

Hum 201: Philosophy

**Architecture in Roman Period**  
**Vitruvius & Architectural Theory in Antiquity**



## **Vitruvius & Architectural Philosophy in Antiquity**

33  
Reg: 99563  
72  
V 85 m

M. VITRUVII POLLIONIS  
DE ARCHITECTVRA

LIBRI DECEM,

CVM COMMENTARIIS

DANIELIS BARBARI,  
ELECTI PATRIARCHAE  
AQVILEIENSIS:

MVLTVS AEDIFICIORVM, HOROLOGIORVM,  
ET MACHINARVM DESCRIPTIONIBVS,

ac figuris, una cum indicibus copiosis, auctis & illustratis.

CVM PRIVILEGIIS.



VENETIIS,

Apud Franciscum Senensem, & Ioan. Crugher Germanum.

M. D. LXVII.



# Ten Books on Architecture

## Marcus Vitruvius Pollio

## **Contents of the 10 books are as follow:**

- **Book 1:** The education of the architect, basic aesthetic and technical principles, subdivisions of architecture-buildings, horology, mechanics, public edifices and domestic architecture, town planning
- **Book 2:** The evolution of architecture, building materials
- **Book 3:** Temple construction
- **Book 4:** Types of temple, the Orders, the theory of proportion
- **Book 5:** Communal buildings, with special reference to theatres
- **Book 6:** The private house
- **Book 7:** The use of Building materials, wall painting and colors
- **Book 8:** Water and the Provision of water supply
- **Book 9:** The Solar system, sundials and water-clocks
- **Book 10:** The construction of machinery and mechanics

**Issues** discussed in the **preface** of the book:

1. Vitruvius **as a person**
2. The **function** of the **treatise**
3. **Problems** of **architecture in general**

The composition of the books were dedicated to emperor Augustus as a token of gratitude for the pension awarded to him which ensured a carefree old age for him. He started working on his architectural treatise at the age of 51 just as he was entering retirement.



Emperor Augustus

The architect must be a master of **fabrica(craft)** and **ratiocination(theory)**

**Architecture must satisfy three distinct requirements:**

**Firmitas (strength)** \_the field of statics, construction and materials

**Utilitas(utility)**\_the use of buildings and the guarantee of successful functioning

**Venustas(beauty)**\_all aesthetics requirements, proportion above all



*These (public facilities) must be built in such a way as to take account of **strength, utility and beauty**. The demands of **strength** will be met when the **foundations** are sunk to bedrock, and the **building materials**, whatever they are, are carefully chosen without trying to save money; those of **utility** when the layout of the **sites** is faultless and does not make their **use** difficult, and when their arrangement is convenient and in each case suited to its particular situation; and those of **beauty** when the work has an **elegant and pleasing** appearance and the **relative proportions** of the individual parts have been calculated with **true symmetry**.*

the basic category of Venustas is divided into six basic concepts :

- *Ordinatio* (ordination)
- *Dispositio* (disposition)
- *Eurythmia* (rhythmic)
- *Symmetria* (symmetry)
- *Décor* (ornament)
- *Distributio* (distribution)



## **Ordinatio**

- Detailed proportioning of each separate part of a building.
- Working out of the general proportions with regard to symmetria, achieved by means of quantitas.
- Quantitas is the taking of units of measure from the building and the creation of a harmonious whole from individual parts.

## **Dispositio**

- Fitting arrangement of parts and the elegant effect of the building achieved through qualitas
- The various types of dispositio are:
  - Ichnographia\_ competent use of rules and compasses
  - Orthographia \_ representation of the front elevation of the building
  - Scaenographia\_ delineation of the façade and the receding sides of the building
- These three spring from Cogitatio(reflection) and Inventio(invention)

## **Eurythmia**

- Result of proportion applied to a building the effect of such proportion on the beholder
- Corresponds more or less to the conception of harmony

## **Symmetria**

- The harmony of the parts in relation to the whole within the total design, as measured by a module (proportion)
- In the case of sacred building, symmetry is calculated either from the thickness of columns, or triglyph, or module
- Ordinatio is principle, symmetria is the result, eurythmia is the effect

## **Decor**

- Correct appearance of a building, composed according to precedent from approved elements.
- Achieved by following convention, or common usage or nature
- Concerns the appropriateness of form and content , not of applied embellishment
- The use of orders comes under this heading: Doric temples are to be built to Minerva, Mars and Hercules

## **Distributio**

- Advantageous management of materials and site , along the consideration of building costs
- Must be designed to suit their occupants
- The relationship between buildings and occupants anticipates a concept 'architecture parlante' according to which architecture should be the expression of its function or the status of its occupants

## **Vitruvius's six fundamental concepts fall into three groups :**

- **Ordinatio, eurythmia and symmetria** denote the various aspects of the proportions of a building
- **Dispositio** refers to the artistic design, for which cogitation and invention is necessary
- **Décor and distribution** concern the appropriate use of the Orders and the relationship between house and occupant.



Class lecture:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1eAPw7FHCuPsy4BGp8oyn-5ad4pXamqSK/view?usp=sharing>

Thank you.