A Treatise in Architecture Beauty

مداخلة في الجمال المعماري

Dr. Wagih Fawzi Youssef

Although the primary purpose of architecture has never been to please, I claim that a building is only beautiful when it satisfies a need. So in order for buildings to be judged aesthetically we have to refer to their origins, and to the rules in force when they were built, a theory of relatively which has been of the utmost influence in the history of modern thought. So it is fair to say that architectural beauty was formerly regarded on the authority of Vitruvius, as a matter essentially of proportion related absolutely to a harmonious system of abstract mathematical intervals, and related analogically to the proportion of man. This interpretation was accepted by Addison who like Vitruvius attributed beauty to the symmetry and proportion of parts. But the philosophers like Edmund Burke rejected this theory and claimed that neither proportion nor utility had anything to do with beauty and according to him beauty result from such qualities as smallness, smoothness and delicacy. Addison on the other hand saw proportion as an expression of the idea of fitness and is based on the association existing between the dimensions of a structural element and the material resistance to the load. What he means is that proportion is merely fitness for the ends of stability and support.

Locke considers the eye as the most perfect medium to judge the beauty of a building since the mind not only receives most of its ideas by the sight, but retains, alters and compounds these images into all the varieties of picture and vision which are most agreeable to the imagination.

About this imagination Addison stated that novelty is one of the three primary sources of pleasure for the imagination and that is operated by gratifying curiosity and filling the soul with an agreeable surprise.

Kant rejected the idea that beauty is derived from the earthy experience of the senses, he said that it is far beyond that, for if architecture would be without purpose, it could be assigned to the category of free beauty. In that case, beauty is not produced by the spatial content, as Hegel would later propound, nor by its substantial mass, but in essence by its delineation.