

Plural Spaces, Plural Times. **A Political Phenomenology of Places**

Drawing on the tools of the phenomenological tradition, this study questions Michel Foucault's claim that philosophy has always neglected space in favor of time. Its objective will be achieved by showing that phenomenology allows us to think time and space as embodied experiences, thereby rethinking their transcendental – or quasi-transcendental – reading of human experience of time and space as embedded dimensions. Phenomenology thematized the locality of human beings as embodied beings: within this tradition, the plural bodily activities enacted in the world open different spaces, times, and causalities. In this contribution, I will show that the forgetfulness of space and time in contemporary Western societies results from the erasure of the varied experiences through which they are lived.

Nowadays, the phenomenon that Paul Virilio called dromocracy - i.e., the disappearance of space due to the despatializing power of velocity - and the frantic capitalistic consumerism of worldly stability cause a social and political forgetfulness of spatiality, as well as an actual destruction of the common world.

This study shows how the phenomenological tradition offers several tools to rethink spatiality and temporality, and counter their Western forgetfulness. Indeed, according to Husserl, humans are embodied beings whose experience coincides with opening spatiality, temporality, and locality. Similarly, Heidegger described human beings as the temporality and locality of Being: being a human means opening a world. Especially in his research on human spatiality, Heidegger drew on the ethological research by Jakob von Uexküll, and his inquiry into the several environments (*Umwelten*) of diverse animal species. Drawing especially on Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception and his insightful accounts of bodily experience, Fuchs theorized an ecology of the brain that combines psychology and phenomenology to grasp how the mind would not exist without the body and its extension into the world through embodied and embedded action. Hannah Arendt's political phenomenology offers a crucial contribution to this inquiry, as it shows that different bodily activities open up different space-times and spheres of human existence. These manifold spatialities and temporalities are labor within life and nature, work within the world, and action in the public realm. Labor is how human beings deal with the fact that their lively needs condition them. Indeed, humans partake in the natural process and its circular, recurring movements. Work produces lasting objects employing raw materials, composing a common and stable world. This world detaches human beings from the biological processes and from an immersive absorption in their needs. Also, the world offers the material and lasting grounding for the last activity, i.e., political action in the public realm, the net of actions and speeches. This net is unpredictable and irreversible, as no one can govern the results of the interweaving of actions. The three space-times – the cyclicity of nature, the durability of the world, the unpredictability of action – result from different, embodied, relational experiences.

In all these perspectives, space and time are quasi-transcendental concepts and yet nonrepresentational: they are the conditions of all other experiences, yet they arise from the very fact of having and being a body, moving and experiencing it. The bodily experiences do not build a representation, as they open space and time as such. As von Uexküll showed, spatial categories correspond to embodied movements, sewed to our physical borders, such as the nose – separating up and down, and the ears, separating behind and before. These quasi-transcendental concepts that enable our experience are extensions of our embodiment.

In conclusion, this study shows that space and time are connected to the activities through which we open spaces, times, causalities, and places, as conditions of all other experiences. From this

perspective, the current erasure of some of the activities that Arendt enlisted (such as political action, or the merging of labor and work in the industrial, frantic, capitalistic production) and their experiences of time and space leads to a diminished sense of space and time, and flattens the complexity of the spheres in which human experience unfolds towards a despatialized world, and a temporality reduced to progress. Could the linear teleology of work, when mixed with the frantic processualism of labor, which is progress itself, grasp the complexity of the human relation to the world and nature? Could it understand the interweaving of actions? How can we grasp the unpredictability of action when even politics is enacted in terms of repetitive, predictable routine? This research claims that the flattening of human activities implies the loss of the manifold spatialities and temporalities, and, consequently, a diminished sense of space and time as embodied experiences – connected to specific activities, bodily movements, and relations to other humans, living, and things.