Nathan Glazer, *From a Cause to a Style: Modernist Architecture's Encounter with the American City*
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by Philip Bess

When the New York *Times* announced in 2004 that its long-time neo-modernist architecture critic Herbert Muschamp would be succeeded by the then Los Angeles *Times* neo-modernist architecture critic Nicolai Ouroussoff, it instantly prompted this dry witty bit of architecture *critic* criticism from the Los Angeles New Urbanist architect Stefanos Polyzoides: "New York's loss will be Los Angeles's gain." Reading Nathan Glazer's *From a Cause to a Style,* it is hard not to think we all would have gained much had the esteemed Harvard professor of sociology emeritus been the (New York) *Times* architecture critic for the past twenty years or so. Alas, we must content ourselves instead with *From A Cause To A Style*, a fine collection of some fifteen years of Glazer's reflections and public meditations on modernist architecture and urbanism, and hope also it will have wide readership (not least by every architecture student and professor in the country)---not necessarily for answers to the questions Glazer poses or for solutions to the problems he identifies, but certainly to better understand the intellectual incoherence of today's architectural modernism that in a certain sense has triumphed and in another sense has rendered architects almost completely irrelevant to the contemporary built environment and to what is left of American civil society.

Not merely a keen sociological observer with an appreciation for the complexity of his subject, Glazer is an *amateur* in the etymologically precise sense of the word: an attentive lover, in this case of cities and architecture. Raised in New York City, a long-time resident of Cambridge, Massachusetts, and a frequent visitor to Washington, DC, Glazer writes of all three places (and Boston) with authority, using each as a lens through which to view the state of contemporary architecture and urbanism. Three of his eleven chapters are devoted specifically to---and indeed illuminate---housing, public amenities and planning in New York City. These chapters alone are in my opinion worth the price of the book, not only because Glazer raises hard and serious questions about whether Manhattan has perhaps become too dense for the well-being of its residents, but also because he demonstrates just how much of what is good about New York today is owed to the foresight and generosity of a not unflawed 19th century culture that was nevertheless *civic* in a way that New York today (and much of America) simply is no longer. Two other chapters focus upon monuments, memorials and the inherent limitations of modernist aesthetics, with specific reference to Washington, DC. There is also a delightful chapter on his fellow New Yorker and Harvard colleague and friend, the late Daniel Patrick Moynihan and his role in creating coherent guidelines for federal architecture---guidelines up to which, alas, the patrons and architects of federal buildings have not yet measured. I cannot resist reporting this vintage Moynihan moment recounted by Glazer. As chairman of the board of Washington's Hirshorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Moynihan

> accepted as a gift from the Institute of Scrap Iron and Steel the sculpture *Isis* by Mark Di Suvero. Moynihan said on that occasion that he accepted this "splendid gift." And further: "I recall that on the occasion that Margaret Fuller declared, 'I accept the universe,' Carlyle remarked that she had better…. *Isis* achieves an aesthetic transubstantiation of that which is at once elusive yet ineluctable in the modern sensibility. Transcending socialist realism with an unequaled abstractionist range, Mr. Di Suvero brings to

the theme of recycling both the hard edge reality of the modern world and the transcendent fecundity of the universe itself."

Just so….

Glazer also has insightful chapters devoted to the current general state of both the planning and the architectural professions, and is one of the few public intellectuals either inside or outside the culture of architecture with both the knowledge to recognize and the courage to state publicly that, whatever his other shortcomings and failings, Prince Charles has spoken (and speaks) intelligently in his pointed criticisms of modernist architecture and urban design. Indeed, Glazer begins his book with how in the 1980s and 90s the Prince of Wales emerged as a leading critic of modernist architecture and planning; and that, even more astonishingly, Charles's outspoken preference for more traditional buildings and towns and urban quarters appeared to have widespread popular support in the United Kingdom. Architects, says Glazer

> to their disgruntlement, were portrayed as arrogant, unresponsive to what ordinary people wanted, indifferent to their interests…. [W]hat was most shocking to modernist architects was how easy it was to portray them as distant from the people and their interests. For at the origins of modernism…[architects] were, in their own minds, leagued with the people against what they saw as archaic, overblown, extravagant and inefficient architecture and design, *the taste of princes* [emphasis added]…. Modernism in architecture and planning spoke for the people and their interests---in good sanitary housing, in green space, in access to air and light, in more living space, in an urban environment adapted to their needs and interests---and against the interest of princes, or merchant princes, or profit-minded developers. Modernism in its origins was a cause, not simply another turn in taste. What, then, had happened, that a prince could better represent the people, their interests and tastes, than the architects?

Glazer concedes that we live (perhaps) in an age of extraordinary architectural achievement, insofar as a handful of neo- or hyper-modernist "starchitects"---he mentions specifically Frank Gehry, Renzo Piano, Rem Koolhaas, Richard Meier, Santiago Calatrava, Zaha Hadid, Daniel Libeskind and Peter Eisenman, all of whose work in recent years has been featured repeatedly in the New York *Times* in particular by both Muschamp and Ouroussoff, and who exemplify a character type promoted almost universally in the architectural academy---have succeeded in finding patrons to finance select "designer" buildings (often art museums or concert venues) of unprecedented form, scale and questionable durability, many of a formal complexity possible only as a consequence of developments in computer graphic technology, and invariably unrelated to place. To make this last point another way, there has arisen a new "international style" of signature "brand name" buildings repeatable and repeated from Amsterdam to Atlanta, Berlin to Bangalore, Denver to Dubai, London to Los Angeles, Seattle to Shanghai. Glazer does not deny that these sometimes startling buildings are creative achievements, rather merely observes that they have but the barest connection either to the rest of the built environment or to the lives of ordinary people, the latter who often see these buildings---and toward whom these buildings are often intended---as an assault; and who in any case are a distant secondary concern to the objective of neo-modernist architects and artists to "subvert the context" (as the title of another of Glazer's chapters suggests) with their art. And so a question suggested by its title arises repeatedly throughout the chapters of Glazer's book: Given architectural modernism's original social ambitions---the late architectural theorist Colin Rowe once aptly characterized architectural modernism as a secular gospel, the power of

which lay in both its utopian message and its "scientific" credentials---how has it happened that the ambition of the latter-day heirs of modernist architecture theory has come to be both limited by and confined to the pursuit of stylistic *novelty*?

Two especially valuable contributions of Glazer's book are his documentation of the neo-modernist architectural obsession with novelty to the *de facto* (though not always rhetorical) exclusion of "social concerns," and also the nuance with which he explores this fact---not least in his understanding that architecture is inevitably a social art, in the obvious sense that architecture is always present *to* if not today always *for* society, but also in the less obvious sense that Glazer (unlike most non-architects) is cognizant of the many social factors in addition to design that shape the built environment. Architects in any age work within such natural constraints as those provided generally by the laws of physics and specifically by the characteristics of their sites; and are also constrained by the taste and temperament of their patrons and clients. Contemporary architects in particular are constrained by modern zoning ordinances and building codes; contemporary construction practice as affected both by the organization of labor and the production of building materials; contemporary traffic engineering standards (often enforced with exceptional bureaucratic insouciance); modern banking practices and financing conventions; the cultural expectations established and reinforced by both the news media and the culture of architecture itself in its professional and academic milieux; and lately by environmental and not-in-my-backyard organizations that have arisen in reaction to the pervasiveness of modernist architectural practices and assumptions. All of these place limits on the ability of any contemporary architect to realize his or her design ambitions, and it is to Glazer's credit that these constraints are acknowledged at a number of points throughout his book. Moreover---given the characteristically modern co-existence of bureaucratically organized public institutions with the strikingly contrasting minimal organization of private life---one might hypothesize that it is 1) the reality of these modern constraints, 2) the inherent difficulty (if not the anthropological impossibility) of creating a just society solely by means of architecture, and 3) precisely the *failed utopia* of modernism that has led neo-modernist architects to abandon the early modernist social agenda for the comparatively simple goal of aesthetic novelty.

In the land of the blind the one-eyed man is king. I therefore mean no disrespect to Glazer and his critical achievement to say that although he sees the world more clearly than ninety-nine per cent of today's architects and architecture critics, there is nevertheless much that still he appears not to see. There seems, for example, a barrelful of blindnesses (as well as some insight) in this one paragraph from his Introduction:

> [T]he central issue in modernism was not really, to begin with, style. Modernism was not simply a new style in architecture…. Modernism was a movement, with much larger intentions than replacing the decorated tops of buildings with flat roofs, molded window frames with flat strips of metal, curves and curlicues [*sic*] with straight lines. It represented a rebellion against historicism, ornament, overblown form, pandering to the great and rich and newly rich as against serving the needs of society's common people. But when [today's] architects compete with each other in imposing forms on museums and concert halls and residential towers that bear no resemblance to their functions, the movement in its larger sense is dead. One element of continuity with early and classic modernism persists, the proscribing and elimination of reference to the history of architecture. Modernism in architecture has abandoned its early intentions and hopes.

There is some truth in the preceding paragraph; but to what specifically does its author seem blind? Among other things:

- that architecture and urbanism *always* embody an explicit concern for formal (i.e. building and spatial) order, and that formal order—aesthetics---is not an extra or accidental aspect of human social life but intrinsic to it;

- that formal order is of particular concern *always* to architects, including modernists;

- that the formal order of human settlements is *never* divorceable from the moral order, from the moral *intentions*---not to mention the economic organization and the environmental implications and consequences---of human settlements (i.e., Glazer's paragraph appears blind to the truth that formal order *always* embodies a moral order, implicit or explicit); and

- that form need *not* always follow function. It is far truer to say that form does and should embody *purpose*; and that purpose includes but is much broader than function. Moreover, there is no reason to believe that the early modernists, in spite of their "form follows function" rhetoric, did not have ambitions far beyond their purported interest in "functionality."

One could argue that Glazer's paragraph does not preclude the idea that there were moral intentions embodied both in modernism and in "the tradition" that modernism replaced. But I read Glazer's paragraph to mean that however much their contemporary heirs have gone astray, the early modernists were moral and "the tradition" was corrupt. This is a peculiar and historically specific understanding of both morality and the built environment (not to mention anthropology); and to the extent that Glazer does mean this, he is not merely a *former* modernist---"who when young is not?" he asks and confesses early on---but he to just that extent *remains* a modernist.

It is true, as Glazer notes, that modernism was a movement with large intentions; but its central issue most assuredly *was* "style," which is to say: the *meaning* of architectural form, and specifically modernist building forms (i.e. style/s) as a symbolic rejection of 19th century European culture. Modernism was, just a little over a century later, the architecture and city planning equivalent of the French Revolution's pitiless overthrow of the *ancien regime* and all its institutional associations. Where "the tradition" was hereditary and organic, modernism would be rational; where the tradition was ornate, modernism would be spare; where the tradition was corrupt, modernism would be pure; where the tradition was for princes and popes, modernism would be for "the people." Moreover, for all but the most child-like of modernist fellow travelers, modernism was never so much about *function* as it was about using the language of function as one more club with which to beat the decadent culture of 19th and early 20th century Europe and the architecture that (in the view of the early modernists and their growing following) symbolized it. Mies van der Rohe's Barcelona Pavilion and Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye, to cite just two icons of early modernism, were hardly about function at all, rather about (among other things) the separation of structure from enclosure and a new building aesthetic and conception of space made possible thereby that clearly differentiated it from the decadent tradition. It's true that there was a modernist interest in "workers' housing;" but one never gets the sense that the programmatic concerns were not secondary to the aesthetic concerns, unless one can still persuade oneself of the modernist *zeitgeist* argument that the form of the buildings simply could not be other than they were. Not that the early modernists were wrong in their assessment of the European culture of their time as corrupt, as the horror of World War I convinced nearly everybody who might theretofore have had any doubts. But this does not mean that

the modernists were right in either their anthropological assumptions---e.g., the early modernists viewed, and latter-day modernists continue to view, human beings as *objects* of their design intentions rather than fellow members of a community and subjects in their own right---or their architectural and urban prescriptions. The historic location of early modernism does however help explain why there was once such widespread if ultimately misplaced faith in modernism's messianic message.

That modernist faith is itself now in ruins, but its influence lingers not only in the built environment we have inherited and continue to extend but also in the fragmentary language Nathan Glazer and most of us---laypeople *and* architects---use to talk about it. As Glazer points out, today's neo-modernist architects have retained from modernism the imperative of newness, and virtually nothing else. But almost everybody inside and outside the contemporary culture of architecture who employs words and phrases like "social concerns" and "progressive" and "avant garde" and "function" and "sustainability" and "social agenda" and "public realm" and "common good" and "civic buildings" and "social justice" and even "beauty" does so apparently unaware that they (we) are employing pieces of a once coherent pre-modernist language and tradition of architecture and city-making the foundations of which the Industrial Revolution was cracking long before the early 20th century modernist ideological wrecking ball came along to finish the job and smash the tradition to smithereens.

Consider for example the incoherence that attends the still respectable modernist terms *avant garde* and *progressive*. These have their origin and only make sense in a teleological framework: history is intended to an end, and we are *avant garde* if we are leading the way toward it, progressive if we are part of that forward movement. But no neo-modernist today holds such a teleological view of history, either in a traditional transcendent biblical or a modern immanent Hegelian-Marxist sense. In the context of contemporary architectural discourse to be *avant garde* and/or progressive means no more and no less than appearing to design buildings unlike any that have ever been done or seen, and justifying such buildings as necessary expressions of an alleged and otherwise mute *zeitgeist*.

Or take a common lament that today's neo-modernism has abandoned the original modernist *social agenda* on behalf of *social justice*. Invariably, both of these terms are understood as equality, and defined exclusively in materialist terms: equal access to fresh air, natural light, sanitary housing, public green space, etc., all guaranteed by some supervising authority---in the original modernist ideological context, government---the achievement of which is sufficient to render a society "just" with no apparent consciousness that justice might be a character virtue both required and within the capacity of individual members of the society. One would never know from such laments that there are long, indeed ancient, pre-modern considerations of justice as both an individual and communal virtue that include not only ideas about equality, but also ideas about both freedom and desert—and particularly the latter, i.e., *justice* as what people deserve, and *being just* as rendering to others their due. Nor would one glean from nostalgia for the modernist social agenda that a good society depends not only upon the strict (and often legal) demands of justice but also upon the exercise of "softer" virtues such as charity and generosity and forbearance, as well as the virtue of prudence needed to render good judgments in those hard cases when virtues conflict. The

material conditions of life have always been a component of classical and biblical considerations of justice; but the thought that the modern recasting of justice into materialist terms may represent an impoverishment rather than an advancement of our collective moral sensibility---one paralleling rather than contrasting with the aesthetic impoverishment of our collective physical environment---is a thought simply not available to those who reside within a strictly modernist universe of discourse. Without denigrating the genuine moral achievements of modern societies---e.g., greater tolerance of racial difference, expanded opportunities for women, the existence of a broad middle class and possibilities for upward economic mobility---crediting modernist architects for their "social agenda" concedes to them too much of what shouldn't be conceded at all: that architects (modernist or otherwise) are unusually "moral," and that modern morality is a self-evident across-the-board improvement over the moral sensibilities of previous generations of western culture.

This point about the questionable merits of modernist sensibilities can be expanded to contemporary architectural concerns for *sustainability* and *function*, and to the idea of the architecture of the *civic realm*, all of which are arguably fragments of pre-modern cultures of building most of which the modern world has swept away. Many modernists (and not a few traditionalists) today are desperate to "own" the issue of environmental sustainability, as if the environmental concerns purportedly addressed by "green buildings" are a sufficient rather than merely necessary component of good architecture and urbanism (and as if traditional architecture and urbanism were not themselves the "original green"). But this is the observation of an architectural traditionalist, one mindful that the broad western architectural tradition that modernists have declared dead once included local and regional cultures of building that recognized durability, comfort, beauty (*firmitas, commoditas, venustas)* and decorum all as necessary elements of architecture understood explicitly as a civic art, i.e., an art of civil society. The contemporary concern for sustainability---and here I must note that much if not most of today's "green building" not only reacts to but also depends upon a purportedly rapacious industrialism that is also both a premise and pre-condition of modernism--- was once upon a time and within the western architectural tradition a component of the architectural virtue and imperative of durability; just as the modernist concern for function was part of the traditional virtue of comfort. Likewise the traditional architectural virtues of beauty and decorum presumed a public realm of a shared civil society *of which the architect himself was a member*, and within which the architect acted as an artist a major part of whose calling was to help make the community beautiful. In such a civil society architects, however disposed to innovation and however free to innovate, are unlikely to see their primary duty to be "subverting the context."

But we no longer have such a shared civil society, let alone one manifested physically in beautiful towns and cities; and both our architectural culture and the physical form of contemporary human settlements are evidence of this. Alasdair MacIntyre has made the point in *After Virtue* that historical actions embody ideas, and ideas occur and develop in a temporal context of human actions. From this he concludes that it is an error to think of "history" and the "history of ideas" as two separate things, because in reality they are part of a single human history. But to this it may be added that both ideas and human actions *take place* in physical and spatial environments that are themselves consequences of ideas and actions that both originate in and further influence their physical and spatial context. So

if, as MacIntyre suggests, there is a reciprocal relationship between actions and ideas, why should we not also assume that the physical form of any human habitat likewise exists in reciprocal relationship to ideas and actions themselves shaped in the context of a physical and spatial environment? And why likewise should we not assume it an error to think of "history" and the "history of ideas" and the "history of architecture and urbanism" as three separate things instead of part of one single history? And if, as MacIntyre contends, our moral discourse is in disarray, why would we shrink from perhaps acknowledging intellectually that which is increasingly evident to our eyes and ears, viz. that our built environment and its accompanying architectural discourse likewise might be in disarray?

If I may be allowed to posit the previous sentence as a hypothesis, MacIntyre's work perhaps continues to illuminate. Because clearly---at least to Nathan Glazer and to me---our contemporary built environment and its accompanying architectural discourse *are* in disarray. One of MacIntyre's objectives in *After Virtue* was to demonstrate (and to confirm Nietzsche's demonstration) how Enlightenment moral discourse employed a certain understanding of reason---a *modern* understanding of reason---as a mask for emotivist moral judgments. Purporting to advocate *rationally objective* moral discourse, Enlightenment moral philosophers were in fact promoting *emotivist* moral discourse and (mostly unknowingly) exercising their will-to-power. Nietzsche's accomplishment was to blow the whistle on their game, and to enlighten the Enlightened about the exact nature of what they were really doing; and Nietzsche's thesis with respect to the implications of what followed from his (ironically) *true* insight led him to preach the *uebermensch* Artist-Warrior, that "superior being" who creates and imposes his own values upon the world. Allowing for a little time lag, does this not have exact parallels with the recent history and current state of architecture?

Modernist architectural theory overthrew the tradition in the name of an ostensibly universal aesthetic and functional rationality that would remake society for the better (with "better" understood entirely in materialist and utilitarian terms). But a truly inconvenient truth is that there is no such universal aesthetic and functional rationality; and society has *not* been remade for the better---not least because the spectrum of good-better-best as applied to human beings almost certainly requires more than materialist and utilitarian assumptions. All that is left to us today is the rationality [sic] of the will-to-power in both its individualist and corporate bureaucratic forms; and, perhaps, the rationality of tradition/s. The Nietzschean rationality of the neo-modernists by now should be abundantly clear---Peter Eisenman once remarked that one of the things he most admired about the late Philip Johnson was that Johnson read Nietzsche in the original German---and is disguised only when they have to present their work to the general public. See, for example, this unintentionally hilarious and revealing promotion of the work of a neo-modernist starchitect for a boys and girls club in Katrina-ravaged Mississippi:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ps5VyYe25F0&eurl=http://www.artsjournal.com/

Neo-modernist architecture therefore is emotivist to the core. So, architectural ideologies aside---because emotivists can make classical buildings too; or perhaps rather: classicists too can be emotivists---if the built environment is the

physical form of a culture, and if our culture is predominantly emotivist, should we not expect to have an emotivist (or to put it in more common parlance, "diverse") built environment? (Even if---because of the organization of the modern economy---the built environment ironically and depressingly turns out to look everywhere the same.) And might we not therefore more truly understand both contemporary neo-modernist architecture and post-WWII suburban sprawl---the contradictory fantasy of "the little-cabin-in-the-woods," democratized---as the respectively high-brow and low-brow physical-expressions-in-the-landscape of an emotivist culture? I have noted above the modern condition of impersonal bureaucratic institutions in the public sphere coexisting with unparalleled license in the sphere of private life; and I note here merely that, for good or ill, we moderns regularly (perhaps daily) migrate between these two domains and their often wildly discrepant role requirements. Together these two notes suggest a veritable Law of Architecture and Urbanism, to wit: that a widespread desire for and expectation of social predictability from everyone else---the culture of bureaucracy---combined with a widespread desire for and expectation of maximum freedom for oneself---the culture of personal autonomy---will *never* produce a coherent (let alone beautiful) public realm. A coherent and beautiful physical realm can only be a consequence of a communal *telos* also shared by its most gifted artists, where the buildings and public spaces that gifted artists make express common rather than idiosyncratic sensibilities---i.e. sensibilities where what is shared is essential and what is unique is accidental. Where what is common is the ambition to live an experimental life, what "counts" in physical culture---as we are instructed weekly in our culture's Paper of Record---are experimental buildings; and these do indeed signify, for better or worse, the kind of culture we are today.

So is there no hope for just, walkable, mixed-use human settlements characterized by durable, comfortable and beautiful blocks of foreground buildings and monuments and background buildings that altogether define a beautiful public spatial realm of streets and squares---a public realm *belonging to rich and poor alike*? Are such environments as we find them in the world today---those places that to see and experience most Americans must go on vacation---doomed merely to be consumed and / or inhabited by the wealthy? Or is it possible to imagine that under certain recognizably modern conditions we can somehow re-learn how to make such human settlements, and make them available across class lines?

These of course are the money questions for disillusioned modernists; and Glazer at first glance is not optimistic that there is either a modernist or a traditionalist answer. For all of modernism's shortcomings, Glazer notes that it is not proving easy to replace it. Replacing modernism, he suggests, would be to "return to a discredited past, [a past of] columns and pediments and men on horseback." At best, the opponents of modernism have been able to save from the modernist vandals some of those newly appreciated pre-modern buildings the styles of which had been "innocently [sic] copied, revived, revised, [and] adapted to different uses…allowed to cluster together messily and incongruously in the city." But challenges to modernism, he notes, have to date just led to new forms of modernism; and this, Glazer suggests, is a consequence of certain features intrinsic to modern life. Among these he cites in particular the *scale* of modern buildings (a function of their institutionally-mandated programs); the *new materials* with which architects must contend ("Can we deny ourselves the opportunities afforded by new materials? I think

not" he writes on p.36; and yet on p.16 he has already noted that modernist buildings "offer tremendous problems of maintenance or restoration as their once-new materials for building have aged and been removed from catalogs"---in fairness, the latter point, written in the 2007 Introduction, was perhaps meant to rebut the former assertion, written in 1991); the *disappearance of craftsmen* and the modern *expense of their labor* (as if modernism was not complicit in ruining both the standards and the economic viability of the traditional building crafts); the *ubiquity of the automobile* and the fact that providing parking for cars has done as much if not more than anything to dissolve good urban form; the fact that *traditional cultures of building* just don't exist anymore; the fact that modern culture is a *commercial culture* (as if that in itself precludes good architecture and urbanism, which would have come as a surprise to, say, medieval Bruges, or even 19th and early 20th century New York; commercial culture un-tempered by other cultural factors is of course another matter); and finally, that the general public has been and remains subject to *bamboozlement and confusion* by publicity and false authority (I will say no more about the New York *Times'* architecture critics). In light of all this, Glazer writes (on p. 46, originally in 1991):

> We can appreciate and preserve the buildings of the past. But how do we build for our public functions today? We have abandoned the language of classical architecture, of pediments and columns, which served to indicate great public functions in Western architecture for twenty-five hundred years. Occasionally forgotten or decried, this architectural language returned again and again to serve as the symbol of our greatest aspirations in public life. We seem to have no replacement…. We can preserve the buildings of the past. We can't build them again. The language of the past can be admired and studied; its loss can be, and is, regretted; but too much has changed for it to serve us today. We are suspended between a language that cannot be used and a language---the language of modernism---that is unsatisfying for major public purposes, but for which we have no replacement.

These indeed are the words of a disillusioned modernist. And yet, allowing himself to trust both his senses and his intellect, Glazer continues to struggle with himself, continues to ponder the massive cumulative failure of the modernist built environment and the patent idiocies of modernist ideology. Reflecting upon possible alternatives to modernism in both architecture and urbanism, he observes that "current efforts to create a more…attractive urbanism…revert to traditional elements of design---a smaller scale, a degree of irregularity, a multiplicity of uses, the reuse of older buildings, *and even traditional architectural elements in new buildings* [p. 17, emphasis added]. Having declared in the early 1990s the impossibility of classicism, by the mid-1990s (and within a span of five pages) he writes of "the power of classical principles of design---symmetry, balance, regularity [p.199]. He notes that "great open spaces…require…some initial strong design conception that can be adapted over time to change. I am impressed by how many of the successful and used open spaces of Manhattan also reflect a classic regularity, indeed a Beaux-Arts-like consciousness emphasizing symmetry and balance" [p.201]. He contends that "one route to better design [in Manhattan] is to review what has been successful…and what has not. In doing so, one will become aware that there are elements in the classic tradition of design that are well suited to and usable in Manhattan" [p.203].

Glazer's grudging but growing appreciation for traditional architecture and urbanism notwithstanding, he would surely be the first to admit that these cannot be established or re-established quickly, even by some putatively authoritative fiat. The problem of the modernist built environment---including both the organization of the economy

that supports it and the modernist cultural plausibility structure that cannot imagine it otherwise---is a cultural problem that has been a long time in the making and will be a long time in the fixing. If (as Alasdair MacIntyre and others have suggested) its fixing requires an Aristotelian virtue-ethics-in-community moral component *contra* Nietzsche, its architectural component will almost assuredly have to entail the broadly Vitruvian tradition's simultaneous attention to durability, comfort, beauty and decorum *contra* both modernism's utilitarian calculus and neo-modernism's emotivist self-expression. Writes Glazer:

> [If] we are to expect the accumulation of small scale environments…to cumulate into grand structures and environments, we probably need more changes in our society than I can envisage…. [The] only way of doing that, in the absence of dictators, is through a steady and dedicated concern with how people live, what they want, what they find desirable and attractive, and what they find troublesome and inconvenient. This knowledge must be gleaned before one builds, while one builds, after one builds…. Little by little is, I suspect, the answer, not only in building but in public policy, where a great many schemes have come tumbling down.

One small reason for hope is that "little by little," here and there, existing communities are becoming conscious of how they are being threatened by modernist habits of building; and new self-limiting communities---of both character virtue and builderly expertise---are looking to recover some of the traditional knowledge about architecture and cities that has been lost. Examples of these in the English-speaking world would include both The Prince's Foundation for the Built Environment and the International Network for Traditional Building, Architecture & Urbanism (INTBAU) in the United Kingdom; INTBAU India; and in the United States the Congress for the New Urbanism, the Institute of Classical Architecture & Classical America in New York, and the American College of the Building Arts in Charleston. Moreover, there are now at least three Schools of Architecture---Andrews University, The University of Miami, and The University of Notre Dame---that have traditional architecture and urbanism embedded within their academic architectural curricula. All of these remain for the moment marginal enterprises, cognitive minorities of deviant knowledge relative to the overwhelmingly modernist orientation of the larger culture of architecture; but twenty years ago most of these programs did not exist, and none existed at the scale they do now.

Ultimately, if we are ever again to have a beautiful architecture and urbanism that are not merely a function of political power and economic arrangements but also a symbol and embodiment of *legitimate authority*, there can be, literally, no substitute for a living and future-oriented tradition, no way to escape a deeper knowledge of our own history and all its entanglements and opportunities. Once this is understood, some key questions that have been suppressed by modernism assuredly will return, for both architects and at least some persons within the larger culture: What is good? What is true? What is beautiful? *From A Cause To A Style* clears at least some of the intellectual space needed for a larger reconsideration of these questions. It deserves a wide reading.