

# The New Criterion

## Features

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## Between art & science

by [Roger Scruton](#)

On modernist architecture.

When Mohamed Atta flew American Airlines Flight 11 into the north tower of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, he was expressing his resentment towards everything symbolized by that building: the triumph of secular materialism, the success and prosperity of America, the tyranny of high finance, and the hubris of the modern city. He was also expressing a long-standing grudge against architectural modernism, which he had already voiced in his master's dissertation for the University of Hamburg architecture school. The theme of that dissertation was the old city of Aleppo, damaged by Syrian President Hafiz al-Assad in his merciless war of extermination against the Muslim Brotherhood, but damaged far more by the skyscrapers that cancel the lines of the ancient streets and rise high above the slim imploring fingers of the mosques. This junkyard modernism was, for Atta, a symbol of the impiety of the modern world and of its bru ...

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