

THE SOUND OF ONE HAND OPENING: ARCHITECTURE AS A DOOR OF PERCEPTION

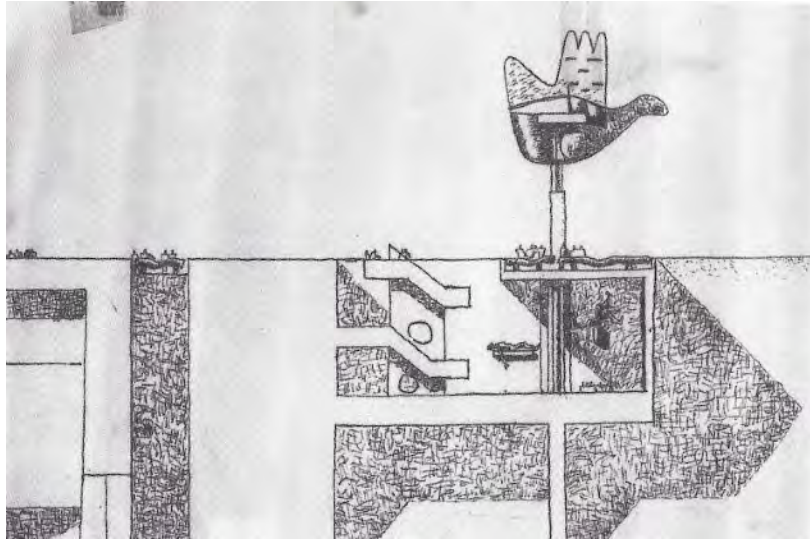


Fig.01 - Section-elevation for *La Main Ouverte* (The Open Hand), Chandigarh, by Le Corbusier, 1950-65 (Izzo and Gubitosi, 1979, p. 209).

When we inhale, the air comes into the inner world. When we exhale, the air goes out to the outer world. [...] We say "inner world" or "outer world," but actually there is just one whole world. In this limitless world, our throat is like a swinging door. The air comes in and goes out like someone passing through a swinging door. [...] What we call "I" is just a swinging door which moves when we inhale and when we exhale. It just moves; that is all. When your mind is pure and calm enough to follow this movement, there is nothing: no "I," no world, no mind nor body; just a swinging door. (Suzuki, 2011, pp. 11-12).

At Chandigarh, Le Corbusier's Open Hand monument (1950-65) (Fig.01) reflects this notion of a "swinging door," pivoting with the wind "like a weather vane" (Frampton, 2001, p. 193). One could imagine being in the presence of this monument, becoming conscious for the first time of the wind and its impression on the physical landscape: firstly in the way the hand turns as it submits to its will, but beyond the monument too... The surrounding ground, trees and buildings dance to the rhythm of the wind. More than mere visual stimulation, one can not just see the wind here- it can be heard, and it can be felt too. But the wind does not discriminate. Spectators of this environment are in fact participants, just as much part of the landscape as its other elements. The monument plays with our perceptions, and in doing so invites us to rediscover our true place in the world.

The term *doors of perception* was coined by the renowned writer and philosopher Aldous Huxley in his 1954 essay of the same title, which is accompanied by a following essay, *Heaven and Hell*, written in 1956 (Huxley, 1954-6). This work is based on his experience of taking the psychedelic drug known as mescaline, which Huxley uses as a topic to host a discussion on the more broad subject of transcendental experiences in which psychedelics are just one of many *doors* leading to altered states

of consciousness. As discussed in Huxley’s essays, other *doors* include meditation, strobe lights, religion and classical art. This paper sets out to explore not just *how* architecture can act as a *door* to alternative ways of perceiving the world, but also *why* this kind of architecture would be of value. The path leading to *doors of perception* will be primarily guided by two schools of thought which run parallel to each other: Zen Buddhism and its accompanying meditative practices for the purpose of clarifying ontological phenomena, and of course architectural theory with the ultimate aim in mind of rendering *doors of perception* in their most useful form, that being concretely in the built environment, by way of assembling raw materials into inhabitable spaces.

DOORS OF PERCEPTION ARE REAL OCCURRENCES

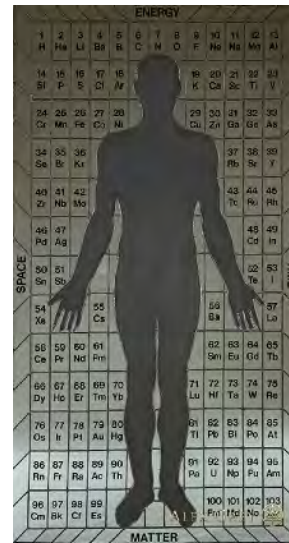
Doors of perception operate to - often temporarily - counteract the brain’s default position for dualistic thought, instead permitting embodied experiences which tend towards the brain’s *full* potential, manifest in terms of non-dualistic thought (Fig.02). According to Dr C. D. Broad (cited in Huxley, 1954-6, p. 19):

Each person is at each moment capable of [...] perceiving everything that is happening everywhere in the universe. The function of the human brain and nervous system is to protect us from being overwhelmed and confused by this mass of largely useless and irrelevant knowledge, by shutting out most of what we should otherwise perceive or remember at any moment.



Fig.02 - *Psychic Energy System* (1980) by Alex Grey (source: www.alexgrey.com)

Fig.03 - *Material World* (1985-6) by Alex Grey (source: www.alexgrey.com)



The “eliminative” function of the brain (Fig.03) establishes a state of consciousness which serves only our basic needs for survival. It is a collective state, shared and subsequently consecrated as “genuinely real” by way of the dualistic, language-based symbol-systems and implicit philosophies which govern much of contemporary society (Huxley, 1954-6, pp. 19-20). Perceiving the world according to this dualistic reality is a process that is learnt, but equally one which *must* be learnt. The transition from birth to adulthood encapsulates this necessity, in which each individual is required by the present conditions of the world into which they are born to take responsibility for their own survival. For this reason, the welfare of the individual is put first and consequently the individual is set in direct opposition to everything beyond itself - the “great big world” out there (Shinzan cited in Skinner, 2017, pp. 13-14).

The very way in which life comes into being and is subsequently maintained gives way to a dualistic consciousness, which in accordance with the Buddha's *Four Noble Truths* (Tsering, 2005, pp. 23-25), is an inexhaustible source of suffering and conflict. On the other hand, non-dual ways of relating to the world are instead characterised by peace and happiness (Skinner, 2017, pp. 65-66). With this understanding, *doors of perception* have a nascent potential for alleviating the ongoing suffering of sentient beings which makes an appealing case for architects...

Architects, as designers of social space who are responsible for the arrangement of social conditions (Coleman, 2005, p. 34), are in a fortunate position of potentially being able to alleviate conflict within society, however this is not usually possible if they do not possess the ability to transcend their own dualistic consciousness because, like everyone else, they sub-consciously act from this place of prioritising their own wellbeing. As Shinzan Roshi puts it, "someone who hasn't reached understanding [of non-duality] himself, [...] cannot help others to do so any more than a blind person can help others to see" (Shinzan cited in Skinner, 2017, p. 228).

ESTABLISHING FUNDAMENTAL PRACTICE(S)

The role of drawing in architecture and the role of meditation in Zen Buddhism have much in common. This comparison is supported by Nathaniel Coleman's article on the Anticipatory Illumination of Drawing (2018) attributes a "meditative" characteristic to the process of architectural drawing. He argues that (analogue) drawing presents architects with the ideal conditions to reveal "cracks through to a third possibility" (p. 4) which "decenter one's own self-perceptions and preconceptions of

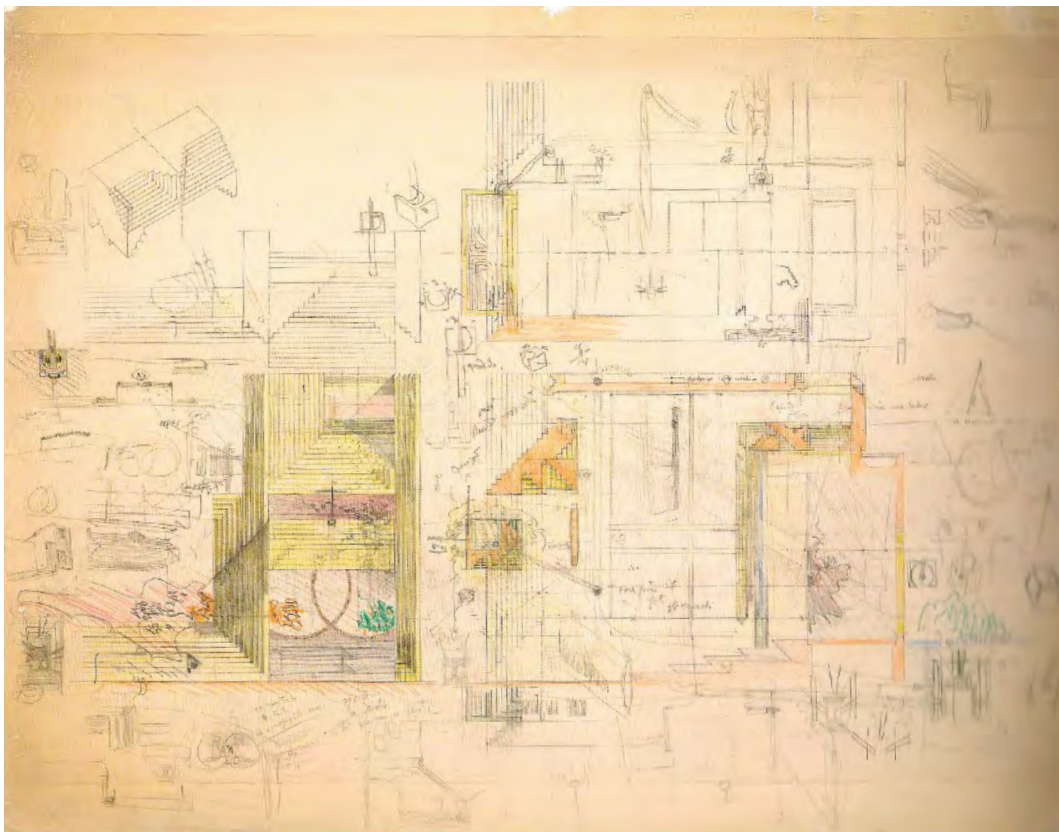


Fig.04 - Drawing for entrance at Brion Cemetery, by Carlo Scarpa (McCarter, 2013, p. 242)

architecture, including the perceived role of architecture and even of the status of architecture culturally" (p. 16). Effective methods for this kind of drawing set out to achieve a "non-yet anticipatory reality of a possible building [...] articulated as giving rise to a desired superior condition" (p. 5). Similarly, Zen Master Dogen explains that by studying and investigating practitioners' object of

meditation “you transcend its higher workings, without a basis to rely on” (Dogen in MacKellar, 17/08/2020, p. xi). To achieve this, the only thing required beyond correct technique is persistence... and perhaps also some well-timed encouragement from an experienced teacher (Skinner, 2017, pp. 140-158)!

A further similarity between the two processes is that for the purposes of generating an exemplary kind of architecture, both meditation and drawing are problematic. For drawing, it's architects' default position to “surrender to the politics of things created by the laws of profit” (Coleman, 2018, p. 4), while for meditation it is that its potential for immediate application lie far outside the context of building architecture. The drawings of Venetian architect Carlo Scarpa (1906-78) are an exemplary demonstration of how these obstacles can be overcome, expressed by Marco Frascari in his essay *The Body and Architecture in the drawings of Carlo Scarpa* (1987) in the way that “the drawings are themselves an architecture,” his ideas being a “continuous meditation on the union of a theory with a practice.” (Frascari, 1987, pp. 125-8).

Frascari elaborates on Scarpa's drawing process in great depth. One characteristic of relevance here is the use of a technique defined as “architectural metonymy” (1987, pp. 124-5) where for Scarpa, the body is the “element of reference.” According to Frascari:

“metonymy, in rhetorical usage, is a semantic shift based on a relationship of logical and material contiguity between literal and figurative terms.” [...] “While in metaphor the relationship established is pragmatic and extrinsic (city = body, head = seat of government, stomach = market, church = heart, and so on), in the metonymy the relationship is syntagmatic and intrinsic: effects substitute for causes, materials for objects, the contained for the container, the abstract for the concrete, or vice versa.”



Fig.05 - Image of exit into meditation pavilion at Brion Cemetery, by Carlo Scarpa (McCarter, 2013, p. 247)

(McCarter, 2013) Scarpa's design (Fig.04) and execution (Fig.05) of a particular door at Brion Cemetery in San Vito D'Altivole (1969-1977) demonstrates his great capacity to realise his conceptions. Zambonini recounts his experience on encountering this door, comparing the technical composition of the door with the bodily sensations that arise on its use to arrive at a potential implication (1983, p. 40):

“a heavy glass door which must be pushed down until it completely disappears beneath the floor level. [...] One's entire body must participate in the effort necessary to lower the door”

“The body is collected in tension to gain way by overcoming a diaphragm, that is, the dynamic image of penetration, of a reverse childbirth, where the body takes a fetal position, aspiring to re-enter the mother’s womb. [...]”

The submerging of the glass door yields a sound produced by a steel cable held taut in a constellation of pulleys [...]. The sound is amplified by the hallway itself, a thin concrete box open at both ends. [...] It is the sound of a counterrevolution of celestial spheres, put in motion by a desire moving in the opposite direction to their natural order; it is an upside down wail, it is the solemn and deep sound of the Om which precedes meditation. [...]

The pavilion protects the act of withdrawing to meditate where a person is in search of his natural origin, as the source of truth.”

DRAWING UPON AN INCOMPLETE TRANSMISSION

The way in which the teachings of Zen Buddhism are passed down from Master to Student follow an identical route to the translation of architecture. The only difference being that in Zen, the transmission takes place via a *singular* translation from “Mind to Mind” (Bielefeldt, 1988, pp. 97-98), while architecture is a “double translation” (Rykwert, 1998, p. 66). The first translation being from “the mental conception” of “the architect’s mind” to the “graphic presentation initially [their] own”, the second being from “the drawing to the building.” Experiencing participants of the built form are then able to mirror this double translation through the process of perceiving the work bodily by way of immediate sensory perceptions, which are then processed cognitively. Or rather, this is how one *hopes* architecture to be experienced. Instead, disillusioned participants’ cognitive faculties take precedent to obscure sensory stimuli. Equally, the architect will most likely suffer from the same fallibility, regardless of their experience or ability. On this, Huxley has the following to say (1954-6, p. 12):

“...in certain cases communication between universes is incomplete or even non-existent. The mind is its own place, and the places inhabited by the insane and the exceptionally gifted are so different from the places where ordinary men and women live, that there is little or no common ground of memory to serve as a basis for understanding or fellow feeling.”

Therefore, the architect (as the *conceiver* of space), and the participant (as *perceiver*) play an equal role in the translation of built form, which makes any attempts made by the architect to *anticipate* the interpretations of others that occur at each stage of translation “inevitably approximate” (Coleman, 2018, p. 6).

“To study Buddhism is to study the self; to study the self is to forget the self.” (Dogen cited in Skinner, 2017, p. 143) and so the journey of development for a student of Zen is very personal one. And, given the promised benefits of true happiness in life free from suffering which pervades every aspect of one’s existence from waking consciousness to sleeping, there is a lot to desire! Given the innate similarities between meditation and architectural drawing, education in architecture could promise the same kind of benefits on offer to Zen students, however it is not so. In schools of Architecture today, the focus tends to be far too one-sided on prioritising the needs of the client, which makes it more challenging for architects to dedicate themselves to their practice with the same drive. Prior to the formation of modern architecture schools, “direct transmission” was more readily available in the form of relationships between Student and Teacher, however the economic realities of today make this almost impossible (Coleman & Rossi in Coleman, 1991 & 2020).

Students who are fortunate enough to acquire the “Wordless Dharma [truth] of the One Mind” (Blofeld, 1958, p. 52) in Zen practice (or architecture), yet resist communicating their understanding to others,

are known as *Silent Buddhas*. What this stage looks like is described by Le Corbusier in his manifesto *Towards a New Architecture* (1931, p. 208):

“This sounding board which vibrates in us is our criterion of harmony. This is indeed the axis on which man is organised in perfect accord with nature and probably with the universe.”

Aldous Huxley also offers an account of this state, which begins to uncover some potential problems that architects might encounter. He says (1954-6, pp. 16-18):

“spatial relationships had ceased to matter very much” and that his *“mind was perceiving the world in terms of other than spatial categories”* that we might ordinarily concern ourselves with like *“position and the three dimensions.”* Instead, Huxley’s arising perceptions of the world around him placed value on *“intensity of existence, profundity of significance [and] relationships within a pattern.”*

Certainly, spatial relationships are an architect’s prime currency! Fortunately, the trajectory of development in Buddhism signifies this condition as only the *beginning*, or better yet just *another step* in the development of self, despite it being the ultimate object of desire. The Buddhist’s path can be adopted by architects to re-situate their efforts back in alignment with architecture as a profession concerned with constructing in “position and the three dimensions” without having to surrender their desires. The primary teaching of the widely available *Lotus Sutra*, which is often considered the essential teaching in Buddhism (Leighton, 2007, pp. 41-65) is for practitioners to dedicate their practice for the benefit of *all sentient beings*.

Le Corbusier found his sense of purpose in the utopian writings of John Ruskin, and his efforts to transmit this into the future signifies “as much a handing down as a handing over.” (Coleman, 2005, p. 125). Frampton also pointed towards a kind of expression that retains the original non-dual transmission but is presented in dualistic forms:

“The signification Frampton hopes for requires a synthesis of opposites made up of glass and steel constructions on the one hand and masonry enclosures on the other. Resolved by an overarching vision, the result would be an architecture able to establish enclosure as a condition of social settings, advantageously brought to realisation with contemporary construction processes.” (Coleman, 2005, p. 118)

The Buddhist term *Skilful Means* (Burk, 2017) offers the promise of ever-renewed hope to the *Silent Buddha*. It is a term that identifies one’s ability to communicate to others their acquired wisdom. For an expression to be understandable to others who have not yet arrived at this realisation themselves requires practitioners to re-engage in that which they once sought to renounce (the world of dualities). Over time, one’s ability to communicate/ transmit their understanding will only become more and more skilful, while any attempts to render absolute this conception of non-duality in reality will result in failure. Other manifestations of truth which *appear* to possess the ability to be manifest absolutely in reality should be of no interest to well-meaning practitioners. This transition of the *Silent Buddha* can be explored in greater depth in the widely available *Lotus Sutra*. For architects, a slightly more relevant version of this Sutra can be found in Leighton’s *‘Visions of Awakening Space and Time: Dogen and the Lotus Sutra’* (2007), on account of its orientation on space and time.

Le Corbusier makes for a good example of how an architect’s process of transmitting a non-dual understanding becomes more and more skilful over time. Prior to his *Towards a New Architecture* (1931), his vision for an awakened society was “blinded by his overarching awe of the new technological age.” In this way, his demands on the “modern Everyman and his family” were too great; seemingly he “could not see his own absolutism” (Coleman, 2005, pp. 125-7). Following the trauma

of WW2, Le Corbusier's attitude became more understanding and accommodating of the real needs of modern societies, able to respond to them in ways according to his own non-dualistic ideals, primarily by "focusing on specificity and local tradition." (Coleman, 2005, p. 122).

In this regard, Balkrishna Doshi reflects on Le Corbusier's design for the main door at Capitol Complex, Chandigarh (Doshi in Melotto, 2014, pp. 37-42) (Fig.06), in which one can identify its grand scale and high adoration of organic symbols. Corbusier's intentions behind the composition of this door was to reveal the "integrated yet peaceful connection to our understanding of life and decisions," expressed through recognisable depictions of "rhythmic order of an everyday life", at the same time recalling the "great porticoes and doors of the European cathedrals which often depict their philosophy life."



Fig.06 - Entrance door to Capitol Complex, Chandigarh, by le Corbusier (Source: Wikipedia)

Returning again to reference the work of Scarpa, this time to review examples of effective transmission and skilful means. During its reign, the Fascist regime manipulated Italian museology in order to impose their educational and political propaganda upon the general public. Scarpa became involved in the revolution of museology following the decline of Fascism (post-WW2). For example, the display cabinets (Fig.00) that Scarpa designed for the restoration at Gallerie degli Uffizi in Florence (1953-1960) utilise ornament as a way to appeal to the objectifying gaze of the alienated public. Once this initial orientation is acquired, the intention shifts to reformation of users' perception by allowing (encouraging) participants to discover the otherwise neglected aspects of the artworks on display (MacKellar, 2016, pp. 2-5).

INNER AND OUTER RHYTHMS

HUAIKANG:

“Worthy monk, why do you sit in meditation?”

Huairang picked up a tile and started to rub it against a stone.

“Polishing it to make it a mirror.”

“How can you become a buddha by sitting in meditation?”

“It’s like riding in an ox cart. If the cart doesn’t move do you hit the cart or do you hit the ox?”

“Are you practicing seated meditation? Are you practicing to be a seated buddha? As for seated meditation, meditation isn’t limited to sitting or lying down. As for being a seated buddha, “buddha” isn’t limited to any fixed form. [...]. If you cling to the sitting posture, you will never realise the essential principle.”

‘Nanyue Polishes a Tile,’ Case 139, *Entangling Vines* (Kirchner, (transl) 2013, pp. 121-22)

MAZU:

“I wish to become a buddha.”

Mazu asked him what he was doing.

“How can you make a tile into a mirror by polishing it?”

“Then what should I do?”

The above interaction between Huairang and his student, Mazu, encapsulates the teaching in Zen which is advocated by many teachers that meditative practice can (and ought to) take place beyond the confines afforded by seated meditation, into other activities of daily life. The same applies to architecture and the practice of drawing explored earlier. This notion is what Lefebvre is alluding to, in regards to his method for *rhythmanalysis*, in which:

“The rhythmanalytical project applied to the urban can seem disparate, because it appeals to, in order to bring together, notions and aspects that analysis too often keeps separate: time and space, the public and the private, the state-political and the intimate” (Lefebvre cited in Coleman, 2015, p. 122).

Meditation practices (naikan) outlined by Zen master Hakuin are characterised by inner contemplation, in the sense that a practitioner observes the phenomena of mind and body that takes place within themselves. Much like Lefebvre’s *rhythmanalysis*, when a presence of this practice is maintained into the activities of daily life, comprehension of the rhythms of the world as found become possible. To do this, engage the mind with the “uninterrupted flow of breath within the body, [so that] it is not preoccupied with analytical focus” on the object of contemplation. Instead, mind and body work together in an integrated, process (Seo, 2010, p. 9). According to Lefebvre (cited in Coleman, 2015, p. 95):

“Within the body itself, spatially considered, the successive levels constituted by the senses (from the sense of smell to sight treated as different within a differentiated field) prefigure the

layers of social space and their interconnections. The passive body (the senses) and the active body (labour) converge in space."

The analysis can be focused and contextualised for architects by keeping that *burning question* (Skinner, 2017, pp. 64-81) that is the crux of the project with them throughout their day, inviting their environment to reveal valuable insights, verifiable on account of them being grounded in a combined bodily experience.

Practising Master Bankei's method for meditation in the 'unborn' (Skinner, 2017, pp. 44-63) can also be propagated into the everyday activities of life, allowing architects to develop the ability to perform analysis on time, city and people (Lefebvre cited in Coleman, 2015, p. 106). The unborn is an "ungraspable place," yet it is not separate from our thoughts and feelings. To gain entry into this place, one must maintain a mirror-like presence, holding the intention of remaining open, allowing the phenomena of the mind and body to come and go. This makes it possible a practitioner to reside "simultaneously inside and outside," so that one may both "grasp rhythm" and be "grasped by it" (Lefebvre cited in Coleman, 2015, p. 106).

The effects of this kind of contemplative work on *rhythms* are manifold: one begins to reorganise their own perceptions of themselves and how they perceive the world (urban or otherwise), affecting their temperament/ behaviour for the better in the way that traumas dormant within the body become *untwisted* (Daizan in Viking, 2020). In the same respect, rhythmanalysis on the city is a catharsis for the city. To support the validity of this claim, Joseph Rykwert (1982, p. 31) offers the following:

"In a critical situation such as ours where collective memory is continually being denied and its relevance to the contemporary situation questioned, we approach (collectively) the malaise of the psychologist's patient who represses his past in order to justify his irrational behaviour in the present. [...] What needs to be examined is the twisted or hidden memory of an experience which will illuminate the current malaise. This must, therefore, be the nature of any historical study which would attempt to relate memory to present experience history to current design."

The method for engaging in this form of analysis can be translated into all aspects of the architect's work if desired, without the need for much alteration. While projecting the analysis onto the world as found will be the most compelling of choices for architects, of equal importance is the analysis of the self, since an analysis of this kind gives rise to changes in the self. The need for both facets of this analysis to occur simultaneously is stressed by David Harvey (cited in Coleman, 2019, p. 529):

"Through changing our world we change ourselves. How, then, can any of us talk about social change without at the same time being prepared, both mentally and physically, to change ourselves? Conversely, how can we change ourselves without changing our world?"

ORIGINAL EXPERIENCE

According to architect Aldo van Eyck (1918-99), the nature of human existence in itself is *liminal* (Coleman, 2005, p. 108). On this fundamental level, the full spectrum of existential experience for sentient beings can be divided into the two main groups of mind and body, (while *breath* mediates between the two). Experience consists of phenomena arising in both the mind and the body. The phenomena that arise in the mind take the form of dualistic (metric) thoughts, theories or memories, while arising phenomena of the body consist of characteristically non-dualistic (non-metric) physical sensations of the five senses (vision, hearing, smell, taste and touch) (Skinner, 2017, p. 148), or, what Lefebvre liked to call *Rhythms* (Coleman, 2015, p. 106).

Recalling an occasion in 2019 where I attended a morning ceremony at the Zenkō-ji Buddhist temple in the city of Nagano, Japan will help to clarify these separate elements of experience. After the morning ceremony, guests in attendance were invited on a journey through a dark tunnel (fig.07). This took place underground beneath the main hall of the temple, where we walked in single file along a pitch-black path. No longer able to rely on sight, our only source for orientation through this voided space was the tactile sensation of our right hands on the smooth (weathered), black timber wall. Anything else was left open to be discovered. Every few steps my hand would hit and trace over a convex shape, which I soon learnt was a column. After one particular column, rather than continuing the path in a straight line, the wall turned 90 degrees to the right, the arc of the column turning a full 270 degrees. Then, a while later, we follow the wall around another 90 degree turn to the right, this time being less of a surprise. An understanding of the dark tunnel in spatial terms was beginning to unfold in my mind. After a third turn to the right, I began to detect a hint of light through the blackness, meaning that the exit was approaching. On reaching the final column, I came to the realisation that the path traced the simple square footprint of the temple.

Perceptions of space in contemporary society are ruled by the mind, resulting in an “absence of embodied experience” which leaves the “construal of meaning as entirely conceptual phenomenon” (Gartner cited in Frampton, 1995, pp. 10-11). In the dark tunnel in Nagano, the source of experience that normally informs perceptions of space was completely obscured when ordinary vision was removed, which meant that the arising “construal of meaning” (of comprehending the tunnel as a square form) was derived from the arising physical sensations, amplified by the continuous engagement of the hands, the primary organs associated with touch. The Neapolitan philosopher Giambattista Vico classified this as “corporeal imagination” in his *Scienza nuova* of 1730 (cited in Frampton, 1995, pp. 10-11):

“the body reconstitutes the world through its tactile appropriation of reality. This much is suggested by the psycho-physical impact of form upon our being and by our tendency to engage form through touch as we feel our way through architectonic space.”

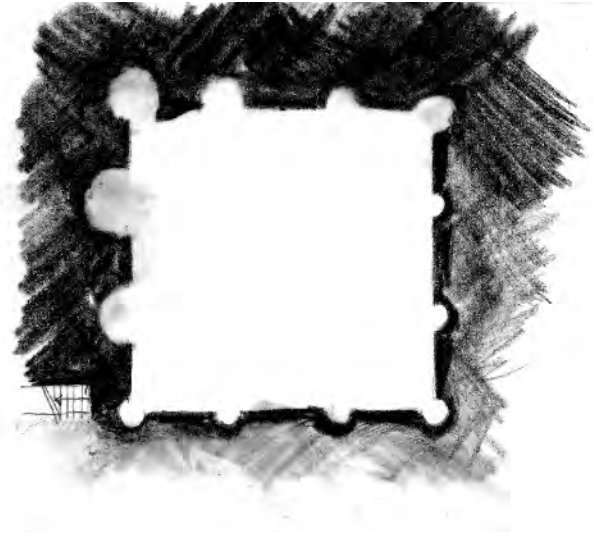


Fig.07 - Experiential plan drawing of the ‘dark tunnel’ at the Zenkō-ji temple in Nagano, Japan.

Not only can experience through space itself be considered in terms of the body and mind, but also architecture itself can be summarised in these two terms. Joseph Rykwert's *The Dancing Column* (1996) considers at length the way the orders in classical (Greek/ Roman) architecture are derived by a translation of the body. More-so, Le Corbusier concluded that architecture was made "in man's measure", that is to say with units "derived from his own body", "to human scale, in harmony with man" (Corbusier cited in Rykwert, 1972, p. 16). What constitutes *body* in architecture, then, is the fact that the human figure is the object of imitation. It can be understood therefore that all examples of architecture endeavour to represent the human body, to varying degrees of success. The element of *mind* in a building can be tended to in that it is one's mental faculties that generate the three-dimensional forms that are to be constructed as buildings. Accordingly, axes, circles, and right angles as the "truths" of geometry make up the "language of the mind" (Corbusier cited in Rykwert, 1972, p. 16).

Along this vein, Alberti coined the phrase "The city is a big house, the house is a small city" (Alberti, cited in Rykwert, 1996, pp. 65-66). Using this interpretation, the comparison between buildings and bodies can be scaled up at will.

PRIMITIVE MIND

"our own indigenous soul - the primal, intuitive, embodied part of humanity that lived for many thousands of years in an immediate and intimate connection with the rhythms and beings of the natural world and that still resides within our genetic and spiritual makeup just beneath the thin masks of civilisation."

Flynn Johnson (cited in Ives, 2018, p. 71)

Joseph Rykwert (1972, p. 14) frames a state of mind which precedes the notion of a "first" (primitive) house as "the irretrievable lost object" of "original mind." This is the moment before the birth of architecture. It can be considered as the state of mind which equates to It can be thought of in terms of being entirely non-dual in its nature, with its origin lying in the depths of the body. Its counterpart is a civilised state of mind that can be considered in terms of geometric language, as introduced in the section above.

Hermits appear in Zen literature as historical characters for pedagogical study who seek to recover this original state of mind. However, as a lost object that has always been so, it cannot be recovered in its complete form (Rykwert, 1972, p. 14). As such, embedding oneself in nature, as hermits do, is the way to get closest to a complete recovery. The reason in this sense why it cannot be fully recovered is because of human's desire for protection from the harsh, exposed elements that nature creates.

The reason hermits feel compelled to do this is to **escape the disharmony offered by more urban life**, of dualistic life, in favour of a **greater connection with nature**, getting **as close as possible** to the irretrievable lost object that is **unification (harmony) with nature**.



Fig.08 - 'The personification of architecture and the primitive hut, after Laugier' (Rykwert, 1972, p. 45)

Hermits' preference for a type shelter is the notional primitive hut which lies on the threshold between full unification with nature and the progressive development of dualistically oriented communities. The primitive hut is suitable enclosure for the pursuit of the original mind because it consists of the fewest built elements (hearth, roof, enclosure [wall], mound and door) that would provide sufficient protection from the "hostile" elements of nature (Semper, 1989, p. 102).

The hermit existing in this state becomes closely in tune with the nature of nature, and is "freed from the attachments and struggles of life in the city" (Ives, 2018, pp. 67-8). Hermits represent what it would be like to seek out to the fullest that desire to draw within that is within each of us. While we each have this desire to reconnect with nature, also innate is its opposite desire, which keeps us together in communities. Contemporary society centred around dense urban landscapes has rendered any sort of return that comes close to a primitive way of living near impossible.

THE DANGERS OF VISIONARY-ABSTRACT AND ITS CURE IN EMBODIMENT

Daizan Roshi outlines three different kinds of people under the criteria of where their *epicentre* is located (Skinner, 2017, pp. 82-85). In contemporary society, most people are the *heady* type, explained by it being the location of the cognitive mind which is responsible for generating dualistic thinking. Another group find their centre in their heart, and are characterised as being "ruled by their emotions." The third category of people find their centre in their centre, or belly. This third category is the ideal condition because it is the only one which lends itself to truly embodied experience, while the other two types remain stuck in dualistic thought.

When practitioners pursue an attainment of non-dual understandings of reality with any sense of real urgency, in a way that is in some form abstracted from the real world, it actually diminishes physical health as opposed to improving it. This can be considered from a number of perspectives.

Visionary architects - such as Etienne-Louis Boullée (1728-99) for example - make the case for *heady* people, whose majority of architectural projects remain unbuilt, only appearing real in the abstraction of the drawing, not actually built in reality. Aldous Huxley's commentary on his mescaline-induced experiences shed some light in this regard. He observed a desire to completely shut his senses off from the real world. Seeing that "spatial relationships" were no longer of any importance, he chose instead to get lost in the mesmerising nature of things, but in this case, "one would never want to do anything else" (1954-6, pp. 28-30):

"This participation in the manifest glory of things left no room, so to speak, for the ordinary, the necessary concerns of human existence, above all for concerns involving persons."

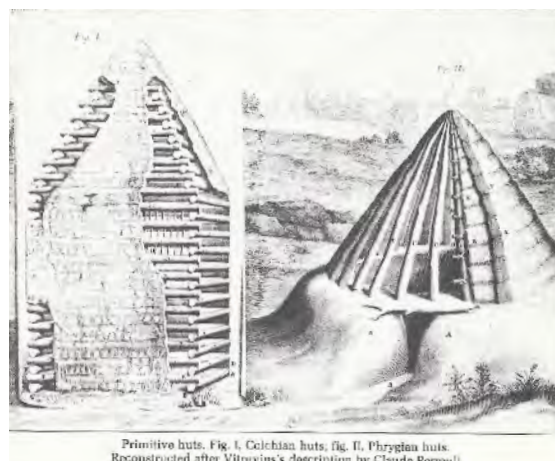


Fig.09 - 'Primitive huts. Colchian huts (left); Phrygian huts (right). Reconstructed after Vitruvius' description by Claude Perrault' (Rykwert, 1972, p. 57)

Convinced that he needed to live in complete isolation from the outside world, Zen master Bankei “built himself a tiny hermitage [...] and walled himself in. The door was sealed up with mud plaster. There was no way out. There was only a small opening at the front, like a letterbox, through which people could put food, and a hatch at the back for defecation”. (Skinner, 2017, pp. 50-51). From this description, Bankei’s fully enclosed hermitage might have resembled something of the kind in (Fig.09). The hut expresses Bankei’s practice at the time, which was driven by a great desire for attaining a truly non-dualistic understanding, however there was clearly no real effort made to attain real harmony of body and mind because, sealed away from the world, there was no way to test it via lived experience, which is absolutely essential. As a result of this abstracted practice, Bankei grew frail and was even on the brink of death (Skinner, 2017, pp. 50-54). Hakuin is another Zen master who’s premature, unembodied practice lead to an array of seemingly incurable physical ailments, dubbed “meditation sickness” (cited in Seo, 2010, pp. 26-27). He reflected on this period in later life:

“those two conditions of life, activity and non-activity had become entirely out of harmony. The two inclinations in me towards finiteness and infinity had become indistinct in my mind. I could not make up my mind to do or not do.”

In ‘Doors of Perception,’ Huxley demythologises the transcendental performance of asceticism by attributing its ability to alter the mind’s consciousness to physiological manipulation. For example, breathing methods used in forms of yoga result in “prolonged suspensions in breath” which “lead to a high concentration of carbon dioxide in the lungs and blood, and this increase in the concentration of CO₂ lowers the efficiency of the brain as a reducing valve and permits the entry into consciousness of experiences, visionary or mystical, from ‘out there.’” (Huxley, 1954-6, p. 112).

Nevertheless, a degree of asceticism could be used effectively in contemporary architecture today, as a way to overcome the over-sheltered lifestyles of the general population. Perhaps all that is required is an accompanying final reward in order to restore a balance. Effective use of asceticism in architecture was recognised by Nathaniel Coleman (2005, p. 266) in his commentary on the ‘Continuity Stairway’ at Daniel Libeskind’s Jewish Museum, Berlin (1989-1999), in which “climbing stairs requires effort, which involves all parts of the body from the feet to the head; ascent also alters one’s breathing. A very long set of stairs, especially with risers just slightly taller than expected, makes the climb even more strenuous, and also rewarding.”

ARCHITECTURE IN HARMONY

Conceiving of architecture and experience terms of mind and body invites the possibility of utilising methods for meditation which seek to re-harmonise mind and body in the form of embodied experience in order to synthesise *doors of perception* in architecture. Julian Daizan Skinner presents us with a comprehensive set of practices which promise to do just this in *Practical Zen: Meditation and beyond* (2017). The overarching approach is structured around his own lineage’s framework for practice, poetically described as ‘two wings of a bird’. The first *wing* (rikan) is comprised of practices which invite insights into the “true nature of reality,” while practices belonging to the second *wing* (naikan) are designed to develop health, wellbeing, groundedness and power in the body. The first *wing* tends to the phenomena that arise in the mind, and the second *wing* tends to the phenomena that arise in the body. By fostering these two aspects simultaneously, harmony of body and mind can be reignited (Dorrian and Kakalis, 2020, pp. 80-82). This structure closely resembles Kenneth Frampton’s “two courses” approach (Coleman, 2005, pp. 116-17) to practice, although the context here is slightly different. The challenge of the architect is to both cultivate this harmony within

themselves, as well as to transmit it onto the page in the form of buildable architecture which establish equivalent experiences for all participating individuals. Reflecting on Frampton's *two courses*, Nathaniel Coleman goes on to elaborate that "palpable tension" increases as the harmony between the two facets of practice increases. This tension is one that "only architects with the greatest capacity for synthesis can resolve." Fortunately, the *naikan* practices introduced above work at gradually cultivating the body's innate potential to become a vessel which can embody such palpable tensions (Daizan in Viking, 2021).

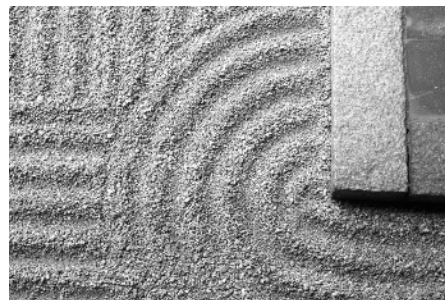
These exercises (*naikan*) which help to develop the capacity of the body were first introduced to Zen by way of Zen master Hakuin, who allegedly was passed them from a hermit known as Hakuyushi, who has the following to say on how "the maintenance of life may be compared to defending a country" (Hakuyushi cited in Skinner, 2017, pp. 209-10):

"An enlightened ruler always gives his devotion to the people, but the unenlightened ruler always pays attention to the upper classes. If the ruler only attends to the upper classes, they become too arrogant in their authority and will lose consideration for the poverty and sufferings of the people. The people then weaken, the land sees famine and death fills the streets. The virtuous and wise hide. Resentment burns amidst the masses. [...]"

"But contrary to this, if the ruler pays his attention principally to the people, the upper classes and officials restrain their ambitions and consider always the hard labours of the people. [...] The people become prosperous and the country strong. [...]"

"The human body is just like this. A man who perfectly masters the way always attends to the lower, filling the lower body with his heart energy. [...] The circulation of energy and blood will be sufficient to make heart and mind vigorous."

Not only do Hakuyushi's remarks suggest a suitable basis around which to organise social structures for prosperous communities, it also inspires hope for the attainment of an unmatched vitality of body and mind for the benefit of the architect but also to be shared with the inhabitants of any future design proposals.



**Fig.10 -
Photographs of
primitive details at
Tofuku-ji, Kyoto,
Japan**



THE BIRTH OF TWIN-PHENOMENA



Fig.11 - '*Jan Rietveld, connection and transformation of two old houses into a new one, Ameide, 1950*' Photograph by Nico Jesse (Ligtelijn and Strauven, 2008, p. 102)



Fig.11 - '*Climbing arch in Dijkstraat playground, 1954*' by Aldo van Eyck. Photograph by Louis van Paridon (Ligtelijn and Strauven, 2008, p. 105)

Seen in another light, the irretrievable lost object is that state of mind before birth, explaining the inclination to regress to pre-conscious, non-dual states. Children are closer to this state since they are still learning the ways towards adulthood. Rykwert makes a connection between the popularity of the womb-like Hardoy chair (Fig.12) among intellectual types (Rykwert, 1982, p. 30). As mentioned above, *heady* people who are not engaged in embodied experience and are at the greatest risk of falling ill.



Fig.12 - '*Hardoy Chair*' (1938) by Antonio Bonet, Juan Kurchan and Jorge Ferrari Hardoy (Rykwert, 1982, p. 26)

Children, as beings who still retain some aspect of that nascent, primitive mind, yet are also learning the ways towards adulthood, are a real-life example of an in-between human consciousness, which makes van Eyck's designs for playgrounds incredibly fertile models for considering ways in which to manifest an architecture which accommodates dualistic and non-dualistic consciousness together.

Van Eyck's commitment to designing cities around the child however does not just tend to children. "To cater for the pedestrian means to cater for the child." (van Eyck in Ligtelijn and Strauven, 2008, p. 104). On this notion, children are pedestrians too, and in cities "which overlooks the child's presence" (van Eyck in Ligtelijn and Strauven, 2008, p. 111), pedestrians are just pedestrians. Van Eyck hoped to reignite the interpretative sense of play and wonder in adults, while still serving the needs of adulthood (van Eyck in Ligtelijn and Strauven, 2008, p. 113), in the hope that in van Eyck-ian environments, pedestrians can also be children too.

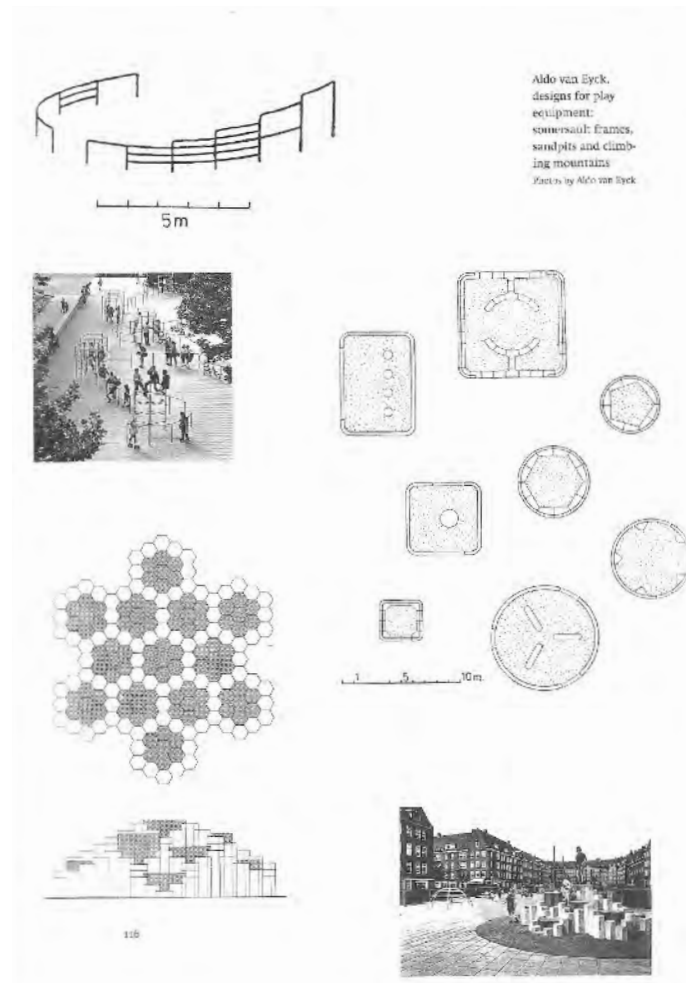


Fig.13 - 'Aldo van Eyck, designs for play equipment: somersault frames, sandpits and limbing mountains.' Photos by Aldo van Eyck (Ligtelijn and Strauven, 2008, p. 116).

The primitive-yet-geometric design of van Eyck's playgrounds appeals to that primitive consciousness still ignited in children, inviting interpretative play, at the same time as being "attractive as a meeting place for everyone." (van Eyck in Ligtelijn and Strauven, 2008, p. 114). Consecrating the movement of children as acceptable within the city is an effort to nurture and maintain the still plastic minds of children "makes a virtue" of the coexistence of the two arising phenomena of dualistic and non-dualistic consciousness. This makes for an "architecture at once utopian and open-ended... make it an ongoing concern always in progress" (Coleman, 2005, p. 115)

"it would be so gratifying if the relationship between outside space and inside space, between individual and common space inside and outside, between open and closed (inwards and outwards) were to become the built mirror of human nature, so that man may recognise himself in its reflection." (van Eyck in Ligtelijn and Strauven, 2008, p. 126).

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