

# The Architecture of Travel / The Travel of Architecture

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Figure 1. Henry W. Johnstone, Jr. (1920–2000), author of “Categories of Travel,” a series of situations and conditions distinguishing authentic travel from other form of human movement. American philosopher and rhetorician known especially for his notion of the “rhetorical wedge” and his re-evaluation of the *ad hominem fallacy* (Wikipedia).

PROPOSAL. This is an experiment. A model of travel is to be “tested” against the full range of travel situations, with the following rule: that the test use Henry Johnstone’s “Categories of Travel” in each test to determine if the quality of “authenticity” (what distinguishes true travel from other kinds of human movements) is negated, affirmed, or unaddressed. The model is fundamentally a circuit, specifically a “neural” circuit qualified by this Axiom: that subjectivity requires objectivity to “complete itself,” and that completion is the subject’s primary accomplishment. That is, a human subject seeks to maintain its status as subject through tasks of completion, but completion is defined, complexly, in reference to the very gap that originally defines the subject as incomplete. Without that gap, travel would be unnecessary because there would be nothing to complete. But, if travel (the circuit) tried to “fake” completeness (i. e. draw a circle as a circle and proclaim success), the project of subjectivity is negated, because the moment of completion has been erased thanks to a fantasy construction. Yes, we can draw a circle with a compass but we cannot draw the drawing of the circle. Travel is essentially the creation of a circuit through any incomplete part of the circuit. In terms of the circle, travel

is any arc.

In mathematics, when a difficult problem is encountered, an “ersatz” procedure can be employed to advance a thesis that, no matter how ridiculous, will result in data. It is assumed in advance that most of the data will be negative. The ersatz thesis will be disproven or shown to be irrelevant. But, in the (rare) case that some part of the thesis hits the mark, the positive result amounts to an exception that changes the *parameters* of the original problem.

This exceptional, if improbable and limited, success succeeds where other inquiries would always fail. “Sensible theories” would obey the rules of the game. They would accept assumptions and presuppositions that, in complex cases, are inevitably packed with the very elements that make the “problem” unsolvable. By accepting them, theory gives up its ability to discover anything that is not withheld in advance from it. The problem’s “outer shape” has protected against any penetration of theory by forcing theory to take the shape of a problem instead of a solution. The “ersatz” procedure ignores this demand by putting forward an irrelevant thesis, one that has little chance of “succeeding” in that it seems to be independent of what the prob-

lem “wants us to see.” In travel, the obvious quality that travel “wants us to see” is motion. The traveler goes somewhere, sees/experiences something (in our case, various cases of architecture), and returns. The trip is a circuit: the traveler must return home to be a traveler in contrast to a wanderer. But, the trip is not the circuit of the errand, which lacks elements that Johnstone uses to distinguish authentic travel from trivial cases of (inauthentic) travel. Travel must have a reflective element; the traveler must have a sense of him/herself; the traveler in short must be a *subject*.

Subjectivity itself must complete a circuit, but this circuit, like the errand, cannot be a simple loop. Subjectivity must engage the issue of incompleteness — what motivated travel in the first place, and how did that motivation further specify that travel be a circuit that, to be completed, “included itself as an end product”? Subjectivity’s “self–intersection” (Socrates: “know thyself,” γνῶθι σεαυτόν) requires a division and reunion. This is the model of the *tesseract*, the token broken into two parts when two friends part company. It is broken *in hopes* of their reunion, at which time the two parts will be joined *authentically*, thanks to the accidental profile created by the break. Like computer passwords generated then stored, authenticity is guaranteed by (1) the improbability of the break and (2) the completion of the whole *thanks to* the improbable profile being in two places.

Just as the *tesseract* require chance to create a “fate” (reunion), travel creates conditions placed in two registers, that of the objects of travel (places visited, things seen, people met) and the role played by subjectivity: reflection, sense of self, willingness to suffer, ability to maintain control, need for curiosity, need to accumulate and recount memories of travel. The two registers are metaleptical: they refer to the “container” or “frame” of presentation. If this claim is made — “there are three errors in this sentence” — any good speller of English objects that there are only two errors; but of course the third error is that there are only two; the third error occurs at the level of the claim as such. This Cretan Liar condition pervades not only subjective / authentic travel, it is a quality of subjectivity as such, in that that the subject is constructed through signifiers that create, necessarily, two levels of information, which could be called “container” and “contents.”

If we take the two–levels issue to our ersatz experiment, we realize that the circuit we want to complete, in subjectivity *and* travel, is not a simple voyage out and back in a consistent medium of space and time. At the same time the traveler moves, both registers of subjectivity (thanks to the nature of signifiers) are engaged. Not only is the whole circuit (= “trip”) affected by this rule that transforms the traveler at the same time the traveler must maintain his/her self–identity, subjectivity itself is inverted. But: this very inversion *is* subjectivity. The two registers require a “twist” at the point where it seems that they are joined by an imaginary seam (dividing home from away).

This seam seems to be an internal division (one space dividing home from “away”) but it is simultaneously an outer bound: a “condition of (authentic) travel.” Understanding how an internal boundary is simultaneously an outer boundary requires topology rather than flat geometry. Perhaps the same can be said of travel: that the motion that appears to take the traveler *out* into alien worlds is simultaneously an enclosure that plants the alien world within the travel-as-subject. The traveler’s attempt to escape home is simultaneously a project of recovering home, “topologically,” in a space-time defined by self-intersection and the conversion of the subject-traveler from a figure on a ground to a ground on which the externalities of travel appear as figures. The traveler becomes a “medium” that, like the ground in the usual figure-ground relationship, must be stable, fixed, and unmoving. That is to say: instead of defining the essence of travel in terms of motion, the essence may be shown to be non-motion, fixity, stillness, paralysis.

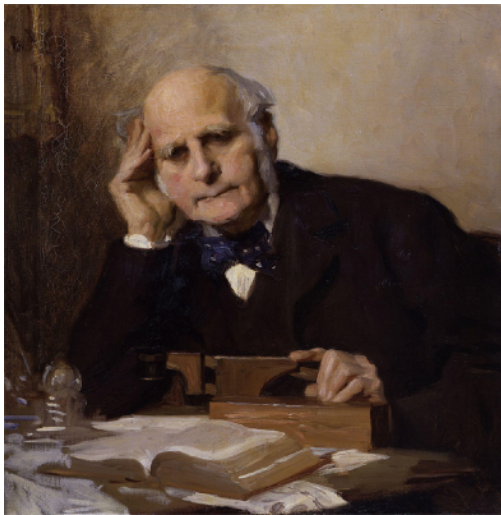


Figure 2. Sir Francis Galton, discoverer of the principle of emergent authenticity. By averaging the guesses of the weight of a prize cow at a carnival raffle, Galton discovered that, although no guess was correct, the *average* of the guesses taken as a sum was precise.

This is my “ersatz” conjecture: *authentic travel is the achievement of perfect paralysis*. This thesis sounds absurd. That is my intention. Any ersatz conjecture should be meaningless or even ridiculous before the experimental tests begin. It is to be expected that the test will fail, but not fully fail. The successful results (think of a student who fails an exam but still has created one or two brilliant responses) will always be successful “in the face of evident failure.” The failure may be imposed by convention or normal expectation. We do not expect pigs to fly, for many reasons. But, it is possible that we do not understand the meaning of flying, or of pigs. A flying pig is contextualized by conditions that keep pigs grounded. The absurdity of pigs flying has to do more with our contextualization than either pigs or aviation. The anxiety about consensus requires contextualization to be structured along ideological grounds. But, I am relying here on the truth of

an adage of Baudelaire’s: that we should thank God we do not understand each other, otherwise we should never be able to agree.<sup>1</sup> Baudelaire, some hundred years before the principle of emergence in evolutionary biology was put forward, had discovered a principle of effectiveness that was key to cybernetics. The *results* of a process are contained in the (often non-intuitive

<sup>1</sup> Charles Baudelaire, *OEuvres posthumes* (Paris: Société du Mercure de France, 1908) 126; [https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/%C5%92uvres\\_posthumes\\_\(Baudelaire\)\\_%281908%29/Texte\\_entier](https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/%C5%92uvres_posthumes_(Baudelaire)_%281908%29/Texte_entier). “Le monde ne marche que par le malentendu. C’est par le malentendu universel que tout le monde s’accorde. Car si, par malheur, on se comprenait, on ne pourrait jamais s’accorder.”

qualities of) the process itself. In both human and artificial “thinking machines,” the latent tendency is to grow to the point of self-destruction. For the human thinker, this is the point of madness or psychosis, that has been reached through rational means. For artificial intelligence, the computer program is a set of instructions that are “neurotic” in that they continually require maintenance procedures that add additional layers of code to “correct” glitches and errors. But, like the “sentence with two errors,” this process relies on the dysfunctional relation of two levels: programming and the program. Each involves the other, in the same way the traveler as subject requires travel objects that are, essentially, self-definitions (of the traveler’s intent) that are disguised as mysterious objects with conditions of limited access.

Like the raffle-ticket buyers who all, having made a wrong guess about the weight of the prize cow, collectively determined the precise weight, the traveler’s success involves a collectivity (of conditions, as in Johnstone’s *Categories of Travel*) of failures: the way that authentic travel must continually assert its *difference* from other forms of movement. These are internal boundaries in the travel experience that are, simultaneously, the outer frame of travel. The inner distinction is the *part* of the circuit of travel that is exterior to (“defining”) authentic travel, but the point is that travel is this very equilibrium between the inner distinction and the outer bound. What is broken (distinguished) internally is completed (i. e. the circuit) externally. This equation converts travel space into a topography of self-intersection (the circuit) and non-orientation (inside-outside).

### *Johnstone’s Categories*

As a preparation for the ersatz experiment, we should first ask: are Henry Johnstone’s “categories” a list, or are they a system? That is, how independent is each category from the others? If the categories are “just” a list, then the list may be incomplete or complete. That is, like a length of string cut off of a ball, could it have been longer? Is there more “string” in the ball of travel concerns?

Or, if Johnstone’s categories are a system of some kind, we may ask “what kind,” and how the elements of the system (the individual categories) both play their role and suggest the nature of the whole in the travel system. My ersatz conjecture begins with the unacknowledged feature of Johnstone’s categories: that the traveler is subject who is “willing to suffer.” By suffering, I mean exposure to potential failure. Avoiding failure is what makes authentic travel different, at any and every point, from being something else. A gap, no matter how small, must be maintained to keep Saturation within bounds. The traveler must maintain a distance that distinguishes him/herself from the native inhabitants of the travel landscape. Therefore, the Gap is a kind of definition of authentic travel. Johnstone does not mention any “Gap,” but it is implicit in all of the other *Categories*. Just saying “traveler” entails a distinction defining the traveler as a non-non-traveler: someone different from those who inhabit the travel landscape, or others who are in motion but not really traveling.

Because this is a central feature of the whole set of categories, I pair subjective intentionality with the necessary presence of the possibility of failure, Johnstone's category of saturation. Concerning saturation, Johnstone says this: "Saturation can arise from a catastrophe so violent that it rips away the traveler's sense of being at home in his travels. But it can also arise in nonviolent ways. Accumulation, I pointed out, requires that a trip be of a certain minimum duration. Saturation, on the other hand, arises from the exceeding of a certain maximum duration."

It is clear that the traveler, to travel authentically, must *first* be willing to face the possibility of Saturation. This dyad can expand in two directions. On the side of the subject's willingness to suffer, the risks of the travel Suffering are balanced against Curiosity. Without curiosity, Suffering is senseless. On the side of Saturation itself, there are active and passive modalities. Saturation is the way the travel landscape seeps into the traveler as a subject. These are commonly called "travel impressions." One sketches, one takes photographs, one visits places. The impressions actively enter into the travelers thoughts and alter other thought processes. The material component of this is the travel journal or set of photographs *as a set*, intended to summarize the journey in a chronological way. The companion term to this category of Accumulation is Control, the exercise of discipline that keeps the traveler moving, resists temptations to loll too long. Too much control spoils the objectivity of the traveler's world. It is over-informed by expectations and plans. Just as Accumulation can overflow and Saturate the traveler, Control can impose so much order on the objects and objectives of travel that the travel is simplified into nothing more than what the traveler expected to encounter by looking at maps and reading books beforehand.

On the other side of the Saturation/Gap dyad are a series of "ways and means" categories. In the expression, "curiosity killed the cat," the potential failure of something that is otherwise necessary to travel, Curiosity, is what makes Curiosity interesting, what makes it, in fact, "curious." Curiosity attempts to access the unknown as such. It is because we don't know something that it interests us, so we have to take responsibility for our intentionality from the start. We are not curious without a motive to be curious. At the same time, what we don't know may be something that others know well. We may be curious in a way that our curiosity can be "liquidated" simply by asking others; or, it may involve the retroactive question of why our ignorance took the particular shape it did. Some things are curious to some people but not to others. Curiosity is a conjunction of objective and subjective conditions.

Curiosity engages Suffering in several forms. First, there is a necessary suspension of expectations required to "see what there is to see," in contrast to seeing only what one expects to see. Expectations limit curiosity and any potential payoffs. Exposure to the unknown can have good or harmful results. That is the nature of curiosity. It's a kind of gamble. It is an "aleatory procedure." In this, we find two more categories of Johnstone's system: Naïveté and Personal. Naïveté is the harmless ignorance we need for any travel experience to begin as such. The Per-

sonal is the requirement for instruction, to know at least something about the trip and the places we visit. A travel guide is the epitome of the Personal. You hire a guide to explain what you see, but this threatens your ignorance in ways that limit the benefits of being Naïve. An analogy would be how one begins to make a drawing. The sheet of paper is unmarked, in readiness for your marks. But, it has a shape, a texture, a ratio of one side to the other. There is already a frame, and the silent instruction to center the drawing on the paper. But, what if the scene you are drawing becomes, in the process of drawing it, interesting in ways that violate this geometry? What if you need to draw more of something on the far right side of the drawing but you have “run out of paper”? Should you tape more drawing paper to that side? Or, should you *obey* the paper and keep to the rule of the center, that the middle should be “more interesting” than what surrounds it? The conflict between Naïveté and the Personal can happen in many ways, but they always fall under the heading of Curiosity.

The other side of the Saturation/Gap dyad, and the companion/rival of Curiosity, is Suffering. Just as Curiosity aims to fulfill the travel experience, Suffering threatens to end it entirely. It is the extension of Saturation, the disappearance of any gap that maintains distance between the traveler and the travel landscape.

Suffering is suffering, but it's what separates the traveler as “authentic” from other humans who are moving about. The traveler must be willing to suffer. In this, the travel is a kind of “hero” in the classical sense.<sup>2</sup> Other (non-authentic) travelers resist suffering, some try to avoid it altogether, by staying in a familiar hotel chain or by only going by guide-books. Willingness to Suffer is, subjectively speaking, first an *intention* that needs to be understood as desire. Even in the knowledge that the travel project may fail, and that some or maybe all of the travel encounters involve pain, and possibly so much pain that travel ends altogether, the traveler persists. This means that the Gap that differentiates a true traveler in terms of this desire has to be realized through two other categories of travel, Reflection and Solitude. Solitude is somewhat self-explanatory. The traveler must maintain distance between him/herself and other travelers as well as from resident natives of the travel landscape. All travel is, in this regard, a form of the ancient, defining travel of the hero, the *katabasis*, or visit to Hades. Only heroes, it is said, were allowed to visit Hell and return to the land of the living. But, this privilege is already inscribed in the living hero, whose name (“hero” = “dead man,” ἥρως, commonly translated as “defender” but associated with both one who was willing to die but also one who was destined to die). If we substitute “dead man” for the heroic traveler, it becomes more obvious how the hero is allowed to visit Hell and return. The hero is “already dead.” In visiting Hades he is just “returning home,” although Hades is configured as the essence of the Saturated travel experience. The

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<sup>2</sup> Erwin Cook, “‘Active’ and ‘Passive’ Heroics in ‘The Odyssey’,” *The Classical World* 93, 2, Homer (November–December, 1999): 149–167.

heroic traveler is one who maintains the gap between him/herself and the other dead who populate Hades (= the travel landscape).

Reflection is more complex, even, than Solitude (self–intersection of the traveler with his own intention to suffer). Reflection is simultaneously an ability to “answer” to challenges about the authenticity of the travel experience. An answer does not have to be an argument, a laying out of the “logic” of travel. It can be presented as something “self-evident,” in the way that a poem or musical composition presents itself *to be heard and, by hearing fully, “understood.”* The same employment of self-evidence applies to jokes. One does not “get” a joke by having the joke explained. One “gets a joke” by becoming fully immersed in the joke’s structure as a joke, to understand that a joke will involve a *retroactive understanding* of how the end of the joke relates to the beginning. Typically, a joke involves sliding over or past something that, by the end of the joke, is realized as the key.

I will tell a joke to illustrate this. Because the most retroactive jokes tend to come from Jewish literature, it will be a Jewish joke, a *Witz*. Mrs. Greenberg attends her dying husband, Mr. Greenberg, at his bedside. Distressed, she asks him what is his last wish. Greenberg tells her, “I want you to marry Friedman.” “But,” she responds in disbelief, “Friedman is your worst enemy!” “—Yes, that’s right.”

Explaining why the dying husband would wish his wife to marry his worst enemy requires the listener to “put two and two together” in the same way that the wife must retroactively realize that her marriage was not all that she had thought it was. Explaining doesn’t make the joke funny, however. It shows how the *structure* of retroaction makes self-evidence an *effective* and *efficient* way to achieve Reflection. In my ersatz conjecture, I would go so far as to say that the retractive nature of self–evidence is not just the best kind of evidence the traveler needs to produce, it is the *ONLY* kind of evidence the traveler can produce. In the case of Odysseus, this is the self–evidence of the hero’s return to Ithaca, and the efficiency by which he avoided alerting anyone but the nurse and dog and was able to surprise and kill Penelope’s suitors. I am willing to accept that many travelers attempt Reflection by inviting over friends to show them slides of their trip, but in my mind this is proof that their travel was anything but authentic. Rather, I would say that the traveler’s best evidence of authentic travel is that he/she has been transformed by what was learned in the travel experience; that he/she is in fact both *the same and different person* (non-orientation along with self–intersection).

This final pairing of Reflection and Solitude, a relating–to–others and a non-relation to others, fills in the final row of the four Categories that “echo” the top row, Accumulation and Control, by means of a preliminary dyad, Suffering and Curiosity, the essence of the hero as one who has, voluntarily, “chosen to suffer” (in effect saying that one volunteers to be imposed on, to have the freedom to choose negated).

## *A Non-System System*

By having the “end” of his Categories (willingness to sacrifice willing) answer to the beginning (the balance of Control with loss of control), the matter of Saturation for the subject who must maintain subjectivity by keeping open an at-least-small gap between him/herself and the traveled world, becomes evident. The (inside) gap has become the (outside) frame of travel. What the subject does to stay a slight distance away from his/her own suffering allows for all of the other Categories to expand this gap idea. In this expansion, the system as a whole is defined. A line can be drawn surrounding the Categories of Travel in the same way that the Third Error of the sentence with two errors defines itself internally and externally.

It seems that the ersatz experiment has at least answered the question of whether Johnstone’s Categories constitute a linear list, where more Categories could conceivably be added on, or whether it has an internal or native “logic.” I put “logic” in scare-quotes because in an important sense I would also claim that the traveler and the subject are one and the same — that, in travel, we constitute subjectivity as such, and that, as being subjects, we find it “in our nature” to be in the world as a traveler, continually traveling but, of course, curving travel so that we may, at the right time, return Home.

Can we ask if there is any difference between subjects in general and the traveling subject? This is a topological question, meaning that, if subjects simply create their own “world” (idealism), how is it possible that they wish to create a world in which they can be not just lost but destroyed entirely (realism). Psychoanalysis provides its answer in the form of the subject who, as subject, insists on undermining his/her own happiness. The “algorithm” of this self-limitation shows how trauma is held and preserved by an unconscious so that it can be transferred to other “sites,” where it appears through a virtuality of symptoms. But, psychoanalysis, too, points to the roles, which we experience in “heroic” travel, self-intersection and non-orientation, the “topological” qualities of projective surfaces such as the Klein bottle and Möbius band and knots with a “Borromeo” logic. In architecture, these are reflected in the “fractal” nature of the Dædalan labyrinth, an origami fold of passages on passages where any one part is representative of the full “system.” Can we presume a *fundamental* connection, based on topological alliances, connecting architecture, Johnstonian travel, and psychoanalysis?

The ersatz experiment claims only to find the “one thing” that prevents us from dismissing it entirely. We cannot *disprove* the coincidences of self-intersection and non-orientation — a topology uniting three independent “fields” — that make travel what it is, that make Johnstone’s Categories into a System rather than a list, that make subjectivity and travel essential to each other. We might look at the negatives. Why not just consider that a traveler is a much simpler kind of human, one who can simply buy an airline ticket and spend a week in Istanbul? Johnstone’s Categories are about, if anything, the way that such a trip might fail to be authentic travel. Why? Because the traveler in many cases can become a non-traveller by running an er-



rand, by failing to return home, or by being resistant to being changed by the travel experience. Any one of these converts travel to non-travel, but *all of them* require us to have a travel topology rather than a list of rules.

Here, I wish to present an incomplete conclusion. This will be the most ersatz of my ersatz conjecture, intentionally. I wish to make what must seem to be the most outrageous claim of all, namely, is that the True Traveler has mastered the art of remaining the same while changing; the True Traveler will have mastered the art of moving while remaining motionless. I intentionally put this claim in the most indefensible way. I do not wish to defend it without provoking attacks that would convince both the attacker and defender (some readers may be on my side, possibly) that authentic travel, like the True Traveler, are not about truths but, rather, the “truth of truth,” and that travel experience is not about meanings *per se* but about *meaningfulness* — where the descriptive distance required for us to explain things has been denied. In the face of this loss of the necessary gap, the subject maintains the claim of meaningfulness because he or she has experience it, and it is personally and intimately meaningful. Yet, despite the privacy of meaningfulness, there is an implicit claim, that this personal meaningfulness is somehow universal — *that others would and should understand this meaningfulness if there were any way to communicate it.*

This is not to say that meaningfulness is not communicable. In fact, it is the most convincing of communications, if we openly admit that the most effective form of argumentation is to argue against the expectations of others. In *The Odyssey* a general wants to keep his troops from defecting. But, instead of pleading with them to continue fighting, he pretends to agree with them in their dismay over battle fatigue. He suggests that they pack up their gear and return to their wives and families. But, he says all this with the silent implied message, that “Greeks don’t give up.” His auditors hear this silent message, and at the end of his speech, they enthusiastically reject his suggestions and join him, to take up their duty as soldiers with absolute devotion.

This kind of rhetoric is called the enthymeme. In theater, it is “acting against character”; in fictional literature it is the device of the unreliable narrator. In all cases, what is literally presented induces a response that is opposite. Self-intersection and non-orientation — this is rhetoric’s version of the topology of projective surfaces. The moving traveler, in this schema, *moves in order to stay in place*. There must be, then, some invisible center of gravity that works like the center of a circle “holding in place” the line that is drawn around it. The gravitational model is correct except in one key detail. At the point where the circle has almost finished its job, the point that was the center will appear on the circumference. This is possibly too much projective geometry to lay on the non-mathematical reader. We should be content with two “translation” ideas, non-orientation and self-intersection. But, how can rhetoric (the enthymeme) explain anything about travel? How can topology be extracted from Johnstone’s *Categories of Travel*?

I offer a term that combines and summarizes the effects of non-orientation and self-intersection and, at the same time, promises a way to connect travel, architecture, rhetoric, and topolo-

gy. In fact, it promises — in a way that will appear to be the extreme of ersatz conjecture — to connect these with the full range of features of human subjectivity. Why not? We are, in ersatz conjecture, playing a game with fake money. We can “buy” and “sell” without really risking anything. If the money is fake, then *not taking a risk* would be cowardly. I would challenge the reader in a rather rude way: “What are you waiting for?”

The term I have promised to do so much with so little (of explanation) is “idempotency.” The word literally means, “the power to remain the same.” In travel, this is a miraculous power indeed: the power, in the midst of what is mandated to make travel travel, to not really move. How could this be even *thought* to be possible? This is the psychotic limit to the “neurotic” Categories of travel, which seem to be picked out of travel experiences in an empirical spirit, simply describing and summarizing various observed experiences. But, this kind of empiricism proves false in the end. To *know* a traveler, one must *already BE* a traveler. And, possibly knowing about travel would bring travel to an end, just as a performer who becomes self-conscious can suddenly lose confidence in an otherwise well-rehearsed role. You must already possess what you set out to find. When you “find” it, however, it will not be because you looked for it. As Picasso was famous for claiming, “I don’t look, I find.” Picasso avoided the tedium of looking because he trusted idempotency. He knew that, in order to find, he must be active but not seek. Seeking would alienate him from his desire, would force him to become non-Picasso. His identity would not just collapse, it would be a suicide! He would be non-orienting but not self-intersecting. The “self” would have collapsed into the terms of the search.

Idempotency is more commonly a term in computer science. It is what programmers must do to defend a web site against “denial of service” attacks, where hackers flood a site with simultaneous demands, causing an overload that shuts down the server. The essence of a defense is to convert the first of this tsunami into an alert that will use the very structure of the attacks as a kind of algorithmic palindrome to “automatically” intersect subsequent attacks. What does computer science have to say about travel theory? Is it fair to introduce an alien concept at this point to trick the reader into accepting a radical jump from a simple set of travel conditions (the Categories) to the idea of a system, to the point where the system can be turned on its head to prove that the traveler is somehow defined by inverting very thing that everyone things qualifies travel as such: motion into stillness.

A sudden leap from a seemingly impossible position is the essence of the ersatz conjecture. It is the one thing that rings true, out of a myriad of improbabilities, that pays off. But, it must be made with humility and careful attention to detail. Here, idempotency reveals a solid and informative clue. It is critical in the understanding how dreams work. Those who study dreams are almost always attracted to the content of dreams. What does this content mean? Is it a residue of the previous day’s experience? Is it always a form of the wish, as Freud maintained? Is the dream able to forecast the future?

Idempotency takes another tack. It asks, what do dreams *do*, exactly? What is a dream in terms of effectiveness? Here, the evidence is relative clear. Dreams are constructed to keep the dreamer asleep in the face of external challenges. Being asleep means, physiologically and neurologically, the paralysis of muscles. At a critical point in the sleep cycle, the dreamer is unable to move. Only the key functions of keeping the body going are operating. If we happen to wake up at this point, we immediately sense powerlessness. We are able to recover quickly, but we have a muscle memory of being paralyzed.

The dream acts like an algorithm constructed to fend off a denial-of-service attack. If it detects an incoming disturbance, it uses this in two ways: first, because this leading edge will be impossible to deny entry, it must convert it into dream content. The famous dream recounted by Alfred Maury. The metal bed frame collapsed and hit him on the neck, but in dream converted it into the last scene of a seemingly long dream about the French Revolution — hiding, then running, being imprisoned, tried, and sentenced ... finally being led to a place of execution where the bed frame was dreamed as the falling blade of the guillotine. Maury and others of course marveled that the first thing that triggered the dream appeared as the final concluding moment in the dream. This means that a palindromic structure appeared, idempotently, at the point of the denial-of-service attack. What seemed to be the elaborate events leading up to this “first” were actually secondary, in service of the conversion of the first.

Why and how does this dream lore relate to travel? The connection seems at first circumstantial. Yes, travel often seems like being in a dream, and many dreams involve travel. And, yes, works of art, where to “get into” the fictional reality the audience or reader must be held in place in front of a screen, stage, or page of a book and required to be quite and still, i. e. to “play dead.” *Where* is the spectator of the work of art? If we choose to say “in front of” the presentational boundary, the edge of the stage or the front of the screen, we ignore the experience of the audience that makes fiction effective: it is *within* the work, as an embodied observer. In dreams, the dreamer does not directly experience paralysis. He/she imagines moving around the dream world. He/she retains a “Euclidean” view, of being a figure moving across an unmoving ground. But, the facts of the case are the opposite. The dreamer *is* fixed. The ground must, therefore, be moving around this fixed point to simulate the dream illusion, in order to *keep* the dreamer asleep.

Is this like the experience of the traveler who *ceases to move as others move* and move “authentically,” as a True Traveler? The key, I believe, lies in distinguishing authentic travel from the movements of those who are not True Travelers. Like the dreamer, the True Traveler experiences “Euclidean” reality and seems to move as others move. The difference is the True Traveler’s relation to authentic travel, which has the status of a dream, and as such, *paralyzes* the True Traveler in order that travel may *insulate* the True Traveler by keeping open the small gap that pre-

vents the dreamer from being overwhelmed by the “external disturbances” that threaten the travel experience.

This returns us to the contrast between Saturation and Gap (my “added” Johnstonian Category). If Saturation takes over, if externalities succeed in their denial-of-service attack, travel ceases. It becomes wandering, errand-running, or the traveler goes native or dies. The Gap means that movement is maintained to simulate relationships with the traveler’s world, but the simulation is a defense. Lacanian psychoanalysis plays this out in terms of trauma, which is Real in the sense that it can’t be represented symbolically. To cover over the sudden appearances of the Real in the course of Symbolic experience, we use fantasy to “explain” A ... (B) ... C. The B, the Real, becomes b’. It is Symbolic but it contains the Real in cipher form. In our ersatz experiment with authentic travel, the True Traveler carries a code-book of ciphers read, not what is “said” in secret code (for none exists), but to specify a plan of action that, like the original trauma, is written in a language of gestures and forms. This in essence is an Event, an enactment, a staging. It has meaningfulness without meanings. It is virtual. It is *effective*.

The True Traveler is not literally motionless, but rather he/she finds a “still center” within the travel experience. This can be represented as a balance point or “impossible” symmetry — a tipping point that is dynamic rather than static. Just as the proper projective circle closes a space by *dis*-closing the point that was its center but moved to the periphery, the move seems impossible. It will be recognizable only to the Traveler him or herself and to other True Travelers, who will recognize each other by their defense, their travel’s relation to the dream. Dynamic balance carries is like the unconscious register. It is able to carry “latent signifiers” from a place of origin to a place of re-emergence. It is able to call them forth from this dark depth. This is possibly how the Parisians of the French Revolution envisaged their city as not just *like* Rome but a New Rome, or why, in folk-lore about the foundation of cities or buildings, what is new is simultaneously original *and* the return an Eternal Form.

You don’t have to look, you will find.

... [conclusion under construction] ...