



From Geometric Nature to Natural Geometry: Bodies We Create for Ourselves

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Theoretical Study

Abstract

One of the fundamental questions, which most of us have throughout childhood and until adulthood – and of course is usually forgotten or sometimes passes our mind very quickly –, is: "where do I end?" or "where does the world begin?" Perhaps you have never asked such questions explicitly; perhaps this question seems eccentric to you. Nevertheless, in the following discussion, you will surely remember that you have some relevant experiences.

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Introduction

When you walk along the river, you perceive that which is outside of your skin as outside, city, and the other and that which is inside of your skin is perceived as inside, self, and I. However, when you get into your car, you carry this relation into your car's boundaries, and when you enter your house, the walls somehow become your skin. Of course, being in these temporal skins, we sometimes return to our original state and assume the original boundaries of our skin. When you sit at the table to eat something, the dish in front of you is regarded as a part of the outside world, but the fork and spoon you use to take the food to your mouth are extensions of your body.

These body boundaries alter not only

when in connection with tools and spaces but with family, group, age, and sex belongings. This in turn changes our perception of inside, outside, self, and the other.

The systemic approach to health explores the strange and multiple dynamism of these boundaries and associates the health of human systems to the clarity and fluidity of these boundaries, to being aware of them, having the insight that house, city, and nature are not spaces for us, but are our topological bodies embedded within each other, and that these physical bodies can be either healthy or unhealthy, lively or sluggish, invigorating or tiring.

Cities and houses are our architectural bodies whose coordination with our physical and ecological bodies guarantees our survival and health.

Architecture involves the experience of

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"being-in-the world" as if the sense of being in the world had been incorporated and created cities and houses. This is the sense which was the beginning of our awareness and self-consciousness; the sense which was given rise to by the fact that a being emerged from the soul of nature who could see its self from outside of itself and could refer to itself to show that he/she exists and is in-the world.

But gradually, over time, man's excessive focus on "being-in-the world" and forgetting other aspects of being – that is, "being from the world" and one's splendid and wonderful feeling-full of solemn respect- of "being with the world" made man a spoiled, irreverent, and stubborn being who sees nature neither as his mother nor a divine gift, but his heritage or right. His/her connection with the world has gradually become more goal-oriented, authoritarian, and ruinous; this relation was due to his alienation from his ecological bodies. Nature, which was animate and intelligent-natured in our ancestors' view and all its phenomena were respected, has now become a mass of raw materials without intelligence, which has to be exploited and become dominated by human being. But, the dominance of which human being are we talking about?

We are talking about the one who has emerged from human-made tools and social systems; the one who has lost his connection with earth and heaven and abuses his bodies; the one who merely increases his desires without seeking to increase his understanding of being, the other, and his self or at least without authentic desire to increase his fulfillments and bliss.

Evidently, the biggest problem of such a human being is depression and its consequent numerous somatic, psychological, and social disorders, the many kinds of addictions, communicative disorders, job problems, crimes,

Prior to manifestation of depression in the form of hopelessness, worthlessness, and desperateness, it emerges as one's loosened I-self connection, as Kierkegaard refers to it.

Where we cannot establish a coordinated and dynamic communication among our various bodies and where the connection between architectural, physical, and ecological bodies loosens, cities become messy and ignorant of body and nature, and the tools are made based on the benefit they have for economic systems rather than for the sustainable development of happiness.

Soul of the place

There is no need to be an architect or an environmental psychologist to understand that the soul of our cities is so disturbed. We neither see any ergonomic, aesthetic, semantic, and structural harmony, nor see sufficient and appropriate context. Except a few constructs in some places and corners of the city, the mere dominance of wandering merchandizing, which seems to have no ideal beyond gaining more and sooner benefits, is observed in cities. Visual manifestations of this idea are disharmonious and even horrifying constructs or – under the best conditions – harmonious ones which are inconsistent with other biopsychosocial dimensions. They are mostly the result of using modern materials, which are fashionable in the market and are reproduced inappropriately due to blind competitions. In the most appropriate way, they create superficial aesthetics only with the aim of mere visual enchantment – like a histrionic personality – while their coldness rejects all people.

We have to remember that our architectural body is not for showing off, but for being, to be comfortable and in harmony with it and in it, and because it facilitates our psychosomatic functions, and to grow into it.

A body between body and the world

From the above brief introduction, we have understood that when we are talking about corporeal connection with house, city, and nature, we do not just mean paying attention to the superficial appearance of these bodies. From a systemic point of view, when we are

talking about boundaries and bodies, we are referring to a bodily connection like the one we have with our bodies. Such a connection is established neither by mere emphasis on mechanical functions nor by considering histrionic manifestations. Rather, it is possible through being and living in/with these bodies. In this way, such a connection gradually becomes more refined and coordinated.

This is our architectural body which can either connect us to nature, being, and the self, make our life meaningful, and help us move through our daily doings in a subtle, coordinated, and meaningful manner, or can always make inter/intra/transpersonal communication into reductive encounters by harsh and incompatible boundaries merely in a goal-oriented manner and make eyes and hearts distant from each other and loosen meaning bonds:

"Buildings and cities provide the horizon for the understanding and confronting of the human existential condition. Instead of creating mere objects of visual seduction, architecture relates, mediates and projects meanings ...Profound architecture makes us experience ourselves as complete embodied and spiritual beings." (Pallasmaa, 2012, p. 13).

Our cosmic body

It seems that the word ecosystem or urban area as the spaces that have surrounded us cannot explain our deep and complicated relationships. Today, everyone understands that our harms to nature due to our avarice and incaution are threatening our life, and therefore, environmental movements are no longer recognized as the sensationalism of some educated and sentimental people or those who are against the progression of society. However, what we have to understand and teach our children is that before our harms to nature reflect to us, cause other destructive events, and create some biological problems for us, our psychological and ontological detachment from nature will lead to the disconnection of our bonds with our shared body and this will consequently

lead to destruction of minds and culture. This common extended body was known as mother earth, tree of life, or Spiritus by our ancestors and, today, theoreticians call it biosphere, Gaia, or semiosphere. It is an intermingled network of living, self-organizing, and evolutionary connections, which behaves as a single system. Of course, we have imprisoned our self-consciousness inside our skin boundaries to the extent that we do not realize this harmony and dance in life, the reason for our discontents and inconsistencies.

School of nature

Today, many pioneering universities in developed countries have developed extensive programs for increasing ecological literacy and sustainable development in children and many of such programs have been widely incorporated into educational systems. The aim of such programs are one's psychological connection with nature, overcoming self-alienation, learning natural orders, and understanding how life has maintained itself through networking, cooperation, and correlation in the course of four milliard years that have led to a qualitative and quantitative order which has to be obeyed by each system for its survival.

Ecological literacy not only plays an important role in the ability of modern citizens of the world to communicate with their society and nature, but is also a very efficient foundation for our biopsychosocial health. Understanding networks and life cycles, solar energy, cooperation, diversity, and dynamic balance are six-fold principles of ecological literacy:

1. Networks: Living systems nest inside other living systems in all hierarchies of life – networks inside networks. Their boundaries are not separating ones, but identity boundaries. All living systems communicate with each other and share resources over their boundaries.

2. Life cycles: All living systems need to exchange matter and energy with their environment so that they can survive.

Although all living systems continuously produce remains, a biological system does not produce any useless remains; the remains of one species become the food of another. In this way, matter circulates in a living network.

3. Solar energy: Energy from the sunlight is converted into chemical energy through photosynthesis in plants. This energy moves ecological cycles on.

4. Cooperation: The transactions of energy and resources are sustained by cooperation. Life has not survived through fighting, but through cooperation, partnership, and networking.

5. Diversity: Ecological systems obtained the features of self-improving and stability due to their richness and the complexity of their ecological networks. The more their biological diversity is, the more self-improving they are.

6. Dynamic balance: An ecological system is a flexible and ever-circulating network. Its flexibility is the outcome of multiple feedback cycles, which keep the system in a dynamic balance. No individual variable reaches its maximum, but rather all variables revolve around their favorable values (Capra, 2002).

Perhaps talking about ecological literacy seems very untimely in our consumer culture in which productive and proactive values are deprecated, showing off and competition are deemed worthier than comfort, development, and health, and technology and management are increasingly and blindly progressing. However, the current dangers that have affected and are threatening our biopsychological health make each one of us contribute in our own way to the resolution of this crisis. I call this ecological literacy the "A to Z of natural body"; this is the body that is now ill and, obviously, has made all other bodies ill. From this perspective, systemic thought and understanding of communicative networks, that is, the principle that leads to our bodily understanding of our relation with our environment and the understanding that we

are not separated from, but in relation with other members, are organs of one body, and respecting the other (other human beings and nature) is in fact respecting ourselves.

A disorder in life cycles is actually like a physiological disorder in our organs and cooperation means our coordinated behavior with our extended bodies; since diversity in natural temperaments and characteristics provides us with a wider range of possibilities in our experience and life, and to exit our hard shell of ego-centrism and participate in the harmonious dance with other human beings, human and natural societies are the condition for an authentic life and being/becoming the self.

Therefore, we have to look back to revise structure and the effect of our behaviors and setting. And, if we find out that they are inappropriate and incongruent and are not aligned with the several-milliard-year order of life, we have to destroy what we have made and construct something new since health is nothing more than being aligned with life – this wonderful generating order.

Liberty of constraints

As it was explained above, bodily understanding of the world does not disturb boundaries that give us identity, responsibility, and freedom. If it did, it would lead to madness and depersonalization. What we mean is coordination of will with life through replacing hard structural boundaries of modern knowledge and technology with fluent functional ones. It is seemingly a paradoxical principle in systemic biology that freedom of a system increases by increased coordination between higher and lower systems and increased constraints. However, our observations show that this paradox is the foundation for the consistency of living systems with each other.

Many may consider that ecological considerations are hindering, limit their possibilities, stop their imaginary plans, and slow down work procedures. These are the

results of the bored and hasty mind of the modern human being who is entangled in his/her hyper-individualism.

Systemic thought teaches us that more possibilities do not necessarily mean more freedom since freedom is realized when biopsychosocial characteristics of the human being have the chance for emergence and sustainable and coordinated development. Many times, we have experienced that more possibilities are overwhelming, and thus, lead to dispersion and disturbance of our bioenergy, and consequently, cause us to miss our opportunities. All of us have experienced being so busy with the imaginary features of a possibility or idea that we completely ignore the favorable quality we intended on achieving. For instance, the image of a house in the picture, movie, fantasy, or somewhere else has haunted our mind to the extent that we do not think about its appropriateness as a house in the periphery or climate, or the comfort and joy we have to gain. It is no surprise that despite expressing our happiness and showing it off to others, we do not feel well.

Sometimes we only find our freedom in the actualization of the picture we have made in our mind, not the quality that was our favorable intention. Therefore, we trap and harm ourselves by cathecting on actualizing that picture without regarding its time-space and psychocultural coordination and fitness.

Many of us have had such experiences as selecting our university major, job, or house; the selections that seemed so beautiful and lively in the emptiness and abstractness of mind space, when realized in the context of our communicative network, turned out to be inconsistent and incompatible. These incompatibilities are not necessarily due to the untimely nature or defects of those possibilities and opportunities.

A subtle and psychological element is required in order for possibilities to create freedom. Wise men in our culture called this element "courtesy". Courtesy means

compliance with the wise appropriateness of time-space-mind-culture, which tells us how and where to use our bioenergy so that our communicative extended bodies are not hurt, and consequently, do not harm ourselves or others.

Courtesy means listening to the rhythm of time-space, since every place may have varying order and rhythm, and the order of the air, light, water, and earth vary in different moments. The enigma of this rhythm and order is only revealed for those whose bodies are open to it; it tells you how to take timely steps, and if you want to build something, it tells you in what rhythm you can grow it from the earth. It talks to you in a way as if it had always existed there, but had only recently emerged.

Courtesy is making dance with the rhythm of mind-culture that is currently flowing in the here and now and incorporating the wandering fantasy in place; not like the impertinent deaf who suddenly start to sing off tempo in a subtle and great symphony. Being off tempo alone is sufficient for creating ugliness, but to also be out of tune significantly adds to the problem.

Present-day medical and psychological knowledge coupled with natural and social sciences try to understand these morphogenic fields; the fields that give form to the stream of events and things, and change mountains, houses, tools, and human beings into different shapes and create beautiful, tuned, healthy, or ugly, inconsistent, and ill morphs.

The blind movement of increasing production and powerful movement of universalization have disturbed not only our understanding of these fields, but also the fields themselves to a great extent. For this reason, we understand less proportion between architecture, clothes, means, language, and behavior compared to previous times as a homogeneous and coordinated context. In many present-day Eastern and Western cultures, we see how they have repaired some lost parts of this

time-psychocultural context or even recreate it in a new, but coordinated way to reestablish their connection with their own condition.

As when disobeying rules of construct, which is related to the earth and leads to not constructing the construct or its collapse and severe consequences for health and life, not responding to comprehensive morphogenic forces leads to non-endurance and fundamental difficulties in building, maintaining, and quality of health of residents and even by-passers. The effect of this morphic and energetic inconsistency on the field of city and nature causes chaos on lifeworlds and inconsistency in the course of life.

Consciousness flow in matter

Every form directs the stream of matter-energy-information-consciousness in a specific way and gives form to it. Moreover, the forms themselves are some forms of energy since various energies are nothing more than vibrations with various forms. Houses, automobiles, or bridges in fact slow the vibrations within a longer time span. Bodily understanding of the world causes these vibrations to flow through our body and causes us to understand that being-in-the world is not a topological relation, but a morphic-energetic one, which causes the world to flow in us and us in the world and forms us in the world and the world in us.

This relation between the world and us may seem eccentric, fanciful, and impossible to you, and its realization in social life utopian and far from vital and everyday issues around us. Nevertheless, I should say that not only has such a humanistic and meaning-oriented attitude been employed in some modern, developed cities but it also guides matter-energy-information-consciousness toward human being's evolution and development (see human design cities); however, some parts of a city, where visualization of the order of mind-time-space flows, has still remained in our

memory and the body of our cities.

Through research and deep and wonderful symbology of /Siosepol/ (thirty-three bridge), and phenomenological contemplation on this ancient construct, I tried, in the book "one bridge, 33 contemplations", to show how this relation with being, nature, and culture has been established. Surprisingly, the wonderful structure and musical harmonies of this ancient construct will be an aspiration for our own future city.

Disregarding the other excellent instances of organic and live city-building of that era, the coordinated psychological, sociological, ecological, and ontological functions of this bridge are sufficient as a model for constructing a city.

I also tried in this book to show how the philosophy of illumination has been written by blocks, stones, and sand, and how a bridge connects earth and heaven, mind and body, and outside and inside, and has integrated our various Iranian, Islamic, and Greek subcultures in a mystical and hermetic manner.

Here, there is no time for retelling evidences and rereading the signs of this bridge. Suffice it to say that what I am talking about is not only possible but has been done. But, a new translation and insight is required to understand that everyday unlimited problems, our disturbances and depressions have risen from the same disturbing morphogenic fields; these tired and perished bodies.

Windows to the hearts

Now we know that our illnesses are subordinate to everyday patterns, rather than accidental events. This means that it is our lifestyle and our way of coping with events that make our lifeworld.

For the same reason, in the systemic approach to health, energy is consumed to create and design these lifeworlds. We are the architectures of these lifeworlds, but very rarely are we aware of our art and create it consciously. Our structural body is a tangible representation of our world making, and

comes into our world and transforms our inner life.

Only very recently have we understood the profound effects of architecture and urbanization on citizens' biopsychosocial health and how these morphogenic fields gradually transform the forms of human communications, settings, individual and collective ideals, lifestyles, and even bodies. Recently, we have realized through the language of our empirical knowledge – not merely based on the enlightenments of our wise ancestors– that streets and bridges do not only guide us to other places, but to other states and qualities, and windows not only guide us to other spaces, but to other hearts and visions. The effect of the form of human constructs on the mind, body, and energy exchanges that they create are dealt with in many various fields of knowledge from social medicine to environmental psychology, architecture, and ergonomics. Regarding the present-day complicated sociocultural systems, it seems that we need a wide interdisciplinary knowledge so that we can construct the appropriate body for this time. We have to keep in mind that human beings are body-making animals who come to this world naked and have to continuously construct various technological and communicative bodies. It is evident that most of their life is spent on constructing, scanning, and repairing these bodies and this is indeed not a worthless deed since each body is the key to entering a new world.

A new place for transformation

If, as stated in the Ecclesiastes, “For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven”, we can also say that the city is a place where for everything there is a place; a place for working, a place for relaxing, a place for recreation, and a place for being cured. But, is there a place for transformation, development, and evolution? Is there a place for what humanistic psychologists call self-actualization, a place for learning to bear our

responsibility and build our own cities, a place for creation of human being from the womb of his consciousness, a place where each of its blocks reflects human being to himself and guides oneself to the self through its passages and alleys, a place that teach us to build new lives, relationships, beliefs, and states, a place for being-thinking-building?

I – like many others – have often thought that our cities are devoid of such a thing. This is highlighted when we consider all the haste and massive load of necessary affairs that hinder our important works and, of course, the great work which our wise ancestors called /estekmal-e nafs/ (consciousness evolution). From this point of view, many diseases, nostalgias, and entanglements are nothing other than evolutionary disorders. This is the story of a lost man who does not know he/she must construct him/herself and does not search for something which is not constructed since he/she has not created it yet. The earth and imagination have to always be mingled with each other for the creation of our architectural body; of course, in a specific proportion so that a space will appear for that way of being.

Coordinated stream of signs

If we recognize health as a progressive inter/intra/transpersonal coordination, we need to have a relation with earth and heaven which allows consciousness to move freely between the self, the other, and being, and connects oneself to the self, and human beings to each other and the nature. Once a part of our body does not adhere to the overall order of the body, its connection with other parts and vital systems breaks and illness emerges. It is the same obstinate act towards others, nature, being, and God which makes us ill.

From the biosemiotic point of view, disease is in fact a communicative disorder and a systemic defect. Now the question is: “Can the technology, architecture, and communicative network, which we construct for ourselves, systematically disrupt the

coordinated and meaningful stream of signs? Can the matter-energy-information-consciousness stream flow in a way that causes the methodological and systematic promotion of health?

The authentic meaning of sustainable development is finding and refining a city that gathers and integrates human beings – these inter/intra/transpersonal beings – and as Habermas says, makes the ideal communicative condition possible. Have present-day cities, which have provided unlimited communications through media and communication channels, integrated human beings? Is this increasing thirst for seeing and making contact – which has become possible by televisions and networks – our authentic thirst for communicative and cultural intellect? Has this cumulative accumulation of knowledge made us wiser? Does medicine development lead to a development in the quality and meaning of life just as it has increased our social efficiency and lifetime?

It seems we need spaces for contemplation, revision, meditation, and education of coping with all these new, coming factors in order to include medicine in life, knowledge in wisdom, and wandering in exploration.

Just as cities have been born from villages, we need some villages to be born out of cities so that the lost balance and alienation from the self, the other, and nature is restored. Such presence and such being can gradually change our lifestyle, discourses, and institutions, and these embassies of cities in the heart of nature can direct natural order toward the cities and life of citizens in a new, natural order.

Reflection on the current wonderful horizon has given rise to our hidden connections with other human beings, animals, plants, and the whole cosmos and we know that the health of the body cannot be separated from that of the mind, society, culture, and ecosystem, and the constant and

boundariless stream of signs flows through and beyond the limits we know and expands itself. These connections are often disconnected in disharmonic and elusive bodies, which we have constructed for ourselves, and our body becomes sick and our mind wanders. Therefore, it demands a prototype so that we can retune our bodies with nature. I emphasized form and place to a great extent in this essay since I believe that where we are standing and the distance, angle, and relation we have established with the self, the other, and being makes us unique, and then, this embodied thought manifests itself in our behavior in a certain way and builds our world. Our knowledge of systemic psychology and medicine tells us that we cannot cause some fundamental and pervasive evolution in health, and the quality and meaning of life unless we transform our individual and collective narratives and world-making ways. To this end, we need an appropriate setting and architectural and institutionalized bridge between technology and nature. We need a move from the geometrized nature of modern cities to the natural, cultural, and spiritual geometry of post-modern cities.

Therefore, returning to the lost model of nature does not mean a permutation and return to the infancy of human being and returning to the embrace of Mother Nature. Rather, it means being open to the other, nature, and being, and to dialog, and exercising the creation and obtaining of health from the source of life, the place that is so inside that is outside.

Conflict of Interests

Authors have no conflict of interests.

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