



Permeable portals

Description

The satirical fantasy *The Good Place* is ostensibly about the afterlife, and features different mechanisms for moving between the Good Place, the Bad Place, the Medium Place and Earth via magical doors, a hot air balloon, a train, a snap of the fingers, pneumatic chutes and giant round doors that clamp shut like the iris over a camera lens. Passage from one world to another demands invention.



The Good Place' Finale Made Heaven Look ...
theodanika.com



Season 3 NBC GIF by The Good Place ...
giphy.com



The Good Place season 2 recap - The ...
thecelestial.co.uk



The secret portal to Earth from The Bad ...
twitter.com



Neutral Zone | The Good Place Wiki | Fandom
thegoodplace.fandom.com



Portal Arrived GIF - Portal Arrived ...
tenor.com

Secret doors

My previous post about [parallel worlds](#) raised the geographical question of where alternative worlds exist. What are they made of? Then there's the relationships between them. Are these putative worlds millions of miles apart? Do they exist at different times? Is one world subsumed or hidden inside the other like a [steganographic image](#)? Is one a different state of the other, as solid and liquid are different states of water? Is one secreted in the other's geometry, a scaled down microscopic version, like a Mandelbrot fractal? Are some worlds made of different substances, beyond substance, or even beyond description as substances â?? invoking distinctions that are after all ineffable?

I take the view that it's sufficient to accept other worlds as elements of language and storytelling, let alone human experience, to regard other worlds as legitimate subjects of inquiry. The multiverse is a way of talking. So, I can ask how you transition between worlds. In my previous post I proposed 4 ways that people talk about parallel universes. Here I'll review briefly some of the ways people talk about *transitioning* from one universe to another.

1. Framing: If talk about parallel worlds is simply a figurative account of differing points of view, frames of reference, biases or preconceptions, then there's nothing mysterious about these â??realmsâ?• and the way to transition from one to another. The means of transport fits within the usual processes by

which we submit to persuasion, challenges to our beliefs, correction, revision, openness, and empathy. A sudden “awakening” might suffice as a way of explaining a portal between parallel worlds. See post [Aha moments](#).

1a. Altered states: I’ve added this to the multiverse discourse of the previous post. You transition from one state to the other by raising or lowering the temperature. If this transition is about a shared universe of human experience, then altered states are as common as changes in the weather. If we are talking about psychological or emotional states of the human being then there are stimulants and depressants to assist, or a change of scene, exercise, company, or a good night’s sleep. See post: [Soft fascination](#).

2. Metaphysics: If the parallel worlds belong within metaphysical discourse (Plato’s ideas, an afterlife, Nirvana, seven heavens), then there are time-honoured methods of transition: contemplation, meditation, redemption, salvation, rebirth, conversion, and/or death – to adopt a very crude summary.

3. Cosmology: Cosmological parallel universe theories of the “multiverse” imply the impossibility of communication between such worlds. Transitioning between universes in the multiverse is meaningless. By most accounts, the multiverse is a byproduct of a series of mathematical models or speculations about models. The multiverse is a thought experiment. That limitation doesn’t prevent the imagination from entertaining further speculation. Portals between worlds built on whatever foundation are a mainstay of science fiction and fantasy.

4. Geometry: If one world is hidden inside the geometry of another, or operates in defiance of the rules of Euclidean geometry, then we might think that drawings would get us from one to the other, as in contemplating a print by M.C Escher. But try as I might, I still can’t enter a world where I ascend a staircase via its underside. Video games, CGI and immersive VR provide obvious media for exploring the geometries of other world transitions. I recall the 1986 film *Labyrinth* (1986) in which we do enter vicariously an Escher world.

Portal ontologies

I’ve not yet found a classification of intra-world portals. That’s bound to include geometry, as well as the geometry of different worlds and how they are related. Part of that geometry involves concealment.

There’s also some apparatus by which a portal is protected from regular commerce. In most narratives about other worlds the means of getting from one to the other constitutes a puzzle. It can’t be easy, or that would be just ordinary. See posts: [Riddle of the Sphinx](#), [Mastering the universe](#), [Turning the corner](#), and posts tagged [utopia](#).



Bibliography

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- Gregory, Bruce. 1988. *Inventing Reality: Physics as Language*. New York: Wiley

Note

- *Labyrinth*, the 1986 film, was directed and written by Jim Henson, Terry Jones and Dennis Lee, and starred David Bowie. In one scene the characters move about a building that looks like M.C Escherâ??s 1953 lithograph *Relativity* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k1Z2pk5J9Ng>
- *The Good Place* was an NBC comedy series 2016-2020 created by Michael Schur.
- The stone arch above is part of a ruin in Enniskillenn, Northern Ireland, photographed in July 2020.

Category

1. Architecture

Tags

1. space
2. virtual reality

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