

ARCHITECTURE IS (AUTHENTIC) TRAVEL

This script accompanies the video podcast, <https://youtu.be/QY5AG1P4MD0>.

1. In this third of a series of three podcasts on the connections between travel and architecture, we have some basic questions we need to tie up. There are so many kinds of human movement, why should travel be something special? Why should we speak of travel failing or succeeding? Why should we talk about travel being authentic or inauthentic? Why do we consider travel as having a special relation to learning, to meaningfulness?

2. Do we really need travel to understand architecture, and vice versa, is there an essential architecture of travel? I suggest that the connection lies in geometry, and the way in which human subjectivity, beginning with the recognition it gets from its own mirror image, alters what we think of as normal geometry.

3. Let's begin with one thing we know about the sensations from the outside world, compared to those we create internally. It seems that there is a kind of fixed sum total that the mind can handle. And, if it's missing something from the outside world, due to injury or illness, it can manufacture stimulation to fill the gap.

4. Let's consider the subject's perceptual world as a 360° panorama, a Euclidean reality. Waldo becomes Waldo when, thanks to his mirror image, he sees himself as others see him, but the mirror divides the 360° into two parts. Even without the mirror physically present, Waldo is now a half-Waldo. The mirror pretends to bounce back an immediate reflection, but thanks to Waldo's commitment to his spectral self, there is a complication. Euclid expects the stimulus of the image to equal the response of the mirror, but what really happens?

5. Waldo sees the world in the mirror as complete, as another 360°. But, this allows the mirror world to curve around to the front of the mirror, and Waldo sees his left-handed version, not his right-handed original self. This overlap of the two panoramas forces Waldo to internalize his non-orientation. It complicates his spatiality, which is no longer perfectly Euclidian.

6. Our half-Waldo now uses up 360° but only travels 180°, thanks to his belief in his mirror image. He carries his non-orientation around with him, meaning that every round trip must include an extra turn to finish up, a figure called the interior-8. Like the Möbius strip, he gains continuity at the expense of orientation.

7. Waldo blames this situation on the mirror. It seems that the mirror has created a back-door space, where it can remember things, conceal them, and save them for later. Every culture has

lots of folklore about the magic of mirrors. We blame the world for its uncanny irregularities. This allows us to be the same, to be idempotent, in the face of irrational deviations from Euclidean normality.

8. Wherever we go, our world is an overlap of a reality of the visible and a virtuality for the invisibles. This is not a single panorama but, rather two panoramas combined, 720°.

9. Henry Johnstone's system defining authentic travel shows how we notice this problem only when we try to travel correctly. Then, we experience the overlap of the two virtualities in the way that Categories create problems of balance and proportion. This moves Johnstone's system into spatial situations, where the idea of the circuit, the completion essential to travel, must preserve the space between the two virtualities in order to have home seen as something we can experience away from home, as long as we are willing to take risks and expose ourselves to danger. You might think of the travel system as electrons spinning around two nuclei, with everything always both in a center and on an edge.

10. If you relax your eyes, the two red dots come together and you can see a third circle emerging in a middle space. When the dots move, you can see for yourself how the overlap allows things to be the same and different.

11. Now for a practical example. Imagine a city in the middle of a countryside, and in the city imagine a park. The park is a miniature version of the outside, but it's topology presumes some unusual things.

12. The tables are turned. Instead of having to laboriously trudge around the city to see its connection with the countryside, we can take a short pleasant walk around the inside frame. This of course was the idea of Central Park in New York City. The interior could give an experience of the exterior, with a simple flip of inside-out relations.

13. The park as an inside frame creates a complex topological relationship when a movement around an object is reconstructed from the object's interior. But, city parks are completely normal occurrences, we don't think twice about them. In terms of authentic travel, a real traveler is aware of how the topology connects the ordinary example to other aspects of travel.

14. This topology is evident when we consider how, on the inside circuit, we imagine looking out to the center of the city as the vanishing point. This means that every change of angle sees a new vanishing point, although there can be only one city center. The inside frame comes at a cost of discarding this Euclidean quality in exchange for what Pascal described as an infinite sphere, a sphere whose center is everywhere and circumference is nowhere.

15. The analogies I've developed using a half-Waldo character have anticipated a whole field of mathematics known as projective geometry. This was discovered in the third century a.d. by Pappus of Alexandria, but given distinctive form by Girard Desargues and Blaise Pascal in the 17c. It was forgotten immediately but revived by a host of mathematicians working in the 19c., who discovered that projective geometry was foundational, not simply a deviation from Euclid. You can in fact derive Euclid from projective geometry but not the other way around. Calling projective geometry non-Euclidean is like calling regular coffee, non-decaf. The amazing thing however is that our half-Waldo has come with his own relations to the psychoanalytic subject and, by extension, popular culture, mythology, and the arts. The Mirror Stage is important even in cultures that don't use mirrors, but all of culture uses latent signifiers in material and collectively important ways. Waldo is like an ambassador for projective geometry. He's like the goldfish whose memory doesn't last a full circuit around the bowl so he has to travel the extra distance through a virtual space that accommodates projective additions. Waldo shows how the neural circuit extends past the literal body into the world, how it adds invisibility to visibility, and connects uncanny waking experiences to dream logic, where the dreamer is paralyzed. Waking subjects are paralyzed, too, but they use devices such as Central Park to stylize motion so that symmetry does the same thing as paralysis. Projective geometry requires us to think about the architecture that we take for granted. But, when we look closely, at things like the uncanny, or mythology, or foundation rituals of early cultures, we connect the dots in new ways. In fact, testimony from these "naïve" informants is our best evidence that culture has understood projective geometry's practice long before we have understood its theory.

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