

East West Synesis: An Integration of Global Traditions

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INTRODUCTION

I soon became susceptible to constructive patterns evolving in everything I saw. I learned to see this way and when I did, I did not care to draw casual incidentals of nature. I wanted to design.¹ - (Frank Lloyd Wright, 1957)

The focus of this research is the relationship between mind, body and spirit and the integration of philosophies related to this focus from the east and the west together in architecture. An extension of this inquiry is investigations into how we can introduce and utilize the philosophies of other disciplines and traditions into architecture and environmental design. The planning system introduced here evolved by synthesizing east and west philosophies. Primarily it represents an intentional plan to improve the urban environment and secondly it represents an investigation of the idea of integrating diverse philosophies into architecture particularly as generators of concept. The value of this exercise may be accessed from its product and its possible applicability and usefulness. This paper expounds the nature of creative sourcing linking past and present, east and west, traditional philosophies and recent developments in science and physics.

This paper extends temporally to connect with philosophies of diverse cultures and expands to include the emerging new science and physics of the present century. It introduces a planning system that attempts through layers to integrate multiple disciplines and the diverse factors of urban life into a holistic union.

PLANNING SYSTEM

Where is the scientist and where is the poet? The poet is one who starts from the seat of the unmeasurable and travels towards the measurable, but who keeps the force of the unmeasurable within him at all times.² - (Louis Kahn/John Lobell, 1985)

This paper describes a planning system that draws concepts from different cultures and philosophies east and west into synthesis. It details a system that integrates concepts of new science and physics with architecture and planning to create a planning system that may creatively and consciously through multi-disciplinary inter-connectivity affect our environment. The main principles behind this planning system are universal - alignment, balance and harmony. The underlying premise of the system is that it is aggregative. It is critical to plan sequentially considering each layer. When each consecutive layer is aligned and in

harmony with the succeeding and subsequent layer the full intention of the system, conscious connectivity between past, present and future, can evolve. The system is applicable to new development and existing conditions and also to their integration.

Influences

Influences for this planning system can be found in Celtic, Hindu and Taoist philosophic principles. Theories of new science/ physics are used as catalysts to explain traditional concepts. The most obvious connection made is to theories of morphic resonance as described by Rupert Sheldrake in *A New Science of Life* and the holographic view of reality described by physicist David Bohm in *The Implicate Order*. Sheldrake proposes that if rather than form being determined by physical laws outside of time, it depends on morphic resonance across time then morphic fields can propagate across space and time and past events can influence other events everywhere else. While Bohm explains that the hologram concept describes every piece as an exact representation of the whole that can be used to reconstruct the entire hologram. Allied to these thoughts and pervasive in this system are ideas drawn from Gaian philosophy and the philosophical idea that the earth is a living organism and that we the human are part of that system not apart from it.

Anthropometrics

Anthropometrics are integrated with the metabolism of the human and earth body using a seven layering system devised from the Hindu philosophy of the chakras - locations within the human body where tradition accepts that atomic and subatomic energy comes together and can be utilized for spiritual evolvment. The chakra system forms the catalyst for this planning system. Each chakra corresponds with a physical organ in the human body and interrelates mind, body and spirit on the physical level. When the chakras in the physical body are harmonized through alignment mind, body and spirit become integrated. Subsequently when the planning layers are aligned integration can take place.

The only way you can build, the only way you can get the building into being, is through the measurable. You must follow the laws of nature and use quantities of brick, methods of construction, and engineering. But in the end, when the building becomes part of living it evokes unmeasurable qualities, and the spirit of its existence takes over.³ (Kahn/Lobell, 1985)

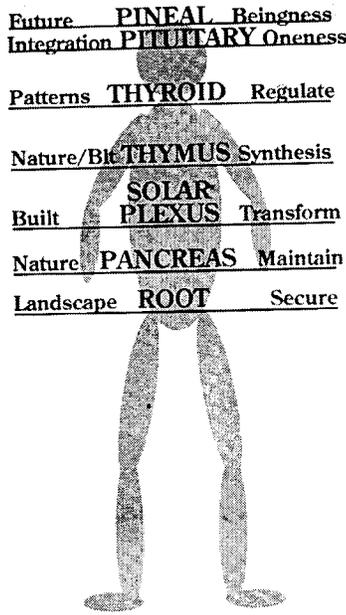


Fig. 1. Planning Layers

PLANNING SYSTEM DESCRIPTION

#	Human Metabolism	Association in Environment	Metabolic-Essence	Single Building Association	Urban Environment Association
1	Root	Landscape	Secure	basic site	environment geology archeology
2	Pancreas	Nature	Maintain	existing/proposed vegetation	green space development
3	Solar Plexus	Built	Transform	transform the site balance the healthy building	transform the environment balance the healthy city
4	Heart	Nature/Built	Synthesis	relation of building to site	interrelation of the environment
5	Thyroid	Patterns	Regulate	details, material use, structure	layout rhythms, patterns of nature/built, built relationship, infrastructure
6	Pituitary	Holism	Integrate	integration of all layers	balanced integration
7	Crown	Beingness	Future	harmony, balance	harmony, balance

Fig. 2. Chart of 7 layer planning system, Keane

Layer 1: Landscape - Secure

Point of action, landscape; characteristic quality, secure.

The first concept to consider when planning a garden, a building, a neighborhood, a village, a city, is the point that initially receives and recreates energy and life essence. In the human body this point is associated with the root or gonads located at the base of the spine. This point is believed to secure the entrance of universal energy into the physical body. Transferring this concept to building, in the built environment this layer is concerned with the basic raw site. On a larger scale, urban or city scale, this layer is concerned with the raw environment, the geology, archeology and essence of a landscape. On both scales it is important that we get intimate with the site, familiarize ourselves with the natural energy existing there and work to balance and harmonize it. In different cultures different responses have evolved to achieve this intimacy.

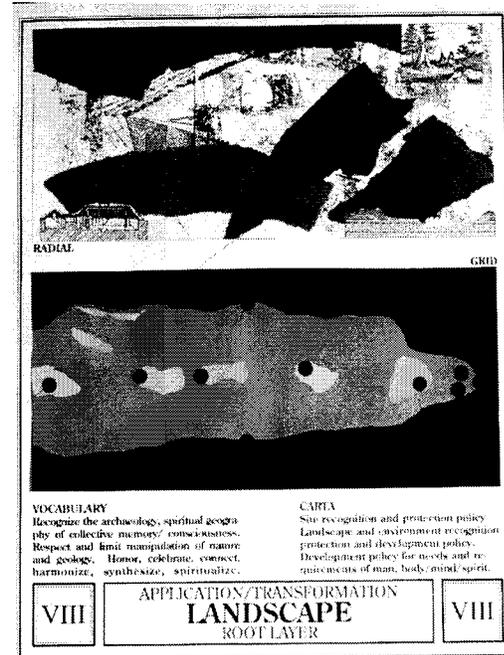


Fig. 3. Layer 1, Landscape

Traditions and philosophies have developed aimed at harmonizing with the subtle energy existing on the earth. In China, Feng Shui originated about three thousand years ago as an art for balancing, harmonizing and enhancing the flow of natural energies in the home and environment. In a similar way Vastu Shasta was recognized as a tool for integrating human settlement with the natural energies in India. In Celtic traditions concepts such as divining developed as tools to assist in reading the character and qualities of surroundings so that human settlement could be integrated.

The security desired in this layer has two principle qualities. On the subtle/esoteric level, if we work with this essential invisible energy force existing in all things, we create an environment conducive to integration. We do not disturb and distort the energy; we use its flow and motion to enhance our own desires. In Feng Shui, placement, organization and orientation are critically studied in order to harmonize human constructs with the natural energy existing on a site. A similar theory exists regarding interior space design and planning. In the visible physical site, issues of site manipulation should consider natural balance and harmony. Insensitive actions can have a detrimental effect on the environment as a whole. Both small and large sites are themselves part of a larger whole with interrelated connections; they are the whole. Physical mismanagement can cause erosion, deforestation, natural pollution etc., affecting the whole. Careless misdirection of natural forces can also have detrimental effect both physical and physisic. The raw materials, which we work with in the landscape, are continuously changing to maintain an ecological balance. Our actions will interfere with this balance to various degrees. The critical issue is the ability of the environment to reestablish a balance after our interference. Our conscious acts can ameliorate this process.

Layer 2: Nature - Maintain

Point of action, nature; characteristic quality, maintain.

The second layer within the human body is located in front of the spine in the area of the pancreas/spleen. The spleen is chiefly concerned with the formation and purification of blood, while the pancreas secretes digestive juices and insulin.

As the pancreas/ spleen point maintains the body, the second planning layer that of nature, is the layer that maintains the environment: earth, air and soil, as well as animals and humans. Nature and landscape, when left to coexist, create a diverse active biology that is self-sustaining. There is a natural balancing, which occurs. Within this system there are degrees to which nature can rebalance after disruption.

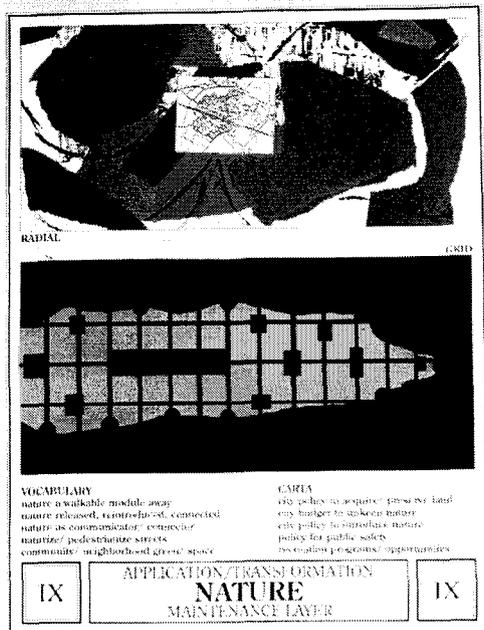


Fig. 4. Layer 2, Nature

If this natural process is interfered with to a severe degree preparations must be made to deal with the consequences: pollution, soil erosion, climate change, global warming, etc. The human is dependent on nature to provide both oxygen and nourishment. As a consequence of extensive tree removal the albedo of the earth is changed, the resulting solar heat is reflected into the atmosphere and an alteration in wind and rain patterns occurs. Nature rejuvenates, feeds and recycles energy.

The presence and condition of nature on any site or in any environment is critical to the survival of the site and humans. In physical terms the covering of nature will prevent erosion of the base layer of landscape, it will affect microclimates and as all things are connected will consequently affect the larger body, the whole, the earth. Existing vegetation can be simply categorized as native or exotic/ imported. A miss-balance in this relationship will have further repercussions; in the extreme situation it may lead to severe environmental disharmony and ecological disturbance. Awareness of this relationship is critical when introducing vegetation and projecting its effect on the environment. A lack of balance and harmony when dealing with this layer will cut off the maintenance juices, resulting in dis-ease. It will prevent the flow of energy to the successive layers or cause deterioration in the quality of that flow to the point where disharmony and imbalance result, creating a similar effect on the environment and its inhabitants. Some of the disciplines involved in the execution and resolution of this layer are biologists, ecologists, landscape architects, architects, planners, and urban designers.

Layer 3: Built - Transformation.

Point of action, built environment; characteristic quality, transformation.

The third layer is concerned with transformation. In the subtle human anatomy it is located in the solar plexus and relates to the transformation of energy. In the building planning system it relates to the transformation of the environment and subsequent transformation of the energy of that environment. In the esoteric view, building location in relation to the subtle energy existing on the earth is critical. Energy can be reflected off a building causing dis-ease; buildings can accentuate positive or negative energy. The form of the building will also affect the ebb and flow of this energy in different ways.

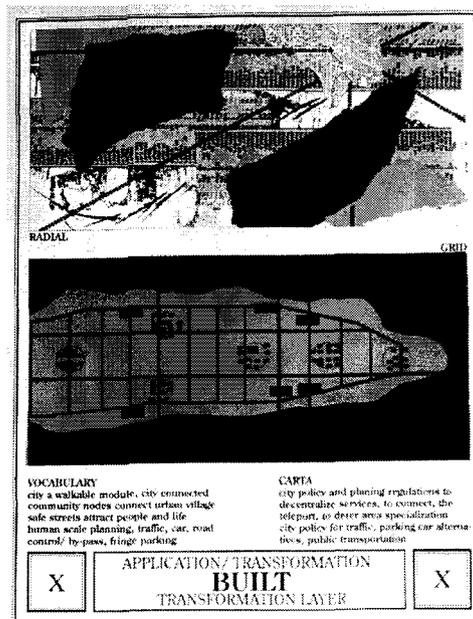


Fig. 7. Layer 3, Built

The act of transformation is very critical. Once a site is interfered with, never in the life of the planet will it be the same again although the ecological balance will redistribute itself into harmony over time. As civilization builds there is interference with and subsequent transformation of the site and the environment. Shape, form, size, height, material and color will affect microclimates, adjacent life, the health of the building and the occupants. This transformation of the environment will have an effect on the health of the neighborhoods and societies that are created.

At the building scale this level relates to the transformation of individual components and elements into a new integrated whole, a balanced whole. How unrelated compounds and elements of varying materials are transformed to become an integrated whole will effect the health of the building. All elements can be viewed as particles of energy with individual characteristics, as these particles are interconnected and transformed into a building the characteristics interrelate to create the essence of the new structure, a new whole and also part of the larger whole. In the creation of a healthy building, both chemical and esoteric compatibility should be considered. Materials can become toxic in certain environments; certain materials have a high potential toxic content to start with, while the subtle essence of materials can aid in achieving balance and harmony, utilizing the energy vibration of the components to affect the overall energy vibration. These underlying principles supersede issues of style, 'isms', and construction periods. Disciplines connected with this layer are architects, planners, craftspeople, chemists, contractors and environmental scientists, etc.

Layer 4: Nature/Built - Synthesis

Point of action, the union of nature and the built environment; characteristic quality, synthesis.

The fourth layer is associated with the heart and the thymus gland. In the body the heart center acts as a synthesizer between the layers above it and those below. The layers below the heart are associated with the physical energy of manifestation. The layers above the heart are associated with the intuitive realm. It is in the heart that diverse concepts are synthesized together. In a similar way, the main purpose of this building layer is to begin to synthesize the diverse elements of the natural and built environments.

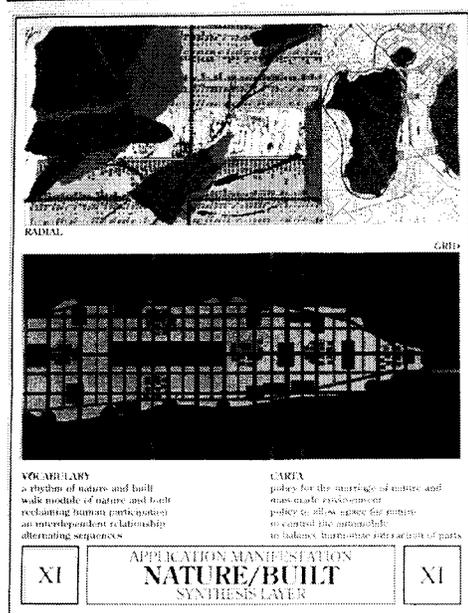


Fig. 6. Layer 4, Nature/Built

It is also here that we can begin to integrate 'heaven and earth'. The earth manifests the raw elements required for building and survival; the site manifests the materials of construction. The intellectual process required to plan, design and layout a simple building or a city could be called a higher process activity. As we plan and build we transform the elements from below by using those qualities from above. This is a combining of physical material and mental energy, and as all material is ultimately energy, this is a combining of different forms of energy. (Shelldrake 1981) If our intellectual processes, or the energy of that activity, can become one with the material of our creation, or more precisely the energy of the material, then balance and harmony can result. In present day architecture and throughout history there are examples of creativity linked to a profound understanding of and investigation into the materials of construction, Calatrava, Kahn, Wright, Corbusier, LeBaron Jenny, Imhotep, etc. When we understand the characteristics and qualities of a material we can exploit and maximize its potential. Throughout history, as architectural ages and styles evolved and human consciousness emerged, creativity was limited only by the ability to manipulate the material of construction. While this development in material manipulation evolved through time there still exists historic examples of construction still unexplained by today's technology, such as the megalithic construction of Sacsayhuaman, Peru; Sillustani on the shore of Lake Titicaca; the city of Tiahuanaco in Bolivia, and Baalbek in Lebanon. (Childress 1986) This raises the question whether if in certain periods or in isolated pockets of civilization consciousness was more evolved.

*It is important that you honor the material you use. You don't bandy it about as though to say, "Well, we have a lot of material, we can do it one way, we can do it another way." It's not true. You must honor and glorify the brick instead of short-changing it and giving it an inferior job to do in which it loses its character, ... The beauty of what you create comes if you honor the material for what it really is.*⁴ - (Frank Lloyd Wright, 1932)

Layer 5: Regulate - Patterns

Point of action, patterns; characteristic quality, regulate.

The fifth layer in the body is located at the throat and thyroid gland. Just as growth and development in the physical body is regulated by the thyroid gland, this layer is the regulator for the 'planning layers'. This regulation occurs through critical patterns and rhythms, which are directed towards creating balance and harmony.

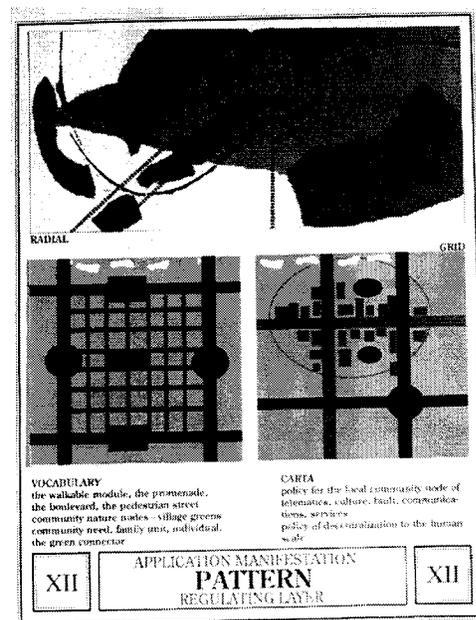


Fig. 7. Layer 5, Pattern

In a simple building situation, the patterns are found in the harmony of the details, the materials used and the integration of the structure. In the larger environment scenario, rhythms and patterns are found in the layout of cities, towns, neighborhoods and in the inter-relationship between nature and the built environment. Patterns and rhythms are also evident in infrastructure and support systems.

The degree of harmony, balance and alignment achieved is dependent on the design of the patterns and the relationships they create between the built environment and nature. Successful patterns can be alternated and repeated. Patterns and natural rhythms are evident in vernacular architecture where knowledge of local materials and their use combines with climatic consciousness to produce a harmonious whole. These patterns and rhythms are also visible in the movement of the solar bodies and the tendencies they exhibit to describe certain orbits or patterns. When working with patterns, we can overlay various layers of information to obtain a holistic pattern, such as human behavior and activity patterns, functional relationships, cultural patterns, weather and climatic patterns, local material availability patterns, labor availability and employment patterns, social economic information etc. Many qualities and components of information can be described as a pattern, or more accurately as a tendency to a certain condition. By

merging the patterns, which are relevant to a particular situation, we arrive at a new more complex pattern with new patterns emerging where patterns overlap. Christopher Alexander has created a 'Pattern Language' based on human behavior preferences aimed at creating the ideal human environment. A pattern by its very nature provides a possibility for change. Since patterns are tendencies there is flexibility included in their very nature. Disciplines associated with this layer are, human behaviorists, sociologists, psychologists, climatologists, material producers, suppliers and economists.

Layer 6: Oneness - Integration

Point of action, union of proceeding layers; characteristic quality, integration.

The sixth layer is associated with the pituitary gland and the brow. In the human body the pituitary gland is a small vascular endocrine gland located at the base of the brain. It consists of an anterior and posterior lobe. The posterior lobe secretes hormones affecting renal functions, contraction of smooth muscle and reproduction. The anterior lobe secretes hormones, which control and regulate most of the other endocrine glands. Thus this gland directly or indirectly controls and regulates most body functions. In a similar way, this 'planning layer' optimizes the integration of all the previous layers. Here the pieces are integrated into a holistic composition; the components of landscape, nature, built, nature/built, patterns and oneness come together with the intention to secure, maintain, transform, synthesize, regulate and integrate.

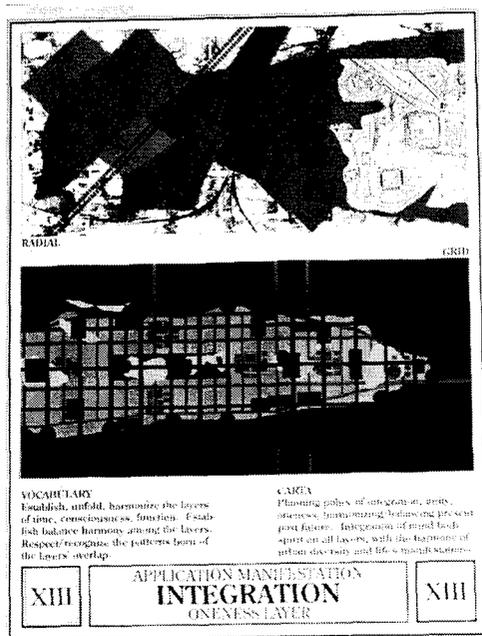


Fig. 8. Layer 6, Integration

Through this system a more balanced and aligned environment becomes possible. At this point the building blocks of the system are integrated and aligned, permitting the flow of universal energy through the layers to create the next layer of beingness. This layer should aim to establish harmonization of the layers of space/time, consciousness and function. Planning guidelines should represent policies of integration, unity, oneness, and criteria for balancing present, past and future, including the integration of mind, body and spirit on all layers with the harmony of urban diversity and life's manifestations. Questions relating to higher nature and how it interacts with life style may arise at this

point. Insights and creative visualizations are projected out into the world through this layer and if there is misalignment in the layering system creativity is adversely affected. Here inner vision assists in the manifestation of the desired outer vision in life. Idealism and imagination are centered here and can best be projected through a system in harmony and balance. Disciplines, which interrelate with this layer, are politicians, planners, architects, and social reformers.

Layer 7: Beingness - Future

*All material in nature, the mountains and the streams and the air and we, are made of light which has been spent, and this crumpled mass called material casts a shadow, and the shadow belongs to light.*⁵ - (Kahn/Lobell 1985)

It is through the final layer that attempts to actively integrate with an understanding of global and universal consciousness can be facilitated. Attempts can be made to bring together human exterior and interior life into a harmonious whole. This layer is associated with issues of higher purpose, destiny, and aspects of unlimited consciousness. Through this layer it is possible to begin to perceive the future. This layer deals with concepts beyond language and beyond our time/space/linear understanding. It deals with aspects that are beyond individual self-consciousness, beyond limited consciousness, beyond our power of comprehension. Here body and spirit can fuse. Here are counterparts of all the other layers. When this layer is balanced action and understanding become one. When all seven layers are aligned a future of harmony and balance emerges where the old and new integrate in an environment conducive to sustainable evolution and progress.

CONCLUSION

*This is what it means to be an artist - to seize this essence brooding everywhere in everything, just behind aspect.*⁶ - (Frank Lloyd Wright, 1932)

If architecture can be viewed as a reflection or concretization of human consciousness in the physical, it is a solid depiction of the state of the psyche of humanity facilitated through the designer as catalyst. In the terminology of C. G. Jung, *in the process of individuation the psyche becomes 'whole' when a balance is achieved between four functions; thinking, feeling, sensing and intuiting*⁷ (C. G. Jung, 1932) - a philosophy reflective of the layering system described and its attendant characteristics. If human consciousness is not harmonious, the result will be imbalance in the products of human creativity.

CONSCIOUS ALIGNMENT

As the Hindu philosophy that is a catalyst for this system evolved to assist the human consciousness to maintain alignment with universal energy and promote its flow through the subtle human body, so too, it is the aim of this planning system to assist in promoting a similar balance in the built environment. When buildings and the built environment are in harmony, they are in harmony with universal energy and perpetuating its flow, the people in these environments, being composed of energy, will be affected by the surrounding energy. This may lead to a change in consciousness as the human energy harmonizes with the surrounding energy. According to the philosophies of Feng Shui and Shastu Vasta, when a building and the built environment are unaligned and in disharmony with universal energy, this situation will have a negative effect on its inhabitants. If the layers are not aligned a block may occur preventing the flow of energy and creating situations of high stress.

An ancient Japanese proverb states: "Seek the past if you would learn the future"⁸. (Mitsugi Saotome, 1989) If we search out the universal principles which have existed for millennia we may find the common truths. Similarly, connecting the essential principles of architecture and building with universal principles of harmony, balance and alignment, through the laws of intention, will evolve a situation conducive to the flow of universal energy, through our environments, which will subsequently affect the inhabitants of these environments.

*Inevitably this deeper sense of building as produce of the spirit of man is to construct the physical body of our machine age.*⁹ (Frank Lloyd Wright, 1954)

NOTES

- ¹ Wright, *A Testament*, New York: Horizon, 1957, p. 20.
- ² Lobell, John. *Between Silence and Light: Spirit in the Architecture of Louis I. Kahn*. Boston: Shambala, 1985, p. 14.
- ³ *ibid.*, p. 48.
- ⁴ *ibid.*, p. 40.
- ⁵ *ibid.*, p. 5.
- ⁶ Frank Lloyd Wright, *An Autobiography*, New York: Horizon Press, 1932, p. 181.
- ⁷ C. G. Jung, *Psychological Commentary on Kundalini Yoga*, Lectures One, Two, Three, and Four, 1932 (from the notes of Mary Foote), published in *Spring*, New York, 1975-
- ⁸ Saotome, Mitsugi. *Aikido: Finding its Future in its Past*. Boston: Shambala Publications, Inc. 1989, p 216.
- ⁹ Frank Lloyd Wright. *The Natural House Book*, New York: Horizon Press, 1954, 30.

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