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Presented at CNU VI: Cities in Context

Point I: Human Culture and Sacred Order

A. Encountering the sacred: "Mysterium tremendum" and "creature-consciousness" / presence and anticipation / call and response
B. Culture as an offering to the sacred / city and cultivated landscape as the physical and spatial forms of culture
C. Marks of sacred sensibility in architecture and the city:
   1. verticality
   2. light and shadow
   3. craftsmanship and / or durability
   4. mathematical and geometric order
   5. compositional and artistic unity
   6. hierarchy

Point II: Nature, Human Nature and Culture

A. A traditional natural law theory point of view
   1. nature exists independently of human beings
   2. human nature is part of nature
   3. human nature is different from nature: it is part of human nature to make culture
   4. human beings are by nature social:
      a. different cultures are the social and historical forms of human aspirations for and understandings of the best kind of life
      b. the cultivated landscape, architecture and cities are the physical and spatial forms of culture (see I.B above); each is a cultural intervention in nature, but also in some sense natural (see II.A.2-3 above)
   5. the good life for human beings is the life of moral and intellectual excellence
B. Tension and conflict in human nature
   1. the goods of individual freedom, communal membership, and justice (each a good,
distinguishable from evil) are perennial sources of human tension and conflict
2. a permanent resolution of the conflicts between these goods does not seem possible within the context of the natural (or cultural) order itself

Point III: Against Economic Determinism
A. assumption: economic determinism as a modern habit of thought
B. counter-assumption: the reciprocal relation between ideas and economics, human freedom and social structures
   1. Max Weber and The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism: Protestantism and the rise of industrial capitalism / "inner-worldly asceticism"
   2. the paradox of asceticism and wealth generation: Aristotle / the dialectical history of monasticism
   3. the paradox of asceticism and the beautiful, durable environment
   4. ascetic ideals as the cultural antidote to consumerism?

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