Without pretending to sum up the matter neatly, I should like to touch on several questions which I think are particularly urgent at the present moment in architecture. They are the subject of heated discussions on the part of young architects and students, whose opinions should be noted with sympathy as an indication of a feeling widely diffused throughout the more sensitive groups in our culture.

Can architecture further develop the premises of the Modern Movement or is it changing its course? This is the problem: continuity or crisis? Doubt, of course, does not in itself prove weakness; quite the contrary, it is the incentive to any kind of intellectual and moral action; but the terms of the dilemma must be set forth clearly or doubt soon degenerates into confusion. The reform and modernization of architecture which characterize the present moment, are rich in undoubtedly positive elements with respect of concrete developments in the future.

But setting aside the respect due all honest opinion and the psychological interest which individual impulses might arouse, I think we ought to point out the dangers of involution or break-down to which the architectonic process may be subject when the individual unconsciously generalizes his own doubts—doubts rooted in his own limitations—rather than trying to formulate his criticism in an untroubled and objective manner: is the impasse due to these limitations or is it really a sign that the thought hitherto informing our work has come to the end of its usefulness?

Considering history as a process, it might be said that history is always continuity or always crisis accordingly as one wishes to emphasize either permanence or emergency; but for a clearer understanding of this it is best to explain, intentionally the philological interpretation I give to my terms.

The concept of continuity implies change within the order of a tradition.

A crisis is a break – a revolution – that is, a moment of discontinuity brought about by new factors (unnoticed before the crisis, or seen only as antitheses spring up out of the overriding impulse towards substantial novelty).

To establish the potentialities of the present situation we must carefully examine the causes of the Modern Movement, setting aside merely contingent factors of short duration from those which promise a more lasting influence, because such an influence is implied by their own essential content.
The architectonic phenomenon cannot be considered to be isolated, because it is influenced by and subject to other fields which have in their turn undergone the vicissitudes of time: we must work out our position by participating in this complex impulse, without mortifying its natural tendencies by confining it (and ourselves) within rigid scholastic limits.

Fallen by the wayside are the arguments raised by the harbingers of the Modern Movement to qualify their own campaign against the circles they were supposed to beat down with crusading zeal, maximalism, even of the verbal kind, and manifestos – who can forget the example that the flat roof was the *sine qua non* for recognition as a modern architect?

Fallen too is the argument that an artificial fracture had to be made as a consequence of that controversy, and thus there has been a shift in the terms used to distinguish the progressives from the reactionaries; the struggle is no longer between traditionalists (slavish imitators of traditional styles) and avant-garde artists, or at least artists working along new roads, because bad must be separated from good within the limits of the same movement: it is not enough to be generally “modern”; the meaning of that modernity must be explained.

This is so obvious for me that I have been repeating it for a great many years now.

But the real problem arises when people persist in recognizing the “style” of the Modern Movement from figurative appearances and not from the expression of a method seeking to establish new and clearer relations between content and form within the phenomenology of a pragmatic and open process, a process which, as it rejects every kind of *a priori* dogmatism, cannot be judged according to such schemes.

Every widening and deepening of architectonic experience which does not deny the basis of the method undertaken must be considered as deriving from its own normal evolution whether the resultant forms are similar or dissimilar to the preceding examples.

It may quite naturally be objected that just as occurs in the organic system, after innumerable subtle changes the tadpole becomes a frog, and we must change its name because the object has changed intrinsically and extrinsically; so too, the Gothic becomes Renaissance and this in turn becomes Baroque. Similarly, the Modern Movement, continuity may have gone its way there may have been a crisis.

But has there really been a crisis? Has architecture really strayed from the orbit of a determined cycle? After these premises for methodically setting the problem, one’s answer evidently depends on one’s evaluation of reality. I believe there is no such crisis, because if we consider the works of the most sensitive artists and study their criticism, we find that the most valid and profound examples depend, more or less consciously, on the premises of the Modern Movement and expect, for guidance, that criteria be used similar to those adopted up to now. […]

In its first phase the Modern Movement had to overlook or actually fight the cultural movements of history, risking a confusion (in an ambiguous nominalism) of the essential values of tradition with the figurative language by means of which those values had gradually found a definite expression.

The development of an awareness of historicism has been useful in establishing a more exact relation between content and form in art and enables us to localize the products of art at any moment that they appear; consequently, we can define the coordinates of our actions in relation to those same moments and with our own: the respect for the past in its congeneric expressions implies respect for the present in its own expression. We have lost the inferiority complex we harbored towards the past, because we no longer feel that we have to oppose it, but rather to carry it on, strengthening our sinews in it with the whole weight of our culture.
In particular, some of the artistic products of the early twentieth century which had aroused the ire of the pioneers of the Modern Movement, take on a new aspect in the light of history and may be considered in respect to their specific content without our being obliged to attack them in order to assert the untrammelled rights of our own work.

Typical of this is the growing interest in the "Liberty" style not only as regards its profitable aspects, largely due to the perfect assimilation of this experience, but also as regards certain literary and nostalgic echoes which contribute nothing concrete to the present complex of architectonic problems. In considering "Liberty" (as well as every other historical-artistic manifestation) there are a variety of approaches, some of which are valid, others of which invalidate the work of a modern architect: the first, which is legitimate for historians, who bear no direct responsibility towards artistic creation, is to evaluate "Liberty" in its cultural reality for what it has been and to find and chart out relationships; the other is to imitate its figurative language, or at any rate to draw from it the themes for present designs. This is an anti-historical way, not only because no attempt is made to understand this language in the terms which had justified it when it was developed, but also because no account is taken of the fact that our age, in producing new content, necessarily produces a variety of new forms: and this is the failing of those who trust to taste and generally fall into the slough of formalism. […]

Moreover, it is clear that while interest in "Liberty" does not in any way prevent us from comparing its products with ours (just as in the case of any other outmoded object), we cannot indulge in imitation without failing in our duty towards our contemporaries, who ask us to revise everything according to their practical and spiritual needs.

It is foolish to think that the ever-growing need for images can be satisfied by accepting the figures of the past without sacrificing communicability, for at most they merely arouse the memory, but fail to create the symbols of our existence.

Admitting for the sake of argument our inability to invent new images, does this mean *sic et Simpliciter* that we must polish up those which we have just recently consigned to the attic? After almost confusing technique and expression in a hurried identification, the Modern Movement, believing that present-day architecture should be limited to the use of reinforced concrete and iron, sought to place practical means in a historical context beyond that of a modernistic technocracy, so as to enable us to recover all possible means. Now, we must not invert the process by identifying the technical means used in the past (and still valid) with the forms of the past, which are hardly adequate for our representations.

But we must go one step further and recognize that while technique is an instrument subject to the will of the artist, it must be understood also as part of a society's cultural heritage; this being so, it follows that technique already embodies several features of a common lexicon. If it is to be realized, the process of architecture requires that activity reflect the energy of two equally important poles; because the forms which characterize contemporary style are neither certain accepted forms nor particular materials, but a method for achieving the exaltation of the formal by means of the proper use of any materials. And yet, if the result were no longer the synthetic expression of Beauty and Utility (ethically inseparable), being derived merely from the limit of one or the other of these terms, we should have to admit that in truth the principles of the Modern Movement are in a crisis and accept the consequences of a new outlook.

But the least that one can ask of those who talk crisis (in the progressive sense) is that they show sufficient coherence in their thinking to point the way to new goals.

Unless by crisis they mean reaction (naturally of ethical and social content as well) or that they believe that confusion in itself is a crisis sufficiently useful to guarantee progress; but
this last would be a very discouraging argument for anyone whose conscience was genuinely shaken.

The problems of continuity, of tradition, of adaptation to pre-existing environment, of the multiplication—technical too—of qualitative values -- all these are correlated in a methodological sequence. They are based on a spatial-temporal concept which might be paraphrased by these words of Ortega y Gasset (quoting whom—mind you—does not necessarily mean the acceptance of his entire doctrine): “the isolated individual is an abstraction, A life of eminent individuality consists in abridged expression rising from the masses. Heroes cannot be separated from masses. It is a matter of a duality essential to the historical process...”

Coming back to our question, to talk of crisis therefore requires that we be ready to substitute for the sequence of terms deducible from the postulates of the Modern Movement an equally coherent series which, besides being an indication of an indeterminate taste, helps us towards the solution of questions of common interest. The crisis will come when it will; in the meantime, let us try to avoid convenient evasions or waste of energy and instead give ourselves to the cultivation of our cultural inheritance.

Only those who fail to realize the breadth of the horizons still to be explored by the Modern Movement and the drama inherent in the method which we have utilized for the deepest of analyses, could believe that in discussing continuity I have tried to alleviate tensions by throwing oil on the waters of a foolish submission.

In any case, the need to avoid confusion has become more pressing than ever.