

THE NECESSARY SPACE

EDITORIAL

Had Heidegger not become for some time now (and perhaps for a while longer) an embarrassing presence for thought, one could have invited a reflection on Space (in philosophy, in science, in architecture, etc.) via some of his dynamic tautologies such as:

“Space spaces (*Der Raum räumt*). Spacing as clearing out; clearing out as clearing, making free, *setting free* (*Das Raumen als roden, roden als lichten, freimachen, freigeben*).”¹

“How can we find the special character of space (*das Eigentümliche des Raumes*)? [...] In the word “space,” what speaks is a making space (*Darin spricht das Räumen*).

How does making-space happen (*Wie geschieht das Räumen*)? Is it not making-space-internally (*das Einräumen*) [...]? First, making-room-internally admits something (*Einmal gibt das Einräumen etwas zu*).”²

In a time of saturation when space seems to be nonexistent (one can think of Michael Wolf's photographic cycles *Tokyo Compression* and *Architecture of Density*, <http://photomichaelwolf.com/#tokyo-compression/1>), going back and reflecting on space, which perhaps is not but can be produced, may be a way of rethinking the question of being.

Could it be that saying “space” is another way of saying “being”? Could being itself be a form similar to *Ein-räumen*, to making-space-internally? Could *Ein-räumen* be something similar to a conceding (admitting) or an adding (*zu-geben*)?

Perhaps thinking (and the life of humans and nature) has always been confronted with problems of space. Space, which is not there, has to be found. But where? How? Through the aggressive modalities of conquest? Or perhaps through some sort of internal spacing, which for the first time introduces/places a space that is not there? Could this paradoxically be the meaning of Heidegger's “clearing out”?

Even Christian dogmas seem to be faced with the puzzle of the space-that-is-not: how can two natures find space in only one person? Or three persons in only one God?

Only if space is *physis*, that is, spacing and generation of space, is there hope to gain space in forms that are not simply aggressive and/or redistributive.

In our epoch, even more than time, it is space that needs perhaps to be rethought. A different notion of space (still to be construed) may become the premise for different (more or less human) ways of living together.

¹ M. HEIDEGGER, *Bemerkungen zu Kunst-Plastik-Raum*, Erker Verlag, St. Gallen 1996, p. 19.

² M. HEIDEGGER, *Die Kunst und der Raum*, in ID., *Aus der Erfahrung des Denkens*, ed. H. Heidegger, in ID., *Gesamtausgabe*, Klostermann, Frankfurt a.M. 1975ff., vol. 13, pp. 206-207.

There is a “bourgeois” notion of space that consists of keeping one’s hands free. To have a lot of space available so that others do not disturb us is one of the most basic forms of the will to power.

Since the globalized world resembles a condominium, there is no doubt that in it there are those who have more room and those who have less. From this there emerge aggressive politics aimed at defending one’s own space and proletarian politics aimed at claiming spaces.

Ethics too seems to be made of space-making, in a sort of willed and deliberate shyness according to which one chooses to occupy little space or, even, no space.

As a matter of fact, space is something physical, and physics follows the laws of distribution. One cannot give $\frac{3}{4}$ of the available water to the contractor and $\frac{3}{4}$ to the workers, as in the deceiving contract that, in Ignazio Silone’s novel *Fontamara*, Don Circostanza offers to the naïve farmers to sign.

Ethics, politics, and philosophy need a different space though, a space beyond the space of distribution. Relativity theory has offered stringent arguments in favor of the spatialization of time, as if yesterday, today, and tomorrow could all be coeval as the “here” and “there” are³. The challenge for the twenty-first century might instead consist in temporalizing space, as if the “here” and “there” could be assimilated to the before and after.

“Here,” in the space where (for example) this plant is, there could also be something else; this could only be possible if movement were intrinsic in space. When we spatialize time, everything becomes eternal; if we temporalized space, then we would be always late or always ahead with respect to ourselves. Places would arrive either too early or too late. Not only could I only go from here to there within time (which is rather obvious), but also I could not be where I am without simultaneously having gone beyond it or not having yet arrived at it. If we were to wind space up with time, as in a mainspring watch, the plant would not be where it is and the very same identical place would be full and empty at the same time. The resulting universe would not be a universe made of possibilities; I could not retrieve my past self at all times, as we erroneously think today. Rather, it would be a universe made of impossibilities: I would never coincide with my present self and would rather be always displaced. The issue is not that of, from a psychological point of view, keeping open all possibilities, as if I could still be young despite the fact that I am old. The issue is rather that of opening up each single reality as if in every saying there were an unsaying (as if any claim were already an admitting and adding [*zugeben*]).

Saying that time is now short, and that those who mourn should live as if they did not mourn or those who laugh as if they did not laugh, as Saint Paul claims⁴, might mean this too—namely, in all places where an event occurs (the event of mourning as well as of laughing) there should always be space also for something else. The issue is not that of keeping a way-out open but rather (on the contrary) of keeping open a way-in. If I own $\frac{3}{4}$ water then (in a *then which is here and now*) you should be able to own it too. Every place must have a history—not only the natural history of the series of generations but

³ On this, see the essay by Palle Yourgrau.

⁴ *Corinthians I*, 7: 29-31.

also the impossible history of the compossibility of that which is self-exclusionary. This is a way of thinking the intertwining of space and time not within the bourgeois arena of possibilities but rather under the free sky of impossibilities. Enabling $\frac{3}{4}$ water to be where only $\frac{1}{4}$ fits is not any easier than time-travelling. Yet it is more urgent.

Enrico Guglielminetti

(Translated by Silvia Benso)