

## Autotopology – A Mechanical Journey Through Self

Raluca Deleanu  
Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi

G. V. Loewen, *Place Meant – Hermeneutic landscapes of the spatial self*, 2015, University Press of America, 266 p.

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G. V. Loewen is a Canadian philosopher whose area of expertise is represented by the traditions of noetics, hermeneutics and phenomenology. He is constantly researching and teaching in the U.S.A. and Canada for over two decades. This assured his excellence in interdisciplinary interpretation so he became one of the most zealous seekers in the previously mentioned fields.

*Place Meant – Hermeneutic Landscapes of the Spatial Self* is the latest of over nineteen titles in his personal bibliography. All of his books share a common idea: it is assumed that being human can be learned through interpretation, dialogue, history and art doubled by a co-dependence with *sociality*. This can possibly give birth to a desire of wanting to discover new and unexplored situations and spaces. That being said, the title of the book becomes self explanatory, hence a creature with the idea of self must have a concept of spatiality as well. The “Place meant” becomes both a wondrous landscape and a personal sixth sense of a personal space. The title actually foresees the continuous duality between spaciness and selfitude, where time turns into fragments of an odd chronology.

The book is dedicated to the memory of the author’s parents, that are both architects of another kind of space, helping both the author and the reader to embark in this

phenomenological journey to explore spaces by rethinking some of the most hidden meanings of a commonly shared life-world. Also the reader receives a totem that obliges to take responsibility both for himself, for others and for the space inbetween. The totem is to be found on the front cover and it's passed on from its creator – Emily Carr, to the author, then to the reader. Henceforth the journey suddenly becomes a kerygmatic one, filled with potential dangers of a spiritual form of Being and the immanence of history, that are both kernels of the meaning of proper existence. The text presents five facets of space, five main parts, five symmetrical chapters that describe an ouroborosian journey and each of them can turn into a journey by itself. In the introductory part we face an autotopology meaningful for both the author and the reader, where some of the future places are described, the history that creates anticipation, the birth and death, the beginning and the end of a book, with its internal passages both mundane and divine. Such general geography doesn't necessarily have to manifest itself in the exact same place, cabled together multiple ones can animate both this book and the reader's understanding of space.

The meaning of space is expanding, the *Vorschein* becomes its foundation, it's only possible for the human actions to take place in space. This is what makes space spatial, the meaning of human actions, which are an amalgam of birth and rebirth into new and newer spaces, ever anew by leaving behind the self-constructing process. The creation dissolves into the judgment of the apocalypse, giving birth to new, different but identical forms. These odd resemblances produced by the author for the reader, by the individual for self and for others are the parts of a cosmos, a spatial self that provides mutual trust and comradeship in a new formal world, where leveling one's self becomes leveling the other, where birth and death are still mysteries for the history. Such melange of mythic and mundane becomes the mappable body of life, that makes the lack of continuous bedding a space characterized by spaciality now more than ever. "I stay in place", "I read about a place", "we take place", the space becomes as it should be - infinite, an individual's journey being possible only through temporarity,

leading to pragmatism necessary in all of the day to day's journeys that are so limited. However all this mundane finitude opens the way to a larger purpose. The beginning and the end are but some geometrical points, creating the fine line between mission and vision, necessary in order to reflect the means of both personal and shared futures and the possibility of blending them.

The public and massive space in which the chores are taking place steals our intimacy, the definition of good or bad for oneself is transformed into a sophomore sense of morality. The Greeks were the first to realize that knowledge of the world is self knowledge, what makes the experiences filled with ipsissimosity determines one to seek a world beyond the one we find ourselves in this very moment, then seeking another one and so on. It is well known that the self is becoming the soul of society, demanding another type of "noûs", that surfaces a cartography of awareness, where one must identify as a singular being lost in translation yet sharing the same terraria and language with many.

The human person is now set to confront its own existence, its own participation in the communal universe, the experience of the Other – here other can be either a person or the divine. The human spatial realities become filled with both inner and outer experiences that lead to radical understandings. This questions *why* we do or say and what the *do* and *say* are. In the spatial self, the search for wisdom (having different meanings for different individuals) becomes impetus, but the pathways are not always clear. Such a journey grows into a reality in itself with its own spirit and its own theatology. One thing is for sure: such itineraries are crafted amidst new queries and new concerns that reveal the thread linking the human subject to an object or a community of subjects who intersubjectively are forced to grow a connection with one another in a Universe composed of multiple split world. In such a space, each individual experiences and experiments new challenges that force one's own space to be re-thought and re-created phenomenologically, where "here" becomes "punctum" from which it can find its start and its end, can be near or far, assuming Logos and Topos in a shared glance.

*Here* defines motion, because it's motion itself, it is the place where one can move into a new horizon, near or far. Loewen lets himself guided by Maurice Natanson (American philosopher who helped introduce the work of Husserl in U.S.A.) that defines the geographical coordinates of the *Here* almost mathematically: they change as one moves, but at the same time, wherever one finds itself, it does so *Here*. The *Hereness* is an attribute of the person experiencing the world, since the dreams, for example, have a *here* of their own, the two topologies seem akin but they're in fact profoundly different. *Here* can sometimes cause "keno-phobia" (the fear of an empty space) which is treated with the answers provided by each one's culture (as both Gadamer and Dalai Lama agreed). This doesn't solve the problem of estrangement and finitude, as Anfenhalt forces us to face the fact that a space between hereness of being is stolen. The decisions regarding where we are surely belong only to the being. From now on, *Here* can become one's place only if it's a punctual tangible particle of what the world offers us with a little help from human imagination. From here on we are emplaced, even fractally, and we matter only to a world that doesn't have the patience to wait or, as Loewen reminds us paraphrasing a song: "Stop the world, I want to get off".

Any system must expand. Now, *There* gets its role by being the "ab-normal" space left entirely by the one that has the power to convert past into future. When *There* comes nearer we have knowledge not of its particular items (a infinity of *Here*) but of its *thereness*. The individual becomes filled with both assertive practicality and dispelled desire. Henceforth, the auto-history transforms into one of self-sacrifice since we always have to give up *here* in order to get *there*, yet we are seldom content to leave one place so we can discover another. Loewen makes a constant analogy between humans and stars that are considered our most distant cousins even though we are Earthbound and can only contemplate them, the thought that one day we will join them as a sentient consciousness creates a nostalgia of the unknown that helps reinventing the self, the world, the other and the divine.

If *here* and *there* are subjective experiences of the internal space and the closely acquainted relationship with it, *anywhere*

reunites the near and the far. In the Agora of anywhere the meaningful space fades. The looking glass reflection of this open space is both blurred and vivid causing a mild narcissistic disorder in every person. The Agora's stage triumphs over the individual by its cultural differences, the linguistic diversity and biographical idiosyncrasies offering the challenge to create connections between all that is different from one's self. Anywhere is sketched as in one of Bruegel's paintings where Psyche is a myth in itself, captivating all other myths. Techne is sovereign over Anywhere, where one must achieve extensive knowledge in order to be let by others to reside this fascinating space.

The reader is brought to Everywhere, where one becomes an object for the other and not just a contraption. The immanence of the open space must be filled since we are orbiting around of thousands of others, human beings that we don't know but we must do, transforming one into a proper hero in search for love, for things to like or maybe just to listen and be listened for a while. The closeness of self towards others implies a significant direction through Epektasis. Everywhere demonstrates that if we are bright enough we can oblivate our profound diversity to replace it with sameness. In order to learn the secrets of everywhere we must attempt to discover only one at a time as its very presence is unbearable for our mortal capabilities.

For the cosmic puzzle to be complete, Nowhere is the final aspect of auto-topology, the final stop of the spatial self that is totally unspatial, impossible to be physically measured. In the Nowhere the subjectivity as a Being is demolished, everyone participates to a common transcendental intersubjectivity. This occurrence guards us against solipsism and grants the coexistence in this uncanny concoction. We are not Lot's wife nor Icarus which are symbolic manifestations of the inner spatialities that the self must drift due to the binary restriction imposed by the states of subject and object. The ultimate bound is somewhat foreign as the Klein periphery and the perspective of *Verborgenes*, we rehearse each move in order to see all the closures ahead. We now emerge to look *up*, experiencing pseudovertigo, a glimpse of mortality that keeps us alive.

The book concludes with an *ontology of man*, a space where the possibility seduces the fundamental aspect of humanity by restricting it to a social climate. The contemporaneity is reigned by inaction, it can spawn a holocaust where the aspiration is to take over the liability of the other. The hermeneutic autotopology develops its compass capacity in a world of meanings.

The reader has just accomplished an ontological odyssey (about what there is) rather than an epistemological one (about what we know). We have both (the author and reader) achieved a conceptual grasp between space and place, having Heidegger, Gadamer, Newmann, Carr or Derrida doing our hermeneutics. We have ridden a carousel of both past and future memories where G. V. Loewen placed already known things into a new perspective, creating this almost reversible, ouroboric journey transformed into a topology essential to philosophy. Being a dynamic book, "Place Meant" is filled with pop-culture references (such as quotations from Frank Sinatra's "My Way" or Pink Floyd's "Another brick in the wall", H. P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu mythos) or more eccentric ones (such as the graffiti from the memorial at Auschwitz) and the autobiographical notes, the writer seems to address its work to every individual concerned in creating a personal topology facing the fact that eventually the human race would've developed to a point when we'll shoot sci-fi films in the actual outer space.

**Address:**

Raluca Deleanu  
Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi  
Department of Philosophy  
Bd. Carol I no. 11  
700506 Iasi, Romania  
E-mail: r\_deleanu@yahoo.com