

Interconnections, relationships, & dwelling as wholeness

A phenomenological ecology of natural & humanmade worlds



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Dwelling studies

“How humans comport themselves on earth so as to fashion a world and world view. Coextensive with building a world, we develop a way of thinking and being” (Dwelling Studies homepage).



Dwelling, thinking, being

Phenomenology as a conceptual ethos & research method.

An “environmental & architectural phenomenology.”

A “phenomenological ecology.”



Phenomenology

- The careful description and interpretation of human experience.
 - *Phenomena*—things or experiences as people experience those things or experiences.



Main aim

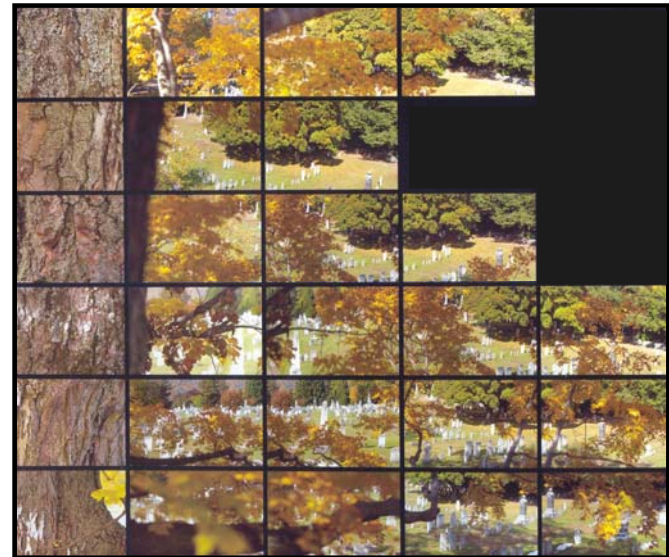
Examining what “dwelling as wholeness” might be.



The ecological emphasis

The study of interconnections, relationships, & environmental wholes different from the sum of their environmental parts.

“special qualities emerge out of interactions & collectivities”
(Worster 1994, p. 22).



Key question

What do interconnections, relationships, and environmental wholes of ecology become in a phenomenological perspective?



Phenomenological ecology

studying how things, living forms, people, events, situations, & worlds come together to make environmental & human wholes.



Two phenomena

- Color
- Lively urban places



Lively urban places

- Extended time-space patterns of the lived body in space.
- Bill Hillier's research on spatial configuration of pathways.



Color

- Goethe's way of science as a phenomenology of the natural world.

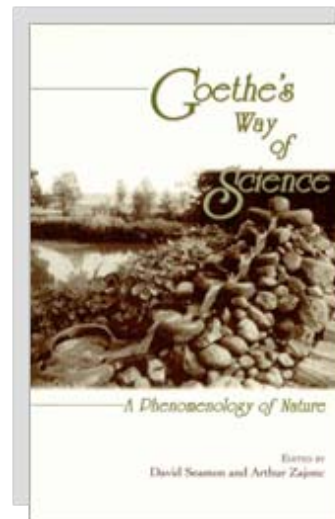
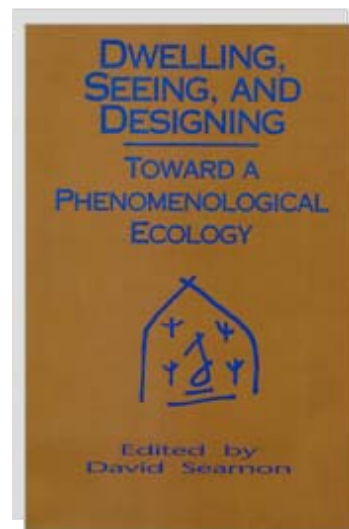
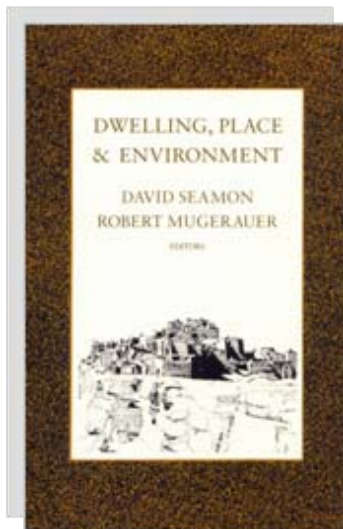


1. Habitual bodies & place ballet



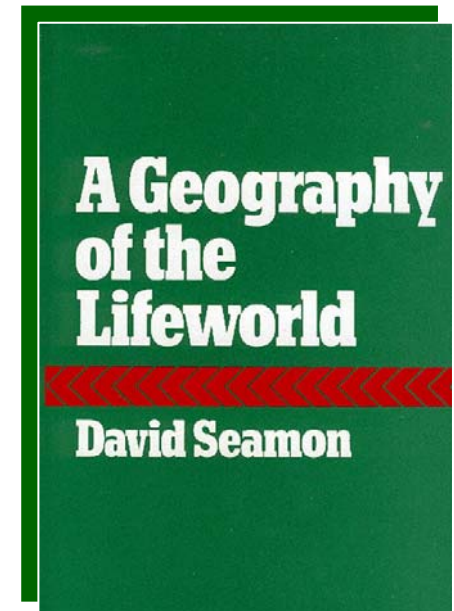
Exemplary themes

- Sense of place.
- Architectural and landscape meaning.
 - Home, dwelling, & journey.
- The nature of environmental & architectural experience.
 - Environmental design as place making.
- The practice of a *lived* environmental ethic.



A phenomenology of everyday environmental experience

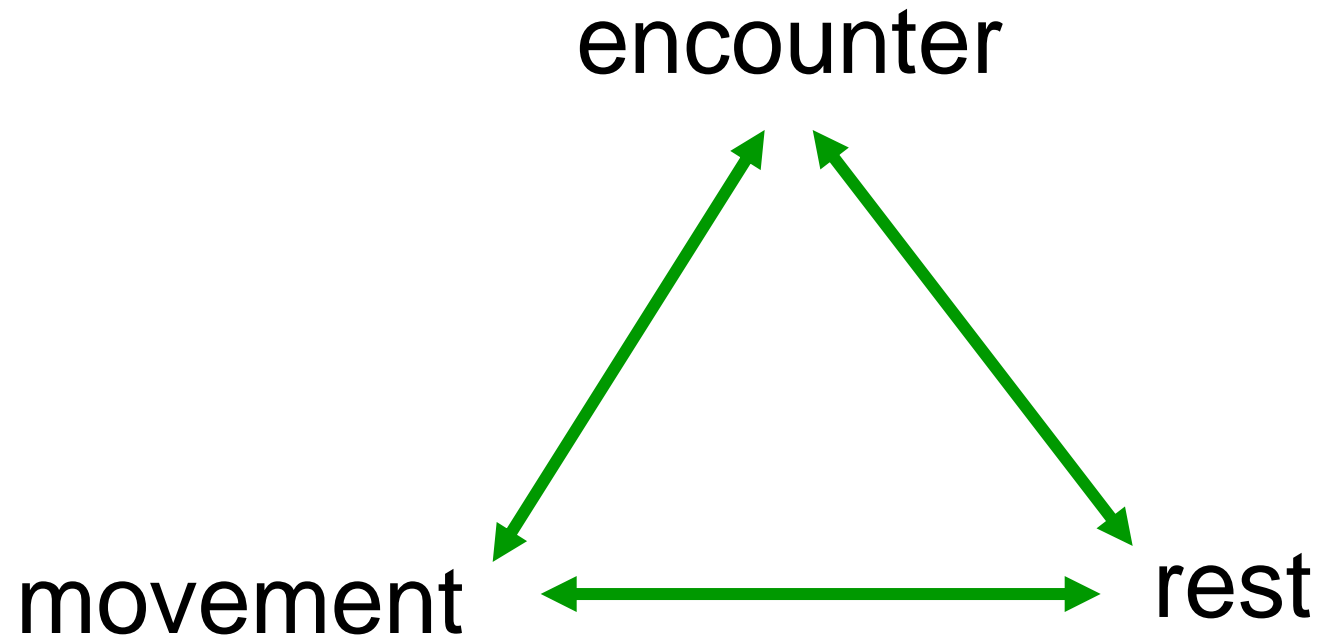
- Peoples' firsthand involvements with everyday places, spaces, & environments.



Exemplary themes for environmental experience groups

- Daily movement patterns.
- Emotions relating to place.
- The meaning of home & at-homeness.
- The nature of environmental noticing & encounter.
 - Places for things.
 - Deciding where to go when.





The habitual nature of everyday movement

- A kind of automatic but intelligent unfolding of movement with which the person has little or no conscious contact.



Body-subject

- The inherent capacity of the body to direct movements intelligently and thus function as a special kind of subject that expresses itself in a pre-conscious way usually described by such words as “automatic,” “habitual,” and “mechanical.”



Merleau-Ponty's *body-subject*

“Consciousness is being toward the thing through the intermediary of the body. A movement is learned when the body has understood it, that is, when it has incorporated it into its ‘world’, and to move one’s body is to aim at things through it; it is to allow oneself to respond to their call....(Merleau-Ponty 1962, pp. 138-39).



Body choreographies

- *Body routine*: a set of integrated behaviors sustaining a particular task or aim—e.g.,, driving a car, typing, doing home repair.
- *Time-space routine*: a set of more or less habitual bodily behaviors extending through a considerable portion of time—e.g., a getting-up or a going-to-lunch routine.



Place ballet

- an interaction of body- & time-space routines rooted in space that becomes place.



Some characteristics of place ballet

- Familiarity & sociability arising out of routine.
- Interpersonal regularity that is unintentional and comes about over time through many “accidental” meetings—an environmental serendipity.
- Participants feel a sense of belonging, at homeness, & well-being.

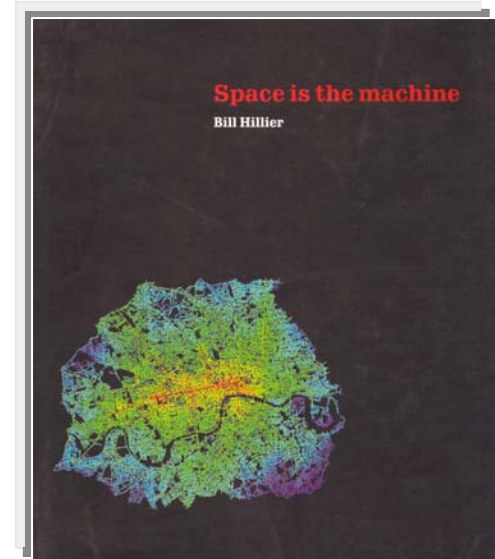
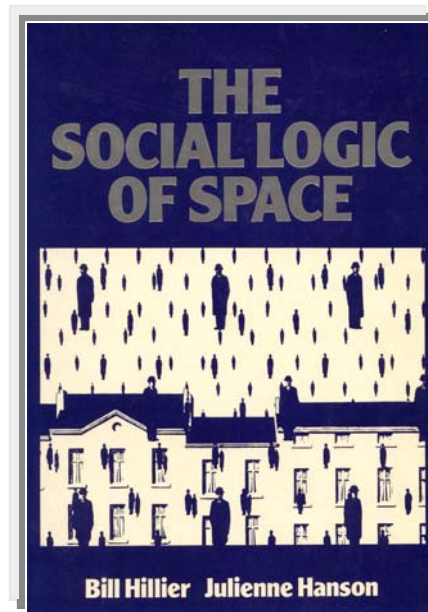


2. Spatial configuration & place ballet



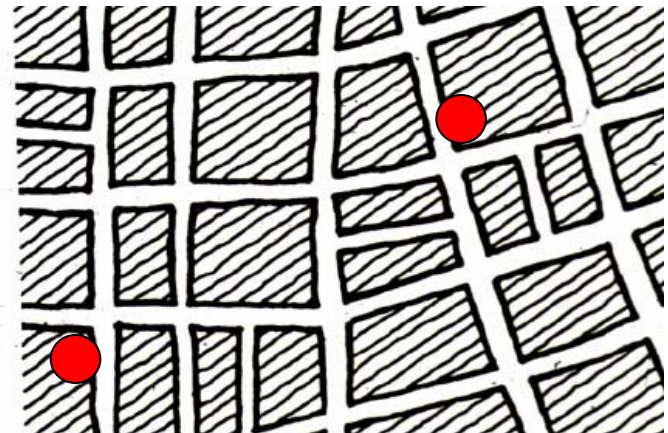
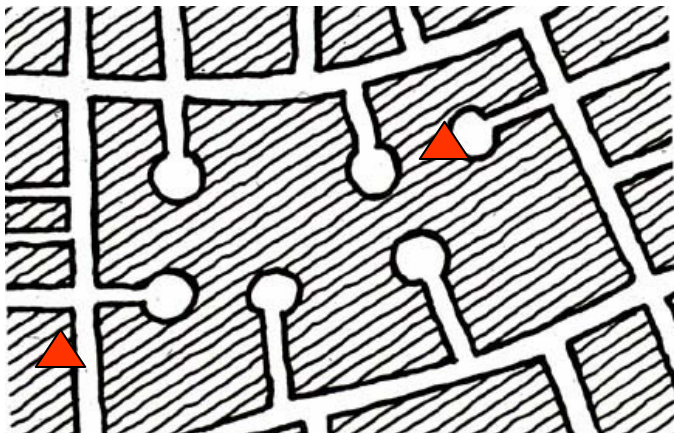
Bill Hillier's theory of space syntax

- How does the physical-spatial environment contribute to lively urban places?
- Key focus: *spatial configuration*, especially layout of pathways.



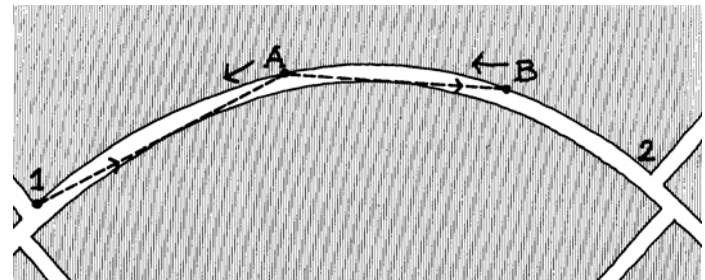
Space syntax

- the way the spatial configuration of pathways can informally & automatically bring people together in urban space or keep them apart.
 - A key concern: *permeability*—the relative accessibility & connectivity within & between urban districts.

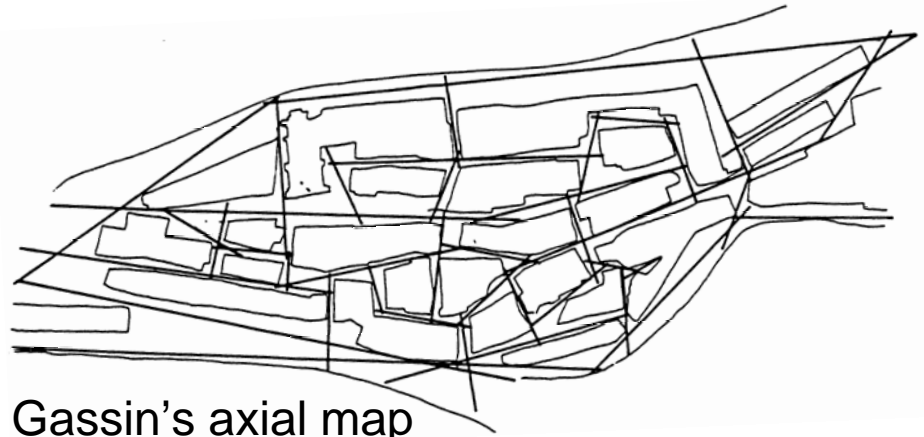
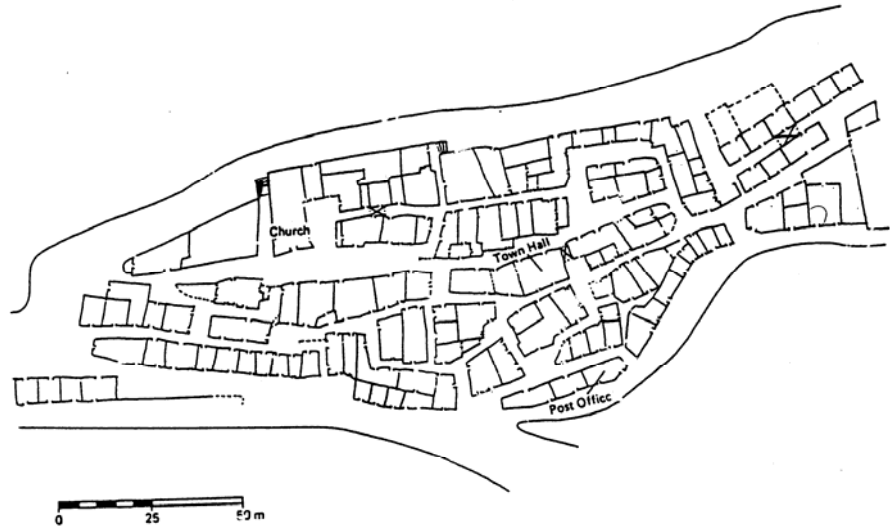


Axial spaces

- Spaces as they are defined by their one-dimensional qualities.
- Work mostly as pathways—e.g., long, narrow streets.
 - Identified geometrically by drawing the longest straight line possible before the line hits a building, wall, etc.



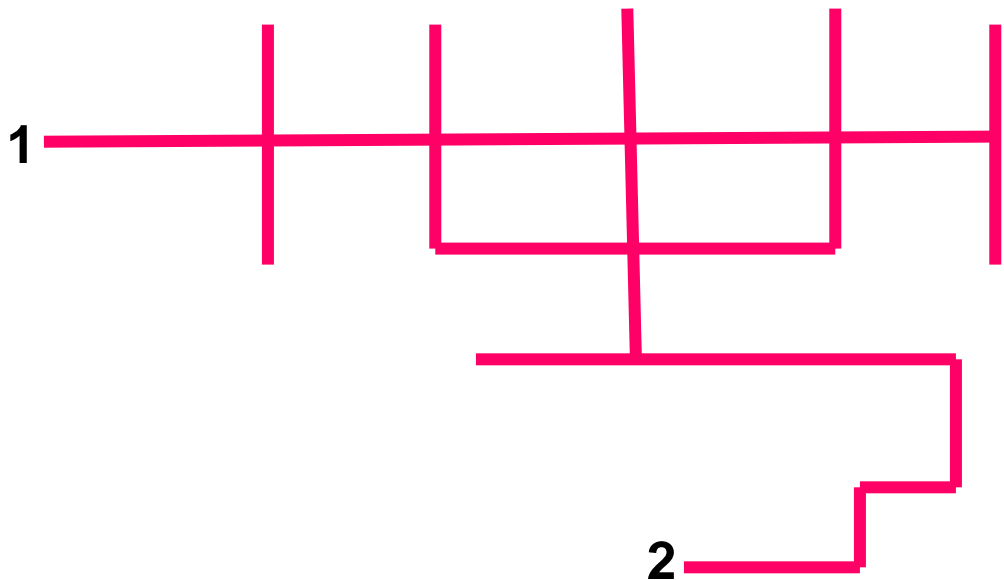
Village of Gassin, southern France



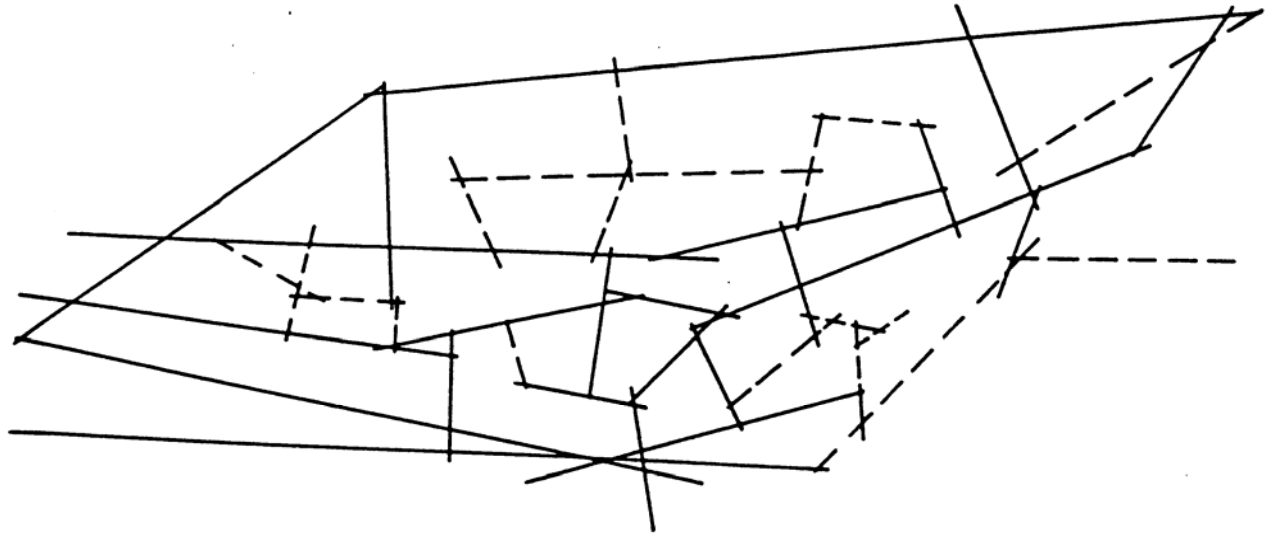
Gassin's axial map

Integrated & segregated pathways

- *Integrated pathways*: pathways that make themselves readily accessible to other pathways. In other words, many other pathways feed into them.
- *Segregated pathways*: pathways that do not make themselves readily accessible to other pathways. In other words, few or no other pathways feed into them.



Map of Gassin, summarizing integration values

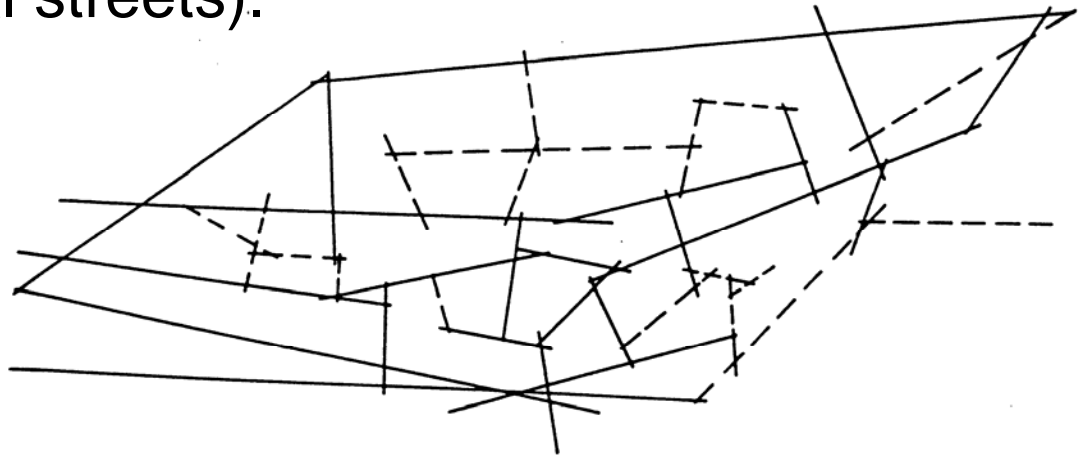


Solid lines = pathways with high integration values
Hatched lines = pathways with high segregation values

Deformed wheel

A pathway system in which the most active, integrated streets make a shape suggesting a wheel & spokes.

- Most of shops, businesses, & most used open spaces are located on these streets.
- Between “spokes” of active, integrated streets are more segregated, quiet pathways (usually residential streets).



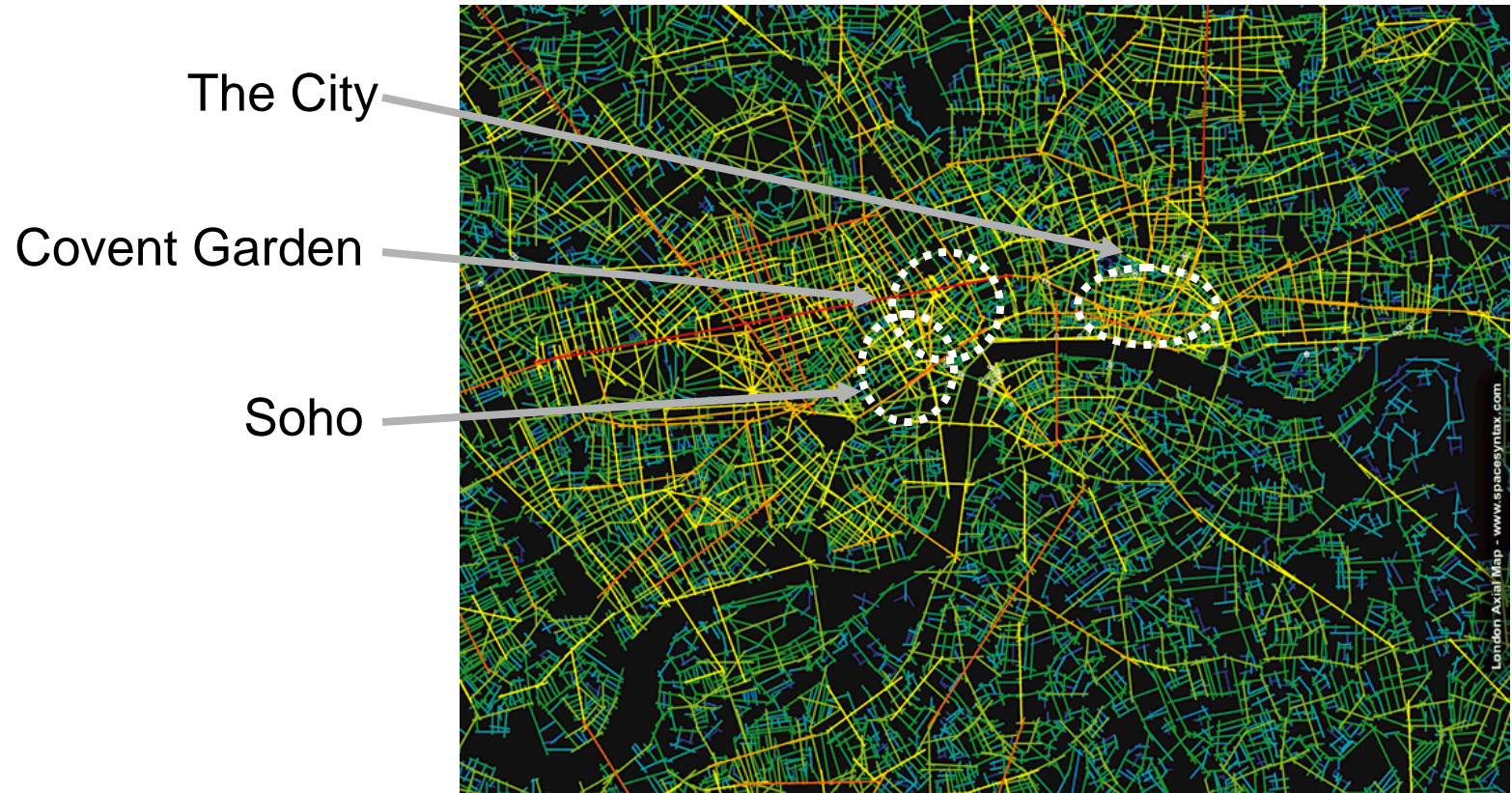
How the traditional city works

- Most large cities are an integrated fabric of smaller “deformed wheels.”
- These integrated areas usually are designated districts—e.g., Soho, The City, Bloomsbury.



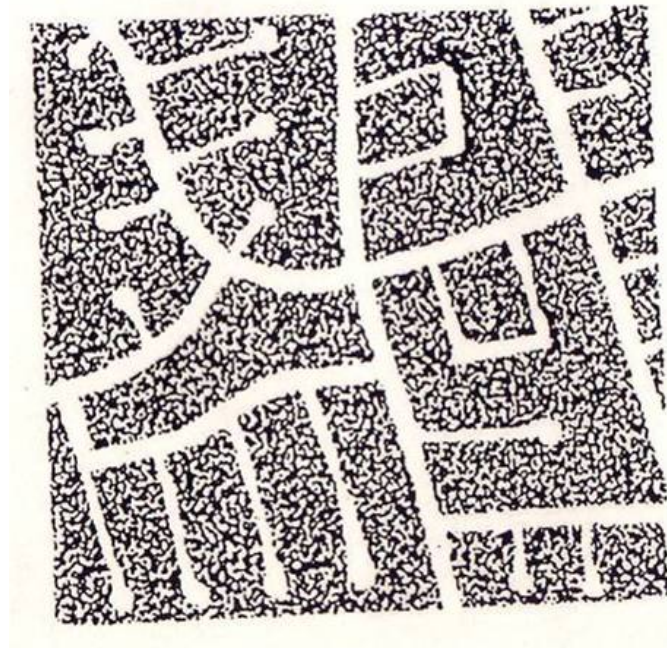
Axial Map, London, 1990s

Axial map & neighborhoods, central London



(The more red the line, the greater the pathway's integration; the more blue the line, the greater the pathway's segregation.)

Conventional suburban patterns today



Eastgate Town Center, Chattanooga, TN (1998-2030)



1998



2030

Designers: Dover, Kohl & Partners,
Miami, Florida

1998



2020



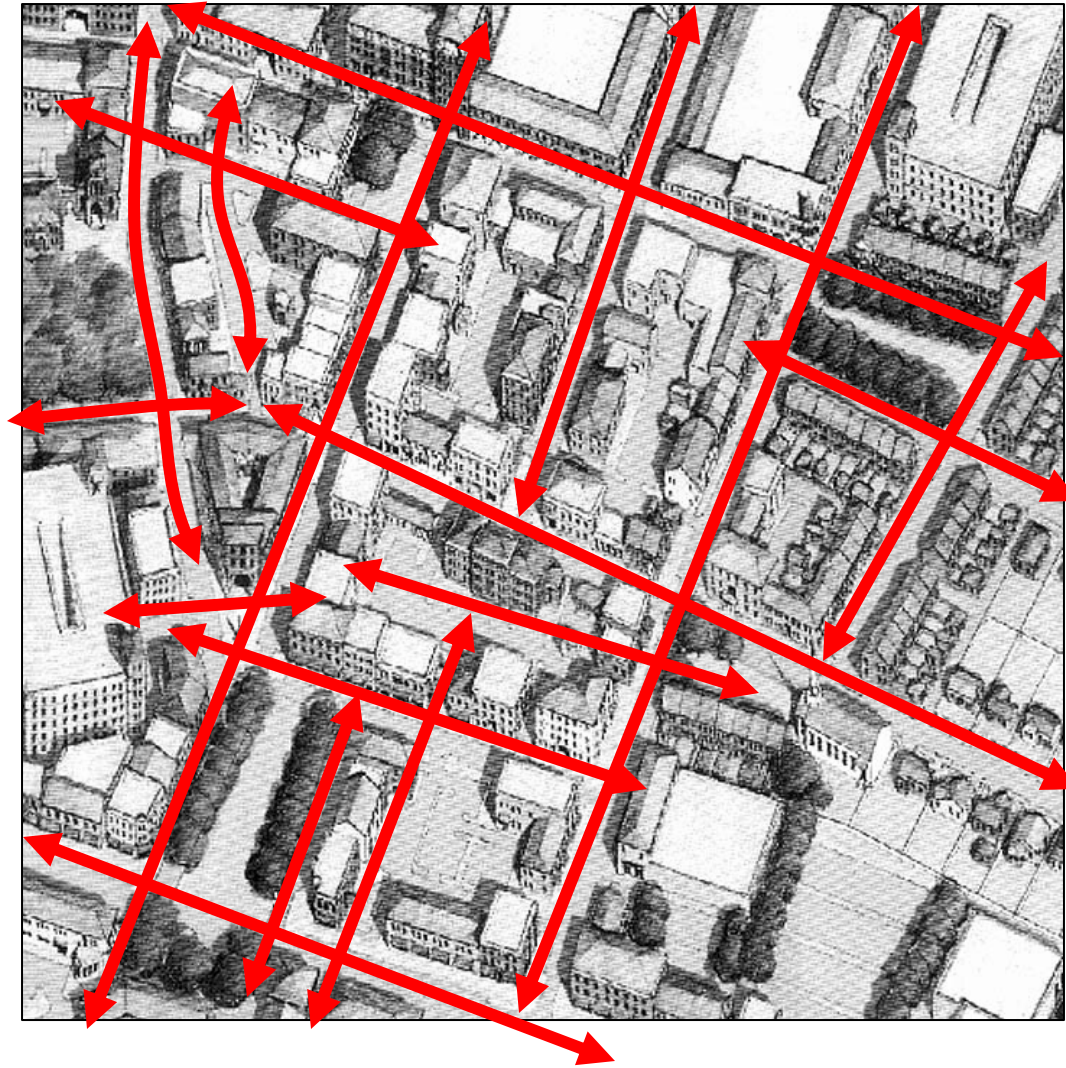
2002



2030



Permeability



Uses

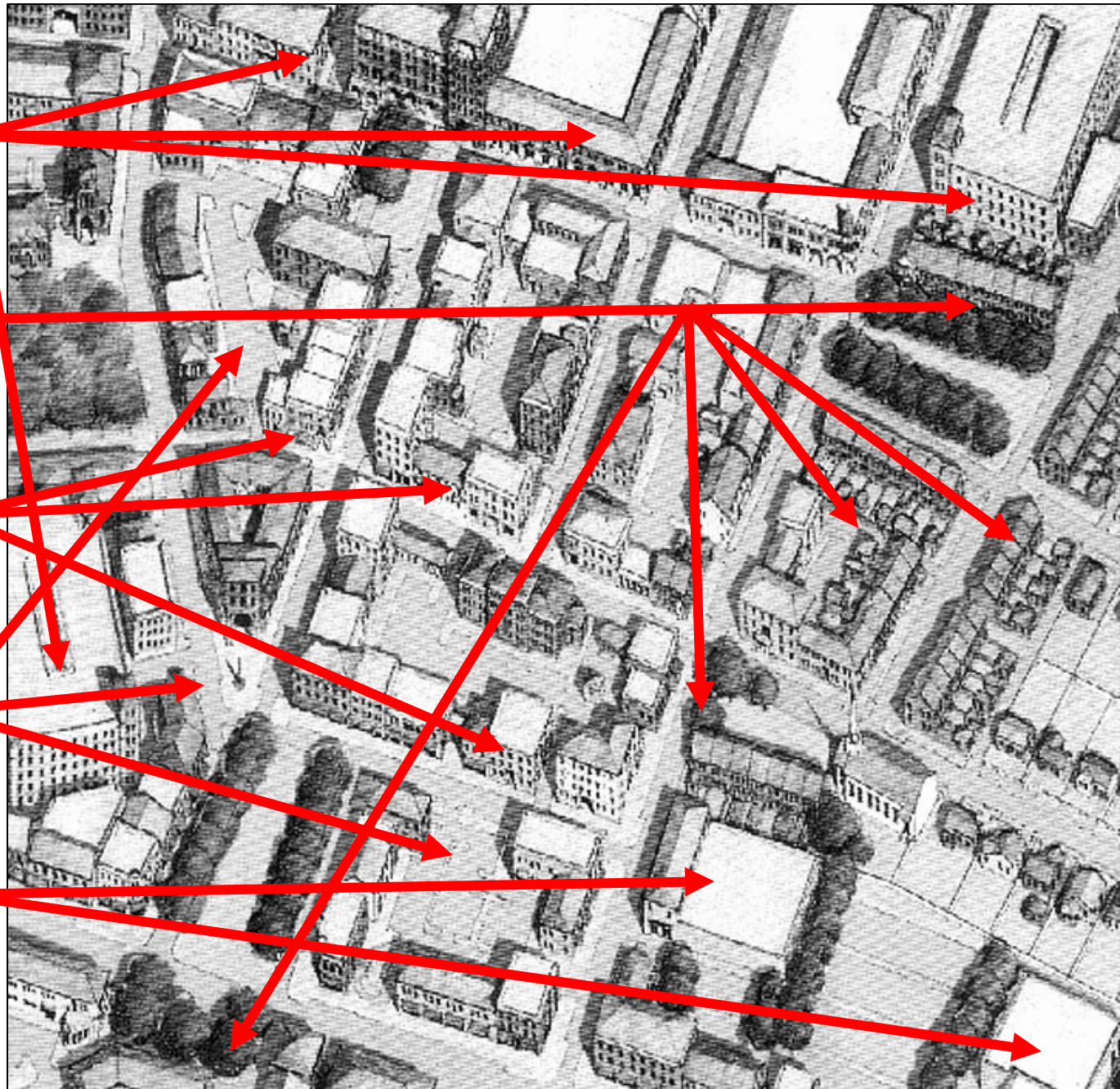
employment

residential

retail

open space

recreational

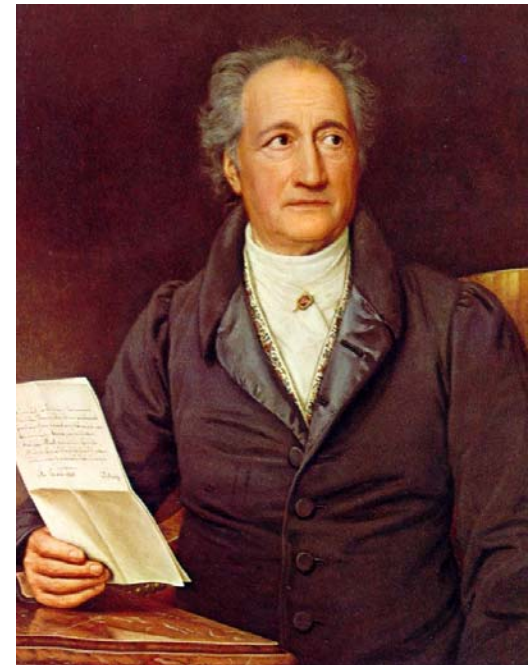


3. A phenomenology of color



Goethe's way of science

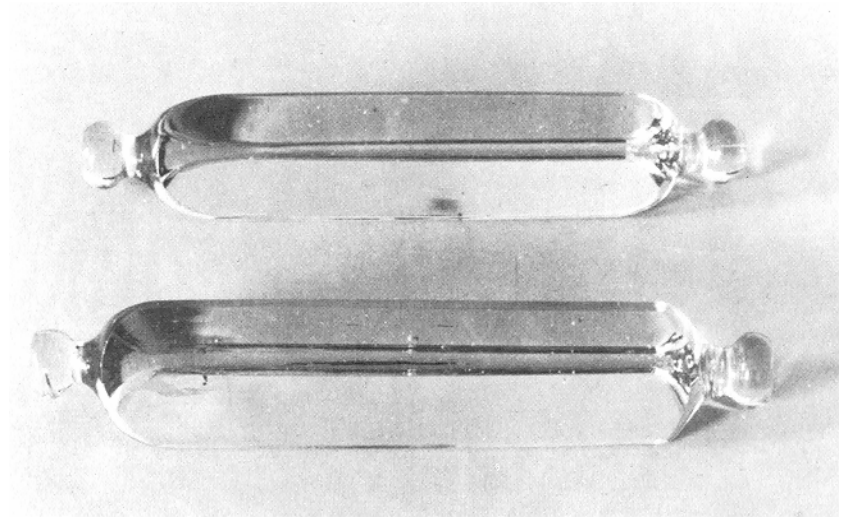
- An intimate firsthand encounter between student & phenomenon.
 - Direct experiential contact coupled with prolonged attentive efforts to look & to see.
 - An early phenomenology of nature.



Johann von Goethe, 1749-1832
(portrait by J. Stieler, 1828).

Goethe's theory of color (1810)

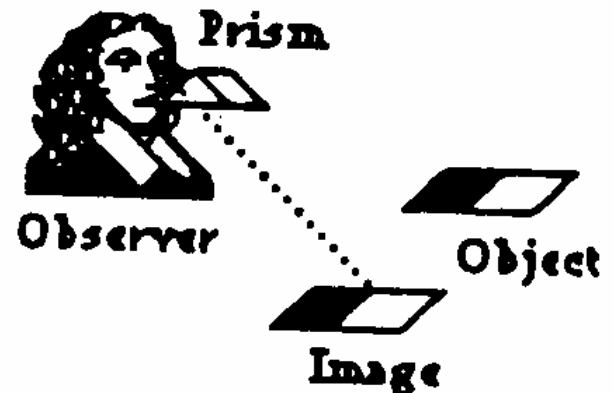
- Provides a phenomenon—the appearance of color—and a set of ordered exercises to probe & better see what color is & how colors are in relationship.



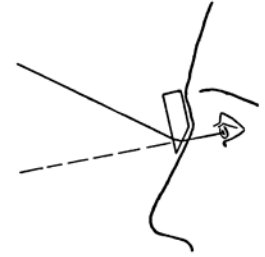
Prisms from Goethe's estate, Weimar

Goethean looking & seeing: Questions to keep in mind

- What do I see?
- What is happening?
- What is this saying?
- What belongs together?
- What remains apart?
- How is this coming to be?
- Is it itself?
- Can I read this in itself?
- How does this belong together with itself?

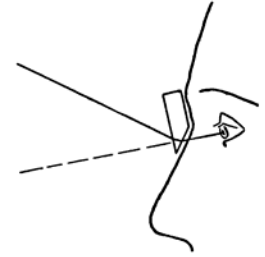


Looking through a prism: Exemplary descriptions



- Black, white, and uniformly pure surfaces show no color through the prism; rather, colors only appear at edges, which can be defined as places of contrast made by darkness & lightness.
- Colors, however, do not appear along all edges; rather, they appear only along edges more or less parallel to the axis of the prism.
 - Usually, the colors at the edges arrange themselves in two different groups: yellow-orange-red & blue-violet.
 - Less frequently, green & magenta appear.

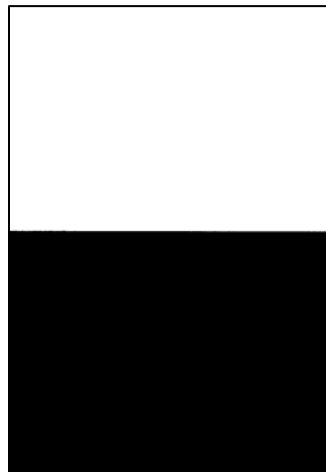
Incorrect descriptions



- “Colors only appear where there is light.”
- “There is a halo of color around all objects.”
- “The prism refracts white light into the color spectrum.”

Cards for prism experiments

- A card divided into black & white portions (card **A**)
- A card with white elongated rectangle surrounded by black (card **B**).
- A card with black elongated rectangle surrounded by white (card **C**).



A



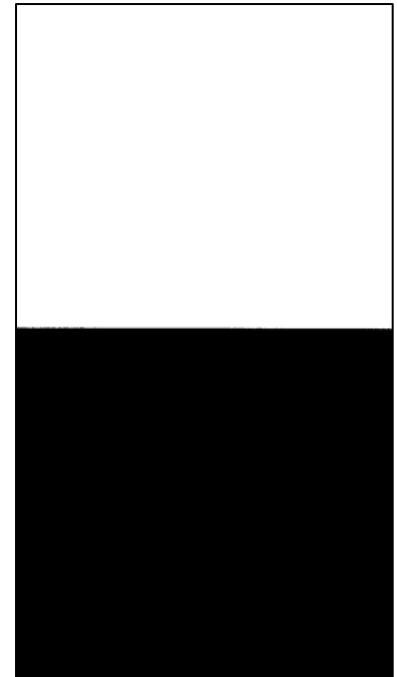
B



C

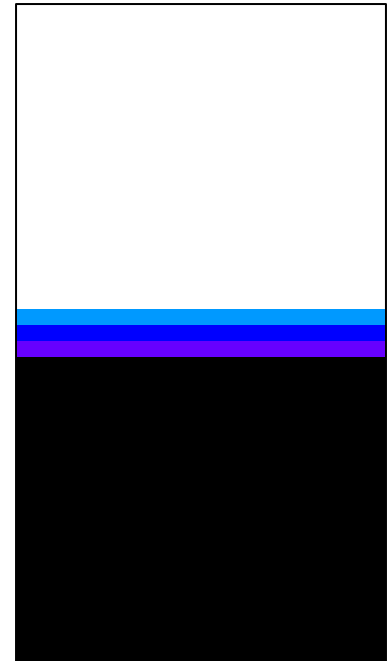
Card A

- Hold the card with the white area above & black below. Locate the card's black-white edge in the prism. What colors appear along the edge? Draw and identify the colors, using colored pencils.



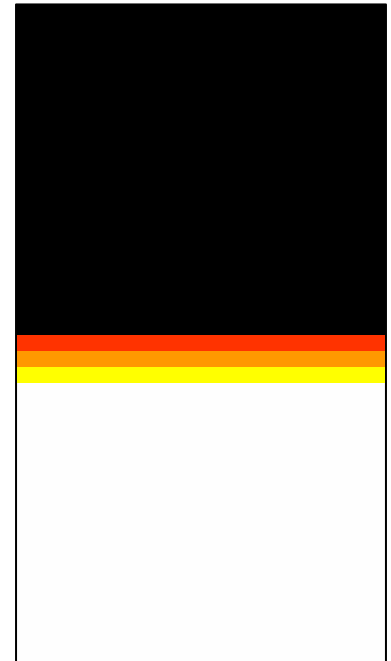
Card A

- If the image we see is displaced by the prism below the actual card, then at the edge we see the darker-edge colors of blue above violet.



Card A reversed

- If we turn the card upside down, we now see something quite different—a set of lighter-edge colors that, from top down, are red-orange & yellow.

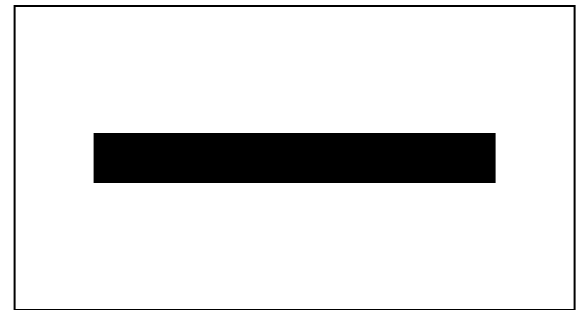


Cards B & C

- Look at either card so that the long axis of the inner rectangle is parallel to the prism axis. Slowly move the card away until it is at an arm's length. As you move the card, observe and describe any color changes. What *new* color appears on each card?



B



C

Card B

- As one moves card **B** farther away toward arm's length, there is a point at which the yellow and blue edges merge, and a vivid **green** appears horizontally so that the original white rectangle is now a band of rainbow.

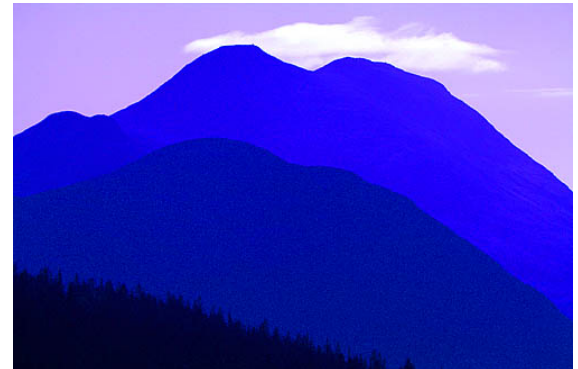


Card C

- As one moves card **C** farther away toward arm's length, there is a point at which the red and violet edges merge, and a vivid ***magenta*** appears horizontally.

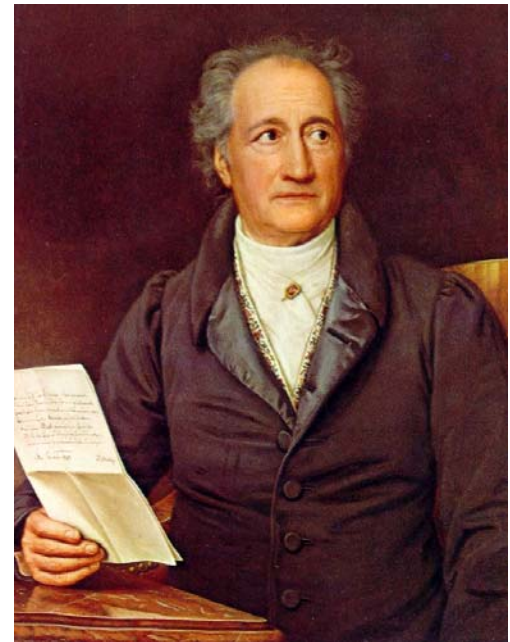


4. Allowing the parts to belong



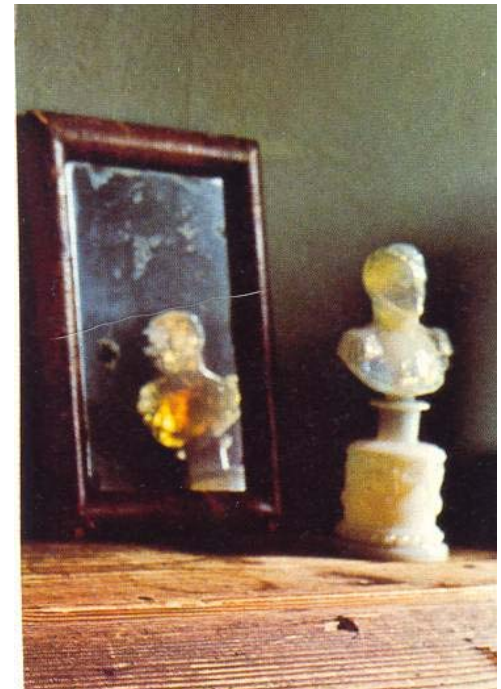
Exact sensorial imagination

- visualizing & thinking the phenomenon concretely & accurately in imagination.
- *“the effect of giving thinking more the quality of perception and sensory observation more the quality of thinking” (Bortoft 1996, p. 42).*



The *ur-phenomenon*

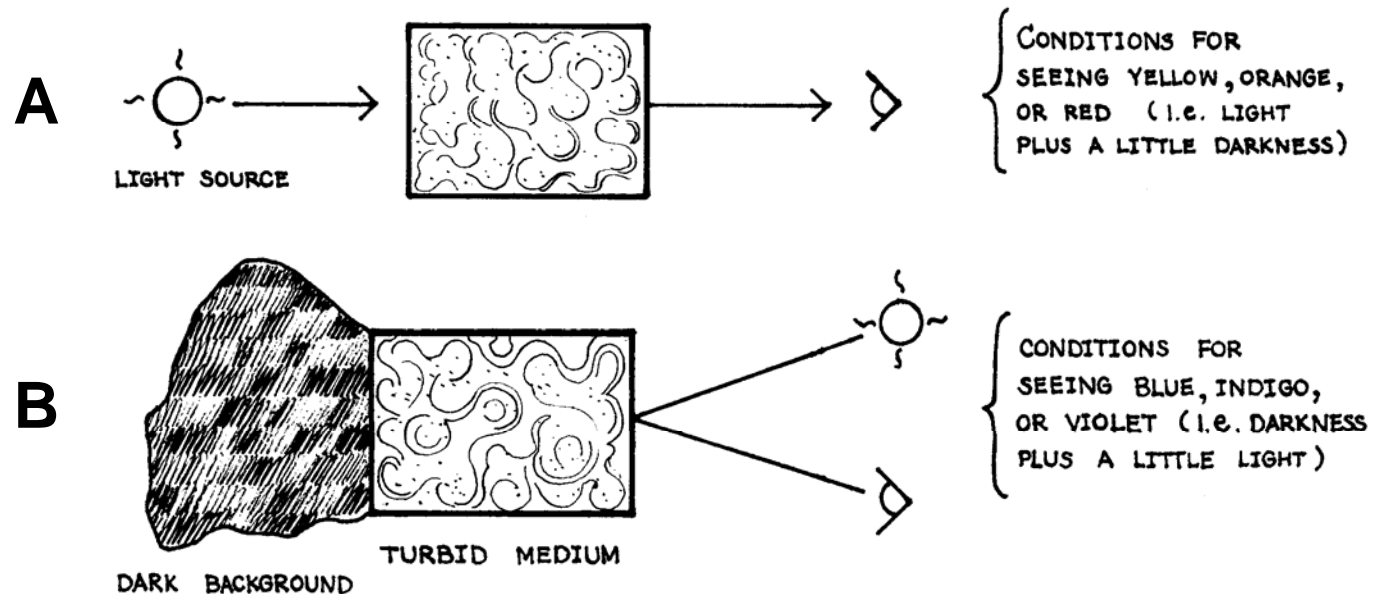
- the deep-down or primal phenomenon that marks out a necessary pattern of relationship.
- For color, the tension between darkness & light—
"the deeds and sufferings of light" (Goethe).



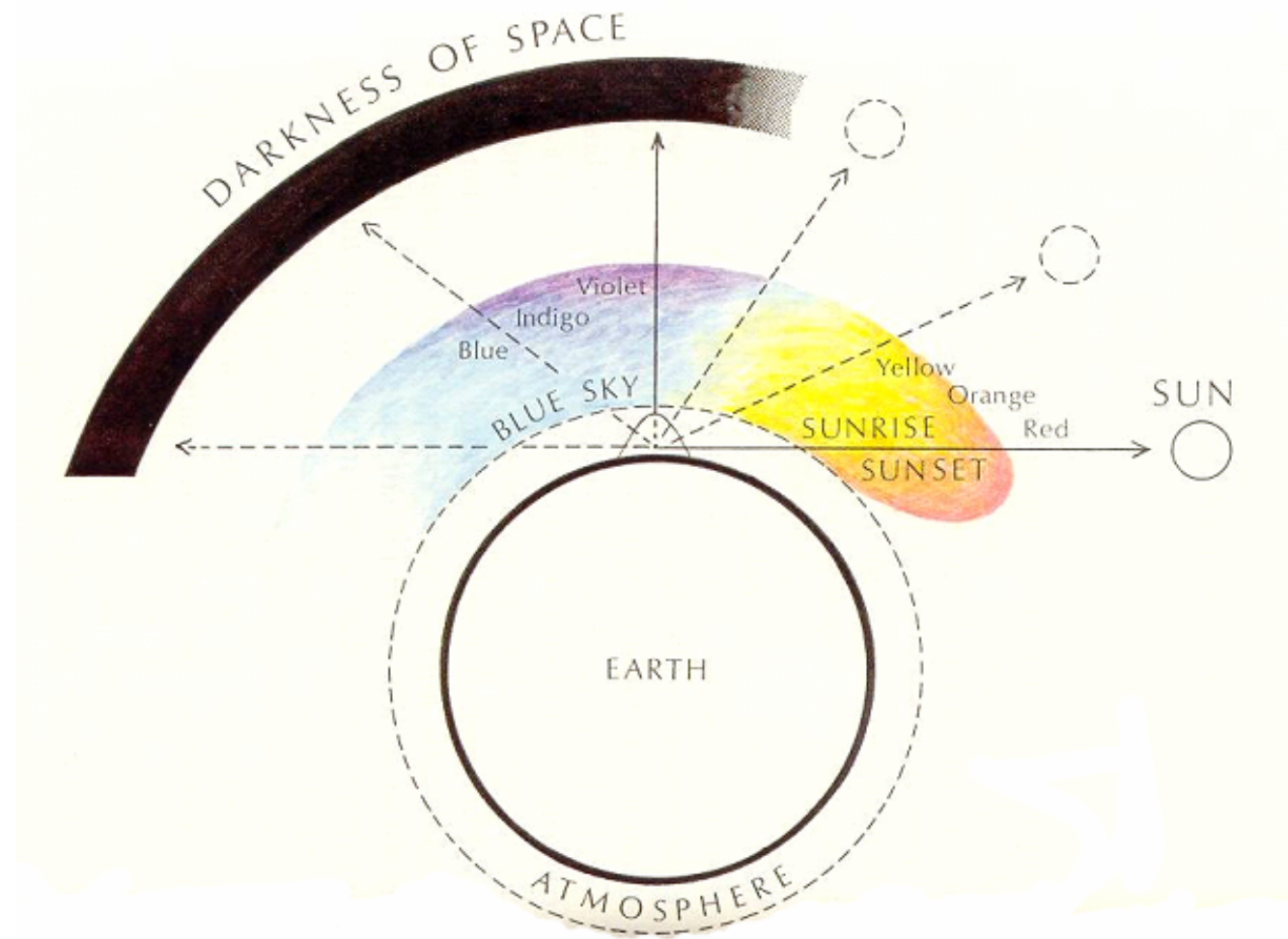
Milk-glass statue, Goethe's estate,
Weimar

The *ur-phenomenon* of color

- In **A**, a semi-transparent medium in front of light generates lighter colors of yellow, orange & red.
- In **B**, the same semi-transparent medium in front of darkness generates darker colors of blue, indigo, & violet.



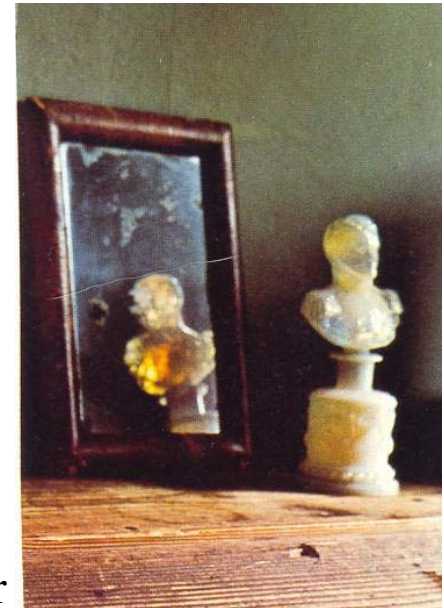
The atmosphere as semi-transparent medium





A science of qualities

- Patterns & connections are not contingent but necessary.
- *“the perception of a relationship [is] a real factor in the phenomenon, instead of being only a mental abstraction added on to what is experienced with the senses” (Bortoft 1996, p. 99).*



Milk-glass statue, Goethe's estate, Weimar

Dwelling within the phenomenon

“Whereas conventional analytical science emphasizes a knowledge of primary qualities—i.e., features of quantity like number, size, and position that can be measured and thereby transformed into a mathematical model—Goethe sought a science of qualities—a method whereby color becomes visible as intelligible within itself—i.e., without some external explanatory agency like ‘angle of refraction’ or ‘wave length’ that lies outside color as color appears as itself.

“Rather, in Goethe’s way of science, colors in everyday experience—e.g., the color edges made by the prism or the changing colors of sun and sky—are now understood to have an intrinsic necessity and therefore are understandable in themselves.

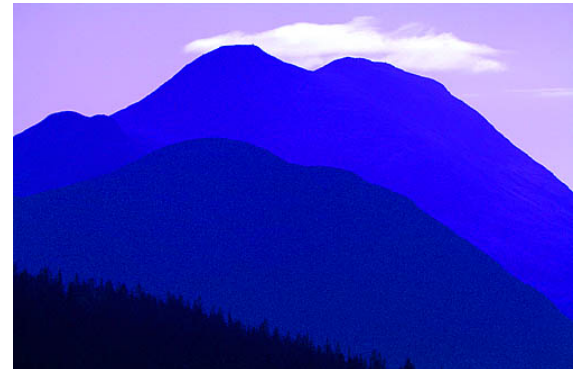
“Goethe’s way of science is one method of encountering qualities by which the natural world remains alive, dynamic, undivided—itself. In short, a science of the wholeness of nature. Said differently, a phenomenology of dwelling within the phenomenon” (Seamon 2003).

Flowforms

- Sculpted, fountainlike vessels by means of which streaming water is brought into rhythmic movement.

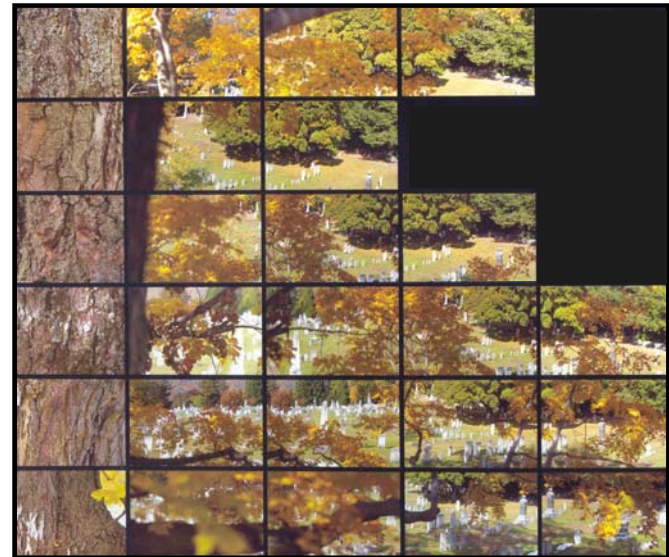


5. The becoming of parts together



Key question restated

What do interconnections, relationships, & environmental wholes of ecology become in a phenomenological perspective?



The hazard of emergence

“The hazard of emergence is such that the whole depends on the parts to be able to come forth, and the parts depend on the coming forth of the whole to be significant instead of superficial. The recognition of a part is possible only through the ‘coming to presence’ of the whole” (H. Bortoft 1996, p. 11).







- Triad of habituality
- Triad of openness



Triad of habituality

- The typical ordinariness & humdrum of everyday life.
- Involves unquestioned repetition & routine.
- Useful change introduced through thoughtful environmental design & policy.



Triad of openness

- Moments of everyday life when one is more alert & alive to the world.
 - Involves heightened encounter.
- Phenomenology & Goethe's way of science as vehicles for facilitating openness.



Triad of openness

- Moments of everyday life when one is more alert & alive to the world.
 - Involves heightened encounter.
- Phenomenology & Goethe's way of science as vehicles for facilitating openness.



Gordon Matta-Clark,
Conical Intersect, 1975

6. Dwelling & phenomenological ecology



Heidegger's *dwelling*

- Sustaining & invoking a mindful familiarity—a sense of “looking after” the things, living beings, places, & situations of one’s world.
- *Appropriation*—i.e., realizing all things have value simply because they exist.
 - “*Appropriation lies in that moment of insight that reveals beings for themselves, the moment in which we know that **this is***” (Relph 1981, p. 186).

Relph's *environmental humility*

- a way of seeing & understanding responsive to the best qualities of the Other.
- Relph's call is for:
“...guardianship, for taking care of things merely because they exist, for tending and protecting them. In this there is neither mastery nor subservience, but there is responsibility and commitment” (Relph 1981, p. 187).





Love—

*“the delicate but total acknowledgement of what is”
(Doris Lessing, 1969, p. 10).*



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