It was the precision of my memory which enabled me to demystify the imaginary quality of the dream: surreal and real became interchangeable metaphors.

The four cubes, as recorded in the dream, form the conceptual, as well as physical foundation for the 'House for Euclid'... The quadrants of a cubic frame, cut at the top and the bottom and perpendicular to its main axis, are each attached to one of the four cubes. While the cubic configuration would appear as the symbolic image of stability of the Euclidean world, this stability could be questioned and transformed at will, and as the central metaphor or real inhabitant watches, the fragments of the Euclidean cube are being tilted, turned, and realigned.

Architecture no longer remains a static construct but signifies the metamorphosis of space and time.

"House for Euclid"
Raimund Abraham
VI

The Lure of the Labyrinth
Human Perception and Aesthetic Values in Historic Architectural Design
What is the mighty labyrinth— the earth,
But a wild maze the moment of our birth?
Still as we life pursue the maze extends,
Nor find we where each winding purlieu ends;
Crooked and vague each step of life we tread,
Unseen the danger, we escape the dread!
But with delight we through the labyrinth range,
Confused we turn, and view each artful change—
Bewildered, through each wild meander bend
Our wandering steps, anxious to gain the end;
Unknown and intricate, we still pursue
A certain path, uncertain of the clue...

British Magazine
(1747)
Human life is by its very nature a maze, a place of illusions, lures, dark invitations, false and true exits. Some exits are entrances into even more challenging or frightening labyrinths. These mysteries are an inevitable and essential part of our lives. Man must have a balance between anxiety and security, unknown and known. While the familiarity of life's experiences protect us, we need to have a sudden awareness of our uncertainty. We should not be afraid of our uncertainties, but explore them, as they are the source that causes us to feel variety within our surroundings. We must experience differences, continuity and discontinuity, complexity and simplicity in order to find meaning through our lives, and finally to be able to intellectualize the world through a sensitive understanding of ourselves.

The silent communication between the environment and ourselves provokes emotions that are not always easily identified. However, this dialogue has a soft and steady effect upon us through everyday experience. Then it seems that a primary way to understand architecture is through the emotions that it evokes within ourselves. For this reason, I believe that there is value in aesthetic experience. Architecture should express qualities that touch our senses and play with our minds.

Because of our memories and images, a delightful air of romance surrounds the whole subject of labyrinths. However, this allure is more than a whimsical sentiment. As aesthetic meaning in built form, the labyrinth is a tangible example of the use of architectural elements to create essential feelings of anticipation, mystery, and illusion. Unending passages, secret niches, shadowy windings provide the physical stimulus, which involves feelings of fun, fear, intrigue,
helplessness, hope, perplexity, horror, or anxiety. It is this emotional perception that is the primary reward in aesthetic experience. This need to emotionally understand the environment inherently provides a goal for the user. In turn, this initial emotional reaction creates the desire to intellectually understand the situation. Our intrigue, even our fear in the labyrinth impels us to discover it. This intellectual perception provides a reward as the means of resolving the complexity of the architectural environment. While the essence of the labyrinth is in the movement it evokes and the perplexity it evokes, it is its outward form, its delineating stones and hedges that conceive this essence. The architectural elements create those mysterious views of half-concealed windings which keep us alive with anticipation. The labyrinth, thus, can serve as a metaphor for perhaps painful, but necessary or unavoidable, experience. "A labyrinth, then, is a quest for a mode of urgent examination or perilous exploration." (Gutierrez, p. 19) Figuratively, the encounter can be seen as a life-enhancing rite. This rite, however, demands a willingness to explore the darknesses, and that of course is seldom easy. But the results could lead to more control by individuals over their own lives.

Esteemed as a survival of a romantic age or as a mere plaything for children, the labyrinth is considered a folly of the past. Perhaps the labyrinth was meant to be "ironical, playing with the concepts of uselessness and excess and even madness," but there is something to be learned from its very dramatic success. (Archer, p. 10) Historically, the labyrinth tells an exciting story of the "unknown" in architecture. Perhaps the maze may be understood by considering its mythical aspects and its early manifestations.

Although intricate in form, the labyrinth is a spiral. It is believed that the spiral order running through nature and science, through mysticism and art is
a representation of infinity and all its complexities. Through the three stages of knowledge: physical, emotional, and intellectual, the spiral process makes ourselves a reality. On the level of everyday experience, the labyrinth, as a piece of architecture, enhances these perceptions. We know ourselves as human beings, therefore we design for ourselves. It is then more important to feel architecture than to know about architecture. Only in relationship to man is it that architecture has any real meaning, as man has a need to derive meaning from life and his surroundings. (Yanez, p. 4) "The expanding spiral that creates and protects the centre, and the contracting spiral which dissolves it, are both concepts implicit in the labyrinth... Entry and dissolution occur only under the right conditions: only with the knowledge of the way." (Purce, p. 63)

It finally took an age of reason for us to discover the marvelous properties of this folly. Despite our formal network of technical analysis and definition, we still cannot explain everything. There is a desire and a need for a language of forms that will at once convey structure, substance, and feeling. We have realized that we cannot establish a set of criteria for design so objective and complete that it constitutes an exact prescription for production. In art there will always remain some part that is personal and unpredictable.

The study of the labyrinth has become a link between an actual historical, architectural folly and the essence of the unknown, of mystery. Such playful extravagance demands attention. The appeal of the labyrinth illustrates the complexity and contradiction that occurs with the juxtaposition of "what an image is and what it seems." (Bacon, p. 32) As Edmund N. Bacon explains, "One of the prime purposes of architecture is to heighten the drama of living." (Bacon, p. 33). Spaces should be infused with a spirit which relates to the activities that take place in it and which stirs the senses and emotions of the people who use it. As the labyrinth
demonstrates, stimulating the effort to understand increases the reward of understanding. Architecture should embody the features and essence to enhance our emotions. Even objects and images we recognize may be used in subtle variations, like the imagery of a dream, to create a dialogue with or expression of something inside ourselves. For although a house may be adorned with towers and battlements, or pinnacles and flying buttresses, it should still maintain the character of a house of the age, country, and culture in which it is erected.

The wants and needs of today's designs easily lend themselves to complex and rich architecture; architecture that poses a challenge to the user. As the following example shows, architecture's power to move us now is the same as it has been throughout history. "The burial mounds and ceremonial causeways of ancient Egypt, its surfaces and engaged columns, its passageways and shadowy niches, all intrigue and touch us in much the same way they must have intrigued and touched their builders. Even if we put completely from our minds whatever we may know of Egyptian religion, Egyptian economy, and Egyptian society - even then these constructions will not cease to speak to us, and their language is the eternal language of architecture. We may or may not be aware that beyond a pair of great pylons lay a sacred precinct to which only a pharoah and his priests were granted admission; no matter, for the pylons themselves still communicate vividly their role of marking the entrance to uncommon ground" (Matthews, p. 195) The lessons of the labyrinth teach us that in architecture there is some manner or characteristic or relationship, no matter how vague or subjective, that is attached only to aesthetic quality. Designers must provide this catalyst for the unpredictable.
VII

Beyond the Labyrinth:
A Retreat from Reality
We shall not cease from exploration; and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started, and know the place for the first time.

T.S. Eliot
Everyday images teach us
the lessons of the labyrinth:

Ivy-covered walls; a brick path sprinkled with sunlight;
cobblestone courtyards hidden from the narrow alleys;
African violets and an overgrown trellis;
alcoves;
cloisters;
and
colonnades;
an outdoor cafe;
barges and piers; balconies and baths;
sidewalks with signs, lights, and trees;
entrances and exits through gateways, stairways, windows and doors;
canals and rivers of green water and stone;
orchards of apples and fields of poppies;
marble and glass and gates of iron;
promenades and pergolas,
piazza and peristyle,
columns and capitols upon ceremonial grandstands;
galleries for waiting, shopping, and strolling;
passages, bridges, gazebos, and meadows;
squares, chateau, villa, and statues;
castles and cottages,
snow-covered mountains,
islands of water,
grids of street trees,
and the views from all these places to the next.
There is magic in the ambiguity of nature confused with art and art with nature. Illusion exists somewhere between nature and art, between landscape and architecture. And yet this illusion is reality. Real places to be lived in, places to be seen from a distance; places that are a state of mind. These places are remembered as isolated images, islands in our conscious. A place of the imagination, a chimerical dream. Islands of delight, or islands of desolution? Paradise or cemetery? Pleasure garden or exile? Memory or oblivion? Splendid isolation or insular loneliness?

And then these islands become ordered. In either the picturesque or formal sense, order is orientation, not alienation. Order includes variety; reason leads to fantasy. There is solace in the clarity and illusion of order, when elements relate to each other. The juxtaposition of nature and art then becomes ceremonial and cerebral, grand and glorious, pretentious and personal.

The darkened outline of an opening draws her inside. Like a labyrinth, atmospheres appear layer by layer. The scenario unfolds as she spirals through a sequence of spaces. Expanding and contracting, reality becomes the present, the past retreats, and the future unfolds. Perspectives open up in different directions, allowing her not only to see, but to imagine what she cannot see. The fragments of the landscape collect to define space. Her senses are intrigued as she touches the surfaces, hears the voices, and sees the silhouettes. As she circles up into the tower, curiosity draws her on toward the center. And looking back, she finds herself through the memory of her experience.
The ritual begins...
Across the open green, a dark opening is visible in the side of the mountain. Passing through the cavern, she feels walls of rough stone with the dampness of the cool air. There are sounds of water dripping into pools. The darkness is suddenly punctuated by showers of light on the displays of the exhibit. The sphericity of the space feels endless. Further inside, the spinning continues; the way to exit is no longer obvious.
Following the stream, she again recognizes the center. Finding her way from enclosed darkness, she is lost in the vast, open air. Two walls meet in a corner, the ceiling opens to the sky. A sacrificial altar is suspended between water and fire. Three stairways appear along one wall. One leads deep down into the earth, the mother. The second leads out into the fields of produce, the child. And the last leads up toward the sun, the light, the father. She senses the primal union of these elements. Satisfied from nourishment, she is led through the stream to be cleansed. And finally into an enclosing darkness, seduced toward a sliver of light, she sleeps.
The outline of the tower appears layer by layer as the sun rises above the horizon. Anxiously, she climbs toward the ultimate discovery. This tower of enlightenment is emphasized by a vertical axis of light conceived from the sun. This light is a bridge between earth and sky. The sun, the symbol of understanding and intellect, the source of life itself.
Deep within the earth, she enters the crypt. Here, the beginning is the end; the exit becomes the entrance.
Heavy stone walls enclose a grid of large steel boxes. The voids echo of the old, the dead, the past. She wanders through the endless cavities of empty gray, ignorant of the life within each cell. For they contain the past, the seed of the future.
Next within the tower, she reaches the library. The volumes are symbols of all past and all present intellect. Once she breaks from the circular hall, she is lost forever in the collections radiating toward the central enlightenment. This maze may only be broken by reaching the goal, the attainment of knowledge.
Finally, she reaches Grandma's attic. Up a steep, narrow stairway, she is enclosed by walls rising high above her. Her perspective is lengthened. The climb is difficult. A thin, strong slit of light draws her onward and upward. She discovers the openings are the celestial quadrants; their light melting the corners. Perched on a tiny alcove, in a place of warmth and light surrounded by empty shadows, she is able to look triumphantly out over her journey with recollections of the past and visions of the future.
We put thirty spokes together and call it a wheel;
But it is on the space where there is nothing
that the utility of the wheel depends.

We turn clay to make a vessel;
But it is on the space where there is nothing
that the utility of the vessel depends.

We pierce doors and windows to make a house;
and it is on these spaces where there is nothing,
that the utility of the house depends.

Therefore, just as we take advantage of what is,
we should recognize the utility
of what is not.

Lao Tse
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