Technicity and Publicness: Steps towards an Urban Space

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The technicity in phenomenology

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy defines phenomenology as 'the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view'.[1] This has led to phenomenology being characterised as 'subjectivist' and 'introspective' (as opposed to being objective and concerned with the 'external' communicable reality of things). The point that Don Ihde makes in proposing a post-phenomenology[2] – and one that will be reinforced here in looking at Heidegger's space – is that phenomenology, properly understood, is not about subjectivity in the conventional sense we think of it at all. It is *relational* and concerned first and foremost with the relations humans have with the world around them. It is not so much about introspection either, but about *reflexivity*, in that what one experiences is derived from the real and embodied relations (characterised as 'intentionality' in phenomenology) of the subject with other people and things in the environment. These relations have nothing to do with any internal or private Mind, but are lived out *beyond* the skin of the subject – and *already* in public. Phenomenology is concerned before anything else with these relations, and investigates not so much real things 'in themselves' as the conditions under which subject-object relations (things *to* people) appear. Ihde goes on to emphasise the roles of objects, settings and technologies in his post-phenomenology – more so than is conventionally done in phenomenology. In so doing he takes phenomenology even further from its supposedly traditional subjectivist concerns and closer still to the technicity of a relational systemat-

ics. Ihde draws closer in fact to *cybernetics* as he schematises human-environment relations as a partial symbiosis of human plus artefact mediated through the relational constructions (and technologies) we use to achieve them.[3]

This incorporation of technologies into a phenomenological ontology is still regarded as being unorthodox. When we look closely however at Heidegger's phenomenology and his space of human involvement in the world, it seems that he clearly recognised the role of artefacts, technologies and objects all along – in fact that he placed technology at the *centre* of his understanding of knowing and being. Heidegger was all along developing a relational view of the world and of our place in it; one which understood us as living in a world *fabricated* around techniques of being and knowing.

The idea of us and our world being co-constituted in a relational and dynamic unity may be held up by both phenomenology and cybernetics as an alternative metaphysics to the 'ontological dualism' of the Cartesian system, which understands matter and mind or substance and spirit as belonging to essentially separate realms – across the boundaries of which we have to travel in order to make this us-world connection. But it is arguably the way this relational unity organises space and works itself out in the world as much as the fact of it that is interesting and useful to us as urbanists. In our more conventional view of the urban world we inhabit, we set ourselves against the world as an indifferent

materiality to be overcome by way of intelligence or wayfinding. Also, in our conventional view of our relations with other people we understand ourselves as joining with them in direct social bonds of affinity or dependence. Both of these conventional views may have to be modified in the sort of urban space that emerges out of Heidegger's thinking. I will argue that we may begin to understand the city much more precisely as fields of places or technical settings which emplace us in very particular and public and political ways.

Relationality is on the agenda in urbanism today. At the same time it is fair to say that most 'network thinking' comes nowhere near addressing the full consequences of relationality, which includes I will argue the idea that the city is not just an artefact in the sense that it is planned and designed by us, but also that it itself constitutes an unplanned but perfectly coherent dynamic, relational 'body politic' with an order and a unity born out of the technologically mediated practice of everyday life within it. While we give much attention to the order of cities in larger global and regional configurations, and while we attempt to create 'orderly' urban places which engage with these spaces, we miss a great deal of the inherent order in the 'messy' reality of the world which goes on under our noses. It is in this reality that much of the business of supporting and maintaining the *global* order in *local* lives and economies takes place – in the work and movements of millions of ordinary folk, as anthropologists[4] and urbanists of a more anthropological bent[5] have already articulated. We are indeed very far from understanding these processes adequately and I don't aim to address them all here. What I will propose though is that we may make a start in thinking about the orders that drive our cities by starting from the ground of the intentional relation that is the fundamental unit of phenomenology.[6]

The intersubjective realm in spaces of intentionality

Rather than trying to find experience in the gap between our situation in some external and absolute space on the one hand and our psychological state on the other, Heidegger proposes we think of experience as well as the genesis of our being public and with others in terms of the way the world discloses itself to us differently from different situations. Heidegger uses in fact no concept of consciousness at all in his system but replaces it with 'a concept of *existence* as the mode of being of an entity for which the things with which it deals *are there* … in the mode of perceptual presence'.[7] This involves a direct relation between subject and the object of perception, action or attention in fields of presence where different things are revealed or disclosed from different positions. Certain things may become possible or coherent from particular positions while others remain foreclosed or incoherent. And there may be a certain objectivity or systematicity about these fields in which perceptions emerge as a *public* factor in a 'politics' of situated presence and appearance.

In phenomenology, 'structures of consciousness' are approached, if we are to take our lead from Heidegger, in the first instance by recognising the enormous, though not obvious to us most of the time, gulf between things and the 'being' of things – between things and the way things are *disclosed* to us. Heidegger calls this 'ontological difference' and his argument really sets the tone for the whole question of our experience of reality. Basically, Heidegger argues, things *themselves* and independently of us are quite beyond our imagination, because in bringing them to our imagination, or even to our knowledge of their being, we incorporate them in an indissoluble unity (that intentional relation) with ourselves.[8]

From this point on, we begin relating to things in a direct active and spatial relation that is integral,

personal and significant. Things may exist in some abstract sense apart from our consciousness of them, but the reality *we* deal in simply cannot be the *absolute* reality, Descartes imagined. Things always exist *for* us – and things also exist for us in a way they simply cannot for things that cannot develop intentional relations with other things. For Heidegger, Being itself '"is" only in the understanding of those entities to whose Being something like an understanding of Being belongs'.[9] Existence is neither an absolute or a neutral issue; existence *matters* for us, and as embodied, active, inquisitive beings, things 'are' in some very important sense in the way we form a relation with them and take them into our lives. Things are *disclosed* to us in this relation, and in our encounter with the world; they come to Being in this encounter, and it is here that a *practical* non-abstract (and pre-reflective or pre-representational) realism begins. I will propose that we may build a space of this encounter, and characterise the city as a space of encounter that brackets and specifies our experience of things and people *in* the world.

This encounter works both individually, in a space of things 'ready' for immediate active incorporation in our lives – and then potentially collectively, in a space of things 'present' to us and for our more generalised, communicable and collective knowing of them. For Heidegger, our first relation with things in perception and action is an integral ecological relation with things 'ready-to-hand' or *zuhanden*. On the other hand we also construct spaces of relations with things in the world which makes them communicable and part of our knowledge. This is our relation with things 'present-at-hand' or *vorhanden*. *Zuhanden* space could be understood (in the sense that it works from a singular perspective) as being 'subjective', while *vorhanden* space could be seen as being 'collective' or 'public' (again in a way that needs to be qualified as spatial). Heidegger therefore reverses the Cartesian priority of 'objective' or absolute space coming before 'subjective' space,

insisting that our encounter with the world by way of the ready-to-hand or *zuhanden* comes first, and the present-at-hand or vorhanden is a derivation or construction out of this immediate active involvement with things.[10]

In other words, we encounter the world first, for the most part quite unproblematically, immediately and practically – and we then begin, as and if the need arises, to order and make better sense of it. In fact, there is no place to begin *outside* of our actions and movements in real situations in the world, and these are in a continuous engagement not only in space but in a practical time which connects our past through the present to a future shaped by the intention of the movement itself. The key to understanding Heidegger's theory of space therefore is his attempt to describe spatial experience without presupposing objective space, or in his own terms, 'world-space'. He attempts instead to describe a *lived* space from within the finite perspective of an active being. This is the space of a being continuously engaged and to a large extent already familiar with the world through previous engagement with it. It is also a 'subjective' space in the sense that it represents a singular situated perspective on the world.

A question arises therefore about where the 'public' and the 'social' may be in all of this ready-to-handness and direct and individual relations with an environment. The question is significant because Heidegger does not address himself simply to the *private* experience of reality Husserl was concerned with (*Erlebnis*), but also to *Erfahrung*, a notion of experience that addresses itself to a more collective understanding of what experience might be. Hubert Dreyfus understands a *public* understanding of our existence as necessarily underlying Heidegger's project and suggests therefore that a public space needs to be prioritised if Heidegger is to achieve his aim of showing how our situated existence is not only individual but also a *public* way

of being.[11] But Heidegger doesn't believe that we need a representational dimension to communicate between the private and the public – indeed he believes there cannot be a private experience that is not itself dependant on a public experience of the world. This seems to pose an irresolvable contradiction between a 'private' *zuhanden* space at the base of things and an idea of the 'public' coming first. Dreyfus goes so far as to argue that Heidegger is 'fundamentally confused'[12] in his prioritisation of a 'subjectivist' individual space and suggests that the simple relation of intentionality cannot therefore be the basis of our experience. For Dreyfus this basis (and the space) of existence (*Dasein*) rather depends on and is made intelligible by a singular notion of Man (*das Man*), captured in a realm of 'social' norms and practices. This view is disputed by Frederick Olafson for one, who sees publicness as something coming *before* the social norms or practices of *das Man*.[13] Olafson is in turn criticised for having a 'subjectivist' conception of *Dasein*.[14]

Yoko Arisaka, in commenting on this debate, argues that the disagreement concerns the space implied in Heidegger's thinking, and the space indeed of people situated in the world. 'Social practices' need in the one view a shared 'public' space, while in the other they may exist quite adequately in the supposedly 'subjective' spatiality of individual existence – which is not by that account simply 'private'. Arisaka argues indeed that the categories of 'public' and 'private' as conventionally understood and spatialised are simply inappropriate for capturing Heidegger's sense of what belongs to shared and personal domains of existence. It is possible, according to her, 'to save both of these domains without raising the question of priority and without presupposing an 'over-individualized' or 'subjectivist' *Dasein*. … the way *Dasein* is in the world maintains "equiprimordially" the space shared with others and the personal sense of spatiality. On this reading, Olafson's "individualist" account need not commit him to a "subjective" conception of *Dasein*'.[15]

Heidegger's prioritisation of the intentional relation of situated people with their environment – the space of 'being-there' or *Dasein* – does not relate at all, on Arisaka's account, to 'subjectivism', and the direct intentional relation may be *also* already part of *collective* experience. Heidegger simply cannot be seen, according to Olafson, as an existentialist who places the perspective of the individual at the centre of the problem of being and of being social.[16] Rather, our being in the world *with* others (*Mitsein*) is a much more fundamental part of our being than we normally see or acknowledge: 'Our being with other like entities is … a constitutive element in our own mode of being as it is in theirs; and it is one to which we cannot do justice as long as we approach it via traditional philosophical routes like the theory of empathy'.[17] Olafson points out that in Heidegger, we are 'for the sake of others', and although Heidegger does not develop this idea further and we have no clear explanation of how *Fürsorge* (caring) for people or things is generated out of *Mitsein*, Olafson proposes taking Heidegger's understanding of caring as involving not 'the peculiar binding character that is the hallmark of distinctively moral relationships', but rather 'the concept of truth as a partnership among human beings'.[18]

The mutual bonds of intersubjectivity involve in other words not so much specific agreements, empathies and dependencies, as a more general agreement about the nature of the world *between us*. Olafson proposes we find a common 'ground' in the realm of what lies *between* human beings rather than in sets of rules or values or 'strong ties'. He emphasises that this mode of being in the world as subject-entities *with* other entities, is one within which subjects and things develop a reciprocal presence to each other and where both self and others are disclosed. This reciprocity is so familiar to us, is so much what we are *immersed* in, that we lose sight of it and of the power it has to determine what the things around us are in their relations with other present things. This realm of commonality may even

begin to be understood as having its own existence at a material and organisational level from which we cannot escape without losing vital components of what we are. We could begin to understand there to be something here that is concrete and *historical*, making of the collective and the public something that is developmental, fashioned in a relational space and in time between people – never *in addition* to 'subjective' life but always integral with it.[19]

According to this argument, Dreyfus has simply not seen how little our conventional understanding of bounded 'public' and 'individual' spaces engage with the problem as outlined by Heidegger himself. This has to do with the peculiar nature of the *relationality* of *Dasein*, including the fact that individual intentionality relates to a public or collective realm of entities (including people) in a way that makes them mutually constitutive of each other. What is 'out there' – what we know and respond to – is a function, to a great degree, of us, while what is 'out there' also conditions us as we encounter it. We need to follow the way the individual and the collective emerge in the production of present-at-hand spaces in ready-to-hand spaces. We need to follow the way present-at-hand places may be seen as becoming (themselves being disclosed) in the ready-to-hand spaces of people engaged in everyday activities and in time. We may find that other problematic issues emerge with Heidegger's space – but these arguably emerge out of the conditions of our existence as *spatial* rather than ideal beings. If we live in relations of reciprocal presence, then the recognition of other beings and things as complementing and *completing* one's own being is prior to substantive or absolute essences or rules of conduct or definitions of justice or whatever, and according to Olafson this strange mutually constituting individualisation of self and other needs far more attention than it has thus far received.

Heidegger's space

Heidegger himself offers an alternative to three older theories of absolute space, relational space, and Kantian space. He sets his own space against absolute space but incorporates aspects of both other spaces in his own. Absolute space is the familiar Cartesian space as 'container'. It serves as the framework for defining the positions and motions of objects within it. But absolute space itself exists independently of these objects and has a homogeneous structure and existence of its own. According to Leibniz on the other hand, space is relative, an order of coexistences. Relational space *depends* on its objects rather than coming before them, as it is nothing more than the relations between these objects. Space here is a property *of* the objects and there is no space above and beyond the configurations of the objects themselves. However both absolute and relational ideas of space understand space to be, if not strictly *material* in the case of relational space, certainly *absolutely* objective and real.

Kant however claimed that space was subjective rather than objective. He believed that space comes to existence in our knowing of things – actually in our intuitions based in our experience of the world. Space is an 'internal' *representation* of the things given in our senses and the way we make our experiences of things 'outside' ourselves coherent. According to Kant it is only from a human standpoint that we can speak of space: space depends on an intuition and an oriented sense of the world which can only come from us. Without this intuition of coherence, which must be subjective, and therefore for Kant 'interior', 'space stands for nothing whatsoever'. Two important points with regard to this 'coherence' is that in being subjective it is taken to be '*internal*' and essentially a *private* experience, setting up the problem of the communication between an 'interior' consciousness and 'external' reality.

Heidegger rejects the metaphysical dichotomy of subject and object along with the presuppositions of interiority and exteriority that go with it. The question of the interiority of the subjective experience is one that had already been dealt with by Brentano and Husserl, who understood intentionality as a 'breaking out' rather than a 'dissolving' of the world in consciousness. According to them, we are in the world, between things, amongst others, and consciousness is no more than a relation with the world. 'Every mental phenomenon includes something as object within itself'[20] – it is that intentional relation. Heidegger acknowledges therefore the human character of space and its role as a condition of experience, but sees it emerging in our action and our practical involvement in the world rather than as an interior construction or *representation* of an exterior reality. Heidegger is therefore not much interested in the Kantian question of whether space is *intrinsically* subjective or objective (or private or public); he is looking for the conditions under which our ideas of objectivity and subjectivity (or public or private) appear. He begins by looking at spaces in which concrete, historical human existence expresses itself and the way it is *produced* in everyday actions. He looks especially for example at pre-reflective activities, such as walking and reaching for things, in order to begin to elucidate a theory of *lived* space. Objective and subjective views of space turn out in his view to be practical orientations to the world rather than abstractions from these more primordial spatialities of lived action.

Heidegger sees three different types of space being produced in our actions and perceptions. These are world-space, regions (*Gegend*), and the spatialities of situated action. These last are divided into that 'breaking out' (*Ent-fernung*; translated as 'de-severance') and directionality (*Ausrichtung*). '"De-severing" amounts to making the farness vanish – that is making the remoteness of something disappear, bringing it close'.[21] De-severance is what happens when I reach for something, but it

is also what happens when I set out for the supermarket or when I speak to someone on my phone or send an email. De-severance is the impulse of an action directed to a specific goal. It is directional, aimed *toward* something specific and within a region which references and is prepared for that action and makes it coherent. All action happens from a centre, *towards* completion, and *through* a region.

World-space is our commonsense conception of space as a container: 'the bench is in the lecture-room, the lecture-room is in the university, the university is in the city, and so on, until we can say the bench is "in world space"'.[22] Heidegger also calls this space present-at-hand (*vorhanden*) and he understands it as being not so much always and already there, as Cartesian space is, but as something that emerges out of – or that we *produce* out of – the more primordial spatialities of action that we start with. Heidegger would understand Cartesian absolute space as being world-space, but the objects 'in' world-space *come to be* understood or intuited by us as being independent of the space that contains them. World-space is not the most original and primordial space therefore, but is rather the most synthetic, the most *fabricated* – and it remains founded on the spatiality of the actions of situated people. 'It is because we act, going to places and reaching for things to use, that we can understand farness and nearness, and on that basis develop a representation of world-space at all. … our spatial notions such as "distance", "location", etc., [come] from a standpoint within the spatial relation of self (*Dasein*) to the things dealt with'.[23]

Regions are the spaces which distribute and locate the things we are involved with in our everyday activities. The places we inhabit are defined not as bounded areas but as regions which emplace 'equipment' that we deal with on an everyday basis. 'Equipment' is the stuff we have or bring ready-to-hand (*zuhanden*) in action, but that we also organise and take care of in a present-at-hand (*vorhanden*)

space. Regions are both the spaces of action and the functional spaces of work and everyday living that are themselves part of the *organisation* of those activities. They are already formalised and organised for action, and one of the most basic functions of regions, I will argue, is to *reference* or *index* the things we need and use in relation to other complementary things. Things don't and cannot exist in isolation: they exist in relation to other things in our active engagement with them, and these relations contribute both to their constitution and their locations. Regions are *backgrounds* to the things we use in action but not neutral backgrounds; rather they are the backgrounds out of which things emerge as what and where they are. Regions are therefore fundamental to the being of things and places – they are in a sense the necessary *other* side of things; the 'ground' from which the 'figure' of the thing is disclosed.

What Heidegger is trying to capture here is a space which is a mode of our active existence, rather than a space independent of that existence. Any space of action and active knowing, he is saying, is already part of that action, and any space which doesn't begin with that action will leave us again having to cross a gulf between intention and action, between knower and known. These spaces of action are not any 'internal' subjective construction or representation, but are out there in the world along with the action – and already in the present-at-hand spaces of the world we encounter. Things and their places become therefore very quickly not just relational but *referential* or *indexical* with respect to regions in our activities – they become spatial *organisations* which *emplace* things in relation to other things such that they are not just ready-to-hand in actions but also present-at-hand *for* action – that we may act on them knowingly, knowing where things are, where we are with things and how or where to go further. The thingness of things and the placeness of their places begin to be significant simply and only in the context of our involvement with them – while this

involvement is about things in the world and not things in our heads. But this involvement with things also draws in the other things and their places that contribute to making that thing what it is for us in that particular context. What Heidegger is not talking about here is a subjective *attitude* in which something *seems* to be 'close' when it is actually far. The 'closeness' he is talking about is that which is the achievement of a specific perception or action in the course of doing things and in a region which locates both actions and things. It is tied up not with thinking or feeling as much as with a practical doing. It is a partially reflective, or even unreflective, practical getting on with things in a real world context of real things important for – and prepared for – the completion of real tasks. The region orients and organises the intention, attention and concern developed in the action, but the region also has a reality, or a mappability let's say. Heidegger's space becomes both subjective and objective.

But these are also much more than spaces that simply *are* there. They are spaces we are involved with in our actions, and into which we put our attention and our intention. These spaces may be encountered *in* action, but they are already practical spaces for action before we encounter them. They are also spaces we care about and care for; we may and do construct, reconstruct, organise and reorganise them to make them ready and fit for the patterns of our activities. Heidegger used the example of the carpenter's workbench, but we could imagine the office of an importer-exporter, or a well-provisioned and ordered kitchen – even the mobile telephone of a well-connected teenager. These spaces are prepared and *equipped* for our action – they are about doing things efficaciously as well as about *knowing* where things are and where we are with things, and are thus 'cognitive' in the sense that the spatial organisation itself is also part of our knowledge. But they are also entirely 'exterior' and there is nothing here that corresponds to our conventional view of an 'interior' subjectivity.

Dreyfus takes regions to be public in that once they are organised and coherent anyone may use them, but we can see, that *all* spaces of action must be regions, and this includes public *and* private spaces – the import-export office is a well-organised and equipped region, but access to it is regulated and it is locked up at the end of the day.

Both the relationality of Leibnitz's space and the subjectivity of Kant's space are to be found in this space, but in such a way that they become inseparable and begin to define the subject and the object in relational and situational terms. Subjectivity and awareness has become spatialised and *distributed* – taken out of some absolute realm defining self and identity – and has become a situated perspective on an *intersubjective* world from which the self presents itself and to which things and other subjects are disclosed. This situated perspective works *across* regions that are already prepared for particular kinds of action – and which are not containers for shared activities, but rather repositories of shared reference. Everything an active 'subjectivity' is capable of becomes bracketed by this perspective as place and access become politicised – setting the framework for Hannah Arendt's further work on appearance and the *polis*.

Finding common ground
But when we think of action we are still speaking of the integral couple (in intentionality) of subject and world, creating a centred space of our *own* activity, organised in a region but centred on a situation or centre of action which is our own. These are the spaces of our encounter with the world, and especially with the environments familiar to us – those of our own office or workbench, of our own kitchen, or of our own mobile phone – though someone else may with more or less difficulty use our kitchen or try to make a call on our mobile phone. Our own spaces are again not neutral or set *against* our action, they are equipped and readied *for* our action and the environments of our actions become conjoined with

those actions. Heidegger's central insight was in seeing just how much of what supports our being and action slips out of sight in its readiness-to-hand. He saw how much of our world consists of 'equipment' for action and how the relation between the ready-to-hand and the present-at-hand was therefore crucial to understanding the spatial mode of our existence, while recognising that relationship would always be difficult for us to see. The being of things incorporated in our actions consists in their efficacy, not in any particular aspect of their make-up or even in the combination of those aspects understood outside of the subject-environment relation.

According to Dreyfus, Heidegger 'has not clearly distinguished *public* space in which entities show up for human beings, from the centered spatiality of each *individual* human being'.[24] Dreyfus interprets regions and the action associated with de-severance to be 'public' and 'individual' respectively, but we can see this cannot be simply or strictly true. Regions in Heidegger are involved in the spaces of de-severance itself and 'ready-to-handness' and 'present-at-handness' are in fact just two ways of seeing the same region. There can therefore be no question of giving one priority over the other. There is no containment of activities in a public space, only spaces generated in actions and these are all particular and private in the limited sense that they originate in particular situations, while they are public in the sense that they participate in intersubjective relational totalities. Dreyfus interprets the de-severance of *Dasein* as a 'function of existential concern'[25] and worries that multiple individually-centred people would become windowless monads, with no access to any common understanding of the world: 'we would have a number of *monads* each with its own centered experience of presence, and public space would be a *construct*'.[26]

Arisaka counter-argues that the chief character of the region of *Dasein* is its indexicality in relation to an active and searching centre. 'What is lacking in

… Dreyfus' account … is the radically perspectival or "indexical" feature of regions, which constantly refers to *Dasein*'s orientation'. She notes again that such orientation is not private or subjective but is positional and perspectival. 'Regions are public because they are based on "*one's*" oriented activity, as a particular orientation, that can be taken up by *any Dasein* … [and] regions offer a frame of *possible* perspectives which give presence a particular orientation … So regions are "public" in this limited sense of referring to the actions of anyone "plugged into" that region'.[27] Heidegger himself put it thus: 'As a monad, the *Dasein* needs no window in order first of all to look out toward something outside itself, not because, as Leibniz thinks, all beings are already accessible within its capsule … but because the monad, the *Dasein*, in its own being is already outside, among other beings, and this implies always with its own self'.[28]

But within regions and from the oriented perspective of *Dasein*, entities withdraw from view as they become part of our actions.[29] The bridge, the house, the city, as ready-to-hand, dissolve into a totality with our action and being. But this totality is also the totality of referentiality of the *region*. Entities refer twice therefore: to the 'subjective' totality into which they disappear in oriented action, and at the same time to the objective relationality that draws subject and objects together into a region. The former process produces readiness-to-hand, the latter a presence-at-hand of things constituted in relations. People doing things and the things (and places) they act on do not exist independently of each other *in* some space, but are rather indissolubly tied up *with* one another in relationships of mutual indexicality. Dreyfus's claim that regions are 'independent of the locations of people' or that they are 'shared' does no justice to the mutually constitutive indexical nature of relational intersubjectivity. It is in any event premature to propose the independence of the public domain from the location of particular people because Heidegger is trying to show just

how such a domain, to some extent abstracted from individual actions, *comes to be* from a primal condition of *Dasein*. Frederick Olafson remarks elsewhere: 'once the concept of an independent *vorhanden* has been admitted, there is no way in which one can avoid treating the *vorhanden* as a necessary condition for the *zuhanden* and the latter as thus a derivative, rather than a primary ontological concept, as Heidegger evidently intended it to be'.[30]

The *subjectivity* in all this lies in an *orientation* to a region of elements constituting and referencing a certain action and the directionality and specificity of the action itself. The *publicness* is a dense web of ties to 'indeterminate others' that constitutes a common world of co-reference. Our actions and subjectivities exist in webs of intersubjectivity that have a grounding and a levelling effect, creating a *commons* and a *public*. In fact, in acting, in interacting, in using tools or equipment, *Dasein* (being there) becomes *Mitsein* (being with) others, even when other people are not immediately present and when actions do not immediately involve other people. The problem of a 'relation of minds' does not arise because a world common to us all, understood and even *built* as present-at-hand, intervenes. We can begin to understand ourselves becoming public between things and others in a realm de Certeau characterises as 'the oceanic rumble of the ordinary … the place from which discourse is produced'.[31]

Common spaces of action
One plugs in fact, not just into regions but also into the webs of indexicality, sociality and significance invested in them and their elements, as objects and people partake in communicative webs of co-reference with other objects and people. In our regions and places we are constantly involved with things and people which refer to other things and people, and as Heidegger points out, this involvement may be with *indeterminate* others. Even when there are no other people directly part of any

particular action, the elements of regions are themselves already 'socialised' by being made part of a whole that *communicates* through cross-linking with other wholes that involve people.[32] Taking a simple example: a chair may be involved directly in a particular action, but it participates by analogy with other similar actions involving chairs through time – the chair comes to the action already marked by its significance as a chair. Actions and objects form relational totalities that are significant and which are 'disclosed … with a certain intelligibility'[33] and regions become the backgrounds against which people act and are 'that wherein the intelligibility of anything is sustained'.[34]

The world is already intelligible and significant to us, intelligibility coming with the process of *disclosure* in an integral whole. And action doesn't just *happen* in a space of communicative intersubjectivity, it finds itself involved with and supported by countless items of equipment involved (right alongside the actor) in the cybernetic totality of the action. This equipment includes multitudes of things that escape our attention precisely because they are ready-to-hand (until they break down and reveal their presence to us): floors, keys, doors, spectacles, walls, switches, ventilators, corridors, chairs, bicycle paths, bus timetables, fish tanks, restaurant menus, watches, knees, mobile telephones. We incorporate multitudes of things in use in our lives on an everyday basis, things that we both count on and take for granted. 'Heidegger shows that we normally do not deal with entities as aggregates of natural physical mass, but rather as a range of functions or effects that we rely upon. … For the most part, objects are implements taken for granted, a vast environmental backdrop supporting the thin and volatile layer of our explicit activities. … The totality of equipment is the world; not as a sum of ontic gears and levers, nor as an empty horizon in which tool-pieces are situated, but as that unitary execution in which the entire ontic realm is already dissolved'.[35]

A *shared* cultural or professional space, if we look at a region like the carpenter's bench, is something that is a factor of the region's facilitation of particular shared practices – and the workbench is a *setting*, regularised and standardised to the support of the practice of carpentry. The fact that the carpenter makes his own workbench to the support of practices learned from his master nicely explains how regions and actions become joined – the fact that he uses a measure clinches the type of space he is constructing. Here is where the *normalisation* of space to present-at-hand and eventually to world-space begins, and this space normalised for the practice of carpentry *is* the workbench. We live in a world prepared for our action and 'equipment *is* its context … every implement exerts a determinate and limited range of effects in each instant, and is equally determined by the equipment that surrounds it'.[36] Practices become *themselves* normalised in relation to already mapped out and constructed settings. More refined and abstracted practices, like the practice of measuring itself, will contribute to a further normalisation and 'worlding' of space. This is the *vorhanden* space that facilitates a particular *Dasein* for a particular skilled practitioner, who needs to rely on his equipment in action. This makes the space 'public' in the sense that it becomes common to a practice, and shared by a bounded group of people who have both access to and the skills to use that space.

There is something a little strange and circular about these equipped, user-included totalities we call regions however, because we find ourselves acting in a world to a very significant extent prepared and 'made to measure' for practices already practiced.[37] Here, if we take Heidegger's example of the carpenter's workbench, we can begin to see how a regularisation of the equipment and the work processes using that equipment could mean that indeed, a carpenter, with a few adjustments and adaptations, could begin work on another carpenter's bench. It would be the same for a professional

cook in another cook's kitchen – but probably less so for the kitchen of the enthusiastic but undisciplined amateur! The spaces for action are already at least partly prepared against the breakdown of action – and the actions become transportable to other places where the skills and settings exist. Spaces are concrete settings constructed and *formed to* regularised 'cultural' and 'everyday' practices, and even more so perhaps when we consider special-ised and professionalised practices. We could also imagine regularised and *less* specialised spaces for action, for more generic activities and practices like walking in the city. It is this 'preparation' that I am taking to be the most important character of the *vorhanden* spaces we use.

It is difficult to see therefore where in the region of space itself we could find a character or marker for publicness or privateness. Publicness and private-ness will be a matter of *access* to different sets of mutually referring 'implements' held in different spatial 'commons' – access therefore for different 'publics' to the prepared *vorhanden* spaces facilitat-ing specific or generic practices. The preparedness of regions means that qualities and degrees of publicness will be *factored into that preparation*. While both public *and* private spaces are necessarily 'shared' or 'common' by virtue of the communicative regions all actions are necessarily part of – they are more or less accessible to, or secured against, the access of those included or excluded from a partic-ular 'commons'. It may be decided for example that slaves and women are simply not 'public'! Some regions will be prepared for a broad public, others will be secured (and all too many are today) and will be 'public' to a select few. We can begin to see how the domains of 'public' and 'private' become contin-gent on *practices* of publicness as well as the rights and provisions of access made for different people to different equipped and facilitating regions. The confusion about Heidegger's understanding of the public and the private may be cleared up when we resist finding any essential public and private: the

public and the private remain a contingent matter of access and rights, and the politics of their construc-tion, negotiation, contestation and placement in wider webs of intersubjectivity.

Spatialities of appearance and everydayness

Notwithstanding what I have said about access and rights to particular spaces for action, publicness is also a factor of the gathering together of people who in this way encounter and are disclosed to one another. This disclosure will itself be constitutive of a 'public' and a public life depending for its realisa-tion on the presence of others. For Hannah Arendt, the *polis* is the space 'where I appear to others as others appear to me, where men exist not merely like other living or inanimate things, but to make their appearance explicitly'.[38] This is where we do things humanly, and through living between others become the kinds of creatures we are. In particu-lar, for Arendt, this is the space created as people gather together 'in speech and action'. The space itself exists according to Arendt only as words and deeds – apparently therefore as a *collective* ready-to-hand space of communicative action. It exists as 'a power potential ... [that] springs up between men when they act together and vanishes the moment they disperse'.[39] But these ready-to-hand spaces of mutual communication, recognition and negotiation will also be supported by equipped present-at-hand spaces prepared for this gathering of people in mutual disclosure. Arendt mentions places like the town hall, the legislative assembly, the agora – these are *implements* of mutual disclosure, places equipped for politics and talk.

The action of gathering here is one that requires a common intention, which is that of coming together to talk; there is a common reason to gather and a common place of gathering. The space of the gathering is therefore *centred*, drawing all with the common intention to a central place which will itself be a bounded region of *talkers*. When Arendt is most specific about the space of her public, she is

speaking of Athens with its centrally placed agora, to which 'free men' and some of the not so free gather to argue, discuss and gossip, and buy and sell. For her, the centre was also defined by its limit, and 'the law of the city-state was … quite literally a wall, without which there might have been and agglomeration of houses, a town, but not a city; a political community'.[40] The space itself is prepared and formed to the practice of a particular politics of a particular and bounded 'public', and the space as much as the politics includes or excludes people depending on whether they can or may partake in these practices.

But this can hardly be the whole story: there is another space of gathering in Arendt's writing which occurs in a quite different space held in common. Here it is no immediate common purpose, and no explicit meeting or agonism of minds that draws people together. What they gather around is instead simply the world that they hold in common between themselves – that they all nevertheless see and act in differently as they draw different elements of it into orbits of different lives and intentions. We hear also from Arendt that 'to live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it; the world like every in-between, relates and separates men at the same time'.[41] When different things in this world of things are accessed by *different* people in movement with different intentions, the space unlike that of the agora or the assembly, is a distributed *decentred* space. Here the space distributes people between places and it is the in-between itself, rather than particular places or things involved in people's actions and intentions, that becomes the locus of an incidental, unfocused encounter between people of *different* intent. Much has been written more recently about a 'politics of difference', addressing the issue of multiculturality and the rights of people unassimilated to a dominant cultural setting (immigrants in Western cities for example) to participate in an open public realm.[42] Indeed many cities, and all great trading cities through history have managed to cope with more or less success with the problem of *sharing* a space between people of different cultures and practices.

In this case people, involved in their own affairs and moving between places significant first and foremost in their individual life narratives and trajectories, become caught up *incidentally* together in a common space. The space itself becomes a carrier for the lives of multiple diverse others; it becomes a common background of intelligibility, supporting multiple intentions without itself directly forming any of them. It draws people together in inhabiting the same place in diversity and difference. This is the cosmopolitan setting where others and their lives are constantly visible in our own lives, adding colour and vibrancy and a certain friction of difference to the everyday scene which stimulates the senses and awakens awareness of the relativity of our own habits. Arendt on the one hand sees the *polis* as a bounded realm of talk comprising a bounded community of *talkers* in a bounded space. The public realm is of a singular politic: 'This wall-like law was sacred, but only the inclosure was political. Without it a public realm could no more exist than a piece of property without a fence to hedge it in'.[43] On the other hand she elaborates a diffuse space of appearance, putting appearance itself now right at the centre of a public life in which 'Being and Appearing coincide. … Nothing and nobody exists in this world whose very being does not presuppose a spectator. In other words, nothing that is, insofar as it appears, exists in the singular; everything that is is meant to be perceived by somebody. Not Man but men inhabit this planet. Plurality is the law of the earth'.[44] In a world of appearance, there is no subject that is not also an object whose identity is affirmed and 'objectified' in recognition.

Arendt finds, in an everyday that like Olafson's depends on being *with* others, a life and a politics

of *presentation*, in the auspices not of a *singular* political law and territory but in the diverse practices of life itself. This is a politics of the public and its appearance and display that works between people and from the 'value of the surface'⁴⁵ rather than from a 'deeper' structural law of a singular and universalised practice of the public. It is distributed *between* the surfaces of things and people, filling space in its enactment – but also necessarily differentiating it in the process. It works not by valorising and marking places as 'political' at the outset, but by finding places *becoming* political as incidents in and expressions of everyday life. Classical Athens was a bounded space walled and centred on its agora, gathering people *in common purpose* and a common politic to a centre. This other space is a grid set out between places, facilitating divergent purposes in a region of places held in common *between* people. People find themselves in the presence of a public of anonymous others, each engaged in their own immediate concerns and only coincidentally participating in a common life between places held in common. We enter here a realm of walkers not assimilated to a singular practice of the public or required to perform that practice to participate in a spatial politics – this is the democratic space of an everyday which includes all whether they opt into a dominant discourse or not – but it is also a space which may secrete a politics of power and presence behind a naturalised and habitual everyday in which all appears to be just as it is.

This walker is not Arendt's 'free man' so much as an anonymous participant *inhabiting* a body politic through his or her unremarked presence in a life of the city. This open public space is the spatial institution of the city in its diverse immediate and everyday affairs, but it is also one whose places will become differently valorised and differentiated in use and in the qualities and amenities they offer different people. The spaces *between* places themselves become places whose value is determined by the passage and presence of particular people. They may in other words themselves take on different positions in the lives of different people engaged in different and differently valourised practices. They hold the potential to be positive places of appearance and copresence between different people or equally to become places which gather value to themselves in a winner-takes-all centralising dynamic. Power can be a factor that accrues over time to central places, even in an initially open and 'democratic' space – relegating more marginal activities to more marginal spaces. We may see all this play out in an 'agonism' of lively and colourful 'contestation' of public space, with marginal and central places coexisting in a polarized and energized proximity. Or we may see peripheral places banished to a 'safer' distance, and drop out of view from the perspective of the centre, to perhaps later erupt without warning as people deprived of the 'reality' and visibility of centrality reassert their rights and make themselves visible in less positive ways. This dynamic of 'place becoming' is therefore creative, but neither neutral nor *intrinsically* 'democratic'. It retains powerful potentials for the hardening of power inequalities in space and place.

The city as instrument of knowledge and memory

Don Ihde draws attention back to the relational essence and the technicity that he sees underlying the phenomenological position and phenomenological space, something we find already being developed in Heidegger's *Being and Time*. He sees our knowledge and practices founded in the *instrumentality* of our equipped and prepared spaces. The spaces we prepare for use and occupation are fabrications *for* particular practices and ways of life. The objects in such spaces partake of relational totalities (practices and their settings) – and are disclosed to us *in* those totalities. As Ihde points out, 'Heidegger inverts the long primacy of objects of knowledge as the primary constituents of the world … In this tool analysis he argues that not only are such praxes closer to us, but that only by a kind of rupture in

this familiar interaction with the environment does something like an "object of knowledge" arise'.[46]

The things we encounter in the spaces we make are the products of those spaces and we are assured of their return in the patterns of the ways we do things. The city made possible the sharing of words and actions in such a way that significance and persistence could begin to accrue to them. The Greek *polis* established a technical framework within which people could gather to speak. But it was also an instrument of organising the collective of 'free men' into a *body politic*, which would outlive the individuals who made it up. Cities became technical supports for cultures, and materialised and spatialised ways of doing things that were sustained through time. It is through these material supports that practices of presenting and performing publicness were established and maintained, and here that the notion of a public or a community that went beyond kinship was itself made possible. Organised spaces became the condition for collectivities that were capable of both persistence and evolutionary change. But besides raising the possibility of a sustained human life at a collective level, these spaces also raised the persistent problems of power and exclusion and access – problems that still need to be addressed and researched at the level of the materialities and spatialities of the practices themselves.

It is arguable that Heidegger didn't go far enough in asserting the materiality and technicity of the processes supporting intentionality and agency in our human world. We continue finding the logics of technical and relational materiality that were always at least implicit in Heidegger's thinking and reevaluating the place of organised matter (the 'mind in the world' of cybernetician Gregory Bateson) in establishing and maintaining the orders that stabilise and regularise our existence as situated and spatial beings. We find that the 'relation of the living to its milieu … pass[es] through organized inert matter

– the technical object … it becomes the interface through which the human … enters into relation with the milieu'.[47] Our further research depends on this understanding that we inhabit technical systems which themselves constitute 'stabilisations of technical evolution around points of equilibrium concretized by particular technologies'.[48] To understand the city as a problem of human inhabitation it is this interface that must be the focus of our ongoing work.

Notes

1. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*; entry on 'Phenomenology': http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/ [accessed: 21st July 2008]

2. Don Ihde, 'If phenomenology is an albatross, is post-phenomenology possible?' in *Chasing Technoscience*, ed. by D. Ihde & E. Selinger (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003).

3. Many urbanists concerned with the city as a human environment will recognise close parallels at a conceptual level with James Gibson's relational environmental psychology and I will continue to footnote some of this in passing (see James Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (Hillsdale: LEA Publishers, 1986)). One of the main points the cyberneticians were making at the Macy Conferences in the 1940s and 50s, was that in talking of human-technological systems, the observer or the user is always indissolubly part of the system. James Gibson's parallel interests in perception and the relations between humans and their environment mediated through human-environment optics and technologies – and especially his work with pilots – was exemplary of this tradition. For Gibson, what came first was the direct 'psychophysical' relation with the object of perception. The pilot becomes locked in an indissoluble unity of relation with his aircraft and with the landing strip he is approaching. In the same way the blind man became blind-man-with-white-stick in the 'cybernetics of self' of Gregory Bateson (in Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago

Press, 2000)), and in Ihde's discussion of Galileo's contribution to the progress towards modern science, Galileo becomes Galileo-with-telescope (Ihde (2003)).

4. For example: Clifford Geertz, 'The uses of diversity' in *Available Light* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

5. For example: Roland Robertson, 'Social Theory, Cultural Relativity and the Problem of Globality' in *Culture, Globalization and the World System*, ed. by A.D. King (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

6. This intentional relation is also close to the 'psycho-physical' relation that is the basis of environmental 'affordance' in Gibson's environmental psychology.

7. Frederick Olafson, 'Heidegger à la Wittgenstein or "Coping" with Professor Dreyfus, *Inquiry* (37, 1994), p. 52.

8. The 'ontological primacy' of the human-environment relation in 'intentionality' reminds us of the 'ontological primacy' of 'affordances' in James Gibson's environmental psychology (see John T. Sanders, 'An Ontology of Affordances', *Ecological Psychology* (9:1, 1997), pp. 97-112).

9. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by J. Macquarrie & E. Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), p. 228 [183].

10. Ibid. secs. 22-24.

11. Hubert Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division I* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1991), ch. 7.

12. Ibid. p. 129.

13. Olafson (1994), pp. 45-64.

14. Taylor Carman, 'On Being Social: A Reply to Olafson' *Inquiry* (37, 1994), pp. 203-23.

15. Yoko Arisaka, 'On Heidegger's Theory of Space: A Critique of Dreyfus', *Inquiry* (38, 1995), pp. 455-67 [p. 456]

16. See Frederick Olafson, *Heidegger and the Ground of Ethics: a study of Mitsein*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) ch. 1; see also Pierre Keller and David Weberman, 'Heidegger and the source(s) of intelligibility', *Continental Philosophy Review* (31, 1998), pp. 369-86.

17. Olafson (1998), pp. 3-4.

18. Ibid p. 7.

19. I will be arguing later that a common world of places may be what the urban specifically and simply adds to this 'world between people'.

20. Franz Brentano, *Descriptive Psychology, trans. by Benito Müller* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 88.

21. Heidegger (1962), p. 139 [105].

22. Ibid. p. 79 [54].

23. Arisaka (1995) p. 460.

24. Dreyfus (1991) p. 129.

25. Ibid. p. 130.

26. Ibid. p. 135.

27. Arisaka (1995) p. 462.

28. Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology,* trans. by A. Hofstadter, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 301.

29. It is also not the object as such, in Gibson's environmental psychology, but its affordance that matters; the way it is available for and becomes incorporated in action in situ.

30. Frederick Olafson, *Heidegger and the Philosophy of Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 49-50.

31. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by S. Rendell (Berkley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 5.

32. See Dan Zahavi, "Beyond Empathy: Phenomenological Approaches to Intersubjectivity", *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, (8: 5-7, 2001), pp. 151-67.

33. Heidegger (1962), p. 119 [86].

34. Ibid. p. 193 [151].

35. Graham Harman, *Tool-being: Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Objects* (Chicago: Open Court Publishing, 2002), p. 18-23.

36. Ibid. p. 23.

37. We find parallels again with Gibson who recognised that the perceiving organism and the environment are already related through the co-evolution and co-adaptation of each to the other. The environment therefore offers conditions commensurate with the organism's needs. As a result, perception for the organism is the pickup of information on the go that supports the

organism's perception and action. Gibson called this action-supportive information 'affordance'. It is the affordance the environment offers that is the proper object of perception, and this affordance may be directly perceived, according to Gibson, without intervening mental representation.

38. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1970) pp. 198-99.

39. Ibid. p. 200.

40. Ibid. pp. 63-4.

41. Ibid. p. 52.

42. See for example Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

43. Arendt (1970), p. 64.

44. Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* (New York: Harvest, 1978), p. 19.

45. Ibid. p. 30.

46. Don Ihde, *Instrumental Realism: The Interface between Philosophy of Science and Philosophy of Technology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), p. 51.

47. Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 1*, trans. by R. Beardsworth and G. Collins (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 49.

48. Ibid. p. 31.

Biography

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