

path, portal participates in the mood of path. As a component of plaza, portal also participates in the ambience of that space. The energy of path and plaza may be similar or contrasting. For instance, both may be peaceful or noisy. Or one may be bustling, and the other quiet. Both path and destination might be slow paced and reverent in mood while the energy at the portal is crowded and pressured. This possibility of multivalent ambience creates an interesting complexity of moods around some portals. They can have a wonderful multiplicity of personalities, one from the plaza side, one from the path side, and a third at the portal itself. In this sense a gate can be far more than a transition between pathspace and placespace. It also can be a transition between vastly difficult urban energies.

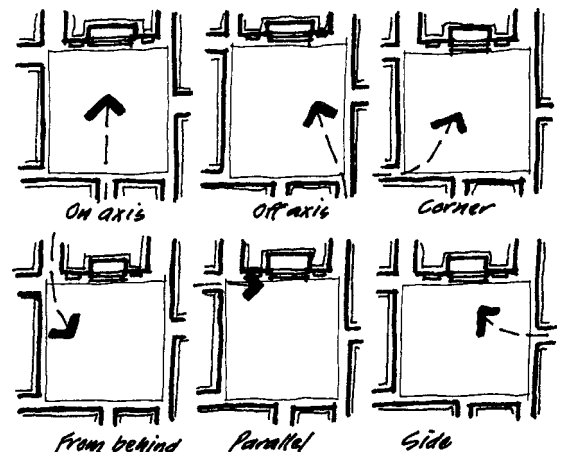
We normally imagine portals in terms of entry as opposed to exit, and so the ambience of a gateway might begin with its gravitational pull, the power of its invitation to approach and move through into the public space beyond. We can feel this sense of anticipation even before the portal is actually seen. Knowing the entry to a great plaza is just around the bend creates an anticipatory tension that is released at our first glimpse of the portal. This tension-release experience is repeated as we move along the path to the portal and through to the plaza. Even though our ultimate destination is the space beyond the portal, the gateway can be a kind of destination, an object of attention in itself. Gateways may be understood in terms of experiential distance. There is a point of first encounter. Initial contact with the portal might be from several blocks away or at close range such as turning a corner and being in the gate's shadow. When there is an experience of procession to portal and when the portal is marked architecturally (arch, columns), we sense the gradual revelation of its form, detail, and surface as we draw closer. This gradation of disclosure is enriched by the view into the urban space that is framed by the gate opening. On approach, the portal aperture grows larger, revealing more and more of the plaza beyond. On passing through, the architecture of the gateway slides past and behind our peripheral vision, and perception is filled only with the plazaspaces. The position of the portal in the plaza geometry affects the character of the framed view to plaza as we approach and the gradual revelation of the full plaza place when we enter. The dynamics of disclosure and the arrival experience are quite different when an urban space is entered on axis, off axis, at a corner, from behind the anchoring building, or parallel to its front

facade. The plaza is framed differently and presents itself differently from each of these portal positions.

The emotional power of a gateway is intensified when all our senses are engaged in the experience. We feel the quickening of pace as we draw near, hear plaza sounds growing in clarity and level, take in the ever richer scents of the approaching destination, feel the path texture underfoot. Our whole body tastes the plaza.

### Historical significance

Ambience is sometimes flavored and amplified by history. The portal may be the site of ancient traditions, rituals, celebrations. Perhaps it is the city entry where visiting dignitaries were once welcomed, the setting for the town's political speeches, or the ceremonial gate that sanctified the city's soldiers as they marched out to engage enemies. The significance and atmosphere of history is magically present here and now when we know the past of the place. We participate somehow in those historic events, rituals, transformations. Feelings of celebration, joy, sadness, fear, or weighty meaning associated with the past still linger at the place. And we sense them as we pass through the portal. Regard, respect, reverence are deepened if understanding of present urban role, function, and quality is underlaid with appreciation of history.



### The good portal

An urban entryway may be considered successful because of its beauty as an object or because of its role in the town form. A triumphal arch might not function as an actual portal but nonetheless be an