discover how we were made. In Man is the record of Man. Man through his consciousness feels this record sparking his desire to learn that which Nature has given him and what choices he made to protect his desires and self-preservation in the Odyssey of his emergence.

I feel that consciousness is in all life. It is in the rose, in the microbe, in the leaf. Their consciousness is not understandable to us. How much more would we comprehend if he were to uncover their secrets, for then a wider sense of Commonness would enter expressions in Art giving the artist greater insight in presenting his offerings answering to the prevalence of Order, the prevalence of Commonness.

Dissonance is in the open. I do not feel that its roots come from need alone. Dissonance down deep stems from desire—desire for the yet not made, yet not expressed. Need comes from the known. Giving what is lacking brings no lasting joy. Did the world need the Fifth Symphony before Beethoven wrote it? Did Beethoven need it? He desired it and the world needs it. Desire brings the new need.

I look at the glancing light, which is such a meaningful light on the side of the mountain bringing every tiny natural detail to the eye and teaches about the material and choice in making a building. But do I get less delight out of seeing a brick wall with all its attempts at regularity, disclosing its delightful imperfections in natural light? A wall is built in hope that a light once observed may strike it even for but a rare moment in time. How can anyone think of a building of spaces not in natural light? Schools are being built with little and without natural light, the reasons given of savings in conditioning costs and pupils greater attention to the teacher. The most wonderful aspects of the indoors are the moods that light gives to space. The electric bulb fights the sun. Think of it.

I am reminded of Tolstoy who deviated from faithlessness to Faith without question. In his latter state he deplored the miracles saying that Christ has radiance without them. They were like holding a candle to the Sun to see the Sun better.

Structure is the maker of light. A column and a column brings light between. It is darkness—light, darkness—light, darkness—light. From the column we realize a simple and beautiful evolvement of rhythmic beauty from the primitive wall and its openings. Walls were thick. They protected man. He felt the desire for freedom and the promises of the outside. He made at first a rude opening. He explained to the unhappy wall his realizations that a wall in accepting an opening must follow a greater order bringing arches and piers to it as new and worthy elements. These are realizations in the nature Architecture of Light and Structure. The choice of a square room is also the choice of its light as distinguished from other shapes and their light. I should like to say that even a room which must be dark must have at least a crack of light to know how dark it is. But Architects in planning rooms today have forgotten the faith in natural light depending on the touch of a finger on a switch satisfied with only
static light compared to the endlessly changing qualities of natural light in which a room is a different room every second of the day.

I spoke of Form as the realizations of a nature. A shape is derived as an expression of Form. Form follows Desire as a realization of a dream or a belief. Form tells of inseparable elements. Design is the infighting to develop these elements into shapes compatible with each other reaching for a wholeness, for a name. Form in the mind of one is not the same as it is in another. Realizations of a nature, to Form, to shape is not a process of design manipulation. In design there are wonderful realizations. The order of structure, the order of construction, the order of time, the order of spaces come into play.

As I see a sheet of music, I realize that the musician sees it to hear. To an architect the plan is a sheet on which appears the order of the structure of spaces in their light.

The institutions of learning give a program of requirement to the architect. These requirements are derived from previous plans answering momentary needs. Farther and farther are these needs from the beginning spirit School. The architect must consider the program only as a measurable guide. The spirit in the sense of its conceived Commonness, School, should be considered as though it is coming to realization for the first time.

Recently our class agreed to speculate on what is a University. There was no program. We thought of its nature. The minds were empty of knowing and full of adventure. One student gave emphasis to the central library as the place of the dedication of the mind. It was felt also that the libraries of the professions should be related to the main library by a conscious Architecture of Connection. The University's most direct service to the community is the sanctioning of the professions. But we were distressed because we realized that the University was gradually falling into the sphere of the market place competing with other schools for specific research money and the invention of composite degrees to attract students. Architecture was being isolated from Urban Design and City Planning which discounted students with broad natural talents in architecture, who refuse to accept such distinctions for their profession.

In the marketplace the professions tend toward business which suppresses individual talent whose leadership has always been followed. The architect can only keep realizing the spirit of his art and realize the emerging orders when the problems before him are all-comprising. Relegated to niches of specialization he will become part of a team, design parts, and give the world nothing but solutions of the needs, never free or experienced to guide prevailing desires to inspirations. Though I feel that unique talent cannot be overthrown, it is hurt by being retarded. Talent has to be recognized early to do good work.

The architecture of connection, Library to Library, developed thoughts about significant places found in its path. The garden became inseparable from the room, the court, the entrance place of invitation, the green or the great court as the place of the happening.

Dissension made us think of a place or a structure yet not named but needed as a place of the teacher, student and the directors. Like the Stoa it would not be partitioned and its position on the campus would be on a great lawn with not a path crossing it. Later division would be agreed upon and the lawn modified by the use it evokes.

Then it was thought that a University has much to gain from the city which in turn may consider the University as one of its most important institutions. Professional practice is in the marketplace. The University—in sanctioning the professions should be free of it. This brought to mind the role of the city planner. We realized that there must be a place free of the University and free of the marketplace in a forum where both could meet. The visions of planners meet the political economy of the city. This should be recognized as a new institution of man equal to the Institutions of Government, of Learning, and of Health.

The city is measured by its institutions. The growth is felt through the works of its leaders sensitive to the desires of the people and to serve their desire of expression. The studies leading to the emergence of new institutions become the points of departure for planning. Movement plans and redevelopment schemes are merely corrective projects. The known institutions need new vitality, conscious recog-
nition. As an example of current deterioration think of City Hall evolved from the early meeting place. It is probably the most dishonored building in the city. A place associated with taxes, fees, courts and jails where nobody meets. Since the meeting houses the interests of people have become greatly extended and diversified but they have no place to air their interests. A place of auditoria, meeting rooms and seminars would revive the spirit of representation and give every man a place which he feels is his own city house.

The inspirations assist us when we clear our senses of known solutions and methods. The realization of a yet unthought of nature and the elements of its form can stimulate an entirely new point of view about everything. Today we talk about technology as though our minds will be surrendered to the machine. Surely the machine is merely a brain which we get as potluck from nature. But a mind capable of realization can inspire a technology, and humiliate the current one.

Teaching is a work. The beginning is dear to the teacher for he senses what man is from what he accepts and is willing to support. The code of the teacher is often remote from the other man. He seeks therefore, because of his desire to tell about his mind, words that are as close to his code as he can think of yet not to lose their generative-ness. I have used “Commonness” instead of “Spirit” for that very reason. Spirit is immediately assumed as understood. Commonness makes one think.

Art is the making of a life, when we hear the strains of a familiar musical masterpiece it is though one familiar entered the room. But still as you must see him again to believe his presence, so must the music be played again to remember all that touched you before.

In Mexico, I met Barragan. I was impressed by his work because of its closeness to nature. His garden is framed by a high private wall, the land and foliage remaining untouched as he found it. In it is a fountain made by a water source lightly playing over a jagged splinter and drop for drop falling in a great native bowl of rhinoceros gray black stone filled to the brim. Each drop was like a slash of silver making rings of silver reaching for the edge and falling to the ground. The water in the black container was a choice from the path of water as a mountain stream in light, over rocks, and then in deep seclusion where its silver was revealed. He learned about water and selected what he loved most.

His house is not merely a house but House itself. Anyone could feel at home. Its material is traditional; its character eternal. We talked about traditions as though they were mounds of the golden dust of man’s nature and from which circumstances were distilled out. As man takes his path through experience he learns about man. The learning falls as golden dust, which if touched gives the power of anticipation. The artist has this power and knows the world even before it began. He expresses himself in terms of validities physiological.

A student asked, “What is the intuitive sense?” Robert Le Ricolais, mathematician, engineer, and scientist, said: “What made man venture to make the first thing? Surely it was not his knowledge but his sense of validity. But intuition must be fed.” I might say that everything must begin with poetry.

**SILENCE AND LIGHT II**

I’m going to put on the blackboard here what may seem at first to be very esoteric. But I believe that I must do it in order to prime myself. Don’t forget that I’m also listening and I have really no prepared talk except that I put a few notes down just to get the scaredness out of me because, you know, this is like a blank piece of paper on which I’ve got to make a drawing. And so, the drawing is a talk this time, you see. It is wonderful to consider, you know, that you must see so well that you hear too. And sometimes it is well to hear so well that you see too. The senses really can be considered one thing. It all comes together. It is the reason why I constantly refer to music in referring to architec-

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2. Kahn’s colleague at the University of Pennsylvania.