

**Source: The Ten Books on Architecture  
by Vitruvius  
(Translated by Morris Hicky Morgan 1914)**

**BOOK VI**

## BOOK VI

### INTRODUCTION

1. It is related of the Socratic philosopher Aristippus that, being shipwrecked and cast ashore on the coast of the Rhodians, he observed geometrical figures drawn thereon, and cried out to his companions: "Let us be of good cheer, for I see the traces of man." With that he made for the city of Rhodes, and went straight to the gymnasium. There he fell to discussing philosophical subjects, and presents were bestowed upon him, so that he could not only fit himself out, but could also provide those who accompanied him with clothing and all other necessaries of life. When his companions wished to return to their country, and asked him what message he wished them to carry home, he bade them say this: that children ought to be provided with property and resources of a kind that could swim with them even out of a shipwreck.

2. These are indeed the true supports of life, and neither Fortune's adverse gale, nor political revolution, nor ravages of war can do them any harm. Developing the same idea, Theophrastus, urging men to acquire learning rather than to put their trust in money, states the case thus: "The man of learning is the only person in the world who is neither a stranger when in a foreign land, nor friendless when he has lost his intimates and relatives; on the contrary, he is a citizen of every country, and can fearlessly look down upon the troublesome accidents of fortune. But he who thinks himself entrenched in defences not of learning but of luck, moves in slippery paths, struggling through life unsteadily and insecurely."

3. And Epicurus, in much the same way, says that the wise owe little to fortune; all that is greatest and essential is under the direction of the thinking power of the mind and the understanding. Many other philosophers have said the same thing. Likewise the

poets who wrote the ancient comedies in Greek have expressed the same sentiments in their verses on the stage: for example, Eucrates, Chionides, Aristophanes, and with them Alexis in particular, who says that the Athenians ought to be praised for the reason that, while the laws of all Greeks require the maintenance of parents by their children, the laws of the Athenians require this only in the case of those who have educated their children in the arts. All the gifts which fortune bestows she can easily take away; but education, when combined with intelligence, never fails, but abides steadily on to the very end of life.

4. Hence, I am very much obliged and infinitely grateful to my parents for their approval of this Athenian law, and for having taken care that I should be taught an art, and that of a sort which cannot be brought to perfection without learning and a liberal education in all branches of instruction. Thanks, therefore, to the attention of my parents and the instruction given by my teachers, I obtained a wide range of knowledge, and by the pleasure which I take in literary and artistic subjects, and in the writing of treatises, I have acquired intellectual possessions whose chief fruits are these thoughts: that superfluity is useless, and that not to feel the want of anything is true riches. There may be some people, however, who deem all this of no consequence, and think that the wise are those who have plenty of money. Hence it is that very many, in pursuit of that end, take upon themselves impudent assurance, and attain notoriety and wealth at the same time.

5. But for my part, Caesar, I have never been eager to make money by my art, but have gone on the principle that slender means and a good reputation are preferable to wealth and disrepute. For this reason, only a little celebrity has followed; but still, my hope is that, with the publication of these books, I shall become known even to posterity. And it is not to be wondered at that I am so generally unknown. Other architects go about and ask for opportunities to practise their profession; but I have been taught by my instructors that it is the proper thing to undertake a charge only after being asked, and not to ask for it; since a gentleman will

blush with shame at petitioning for a thing that arouses suspicion. It is in fact those who can grant favours that are courted, not those who receive them. What are we to think must be the suspicions of a man who is asked to allow his private means to be expended in order to please a petitioner? Must he not believe that the thing is to be done for the profit and advantage of that individual?

6. Hence it was that the ancients used to entrust their work in the first place to architects of good family, and next inquired whether they had been properly educated, believing that one ought to trust in the honour of a gentleman rather than in the assurance of impudence. And the architects themselves would teach none but their own sons or kinsmen, and trained them to be good men, who could be trusted without hesitation in matters of such importance.

But when I see that this grand art is boldly professed by the uneducated and the unskilful, and by men who, far from being acquainted with architecture, have no knowledge even of the carpenter's trade, I can find nothing but praise for those householders who, in the confidence of learning, are emboldened to build for themselves. Their judgment is that, if they must trust to inexperienced persons, it is more becoming to them to use up a good round sum at their own pleasure than at that of a stranger.

7. Nobody, therefore, attempts to practise any other art in his own home — as, for instance, the shoemaker's, or the fuller's, or any other of the easier kinds — but only architecture, and this is because the professionals do not possess the genuine art but term themselves architects falsely. For these reasons I have thought proper to compose most carefully a complete treatise on architecture and its principles, believing that it will be no unacceptable gift to all the world. In the fifth book I have said what I had to say about the convenient arrangement of public works; in this I shall set forth the theoretical principles and the symmetrical proportions of private houses.

## CHAPTER I

### ON CLIMATE AS DETERMINING THE STYLE OF THE HOUSE

1. If our designs for private houses are to be correct, we must at the outset take note of the countries and climates in which they are built. One style of house seems appropriate to build in Egypt, another in Spain, a different kind in Pontus, one still different in Rome, and so on with lands and countries of other characteristics. This is because one part of the earth is directly under the sun's course, another is far away from it, while another lies midway between these two. Hence, as the position of the heaven with regard to a given tract on the earth leads naturally to different characteristics, owing to the inclination of the circle of the zodiac and the course of the sun, it is obvious that designs for houses ought similarly to conform to the nature of the country and to diversities of climate.

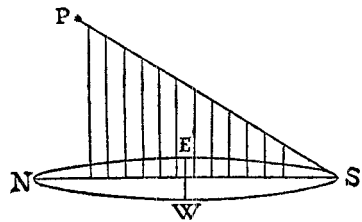
2. In the north, houses should be entirely roofed over and sheltered as much as possible, not in the open, though having a warm exposure. But on the other hand, where the force of the sun is great in the southern countries that suffer from heat, houses must be built more in the open and with a northern or north-eastern exposure. Thus we may amend by art what nature, if left to herself, would mar. In other situations, also, we must make modifications to correspond to the position of the heaven and its effects on climate.

3. These effects are noticeable and discernible not only in things in nature, but they also are observable in the limbs and bodies of entire races. In places on which the sun throws out its heat in moderation, it keeps human bodies in their proper condition, and where its path is very close at hand, it parches them up, and burns out and takes away the proportion of moisture which they ought to possess. But, on the other hand, in the cold re-

gions that are far away from the south, the moisture is not drawn out by hot weather, but the atmosphere is full of dampness which diffuses moisture into the system, and makes the frame larger and the pitch of the voice deeper. This is also the reason why the races that are bred in the north are of vast height, and have fair complexions, straight red hair, grey eyes, and a great deal of blood, owing to the abundance of moisture and the coolness of the atmosphere.

4. On the contrary, those that are nearest to the southern half of the axis, and that lie directly under the sun's course, are of lower stature, with a swarthy complexion, hair curling, black eyes, strong legs, and but little blood on account of the force of the sun. Hence, too, this poverty of blood makes them over-timid to stand up against the sword, but great heat and fevers they can endure without timidity, because their frames are bred up in the raging heat. Hence, men that are born in the north are rendered over-timid and weak by fever, but their wealth of blood enables them to stand up against the sword without timidity.

5. The pitch of the voice is likewise different and varying in quality with different nations, for the following reasons. The terminating points east and west on the level of the earth, where the upper and lower parts of the heaven are divided, seem to lie in a naturally balanced circle which mathematicians call the Horizon. Keeping this idea definitely in mind, if we imagine a line drawn from the northern side of the circumference (N) to the side which lies above the southern half of the axis (S), and from here another line obliquely up to the pivot at the summit, beyond the stars composing the Great Bear (the pole star P), we shall doubtless see that we have in the heaven a triangular figure like that of the musical instrument which the Greeks call the "sambuca."



6. And so, under the space which is nearest to the pivot at the bottom, off the southern portions of the line of the axis, are found nations that on account of the slight altitude of the heaven above them, have shrill and very high-pitched voices, like the string nearest to the angle in the musical instrument. Next in order come other nations as far as the middle of Greece, with lower elevations of the voice; and from this middle point they go on in regular order up to the extreme north, where, under high altitudes, the vocal utterance of the inhabitants is, under natural laws, produced in heavier tones. Thus it is obvious that the system of the universe as a whole is, on account of the inclination of the heaven, composed in a most perfect harmony through the temporary power of the sun.

7. The nations, therefore, that lie midway between the pivots at the southern and the northern extremities of the axis, converse in a voice of middle pitch, like the notes in the middle of a musical scale; but, as we proceed towards the north, the distances to the heaven become greater, and so the nations there, whose vocal utterance is reduced by the moisture to the "hypatès" and to "proslambanomenon," are naturally obliged to speak in heavier tones. In the same way, as we proceed from the middle point to the south, the voices of the nations there correspond in extreme height of pitch and in shrillness to the "paranètès" and "netès."

8. That it is a fact that things are made heavier from being in places naturally moist, and higher pitched from places that are hot, may be proved from the following experiment. Take two cups which have been baked in the same oven for an equal time, which are of equal weight, and which give the same note when struck. Dip one of them into water and, after taking it out of water, strike them both. This done, there will be a great difference in their notes, and the cups can no longer be equal in weight. Thus it is with men: though born in the same general form and under the same all-embracing heaven, yet in some of them, on account of the heat in their country, the voice strikes

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