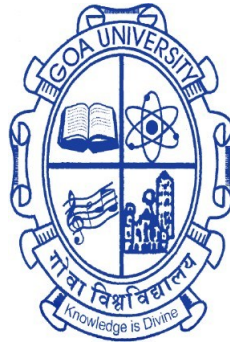


Hermeneutics of Space and Selfhood: A Study in the Philosophies of Foucault and Ricoeur

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DECLARATION

I, Vidya Mary George, hereby declare that this thesis represents work which has been carried out by me and that it has not been submitted, either in part or in full, to any other University or Institution for the award of any research degree.

Place: Taleigao Plateau

Date: 04.09.2026



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CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that the above Declaration of the candidate, Vidya Mary George, is true and that the work was carried out under my supervision.


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Chapter 1

Interpretation of Space and Understanding of Self: Reading Foucault and Ricoeur in One Frame

The aim of this study, titled *Hermeneutics of Space and Selfhood: A Study in the Philosophies of Foucault and Ricoeur*, is to explore the possibility of a coherent and comprehensible sense of self emerging hermeneutically in relation to others and/in space. The study adopts a critical-interpretive approach to explore three objectives, namely the spatial constitution of selfhood, the hermeneutics of space/architecture, and the spatial aspects of living a good life, by building on the suggestions in the later works of the late twentieth-century French thinkers Michel Foucault (1926–1984) and Paul Ricoeur (1913–2005).

This introductory chapter contextualises the study within a broader theoretical framework, with the specific objective of knowing our way around how the interpretation of space hangs together with and opens possibilities for the understanding of the self in the later works of Foucault and Ricoeur. Such an exploration will contribute to our examination of how both thinkers used and understood the concept of the self in their distinct ways and accounted for its coherence and comprehensibility, a task we will take up in Chapter 2.

In this chapter, we will first identify the concern that Foucault and Ricoeur share for the self in their later works as projects in post-structuralist hermeneutics of the subject/self, situated in the aftermath of what Ricoeur calls the “overthrow of the Cogito” (1992, 5) by the “masters of suspicion” (1970, 33): Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud. Next, we will pass through a detour of analysis of space to explore how the interpretation of space and the understanding of the self hang together with regard to the self’s exteriorisation of meaning in space. Here, we will unpack Foucault’s history of the concept of space in the West in light of Stephan Günzel’s

(2009, 2012) exposition, and discuss Foucault and Ricoeur as thinkers on space. Finally, we will identify “refiguration of space” as the phase in which possibilities for the revealing and transforming of the self are opened. We will conclude by showing that “spatiality of the self” offers yet another point of intersection to further imaginary conversations and philosophical dialogues between Foucault and Ricoeur in the context of their shared concern for the self.

1.1. A Shared Concern for the Self: Projects in Post-structuralist Hermeneutics

Despite being contemporaries within the same camp of Contemporary Continental Philosophy and having had several common concerns, Foucault and Ricoeur had few interactions with each other during their lifetimes—“except at very localised points of intersection,” as Ricoeur observed (Ricoeur 1998, 79; see also Goetz 2004; Castonguay 2010, 83n1). Recent studies have attempted to construct imaginary conversations and philosophical dialogues between the two thinkers with regard to their shared concern for the self (Davidson and Michel 2010, 8), specifically the role of understanding and interpretation in the constitution of the subject (Castonguay 2010), the constitution of the self by the self (self-transformation and self-knowledge; Barthélémy 2010), the conception of freedom as practices of the self (resistance to power and exercise of capacities; Barthélémy 2010), the status of ethics (care of the self and the practical wisdom of little ethics; Barthélémy 2010), and practices and human action.¹ Many of these studies identify the search for self-understanding, imbued with an ethical concern for one’s relations with oneself and others in institutions, as one of the common guiding threads that run through their works (Goetz 2004), situating them within “a philosophical lineage that can be traced back to the Socratic injunction to ‘know oneself’” (*gnothi seauton*) framed by the “care of the self” (*epimeleia heautou*) (Michel 2015, 103; Davidson 2016, 159).

¹ Recent years have witnessed a considerable growth in the scholarly literature on the actual and possible interactions between Foucault and Ricoeur. However, several of these works (such as those published in *Ricoeur Studies* 1, no. 1 (2010) and Goetz 2004) are in French, with no English translations available yet.

Foucault's and Ricoeur's concern for the self became more pronounced in their later works, which can be considered projects in post-structuralist hermeneutics of the subject/self. The highly eclectic concept of "post-structuralism" is difficult to define due to the ambiguities and disagreements surrounding it. Following Gary Gutting (1998a, 1998b), this study uses the concept in the sense of philosophical reflections on or reactions to structuralism, rather than as a simple rejection or extension of it. The implicit theoretical basis of structuralism was "a kind of Cartesianism without the subject": it treated "distinctively human domains as formal structures in which meanings were constituted not by conscious subjects but by relations among the elements of a formal system." Post-structuralist critiques of structuralism retain its elimination of the foundational role of the subject but deny the internal coherence of formal systems based on two major theses: (1) No system is autonomous in the way structuralism requires, and (2) dichotomies underlying structuralism do not hold up under scrutiny (Gutting 1998a, 1998b). The retention of the term "post-structuralism" instead of "postmodernism," which the current academic literature more typically invokes, seems more apt here, as George Taylor (2015) observes, to delineate the thinkers' responses precisely to the idea that "the subject [is] not the master of meaning" (Taylor 2015, xii), and to suggest the thinkers' engagement with tradition rather than a "radical rupture" with it that the latter term implies (Taylor 2015, xv). Meanwhile, Keane and Lawn (2016) observe that the contemporary understanding of Western hermeneutics is "almost exclusively bound up with the activity of interpretation," compared to its more polysemic past—the Greek *hermeneia*, translated into Latin as *hermeneutica*, designated the activities of "declaration, explanation, translation, communication, and even artistic elocution," in addition to interpretation (Keane and Lawn 2016, 1). They address the nature of contemporary hermeneutics by identifying the interplay of three interconnected yet distinct aspects that it usually refers to:

(1) The concrete process of understanding as the task of explicating and assessing our interpretation of texts; ... (2) the historical centrality of establishing a rule for the proper use of interpretation, that is, the concrete elaboration and implementation of what was called the *ars interpretandi* [art of interpretation]; ... and (3) the philosophical theory and method with which we can fix or ascertain the nature, character, conditions, and limits of every possible act of understanding. (Keane and Lawn 2016, 1)

Foucault is widely recognised as a post-structuralist, though not as often as a hermeneutician. Dreyfus and Rabinow (1983, 124) argue that Foucault employs an “interpretive analytic of our current situation,” but not a hermeneutic method. However, Foucault is readily included as a “major figure” in key references on hermeneutics such as *The Blackwell Companion to Hermeneutics* (Keane and Lawn 2016) and *Transforming the Hermeneutic Context: From Nietzsche to Nancy* (1990), especially for his contributions to and expansion of the hermeneutics of suspicion by way of analysing “cultural meaning as a site in which competing fields of power configure and confront one another” (Davey 2008, 695–696). On the other hand, Ricoeur is widely recognised as a seminal figure in contemporary hermeneutics, though not as often as a post-structuralist. However, many recent studies, notably those by Johann Michel (2015), clearly characterise Ricoeur as a post-structuralist, especially with regard to his critique of the foundational subject, his attempt to surpass structuralism, and rereading of Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud as hermeneuticians of suspicion (Michel 2015, xxiv).²

Despite and due to their difficulties of “fully belonging” to both theoretical branches, this study presupposes the later works of Foucault and Ricoeur as contributing “up to a point” to a “specific type” of post-structuralist hermeneutics in their own distinct ways, in a manner similar to that proposed by Michel (2015, xxvi). Ricoeur (1998, 79) had observed that he and

² For a list of studies that classify Ricoeur as a post-structuralist, see Michel 2015, xxviii n9, xxix n15, xxix n17, xxx n23; for a study that discusses the difficulties with such a classification, see Michel 2015, xxviii n9.

Foucault were on paths where they encountered each other infrequently. Even so, as Hans Joas (2019, xiv) notes, Michel (2015, 2019) explicates how the two French thinkers “learned from each other and modified their respective philosophies accordingly,” furthering the possibilities of reading them in one frame.³ As Hans Joas (2019) summarises Michel’s argument—also responding to Dreyfus and Rabinow:

Ricoeur integrated more and more aspects of a Nietzschean hermeneutics of suspicion into his approach—a process that had already begun with his interest in Freud and Marx or Karl Mannheim. Foucault, who had been labelled—by Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow—to be “interpretive but not hermeneutic,” developed in his later work a study of the genealogy of self-examination that can be called a “hermeneutics of the self” ... Both provide, as Johann Michel writes, an anthropological foundation for the “forms of auto-interpretation when a human agent is confronted with the problematization regarding himself, when the meaning of his existence no longer makes sense.” (Joas 2019, xiv)

1.2. The Quest for Meaning: Towards a Hermeneutics of the Subject/Self

The self for which a concern Foucault and Ricoeur share in their later works emerges in the aftermath of the critique of the philosophies of the subject by Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, whom both Foucault and Ricoeur jointly treated for their contributions to the “hermeneutics of suspicion” (Ricoeur 1970; Foucault 1990). The primary references in this chapter for their joint

³ Although Foucault and Ricoeur learned from each other, they did not explicitly cross-reference each other’s works very often, and that too with more instances of the latter mentioning the former. One of the instances in which Ricoeur makes a passing reference to Foucault’s thought is in the introduction of *Oneself as Another* (1992), wherein he “borrows” the phrase “care of the self,” and qualifies it as “Foucault’s magnificent title” (Ricoeur 1992, 2). Goetz (2004) finds this to be excessive praise, as it is simply a translation of the ancient Greek injunction *epimeleia heautou*. Understandably, Ricoeur does not analyse Foucault’s contributions in detail here, as he did not share Foucault’s concern with the history of sexuality in the context of the care of the self. Apart from passing references, there are also instances wherein Ricoeur provides a more “substantial treatment” to specific analyses by Foucault (Michel 2015, xxx n20), whether charitably or critically. Scholars have observed that Ricoeur’s approach towards the later Foucault was more amiable, with him paying heartfelt tributes to the latter in his works published after Foucault’s untimely death (see Goetz 2004).

treatment of these hermeneuticians of suspicion are the published English translations of Foucault's "Nietzsche, Freud, Marx" (Foucault 1990), presented and originally published in 1964, as well as Ricoeur's "Interpretation as Exercise of Suspicion" (Ricoeur 1970), delivered in 1961–1962 and originally published in 1965.

The heritage of the philosophies of the subject in the West, "those from Descartes to Kant, then from Kant to Fichte, and finally to the Husserl of the *Cartesian Meditations*" (Ricoeur 1992, 5), underwent a tremendous shift in the nineteenth century in light of the critiques of Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, whom Ricoeur famously designated as the "masters of suspicion" (Ricoeur 1970, 33). The mastery of the masters of suspicion lay in suspecting consciousness as being something other than what it appears to itself (Ricoeur 1970, 33; 1989, 148). Though suspicion had been exercised in the history of thought before the masters did so, it was directed only towards language and things, and never towards consciousness. Since the ancient Greeks, language in Indo-European cultures had been suspected of meaning something other than what it says and speaking through things other than itself (Foucault 1990, 60). Since Descartes, things too had been suspected of being something other than what they appear to consciousness. Descartes' search for a certain and indubitable foundation of all knowledge and meaning led him to the positing of the Cogito (Ricoeur 1992, 5). The subject thus posited, however, answered to the question of what I am rather than who I am (Ricoeur 1992, 7). The "exaltation of the Cogito" came at the price of its being reduced to a thinking thing bereft of understanding or agency (Ricoeur 1992, 11). When the masters of suspicion took up the problem of the Cartesian doubt once again, it was to take aim at the heart of the Cartesian subject itself, "to look upon the whole of consciousness primarily as 'false' consciousness" (Ricoeur 1970, 33). They entered the problem of false consciousness in different ways, attempting to "make their 'conscious' methods of deciphering coincide with the 'unconscious' work of ciphering which they attributed to the will to power, to social being, to the unconscious psychism."

Nevertheless, all the methods were united in their common intention: the reduction of the illusions and lies of consciousness (Ricoeur 1970, 32–34).

When the interpreters began interpreting themselves according to the techniques of interpretation, the Cogito suffered catastrophic consequences, inflicting “inexhaustible narcissistic wounds” on Western culture (Foucault 1990, 61). It became uncertain and doubtful if meaning and the consciousness of meaning coincided in consciousness at all. The new “hermeneutics of suspicion” posed interpretation as an exercise of suspicion against interpretation as a recollection of meaning and the reminiscence of being (Ricoeur 1970, 35). It was no longer sufficient to seek meaning through the act of recollection and verbalisation of the immediate consciousness of meaning. Rather, meaning necessitated mediation—an art of interpretation, a deciphering of its expressions (Ricoeur 1970, 33; 1989, 149).

Ricoeur asserts that the contribution of the masters of suspicion to the heritage of the philosophies of the subject was not simply an exercise in scepticism, as is commonly misunderstood and dismissed. The legacy of the masters lies not only in suspecting and demystifying consciousness, but also in extending it rather than detracting it—Marx via necessity, Nietzsche via the eternal return, and Freud via the reality principle (Ricoeur 1970, 35). Indeed, the role of suspicion, as George Taylor (2015, xiv) notes, was to “open an alternative space for human vitality to flourish.” As Foucault argues, the overthrow of the Cartesian subject “does not create a deficiency; it does not constitute a lacuna that must be filled. It is nothing more, and nothing less, than the unfolding of a space in which it is once more possible to think” (Foucault 1970a, 373). In the absence of the imposition of the Cartesian subject and the emptiness of reflexive self-certitude (Davidson 2016, 160), many Continental thinkers have indeed superseded the philosophies of the subject. By being attentive to and

assimilating the often-overlooked positive possibilities of the masters' critiques (Ricoeur 1970, 32), they have reconceptualised the subject/self within newly unfolding interpretive spaces.⁴

For Foucault, the new relation between meaning and the consciousness of meaning that the hermeneutics of suspicion brought forth implied that the interpretation of consciousness became an essentially incomplete task—forever fragmented, unfinished, and infinite, what with its irreducible gaps and openings. It comes to have no origination or end, as there is *nothing* to interpret—there are only interpretations of interpretations. Given the endlessness of the interpretations of interpretations, interpretation cannot help but always correct itself. To impose one interpretation over others is to give up on the infinity of interpretations, to force the death of interpretation (Foucault 1990, 63–66). The rejection of *a priori* theories of the subject is what Foucault celebrates in *The Order of Things* (1970a) when he declares man to have disappeared and died (Foucault 1970a, 373)—a statement often misunderstood and criticised as having given up on conceptualisations of the subject/self altogether (Allen 2008, 60). On the contrary, he asserts that, with nothing to interpret, the new hermeneutic question turns to the “Who?”—the subject that poses the interpretation (Foucault 1990, 66), a form, not a substance, which is “not primarily or always identical to itself” (Foucault 1997d, 290). The active constitution of the subject by itself in various forms through the practices of the self becomes the object of analysis in the later Foucault's investigations into both the ethics of the

⁴ To those who still do not consider the Cartesian subject to have been overthrown, Foucault responds with a silent, philosophical laugh:

To all those who still wish to talk about man, about his reign or his liberation, to all those who still ask themselves questions about what man is in his essence, to all those who wish to take him as their starting-point in their attempts to reach the truth, to all those who, on the other hand, refer all knowledge back to the truths of man himself, to all those who refuse to formalise without anthropologising, who refuse to mythologise without demystifying, who refuse to think without immediately thinking that it is man who is thinking, to all these warped and twisted forms of reflection we can answer only with a philosophical laugh—which means, to a certain extent, a silent one. (Foucault 1970a, 373)

care of the self and others as a practice of freedom and the genealogy of the hermeneutics of the subject (Foucault 1997d, 281–287).

For Ricoeur, to enforce a final interpretation or a last word (in literary criticism or the social sciences) on the conflict of interpretations or plurivocity of texts and actions is to do violence (Ricoeur 1981e, 177). He, too, declares the Cogito to have been shattered and his question of selfhood to have parted ways with the philosophies of the subject in the introduction to *Oneself as Another* (Ricoeur 1992, 4). He then turned his attention toward a hermeneutics of the self considered as a “triple dialectic of reflection and analysis, of selfhood and sameness, and of self and other” (Ricoeur 1992, 21), which he places “at an equal distance from the apology of the cogito and from its overthrow” (Ricoeur 1992, 3). Ricoeurian hermeneutics is a “philosophy of detours”: “The recourse to analysis ... is the price to pay for a hermeneutics characterised by the indirect manner of positing the self” (Ricoeur 1992, 17). Ricoeur’s basic claim here, as George Taylor explains, is that “meaning is understood not on the basis of intuition but in meaning’s externalisation [or, in Ricoeurian terms, exteriorisation] in objects” (Taylor 2015, xii). The self implied reflexively in the long route of analysis is rich, complex, and multidimensional, one that answers to the question “Who?”: “Who is speaking? Who is acting? Who is recounting about himself or herself? Who is the moral subject of imputation?” (Ricoeur 1992, 16). The intimate degree to which the other is constitutive of selfhood (Ricoeur 1992, 3) is such that “the autonomy of the self will appear then to be tightly bound up with solicitude for one’s neighbour and with justice for each individual” (Ricoeur 1992, 18). That is, his hermeneutics of the self is bound up with the practical wisdom of his “little ethics” in the quest for the “ethical intention,” understood as the “aiming at the good life with and for others, in just institutions” (Ricoeur 1992, 172).

1.3. Self, Spatiality, and Exteriorisation of Meaning: An Analysis of Space

In Ricoeurian hermeneutics—a philosophy of detours—the paradigm for interpretation is provided by the notion of the text. Understanding the text, however, is not an end in itself: “It mediates the relation to himself of a subject who, in the short circuit of immediate reflection, does not find the meaning of his own life. ... The constitution of the self is contemporaneous with the constitution of meaning” (Ricoeur 1981d, 120). Ricoeur asserts that to understand oneself is to understand oneself in front of the text. Self-understanding requires passing through “the detour of understanding the cultural signs in which the self documents and forms itself” (Ricoeur 1981c, 12), such as “those which are fixed by writing, including all the sorts of documents and monuments which entail a fixation similar to writing” (Ricoeur 1981e, 159). In addition, in his article “Architecture and Narrativity” (2016b), he draws a direct and open analogy between architecture, an inscription in stone or any hard material, and narrativity, an inscription in language (Ricoeur 2016b, 32).⁵ He thus opens possibilities for the application and expansion of hermeneutics to built space and, more broadly, to space.⁶ In what follows, we pass through a detour of reflection by way of an analysis of space to explore how the interpretation of space and the understanding of the self hang together with regard to the self’s exteriorisation of meaning in space. In this section, we unpack Foucault’s history of the concept of space in the West in light of Stephan Günzel’s exposition, before discussing Foucault and Ricoeur as thinkers on space in the following sections.

⁵ In Ricoeurian hermeneutics, there are parallels between models and metaphors; however, the two cannot be equated. While a model helps describe “an unknown thing or a lesser-known thing in terms of a better-known thing thanks to a similarity of structure,” metaphors “build similarities on dissimilarities,” thereby generating new meanings (what he calls “semantic innovation”) and refiguring the reality of the world of the reader (Ricoeur 1991, 83–84). That is to say, in his spatial thought, Ricoeur drew a parallel between architecture and narrativity, but did not see the concept of the text as a metaphor for space. We will discuss this in more detail in Chapter 3.

⁶ In the context of our following discussion of Foucault’s and Ricoeur’s usage and understanding of “space” in their post-structuralist hermeneutic accounts, our concern with and usage of the term “space” in this study includes the notion of built space.

Space, for Foucault, is a historical entity subject to time and power. The history of spaces is a history of powers (Foucault 1980b, 149). In his oft-cited article “*Des Espaces Autres*” (2008 [1967]), he traces a brief history of the concept of space in the West: the contemporary space of “emplacement” has substituted the modern space of “extension,” which itself had replaced the medieval space of “localisation” (Foucault 2008, 14). In the Middle Ages, space was conceptualised as a hierarchic, oppositional ensemble of localised places. However, in the modern era, when space came to be conceived as infinitely extended and open, places were dismissed as mere points in the movement of a thing. In contrast, space is conceptualised today as emplacements, i.e., “relations of proximity between points or elements” (Foucault 2008, 14). Foucault’s account has been criticised as being hasty and simplistic (for instance, see Casey 1997, 298); however, unpacking it in light of a more recent exposition of the conceptual history of space, such as that offered by Stephan Günzel (2009, 2012), demonstrates its continuing relevance.

Günzel (2009, 2012) identifies three epochs in the general history of the concept of space: the Aristotelian period, the Newtonian period, and the contemporary period, in which Newton’s spatial conception was rethought, especially by Einstein. In each epoch, he notes, “the physical concept of space rested upon geometrical as well as cosmological concepts of spatiality, which furthermore was set in a cultural context by which certain understandings of space were encouraged and others ignored or suppressed” (Günzel 2009, 1173).

During the Aristotelian period, the concept of space as “*topos*” or “place” was dominant. Aristotle considered place as “the surrounding border of any material object,” tying spatiality to the locality and substance of an object. Space as place is non-geometrical and has no extension, is invariable and never void. Things can change their places, but place itself does not move. The cosmological background of Aristotelian physics—a finite universe with Earth

as the centre and a first mover (identified with God in Christian interpretations, especially that by Aquinas) located at the outermost sphere, who caused any physical process in the world—prevailed and persisted into the Middle Ages (Günzel 2009, 1173–1174). The concept of space that presupposes the cosmology Günzel outlines here aligns with what Foucault calls the medieval space of “localisation,” wherein space was seen as hierarchic and oppositional. Foucault writes:

In the Middle Ages it was a hierarchic ensemble of places: sacred places and profane places, protected places and open spaces without defence, urban places and rural places (so far for the real life of humans). For cosmological theory, there were the super-celestial places as opposed to the celestial, and the celestial place was in turn opposed to the terrestrial place. There were the places where things found themselves placed because they had been violently displaced, and then, on the contrary, the places where things found their emplacement and natural rest. It was this complete hierarchy, this opposition, this intersection of places that constituted what could very roughly be called medieval space: the space of localisation. (Foucault 2008, 15)

Later, Aristotle’s substantialism was strongly supported by Descartes, who conceived of physical space as “*plenum*,” understood as “continuous and of a material character” (Günzel 2009, 1175).

During the Newtonian period, a new concept of physical space as volume—“the (geometrical) product of a three-dimensional extension”—was established. Newtonian absolute space is the homogeneous, indivisible totality in which any object is located. Against the Aristotelian-Cartesian conceptions of space it replaced, absolute space was no longer tied to locality or substance, and could be void. In the cosmological framework of Newtonian physics—an infinite universe with no centre—there was no place for a divine first mover, as matter (as mass) itself was considered the cause of movement (Günzel 2009, 1174–1175). The conception

of space Günzel discusses here aligns with what Foucault calls the space of “extension,” wherein space was seen as “infinite and infinitely open” ever since Galileo, reducing medieval place to a point in the movement of a thing. Foucault writes:

This space of localisation opened up with Galileo, for the real scandal of Galileo’s work is not so much his discovery, or rediscovery, that the Earth revolved around the sun, but his constitution of an infinite and infinitely open space. In such a space the place of the Middle Ages found itself dissolved as it were; the place of a thing was nothing but a point in its movement, just as the rest of a thing was only its movement indefinitely slowed down. In other words, starting with Galileo, starting with the seventeenth century, extension supplanted localisation. (Foucault 2008, 15)

Newton’s spatial conception was contested and rethought in several ways. Leibniz, in correspondence with the Newtonian Samuel Clarke, refuted the Newtonian concept of absolute space (also for suggesting atheism), conceiving space instead as the relations between *topoi*, the construction of which is even prior to the perception of objects.⁷ On the other hand, Kant responded to the Leibniz-Clarke correspondence by considering geometric space, the three-dimensional extension, to be the very condition of perception and hence prior to and independent of relations, particular situations, and individual perceptions. In the early twentieth century, Einstein rethought Newtonian absolute space—which he called the container model of space—as relative. In his relativistic space-time theory, space is interweaved with time and no longer seen as infinite, as it has expanded since the Big Bang (Günzel 2009, 1175–1176).

In response to the physical and mathematical concepts of space, phenomenologists such as Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and Bachelard argued for a description of spatiality

⁷ Günzel notes that Leibniz can be considered the forerunner of “topology”—a “non-materialistic and even non-extensional conception of space as the structure of relations (of spatial objects).” This abstraction in geometry is said to have urged the contemporary understanding of space in sociocultural discourse (Günzel 2012, 307).

from within lived bodily experience, against explanations of spatial structures in terms of the mechanics of a body's functions. In this "counterproposal," spatial dimensions arose from a "point zero" inherent in the subject (Günzel 2012, 312), thereby incorporating the lived body into discussions on space (Tharakan and George 2025b, 147). Foucault considered phenomenological descriptions of space as primarily concerned with "inner space" and "fundamental for reflection in our time" (Foucault 2008, 16). Reflecting on Bachelard's description of space as heterogeneous, he writes:

Bachelard's monumental work, the descriptions of phenomenologists have taught us that we do not live in a homogeneous and empty space, but on the contrary in a space thoroughly loaded with qualities and perhaps also haunted by fantasy. The space of our primary perception, the space of our dreams and that of our passions hold within themselves qualities that seem intrinsic: it is a light, ethereal, transparent space, or again it is a dark, rough, encumbered space; it is a space from above, a space of summits, or on the contrary a space from below, a space of mud; it is a space that can be flowing like lively water, or it is a space that is fixed, solidified, like stone or like crystal. (Foucault 2008, 16)

Husserl, in particular, can be regarded as one of the phenomenologists whose prolonged meditations on spatiality (see Casey 1997, 433n78; da Silva 2012; DuFour 2023) ushered in the transition from the modern to the contemporary understanding of space.⁸ According to Casey, though Husserl regarded space as fully constituted, homogenous, and objective as per modern physics, he maintained a caveat by way of the lived body even in his initial, pre-*Crisis* forays into spatiality: "External space (*der Ausserraum*) is homogeneous, even though it

⁸ An abridged version of this paragraph has been published as part of a research paper titled "Husserl's *Crisis* Text and the Spatial Turn in Philosophy of Science," where we show that "the project of spatiality becomes another bridge between the works of Husserl and Foucault, continuing dialogues between their respective traditions" (see Tharakan and George 2025b).

presents itself as oriented in various ways... But the lived body and its bodily space break the homogeneity asunder” (Husserl as cited in Casey 1997, 219–220). In *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, Husserl explicitly points to the bodily basis of the abstracting and idealising operations of Euclidean geometry (Casey 1997, 230) by singling out the necessarily lived and extended body and its constitutive role in the life-world (Casey 1997, 223; also see DuFour 2023, 338). In the lived bodily experiences of kinesthesia and movement, especially walking, the lived body and the lived place are constituted as coherent wholes and linked together (Casey 1997, 224). By incorporating the living body into discussions of space and place and emphasising its foundational role in the origin and orientation of space and spatial thought, Husserl established an axis to criticise and unsettle the modernist conception of abstract space (Casey 1997, 229; Whaley 2018, 25; Paç 2023, 504). Husserl’s corporeal turn in *Crisis* was further developed by later phenomenologists such as Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and Bachelard (Whaley 2018, 25–27), marking a “spatial turn” in phenomenology (Peters and Kessl 2009, 21), continuing to influence discussions on place,⁹ and anticipating the contemporary heterogeneous, network era of space (Tharakan and George 2025b, 147).

Meanwhile, by the twentieth century, the conception of space in sociocultural discourse had moved, to a large extent, away from “a materialistic and deterministic view of (physical) space to an immaterial and possibilistic view of (cultural) space” (Günzel 2012, 307). Cultural space is less concerned with the origin, essence, or “true” concept of space than with spatial practices and the production of spatiality (Günzel 2012, 307). Space is no longer viewed as “static, fixed, and lying outside of society” (Warf 2009, 74), or a void/container or coordinate system inside which individuals and things could be placed; nor is it viewed as a set of physical places or category of consciousness that shapes perception. In the contemporary period, space is

⁹ As seen, for instance, in the works of the humanist geographer Edward Relph (Withers 2009, 640).

understood as emergent rather than existing *a priori*, and composed of relations rather than structures (Warf 2009, 75; Bachmann-Medick 2016, 216). Such a reconceptualisation can better account for the dynamicity and heterogeneity of the processes that shape space today. Contemporary society has the “network” as its organising principle, wherein distance is defined “functionally rather than in terms of physical length” (Warf 2009, 70). The notion of space as relational and heterogeneous in the network era aligns with what Foucault calls the space of “emplacements” in the present epoch of space. He writes:

The present epoch would perhaps rather be the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity; we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and the far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. We are at a moment, I believe, when our experience of the world is less that of a great life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein. ... We are in an epoch in which space is given to us in the form of relations between emplacements. ... We do not live in a kind of void, inside which we could place individuals and things. ... We live inside a set of relations that delineate emplacements that cannot be equated or in any way superimposed. (Foucault 2008, 14–16)

The relational understanding of space, however, may risk overemphasising the creative capacities of agents. For instance, it has been noted that a few recent contributions to the relational understanding of space view space as “spacing,” wherein the relations between things and actors have to be constantly rebuilt by the latter (Peters and Kessl 2009, 25; Schroer 2019, 9).

The understanding of space as relational and heterogeneous has been central to the spatial turn in social theory in the late twentieth century. With a strong theoretical critique provided by post-structuralism, this ongoing movement responds to “a longstanding ontological and epistemological bias that privileges time over space in all the human sciences, including spatial

disciplines like geography and architecture” (Soja 2008, 11). Acknowledging that discussions of space have been widely neglected and severely limited compared to those of time, it calls for a “reinsertion” or “reassertion” of space in the humanities and social sciences (Peters and Kessl 2009, 1; Warf and Arias 2009, 1). In the wake of the spatial turn’s “long, slow, and painful undertaking,” it has come to be reasserted that space matters not only because all our thoughts and actions necessarily occur in space, but also because “where events unfold is integral to how they take shape” (Warf and Arias 2009, 3–10; Vendra and Furia 2021, 1). Today, space unfolds as “a variegated, complex, often bewildering series of different types of locations ... suspended between matter and meaning” (Warf and Arias 2009, 10), a result of “social and political action that has its material correspondence in architecture, structures, etc.” (Bachmann-Medick 2016, 229). Since the spatial turn, increased attention is being paid to the analysis of current spatial conditions, critical and interpretive understandings of space, different spatial perspectives, and the generation of new spatial concepts to account for spatial differences (Bachmann-Medick 2016, 214).

The spatial turn has also urged profound shifts in the understanding of subjectivity and identity. The fixed, unified, autonomous, and transcendental identity at the core of the Cogito has mostly made way to account for heterogeneous, shifting, and even contradictory aspects of the nature and constitution of selves “who lie at the changing intersections of different language games” and axes of identity (Warf and Arias 2009, 6). The contemporary conception of spatiality also helps us grasp “how space and social relations are made through each other” (Hubbard and Kitchin 2011, 499). In the following two sections, let us discuss Foucault and Ricoeur as thinkers on space who, in their own distinct ways, held space for the “spatiality of the self,” for thinking spatially about the self to reveal the ethical entanglements between the self, spatiality, and meaning-making.

1.4. Foucault and the Spatiality of the Self

Foucault is widely recognised as a “key thinker on space” (Hubbard and Kitchin 2011; Philo 2011; see Elden 2014), whose discussions on the significance of space for the human condition are credited for renewing a cultural approach to space (Günzel 2012, 313) and for leading to the spatial turn in the humanities and social sciences (Schroer 2019, 4–5). He recognised the “devaluation of space that has prevailed for generations” (Foucault 1980a, 70), identifying the “discourse of philosophers” as one of the reasons for it (Foucault 1980b, 149). He writes:

At the moment when a considered politics of spaces was starting to develop, at the end of the eighteenth century, the new achievements in theoretical and experimental physics dislodged philosophy from its ancient right to speak of the world, the cosmos, finite or infinite space. This double investment of space by political technology and scientific practice reduced philosophy to the field of a problematic of time. ... Along with this goes a correlative devaluation of space (Foucault 1980b, 149–150)

He observes that the longstanding neglect of space meant that space was treated as “the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile,” compared to time, which was seen as “richness, fecundity, life, dialectic” (Foucault 1980a, 70). It also meant a delay in the emergence of space as a “historico-political problem”: as he explains, “space used to be either dismissed as belonging to ‘nature’—that is, the given, the basic conditions, ‘physical geography,’ in other words a sort of ‘prehistoric’ stratum; or else it was conceived as the residential site or field of expansion of peoples, of a culture, a language or a State” (Foucault 1980b, 149). Foucault acknowledged the intersection of time and space, emphasising that “a whole history remains to be written of spaces—which would at the same time be the history of powers” (Foucault 1980b, 149). He also observed that “the anxiety of today fundamentally concerns space, no doubt much more than time. Time probably appears only as one of the various possible operations of distribution between the elements that are spread out in space” (Foucault 2008,

15). Although only a few of Foucault's works discuss space explicitly—the most acclaimed ones being the interviews “Questions on Geography” (Foucault 1980a), “The Eye of Power” (Foucault 1980b), and “Space, Knowledge, Power” (Foucault 2000a), and the article “*Des Espaces Autres*” (Foucault 2008 [1967])—he admitted to his spatial “obsessions” and preoccupations, conceding that “geography must indeed necessarily lie at the heart of [his] concerns” (Foucault 1980a, 77). Indeed, most of his works are imbued with the theme of space; they not only use spatial, strategic metaphors but also study spaces as objects (Foucault 1980a, 70; 2000a, 362).

In Foucault's works, space acts as the support, or the condition of possibility, for relating knowledge and power. In comparison to the “inner space” of phenomenologists, it was “outer space,” or sociocultural space, that he was attentive to (Foucault 2008, 16). In his analysis of the genealogy of knowledge and the formation of discourses, Foucault was concerned with the “politics of knowledge,” i.e., the tactics and strategies of power deployed through channels of geopolitics, by which “knowledge functions as a form of power and disseminates the effects of power” (Foucault 1980a, 69–77). He considered space as fundamental to any form of communal life and to any exercise of power, and hence as having an effect on the constitution of personal identity (Foucault 2000a, 361). As Foucault explains, the individual “is not a pre-given entity which is seized on by the exercise of power. The individual, with his identity and characteristics, is the product of a relation of power exercised over bodies, multiplicities, movements, desires, forces” (Foucault 1980a, 73–74).

Foucault analyses architecture especially for the “specific effects” it brings about in the field of social relations, rather than merely as “an element in space.” He admits that his analyses of architecture have been “vague,” and that, in them, architecture is “only taken as an element of support, to ensure a certain allocation of people in space, a canalisation of their circulation, as

well as the coding of their reciprocal relations” (Foucault 2000a, 361). In other words, he was interested in architecture’s “interconnection” with social relations, and not “the primacy of this over that” (Foucault 2000a, 362). For instance, he described the concept of heterotopia to discuss “singular spaces to be found in some given social spaces whose functions are different or even opposite to the others” (Foucault 2000a, 361). Foucault observed that, if separated from one another, it would become impossible to understand “the effective practice of freedom by people, the practice of social relations, and the spatial distributions in which they find themselves.” For Foucault, liberty and resistance are relations realised and exercised in the actual practices of people, not that which can be given or possessed. Therefore, there is nothing inherent or fundamental in the order of spaces as such—their structure, function, or the intention of the architect—that can either thwart or guarantee liberty to its inhabitants. Even in the most terrifying of systems, such as concentration camps, “aside from torture and execution which preclude any resistance ... there always remain the possibilities of resistance, disobedience, and oppositional groupings.” Similarly, institutions and laws intended to guarantee liberty cannot automatically assure it merely by their establishment, and even retain the possibility of being turned around. Still, the exercise of freedom is not “completely indifferent to spatial distribution”—his position is not that “one may as well leave people in slums, thinking that they can simply exercise their rights there.” Architecture can and does produce “positive effects when the liberating intentions of the architect coincide with the real practice of people in the exercise of their freedom.” For Foucault, an architect is not comparable to “a doctor, a priest, a psychiatrist, or a prison warden,” in that she is not one among the people “through whom power passed or who are important in the fields of power relations.” However, the architect—her mentality and attitude—and her projects need to be taken into account so as to understand “a certain number of the techniques of power that are invested in architecture” (Foucault 2000a, 354–357).

1.5. Ricoeur and the Spatiality of the Self

Ricoeur's discussions on space are severely limited compared to those on time, so much so that recent scholarship observes that "his work could be (and in fact has been) considered a perfect example of the temporal bias" in philosophy and the humanities (Vendra and Furia 2021, 2). Although the theme of space is not antithetical to his work, almost every aspect of his philosophical thought "revolves around time rather than space" (Furia 2022, 193), "even in contexts where spatial language might be more appropriate than temporal" (Gschwandtner 2017, 169–170). Despite being one of the most prolific and influential scholars in the matters of the self in contemporary theory, Ricoeur directly, though briefly, analyses space in the context of "the meaning and the task of human being" (Vendra and Furia 2021, 3) in a handful of works only—including the section "Inhabited space" in *Memory, History, Forgetting* (2004b) and the article "Architecture and Narrativity" (2016b). Consequently, Ricoeur had rarely been addressed as a thinker on space, with very few scholarly articles taking up his analysis of the problem of space and almost none characterising them as a spatial theory. However, recent scholarship also demonstrates that "the concept of space is profoundly intertwined with the recurring topics of his thought" (Vendra and Furia 2021, 2–3), and that "he offers decisive suggestions for how to conceive of a hermeneutic account of human space" (Umbelino 2017, 234), opening possibilities to envision a spatial turn for the philosopher of the temporal self.¹⁰ Ricoeur's insights on "space as a polysemic concept" (Vendra and Furia 2021, 1), though not explicitly developed by the philosopher himself, are being recognised as having crucial implications for furthering our understanding of the spatiality of space and space–language and self–environment relations (Vendra and Furia 2021, 1–4; Furia 2022),

¹⁰ For instance, there is no mention of Ricoeur as a spatial thinker in canonical texts on space such as the 2011-published *Key Thinkers on Space and Place* (Hubbard and Kitchin 2011). More recently, however, a 2021 issue of the distinguished journal *Ricoeur Studies* 12, no. 2 was entirely dedicated to exploring "Ricoeur and the Problem of Space" (see Vendra and Furia 2021 in the issue for a list of the now-growing literature that explores Ricoeur as a thinker on space).

putting him in dialogue with several spatial fields in the humanities and social sciences, including geography, architecture, and urbanism.¹¹ The growing interest in what Umbelino (2015, 199) calls a “Ricoeurian project of a hermeneutics of space” is so far fragmentary, promising ample room for further elaboration on the multiple dimensions along which he pursues the problem of space (Vendra and Furia 2021, 3).

Ricoeur traces the discourse of space as a “dialectic of lived space, geometrical space, and inhabited space” in *Memory, History, and Forgetting* (2004b, 153). Lived space includes the living body surrounded by “places” of life (Ricoeur 2016b, 32). The corporeal space is “immediately linked with the surrounding space of the environment” in privately shared memory, from which “we pass by degrees to collective memory and its commemorations linked to places consecrated by tradition”—i.e., its named, public spaces that invite ritualised gatherings (Ricoeur 2004, 149–151). The phenomenology of places is such that “beings of flesh and blood occupy, leave, lose, [and] rediscover” them (Ricoeur 2004a, 153). Ricoeur writes:

My place is there where my body is. But placing and displacing oneself are primordial activities that make place something to be sought out. And it would be frightening not ever to find it. We ourselves would be devastated. The feeling of uneasiness—*Unheimlichkeit*—joined to the feeling of not being in one’s place, of not feeling at home, haunts us and this would be the realm of emptiness. But there is a question of place because space is not yet filled, not saturated. In truth, it is always possible, often urgent, to displace oneself, with the risk of becoming that passerby, that wanderer, that flâneur, that vagabond, stray dog that our fragmented contemporary culture both sets in motion and paralyses. (Ricoeur 2004a, 149)

¹¹ For instance, for an outline of a Ricoeurian path to human geography in terms of understanding and explanation, see Furia 2022.

The placements and displacements of the body cannot be spoken of, thought, or experienced without some reference to “points, lines, surfaces, volumes, distances” inscribed on a geometrical space detached from it (Ricoeur 2004a, 150). Unlike the lived space of the lived body—the absolute here and “the landmark for any there”—the three-dimensional geometrical space has no “privileged” places or “ethical overtones”; rather, it is measurable according to Cartesian coordinates, and each point in it can be “deduced from other points” (Ricoeur 2004a, 149–153; 2016b, 32). The inhabited space or “site” is situated at the boundaries of lived space and geometrical space. This “third space” or “mixed space” results from the superimposition of places on geometric space solely through an “act of construction” or architecture. Therefore, constructed space consists of “a system of sites for the major interactions of life”—be it “fixed space or space for dwelling” or “space to be traversed”—that are also “geometrical, measurable, and calculable” (Ricoeur 2004a, 149–150; 2016b, 31–33).¹²

Ricoeur analyses architecture as a parallel to narrativity—thereby also investigating the entanglements of spatiality and temporality—by way of trying “to transpose to the architectural plane the categories linked to threefold mimesis”: prefiguration, configuration, and refiguration (Ricoeur 2004b, 527n). Rather than reproducing reality, Ricoeurian mimesis functions “in a dialectical manner, as being first imitation, next reconstruction, and, finally, the transformative capacity of experience” (Ricoeur 1998, 83). The act of inhabiting is the “prefiguration of space” or the presupposition of the architectural act, “inasmuch as the need for shelter and circulation lays out the interior space of a dwelling and the given intervals to traverse” (Ricoeur 2004b, 527n; 2016b, 33). The act of construction is the process of “configuration of space,” and works simultaneously with the act of inhabiting, shaping one another at the same time. Ricoeur writes:

¹² A similarity, up to a point, can be observed between Ricoeur’s notions of place, geometrical space, and site, and Foucault’s notions of the spaces of localisation, extension, and emplacement, respectively.

The functions of inhabiting are continually ‘invented,’ in both senses of the word (to discover and to create), at the same time that the processes of construction are inscribed in the design of the architectural space. We might say that the act of inhabiting, and the building resulting from the construction, shape one another at the same time. (Ricoeur 2016b, 36)

In the act of construction, inhabiting is redesigned such that “the last word is given to a thoughtful inhabiting.” The builder configures space according to three “rules of rationality”: (1) emplotment—the “spatial synthesis of the heterogeneous,” or “the intention of internal coherence” between parts of a building; (2) intelligibility—the intention to clarify and make comprehensible the inextricable through inscription in the “enduringness of materials”; and (3) intertextuality—the intention to contextualise or confront the new building next to, against, and after the “network of already-there buildings” and ways of inhabiting. Due to the ideological presuppositions of the builder, the architectural project is inclined to disregard or outweigh the inhabitants’ needs and expectations stemming from the act of inhabiting, and “is too often the representation of the ‘competent authorities’ regarding the inhabiting needs of... [the] masses” (Ricoeur 2004a, 150; 2016b, 33–39). Even so, the building does not complete its journey in its configuration by the builder—it gives itself not only to be seen but also to be read (Ricoeur 2004a, 151). Ricoeur writes:

[I]t will not suffice for an architectural project to be well thought-out, or even for it to be held to be rational for it to be understood and accepted. All planners ought to learn that an abyss can separate the rules of the rationality of a project ... from the rules of acceptability to a public. (Ricoeur 2016b, 39)

The inhabitants of the space read and reread it from the point of view of their way of inhabiting, approaching it with their needs, expectations, resistance, and challenges, which, when confronted by the space’s propositions of meanings, elicit responses ranging “from passive

reception, subdued, indifferent reception, to hostile and angry reception” (Ricoeur 2004b, 527n; 2016b, 39). In the inhabitants’ inhabiting as a response or even an answer to building, the architectural project undergoes a “refiguration of space.” Receptive and active inhabiting implies plural, polemical, and intertextual readings of space—that is, “careful rereading of the urban environment, a continuous relearning of the juxtaposition of styles, and thus also of life stories of which the monuments and all the buildings carry the trace” (Ricoeur 2016b, 39).

1.6. Conclusion: Understanding of Self by Way of Interpretation of Space

In Ricoeurian hermeneutics of space, it is in the mimetic phase of refiguration that the interpretation of space opens possibilities for self-understanding (Umbelino 2015, 205–206; Ricoeur 2016b, 39). Ricoeur considers the model of reading excellent for reevaluating the act of inhabiting (2016b, 39). In the act of reading a space, the space reveals and transforms the inhabitant while undergoing a transformation of its own, as a text does. Ricoeur writes:

The text unfolds its capacity to illuminate or clarify the life of the reader; it has both the power of discovering, of revealing the hidden, the unsaid of a life shielded from Socratic scrutiny, and that of transforming the banal interpretation that the reader makes according to the bent of day-to-day life. To reveal (in a sense of truth to which Heidegger made us sensitive), but also to transform, that is what carries the text outside itself. (Ricoeur 2016b, 39)

The dialectic of revealing and transforming is such that the interpretation of space could culminate in the self-interpretation of the inhabitant. Then, the inhabitant “understands himself better, understands himself differently, or simply begins to understand himself”—what Ricoeur calls “appropriation” (Ricoeur 1981d, 120)—constituting the self contemporaneous with the constitution of meaning. The interplay of revealing and transforming is also consequential in Foucault’s analyses of the subject: revealing the genealogy of the subject and the possibilities

for practices of self-transformation are indeed crucial to the Foucauldian project of the hermeneutics of the subject (Foucault 1986, 64; Koopman 2013, 526).

Thus, as an object in which meaning is exteriorised, space mediates self-understanding. Even so, as George Taylor (2015, xii–xiii) notes, Ricoeur asserts that the self is not the master of the exteriorisation of meaning in objects, since the exteriorisation “may be a result of an unconscious or subconscious intention, ... may differ from the inspiring intention, and ... may develop autonomy.” There is, therefore, a need to emphasise the positive “creativity of the externalisation” (Taylor 2015, xiii). Simultaneously, there is a need to engage with tradition to incorporate the critique of ideology, or a hermeneutics of suspicion, within the hermeneutics of space, since space—like other external products of life—can fall under the sway of games of power, false consciousness, or ideological presuppositions (Foucault 2000a, 363; Davidson 2016, 160).

In conclusion, this chapter argues that the “spatiality of the self” offers yet another point of intersection to further imaginary conversations and philosophical dialogues between Foucault and Ricoeur in the context of their shared concern for the self in their later works. Despite their shared concerns and similarity of themes, Foucault and Ricoeur followed distinct paths in their search for self-understanding, differing in their methods, use of concepts, and ideas on thinking about those concepts (see Goetz 2004). Then, reading the two thinkers in one frame requires the reader to hold space for their works in a manner similar to Gillian Rose’s paradoxical spaces—“complex and contradictory spatialities” that speak of “power, resistance, and the acknowledgement of difference” (Rose 1993, 141).

Let us conclude this introductory chapter with a brief overview of the study. This chapter, titled “Interpretation of Space and Understanding of Self: Reading Foucault and Ricoeur in One Frame,” argued that “spatiality of the self” offers yet another point of intersection to further

imaginary conversations and philosophical dialogues between Foucault and Ricoeur in the context of their shared concern for the self that they pursued in their respective projects of post-structuralist hermeneutics of the subject/self in their later works, discussing the act of interpretation of space—as an object in which the self exteriorises meaning—as opening possibilities for the understanding of the self through the dialectic of revealing and transforming. Chapter 2, titled “Conceptualising the Self: Coherence, Comprehensibility, and Spatial Constitution,” will explore the spatial constitution of selfhood by examining how Foucault and Ricoeur accounted for the coherence and comprehensibility of the subject/self in their distinct ways by moving beyond modernity’s conception of interiority and reconceptualising the subject/self as ethical and mediated in relation to “the outside” or “the exterior.” Chapter 3, titled “Configuring Space: Meaning-making, Space, and Architecture,” will explore the hermeneutics of space/architecture with regard to the exteriorisation of meaning in space and metaphors for space, suggesting the Foucauldian concept of heterotopia as a Ricoeurian metaphor that has the potential to open up possibilities for dialogue and the encounter of difference within hermeneutics, and reading the exercise of the capacity for meaning-making through Ricoeurian imaginative variation facilitated by texts and metaphors as a practice of Foucauldian resistance in the context of the constitution and understanding of the self. Chapter 4, titled “Refiguring Space: The Spatiality of Hermeneutical Justice and Living the Good Life,” will explore the spatial aspects of living a good life by considering a heterotopology of home as an instance of the act of refiguration of space and the practice of resistance through imaginative variation facilitated by metaphors, and conceptualising spatial hermeneutical injustice to make describable the interpretative injuries and injustices committed during the acts of configuration and refiguration of space that reduce or destroy the capacities of spaces and its inhabitants and hence the possibility of the realisation of the aim of living a good life in relation to others and/in space. Chapter 5, titled “Conclusion: Self, Spatiality, and

Meaning-making,” will bring together the findings of our explorations on the spatial constitution of selfhood, the hermeneutics of space/architecture, and the spatial aspects of living a good life with others and/in space so as to acknowledge our collective responsibility and fragility in moving towards greater spatial hermeneutical justice.

Chapter 2

Conceptualising the Self:

Coherence, Comprehensibility, and Spatial Constitution

Chapter 1 contextualised this study within a broader theoretical framework, with the specific objective of knowing our way around how the interpretation of space hangs together with and opens possibilities for the understanding of the self in the later works of Foucault and Ricoeur. It discussed the act of interpretation of space—as an object in which the self exteriorises meaning—as opening possibilities for the understanding of the self through the dialectic of revealing and transforming. The chapter argued that reading Foucault and Ricoeur in the frame of “spatiality of the self” provides yet another point of intersection to further imaginary conversations and philosophical dialogues between them in the context of their shared concern for the self, which they pursued in their respective projects of post-structuralist hermeneutics of the subject/self in their later works.

This chapter explores the spatial constitution of selfhood by revisiting Foucault’s and Ricoeur’s projects of post-structuralist hermeneutics of the subject/self in their later works, with the specific objective of examining how each thinker (1) used and understood the concept of the self, and (2) accounted for the possibility of the self’s coherence and comprehensibility, in their distinct ways. Such an examination will contribute to our exploration of the hermeneutics of space/architecture with regard to the exteriorisation of meaning in space and metaphors for space, which we will undertake in Chapter 3.

Let us begin this chapter by unpacking a few presuppositions underlying its objective in the context of the aim of the study, which is, let us recall, the exploration of how a coherent and comprehensible sense of self emerges hermeneutically in relation to others and/in space.

Undoubtedly, the study is concerned with self-understanding, or one's confrontation with the problematicity regarding oneself; it addresses the human need for our selves (or, more generally, our lives) to be understandable to us, to have meaning. However, the accounts in this chapter focus on the implications of conceptualisations of the self for the possibility of its coherence and comprehensibility, which may not necessarily include the aspect of self-understanding.¹ Instead, accounting for the self's coherence and comprehensibility is presupposed as mirroring, respectively and up to a point, Ricoeur's first two "rules of rationality" of configuration: (1) emplotment—the synthesis of the heterogeneous or the intention of internal coherence, and (2) intelligibility—the intention to clarify and make comprehensible the inextricable, as we discussed in Chapter 1.²

Next, before turning to Foucault's and Ricoeur's projects of post-structuralist hermeneutics of the subject/self in their later works, let us contextualise their shared concern for the self by drawing a historical sketch of the conceptual varieties of the self in the West, with an emphasis on how the possibility of the self's coherence and comprehensibility was accounted for.

2.1. The Self-Constituting Modern Subject: Coherence by way of "Interiority"

Conceptions of the self in classical antiquity were often intertwined with reflections on the topic of the soul. The self was seldom equated with the soul in its entirety but was often considered only one aspect of it—for instance, its reason or will, and sometimes even the body (Sorabji 2006, 34). Plato conceived of the soul as an immaterial and eternal substance in contrast to the material and changing substance of the body (Taylor 1989, 121).³ The soul's

¹ This clarificatory note is called for since Foucault's account of the self has been criticised—unjustly, as we will see below—as having omitted the thematisation of the role of understanding and interpretation (for instance, see Castonguay 2010).

² As we saw in Chapter 1, Ricoeur considered emplotment, intelligibility, and intertextuality as parts of the act of configuration of narratives and space. In this chapter, we borrow this idea to inquire into if and how forms of these rules of rationality were considered relevant or applicable to the self as well in the conceptualisations of the self in the history of thought.

³ Interestingly, in an alternate interpretation, Foucault observed that the self that concerned ancient thinkers—including Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics—in their practice of "the care of the self" was "the soul as

simplicity ensures its pre-existence prior to its incarnation, its survival of changes while alive and embodied, and its immortality post bodily death—all while maintaining its individuality (Barresi and Martin 2011, 34). He treated reason or intellect, an aspect of the soul, as the essential self of human beings (Sorabji 2006, 34). Reason, for Plato, is “a vision of order in the cosmos” (Taylor 1989, 21) that involves turning “upward” towards Ideas (Taylor 1989, 537n4). The rule of reason over the lower parts of the soul, i.e., desire and spirit, entails self-mastery, which brings with it “unity with oneself, calm, and collected self-possession” (Taylor 1989, 116). In opposition to Plato’s soul-body dualism, Aristotle conceived of the self as a hylomorphic substance in which the soul is related to the body as form is to matter so as to be integrated as the unified whole of an organism. Whereas the Platonic soul is present only in human beings and is immortal, the Aristotelian soul is present in all living organisms as the vital principle; being biological, it is mortal (Sorabji 1999, 8). Again, for Aristotle, unlike Plato, it was matter, not the soul, that varied among individuals in human beings (Barresi and Martin 2011, 35). Alongside such conceptualisations, there were also those that denied the existence of immaterial souls. For instance, the Epicureans, as proponents of material atomism, conceptualised the self as a material complex of atoms, challenging the belief in “personal survival of bodily death” and questioning one’s “egoistic concern to survive” (Barresi and Martin 2011, 35).⁴ Nevertheless, the view of the self as an immaterial substance continued to be upheld, especially by Neoplatonists. For Plotinus, the immateriality of the soul accounted for the unity of experience, without which our lives would be meaningless. He considered the divisibility of the soul to be different from that of matter in that the soul does not have separate sections—it is present in every part of the individual, hence divisible; it is present in its entirety

subject [or agent] and not at all the soul as substance” (Foucault 2005, 57). He noted that the notion of soul-substance came to the fore only later, during the early Christian period.

⁴ Though omitted here for the sake of simplicity, we will take up the case of the thinkers of the first and second centuries in more detail later, when we discuss Foucault’s genealogy of the subject.

in every part of the individual, hence indivisible (Barresi and Martin 2011, 34). He also believed in the existence of disembodied selves (Sorabji 2006, 33).

The view of the self as an immaterial substance continued to endure in the Middle Ages, primarily due to its endorsement by the Church Fathers, notable among whom was Augustine. Although a Platonist, Augustine differed from the ancient thinker in conceiving the soul as forming an intimate unit with the body to account for both personal immortality and bodily resurrection as promised in the Christian scriptures (Barresi and Martin 2011, 36–38). Charles Taylor (1989) considers Augustine to be the first to adopt a sense of “inwardness,” a facet of the modern notion of what it is to be a self. In his seminal *Sources of the Self* (1989), he describes three such facets of “the modern identity,” of which we focus only on the first for the purposes of our study:

First, modern inwardness, the sense of ourselves as beings with inner depths, and the connected notion that we are ‘selves’; second, the affirmation of ordinary life which develops from the early modern period; third, the expressivist notion of nature as an inner moral source. (Taylor 1989, x)

Inwardness is characterised by a standpoint of “radical reflexivity,” wherein one turns to oneself in the first-person perspective, i.e., focuses on oneself as the agent of experience and makes one’s own experience the object of one’s attention (Taylor 1989, 131). Though the language of inwardness was anticipated in ancient thought, Charles Taylor argues that it was Augustine who gave the inside/outside dichotomy a more central place in the conceptualisation of the self by taking an “inward turn”: “He was concerned not just with a turn away from what is outside, but with a search within” (Taylor 1989, 537n4).

Modern conceptions of the self considered the sense of inwardness fundamental to them to the point of generating the aberrated view that “there is a special domain of ‘inner’ objects available

only from this standpoint; or the notion that the vantage point of the ‘I think’ is somehow outside the world of things we experience” (Taylor 1989, 131). Early modern discussions of the self introduced thin conceptions of a unified, disengaged, and inward self into scientific theory (Sorabji 1999, 15; Barresi and Martin 2011, 51), marking the beginnings of the “philosophies of the subject.” Descartes conceived the self as the mind or *Cogito*, an unextended substance that has thinking as its essence. His disengaged self is a self-evident and transparent subject, capable of objectifying the outer world as well as its own operations to achieve “a kind of distance and self-possession which allows him to act ‘rationally.’” Reason, for Descartes, is procedural, defined in terms of “instrumental efficacy, or maximisation of the value sought, or self-consistency” (Taylor 1989, 21). His dualist account distinguished the mental from the material more sharply than Plato’s, intensifying the problem of explaining the relation between the two substances (Barresi and Martin 2011, 39). Locke marked a “decisive break” with substance accounts of the self with his empiricist account that “naturalised the soul” and made it inspectable (Sorabji 2006, 18; Barresi and Martin 2011, 40). Locke’s self, in Charles Taylor’s vocabulary, is “punctual or neutral”—a disengaged self “defined in abstraction from any constitutive concerns” (Taylor 1989, 49). Locke’s concern, then, was for personal identity alone, which could be understood in terms of the “unifying role of consciousness.” By consciousness, he mostly meant memory and not an underlying substance, be it material or immaterial. His relational account of the unified self considered personal identity as a matter of intrinsic relation, i.e., each self or person is a “complex composed of physical and/or mental elements that persists as long as the elements in the complex are properly related” (Barresi and Martin 2011, 40). Subsequently, Hume denied the existence of the Lockean self, empirically accounting for personal identity as a “bundle of perceptions.” He argued that “the idea of a substantial, persisting self is an illusion” and that even the mind is a fictional construction (Taylor 1989, 49; Sorabji 2006, 18; Barresi and Martin 2011, 43). Later,

Kant provided a nonsubstantial account of the self in terms of a phenomenal self and a noumenal self. The former is “extended temporally and perhaps also spatially and is capable of being experienced both subjectively and objectively,” while the latter “lacks spatial and temporal extension and is not capable of being experienced.” Personal identity over time concerns only the phenomenal self and requires, unlike the Lockean conception, a sort of physical continuity rather than just sameness in consciousness/memory. The Kantian self is a “pure rational agent” (Taylor 1989, 12), the source of autonomous agency and meaning (Barresi and Martin 2011, 46–47), and a necessary condition for thought (Sorabji 2006, 109).

2.2. Constituted Contemporary Selves: Coherence by way of “Exteriority”

Since the mid-eighteenth century, developmental and social accounts of the acquisition of self-concepts have begun gaining attention. Hegel’s relational account, for instance, viewed self-consciousness as a matter of extrinsic relation, i.e., it arises in individuals not through introspection or in isolation but in our “reaction to recognition by others” (Barresi and Martin 2011, 44). By the end of the nineteenth century, the self was predominantly viewed as a merely pragmatic, useful fiction rather than a unified and “realistically understood scientific postulate” (Barresi and Martin 2011, 43). As discussed in Chapter 1, the “masters of suspicion” contested modernity’s presumption of the immediacy of experience, suspecting it of being susceptible to the influences of Freud’s unconscious, Nietzsche’s will to power, and Marx’s forces of economic production. While Nietzsche proclaimed the death of the self, berating the grammatical customs, “absurd overestimation of consciousness,” and the fiction of a unified self that philosophers have bought into to account for the mere “semblance of unity” we have (Barresi and Martin 2011, 44), Marx’s theory led to a heightened interest in socio-historical conceptions of the self.

Furthermore, in *Crisis*, Husserl issued a scathing critique of modernity's disengaged view, especially that propounded by Descartes, highlighting the crisis of modern science by comparing it to a machine. He argued that modern science treated everything as though it were an object and meant nothing to us, thereby encouraging science to manipulate nature. The method of modern science, once formalised, renders it into a mathematical process that idealises nature and makes its study a routine affair. The modern scientist seems to be satisfied with the successful operation of the 'machine,' which guarantees the success of practical achievement, especially in the form of technology that manipulates nature (Tharakan and George 2025b, 140). Later phenomenologists such as Heidegger and Sartre stressed that "the idea of an individual isolated from social and worldly involvements is an abstraction" (Barresi and Martin 2011, 49). By the late twentieth century, it seemed that the modern notion of a unified, disengaged, and inward self, which had itself replaced the ancient notion of the self as substance, had been effectively overthrown.

Many contemporary discussions recognise that "the self lies in fragments" today (Barresi and Martin 2011, 51). For Barresi and Martin, the fragmentation of the self is a result of its having died "the death of ... a thousand hyphenations" in different disciplines that focus exclusively on one or more of the aspects of its experiential, ontological, or social dimensions (Barresi and Martin 2011, 51–53). Goldstein (2005) identifies three types of fragmentation of the self: vertical fragmentation, horizontal fragmentation, and segmentation. Vertical fragmentation of the self is premised on the existence of an unconscious that lies deep below consciousness, problematising "the knowability of the self." Freud, in particular, is regarded as having contributed to the understanding of this type of fragmentation of the self (Goldstein 2005, 3). Horizontal fragmentation refers to the status of the self in theories rooted in biology that view the mind as a composite of discrete, equally knowable pieces with no resources to unify them, questioning the qualification of "the true self." Locke's account of the punctual self is regarded

as one of the theories that prompted the understanding of this type of fragmentation of the self (Goldstein 2005, 5). Segmentation refers to “the disparity among the self’s various roles,” challenging ideas surrounding the authenticity of the self (Goldstein 2005, 3). It is in this type of fragmentation of the self that we see one of the most compelling responses to the vestiges of the modern notion of inwardness that still lingers in the contemporary conceptualisations of the self. Georg Simmel’s account of “In-addition” and Mariana Ortega’s account of “multiplicitous self” can be considered examples of the segmentation of the self through the roles it plays within institutions and in relation to social identity, respectively. Even as both accounts uphold the fragmentation of the self, they nevertheless offer ideas concerning the possibilities for its coherence, what they call its “harmonisation” or “integration.”

Let us first consider Simmel’s account of the segmentation of the self through role-playing within institutions in society, by grounding it in Berger and Luckmann’s analysis of institutions in *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966). Berger and Luckmann characterise institutions as the typification of socially relevant, habitualised actions for pragmatic ends. It has no empirical existence, ongoing significance, or intelligibility apart from the recurrent realisation of it through the roles of the actors. The intelligibility of a role in an individual’s consciousness, in turn, is provided by the legitimation of the institution as well as the other roles (Berger and Luckmann 1966, 92–94); it contributes to a sense of identity, belonging, and security in the actor (Berger and Luckmann 1966, 117). To put it more generally, individual consciousness is socially determined, while social reality only exists because individuals are conscious of it (Berger and Luckmann 1966, 92–96). The legitimation of an institution, i.e., the explanation and justification of its existence and function (Berger and Luckmann 1966, 111), is transmitted through generations as objectively valid truth and internalised during socialisation as subjective reality (Berger and Luckmann 1966, 85). This transmission is done through mnemotechnic aids that range from simple verbal designation to highly complex symbolisation of reality (Berger

and Luckmann 1966, 88–97).⁵ These are already available to individuals, external to them and coercive upon them (Berger and Luckmann 1966, 53). The appropriate rules of conduct for the role of an individual within an institution are constituted and regulated by norms (Berger and Luckmann 1966, 83),⁶ which Schutz (1954) calls “recipe knowledge.” The social distribution of knowledge (Schutz 1954, 269) or the social stock of knowledge (Berger and Luckmann 1966, 94) is such that the norms are known by the actors, and it is known that these are known (Berger and Luckmann 1966, 91). An individual who deviates from the norms can be held accountable, have their credentials questioned, and be judged as morally, mentally, and epistemologically depraved, and therefore in need of treatment, cure, seclusion, or punishment. In the course of the role performance within an institution, the self-apprehension of the actor is determined by the action. The actor self-typifies a segment of their self—their social self—as the performer of the role (Berger and Luckmann 1966, 85–91).

Even so, as Simmel observes, the self is not completely social (Simmel 1910, 381). Berger and Luckmann, too, note that even as the actor self-typifies their social self as the performer of the role, there may be at least a marginal awareness of a distinct yet inseparable segment of their self that is not involved in the role (Berger and Luckmann 1966, 91)—what Simmel (1910) calls an irreducible “In-addition.”⁷ The In-addition exists in all individuals and is exempt from all attempts at socialisation (Simmel 1910, 381; Symons 2009, 107). The society is structurally unable to represent the whole self within it—even the affordances accommodated by the roles

⁵ Looking for a conscious, benevolent, and intelligent author of social rules may be a fetching of the argument from design to the far realm of the social world. It reifies social reality and paints it as natural and immutable, alienating one from the society one produces and is a member of (Berger and Luckmann 1966, 106).

⁶ The norms that constitute and regulate the behaviour of the actor can also be understood in terms of Weber’s ‘idea,’ one of the ways of conceiving subjectively intended meaning of human action. Simmel’s account may make intelligible the possibility of an individual finding meaning for her actions outside societal norms and roles—as Weber’s ‘means’ to an end (see Tharakan, Koshy. “Max Weber on Explanation of Human Actions: Towards a Reconstruction.” *Journal of Indian Council of Philosophical Research* 12, no. 3 (May–August 1995): 21–30; esp. 22).

⁷ Exempted are Simmel’s “extreme cases” wherein identity is reified (Berger and Luckmann 1966, 108), as in the cases of the priest and the lover (Simmel 1910, 383).

within institutions in society are not tuned to individual selves, as typification subverts singularity. Hence, individuals undergo a form of alienation when they enter it—an alienation inherent to society (Symons 2009, 113). The segment of the self referred to as In-addition, then, is the “outside” of society, which, for Simmel, is the very condition of possibility of the “inside” of society, of every society (Symons 2009, 106). Despite, or perhaps due to, the segmentation of the self, there are possibilities for making sense of one’s self and experiences, just as it problematises one’s sense of belonging. For instance, the awareness of the existence of one’s In-addition opens possibilities for finding the meaning of one’s actions outside societal norms and roles. Additionally, the subjective experience of the social self as distinct from and even confronting the self in totality opens possibilities for conversation between the disparate segments of the self, and even “the harmonising of the sense one makes of one’s biography with the sense ascribed to it by society” (Berger and Luckmann 1966, 91–100).

Let us next consider Ortega’s account of the segmentation of the self through the various roles it plays in relation to social identity. As mentioned in Chapter 1, since the spatial turn, there have been profound shifts in understanding identity, making way to account for the heterogeneous, shifting, and even contradictory aspects of the nature and constitution of selves lying at “the changing intersections of different language games” and axes of identity (Warf and Arias 2009, 6). Ortega’s account of the self aligns with this shift. For Ortega, rather than there being a “multiplicity of selves,” the self is “multiplicitous,” i.e., “a self that occupies multiple positionalities in terms of social identities, be it race, class, sex, gender, ability, nationality, etc., and thus lives in various worlds” (Ortega 2020, 170–171). Though all of us are multiplicitous selves who negotiate our multiple positionalities, those whose experiences are not of being mostly at ease in the world but of marginalisation, alienation, and oppression must constantly engage in “world-travelling”—travelling in and between the worlds they inhabit. Their lived experience is one of ruptures and of being constantly aware of not being at

home in the worlds they inhabit (Ortega 2020, 170–171). Ortega notes that, despite recognising the advantages of integrating the multiple identities of the self into a cohesive whole, not all multiplicitous selves have or desire such a “self-integrating life project.” For many, the prospect of such an integration is an illusion, and there is no sense in which they can fully belong due to their identity. They prefer to and are willing to live with the contradictions and ambiguities that their multiplicitous selves entail (Ortega 2014, 180). Ortega emphasises that belonging needs to be forged. A forged sense of belonging is neither normative (at ease with intelligibility, norms, and practices), authentic (given fully due to one’s identity), nor pure (normative, authentic, and without the possibility of ruptures) (Ortega 2020, 170).

To sum up: Selective and simplified as it may be, the review suffices to illustrate the richness of the conceptual varieties of the self in the West as well as the accounts of the possibility of the coherence and comprehensibility of the self. Among these, the one most significant to contemporary thought can be said to be modernity’s conception of interiority—the “inventor”/“birthplace” of which both Foucault (2005, 17) and Ricoeur (1992, 5) consider to be Descartes. We could go so far as to generally characterise contemporary conceptualisations of the self—including that of Foucault and Ricoeur—as consisting of a series of philosophical reflections on or responses to the Cartesian notion of identity as self-scrutinising and self-constituting. It is in this context that we shall, in the following two sections, explore how Foucault and Ricoeur used and understood the concept of the self in their projects of post-structuralist hermeneutics of the subject/self, and how they accounted for the possibility of the coherence and comprehensibility of the self in their distinct ways.

2.3. Foucault and the Project of Post-structuralist Hermeneutics of the Subject

In a 1982 essay titled “The Subject and Power,” Foucault reflected on his work to conclude that it is the subject which has been the “general theme” of his research over the past twenty

years (1983, 209). This retrospective statement may seem odd, especially in light of Chapter 1, wherein we noted that Foucault himself had admitted in a 1976 interview that it is geography that lies at the heart of his concerns. Rather than hinting at inconsistency—a widespread accusation used to dismiss his work—this statement offers further support for the argument that Foucault is, indeed, a hermeneutician, a view contested by both his critics and his allies. As Frédéric Gros (2005) rightly observes,

Foucault does not present the practices of the self as a conceptual novelty, but as the organising principle of his entire work and the common theme of his first writings. Foucault, and this is the secret of his approach, never proceeds by the juxtaposition of themes, but according to a hermeneutic spiral: what he brings out as new thought he finds again as the unthought of the work preceding it. (Gros 2005, 515)

By revisiting his earlier work according to a hermeneutic spiral and pursuing the “unthought” he finds in it, Foucault honours the spirit of hermeneutics and, particularly, the legacy of the masters of suspicion.⁸

Over the course of Foucault’s research, his usage of terms related to the theme of the subject—such as “self,” “subject,” and “subjectivity”—was more analogous than distinctive. In a discussion on “Truth and Subjectivity,” a lecture part of *About the Beginnings of the Hermeneutics of the Self*, Foucault responds to the interviewer’s confusion over his usage of the term “self” by admitting to the challenges posed by both his English and the limitations of French terminological equivalents. He explains:

As you know, we don’t have the word “self” in French, and unfortunately, because I think it’s a good word. In French, we have two words—“subject” and “subjectivity” ...

⁸ Here, the “unthought” refers to what is revealed or brought out in the hermeneutical spiral of Foucault’s approach, and not a deep, hidden meaning. As we have seen in Chapter 1, Foucault considers the legacy of the masters of suspicion as lying in “the unfolding of a space in which it is once more possible to think” (Foucault 1970a, 373). According to Foucault, in the modern hermeneutic they founded, “the interpretation of signs occurs in a differentiated interpretive space characterised by depth as exteriority, not interiority” (Foucault 1990, 61).

You see, by “self” I had in mind the kind of relation that the human being as a subject can have and entertain with himself That you could call in French “subjectivity,” but that is not good, I think that “self” is better. (Foucault 2016, 116)

Elsewhere, he noted that by “subjectivity” he understands “the mode of relation of self to self” and “the way in which the subject ... relates to himself” (Foucault 2016, 125n50). Given the lack of sharp differentiation between the terms, what Foucault meant by each of them in each instance is best understood contextually. This clarificatory note is also to respond to and caution us against interpretations that overemphasise the categorical usage of terminology in Foucault’s works—such as “‘self’ versus ‘subject’” corresponding to antiquity and modernity, respectively, as Goldstein suggests (Goldstein 2005, 14). This overemphasis may have stemmed from referring to the subheading “From the Classical Self to the Modern Subject” included in Foucault’s interview transcript of “On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress” (1984a), which, however, finds no correspondence either in the interview itself or elsewhere in Foucault’s works.

The subject, for Foucault, is not a substance but a form. It is real, noncorporeal, and produced by the exercise of power. He writes:

It would be wrong to say that the soul is an illusion, or an ideological effect. On the contrary, it exists; it has a reality; it is produced permanently around, on, within the body ... [I]t is the element in which are articulated the effects of a certain type of power and the reference of a certain type of knowledge, the machinery by which the power relations give rise to a possible corpus of knowledge, and knowledge extends and reinforces the effects of this power. (Foucault 1984b, 177)

Rather than beginning with an *a priori* theory of the subject, Foucault focused on the different, specific forms that the subject has taken throughout history. He observed that some of these forms are those in which the subject actively constitutes itself through what he called

“techniques of the self”—i.e., “real, historically analysable practices,” either suggested or prescribed, used by human beings to understand themselves (Foucault 1983, 209; 1984a, 369; 1997a, 87; 1997b, 224; 1997c, 290–291). The techniques of the self are specific “operations” related to “technologies of the self”—for Foucault, technologies of the self are “truth games” that “permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality” (Foucault 1997b, 225).⁹ With techniques of the self as his “guiding thread,” Foucault traced “a genealogy of the subject” in the West along three axes:

First, a historical ontology of ourselves in relation to truth through which we constitute ourselves as subjects of knowledge; second, a historical ontology of ourselves in relation to a field of power through which we constitute ourselves as subjects acting on others; third, a historical ontology in relation to ethics through which we constitute ourselves as moral agents. (Foucault 1984a, 351–352)

Foucault’s *The Order of Things* (1970b), *Discipline and Punish* (1975), and volumes of *The History of Sexuality* (see Foucault 1985, 1986) are considered landmark instances that document his genealogy of the subject along the axes of truth, power, and ethics, respectively (Foucault 1984a, 352; 1985, 6).¹⁰ However, these axes are not exclusive—for instance, one can

⁹ By “truth games,” Foucault means “a set of rules by which truth is produced. ... [I]t is a set of procedures that lead to a certain result, which, on the basis of its principles and rules of procedure, may be considered valid or invalid, winning or losing” (Foucault 1997c, 297). He analysed the sciences as technologies, or truth games with specific techniques, to identify four such technologies: technologies of production, technologies of sign systems, technologies of power or domination, and technologies of the self. Foucault reflects that although these technologies rarely function separately, his attention was drawn to the latter two. He describes technologies of power or domination as those which “determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivising of the subject.” He termed the contact between the technologies of power or domination and the technologies of the self as “governmentality” (Foucault 1997b, 224–225).

¹⁰ It is interesting to note that, emphasising another “guiding thread,” Gutting argues that Foucault’s work can be seen as contributing to the sociology of knowledge and social theory when it is interpreted as starting with the study of knowledge through an archaeology of discourse, coming to see the inextricable connection between knowledge and power through a genealogy of power relations, and finally subordinating both to a primary concern with the self through a problematisation of ethics (see Gutting 2005).

see that discussions on truth and power continued to inform his genealogy of the subject along the ethical axis (for instance, “truth games”). It was while tracing the genealogy of the subject along the ethical axis in the final years of his life that Foucault discovered what he called “the hermeneutics of the self.” He discussed this significant finding in the many lectures he delivered during this period—such as those at Dartmouth College in 1980, compiled as *About the Beginnings of the Hermeneutics of the Self* (2016), and those in the course *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* (2005) delivered at the Collège de France in 1981–1982—as well as in numerous interviews. In the context of the aim of this study and the objective of this chapter, our exploration of the self that Foucault was concerned with deliberately focuses on these later works.

In his genealogy of the subject along the ethical axis, Foucault discusses the techniques of the self in terms of “the dynamic entanglement, a reciprocal call” of two precepts of antiquity: care of the self (*epimeleia heautou* in Greek, *cura sui* in Latin) and knowledge of the self (*gnothi seauton* in Greek) (Foucault 2005, 69). He summarises the findings of his discussion:

There has been an inversion in the hierarchy of the two principles of antiquity, “Take care of yourself” and “Know yourself.” In Greco-Roman culture, knowledge of oneself appeared as the consequence of the care of the self. In the modern world, knowledge of oneself constitutes the fundamental principle. (Foucault 1997b, 228)

Here, it is interesting to note that, although differing in their facets of emphasis, Foucault’s account of the self converges with that of Charles Taylor on a key finding: a shift in the way of thinking about the self from antiquity to modernity.

According to Foucault, to take care of oneself meant being concerned with those truths relative to oneself and important to life, such as the principles of cities and rules for personal and social right conduct (Foucault 1984a, 360; 1997b, 226). It is “spiritual” or “ascetic”: to have access

to these truths, it is necessary that the subject carry out certain transformations on himself through “search, practice, and experience” (Foucault 1986, 64; 2005, 14). It is “ethical” in itself: it was “the mode in which individual freedom—or civic liberty, up to a point—was reflected as an ethics.” This ethics was an “aesthetics of existence”: it was related to the idea that “from one’s own life one can make a work of art” through self-regulation and personal choices (Foucault 1984a, 343, 379; 1985, 11; 1986, 43). For Foucault, ethics is the “kind of relationship you ought to have with yourself (*rapport a soi*)”—which is “not a relation of identity in the logical sense” (Foucault 2016, 125n52). As he puts it, “[f]reedom is the ontological condition of ethics. But ethics is the considered form that freedom takes when it is informed by reflection.” The care of the self is ethical in the sense that it “determined how the individual is supposed to constitute himself as a moral subject of his own actions” (Foucault 1984a, 352; 1997c, 281). It also involves the problem of the relationships with others “insofar as this ethos of freedom is also a way of caring for others” (Foucault 1997c, 287).¹¹

On the other hand, according to Foucault, to know oneself, one had to practise reflexivity, the forms of which varied and overlapped throughout history—from Platonic memory to Augustinian meditation to Cartesian method (Foucault 2005, 461–462). As the forms of reflexivity varied, the contents of the knowledge of the self, as well as the forms of the subject constituted through these practices, never remained the same (Foucault 2005, 462). What Foucault called the “hermeneutics of the self” began during the pagan and early Christian period (Foucault 1997b, 224). For Foucault, the hermeneutics of the self was a type of practice of self-examination and confession wherein the self was examined with respect to “the relation

¹¹ Foucault’s “care of the self” has often been accused of ignoring discussions of care for others. This accusation, however, turns out to be false: for instance, in the third volume of *The History of Sexuality* (1986), Foucault elaborately explores some aspects of conceiving oneself in relation to others with regard to two themes: “changes in marital practice and modifications in the rules of the political game” (Foucault 1986, 71). Although he admits to the ethical priority of one’s relation to oneself, he clarifies elsewhere that the care for others is implied in and present throughout his discussion of the care of the self (Foucault 1997c, 287).

between the hidden thought and an inner impurity.” It implied that “there is something hidden in ourselves and that we are always in a self-illusion that hides the secret,” hence requiring a constant “deciphering of inner thoughts” as well as a renouncing of the self (Foucault 1997b, 247). It marked the beginning of when “the self became an object of interpretation.” Although practices of self-examination existed even in antiquity—such as the Senecan “self-examination with respect to the way our thoughts relate to rules”—they were part of the care of the self and aimed at constituting the self. These ancient practices were “an ontological and not a psychological form of contemplation” concerned with the problematic of the self as a being, and not as an object (Foucault 1984a, 366–367; 1997b, 247; 1997c, 287; 2016, 11).¹² During the medieval period, however, the care of the self was “denounced as a form of self-love, a form of selfishness or self-interest in contradiction with the interest to be shown in others or the self-sacrifice required” (Foucault 1997c, 281).

Foucault sees Cartesian self-examination—that “with respect to thoughts in correspondence to reality”—as using the medieval technique of the hermeneutics of the self as the foundation for a philosophical discourse and scientific knowledge. Descartes substituted evidence for ascesis, a subject as “founder of practices of knowledge” for one constituted through practices of the self. The Cartesian subject is a “unique but universal and unhistorical subject” (Foucault 1983, 216)—one who can be immoral and still know. The notion of knowledge itself as an “access to truth” is substituted for “knowledge (*connaissance*) of a domain of objects” (Foucault 2005, 191). This “Cartesian moment” is what made possible “the institutionalisation of modern science” (Foucault 1984a, 372). Cartesian scientific knowledge, including that in the human sciences, has become the justification for how we govern ourselves today. From Descartes to

¹² For instance, Foucault observes that the act of remembering oneself, be it at the end of a day or periodically, has been a practice since antiquity, but the way of carrying it about has changed over the centuries—it could be private or public confessions (telling the truth about oneself) and can have moral or punitive shadings, but not necessarily (see Foucault 2016).

Husserl of *Cartesian Meditations*, “knowledge of the self (the thinking subject) takes on an ever-increasing importance as the first step in the theory of knowledge” (Foucault 1997b, 228). Since modern scientific knowledge has hermeneutics of the self as its foundation, Foucault argues, it is linked to the obligation to sacrifice and decipher the self (Foucault 2016, 104–109). It is this hypothesis that he wanted to get rid of as he called for getting rid of the hermeneutics of the self. He writes:

The fundamental hypothesis of the hermeneutics of the self, that is, that we have to find in ourselves a deep truth which is hidden and which has to be deciphered as a book, an obscure book, a prophetic book, a divine book has to be deciphered, I think that is to be got rid of. (Foucault 2016, 118)

Foucault reflects that, although he and other thinkers searched for an alternate positive foundation for the hermeneutics of the self, their efforts were in vain (Foucault 2016, 109), leaving as the only open option the getting rid of the hermeneutics of the self altogether.

2.4. Ricoeur and the Project of Post-Structuralist Hermeneutics of the Self

In a retrospective reply to a commentator’s overview of his hermeneutics of the subject, Ricoeur affirmed that “it is indeed the fate of human subjectivity that is at stake throughout the whole of [his] work” (Ricoeur 1995b, 93). This statement may seem at once obvious and striking, given that, as his colossal corpus demonstrates, Ricoeur was a prolific writer whose thought developed through engagements and debates with intellectual traditions and movements as varied as French reflexive philosophy, psychoanalysis, philosophies of existence, Husserl’s descriptive phenomenology, hermeneutics, structuralism, and analytic philosophy, to name only a few. In his intellectual autobiography, he reflects that even his reaction to structuralism—which was neither a simple rejection nor an extension of it—was informed by one of his earliest and most strongly held convictions: his resistance to the claims

to immediacy, directness, and self-transparency made by the Cogito (Ricoeur 1995a, 4).

Ricoeur reflects:

On the one hand, I was always very careful to dissociate structuralism as a universal model of explanation from the legitimate and fruitful structural analyses as they were applied in specific cases to a well-defined field of experience. On the other hand, I strove to eliminate from my own conception of the thinking, acting, and feeling subject everything that would make it impossible to include a phase of structural analysis within the reflexive operation. (Ricoeur 1995a, 19)

This reflection offers further support for the argument that Ricoeur was indeed a post-structuralist, a view that is gaining momentum. By incorporating structural analysis within reflection, Ricoeur was asserting that self-understanding necessitates the long detour of reflection by way of analysis of texts and works transmitted in the cultural world, thereby critiquing the presuppositions of the Cogito (Ricoeur 1995a, 16).

It was following his hermeneutic turn in the 1960s that Ricoeur's investigations on human subjectivity turned toward what he called the "hermeneutics of the self." Ricoeur's turn toward hermeneutics was a methodological decision that he expressed as "the graft of hermeneutics onto phenomenology"—his hermeneutical phenomenology considered "phenomenology to be the unsurpassable presupposition of hermeneutics," despite rejecting its idealist assumptions (Ricoeur 1995a, 36). In his hermeneutics of the self, Ricoeur argued for the "exact equivalence" between self-interpretation and the unfolding of "the triple dialectic of reflection and analysis, of selfhood and sameness, and of self and other" (Ricoeur 1992, 21, 297). He explored the unfolding of the triple dialectic in his studies on philosophy of language, philosophy of action, questions of personal identity, and the "ethical and moral determinations of actions" through an "analytic-hermeneutical procedure" (Ricoeur 1992, 18, 20). These explorations were discussed in the many lectures he delivered especially since the 1980s and published later—

such as his canonical *Oneself as Another* (1992), the published version of his Gifford Lectures delivered in Edinburgh in 1986 under the title “On Selfhood: The Question of Personal Identity,” and *Philosophical Anthropology* (2016a), consisting of published versions of lectures delivered at various venues compiled under the section titled “Hermeneutics of the Self.” In the context of the aim of our study and the objective of this chapter, our exploration of the self that Ricoeur was concerned with deliberately focuses on these later works.

Ricoeur took up the problematic of the term “self” by way of an analysis of the grammars of various European natural languages that “allow the opposition between ‘self’ [*le soi*] and ‘I’ [*le moi*],” thereby supporting in different forms his intention of indicating “the primacy of reflective meditation over the immediate positing of the subject” and guaranteeing the “irreducible distinction” between them (Ricoeur 1992, 1; 1995a, 49). He observed that, although the terms ‘self’ in English, ‘*ipse*’ in Latin, and ‘*soi*’ in French are all reflexive versions of personal pronouns that respond to the question “Who?”, the French *soi* is restricted to the third-person alone (herself, himself, itself). The use of the adjective *même* (same) partly overcomes this restriction, making the reflexive pronoun belong to all persons (*moi-même*, *toi-même*, *elle-même/lui-même*, *soi-même*: myself, yourself, herself/himself, oneself) (Ricoeur 2016a, 222).

The addition of *même* to *soi* (*soi-même*: oneself), however, introduces a problematic regarding the nature of identity of the self. This is because *même* is equivocal: it translates both the Latin words *idem* (sameness) and *ipse* (ownness, which is opposed to otherness but not to difference). Ricoeur notes that the problematic of identity concerns “a primary trait of the self”—its temporality: the paradox of identity “despite time” and identity “across time.” With the intention of distinguishing between the two meanings of identity, he introduced the terms

“*idem*-identity” (identity of sameness) and “*ipse*-identity” (identity as selfhood), opposing them to each other (Ricoeur 1992, 2; 1995a, 49; 2016a, 223). He writes:

The identity of sameness [*idem*-identity] appeared to me to suit the objective or objectivised features of the speaking and acting subject, while identity as selfhood [*ipse*-identity] appeared to me better suited to characterising a subject capable of designating himself or herself as the author of words and actions, a nonsubstantial and nonimmutable subject, yet nevertheless one responsible for his or her saying and doing. (Ricoeur 1995a, 49)

While the immutable *idem*-identity takes “substance as its model or the structural relation” (Ricoeur 2016a, 244), the nonsubstantial, nonimmutable *ipse*-identity implies “no assertion concerning some unchanging core of the personality” (Ricoeur 1992, 2). The distinction between these two ideas of identity forms the basis of Ricoeur’s philosophy of selfhood, what he calls *ipseity* (Ricoeur 1992, 331).

The self, for Ricoeur, answers to the question “Who?”— “who speaks? who acts? who tells his or her story? who is responsible?” (Ricoeur 1992, 297)—and not “What?” (Ricoeur 2016a, 245). The question of identity is such that, while the question “What?” called for a univocal answer from the Cogito and in terms of *idem*-identity, the question “Who?” calls for an equivocal answer in terms of both *idem*-identity and *ipse*-identity, i.e., the unfolding of the dialectic of selfhood and sameness. Ricoeur elaborates:

The question who calls for an equivocal answer, a split answer, whose two extremes would be illustrated by the character that is the mark of the permanence of the *idem* and by the promise that illustrates the self-constancy of the *ipse*. We must not say that things are on the side of sameness and persons on that of *ipseity*. Persons are on both sides. This is why there is a paradox. We are characters and beings who make promises. (Ricoeur 2016a, 245)

Ricoeur addresses this paradox with regard to the “temporal structure of identity” (Ricoeur 2016a, 243)—i.e., that between character and self-constancy—by offering a mediation by way of the notion of “narrative identity.” He writes:

Narrative identity stands between the two; in narrativising character, the narrative returns to it the movement abolished in acquired dispositions, in the sediment of identifications-with. In narrativising the aim of the true life, narrative identity gives it the recognisable features of characters loved or respected. (Ricoeur 1992, 165–166)

Selfhood or *ipseity* is such that a kind of otherness can be constitutive of it, and not just comparable to it—a thesis so significant that it is articulated in the very title of Ricoeur’s *Oneself as Another* (1992). He writes:

Oneself as Another suggests from the outset that the selfhood of oneself implies otherness to such an intimate degree that one cannot be thought of without the other, that instead one passes into the other, as we might say in Hegelian terms. To “as” I should like to attach a strong meaning, not only that of a comparison (oneself similar to another) but indeed that of an implication (oneself inasmuch as being other). (Ricoeur 1992, 3)

Ricoeur reflects that, in the “little ethics” he developed in *Oneself as Another*, he defined ethics as “the wish to live well with and for others in just institutions” (Ricoeur 1995a, 51). This “three-cornered definition” distinguished between two kinds of “other”: “the ‘thou’ of interpersonal relations and the ‘each one’ of life in the context of institutions.” Here, Ricoeur understands institutions as “the structure of living together as this belongs to a historical community” and are characterised by “the bond of common mores and not that of constraining rules” (Ricoeur 1992, 194; 1995a, 52). However, Ricoeur did not reduce the otherness, or passivity, that is constitutive of selfhood to other people; instead, he explored the “scattering of the figures of alterity” along three directions:

Toward the flesh, as mediating between the self and a world, itself taken up in terms of its multiple modes of at-homeness and uncanniness [*Unheimlichkeit*]; toward the stranger, as similar but exterior to me; and finally toward that other figured as my heart of hearts, and designated by the “other” voice of conscience addressed to me from deep within myself. (Ricoeur 2016c, 259)

It is in terms of the dialectic of the self and the other that Ricoeur speaks of human beings not only as acting beings—with the capacities to say, act, recount, and promise and impute oneself—but also as suffering beings (Ricoeur 1995a, 49). Suffering, for Ricoeur, is defined not solely by physical or mental pain but “by the reduction, even the destruction, of the capacity for acting, of being-able-to-act, experienced as violation of self-integrity” (Ricoeur 1992, 190). Ricoeur sees our difficult relationship with time and “the sense of menace in our encounter with the other” as sources of the fragility of our identity (see Ricoeur 2011).

Ricoeur asserts that a gap separates the philosophies of the Cogito and his hermeneutics of the self. While the I is posited, the self is “implied reflexively in the operations, the analysis of which precedes the return toward this self”—a return as “another” (Ricoeur 1992, 18; 1995a, 50). Through the nontotalisable and fragmentary character of his studies resulting from the detour of analysis imposed on reflection, he challenged the thesis of “indecomposable simplicity of the Cogito, which is joined to that of its immediacy” (Ricoeur 1992, 19). In addition, with his notion of “attestation,” i.e., “the assurance—the credence and the trust—of existing in the mode of selfhood,” he contested the “guarantee and hypercertainty” that the I boasts of as the ultimate foundation (Ricoeur 1992, 22, 302; 1995a, 23).

2.5. Conclusion: Coherence, Comprehensibility, and Spatial Constitution

This chapter explored the spatial constitution of selfhood by revisiting Foucault’s and Ricoeur’s projects of post-structuralist hermeneutics of the subject/self in their later works to examine

how each thinker, in his distinct way, used and understood the concept of the self and accounted for the possibility of the self's coherence and comprehensibility. We began our exploration by unpacking a few presuppositions underlying the objective of this chapter in the context of the aim of the study. Next, we drew a historical sketch that illustrated the richness of the conceptual varieties of the self in the West and the accounts of the possibility of the self's coherence and comprehensibility. We observed that while the modern subject was posited as unified and self-constituting, establishing its coherence by turning "inwards," as Charles Taylor (1989, x) puts it, contemporary selves are often conceived as segmented and constituted, forging coherence by way of continuous mediations with "the outside" or "the exterior," varied as its senses may be. We argued that contemporary conceptualisations of the self—including those of Foucault and Ricoeur—can be generally characterised as consisting of a series of philosophical reflections on or responses to modernity's "closed conception of interiority" (Downes 2020, 124), specifically the Cogito as self-scrutinising and self-constituting. In this context, we then provided an account of Foucault's and Ricoeur's projects of post-structuralist hermeneutics of the subject/self in their later works.

Despite differing in their use and understanding of the concept of the self, our exploration revealed that, as in many contemporary accounts of the self, both Foucault and Ricoeur accounted for the possibility of the coherence and comprehensibility of the self—however fragile and fragmented as it may be—by way of mediations with and in relation to "the outside" or "the exterior," in its varied senses.¹³ It also illustrates the thinkers' projects as imbued with an ethical concern for one's relations with oneself and others—providing further support to views that situate their shared concern for the self, as we noted in Chapter 1, within "a

¹³ Symons (2009) has argued that, although Foucault never cites or explicitly refers to Simmel, the latter's account of the inside-outside that makes society possible is imbued in Foucault's intuition that the realm in which power is exercised is also the one in which strategies of resistance to it are being developed (see Symons 2009, 115).

philosophical lineage that can be traced back to the Socratic injunction to ‘know oneself’” (*gnothi seauton*) framed by the “care of the self” (*epimeleia heautou*) (Michel 2015, 103; Davidson 2016, 159). Hence, Foucault’s and Ricoeur’s post-structuralist hermeneutics of the subject/self can be read as mirroring, in their own ways and up to a point, all three of Ricoeur’s “rules of rationality” of configuration: (1) coherence as emplotment—the “synthesis of the heterogeneous” or “the intention of internal coherence,” (2) comprehensibility as intelligibility—the intention to clarify and make comprehensible the inextricable, and (3) spatial constitution as intertextuality—which can be interpreted in the context of the self as the intention to contextualise or confront oneself in relation to “the outside” or “the exterior,” which includes other selves and ways of inhabiting.

Recent studies that read Foucault and Ricoeur within the frame of their projects of post-structuralist hermeneutics of the subject/self have argued for the need for mediation or interpellation of the two projects so as to complement each other and ward off each other’s blind spots (Barthélémy 2010; Castonguay 2010). However, the approach in this chapter has been to read the two thinkers in a manner that holds space for the complexity of their thoughts while acknowledging the differences, incompleteness, and fragility of their projects. In light of the findings in this chapter, we will next turn to exploring the hermeneutics of space/architecture with regard to exteriorisation of meaning in space and metaphors for space in Chapter 3. Such an exploration of the application and expansion of hermeneutics to space would reveal the ethical entanglements between the self, spatiality, and meaning-making.

Chapter 3

Configuring Space:

Meaning-making, Space, and Architecture

Chapter 2 revisited Foucault's and Ricoeur's projects of post-structuralist hermeneutics of the subject/self in their later works, with the specific objective of examining how each thinker used and understood the concept of the self and accounted for the possibility of the self's coherence and comprehensibility. It considered the thinkers' accounts to be among contemporary conceptualisations of the self characterised as comprising a series of philosophical reflections on or responses to modernity's conception of interiority. It showed that, despite their distinct ways of using and understanding the concept of the self, both Foucault and Ricoeur accounted for the possibility of the coherence and comprehensibility of the self by way of mediations with varied senses of "the outside" or "the exterior" that included an ethical concern for one's relations with oneself and others, which we read as spatial constitution of the self.

This chapter explores the hermeneutics of space/architecture by revisiting Foucault's and Ricoeur's projects of post-structuralist hermeneutics of the subject/self in their later works, with the specific objective of exploring (1) the exteriorisation of meaning in space, and (2) metaphors for space. Such an exploration of the application and expansion of hermeneutics to space would reveal the ethical entanglements between the self, spatiality, and meaning-making, contributing to our exploration of the spatial aspects of living a good life in Chapter 4.

In this chapter, we will first explore Foucault's and Ricoeur's approaches to hermeneutics in the context of the subject/self by briefly reviewing their accounts of the recent history of Western hermeneutics and examining their conceptualisations and use of hermeneutics, particularly in their later works. Next, we will examine and build on the decisive suggestions

they offered in their later works for the application and expansion of hermeneutics to space and architecture by reviewing and identifying points of intersection in their discussions on the interpretation of texts. As we explore space as an object in which meaning is exteriorised, we will highlight the need for incorporating a hermeneutics of suspicion within self-understanding by way of understanding such objects. As we explore concepts that can be taken as metaphors for space in light of Bruce Janz's (2017) exposition, we will suggest Foucault's heterotopia as a possible alternative metaphor for space, which has the potential to open up possibilities for dialogue and the encounter of difference within hermeneutics. Finally, we will argue that the exercise of the capacity of meaning-making through Ricoeurian imaginative variation facilitated by texts and metaphors can be read as a practice of Foucauldian resistance in the context of the constitution and understanding of the self.

3.1. Beyond Hidden Meanings: Approaches to Hermeneutics

As we saw in Chapters 1 and 2, in order to pursue their respective projects of post-structuralist hermeneutics of the subject/self in their later works, Foucault developed a genealogy of the hermeneutics of the subject along the ethical axis, while Ricoeur developed an ethical project of a hermeneutics of the self. In this section, we briefly review Foucault's and Ricoeur's accounts of the recent history of Western hermeneutics, before exploring how each thinker conceptualised and used hermeneutics in his own distinct way, particularly in their projects of post-structuralist hermeneutics of the subject/self.

3.1.1. Foucault and the Techniques of Interpretation

Foucault introduces the history of "techniques of interpretation" in the essay "Nietzsche, Freud, Marx" (1990) by observing that, since antiquity, every culture in the West has had its own techniques, methods, and systems of interpretation, as well as two kinds of suspicion regarding language. These suspicions, which continue to be held even today, are that (1) "language means

something other than what it says,” i.e., there is a meaning underneath the lesser, immediately manifest meaning, and (2) “there is language elsewhere than in language,” i.e., language also takes non-verbal forms and that things other than language—“nature, the sea, rustling trees, animals, faces, masks, crossed swords”—also speak (Foucault 1990, 59–60).

Foucault traces the genealogy of the contemporary system of interpretation—which he considers a result of the nineteenth-century hermeneutic founded by Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud—by first taking a look at “similitude” or “resemblance,” a technique that gave rise to interpretation in the sixteenth century (Foucault 1990, 60). He elaborates in *The Order of Things* (1970b):

Let us call the totality of the learning and skills that enable one to make the signs speak and to discover their meaning, hermeneutics; let us call the totality of the learning and skills that enable one to distinguish the location of the signs, to define what constitutes them as signs, and to know how and by what laws they are linked, semiology: the sixteenth century superimposed hermeneutics and semiology in the form of similitude. To search for a meaning is to bring to light a resemblance. To search for the law governing signs is to discover the things that are alike. (Foucault 1970b, 33)

The relationship of similitude between hermeneutics and semiology, when put into practice, meant that signs were seen as absolute, simple, and benevolent—i.e., as Foucault puts it, “only a transparent veil separated the sign from the signified”—and were “exchanged back and forth” in a homogenous space (Foucault 1990, 62–65).

The evolution of Western thought in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, especially the critiques by Bacon and Descartes, left similitude suspended, while the modern hermeneutic founded by Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud in the nineteenth century modified the nature of the sign and the way in which it is interpreted, providing a “new possibility of interpretation” (Foucault 1990, 61). According to Foucault, the modern hermeneutic has four postulates: (1)

the interpretation of signs occurs in a differentiated interpretive space characterised by depth as exteriority, not interiority; (2) interpretation is endless and incomplete, with signs linked in an “inexhaustible as well as infinite network”; (3) there is “nothing to interpret,” as signs are themselves interpretations and “interpretation precedes the sign”; and (4) interpretation must always interpret itself endlessly, “always correcting itself” (Foucault 1990, 61–66). Foucault reminds us that hermeneutics and semiology are indeed “two ferocious enemies” — “believing in the absolute existence of signs gives up the violence, the incompleteness, the infinity of interpretations,” whereas “the life of interpretation ... is to believe that there is nothing but interpretations” (Foucault 1990, 66–67).

Foucault’s views on hermeneutics, according to van de Velde (2014), can be organised along three perspectives:

(1) [I]n *The Order of Things* [1970b [1966]], hermeneutics is presented as a kind of discourse that can be dated in its arising and thereby relativised in any universal claim it can make; (2) in *Archaeology of Knowledge* [1971 [1969]], hermeneutics is mentioned as a method of investigation that archaeology criticises and claims to overcome; and (3) in some of his last works hermeneutics is co-opted as a new approach to the self, for example in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* [2005 [1981–1982]]. (van de Velde 2014, 182)

In the context of the aim of this study and the objective of this chapter, our exploration of Foucauldian hermeneutics deliberately focuses on aspects of his views on hermeneutics in his later works. As we saw in Chapter 2, Foucault’s usage of the term hermeneutics with regard to the self was in the specific sense of finding a hidden, deep truth within itself, as in a book, a technique of the self he wanted to get rid of. van de Velde (2014) calls this a “‘hermeneutic attitude’ than a hermeneutic method,” since its “goal is not to ‘interpret’ the self but to accompany its disclosure to itself, as it were, by following the experiences through which a self

comes to understand itself or manifest itself” (van de Velde 2014, 185). Furthermore, as we saw in Chapter 1, Dreyfus and Rabinow (1983) call Foucault’s method in his last works “interpretive analytics”:

[What Foucault offers] is not a theory, nor is it an interpretation based on deep meaning, a unified subject, signification rooted in nature, privileged access of the interpreter. If we label the misguided kind of interpretive method “hermeneutics,” then we can call Foucault’s current method “interpretive analytics.” (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983, 183)

3.1.2. Ricoeur and the Tasks of Hermeneutics

Ricoeur introduces the history of the “hermeneutical problem” in the essay “The Task of Hermeneutics” (1981c) by identifying the first locus of interpretation as language, particularly written language. The work of interpretation is an “activity of discernment” involved in “sensitivity to context” with respect to polysemy, a characteristic of natural languages: “To produce a relatively univocal discourse with polysemic words, and to identify this intention of univocity in the reception of messages” (Ricoeur 1981c, 4). His working definition of hermeneutics as “the theory of the operations of understanding in their relation to the interpretation of texts” involves the key idea of the “realisation of discourse as a text” (Ricoeur 1981c, 3).

Ricoeur provides a recent history of hermeneutics—a “historical backcloth” of his own conception of and investigations into hermeneutics (Ricoeur 1981a, xlv)—by identifying two interacting “preoccupations” of hermeneutics from Schleiermacher to Gadamer: (1) “deregionalisation,” or the movement from regional to general hermeneutics; and (2) “radicalisation,” or the movement from epistemology to ontology (Ricoeur 1981c, 4). He observes that the work of interpretation before Schleiermacher—such as in the philology of classical texts and the exegesis of sacred texts—varied with the diversity and particularity of

the texts (Ricoeur 1981c, 5). It was with Schleiermacher, whom Ricoeur calls “the founder of modern hermeneutics” (Ricoeur 1981c, 8), that deregionalisation began. This movement to raise hermeneutics to “the level of a *Kunstlehre*,” or a “technology” with “universally valid rules of interpretation,” enlarged the aim of hermeneutics to incorporate all regional hermeneutics into a single general hermeneutics (Ricoeur 1981c, 4–6). Dilthey furthered deregionalisation by incorporating the problem of regional hermeneutics into the general field of historical knowledge, also addressing the “epistemological concerns of hermeneutics” (Ricoeur 1981c, 9). A response to positivism, his effort to establish for the human sciences a status comparable to that of the natural sciences involved opposing the explanation of nature to the understanding of history,¹ with the aim of hermeneutics remaining psychological—understanding not what the text says but the lived experience expressed within it (Ricoeur 1981c, 11–12).

With the works of Heidegger and Gadamer, deregionalisation was soon accompanied by radicalisation, a movement in which hermeneutics was to become “not only general but fundamental” (Ricoeur 1981c, 4). Ricoeur writes:

The presupposition of hermeneutics construed as epistemology is precisely what Heidegger and Gadamer place in question. Their contribution ... must be seen as an attempt to dig beneath the epistemological enterprise itself, in order to uncover its properly ontological conditions. ... [A] new question is raised: instead of asking ‘how do we know?’ it will be asked ‘what is the mode of being of that being who exists only in understanding?’ (Ricoeur 1981c, 14)

¹ Ricoeur considers hermeneutic understanding (*verstehen*) to have been distinguished from structural explanation (*erklären*) by three criteria:

To the observation of facts in the natural sciences corresponded on the side of the human sciences the appropriation of external signs, expressive of internal mental life. To the objective, uninvolved attitude there corresponded the transfer by empathy into a foreign life. Finally, to the analytic examination of causal chains was opposed the apprehension of the cohesion of meaningful connections. (Ricoeur 1995a, 30)

Ricoeur reminds us that radicalisation has not resolved, but only displaced and aggravated, the central problem of hermeneutics that deregionalisation presented: the “disastrous” opposition between explanation and understanding (Ricoeur 1981c, 3). He sees his own contributions to hermeneutics as attempts to search for a “complementarity” between these two modalities of knowing (Ricoeur 1981c, 3), “‘re-regionalise’ hermeneutics by means of the notion of the text” (Ricoeur 1981c, 4), and account for the question of critique within fundamental hermeneutics (Ricoeur 1981c, 20).

Since Ricoeur’s hermeneutic turn in the 1960s, his conception of hermeneutics underwent, as he reflects, three “shifts of direction, nesting one within the other”: from the symbol to the text, and from the text to human action (Ricoeur 1995a, 38). His first conception of hermeneutics centred on symbols, which he then understood as “all expressions of double meaning, wherein a primary meaning refers beyond itself to a second meaning which is never given directly” (Ricoeur 1981a, xliii). This “hermeneutics of the symbol,” developed in *The Symbolism of Evil* (1967 [1960]), was then limited to the deciphering of the second, hidden meanings of symbols and “functioned, without explicit critical concern, as a hermeneutics of recollection” (Ricoeur 1981a, xliv). Soon, as a response to the “semiological challenge” posed by psychoanalysis and structuralism—the hermeneutics of suspicion in the former and the elimination of the foundational role of the subject in the latter—Ricoeur recognised the need to extend interpretation to “all phenomena of a textual order.” This “hermeneutics of the text,” his second conception of hermeneutics developed in *The Conflict of Interpretations* (1974 [1969]), focused on the notion of “indirect reference,” also calling into question the primacy of the subject by way of the “detour via signs,” as we saw in Chapters 1 and 2 (Ricoeur 1981a, xliii–xliv). Ricoeur writes:

It was then necessary, however, to dissociate the hermeneutical project from the simple interpretation of expressions of double meaning and to expand it to the dimensions of

the problem posed by the passage from the structure immanent in every text to its extra-linguistic aim (*visée*) – the aim or reference which I sometimes designate by other related terms: the matter of the text, the world of the text, the being brought to language by the text. (Ricoeur 1981a, xlv)

His third conception of hermeneutics involved an “analogical extension” of the notion of the text “to phenomena not specifically limited to writing, nor even to discourse” (Ricoeur 1981a, xlviii), such as meaningful action, the object of the social sciences. This “hermeneutics of human action,” developed in essays such as “The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action considered as a Text” (1981e [1971]), extended the theory of interpretation to the entire field of social sciences (Ricoeur 1981a, xlvii). In the context of the aim of this study and the objective of this chapter, our exploration of Ricoeurian hermeneutics deliberately focuses on aspects of his second and third conceptions of hermeneutics.

In sum, the brief review above illustrates that Foucault and Ricoeur placed emphasis on different aspects of the recent history of Western hermeneutics: its interpretive techniques and hermeneutical tasks, respectively. Both thinkers conceptualised and used hermeneutics in distinct ways, reworking their definitions of and approach toward it throughout the course of their work. We can see that the conception of hermeneutics Foucault rejected in the context of the subject/self is the one Ricoeur himself saw as limited and requiring extension—that of the hermeneutics of the symbol with its thesis of hidden meanings within the self. As we saw in Chapter 1, for Ricoeur, to understand oneself is to understand oneself before the text (Ricoeur 1995a, 37), requiring the long route of analysis. Foucault, too, through what his commentators variously call “hermeneutic attitude” or “interpretive analytic,” moved beyond the hermeneutics of the symbol, to conceptualise the self’s meaning-making in his own distinct way.

Having explored Foucault's and Ricoeur's distinct approaches to hermeneutics in the context of the subject/self, we will next examine and build on the decisive suggestions they offered in their later works for the application and expansion of hermeneutics to space and architecture. As we saw in Chapter 1, Ricoeur considered the notion of the text as providing the paradigm for interpretation. Then, our approach here will be to identify points of intersection in Foucault's and Ricoeur's concern with the interpretation of texts, which can be extended and applied to the case of space, even though their ideas on thinking about them may differ, thereby opening possibilities for dialogue and the encounter of difference in their works. In the following two sections, we will explore space as an object like a text in which meaning is exteriorised, as well as the concepts that can be taken as metaphors for space, respectively.

3.2. Exteriorisation of Meaning in Space as a Text-analogue

In Ricoeur's theory of the text, the notion of the text is understood as that in which the meaning of a discourse is exteriorised and fixed by writing (Ricoeur 1981d, 109). Here, discourse is the event or usage of language in speaking or writing (*à la parole*), the counterpart of the system or code of language (*à la langue*). Unlike the language system that lacks temporality, subjectivity, a world, and an interlocutor, discourse is "always realised temporally and in the present," "refers back to its speaker," is "always about something," and has an interlocutor "to whom it is addressed" (Ricoeur 1981d, 160).

According to Ricoeur, the "'objectivity' of the text" is constituted by four traits: "(1) the fixation of the meaning, (2) its dissociation from the mental intention of the author, (3) the display of non-ostensive references, and (4) the universal range of its addressees" (Ricoeur 1981d, 172). For Ricoeur, it is in "writing and by all comparable phenomena" that meaning becomes fixed in texts and monuments (Ricoeur 1981d, 51; 1981e, 159). The fixation in writing implies "distanciation" and is the condition for the "threefold autonomy" of the text: "with

respect to the intention of the author; with respect to the cultural situation and all the sociological conditions of the production of the text; and finally, with respect to the original addressee” (Ricoeur 1981d, 51). For Ricoeur, writing “emancipates” the text from the oral situation, not only preserving discourse as “an archive available for individual and collective memory,” but also entailing an “upheaval” of both language–world and language–subjectivity relations in living speech (Ricoeur 1981d, 109). Ricoeur elaborates:

[I]n living speech, the *ideal* sense of what is said turns towards the real reference, towards that ‘about which’ we speak. At the limit, this real reference tends to merge with an ostensive designation where speech rejoins the gesture of pointing. Sense fades into reference and the latter into the act of showing. ... This is no longer the case when the text takes the place of speech. ... [T]here is no longer a speaker, at least in the sense of an immediate and direct self-designation of the one who speaks in the instance of discourse. (Ricoeur 1981d, 110–111)

In other words, for Ricoeur, the text intercepts the relation of ostensive reference—i.e., the “act of showing”—between language and the world in speech. Here, the interception of the referential function of language that he observes can be read alongside what Foucault identifies as a theme of contemporary writing—its “freedom from the theme of expression,” whereby “[r]eferring only to itself, but without being restricted to the confines of its interiority, writing is identified with its own unfolded exteriority” (Foucault 2000b, 206). Moreover, for Ricoeur, writing–reading interrupts the relation of dialogue in speaking–answering, since “the writer does not respond to the reader” (Ricoeur 1981d, 109–110). As the “original addressee is transcended,” the text is open to “whoever knows how to read” (Ricoeur 1981d, 52, 164).

Both Ricoeur and Foucault critically engaged with the loss of authorial intention and the idea of the death of the author.² For Ricoeur, with the meaning of the text no longer coinciding with authorial intention, to read a text is to “consider its author as already dead and the book as posthumous.” He considered the “different modalities of the relation of author to narration,” and even the death of the author, as games that the author plays (Ricoeur 1981b, 150–151). Despite defending the “semantic autonomy” of the text, Ricoeur distanced himself from what he called “the ideology of the absolute text,” i.e., the notion of a text without reference (Ricoeur 1981d, 109–110). Meanwhile, Foucault considered the author not simply as “an element in a discourse,” but as playing a role that has the “function” of regulating or constraining the “proliferation of meaning” in discourse (Foucault 2000b, 222). For him, the author “must assume the role of the dead man in the game of writing” (Foucault 2000b, 207). However, he observed that, although criticism and philosophy has taken note of the idea of the death of the author, the author cannot be said to have died or disappeared unless the “author function”—what has replaced the privileged position of the author through notions such as “the idea of the work” and “giving writing a primal status”—has disappeared (Foucault 2000b, 207–208). He writes:

I think that, as our society changes, at the very moment when it is in the process of changing, the author function will disappear, and in such a manner that fiction and its polysemous texts will once again function according to another mode, but still with a system of constraint—one that will no longer be the author but will have to be determined or, perhaps, experienced.... (Foucault 2000b, 222)

According to Ricoeur, the fulfilment of the text’s reference is the task of reading *qua* interpretation (Ricoeur 1981d, 108–110), and what must be interpreted is the “world of the

² The notion of “death of the author,” most explicitly articulated by Roland Barthes in a 1967 essay by the same name, marked a significant moment in literary criticism.

text”—i.e., “the type of being-in-the-world unfolded in front of the text” (Ricoeur 1981d, 104). By virtue of the upheaval of language–world relations, the text enters into a relation with all the other texts, engendering the “quasi-world of texts or literature” that takes the place of the ostensive reference in speech (Ricoeur 1981d, 110). Ricoeur considered the loss of authorial intention as posing a radical challenge to the notion of the self as the master of meaning:

The most radical way in which hermeneutics questions the primacy of subjectivity is to take as its touchstone the theory of the text; indeed, the extent to which the sense of a text has become autonomous in relation to the subjective intention of its author, the essential question is no longer to discover the lost intention behind the text, but to unfold before the text, as it were, the “world” that it opens and uncovers. (Ricoeur 1995a, 35)

Foucault, too, asserts that as “biographical and psychological references” are set aside, “the absolute character and founding role of the subject” are called into question—“it is a matter of depriving the subject (or its substitute) of its role as originator, and of analysing the subject as a variable and complex function of discourse” (Foucault 2000b, 220). He reflects that, with the disappearance of the author function, our attention will shift to new questions regarding discourse:

What are the modes of existence of this discourse? Where has it been used, how can it circulate, and who can appropriate it for himself? What are the places in it where there is room for possible subjects? Who can assume these various subject functions? And behind all these questions, we would hear hardly anything but the stirring of an indifference: What difference does it make who is speaking? (Foucault 2000b, 222)

For Ricoeur, interpretation culminates in a concrete reader who “appropriates” the meaning of the text. By appropriation (his translation of the German *Aneignen*), he means “participatory belonging,” the counterpart of “distanciation” associated with “any objective and objectifying

study of a text” (Ricoeur 1981b, 145–147). In other words, Ricoeur finds the equivalent of Dilthey’s explanation-understanding in Gadamer’s distanciation-participation (Ricoeur 1981a, xlv). Then, it is in interpretation that the dialectic—rather than a disastrous opposition—between explanation and understanding unfolds at the level of the text. The complementarity between these two modalities of knowing is such that the structural analysis of the text mediates its hermeneutic understanding, a position he formulates as the motto of his hermeneutics of the text: “explaining more in order to understand better” (Ricoeur 1995a, 31). The mode of being of appropriation is ‘play.’ Play has its own way of being; it is not determined by the player. The subject of play is not the player but what “takes place” in play—“the to and fro of play [that] occurs as if by itself, that is, without effort or applied intention.” The rules of the game impose themselves on the participants, prescribing the to-and-fro and delimiting the field of play. Ricoeur considers the reader—as well as the author—as a “playful figure” who undergoes “imaginative variations” of the ego during appropriation (Ricoeur 1981b, 148–152).

According to Ricoeur, the imaginative variations of the ego are “conditions for a self other than the ego that initially comes to the reading” received from the proposed world of the text, which, when made one’s own, reveals and transforms the reader (Ricoeur 1995a, 37). He writes:

To appropriate is to make what was alien become one’s own. What is appropriated is indeed the matter of the text. But the matter of the text becomes my own only if I disappropriate myself, in order to let the matter of the text be. So I exchange the me, master of myself, for the self, disciple of the text. The process could also be expressed as a distanciation of self from itself within the interior of appropriation. (Ricoeur 1981d, 73)

The distanciation or disappropriation concerns not only the self’s relation to itself, but also “the naive, uncritical, illusory and deceptive understanding which he claims to have of himself” with which he approaches the text (Ricoeur 1981a, xlv; 1981d, 106). Ricoeur thus asserted the

need for a “critique of the illusions of the subject”—i.e., a hermeneutics of suspicion—to be incorporated within self-understanding by way of understanding the text (Ricoeur 1981d, 55, 106), challenging the primacy of the subject (Ricoeur 1981b, 155). In seeing the distancing of the self from itself as “not a fault to be combated, but rather the condition of possibility of understanding oneself in front of the text,” Ricoeur also saw “the place for a necessary dialogue between hermeneutics and the theory of ideology” (Ricoeur 1981b, 153; 1981d, 55).³

3.3. Metaphors for Space

In Ricoeur’s theory of metaphor—formulated following the contributions of Max Black, Donald Schön, and Mary Hesse—a metaphor is understood, unlike in the classical theory of metaphor, “not as a mere substitution of name but as the production of new information by putting together two different semantic fields, by putting two ideas within one structure” (Ricoeur 2024, 262). For Ricoeur, for a concept to be taken as a metaphor, it must be live or fluid enough to allow its “displacement” to new situations, i.e., situations outside those mentioned in its original conception. The process of displacement is not an application of the concept to a new situation as an instance of it (subsumption or ordering). Instead, it is a taking of the concept as a metaphor for the new situation to transpose or carry over a new perspective to think about the situation (Ricoeur 2024, 264). Such a “seeing-as” involves the activity of “reading,” i.e., a selecting or screening to “set aside the irrelevant aspects and emphasise only what is relevant” in the concept and elaborating how these can be carried over and related to the new situation (Ricoeur 2024, 261).⁴ In this process, the logical distance between the concept

³ Here, Ricoeur is referring to his stance on the Gadamer-Habermas debate, which began in Germany in 1967. He sees the debate as “the conflict between hermeneutics and the critical theory of ideology” with regard to the “rehabilitation of prejudice, authority, and tradition” (Ricoeur 1981d, 24n1). His response to the debate was to show that both hermeneutics and critical theory “can recognise the other’s claim to universality in a way which marks the place of one in the structure of the other” (Ricoeur 1981d, 25). By emphasising the need to incorporate a critique of ideology within hermeneutics, his goal was to “formulate a hermeneutics which would render justice to the critique of ideology, which would show the necessity of the latter at the very heart of its own concerns...” (Ricoeur 1981d, 24).

⁴ Here, one may recall Wittgenstein’s two uses of “see,” i.e., the epistemic distinction between “seeing” as a “state” and “seeing as” as a process.

and the new situation is reduced—what initially appears remote, and a strange or mistaken use, no longer seems so (Ricoeur 2024, 271). Thus, along with transforming the perception of the new situation, seeing-as also extends the instance of the concept to the new situation, modifying its previous description and conceptual scheme (Ricoeur 2024, 264). That is, metaphors extend polysemy in language and refigure the reality of the practical world of the reader (Ricoeur 1991, 83). As Ricoeur writes:

But now metaphor is no longer a rhetorical device, no longer a trope; it designates the general process by which we grasp kinship, break the distance between remote ideas, build similarities on dissimilarities. ... [M]etaphor shatters not only the previous structures of our language, but also the previous structures of what we call reality. (Ricoeur 1991, 83–85)

Ricoeur situates the theory of the metaphor in the problematic of the text “insofar as metaphor consists not only in a deviation and extension of the meaning of words, but in a ‘bizarre’ application of predicates in the context of the sentence, which can be considered as a text in miniature” (Ricoeur 1981a, xlvi). He considers metaphors as offering an example of semantic innovation comparable to that offered by the emplotment, or “ordered composition,” involved in writing, although their “ways of creative imagination” differ (Ricoeur 1995a, 44). He writes:

To be sure, the ways of the creative imagination or, if one prefers, the paths of schematisation, are different: in one, the production of a new attributive relevance out of an abusive attribution; in the other, the production of plots combining in an original manner intentions, causes, and chance. (Ricoeur 1995a, 44)

Moreover, he considers the act of reading as providing the “intermediary link” between “being-as” of the extra-linguistic world of the text and “seeing-as” of metaphors (Ricoeur 1995a, 29). The “being-as” can be compared to “seeing-as,” as both “aim at refiguring reality, in the

twofold sense of uncovering the concealed dimensions of human experience and of transforming our vision of the world” (Ricoeur 1995a, 47).

Our explorations in the previous section showed that Ricoeur considered space to have certain text-like characteristics, thereby prompting us to inquire whether the concept of the text can be taken as a metaphor for space. Although Ricoeur himself did not explicitly take the concept of the text as a metaphor for space,⁵ we can think with him in light of Janz’s (2017) exposition to see space as a text. Ricoeur identifies five features, when taken together, as constituting the “criteria of textuality”:

(1) [T]he realisation of language as discourse; (2) the realisation of discourse as a structured work; (3) the relation of speaking to writing in discourse and in the works of discourse; (4) the work of discourse as the projection of a world; (5) discourse and the work of discourse as the mediation of self-understanding. (Ricoeur 1981c, 94)

In seeing space as a text, some of these aspects can be read and transposed to the new situation of space. Janz (2017) compiles and highlights twelve such aspects of a text that are relevant, have been carried over, and are related to the situation of space.⁶ These are:

- (1) Inscription: the intentional or unintentional fixing of discourse;
- (2) Reading(s): “creating and re-creating elements of a place in such a way that it is renewed”;

⁵ As we saw in Chapter 1, Ricoeur drew a parallel or analogy between architecture and narrativity, and considered the model of reading excellent for reevaluating the act of inhabiting (Ricoeur 2016b). However, he did not consider text as a metaphor for space. In Ricoeurian hermeneutics, though there are parallels between models and metaphors, the two cannot be equated. Regarding the function of models, he writes:

The function of a model is to describe an unknown thing or a lesser-known thing in terms of a better-known thing thanks to a similarity of structure. Two things have therefore to be considered in a model. On the one hand, it is a fiction, that is, it is a way of making an object easier to handle. On the other hand, this fiction is a heuristic fiction inasmuch as we may transfer the description of this better-known object to the field to be described on the basis of a partial isomorphism. (Ricoeur 1991, 84)

Metaphors, on the other hand, “build similarities on dissimilarities,” as we see in this section, extending polysemy in language (Ricoeur 1991, 83) and refiguring the reality of the practical world of the reader.

⁶ In “Is Place a Text?” (2017), Janz’s inquiry specifically concerns whether textuality exhausts the possibilities of “place”; for him, space is one among the possibilities that place turns into when enacted or read (Janz 2017, 27). However, in the context of our discussion in Chapter 1 of Foucault’s and Ricoeur’s usage and understanding of “space” in their post-structuralist hermeneutic accounts, we can see that Janz’s inquiry concerns and is relevant to the manner in which we consider space in this study.

- (3) (Lack of) literacy or familiarity: “an acquired ability to apprehend place”;
- (4) Author(s) and audience(s): “places, even ‘natural’ ones, as having human and cultural imprints, in concert with the imprints of nonhumans”;
- (5) Boundedness: the horizon of meaning “made available through materiality and tradition”;
- (6) Reflexivity: reading as revealing the way of being of the reader;
- (7) Mediums: that on which place is inscribed to be read differently by different people;
- (8) Genres: “sets of conventions that we use to shorthand both texts and places”;
- (9) Hermeneutics of trust and of suspicion: places can have a meaning that is apparent, as well as one that is “held back, or only available to some”;
- (10) Affective element: an orientation that “arises in the encounter, as a mode of understanding”;
- (11) No retrieval of an ‘original,’ as both texts and places are situated within tradition, in “a neverending chain of what has been”; and
- (12) Productive distancing: the “long route” of analysis by way of the world of the text (Janz 2017, 27–29).

3.3.1. Limits of the Metaphor of the Text: Possible Alternate Metaphors for Space

While Janz (2017) acknowledged the metaphor of the text as unquestionably useful in understanding space, he argues that textuality does not exhaust the possibilities of space. The limits of the metaphor of the text show through when it comes to carrying over the perspective of textuality to the situation of, for instance, natural places (Whose text is it?), or ‘other’ places with no human engagement (for instance, those outside the age of the Anthropocene) (Janz 2017, 29). Rather than abandoning the metaphor of the text for space altogether, he suggests “placing it alongside other metaphors and resisting the inclination to reduce metaphors to each other,” thus “bringing fundamental difference and dialogue within the bounds of hermeneutics itself” (Janz 2017, 30).

Janz (2017) considers four concepts as possible alternative metaphors for understanding space, describing their relevant aspects that can be related to the situation of space. They are:

- (1) Body: Spaces—especially natural places—as bodies are not always-already present. They are more fluid than a text, and “live at the edge of the uninterpretable”—i.e., they are yet to be known but may never be known. Moreover, they know. Janz writes:

[P]laces, like, bodies, also know. Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela developed the concept of “autopoiesis,” the idea that living bodies are self-organising systems. Places operate in the same manner, at least in the sense that they operate as coherent, responsive, positive feedback models. They are not quasi-Romantic forms of consciousness ... but they are contained but permeable modes of knowledge which require that we respond as knowledge responds to knowledge, rather than as knowledge responds to object of investigation. (Janz 2017, 31)

- (2) Scene: Scenes, unlike the dwelling, are about “synchronic mode of place-making,” or “shifting and provisional theatrical constructions of place” (Janz 2017, 31). They are transgressive, interpretive sites concerned with the question of “becoming, that is, of coming-to-be and perishing” (Blum 2003 as cited in Janz 2017, 31). Janz writes:

Hermeneutics has rendered moments of change as moments on the way to or from *alethia*, instances of the manifestation of being or its covering-over. Using the metaphor of scene makes it possible to think place not as fundamentally a mode of being, but of becoming, not as always provisional, lacking, and a form of negation, but as positive.

In the scene, we do not move to a dwelling, but dwell by moving.... (Janz 2017, 31)

- (3) Image/visuality: Spaces as image/visuality, through their presupposed distancing, help us remember the materiality of the event of artistic creation, resisting textualisation or writing, and the “easy deflation” into forms of textuality (Janz 2017, 32).

(4) Haunting: Spaces as haunting are rooted in becoming such that they are both the “moment of the event” that bring into being “a specificity that distinguishes a place as having meaning,” but also “the locus of the encounter between world and self, and as such, it is the place of a new creation” (Janz 2017, 32).

In addition to the concepts Janz (2017) considers, the Foucauldian concept of heterotopia can be regarded as a possible alternative metaphor for understanding space and extending its polysemy, with the potential to open possibilities for dialogue and the encounter of difference within hermeneutics. In the following subsection, we will engage with Foucault’s concept of heterotopia and describe it in terms of the principles and examples of situations provided in its original conception. Such an engagement will then contribute to our exploration of various metaphors—including those Janz suggests—for better understanding various spaces in Chapter 4.

3.3.2. Foucault’s Heterotopia: A Possible Alternate Metaphor for Space⁷

The Foucauldian concept of heterotopia has become crucial to thinking about space, especially since the spatial turn in the social sciences and humanities (Beebe, Davis and Gleadle 2012, 526). As we saw in Chapter 1, Foucault’s discussions on the significance of space for the human condition are widely recognised as having led to the spatial turn. Let us recall that space, for Foucault, is a historical entity subject to time and power—its history is a history of powers. He conceptualises contemporary space as emplacements, i.e., “relations of proximity between points or elements”—it is relational and heterogeneous (Foucault 1980b, 149; 2008, 14–16).

The key text for understanding Foucault’s concept of heterotopia is his “*Des Espaces Autres*” (variously translated as “Of Other Spaces” and “Different Spaces”), originally delivered as a

⁷ An abridged version of this section has been published as part of a research paper (see George and Tharakan 2025).

lecture to architects in 1967. There have been earlier, and not in the least insignificant, mentions of the concept by Foucault, such as *The Order of Things* (Foucault 1970b) and a few radio transcripts of his talks.⁸ However, “*Des Espaces Autres*” is the publicly available text wherein the concept is discussed in most detail—though often reprimanded for being too short, unsystematised, and ambiguous. The text has had at least four translations from French to English, with as many as three anthologies dedicated to celebrating the concept’s continuing relevance, significance, and mystique in our contemporary epoch. One of the significant differences among these translations lies in the translator’s interpretation of heterotopia’s stance on difference/alterity—i.e., whether or not heterotopia is a space separate from the spaces of everyday life. This chapter refers to the fourth translation of “*Des Espaces Autres*” by Dehaene and De Cauter, published in 2008 in one of the key anthologies on heterotopia, *Heterotopia and the City: Public Space in a Postcivil Society* (Foucault 2008). Here, the translators followed the now-classical interpretive convention of translating the title of the text as “Of Other Spaces” to emphasise the separation of heterotopias from spaces of everyday life. In contrast, the third translation of the text by Robert Hurley in 1998 puts forward an alternative translation of the title of the text as “Different Spaces” to assert that heterotopias are not

⁸ According to Dehaene and De Cauter, there is a “missing link” between Foucault’s formulation of heterotopia in *The Order of Things* (1970b) and that in “*Des Espaces Autres*” (1967). That is, while the formulation of heterotopia in “*Des Espaces Autres*” is in relation to “places and institutional arrangements in society,” that in the Introduction to *The Order of Things* is in relation to language, specifically as a “literary genre” (see Foucault 2008, 24n10). As Foucault writes in the latter:

Heterotopias are disturbing, probably because they secretly undermine language, because they make it impossible to name this and that, because they shatter or tangle common names, because they destroy ‘syntax’ in advance, and not only the syntax with which we construct sentences but also that less apparent syntax which causes words and things (next to and also opposite one another) to ‘hold together.’ This is why utopias permit fables and discourse: they run with the very grain of language and are part of the fundamental dimension of the fabula; heterotopias ... desiccate speech, stop words in their tracks, contest the very possibility of grammar at its source; they dissolve our myths and sterilise the lyricism of our sentences. (Foucault 1970b, xix)

In Chapter 4, we will explore the formulation of heterotopia in “*Des Espaces Autres*” in relation to the “myth of home,” thus also contributing to scholarship that identifies and supplies possible links between the two formulations.

“radically other than the spaces of ordinary life” (email exchange with James Faubion by Dehaene and De Caeter cited in Foucault 2008, 23n*).

In “*Des Espaces Autres*,” Foucault considers heterotopia as one of the two main types of spaces that have “the curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspend, neutralise, or invert the set of relations designated, mirrored, or reflected by them.” The other type of space—utopia—is an emplacement with no real place that has “a general relation of direct or inverted analogy with the real space of society. It is society itself perfected, or else it is society turned upside down.” In contrast to utopias that are “fundamentally unreal places,” heterotopias are real places (Foucault 2008, 14–17). He writes:

There are also, and this probably in all culture, in all civilisation, real places, effective places, places that are written into the institution of society itself, and that are a sort of counter-emplacements, a sort of effectively realised utopias in which the real emplacements, all the other real emplacements that can be found within culture, are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted; a kind of places that are outside all places, even though they are actually localisable. (Foucault 2008, 17)

The meanings of emplacements can be explored by describing them by looking for the set of relations by which a given site can be defined. Foucault terms the systematic description of heterotopias via the network of relations that define them as “heterotopology.” It has as its object “in a given society, the study, analysis, description, and ‘reading,’ ... of these different spaces, of these other places, as a sort of simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live” (Foucault 2008, 16–17).

Foucault provides us with six principles and several examples to describe the concept of heterotopia:

(1) Heterotopias are constituted in (probably) all cultures in the world, though in varied forms, as there is no “one single form of heterotopia that is absolutely universal.” They can be classified into two major types:

- (a) Heterotopias of crisis: “privileged, or sacred, or forbidden places, reserved for individuals who are, in relation to society and to the human environment in which they live, in a state of crisis: adolescents, menstruating women, pregnant women, the elderly, etc.”—for example, “boarding school, in its nineteenth-century form, or the military service for boys.” These emplacements are fast disappearing in contemporary society.
- (b) Heterotopias of deviation: emplacements in which “individuals are placed whose behaviour is deviant in relation to the mean or required norm”—for example, rest homes, prisons, and psychiatric hospitals. These emplacements are replacing heterotopias of crisis in contemporary society.

Foucault places retirement homes on the borderline between heterotopias of crisis and deviation since “after all, old age is a crisis, but it is also a deviation since, in our society where leisure is the rule, idleness is a sort of deviation” (Foucault 2008, 18).

- (2) Each heterotopia has a “precise and determined function” within a society that may change over time according to “the synchrony of the culture in which it occurs”—as in the case of cemeteries. Foucault notes that it is only since the nineteenth century that cemeteries in the West have been displaced from the heart of the city to its outskirts, and each person is being given “his own little box for his own little personal decomposition” (Foucault 2008, 18–19).
- (3) A heterotopia has the “power to juxtapose in a single real place several spaces, several emplacements that are in themselves incompatible”—for example, theatres, gardens, and Persian carpets (Foucault 2008, 19).

- (4) Heterotopias are often linked to “slices of time,” providing “a sort of absolute break with ... traditional time.” These heterotopias of time, or “heterochronias,” may be:
- (a) Heterotopias of permanence: emplacements linked to the “accumulation of time”—such as museums and libraries; or
 - (b) Heterotopias of ephemerality: emplacements linked to “time in its most futile, most transitory, most precarious aspect, and this in the festive mode”—such as the “absolutely chronic” fairgrounds (Foucault 2008, 20).
- (5) Heterotopias presuppose “a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable.” To enter them, one must either be constrained—as in prisons or barracks; or submitted to permissions, rites, or purifications—as in “Scandinavian saunas.” However, he also notes the case of emplacements with “pure and simple openings” that anybody can enter, but “by the very fact of entering, one is excluded”—such as the “famous American motel rooms” (Foucault 2008, 21).
- (6) Heterotopias have a function in relation to the rest of space, be it the exposing of its being illusory or compensating for its disorderliness. In extreme cases, they create either:
- (a) Heterotopia of illusion: “a space of illusion that exposes all real space ... as even more illusory”—such as brothels; or
 - (b) Heterotopia of compensation: “another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is disorderly, ill construed and sketchy”—such as Jesuit colonies (Foucault 2008, 21–22).

Foucault observes that civilisations since the sixteenth century have considered ships to be “heterotopias par excellence,” as they are “not only the greatest instrument of economic development ... but also the greatest reserve of imagination” (Foucault 2008, 22).

3.4. Conclusion: Meaning-making, Space, and Architecture

This chapter explored the hermeneutics of space/architecture by revisiting Foucault's and Ricoeur's projects of post-structuralist hermeneutics of the subject/self in their later works, so as to explore the exteriorisation of meaning in space and metaphors for space. We first explored the thinkers' approaches to hermeneutics in the context of the subject/self by reviewing their accounts of the recent history of Western hermeneutics and examining the distinct ways in which they conceptualised, used, and reworked their definitions of hermeneutics throughout the course of their work. Foucault and Ricoeur placed emphasis on different aspects of the recent history of hermeneutics in the West: its interpretive techniques and hermeneutical tasks, respectively. We argued that the conception of hermeneutics Foucault rejected in the context of the subject/self is the one Ricoeur himself saw as limited and requiring extension—that of the hermeneutics of the symbol, with its thesis of hidden meanings within the self, which both thinkers moved beyond to conceptualise the self's meaning-making in their own distinct ways.

We next turned towards examining and building on the decisive suggestions that Foucault and Ricoeur offered in their later works for the application and expansion of hermeneutics to space and architecture.⁹ We reviewed and identified points of intersection in the thinkers' discussions on the interpretation of texts, which can be extended and applied to the case of space. As we explored space like a text as an object in which meaning is exteriorised, we highlighted the need for incorporating a hermeneutics of suspicion within self-understanding by way of understanding such objects. As we explored concepts that can be taken as metaphors for space, we considered the usefulness and limits of the metaphor of the text for space through the lens

⁹ Several recent works have explored the application and expansion of hermeneutics to architecture and design. For instance, Snodgrass and Coyne (1996) argue that designing is indeed hermeneutical, as “the design activity proceeds by way of a hermeneutical circle, involving the projection of pre-understandings and a dialogical structure of question and answer” (Snodgrass and Coyne 1996, 65). Adding to their discussion, Jahnke (2012) argues that Ricoeur's hermeneutics and his notion of metaphor can help describe “both critical distancing and the poetic re-description through metaphorical deliberation that is necessary for the ability to manifest new meaning in design” (Jahnke 2012, 39).

of Janz's (2017) exposition, and suggested Foucault's concept of heterotopia as a possible alternative metaphor for understanding space and extending its polysemy, with the potential to open possibilities for dialogue and the encounter of difference within hermeneutics.

Further, inasmuch as the self is revealed and transformed through the act of reading through appropriation and comes to understand itself, the exercise of the capacity of meaning-making through Ricoeurian imaginative variation can be read as a practice of Foucauldian resistance in the context of the constitution and understanding of the self. As Foucault writes, "the common goal of these practices of the self, allowing for the differences they present, can be characterised by the entirely general principle of conversion to self" (Foucault 1986, 64). It is then possible to see meaning-making through imaginative variation facilitated by both texts and metaphors as responding to Foucault's call to "create, innovate, and refuse," as a resistance without new forms of subjugation and transgression without (re)institution of new norms. In light of the ethical entanglements between the self, spatiality, and meaning-making revealed in this chapter, we will now explore the spatial aspects of living a good life in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4

Refiguring Space: The Spatiality of Hermeneutical Justice and Living a Good Life

Chapter 3 revisited Foucault's and Ricoeur's projects of post-structuralist hermeneutics of the subject/self in their later works, with the specific objective of exploring the application and expansion of hermeneutics with regard to the exteriorisation of meaning in space and metaphors for space. It argued that the conception of hermeneutics Foucault rejected in the context of the subject/self is the one Ricoeur himself saw as limited and requiring extension—that of the hermeneutics of the symbol, which both thinkers moved beyond to conceptualise the self's meaning-making in their own distinct ways. It also proposed Foucault's concept of heterotopia as a possible alternative metaphor for understanding space and extending its polysemy, and argued that the exercise of the capacity of meaning-making through Ricoeurian imaginative variation can be read as a practice of Foucauldian resistance.

This chapter explores the spatial aspects of living a good life by revisiting Foucault's and Ricoeur's projects of post-structuralist hermeneutics of the subject/self in their later works, with the specific objective of exploring the variety of ways in which space reveals and transforms itself and its inhabitants when they approach it with their needs and expectations during the act of refiguration of space. Such an exploration of the ethical entanglements between the self, spatiality, and meaning-making will contribute to our discussions in Chapter 5, where we will propose further inquiry into the multiple dimensions along which the problematic of the self's meaning-making of spatiality may be pursued.

In this chapter, we will first demonstrate the continuing relevance of the notion of refiguration of space by providing an overview of more recent scholarship that highlights the significance

of inhabitants' interpretations of space for addressing contemporary everyday spatial concerns that have implications for the living of a good life. Next, we will describe and reflect on a "heterotopology of home" as an instance of the act of refiguration of space and the practice of resistance through imaginative variation facilitated by live metaphors. Finally, we will conceptualise "spatial hermeneutical injustice" to account for and make describable the interpretative injuries and injustices committed against spaces and their inhabitants during the acts of configuration and refiguration, which reduce, or even destruct, the capacities for meaning-making and meaning-sharing, and hence the realisation of the aim of living a good life in relation to others and/in space.

4.1. Refiguring Space: Recent Engagements with the Anxieties of Today

As we noted in Chapter 1, it is in the practice of reading *qua* interpretation of a space by its inhabitants as they approach it with their needs and expectations—the third level of parallelism Ricoeur draws between architecture and narrativity that he calls the refiguration of space—that the possibilities for the revealing and transforming of the space and its inhabitants are opened in both Foucault's and Ricoeur's post-structuralist hermeneutic accounts of space. In this section, we demonstrate the continuing relevance of the notion of refiguration of space by providing an overview of more recent scholarship that highlights the significance of inhabitants' interpretations of space for addressing contemporary everyday spatial concerns that have implications for the living of a good life.

Contemporary engagements with the notion of refiguration of space have emphasised the active and participatory roles of inhabitants as interpreters and narrators, elaborating on the possibility of realising human agency and engaging in participatory sense-making of themselves (Umbelino 2015, 204; 2016, 119), the spaces they inhabit, and their relations with them (Candiotto and De Jaegher 2021). For instance, Candiotto (2022) furthers our understanding

of self–environment relations by characterising the relationship between an inhabitant and nature as “love”—a situated, existential love for a place as participatory sense-making that accounts for the differences that are inherent to that place, challenging “a universal conceptualisation of nature and a fusion account of love” that have as their goal the fusion of the lovers and the erasure of differences.¹ She argues that by “loving a place,” i.e., inhabiting a place with love, one can practise loving the Earth (Candiotto 2022, 179).

In addition, recent scholarship on the configuration of space, too, has highlighted the significance of the actual use of a space by its inhabitants over its intended design, since, despite its conceptions, a space goes through continuous processes of reconstruction through perceptions, imaginations, expressions, and remembering (see Christmann, Knoblauch, and Löw 2022; Million *et al.* 2022). Hence, such studies call for a shift of emphasis from a prescriptive approach towards space as a fixed product of an expert’s vision to a participatory approach of open-ended possibilities. They highlight the need for the integration of the inhabitants’ spatial knowledge into the design and planning processes of yet-to-be-built spaces, as well as the continuous spatial transformations of already-built spaces. As spaces are produced in everyday life and inhabitants participate in them, there is a need to decentralise the design process so as to let those affected by the spaces participate in it. As the faces of spaces keep shifting with time, the design process should also accommodate this absence (potential), with due regard to human behaviour, the environment, and the dynamic interplay of nature and culture (see Martin, Nettleton, and Buse 2020; Christmann, Knoblauch, and Löw 2022; Ulloa *et al.* 2022).²

¹ As we saw in Chapter 2, Simmel considers the “lover” to be an “extreme case” wherein even a marginal awareness of the “In-addition” is absent.

² For instance, Martin, Nettleton, and Buse (2020, 66) argue that the use of hand-drawn images in place of “clear and unambiguous image-making” in architectural design avoids “overspecification in order to suggest the use of space and design in more open ways” by its future inhabitants. Ulloa *et al.* (2022, 294) explore how

Centre-staging refiguration urges us towards thinking about space in relation to the self and its axes of identity. It enables us to make sense of a variety of human spatial experiences, including how a space may come to have different meanings or narrative plots for different inhabitants based on their subject positions and social relations (see Foucault 2008, 18; Bondy 2012, 94; Pedersen 2022). As Janz (2017) writes on the hermeneutics of trust and suspicion of space as a text,

Places, like texts, are nothing without their engagement, without the kinds of reading they can be subjected to, and so we can easily imagine a place that presents itself as benign to someone while being something much more sinister to someone else, someone of a different race or culture or class. (Janz 2017, 28)

Examples of such spatial experiences may be as varied as the practice of Foucauldian freedom as transgression realised in “desire paths,” and the conversion of train compartments or indoor sports stadiums into quarantine wards during the COVID-19 pandemic in India. A focus on the notion of refiguration of space can also account for how the time of day, seasons, atmosphere, and the memories that spaces hold can influence responses to and perceptions of spaces. Spaces that may seem neutral, if not safe, during the day can be perceived as and may become othering, inaccessible, and even life-threatening to members of marginalised groups by nightfall. For instance, India’s urban spaces and transit environments remain notoriously unsafe for women even today. Women fear and face discrimination, oppression, abuse, and even violence and death each day in these spaces. Many projects that intend to build more inclusive, gender-safe urban spaces in India limit themselves to “design and defensive architecture strategies” (see Pedersen 2020, 381), such as offering streetlights, CCTVs, public restrooms, footpaths, or reserved “ladies-only” coaches. However, following Foucault, we can see that the material structure and intended function of a space alone cannot guarantee the sense of safety and

through a “responsive” approach to design, i.e., design as a response to actual use, children’s spatial knowledge can be integrated into a playground’s design process.

belonging, or even mobility and access, one experiences in that space. Women in urban spaces, especially at night, are often regarded as trespassers, their mere “act of occupying space” considered as a transgression (see Pancho 2021, 90). They often have their identity, sense of belonging, and embodied subjectivity called into question (using various techniques of ‘reminding’ such as staring, catcalling, and stalking), and, in extreme, yet not infrequent cases, are even ‘punished’ for their ‘transgression’ (through harassment, assault, rape, or murder) (see Pancho 2021). Then, attempts to build more inclusive spaces will remain severely limited if they continue to draw solely on a builder-centric, absolute, and overly prescriptive approach to urban planning, without seriously considering the women who inhabit them and the “spatiality of women’s fear” (Pancho 2021, 79).

The brief overview above brings into focus several aspects of the complexity of the notion of refiguration in addressing contemporary everyday spatial concerns. First, drawing solely on an inhabitant-centric, relational, multi-layered, and participatory or responsive approach to planning may risk overemphasising the creative capacities of its inhabitants. There may still be instances in which a prescriptive approach is more suitable, such as the design and implementation of a city’s sewage system. Rather than abandoning the prescriptive approach altogether, placing it alongside the participatory approach may help better address the complexities of the spatial anxieties of today. Next, as opposed to the dominant model of spatial production in the Global North, the cities in the Global South are often configured by their inhabitants themselves through what Caldeira (2017) calls “peripheral urbanisation.” It involves a process of “autoconstruction,” wherein, rather than being given as finished products, spaces are “never quite done, always being altered, expanded, and elaborated upon,” changing according to rules of their own (Caldeira 2017, 5).³ Also, a few recent studies on the

³ Caldeira’s (2017) concept of “autoconstruction” aligns with Janz’s (2017) description of “autopoiesis” we discussed in Chapter 3. Then, her notion of “peripheries” can be understood in terms of Janz’s metaphor of “body” for its self-organisation.

refiguration of space account for how the actual uses, interpretations, and experiences of an already-built space by some of its privileged inhabitants can undermine its intended design and overwrite other interpretations of the space, even to the extent of harming some of its marginalised inhabitants. Additionally, the overview also suggests that practices of refiguring space are often contingent, decentered, and personal.

Having engaged with empirical gestures of spaces of everyday life, let us next take up a detailed case analysis of the situation of home—a privileged space of everyday life—to describe and reflect on a “heterotopology of home” as an instance of the act of refiguration of space and the practice of resistance through imaginative variation facilitated by live metaphors.

4.2. Home as Heterotopia: Refiguring Reality through Metaphors⁴

When thinking about space, one of the oppositions we continue to regard as a simple given is that between different spaces and spaces of alterity. While an approach towards space based on the notion of alterity, or radical otherness, suggests a separation between certain “other spaces” and the spaces of everyday life, that which is based on difference suggests no such radical separation but only a lack of similarity. In the context of the former approach, it is often assumed that a sense of belonging in space is assured within the spaces of everyday life, in spite of the variegated nature of such spaces. Also, it is commonly assumed that a sense of otherness is experienced only within the other spaces of alterity (George and Tharakan 2025, 154). In this section, we take up the case of home, a space of everyday life, to problematise these assumptions.

⁴ An abridged version of the following analysis has been published as a research paper titled “Home as Heterotopia: Describing the *unheimlich* through a Foucauldian Heterotopology of Home” (see George and Tharakan 2025).

4.2.1. The *unheimlich* within Home: A Blocked Situation

In many cultures worldwide, in varied forms, home remains a classic and conservative instance of a privileged category of space. The primordiality and normative power of home are such that “our bodily encounters in other places are stylised according to the home’s normative stylising of our bodies” (Donohoe 2012, 17). Home is a “symbolic environment” (see Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981): the notion of home is imbued with and evocative of a sense of belonging, a being at ease, a being in one’s place in the world. The “personal, intimate, feeling of being ‘at home’ in a place (place-belongingness)” (Antonsich 2010, 645) may be related to what Ricoeur calls the “*heimlich*.” Ricoeur interprets the *heimlich* as a fundamental human need, expressed and represented in the deliberate act of building a home (Ricoeur 2016b, 264).

Many a time, however, the experience of the *heimlich* within home remains a “myth”—it is not simply given in the actual, material space of a home (Ortega 2020, 169). Home is often the site where the self experiences the feeling of uneasiness, as in the feeling of “not being in one’s place, of not feeling at home.” The “sense of loneliness, isolation, alienation, and displacement” (Antonsich 2010, 649) experienced in a place may be related to what Ricoeur calls the “*unheimlich*” (Ricoeur 2004a, 39; 2016c, 260). The intriguing notion of “*Das Unheimliche*” was expounded by Sigmund Freud in a 1919 essay, translated into English as “The ‘Uncanny’” (Freud 1958 [1919]).⁵ Heidegger translates the *unheimlich* as “not at home” to pronounce the normative constitution of humans as beings that are essentially not-at-home in a temporal-historical way (D’Angelo 2021, 112). Unlike Heidegger, Ricoeur discusses the *unheimlich* to explore “the phenomenon of the strange” in spatial-geographical terms and emphasises the primordiality of both placement and displacement for human beings (Ricoeur

⁵ Although “*unheimlich*” etymologically translates better as “unhomely” in English, Strachey translates it as “uncanny” (Freud 1958 [1919]). In Ricoeur’s reading, Freud’s “*Unheimliche*” undergoes “a final reduction to the fear of castration” (Ricoeur 2016c, 260).

2016c, 260). While Heidegger's interpretation of *Unheimlichkeit* as "not-being-at-home" has received considerable scholarly attention, Ricoeur's reading has not, despite his usage of the term in varied contexts, including the dialectic of the same and the other in his hermeneutics of selfhood. As we saw in Chapter 2, Ricoeur discusses the *unheimlich* in the context of the "world," which is itself discussed in relation to our bodies, a figure of alterity: "a world, itself taken up in terms of its multiple modes of at-homeness and uncanniness [*Unheimlichkeit*]" (Ricoeur 2016c, 259). Ricoeur observes that, in contrast to the feeling of familiarity in the experience of the *heimlich*, the sense of otherness in the experience of the *unheimlich* is at the "height of its feeling of strangeness" (Ricoeur 2004a, 39). In his interpretation, the *unheimlich* is a "realm of emptiness" that haunts us (Ricoeur 2004a, 149)—the *heimlich* expressed and represented in the act of building or constructing a home never succeeds in eclipsing the *unheimlich* (Ricoeur 2016c, 264).⁶

This brief account of home suggests that the *unheimlich* is experienced even within the spaces of everyday life and is a more common experience than typically assumed. This view aligns with Ricoeur, who considers both placing and displacing oneself as primordial human activities. For Ricoeur, the reality of the *unheimlich* is such that every displaced person experiences it, and it is sometimes even cultivated for itself in "an ethics of roaming, of uprootedness" (Ricoeur 2016c, 264).⁷

As we can see, the experience of the *unheimlich* within the home is indescribable in terms of its classic description. This presents a "blocked situation" (Ricoeur 2024, 263), which then

⁶ To convey the Foucauldian intuition that the *heimlich* and the *unheimlich* are actual experiences in a space and not states or conditions given or guaranteed through the material or structural form of the space, this analysis uses the adjective pair *heimlich-unheimlich* instead of the corresponding noun pair *Heimlichkeit-Unheimlichkeit*.

⁷ Even as we practise the ethics of roaming and uprootedness, it is possible to stay attached and loyal to our "home." This is what Appiah (1997) calls "rooted cosmopolitanism" or "cosmopolitan patriotism" wherein one is "attached to a home of one's own, with its own cultural particularities, but taking pleasure from the presence of other, different places that are home to other, different people" (Appiah 1997, 618).

invites the generation of a new perspective of home to describe the experience of the *unheimlich* within its space. In recent years, the notion of home in terms of the *heimlich* and the *unheimlich* experienced within it has been a poignant theme for many writers. However, many such accounts do not do justice to both the noetic (the subjective) and the noematic (the objective) dimensions of the intentionality of the act of perceiving home. Often, an individual's inability to experience *heimlich* in a space is understood exclusively in terms of the actions and conduct of the individual, a psychological explanation of the phenomenon of not being at home that overemphasises a socially decontextualised individualism. Such accounts separate the experience of the *heimlich* from the “politics of belonging”—the dimension of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion—an approach Antonsich cautions us against (Antonsich 2010, 645). On the other hand, structural-functional approaches to the phenomenon ignore the subjective elements and read the *unheimlich* solely in terms of the objective structures that constitute the home, such as the patriarchal structures of society (Tharakan and Mukherjee 2022, 1–2), ignoring the personal, individual dimension of the experience of the *heimlich*. Given the shortcomings of these accounts, the invitation to generate a new perspective of home that can describe the experience of the *unheimlich* within its space remains open.

In sum, the *unheimlich*, interpreted by Ricoeur as the sense of otherness in a space, is a more common experience than is typically assumed in an approach towards space based on the notion of alterity. It is experienced even within a space of everyday life such as home, as a reality indescribable in terms of the classic description of home. This blocked situation calls for the generation of a new perspective to overcome it. A new (and better) perspective can be generated by reflecting on a “heterotopology of home,” i.e., a description that takes Foucault's concept of heterotopia (an “other space”)—which we discussed in Chapter 3—as a Ricoeurian metaphor for home (George and Tharakan 2025, 156). In the following subsection, we will engage with ongoing debates and discussions surrounding the meanings of the concept of

heterotopia to explore the possibility of considering home as heterotopia. We will see that the fluidity of the concept is such that it allows itself to be displaced to new situations—such as the situation of home—as a metaphor.

4.2.2. Foucault’s Heterotopia: A Fluid and Displaceable Concept

As we discussed in Chapter 3, Foucault provided us with six principles to describe the concept of heterotopia, which can be summarised as: (1) Heterotopias are constituted in (probably) all cultures in the world, though in varied forms; (2) Each heterotopia has a “precise and determined function” within a society that may change over time; (3) A heterotopia can juxtapose within it several incompatible emplacements; (4) Heterotopias are often linked to “slices of time,” providing “a sort of absolute break with ... traditional time”; (5) Heterotopias presuppose “a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable,” through constraint or submission to permissions, rites, or purifications; (6) Heterotopias have a function in relation to the rest of space, be it the exposing of its being illusory or compensating for its disorderliness (Foucault 2008, 18–21; George and Tharakan 2025, 159).

Despite (or perhaps due to) the description of its principles, heterotopia remains a fluid and fertile concept. Though Foucault himself did not engage further with the concept, it has been kept from being too frozen or sedimented over the years through ongoing debates and disagreements among later theorists regarding its interpretations.⁸ These various interpretations can be summarised in terms of their underlying positions by following Hilde Heynen’s (2008) framework, bringing them under three key dimensions:

⁸ Ongoing debates and disagreements surrounding the concept also range from the concern over the translation of technical terms in the text (such as “emplacement”—is emplacement synonymous to “site”?) to the usefulness of the concept, if at all, in understanding spatial difference.

- (i) The role of space (Is heterotopia a recognisable spatial entity? How can the relationship between spatial and social-cultural processes be conceptualised?);
- (ii) Aspects of politics (Do heterotopias support or subvert the societal status quo?);
- (iii) The dynamics of human agency (Do heterotopias have the same meaning for all actors involved?) (Heynen 2008, 312–321).

The possibility or permissibility of interpreting home as heterotopia is partly based on the same unresolved problematic of the concept that underlies the disagreements among the different translations of the title of “*Des Espaces Autres*,” which we discussed in Chapter 3: heterotopia’s stance on difference/alterity, i.e., whether or not it is an other space, a special case separate from the spaces of everyday life. If heterotopia is indeed an other space, the concept as a metaphor will allow its displacement to new situations, i.e., situations outside those mentioned in its original conception by Foucault—such as the situation of home, a space of everyday life (George and Tharakan 2025, 160). The process of displacement is not an application of the concept of heterotopia to the new situation of home as an instance of it (subsumption or ordering). Instead, it is a taking of the concept as a metaphor for home to transpose or carry over a new perspective to think about the situation (Ricoeur 2024, 264). The interpretation of home as heterotopia involves the activity of “reading,” i.e., a selecting or screening to “set aside the irrelevant aspects and emphasise only what is relevant” in the concept and elaborating how these can be carried over and related to the new situation (Ricoeur 2024, 261). In this process, the logical distance between heterotopia and home is reduced—what initially appears remote, and a strange or mistaken use, no longer seems so (Ricoeur 2024, 271).

Thus, heterotopia is a fluid concept that allows displacement to the new situation of home as a Ricoeurian metaphor. Such a displacement opens possibilities for the generation of a new perspective that can be carried over to think about and even overcome the blocked situation of

home. To explore this possibility, in the next subsection, we will describe a Foucauldian “heterotopology of home” that interprets home as heterotopia and suggest that the principles of heterotopia can be carried over and related to the situation of home.

4.2.3. Home as Heterotopia: Describing a Foucauldian Heterotopology of Home

In this subsection, we think with Foucault about the classic description of home and the experiences of the *heimlich* and the *unheimlich* in the context of his relational understanding of space. We then describe a Foucauldian “heterotopology of home” by summarising and analysing past readings of home as heterotopia on the basis of their underlying positions through Heynen’s (2008) framework, which we mentioned in the previous subsection.

In “*Des Espaces Autres*,” Foucault offers suggestions for thinking about the classic description of home. He observed that although space has been formalised and determined since “emplacement” substituted the modern space of “extension,” our everyday life is still ruled by oppositions given to us. In other words, although contemporary space has been theoretically desacralised, it has not been entirely practically desacralised (Foucault 2008, 16). As he elaborates:

To be sure a certain theoretical desacralisation of space has occurred (the one signalled by Galileo’s work), but we may still not have reached the point of a practical desacralisation of space. And perhaps our life is still ruled by a certain number of oppositions that cannot be touched, that institution and practice have not yet dared to undermine; oppositions that we regard as simple givens: for example, between private space and public space, between family space and social space, between cultural space and useful space, between the space of leisure and that of work. All these are animated by an unspoken sacralisation. (Foucault 2008, 16)

Home can be considered a space wherein such a “practical desacralisation” has not yet occurred (Foucault 2008, 16; Ricoeur 2016c, 264; also see Quinby 1994, 143). The notion of home is suspended between the materiality of actually localisable spaces and the human need to be in one’s place. Nevertheless, following Foucault, we can see how there is nothing in the order of the home as such—its structure or function or even the intention behind it—that can either thwart or guarantee the *heimlich* experienced within it (Foucault 2000, 354–356).

Following the Foucauldian conception of space as relational, we can see that the experiences of the *heimlich* and the *unheimlich* within home open four scenarios in relation to the rest of space: first, despite the experience of the *heimlich* within home, we may experience the *unheimlich* in the rest of space. Second, despite the experience of the *unheimlich* within home, we may experience the *heimlich* in the rest of space. Third, the experience of the *unheimlich* within home may seep into, stylise, and shape our experiences of and negotiations with the rest of space, haunting us with an uneasiness linked to the feeling of not finding one’s place in the world. Fourth, in cases of absolute privilege, the experience of the *heimlich* is omnipresent, pervading each and every space as we move through the world. As we can see, among these four scenarios, it is the third that most closely relates to our discussion on the situation of home.

In “*Des Espaces Autres*,” Foucault calls the house, the bedroom, and the bed “closed or semi-closed emplacements of rest” (Foucault 2008, 16). Whether or not these emplacements are necessary or sufficient parts of homes, he neither qualifies them nor exemplifies homes as heterotopias. In other words, the situation of home lies outside those mentioned in Foucault’s original conception of heterotopia. Nevertheless, although the problematic of heterotopia’s stance on difference/alterity remains theoretically unresolved, several thinkers over the years have interpreted home as heterotopia in their multiple, often diverging, and even contradictory readings (for examples, see Quinby 1994; Bondy 2012; Gonçalves 2018)—affirming our

finding that heterotopia can be displaced to the situation of home. The multitude of these past readings of home as heterotopia can be summarised and analysed on the basis of their underlying positions, following Hilde Heynen's framework, to describe a "heterotopology of home" (Heynen 2008, 312–320).

(i) The role of space:

Is home as heterotopia a recognisable spatial entity? On the one hand, reading home with an emphasis on its spatial form highlights its heterotopian mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. In this reading, the material or structural form of the home is what makes it heterotopian (Foucault's first principle of heterotopia). On the other hand, reading home with an emphasis on its actual use and meanings helps envision it as having the quality to temporarily accommodate heterotopian moments within its form (Heynen 2008, 312–314). Here, heterotopia is a dynamic, ephemeral quality of the lived space of the home, actualised by the practices of its inhabitants (Foucault's fourth principle of heterotopia). Both readings provide insights into the "pattern of regular doings" (Foucault's fourth principle of heterotopia) (Douglas 1991, 287) and spatial divisions (Foucault's fifth principle of heterotopia) of domesticity and socialisation. These patterns and divisions aim at "separation, exclusion, control, and cleanliness" (Heynen 2008, 313) for the home's inhabitants, providing security, privacy, comfort, familiarity, and an either-or understanding of one's and the other's place within society (Foucault's sixth principle of heterotopia) (Annavarapu 2020, 2). However, in their "logics of purity," prohibition, and discrimination, they may sometimes be inexorable, absurd, and othering even to the inhabitants (Foucault's third principle of heterotopia) (see Bondy 2012).⁹

⁹ For instance, a heterotopology of villages in Indian society can help provide insights into the linkage between the problem of untouchability and spatiality—how, as Ambedkar observes, involuntary and forced socio-spatial segregation and fragmentation between Dalits and caste Hindus make them sites of inequality and injustice,

How is the relationship between spatial and social-cultural processes conceptualised in home as heterotopia? Reading home as a heterotopian receptor/reflector renders it a passive role, emphasising instead social-cultural mechanisms such as “capital movements, labour relationships, discriminatory practices, symbolic transformations, etc.,” the effects of which are felt and registered through various pathways within its space. Reading home as a heterotopian instrument presents it as an active “spatial tool for the regulation of behaviour, the disciplining of the body or the activation of social interaction” through various techniques of domination and surveillance. Finally, reading home as a heterotopian stage for social processes displays both its active and passive roles in making “certain actions and interactions possible or impossible without this influence being decisive for the content [of the actions]” (Foucault’s second and sixth principles of heterotopia) (Heynen 2008, 314–315).

(ii) Aspects of politics:

Does home as heterotopia support or subvert the societal status quo? On the one hand, reading home with an emphasis on its immutability presents it as an instrument of normalisation, oppression, violence, and trauma (Heynen 2008, 37), the representation and support system for exclusion, patriarchy, gender normativity, and hierarchy (Annavarapu 2020, 2). On the other hand, reading home with an emphasis on its fragility and mutability makes it possible to envision it as a potential site for the contestation and inversion of the normative order, for the practice of resistance, subversion (Heynen 2008, 317; Brant 2023, 46),¹⁰ transgression, and greater liberation—an “alternative social formation(s) in the making” (Heynen 2008, 318), such as a special kind of distributive justice (Douglas 1991, 297) or a radically “inclusive and

and how a simultaneously mythic and real contestation of caste and space takes place via its structures and practices.

¹⁰ Brant (2023) documents that bell hooks reconceptualises home space in terms of its potential to be a subversive, feminist site of resistance, renewal, and self-recovery, thus overturning the oppressive nature and the sexist norms of the domestic space. Intensive interpretations such as this bring out the ambivalent nature of home as a space of juxtaposition of societal binary divisions and continuous mediations between the world and the self.

egalitarian space where dissent and comradeship thrive” (Foucault’s second principle of heterotopia) (Annavarapu 2020, 2). Such readings are insightful in understanding how the sediments of shared tradition, religion, values, practices, artifacts, and memories in a home not only ground its inhabitants and envelop them in a sense of belonging, but also loom larger than the inhabitants themselves, exerting “tyrannous control” over mind, body, and speech (Foucault’s third principle of heterotopia) (Douglas 1991, 304).

(iii) The dynamics of human agency:

Does home as heterotopia have the same meaning for all actors involved? Many feminist readings of home as heterotopia emphasise “the necessity to recognise that embodied subjectivities, decentered and de-totalised as they might be, provide the necessary starting point for a politics of anti-domination” (Heynen 2008, 321). They have as their central site of interrogation the contextualised, embodied subjects and their ability to “not only live in, but also act upon and transform” their lived space of home (Bondy 2012, 94). These readings also demonstrate that home can be negotiated to have different meanings and functions for different inhabitants based on their subject positions and social relations and that these meanings, functions, and subject positions can shift or multiply over time (Foucault’s second principle of heterotopia) (Foucault 2008, 18; Bondy 2012, 94).

Summing up, in this subsection, we described a Foucauldian heterotopology of home by summarising and analysing the multitude of past readings of home as heterotopia on the basis of their underlying positions through Heynen’s framework. Rather than providing a new reading of home as heterotopia, we built on past contributions to suggest that the characteristics of home identified in these readings relate to Foucault’s principles of heterotopia. In the following subsection, we will reflect on this heterotopology of home to account for the experience of the *unheimlich* within home so as to overcome the blocked situation of home.

4.2.4. Describing the *unheimlich* within Home: A Reflection on Heterotopology of Home

In this subsection, we reflect on the Foucauldian heterotopology of home described in the previous subsection. We will show that describing the experience of the *unheimlich* within home calls for a reinterpretation of the experience of the *heimlich* and the understanding of selfhood in relation to the *unheimlich*. We will put forth Ortega's accounts of "hometactics" and "multiplicitous selves," which we discussed in Chapter 2, and Simmel's notion of "the stranger" as exemplifications of such a reinterpretation.

A heterotopology of home urges us to reinterpret the experience of the *heimlich* within home in relation to the *unheimlich*. It emphasises that the experience of the *heimlich* within home exists simultaneously and in juxtaposition with the realm of power and its forms of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion at play in that very space, aligning with Antonsich's argument that place-belongingness should not be separated from the politics of belonging (Antonsich 2010, 645). Thus, it does justice to both the noetic and the noematic dimensions of the intentionality of the act of perceiving home. By blurring divides such as private/public, personal/social, subjective/objective, and spaces of everyday life/other spaces, a heterotopology of home contributes to ongoing discussions that contest the assumed givenness of the oppositions that Foucault observes as existing even in the contemporary epoch of space.¹¹

The complex and variegated experience of the *heimlich* needs to be articulated in terms of both the personal and the social. Ortega's account of hometactics can be considered an instance of such an articulation. Ortega notes that in the absence of a pre-given experience of the *heimlich* in the home and to alleviate the experience of the *unheimlich*, selves engage in certain micropractices of home-making to make themselves feel more at home in the world—what she

¹¹ The assumed divide and opposition between private and public spaces—which came to be even more pronounced in contemporary theoretical discussions after Habermas's theorisation of "public sphere"—has been heavily criticised, especially by feminist theorists. For a detailed discussion, see Quinby 1994.

calls “hometactics.” Ortega here follows Michel de Certeau’s understanding of “tactics” as “the ‘art of the weak,’ or ingenious, improvised resistant practices performed by those who do not have power” (Ortega 2020, 169), which itself, in part, follows Foucault’s general approach towards power and distinction between tactics and strategies (Nale 2014, 488). Power, for Foucault, is an actual practice of people rather than an institution or substance that can be possessed, as we discussed in Chapter 1. Tactics are local, singular force relations of power that become strategies when coordinated to form an apparatus (Nale 2014, 486). For Foucault, it is in these actual practices of people that resistance is immanent and realised within a totalising system—the realm in which power is exercised is also the one in which strategies of resistance to it are being developed (Foucault 2000, 354–356; Nale 2014, 488). Owing to being contingent, decentered, and personal, hometactics are unmappable and offer no surety on “how effective such practices will be, how they can be co-opted, misunderstood, or undermined by others” (Ortega 2020, 173). Examples of hometactics include arranging things in a space to evoke a sense of familiarity and walking in a city without a map.¹² The *heimlich* forged through hometactics is neither normative, authentic, nor pure. Instead, it is a belonging-in-the-making that “‘makes do’ and is creatively constructed in our everyday dealings in worlds” (Ortega 2020, 170). Borrowing Ricoeur’s vocabulary, hometactics can be read as an “appropriation” of the experience of the *unheimlich*—a “play” through which what had been other is made one’s own or familiar (Ricoeur 1981b, 147; 2002, 12).

A heterotopology of home also enriches our understanding of selfhood by proposing the productive function that the experience of the *unheimlich* within home can have in self-constitution and self-understanding. In Ortega’s vocabulary, the self that engages in hometactics is “multiplicitous.” The lived experiences of multiplicitous selves that are

¹² The constitutive role that walking plays in the origin of space and place is much discussed. For instance, Husserl construes the lived body and the lived place as constituted coherent wholes that link up with each other in the bodily experience of walking (see Casey 1997, 202–242).

marginalised are of ruptures and being constantly aware of not being at home in the worlds they inhabit. They must then constantly engage in “world-travelling” (Ortega 2014, 170–171), an activity that redefines the search for home as a question of homes, one’s home-boundedness, i.e., the longing to come home, and what we come to call home or our place in the world.¹³

However, this “tactical” activity runs the risk of what Ricoeur warns us about constantly placing and displacing oneself: “It is always possible, often urgent, to displace oneself at the risk of becoming that passerby, that wanderer, that flâneur, that vagabond, stray dog that our fragmented contemporary culture both sets in motion and paralyses” (Ricoeur 2004a, 149). Although this risk anticipated by Ricoeur is an actual possibility, our discussion of the Foucauldian concept of heterotopia as a Ricoeurian metaphor offers mitigatory suggestions following Simmel’s notion of “the stranger.” In travelling in and between worlds, the stranger exercises her “freedom of coming and going.” Her position in the group she has come to today and will stay until the morrow is “determined, essentially, by the fact that [s]he has not belonged to it from the beginning, that [s]he imports qualities into it, which do not and cannot stem from the group itself” (Simmel 1950, 402). Then, akin to the concept of live metaphor, the stranger generates new perspectives that can be transposed to think about the experience of the *unheimlich* and to help constitute the self through the forged *heimlich*.

In brief, in this subsection, we have shown that a reflection on the heterotopology of home opens space for contesting the myths of humanity deposited in tradition and culture, as well as critiquing the illusions and prejudices of the self—in other words, for incorporating a hermeneutics of suspicion within the hermeneutics of space. It generates a perspective to describe the experience of the *unheimlich* at home by reinterpreting the experience of the *heimlich* and the understanding of selfhood in relation to the *unheimlich*. We illustrated the

¹³ Here, one may recall the different notions of “world” such as “*Heimwelt*” (home-world), “*Fremdwelt*” (foreign-world), and “*Allwelt*” (the whole-world) in Husserl’s phenomenology.

possibility of such a reinterpretation by invoking Ortega's accounts of "hometactics" and "multiplicitous selves" and Simmel's notion of "the stranger." We observe that Ortega's notion of forged belonging aligns with the Foucauldian intuition that the *heimlich* and the *unheimlich* are actual experiences within a space, not states or conditions given or guaranteed through the material or structural form of the space. Although the reinterpretation we propose is not without the risks anticipated by Ricoeur, we indicated that Simmel's notion of the stranger offers decisive suggestions to mitigate them. Ultimately, this reflection provides further evidence that, although Foucault himself did not engage further with heterotopia, the concept is so fluid and fertile that it continues to generate meanings, not only through displacement to new situations but also through engagement with diverse thoughts and thinkers.

4.2.5. Overcoming the Blocked Situation: Describing the *unheimlich* within Home

Summing up the case analysis we took up in this section: The experience of the *unheimlich*, interpreted by Ricoeur as the sense of otherness in a space, is indescribable in terms of the classic description of home. To generate a new perspective to overcome this "blocked situation," we reflected on a "heterotopology of home," i.e., a description of Foucault's concept of heterotopia (an "other space") as a Ricoeurian metaphor for home. After considering heterotopia as a fluid concept that allows "displacement" to the new situation of home, a heterotopology of home was described by summarising and analysing the multitude of past readings of home as heterotopia through Heynen's framework. A reflection on the heterotopology of home reinterprets the experience of the *heimlich* and understanding of selfhood in relation to the *unheimlich*, as exemplified through Ortega's accounts of "hometactics" and "multiplicitous selves" and Simmel's notion of "the stranger." A Foucauldian heterotopology of home overcomes the blocked situation of home as the experience of the *unheimlich* within home becomes describable in terms of the new description of home as heterotopia. This process of refiguration of reality and semantic innovation is such

that, along with transforming the perception of home, a heterotopology of home also transforms the previous description of heterotopia. The displacement of the concept of heterotopia to the situation of home results in the extension of its instances from “other spaces” to spaces of everyday life, modifying its conceptual scheme. In other words, heterotopia is a different space, not an other space. Our interpretation of the heterotopology of home thus contributes to discussions on the problematic of difference/alterity surrounding heterotopias by reasserting the relationality of space advocated by Foucault and suggested by the notion of difference (George and Tharakan 2025, 168).

Even as our analysis of home contributes to the “practical desacralisation” of space, it reopens the problematic of considering otherness in relation to the notions of difference and alterity without reducing it to the former—revealing the limits of heterotopia as a metaphor for space.¹⁴ Interestingly, the blocked situation of home also presents a case of, and opens possibilities for conceptualising, a spatial variety of hermeneutical injustice, which we will turn to in the following section.

4.3. When Meanings Break: Conceptualising Spatial Hermeneutical Injustice

Since its explicit formulation by Miranda Fricker in her book *Epistemic Injustice* (2007), the concept of “hermeneutical injustice” has invited and incorporated a variety of ways of thinking about it (Kidd, Medina, and Pohlhaus 2017, 2). As Georgia Warnke (2023) explains, hermeneutical injustice is a kind of epistemic injustice that occurs when members of marginalised groups are prevented from creating, communicating, and introducing into collective understanding concepts/terms and matters related to their experiences of marginalisation due to taboos, social practices, and/or lack of power. As the current and

¹⁴ For instance, within the modified conceptual scheme of heterotopia, it becomes impossible to describe truly ‘other’ places, those with no human engagement, such as, in the example Janz (2017) suggests, those outside the age of the Anthropocene.

historical concerns of marginalised groups become poorly represented or unaddressed, “a society’s capacity to understand its own creations” is undermined. In turn, the absence or lack of concepts and terms related to their experiences affects the ability of members of marginalised groups to meaningfully understand and express themselves, their experiences, and the worlds they inhabit (see Warnke 2023). In extreme cases, the radical loss and extreme curtailment of the interpretative and expressive capacities of subjects lead to deep and significant hermeneutical harms to the very development of selfhood, what Medina calls a “hermeneutical death” (Medina 2017, 41).

It is then possible to speak of “spatial hermeneutical injustice,” which I conceive as a hermeneutical injustice towards space as well as its inhabitants that occurs when interpretations of a space, the interpretative and expressive/narrative rights of its inhabitants, or the multiple relations between a space and its inhabitants are reduced or even destroyed. It affects the space’s capacity to reveal and transform itself and the inhabitant, and the inhabitants’ capacities for meaning-making and meaning-sharing, possibilities for understanding themselves through the transformative capacity of spatial experience, and the aim of living a good life in relation to others and/in space.

Spatial hermeneutical injustice accounts for and makes describable the interpretative injuries and injustices committed during the acts of configuration and refiguration of space. It can make describable the injustice that occurs when, for instance, as we saw in Ricoeur’s account of space in Chapter 1, the ideological presuppositions of the builder disregard the needs and expectations of the inhabitants (Ricoeur 2016b, 39). It can also occur due to exclusive norms and policies (see Umbelino 2016), ideologies and prejudices of inhabitants of inherited traditions, as well as epistemic hierarchies, institutional mechanisms, and power structures that

hegemonise the interpretations of privileged inhabitants of a space (see Warnke 2023),¹⁵ often demanding obligatory memorisation of the dominant discourse or ‘official history’ while forgetting, overwriting, erasing, and misrepresenting the others’ past, memories, and miseries as well as their status as the author of their own actions and futures in relation to that space (see Ricoeur 2011; Medina 2017, 41).¹⁶ As Ricoeur writes about space and the “violence of history”:

We must also talk about destruction and rebuilding. We have not only destroyed the symbols of a culture through hatred, but also through carelessness, through contempt and through ignorance, in order to replace what has ceased to please with whatever the new taste suggests or demands. (Ricoeur 2016b, 37)

By drawing attention to the often-overlooked spatial aspects of actually existing social practices as well as the unacknowledged prejudices and injustices that spaces come to house despite their apparent innocence, spatial hermeneutical injustice calls for a hermeneutics of suspicion of space. Its conception emphasises the importance of spatiality in theories of hermeneutical (in)justice and that of hermeneutics in theories of spatial (in)justice.

Revisiting our case analysis of home, we can see that the blocked situation of home—wherein the experience of the *unheimlich* is indescribable in terms of the classic description of home—also presents a case of spatial hermeneutical injustice wherein the self’s meaning-making capacities about herself and the home space she inhabits are curtailed. Then, reading home as

¹⁵ For instance, hostile architecture, or defensive design, such as public benches designed to deter people from lying down or seeking shelter. Additionally, certain spaces tend to mirror and even exponentiate the debilitating gender norms of a society. Moreover, Foucault considers the military camp “an exceptional example in which the architectural means reproduce(s), with more or less emphasis, the social hierarchies (Foucault 2000a, 363).

Hermeneutically unjust spaces can be contrasted with Habermas’s public sphere, a democratic (though ideal) space of dialogue and difference wherein all citizens are guaranteed, in principle, both access to the sphere and the freedom to discuss matters of general interest (Habermas 2019, 143). Here, anyone affected by general social norms or political decisions is enabled to have a say in them (Benhabib 1992, 105).

¹⁶ For instance, the demolition of the historic Ambedkar Bhavan and Buddha Bhushan Printing Press in Maharashtra and the destruction of the hutments of the Vanarmare tribal community in a Goan village.

See Ricoeur 2011 for a discussion on the inheritance of founding violence and torture as a cause for fragile identity. Here, he considers all communities as born out of an original relationship with war and all our founding events as acts of violence which have been given legitimacy by precarious authorities in power.

heterotopia—an act of refiguring reality through live metaphors by which the indescribable becomes describable—can be seen as an actual practice of everyday resistance through imaginative variation in the practical world of the inhabitant. As we saw in Chapter 3, the exercise of the capacity of meaning-making through Ricoeurian imaginative variation can be read as a practice of Foucauldian resistance. In this process of constitution of meaning, the self is revealed and transformed, contemporaneously constituting itself. Since the self's experience of the *heimlich-unheimlich* cannot be separated from the “politics of belonging,” resistance through imaginative variation is also political, the goal of which is to better address hermeneutical injustice and move towards greater spatial hermeneutical justice.

That said, there is a need to recognise that refiguration of spaces can be oppressive just as it can be enabling (Soja 2010, 58). Actual uses, interpretations, and experiences of a space can reshape and undermine the intention behind the space, even to the extent of being violent and destructive to (a few of) its inhabitants and their living of a good life. Here, I call to mind the bus in which the 2012 Delhi gang rape (Nirbhaya Case) took place, the temple in which the 2018 Kathua gang rape (Kathua Rape and Murder Case) took place, and the seminar hall in which the 2024 Kolkata rape (R. G. Kar Medical College Case) took place. I call these “spaces of horror.”

Here, I conceive spaces of horror as a type of hermeneutically unjust space. All hermeneutically unjust spaces are not spaces of horror; however, all spaces of horror are hermeneutically unjust. Compared to what I call a “space of terror,” another type of hermeneutically unjust space that is configured with the intention of systematically and strategically torturing and executing its inhabitants—such as certain kinds of concentration or extermination camps—the becoming of a space of horror is a result of the actual use and violent interpretations of spaces of everyday life by some of its inhabitants. While the violence and suffering inflicted in spaces of terror are

predictable by design, that in spaces of horror are sporadic, unpredictable, and unmapped. While the former are so totalising that they preclude resistance, the latter may allow for the possibility of the practice of tactics of resistance. A space of horror can be, in part, thought about in terms of the concepts Janz (2017) described, which we reviewed in Chapter 3. Like a scene, a space of horror is a space concerned with the question of becoming—it comes to be momentarily and unbecomes thereafter. Like an image, it resists its inscription in material. Like haunting, it reveals the moment that brings into being the precarity and fragility of a space as having meaning.

In the extreme yet not uncommon case of a space of horror, the spatial prejudices and practices of a few inhabitants can be said to violate the proper rules and evaluative guidelines for the just interpretation of space. Ricoeur follows Hirsh in considering that “there are no rules for making good guesses. But there are methods for validating guesses” with regard to right interpretation. He writes:

If it is true that there is always more than one way of construing a text, it is not true that all interpretations are equal and may be assimilated to so-called ‘rules of thumb.’ The text is a limited field of possible constructions. The logic of validation allows us to move between the two limits of dogmatism and scepticism. (Ricoeur 1981d, 175)

In a space of horror, the banal and violent interpretation of some of its inhabitants causes an exclusive and absolute break of the space from its surrounding spaces, rendering the plural, polemical, and intertextual readings of the space impossible and hindering the transformative capacity of the space. The experience of the space is then rendered deeply unintelligible to a few of its other, marginalised inhabitants, radically compromising their status as participants in the meaning-making and meaning-sharing practices through which they respond to the human condition and constitute their sense of self and their place in the world (Medina 2017, 47; Pedersen 2020, 375).

Recognising spatial hermeneutical injustice is the beginning of a diagnostic process that asks specific questions about the ways and limits of interpreters and interpretations (Medina 2017, 43) and the ethical entanglements between self, spatiality, and meaning-making in the context of power and resistance. It is also a step towards acknowledging the collective spatial debt we owe to spaces and their inhabitants who have been harmed. A study of hermeneutically unjust spaces may, in turn, help unhide the dynamics of spaces of hope and redemption, by re-emphasising the extent and incoherence of violence and suffering that human beings are capable of inflicting on each other, whether consciously or unconsciously, and embracing the mutability, fragility, revisability, and transformative potential of spaces, the selfhood of its inhabitants, and selfhood-space relationships. A “place of memory,” such as a monument or a site of tragedy,¹⁷ can then be conceived as a space of hope and redemption. As Ricoeur observes, “places of memory call for a work of memory,” a requirement of life which is “not possible without a work of mourning” (Ricoeur 2016b, 40). He distinguishes between two types of memory:

For the repetition-memory, nothing is worth anything except the well-known, and the new is odious; for the reconstruction-memory, the new must be welcomed with curiosity and with the desire to reorganise the old with a view to making room for this newcomer. It is no less a question of de-familiarising the familiar than of familiarising the unfamiliar. (Ricoeur 2016b, 40)

As a critical resource of reconstruction-memory, monuments and sites of tragedy can aid members of vulnerable communities to struggle against oblivion (Umbelino 2016, 121), create a potential site for remembering, memorialisation, mourning, healing, and even recovery from trauma (see Arel 2018), facilitate active engagement to foster empathy and emotional

¹⁷ For instance, the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum stands at the site of the space of terror it memorialises, the Auschwitz concentration camp. On the other hand, the memorials of spaces of horror, if any, are often displaced from the actual site where it had come to be momentarily.

availability and to encounter alternate narratives, reinterpret identities, and reimagine histories in relation to them, and move towards greater spatial hermeneutical justice—for the space, its inhabitants, and the relations between them. As Ricoeur suggests, through receptive and active inhabiting practices, we can relearn the life stories of which monuments always carry a “trace”: “to make these traces not only residues, but testimonies of the past that is no longer but which—once-was, to save the having-been of the past in spite of its being-no-longer, this is what the ‘rock’ that endures can do” (Ricoeur 2016b, 39).

4.4. Conclusion: The Spatiality of Hermeneutical Justice and Living a Good Life

This chapter explored the spatial aspects of living a good life by building on Foucault’s and Ricoeur’s post-structuralist hermeneutic accounts of space in their later works, so as to explore the varieties of ways in which space reveals and transforms itself and its inhabitants when they approach it with their needs and expectations during the act of refiguration of space. We first demonstrated the continuing relevance of the notion of refiguration of space by providing an overview of more recent scholarship that highlights the significance of inhabitants’ interpretations of space for addressing contemporary everyday spatial anxieties that have implications for the living of a good life.

Next, we described and reflected on a “heterotopology of home” as an instance of extending the polysemy of space, and the act of refiguration of space and the practice of resistance through imaginative variation facilitated by metaphors. Here, we argued that a heterotopology of home overcomes the blocked situation of home, as the experience of the *unheimlich* within home becomes describable in terms of the new description of home as heterotopia. In this process, along with transforming the perception of home, the previous description of heterotopia is transformed as well. We then conceptualised “spatial hermeneutical injustice” to account for and make describable the interpretative injuries and injustices committed against spaces and

their inhabitants during the acts of configuration and refiguration, which reduce, or even destruct, the capacities of spaces and its inhabitants, and the possibility of the realisation of the aim of living a good life in relation to others and/in space. We conceptualised types of hermeneutically unjust spaces, such as spaces of terror and spaces of horror, and reflected that hermeneutically unjust spaces may reveal the dynamics of monuments and sites of tragedy as places of reconstruction, memory, and spaces of hope and redemption. Through our investigations, we acknowledge and recognise the revelatory and transformative potential of meaning-making of spaces on spaces, the selfhood of its inhabitants, and selfhood–space relations. In light of the ethical entanglements between the self, spatiality, and meaning-making revealed in this chapter, we will now turn to Chapter 5, where we will propose further inquiry into the multiple dimensions along which the problematic of the self’s meaning-making of spatiality may be pursued.

Chapter 5

Conclusion: Self, Spatiality, and Meaning-making

Chapter 4 revisited Foucault's and Ricoeur's post-structuralist hermeneutic accounts of space in their later works, with the specific objective of exploring the varieties of ways in which space reveals and transforms itself and its inhabitants when they approach it with their needs and expectations during the act of refiguration of space. It described and reflected on a heterotopology of home as an instance of extending the polysemy of space and the act of refiguration of space and the practice of resistance through imaginative variation facilitated by metaphors, arguing that taking the Foucauldian concept of heterotopia as a Ricoeurian metaphor for home overcomes the blocked situation of home. It also conceptualised "spatial hermeneutical injustice" and types of hermeneutically unjust spaces to make describable the interpretative injuries and injustices committed during the acts of configuration and refiguration of space that reduce or destroy the meaning-making and meaning-sharing capacities of inhabitants and hence the possibility of the realisation of the aim of living a good life in relation to others and/in space. This chapter has as its objective the summarisation of the findings of this study and the proposal of further inquiry into the multiple dimensions along which the problematic of the self's meaning-making of spatiality may be pursued.

The aim of this study, titled *Hermeneutics of Space and Selfhood: A Study in the Philosophies of Foucault and Ricoeur*, was to explore the possibility of a coherent and comprehensible sense of self emerging hermeneutically in relation to others and/in space. The study adopted a critical-interpretive approach to explore three distinct yet interconnected objectives, namely the spatial constitution of selfhood, the hermeneutics of space/architecture, and the spatial aspects of living a good life, by building on the decisive suggestions in the later works of the late twentieth-century post-structuralist hermeneuticians Michel Foucault and Paul Ricoeur.

Recent studies that read Foucault's and Ricoeur's concern for the self within the frame of their projects in post-structuralist hermeneutics of the subject/self in their later works have argued for the need for mediation or interpellation of the two projects so as to complement each other and ward off each other's blind spots, as we noted in Chapter 2 (Barthélémy 2010; Castonguay 2010).¹ The approach in this study, however, has been to read the two thinkers in one frame so as to open up possibilities for dialogue and the encounter of difference in their works. As we held space for the complexity of their distinct ways of thinking about the spatiality of the self, we also acknowledged the differences, incompleteness, and fragility of their projects.

Meaning-making of events through narratives has been associated with narrative identity but not with life satisfaction, i.e., positive affect or the hedonic aspect of well-being (de Moor 2023, 8).² However, the explorations in this study were concerned with contributing to the understanding of how the self's meaning-making of spatiality is associated with a good life, i.e., meaningfulness or the eudaimonic aspect of well-being. The study's emphasis on the act of refiguration of space and the practice of resistance through imaginative variation facilitated by live metaphors through play, as well as the conception of spatial hermeneutical injustice to account for the reduction, or even destruction, of the meaning-making and meaning-sharing capacities of inhabitants in a space, align with Richards' thesis that meaning is partly constituted in "the space between symbol and symbolised," and that the thinning of this space entails losing one's metaphorical dimension of experience, wherein play is constitutive of selfhood (Richards 2005, 10–11). Our explorations of the ethical entanglements of self, spatiality, and meaning-making evoke Charles Taylor's intuition that "the disorientation and

¹ Just as how there are more references to Foucault in Ricoeur's works, than to the latter in the former's, there are disproportionately more works that read the two thinkers together from a Ricoeurian perspective, and are, hence, less charitable to Foucault (both Barthélémy 2010 and Castonguay 2010 can be seen as examples of such an approach, while Michel 2010, 2015 may be seen as taking a more balanced view on the thinkers).

² However, de Moor (2023, 8) also cautions us about situations in which meaning-making of events through narratives could be maladaptive for the sense of self—memories related to trauma events, for instance.

uncertainty about where one stands as a person seems to spill over into a loss of grip on one's stance in physical space" (Taylor 1989, 28).

Although the explorations in this study primarily centred on the self's meaning-making in relation to built space, some of its findings may be extended to and have implications for spaces that are not strictly "inscribed in stone" (Ricoeur 2016b, 32). A growing scholarship now explores the later works of Foucault and Ricoeur in relation to ecology and environmental philosophy.³ For instance, Iofrida (2024) considers the later Foucault's investigations into the ethics of the care of the self and others, especially those in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* (2005)—such as its questioning of the Cartesian subject/object dualism, the subject's inherence to and emergence from the world, and its reference points in the finite and limited—to be "particularly amenable to interpretation in ecological terms" (Iofrida 2024, 127–128). Similarly, Soares (2021) elaborates on how the later Ricoeur's consideration of the text as the paradigm for hermeneutics—specifically, his direct and open comparison of space with text in "Architecture and Narrativity" (2016b)—is the inspiration and model for the new discipline of environmental hermeneutics (Soares 2021, 88; also see Utsler 2009, 2011). The concept of spatial hermeneutical injustice can be extended to environmental hermeneutics to theorise a hermeneutical variety of environmental or ecological injustice—an injustice that occurs when a space is interpreted as only belonging to certain charismatic species, human beings, or even living beings alone, and not also as the home and refuge of various co-inhabiting beings.⁴ It

³ For a list of works that consider the later Foucault in relation to the topic of ecology, see Iofrida 2024, 127n1. For a list of works that consider the later Ricoeur in relation to the field of environmental philosophy, see Soares 2021, 85.

⁴ As Foucault notes, "after all, it might be that nature, the sea, rustling trees, animals, faces, masks, crossed swords all speak" (Foucault 1990, 59). However, not all of them get to be heard. In India, the vast disparity in the conservation attention and funding that megafauna such as tigers and elephants receives render many threatened species invisible, understudied, and unprotected even in protected areas (see George 2019 for a summary of a case in India). As I have shown elsewhere:

The lion's share of conservation attention and funding is usually dedicated to the rescue of charismatic species worldwide. This worrisome trend assumes that a single species can be saved in isolation just as it ignores the immediate conservation needs of a wide variety of other equally important and often threatened species in the wild. (George 2019, 5)

could provide insights for rethinking the current environmental crises as resulting from violent interpretations and, therefore, highlight the need to be suspicious of those interpretations that are enforced over others and become the only ones that get to be heard.⁵ There may also be a possibility of reading the notion of care for others in both thinkers as a form of weak anthropocentrism with the potential for an ethic of care.⁶

Some of the findings of the study may be extended to digital spaces as well. As Janz (2017) reminds us, “even digital place is not wholly virtual—it is the product of practices and performances that have various levels of reference to practices and performances in material space” (Janz 2017, 28). In a recent study, Koliska and Roberts (2021) reimagine selfies, a now-ubiquitous technology for visual communication, as a Foucauldian heterotopia, arguing that people take and share selfies “to provide alternative or personalised perspectives of these places but also to represent their self” (Koliska and Roberts 2021, 1–4). This reimagination can be deepened by our discussion on taking heterotopia as a Ricoeurian metaphor—the practise of taking and sharing selfies can then be seen as an act of refiguration of space and the practice of resistance through imaginative variation of space and the self facilitated by live metaphors through play.

Let us now conclude our study with a brief summarisation of the findings of our chapters. Chapter 1, titled “Interpretation of Space and Understanding of Self: Reading Foucault and Ricoeur in One Frame,” contextualised the study within a broader theoretical framework to know our way around how the interpretation of space hangs together with and opens

⁵ Within this conceptual framework, what is seen as “native,” “invasive,” and the perceived opposition between them may require reimagining in the context of today’s climate crisis, considering that, for instance, some invasive species may contribute more to carbon consumption than native species.

⁶ While ecocentrism emphasises an inseparable bond between human beings and nature, and accords nature an intrinsic value, anthropocentrism emphasises a separation between the two, and construes nature as ‘the other,’ according it only an instrumental value. Strong anthropocentrism construes “nature as an object to be conquered and subjugated for the betterment of humans,” while weak anthropocentrism presents the possibility of being construed as “stewardship” (see Tharakan and George 2025a).

possibilities for the understanding of the self in the later works of Foucault and Ricoeur. Despite being contemporaries within the same camp of Contemporary Continental Philosophy, the two thinkers interacted with each other only at “very localised points of intersection” (Ricoeur 1998, 79). Nevertheless, their later works share a concern for the self, which can be identified as projects in post-structuralist hermeneutics of the subject/self, situated in the aftermath of what Ricoeur calls the “overthrow of the Cogito” (1992, 5) by the “masters of suspicion” (1970, 33): Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud. Both assimilated the positive possibilities of the masters’ hermeneutics of suspicion—not merely as an exercise in scepticism but as the unfolding of new interpretive spaces—to move beyond the foundational subject and reconceptualise the subject/self in their distinct ways.

The chapter then unpacked Foucault’s history of the concept of space in the West—from medieval localisation and modern extension to contemporary emplacement—in light of Stephan Günzel’s more recent exposition of the conceptual history of space. Aligning with discussions on space since the late twentieth-century spatial turn in social theory, Foucault and Ricoeur were discussed as thinkers on space who disclose the relational and heterogeneous dimensions of space. Ricoeur drew a parallel between architecture and narrativity by way of the mimetic phases of prefiguration, configuration, and refiguration. The chapter identified refiguration as the phase in which the act of interpretation of space—as an object in which the self exteriorises meaning—opens possibilities for understanding the self through the dialectic of revealing and transforming for both Foucault and Ricoeur. It concluded by arguing that “spatiality of the self” offers yet another point of intersection to further imaginary conversations and philosophical dialogues between the two thinkers in the context of their shared concern for the self. It acknowledged the differences in their spatial thought while recognising their potential to address questions of power, resistance, and ethics with regard to the interpretation of spaces and understanding of the self.

Chapter 2, titled “Conceptualising the Self: Coherence, Comprehensibility, and Spatial Constitution,” explored the spatial constitution of selfhood by revisiting Foucault’s and Ricoeur’s projects of post-structuralist hermeneutics of the subject/self in their later works to examine how each thinker used and understood the concept of the self, and accounted for the possibility of the self’s coherence and comprehensibility, in their distinct ways. The chapter first contextualised the thinkers’ shared concern for the self by drawing a historical sketch of the conceptual varieties of the self in the West, with an emphasis on how the possibility of the self’s coherence and comprehensibility was accounted for. The modern subject was posited as unified, immediate, and closed, establishing its coherence through, as Charles Taylor (1989, x) observes, reflexivity or turning “inwards.” The presuppositions of the modern subject came to be contested, notably by the masters of suspicion and phenomenologists, urging a transition to contemporary conceptualisations of the self as fragmented and constituted, forging coherence by way of continuous mediations with “the outside” or “the exterior,” as the accounts of Simmel’s “In-addition” (1910, 381) and Ortega’s “multiplicitous selves” (2020, 170) demonstrate. In this light, contemporary conceptualisations of the self—including those of Foucault and Ricoeur—were generally characterised as consisting of a series of philosophical reflections on or responses to modernity’s conception of interiority, specifically the Cartesian notion of identity as self-scrutinising and self-constituting.

The chapter then turned to Foucault’s and Ricoeur’s projects of post-structuralist hermeneutics of the subject/self in their later works. While Foucault pursued a genealogy of the subject along the ethical axis, where the self is conceived as forms in which the self constitutes itself through historically specific techniques of the self, Ricoeur equated his hermeneutics of the self with the unfolding of the triple dialectic of reflection and analysis, *idem*-identity (sameness) and *ipse*-identity (selfhood), and the self and other. The chapter showed that, despite their distinct ways of using and understanding the concept of the self, both thinkers accounted for the

possibility of the coherence and comprehensibility of the self by way of mediations with varied senses of “the outside” or “the exterior” that included an ethical concern for one’s relations with oneself and others, which the chapter read as spatial constitution of the self. It then situated their ethical concern for one’s relations with oneself and others within the philosophical lineage of the Socratic injunction to “know oneself” framed by the “care of the self” (Michel 2015, 103; Davidson 2016, 159).

Chapter 3, titled “Configuring Space: Meaning-making, Space, and Architecture,” explored the hermeneutics of space/architecture by revisiting Foucault’s and Ricoeur’s projects of post-structuralist hermeneutics of the subject/self in their later works, so as to explore the exteriorisation of meaning in space and metaphors for space. The chapter first explored Foucault’s and Ricoeur’s approaches to hermeneutics in the context of the subject/self by briefly reviewing their accounts of the recent history of Western hermeneutics and examining their conceptualisations and use of hermeneutics, particularly in their later works. It observed that the thinkers reworked their definitions of hermeneutics throughout the course of their work and placed emphasis on different aspects of the recent history of hermeneutics in the West: its interpretive techniques and hermeneutical tasks, respectively. It argued that the conception of hermeneutics Foucault rejected is the one Ricoeur himself saw as limited and requiring extension—that of the hermeneutics of the symbol, with its thesis of hidden meanings within the self, which both thinkers moved beyond to conceptualise the self’s meaning-making in their own distinct ways.

The chapter then turned towards examining and building on the decisive suggestions that Foucault and Ricoeur offered in their later works for the application and expansion of hermeneutics to space. We reviewed and identified points of intersection in the thinkers’ discussions on the interpretation of texts, which can be extended and applied to the case of

space. In its exploration of space as an object in which meaning is exteriorised, the need for incorporating a hermeneutics of suspicion within self-understanding by way of understanding such objects was highlighted. In its exploration of concepts that can be taken as metaphors for space, the usefulness and limits of the metaphor of the text for space were considered through the lens of Janz's (2017) exposition. It suggested Foucault's concept of heterotopia as a possible alternative metaphor for understanding space and extending its polysemy, with the potential to open possibilities for dialogue and the encounter of difference within hermeneutics. The chapter concluded by arguing that the exercise of the capacity of meaning-making through Ricoeurian imaginative variation facilitated by texts and metaphors can be read as a practice of Foucauldian resistance in the context of the constitution and understanding of the self.

Chapter 4, titled "Refiguring Space: The Spatiality of Hermeneutical Justice and Living a Good Life," explored the spatial aspects of living a good life by revisiting Foucault's and Ricoeur's projects of post-structuralist hermeneutics of the subject/self in their later works, so as to explore the variety of ways in which space reveals and transforms itself and its inhabitants when they approach it with their needs and expectations during the act of refiguration of space. The chapter first demonstrated the continuing relevance of the notion of refiguration of space by providing an overview of more recent scholarship that highlights the significance of inhabitants' interpretations of space for addressing contemporary everyday spatial anxieties that have implications for the living of a good life. It then described and reflected on a "heterotopology of home" as an instance of extending the polysemy of space, and the act of refiguration of space and the practice of resistance through imaginative variation facilitated by metaphors. Here, it argued that taking the Foucauldian concept of heterotopia as a Ricoeurian metaphor for home overcomes the blocked situation of home, as the experience of the *unheimlich* within home becomes describable in terms of the new description of home as

heterotopia. In this process, along with transforming the perception of home, the previous description of heterotopia is transformed as well.

The chapter then considered the blocked situation of home as presenting a case of and opening possibilities for conceptualising “spatial hermeneutical injustice.” Conceptualising spatial hermeneutical injustice helps account for and makes describable the interpretative injuries and injustices committed against spaces and their inhabitants during the acts of configuration and refiguration, which reduce, or even destruct, the capacities of spaces and their inhabitants, and the possibility of the realisation of the aim of living a good life in relation to others and/in space. The chapter conceived types of hermeneutically unjust spaces, such as spaces of terror and spaces of horror, and reflected that hermeneutically unjust spaces may reveal the dynamics of monuments and sites of tragedy as places of reconstruction, memory, and spaces of hope and redemption. Through its investigations, the chapter acknowledged and recognised the revelatory and transformative potential of meaning-making of spaces on spaces, the selfhood of its inhabitants, and selfhood–space relations, revealing the ethical entanglements between the self, spatiality, and meaning-making in the context of power and resistance.

To conclude, this study was an exploration of the possibility of a coherent and comprehensible sense of self emerging hermeneutically in relation to others and/in space through the decisive suggestions offered by Foucault and Ricoeur in their later works. By identifying points of intersection with regard to their thoughts on the self’s meaning-making of spatiality, the study contributes to furthering imaginary conversations and philosophical dialogues between the two thinkers and opening possibilities for the encounter of difference in their works in the context of their shared concern for the self. Taken together, the explorations in the study on the spatial constitution of selfhood, the hermeneutics of space/architecture, and the spatial aspects of

living a good life with others and/in space acknowledge our collective responsibility and fragility in moving towards greater spatial hermeneutical justice.

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Appendix 1: Paper Published in *Kritike*

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Article

Home as Heterotopia: Describing the *unheimlich* through a Foucauldian Heterotopology of Home¹

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Abstract: The experience of the *unheimlich*, interpreted by Paul Ricoeur as the sense of otherness in a space, is indescribable in terms of the classic description of home. To generate a new perspective to overcome this “blocked situation,” we reflect on a “heterotopology of home,” i.e., a description of Michel Foucault’s concept of heterotopia (an “other space”) as a metaphor for home. After considering heterotopia as a fluid concept that allows “displacement” to the new situation of home, a heterotopology of home is described by summarizing and analyzing the multitude of past readings of home as heterotopia through Hilde Heynen’s framework. A reflection on the heterotopology of home reinterprets the experience of the *heimlich* and understanding of selfhood in relation to the *unheimlich*, as exemplified through Mariana Ortega’s accounts of “hometactics” and “multiplicitous selves” and Georg Simmel’s notion of “the stranger.” In conclusion, we argue that a Foucauldian heterotopology of home overcomes the blocked situation by transforming the perception of home: the experience of the *unheimlich* becomes describable in the terms of home as heterotopia. In this process, the instances of heterotopia are extended from “other spaces” to spaces of everyday life, also transforming the previous description of heterotopia.

Keywords: Foucault, heterotopia, *heimlich*, *unheimlich*

¹ We sincerely thank the external referee, whose meticulous feedback and insightful suggestions have greatly improved this paper. The first author remains deeply indebted to *Hermeneutics in Real Life (HmRL)* and Vidyasagar Sharma (Bielefeld University, Germany) for sharing resources and engaging in discussions on Ricoeur’s metaphor theory and the notion of belonging, respectively.



The *unheimlich* within Home: A Blocked Situation

When thinking about space, one of the oppositions we continue to regard as a simple given is the one between different spaces and spaces of alterity. While an approach towards space based on the notion of alterity, or radical otherness, suggests a separation between certain “other spaces” and the spaces of everyday life, that which is based on difference suggests no such radical separation but comprising only a lack of similarity. In the context of the former approach, it is often assumed that a sense of belonging in space is assured within the spaces of everyday life, in spite of the variegated nature of such spaces. Also, it is commonly assumed that a sense of otherness is experienced only within the other spaces of alterity. In this section, we will take up the case of home, a space of everyday life, to problematize these assumptions.

In many cultures worldwide, in varied forms, home remains a classic and conservative instance of a privileged category of space. The primordially and normative power of home are such that “our bodily encounters in other places are stylized according to the home’s normative stylizing of our bodies.”² Home is a “symbolic environment”³: the notion of home is imbued with and evocative of a sense of belonging, a being at ease, a being in one’s place in the world. The “personal, intimate, feeling of being ‘at home’ in a place (place-belongingness)”⁴ may be related to what Paul Ricoeur calls the “*heimlich*.” Ricoeur interprets the *heimlich* as a fundamental human need, expressed and represented in the deliberate act of building a home.⁵

Many a time, however, the experience of the *heimlich* within home remains a “myth”—it is not simply given in the actual, material space of a home.⁶ Home is often the site where the self experiences the feeling of uneasiness as in the feeling of “not being in one’s place, of not feeling at home.” The “sense of loneliness, isolation, alienation, and displacement”⁷ experienced in a place may be related to what Ricoeur calls the “*unheimlich*.”

² Janet Donohoe, “The Place of Home,” in *Environmental and Architectural Phenomenology*, 23 (Spring 2012), 17.

³ See Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton, “The Home as Symbolic Environment,” in *The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self*, ed. by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

⁴ Marco Antonsich, “Searching for Belonging: An Analytical Framework,” in *Geography Compass*, 4 (2010), 645.

⁵ Paul Ricoeur, “Uncanniness Many Times Over,” in *Philosophical Anthropology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016), 264.

⁶ Mariana Ortega, “Hometactics,” in *50 Concepts for a Critical Phenomenology*, ed. by Gail Weiss, Ann V. Murphy, and Gayle Salamon (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2020), 169.

⁷ Antonsich, “Searching for Belonging,” 649.

He observes that, in contrast to the feeling of familiarity in the experience of the *heimlich*, the sense of otherness in the experience of the *unheimlich* is at the “height of its feeling of strangeness.”⁸ In Ricoeur’s interpretation, the *unheimlich* is a “realm of emptiness” that haunts us⁹—the *heimlich* expressed and represented in the act of building or constructing a home never succeeds in eclipsing the *unheimlich*.¹⁰

This brief account of home suggests that the *unheimlich* is experienced even within the spaces of everyday life and is a more common experience than typically assumed. This view aligns with Ricoeur, who considers both placing and displacing oneself as primordial human activities. For Ricoeur, the reality of the *unheimlich* is such that every displaced person experiences it, and it is sometimes even cultivated for itself “an ethics of roaming, of uprootedness.”¹¹

As we can see, the experience of the *unheimlich* within the home is indescribable in terms of its classic description. This presents a “blocked situation,”¹² which then invites the generation of a new perspective of home to describe the experience of the *unheimlich* within its space. In recent years, the notion of home in terms of the *heimlich* and the *unheimlich* experienced within it has been a poignant theme for many writers. However, many such accounts do not do justice to both the noetic (the subjective) and the noematic

⁸ Paul Ricoeur, “Inhabited Space,” in *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. by Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 39. The intriguing notion of the *unheimlich* was expounded by Sigmund Freud in a 1919 essay, translated into English as “The ‘Uncanny’” by J. Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1958). Heidegger translates the *unheimlich* as “not at home” to pronounce the normative constitution of humans as beings that are essentially not-at-home in a temporal-historical way (Diego D’Angelo, “To Be or Not to Be at Home. Heidegger and Derrida Reading Sophocles,” in *Kritike*, 14 (2021), 112). Unlike Heidegger, Ricoeur discusses the *unheimlich* to explore “the phenomenon of the strange” in spatial-geographical terms and emphasizes the primordially of both placement and displacement for human beings (Ricoeur, “Uncanniness,” 260).

⁹ Ricoeur, “Inhabited Space,” 149.

¹⁰ Ricoeur, “Uncanniness,” 264. To convey our Foucauldian intuition that the *heimlich* and the *unheimlich* are actual experiences in a space and not states or conditions given or guaranteed through the material or structural form of the space, we have used the adjective pair instead of the corresponding noun pair *Heimlichkeit–Unheimlichkeit* in our analysis. We thank the anonymous referee for urging us to reflect on this technical distinction.

¹¹ Ricoeur, “Uncanniness,” 264. Even as we practice the ethics of roaming and uprootedness, it is possible to stay attached and loyal to our “home.” This is what Appiah calls “rooted cosmopolitanism” or “cosmopolitan patriotism” wherein one is “attached to a home of one’s own, with its own cultural particularities, but taking pleasure from the presence of other, different places that are home to other, different people” (Kwame Anthony Appiah, “Cosmopolitan Patriots,” in *Critical Inquiry*, 23 (Spring 1997), 618).

¹² Paul Ricoeur, “Fiction (4): Models,” in *Lectures on Imagination*, ed. by George H. Taylor, Robert D. Sweeney, Jean-Luc Amalric, and Patrick F. Cosby (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2024), 263.

(the objective) dimensions of the intentionality of the act of perceiving home. Often, an individual's inability to experience *heimlich* in a space is understood exclusively in terms of the actions and conduct of the individual, a psychological explanation of the phenomenon of not being at home that overemphasizes a socially decontextualized individualism. Such accounts separate the experience of the *heimlich* from the "politics of belonging"—the dimension of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion—an approach Marco Antonsich cautions us against.¹³ On the other hand, structural-functional approaches to the phenomenon ignore the subjective elements and read the *unheimlich* solely in terms of the objective structures that constitute the home, such as the patriarchal structures of society,¹⁴ ignoring the personal, individual dimension of the experience of the *heimlich*. Given the shortcomings of these accounts, the invitation to generate a new perspective of home that can describe the experience of the *unheimlich* within its space remains open.

In sum, the *unheimlich*, interpreted by Ricoeur as the sense of otherness in a space, is a more common experience than is typically assumed in an approach towards space based on the notion of alterity. It is experienced even within a space of everyday life such as home—a reality indescribable in terms of the classic description of home. This blocked situation calls for the generation of a new perspective to overcome it. We propose that such a new (and better) perspective can be generated by reflecting on a "heterotopology of home," i.e., a description that takes Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopia (an "other space") as a metaphor for home. In the next section, we will engage with the concept of heterotopia to explore the possibility of considering home as heterotopia.

Foucault's Heterotopia: A Fluid and Displaceable Concept

In this section, we will introduce Foucault's concept of heterotopia, contextualize it within his broader theory of space, and describe it in terms of its principles. By engaging with ongoing debates and discussions surrounding the meanings of the concept, we will show that the fluidity of heterotopia is such that it allows itself to be displaced to new situations, such as the situation of home, as a metaphor.

Foucault's concept of heterotopia has become crucial to thinking about space, especially since the spatial turn in the social sciences and

¹³ Antonsich, "Searching for Belonging," 645.

¹⁴ Koshy Tharakan and Payel Chattopadhyay Mukherjee, "At Home as an 'Outsider': Subamalata and Othappu: The Scent of the Other Side," in *Samyukta: A Journal of Gender and Culture*, 7 (2022), 1–2, <<https://doi.org/10.53007/SJGC.2022.V7.I2.47>>.

humanities.¹⁵ The spatial turn is an ongoing “response to a longstanding ontological and epistemological bias that privileges time over space in all the human sciences, including spatial disciplines like geography and architecture.”¹⁶ Following its “long, slow, and painful undertaking,” it is being reasserted that space matters because “where events unfold is integral to how they take shape” and not only because all our thoughts and actions necessarily occur in space.¹⁷ Foucault’s discussions on the significance of space for the human condition are widely recognized as having led to the spatial turn.¹⁸

The key text for understanding Foucault’s concept of heterotopia is his “*Des Espaces Autres*” (variously translated as “Of Other Spaces” and “Different Spaces”), originally delivered as a lecture to architects. There have been earlier, and not in the least insignificant, mentions of the concept by Foucault, such as those in *The Order of Things* and a few radio transcripts of his talks. However, “*Des Espaces Autres*” is the publicly available text wherein the concept is discussed in most detail—though often reprimanded for being too short, unsystematized, and ambiguous. The text has had at least four translations from French to English, with as many as three anthologies dedicated to celebrating the concept’s continuing relevance, significance, and mystique in our contemporary epoch. One of the significant differences among these translations lies in the translator’s interpretation of heterotopia’s stance on difference/alterity—i.e., whether or not heterotopia is a space separate from the spaces of everyday life. This paper refers to the fourth translation of “*Des Espaces Autres*” by Dehaene and De Cauter in 2008, who followed the now-classical convention to translate the title of the text as “Of Other Spaces” to emphasize the separation of heterotopias from spaces of everyday life. In contrast, the third translation of the text by Robert Hurley in 1998 puts forward an alternative translation of the title of the text as

¹⁵ Kathryn Beebe, Angela Davis, and Kathryn Gleadle, “Introduction: Space, Place and Gendered Identities: Feminist History and the Spatial Turn,” in *Women’s History Review*, 21 (2012), 526.

¹⁶ Edward Soja, “Taking Space Personally,” in *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. by Santa Arias and Barney Warf (London: Taylor and Francis, 2008), 11.

¹⁷ Barney Warf and Santa Arias, “Introduction: Reinsertion of Space in the Humanities and Social Sciences,” in *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. by Santa Arias and Barney Warf (London: Taylor and Francis, 2008), 3–10; Maria Cristina Vendra and Paolo Furia, “Introduction: Ricoeur and the Problem of Space. Perspectives on a Ricoeurian ‘Spatial Turn,’” in *Ricoeur Studies*, 12 (2021), 1.

¹⁸ Beebe, Davis, and Gleadle, “Space, Place and Gendered Identities,” 525–527.

"Different Spaces" to assert that heterotopias are not "radically other than the spaces of ordinary life."¹⁹

Foucault considers space a historical entity subject to time and power—its history is a history of powers.²⁰ He begins "*Des Espaces Autres*" with a brief history of the concept of space in the West. According to his account, the contemporary space of "emplacements" has substituted the modern space of "extension," which itself had replaced the medieval space of "localization." In the Middle Ages, space was conceptualized as a hierarchic, oppositional ensemble of localized places. However, when space came to be conceived as infinitely extended and open in the modern era, places were dismissed as mere points in the movement of a thing. In contrast, space is conceptualized today as emplacements, i.e., "relations of proximity between points or elements."²¹ Foucault writes:

The present epoch would perhaps rather be the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity; we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and the far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed We do not live in a kind of void, inside which we could place individuals and things We live inside a set of relations that delineate emplacements that cannot be equated or in any way superimposed.²²

In other words, Foucault considers contemporary space to be relational and heterogeneous.

In "*Des Espaces Autres*," Foucault considers heterotopia as one of the two main types of spaces that have "the curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspend, neutralize, or invert the set of relations designated, mirrored, or reflected by them." The other type of space—utopia—is an emplacement with no real place that has "a general relation of direct or inverted analogy with the real space of society. It is society itself perfected, or else it is society turned upside down." In contrast to utopias that are "fundamentally unreal places," heterotopias are real places:

¹⁹ Email exchange with James Faubion by Michiel Dehaene and Lieven De Cauter cited in Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces (1967)," in *Heterotopia and the City: Public Space in a Postcivil Society*, ed. and trans. by Michiel Dehaene and Lieven De Cauter (London: Routledge, 2008), 23n*.

²⁰ Michel Foucault, "The Eye of Power," in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, ed. by Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 149.

²¹ Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," 15.

²² *Ibid.*, 14–16.

There are also, and this probably in all culture, in all civilization, real places, effective places, places that are written into the institution of society itself, and that are a sort of counter-emplacements, a sort of effectively realized utopias in which the real emplacements, all the other real emplacements that can be found within culture, are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted; a kind of places that are outside all places, even though they are actually localizable.²³

The meanings of emplacements can be explored by describing them by looking for the set of relations by which a given site can be defined. Foucault terms the systematic description of heterotopias via the network of relations that define them as "heterotopology." It has as its object "in a given society, the study, analysis, description, and 'reading,' ... of these different spaces, of these other places, as a sort of simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live."²⁴

To describe the concept of heterotopia, Foucault provides us with six principles, which we summarize as follows: (1) Heterotopias are constituted in (probably) all cultures in the world, though in varied forms; (2) Each heterotopia has a "precise and determined function" within a society that may change over time; (3) A heterotopia can juxtapose within it several incompatible emplacements; (4) Heterotopias are often linked to "slices of time," providing "a sort of absolute break with...traditional time"; (5) Heterotopias presuppose "a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable," through constraint or submission to permissions, rites, or purifications; (6) Heterotopias have a function in relation to the rest of space, be it the exposing of its being illusionary or compensating for its disorderliness.²⁵

Despite (or perhaps due to) the description of its principles, heterotopia remains a fluid and fertile concept. Though Foucault himself did not engage further with the concept, it has been kept from being too frozen or sedimented over the years through ongoing debates and disagreements among later theorists regarding its interpretations. These various interpretations can be summarized in terms of their underlying positions by following Hilde Heynen's framework, bringing them under three key dimensions: i) The role of space (Is heterotopia a recognizable spatial entity? How can the relationship between spatial and social-cultural processes be

²³ Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," 17.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 16–17.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 18–21.

conceptualized?); ii) Aspects of politics (Do heterotopias support or subvert the societal status quo?); and iii) The dynamics of human agency (Do heterotopias have the same meaning for all the actors involved?).²⁶

The possibility or permissibility of interpreting home as heterotopia is partly based on the same unresolved problematic of the concept that underlies the disagreements among the different translations of the title of *“Des Espaces Autres”*: Heterotopia’s stance on difference/alterity, i.e., whether or not it is an other space, separate from the spaces of everyday life. If heterotopia is indeed an other space, the concept as a metaphor will allow its displacement to new situations, i.e., situations outside those mentioned in its original conception by Foucault—such as the situation of home, a space of everyday life. The process of displacement is not an application of the concept of heterotopia to the new situation of home as an instance of it (subsumption or ordering). Instead, it is a taking of the concept as a metaphor for home to transpose or carry over a new perspective to think about the situation.²⁷ The interpretation of home as heterotopia involves the activity of “reading,” i.e., a selecting or screening to “set aside the irrelevant aspects and emphasize only what is relevant”²⁸ in the concept and elaborating how these can be carried over and related to the new situation. In this process, the logical distance between heterotopia and home is reduced—what initially appears remote, and a strange or mistaken use no longer seems so.²⁹

In this section, we have shown that heterotopia is a fluid concept that allows displacement to the new situation of home as a metaphor. Such a displacement opens possibilities for the generation of a new perspective that can be carried over to think about and even overcome the blocked situation of home. To explore this possibility, in the next section, we will describe a Foucauldian “heterotopology of home” that interprets home as heterotopia and suggest that the principles of heterotopia can be carried over and related to the situation of home.

Home as Heterotopia: Describing a Foucauldian Heterotopology of Home

In this section, we will think with Foucault about the classic description of home and the experiences of the *heimlich* and the *unheimlich* in the context of his relational understanding of space. We will then describe a

²⁶ Hilde Heynen, “Heterotopia Unfolded?,” in *Heterotopia and the City: Public Space in a Postcivil Society*, ed. by Michiel Dehaene and Lieven De Cauter (London: Routledge, 2008), 312–321.

²⁷ Ricoeur, “Fiction (4): Models,” 264.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 261.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 271.

Foucauldian “heterotopology of home” by summarizing and analyzing past readings of home as heterotopia on the basis of their underlying positions through Hilde Heynen’s framework, which we mentioned in the previous section.

In “*Des Espaces Autres*,” Foucault offers suggestions for thinking about the classic description of home. He observes that even in the contemporary epoch of space, “perhaps our life is still ruled by a certain number of oppositions that cannot be touched, that institution and practice have not yet dared to undermine; oppositions that we regard as simple givens.”³⁰ Home can be considered a space wherein such a “practical desacralization” has not yet occurred.³¹ The notion of home is suspended between the materiality of actually localizable spaces and the human need to be in one’s place. Nevertheless, following Foucault, we can see how there is nothing in the order of the home as such—its structure or function or even the intention behind it—that can either thwart or guarantee the *heimlich* experienced within it.³²

Following the Foucauldian conception of space as relational, we can see that the experiences of the *heimlich* and the *unheimlich* within home open four scenarios in relation to the rest of space: first, despite the experience of the *heimlich* within home, we may experience the *unheimlich* in the rest of space. Second, despite the experience of the *unheimlich* within home, we may experience the *heimlich* in the rest of space. Third, the experience of the *unheimlich* within home may seep into, stylize, and shape our experiences of and negotiations with the rest of space, haunting us with an uneasiness linked to the feeling of not finding one’s place in the world. Fourth, in cases of absolute privilege, the experience of the *heimlich* is omnipresent, pervading each and every space as we move through the world. As we can see, among these four scenarios, it is the third that most closely relates to our discussion on the situation of home.

In “*Des Espaces Autres*,” Foucault calls the house, the bedroom, and the bed “closed or semi-closed emplacements of rest.”³³ Whether or not these emplacements are necessary or sufficient parts of homes, he neither qualifies

³⁰ Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” 16.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 16 and Ricoeur, “Uncanniness,” 264. See also Lee Quinby, “Resistance on the Home Front: Re(con)figuring Home Space as a Practice of Freedom,” in *Anti-Apocalypse: Exercises in Genealogical Criticism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 143.

³² Michel Foucault, “Space, Knowledge, Power,” in *Power: The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984*, ed. by James D. Faubion (New York: The New Press, 2000), 354–356. By this, Foucault does not mean that the “exercise of freedom is completely indifferent to spatial distribution....” He asserts that architecture “can and does produce positive effects when the liberating intentions of the architect coincide with the real practice of people in the exercise of their freedom” (Foucault, “Space, Knowledge, Power,” 355–366).

³³ Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” 16.

them nor exemplifies homes as heterotopias. In other words, the situation of home lies outside those mentioned in Foucault's original conception of heterotopia. Nevertheless, although the problematic of heterotopia's stance on difference/alterity remains theoretically unresolved, several thinkers over the years have interpreted home as heterotopia in their multiple, often diverging, and even contradictory readings³⁴—affirming our finding that heterotopia can be displaced to the situation of home. The multitude of these past readings of home as heterotopia can be summarized and analyzed on the basis of their underlying positions, following Hilde Heynen's framework, to describe a "heterotopology of home."³⁵

i) *The role of space*: Is home as heterotopia a recognizable spatial entity? On the one hand, reading home with an emphasis on its *spatial form* highlights its heterotopian mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. In this reading, the material or structural form of the home is what makes it heterotopian (Foucault's first principle of heterotopia). On the other hand, reading home with an emphasis on its *actual use and meanings* helps envision it as having the quality to temporarily accommodate heterotopian moments within its form.³⁶ Here, heterotopia is a dynamic, ephemeral quality of the lived space of the home, actualized by the practices of its inhabitants (Foucault's fourth principle of heterotopia). Both readings provide insights into the "pattern of regular doings" (Foucault's fourth principle of heterotopia)³⁷ and spatial divisions (Foucault's fifth principle of heterotopia) of domesticity and socialization. These patterns and divisions aim at "separation, exclusion, control and cleanliness"³⁸ for the home's inhabitants, providing security, privacy, comfort, familiarity, and an either-or understanding of one's and the other's place within society³⁹ (Foucault's sixth principle of heterotopia). However, in their "logics of purity," prohibition, and discrimination, they may sometimes be inexorable, absurd, and othering even to the inhabitants⁴⁰ (Foucault's third principle of heterotopia).

³⁴ For examples, see Quinby, "Resistance on the Home Front"; Jennifer M. Bondy, "Latinas, Heterotopia, and Home: Pedagogies of Gender and Sexuality in *Quinceañera*," in *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy*, 9 (2012); Alice Gonçalves, "Spaces of Resistance: Heterotopia and Dystopia in Toni Morrison's *Home*," in *Via Panoramica: Revista de Estudos Anglo-Americanos*, 3 (2018).

³⁵ Heynen, "Heterotopia Unfolded?" 312–320.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 312–314.

³⁷ Mary Douglas, "The Idea of a Home: A Kind of Space," in *Social Research*, 58 (Spring 1991), 287.

³⁸ Heynen, "Heterotopia Unfolded?" 313.

³⁹ Sneha Annavarapu, "Home Is Where the Revolution Is," in *Economic & Political Weekly*, 55 (January 2020), 2.

⁴⁰ See Bondy, "Latinas, Heterotopia, and Home."



How is the relationship between spatial and social-cultural processes conceptualized in home as heterotopia? Reading home as a heterotopian *receptor/reflector* renders it a passive role, emphasizing instead social-cultural mechanisms such as “capital movements, labor relationships, discriminatory practices, symbolic transformations, etc.,” the effects of which are felt and registered through various pathways within its space. Reading home as a heterotopian *instrument* presents it as an active “spatial tool for the regulation of behavior, the disciplining of the body or the activation of social interaction” through various techniques of domination and surveillance. Finally, reading home as a heterotopian *stage* for social processes displays both its active and passive roles in making “certain actions and interactions possible or impossible without this influence being decisive for the content [of the actions]”⁴¹ (Foucault’s second and sixth principles of heterotopia).

ii) *Aspects of politics*: Does home as heterotopia support or subvert the societal status quo? On the one hand, reading home with an emphasis on its *immutability* presents it as an instrument of normalization, oppression, violence, and trauma,⁴² the representation and support system for exclusion, patriarchy, gender normativity, and hierarchy.⁴³ On the other hand, reading home with an emphasis on its *fragility and mutability* makes it possible to envision it as a potential site for the contestation and inversion of the normative order, for the practice of resistance, subversion,⁴⁴ transgression, and greater liberation—an “alternative social formation(s) in the making,”⁴⁵ such as a special kind of distributive justice⁴⁶ or a radically “inclusive and egalitarian space where dissent and comradeship thrive”⁴⁷ (Foucault’s second principle of heterotopia). Such readings are insightful in understanding how the sediments of shared tradition, religion, values, practices, artifacts, and memories in a home not only ground its inhabitants and envelop them in a sense of belonging, but also loom larger than the

⁴¹ Heynen, “Heterotopia Unfolded?” 314–315.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 317.

⁴³ Annavarapu, “Home Is Where the Revolution Is,” 2.

⁴⁴ Heynen, “Heterotopia Unfolded?” 317; Jennifer Brant, “Finding Homeplace within Indigenous Literatures: Honoring the Genealogical Legacies of bell hooks and Lee Maracle,” in *Hypatia*, 38 (2023), 46. Brant documents that bell hooks reconceptualizes homeplace in terms of its potential to be a subversive, feminist site of resistance, renewal, and self-recovery, thus overturning the oppressive nature and sexist norms of the domestic space.

⁴⁵ Heynen, “Heterotopia Unfolded?” 318.

⁴⁶ Douglas, “Idea of a Home,” 297.

⁴⁷ Annavarapu, “Home Is Where the Revolution Is,” 2.

inhabitants themselves, exerting “tyrannous control” over mind, body, and speech⁴⁸ (Foucault’s third principle of heterotopia).

iii) *The dynamics of human agency*: Does home as heterotopia have the same meaning for all actors involved? Many feminist readings of home as heterotopia emphasize “the necessity to recognize that embodied subjectivities, decentered and de-totalized as they might be, provide the necessary starting point for a politics of anti-domination.”⁴⁹ They have as their central site of interrogation the contextualized, embodied subjects and their ability to “not only live in, but also act upon and transform” their lived space of home.⁵⁰ These readings also demonstrate that home can be negotiated to have different meanings and functions for different inhabitants based on their subject positions and social relations and that these meanings, functions, and subject positions can shift or multiply over time (Foucault’s second principle of heterotopia).⁵¹

Summing up, in this section, we described a Foucauldian heterotopology of home by summarizing and analyzing the multitude of past readings of home as heterotopia on the basis of their underlying positions through Hilde Heynen’s framework. Rather than providing a new reading of home as heterotopia, we built on past contributions to suggest that the characteristics of home identified in these readings relate to Foucault’s principles of heterotopia. In the next section, we will reflect on this heterotopology of home to account for the experience of the *unheimlich* within home so as to overcome the blocked situation of home.

Describing the *unheimlich* within Home: A Reflection on the Heterotopology of Home

In this section, we will reflect on the Foucauldian heterotopology of home described in the previous section. We will show that describing the experience of the *unheimlich* within home calls for a reinterpretation of the experience of the *heimlich* and the understanding of selfhood in relation to the *unheimlich*. We will put forth Mariana Ortega’s accounts of “hometactics” and “multiplicitous selves” and Georg Simmel’s notion of “the stranger” as exemplifications of such a reinterpretation.

A heterotopology of home urges us to reinterpret the experience of the *heimlich* within home in relation to the *unheimlich*. It emphasizes that the

⁴⁸ Douglas, “Idea of a Home,” 304.

⁴⁹ Heynen, “Heterotopia Unfolded?” 321.

⁵⁰ Bondy, “Latinas, Heterotopia, and Home,” 94.

⁵¹ Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” 18 and *Ibid.*

experience of the *heimlich* within home exists simultaneously and in juxtaposition with the realm of power and its forms of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion at play in that very space, aligning with Antonsich's argument that place-belongingness should not be separated from the politics of belonging.⁵² Thus, it does justice to both the noetic and the noematic dimensions of the intentionality of the act of perceiving home. By blurring divides such as private/public, personal/social, subjective/objective, and spaces of everyday life/other spaces, a heterotopology of home contributes to ongoing discussions that contest the assumed givenness of the oppositions that Foucault observes as existing even in the contemporary epoch of space.⁵³

The complex and variegated experience of the *heimlich* needs to be articulated in terms of both the personal and the social. Mariana Ortega's account of hometactics can be considered an instance of such an articulation. Ortega notes that in the absence of a pre-given experience of the *heimlich* in the home and to alleviate the experience of the *unheimlich*, selves engage in certain micropractices of home-making to make themselves feel more at home in the world—what she calls “hometactics.” Ortega here follows Michel de Certeau's understanding of “tactics” as “the ‘art of the weak,’ or ingenious, improvised resistant practices performed by those who do not have power,”⁵⁴ which itself, in part, follows Foucault's general approach towards power and distinction between tactics and strategies.⁵⁵ Power, for Foucault, is an actual practice of people rather than an institution or substance that can be possessed. Tactics are local, singular force relations of power that become strategies when coordinated to form an apparatus.⁵⁶ For Foucault, it is in these actual practices of people that resistance is immanent and realized within a totalizing system—the realm in which power is exercised is also the one in which strategies of resistance to it are being developed.⁵⁷ Owing to being contingent, decentered, and personal, hometactics are unmappable and offer no surety on “how effective such practices will be, how they can be co-opted, misunderstood, or undermined by others.”⁵⁸ Examples of hometactics

⁵² Antonsich, “Searching for Belonging,” 645.

⁵³ The assumed divide and opposition between private and public spaces has been heavily criticized, especially by feminist theorists. For a detailed discussion, see Quinby, “Resistance on the Home Front.”

⁵⁴ Ortega, “Hometactics,” 169.

⁵⁵ John Nale, “Strategies (and Tactics),” in *The Cambridge Foucault Lexicon*, ed. by Leonard Lawlor and John Nale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 488.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 486.

⁵⁷ Foucault, “Space, Knowledge, Power,” 354–356 and Nale, “Strategies (and Tactics),” 488.

⁵⁸ Ortega, “Hometactics,” 173.

include arranging things in a space to evoke a sense of familiarity and walking in a city without a map. The *heimlich* forged through hometactics is neither normative (at ease with intelligibility, norms, and practices), authentic (given fully due to one's identity), or pure (normative, authentic, and without the possibility of rupture). Instead, it is a belonging-in-the-making that "makes do" and is creatively constructed in our everyday dealings in worlds.⁵⁹ Borrowing Ricoeur's vocabulary, hometactics can be read as an "appropriation" of the experience of the *unheimlich*—a "play" through which what had been other is made one's own or familiar.⁶⁰

A heterotopology of home also enriches our understanding of selfhood by proposing the productive function that the experience of the *unheimlich* within home can have in self-constitution and self-understanding. Since the spatial turn, the fixed, unified, autonomous, and transcendental identity at the core of the Cogito has more decisively made way to account for heterogenous, shifting, and even contradictory aspects of the nature and constitution of selves who lie at the "changing intersections of different language games" and axes of identity.⁶¹ Ortega's account of "multiplicitous selves" is an instance of such a shift in understanding selfhood. In her vocabulary, the self that engages in hometactics is "multiplicitous," one that "occupies multiple positionalities in terms of social identities...and thus lives in various worlds."⁶² The lived experiences of multiplicitous selves that are marginalized are of ruptures and being constantly aware of not being at home in the worlds they inhabit. They must then constantly engage in traveling in and between their worlds,⁶³ an activity that redefines the search for home as a question of homes, one's home-boundedness, i.e., the longing to come home, and what we come to call home or our place in the world.⁶⁴

However, this "tactical" activity runs the risk of what Ricoeur warns us about constantly placing and displacing oneself: "It is always possible,

⁵⁹ Ortega, "Hometactics," 170.

⁶⁰ Paul Ricoeur, "The Canon between the Text and the Community," in *Philosophical Hermeneutics and Biblical Exegesis*, ed. by Petr Pokorny and Jan Roskovec (Tubingen: Mohn Siebeck, 2002), 12 and Paul Ricoeur, "Appropriation," in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation*, ed. by John B. Thompson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 147.

⁶¹ Warf and Arias, "Reinsertion of Space in the Humanities and Social Sciences," 6.

⁶² Mariana Ortega, "Hometactics: Self-Mapping, Belonging, and the Home Question," in *Living Alterities: Phenomenology, Embodiment, and Race*, ed. by Emily S. Lee (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2014), 170–171.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Here, one may recall the different notions of "world" such as "*Heimwelt*" (home-world), "*Fremdwelt*" (foreign-world), and "*Allwelt*" (the whole-world) in Edmund Husserl's phenomenology.

often urgent, to displace oneself at the risk of becoming that passerby, that wanderer, that *flâneur*, that vagabond, stray dog that our fragmented contemporary culture both sets in motion and paralyzes.”⁶⁵ Although this risk anticipated by Ricoeur is an actual possibility, our discussion of the Foucauldian concept of heterotopia as a metaphor offers mitigatory suggestions following Georg Simmel’s notion of “the stranger.” In traveling in and between worlds, the stranger exercises her “freedom of coming and going.” Her position in the group she has come to today and will stay until the morrow is “determined, essentially, by the fact that [s]he has not belonged to it from the beginning, that [s]he imports qualities into it, which do not and cannot stem from the group itself.”⁶⁶ Then, akin to the concept of metaphor, the stranger generates new perspectives that can be transposed to think about the experience of the *unheimlich* and to help constitute the self through the forged *heimlich*.

In brief, in this section, we have shown that a reflection on the heterotopology of home opens space for contesting the myths of humanity deposited in tradition and culture, as well as critiquing the illusions and prejudices of the self. It generates a perspective to describe the experience of the *unheimlich* at home by reinterpreting the experience of the *heimlich* and the understanding of selfhood in relation to the *unheimlich*. We illustrated the possibility of such a reinterpretation by invoking Ortega’s accounts of “hometactics” and “multiplicitous selves” and Simmel’s notion of the “the stranger.” We observe that Ortega’s notion of forged belonging aligns with the Foucauldian intuition that the *heimlich* and the *unheimlich* are actual experiences within a space, not states or conditions given or guaranteed through the material or structural form of the space. Although the reinterpretation we propose is not without the risks anticipated by Ricoeur, we indicated that Simmel’s notion of the stranger offers decisive suggestions to mitigate them. Ultimately, this reflection provides further evidence that, although Foucault himself did not engage further with heterotopia, the concept is so fluid and fertile that it continues to generate meanings, not only through displacement to new situations but also through engagement with diverse thoughts and thinkers.

Conclusion: Overcoming the Blocked Situation

A Foucauldian heterotopology of home overcomes the blocked situation of home as the experience of the *unheimlich* within home becomes

⁶⁵ Ricoeur, “Inhabited Space,” 149.

⁶⁶ Georg Simmel, “The Stranger,” in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, trans. by Kurt Wolff (New York: Free Press, 1950), 402.

describable in terms of the new description of home as heterotopia. In this process, along with transforming the perception of home, a heterotopology of home also transforms the previous description of heterotopia. The displacement of the concept of heterotopia to the situation of home results in the extension of its instances from “other spaces” to spaces of everyday life, modifying its conceptual scheme. In other words, heterotopia is a different space, not an other space. Our interpretation of the heterotopology of home thus contributes to discussions on the problematic of difference/alterity surrounding heterotopias by reasserting the relationality of space advocated by Foucault and suggested by the notion of difference.

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Travaux d'histoire et de philosophie des sciences

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"L'Origine de la géométrie" d'Edmund Husserl à travers l'histoire et la philosophie des sciences

Husserl's *Crisis* Text and the Spatial Turn in Philosophy of Science

Koshy Tharakan and Vidya Mary George



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Husserl's *Crisis* Text and the Spatial Turn in Philosophy of Science

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Résumé : *La Crise des sciences européennes et la phénoménologie transcendantale (Krisis)* marque le point culminant de la phénoménologie génétique de Husserl et le début d'une nouvelle philosophie des sciences, qui considère la science non pas comme un fait, mais comme un problème nécessitant d'une compréhension philosophique. Pour Husserl, la crise de la science galiléenne résulte de la rupture de sa relation avec le monde de la vie et de l'identification erronée de la « Nature » avec son objet mathématique ou quantifiable constitué. Dans la philosophie phénoménologique de la science, la science est une tradition formée par la praxis humaine, comme toute autre entreprise culturelle. L'objectivité dans la pratique scientifique est un principe régulateur constitué par le consensus des jugements de la communauté scientifique. La continuité de la connaissance scientifique se manifeste par l'unité du transfert de sens propagé, dont la sédimentation est assurée par le langage. Bien que le monde scientifique soit ontologiquement ancré dans le monde de la vie, Husserl a cherché de préserver l'autonomie des deux mondes. Afin d'apprécier pleinement les implications de la contribution de Husserl à la philosophie de la science, cet article identifie le « tournant spatial » que Husserl a introduit à travers sa notion « moins mathématique, plus physique » du monde de la vie avec le virage à 90° dans les études sociales de la science que Latour a proposé. Le monde de la vie fusionne la « Nature » et la « Société » en une seule entité ontologique qui donne naissance à la science, s'éloignant ainsi d'une science unidimensionnelle qui maintenait l'ontologie de la science ancrée dans l'un de ces pôles uniquement. Malgré les limites de l'épistémologie phénoménologique husserlienne, la *Krisis* s'est radicalement écartée du positivisme, la philosophie des sciences officielle de l'époque, en embrassant l'historicité et le langage pour élargir notre discours

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sur la science et en se rapprochant même de certains développements ultérieurs de la philosophie des sciences. Les méditations de Husserl sur la spatialité ont également favorisé une transition vers la compréhension contemporaine de l'espace, ouvrant des possibilités de dialogue avec Foucault.

Abstract: *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (*Crisis*) marks the culmination of Husserl's Genetic Phenomenology and the beginning of a new philosophy of science, one that viewed science not as a fact but as a problem that needed philosophical understanding. For Husserl, the crisis of Galilean Science is born out of the severance of its relation to the life-world and the erroneous identification of "Nature" with its constituted mathematical or quantifiable object. In the phenomenological philosophy of science, science is a tradition formed through human praxis, like any other cultural enterprise. Objectivity in scientific praxis is a regulative principle constituted by the consensus of judgements of the scientific community. The continuity of scientific knowledge shows in its unity of propagated transference of meaning, the sedimentation of which is carried through language. Despite the scientific world being ontologically grounded in the life-world, Husserl sought to preserve the autonomy of both worlds. To fully appreciate the implications of Husserl's contribution to the philosophy of science, this paper identifies the 'spatial turn' that Husserl brought in through his "less mathematical, more physical" notion of life-world with the 90° shift in the social studies of science that Latour proposed. The life-world fuses "Nature" and "Society" as one ontological entity that gives rise to science, moving away from a one-dimensional science that kept the ontology of science grounded in one of those poles alone. Despite the limits of Husserlian phenomenological epistemology, *Crisis* radically departed from positivism, the then-official philosophy of science, embracing historicity and language to broaden our discourse on science and even coming close to certain later developments in Philosophy of Science. Husserl's meditations on spatiality also urged a transition to the contemporary understanding of space, opening possibilities of dialogue with Foucault.

1 Introduction

Edmund Husserl's Genetic Phenomenology culminates with *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* [hereafter *Crisis*] [1970]. Unlike Static Phenomenology, Genetic Phenomenology embraces "historicity" as well as "language," those very notions Husserl tried to bracket earlier in order to arrive at an absolute certainty of knowledge.¹ *Crisis* also

1. See in this context Husserl [1965, 71–147]. In this 1911 essay, Husserl attacks philosophies that are grounded in "Historicism" and "*Weltanschauung*" in favour of a

marked the beginning of a new philosophy of science that viewed science not as a fact but as a problem that needed philosophical understanding. For Husserl, the crisis of Galilean Science is borne out of the severance of its relation to the life-world and the erroneous identification of "Nature" with its constituted mathematical or quantifiable object. In the phenomenological philosophy of science, science is a product of human praxis, like any other cultural fact. Objectivity in scientific praxis is constituted by the consensus of judgements of the scientific community, and the continuity of scientific knowledge shows in its unity of propagated meaning transference. Despite the scientific world being ontologically grounded in the life-world, Husserl sought to preserve the autonomy of both worlds.

In what follows, we discuss "The Origin of Geometry" in the larger framework of Husserl's *Crisis* text that inaugurated a new philosophy of science. We argue that this new perspective in the Philosophy of Science introduced by Husserl resonates with the "90° turn" that Bruno Latour proposed. The life-world fuses "Nature" and "Society" as one ontological entity that gives rise to science, moving away from a one-dimensional science that kept the ontology of science grounded in one of those poles alone. Despite the limitations of Husserlian phenomenological philosophy of science, *Crisis* radically departed from positivism, the then-official philosophy of science, broadening our discourse on science and even coming close to certain later developments in philosophy of science. Husserl's meditations on spatiality also urged a transition to the contemporary understanding of space, opening the way for possibilities of dialogue with Foucault.

2 *Crisis* and the new Philosophy of Science

Aron Gurwitsch places the phenomenological philosophy of science in the third phase of the philosophy of science [1967, 389–391]. According to him, the first phase extends from the mid-17th century to the 18th century. The characteristic work in this period is Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy*. The first phase of the philosophy of science is concerned with providing a foundation for and validation of the new science. It presupposes a sharp dichotomy between appearance and reality. The nature and structure of the universe is not given in common experience. It is not amenable to perception; rather, it should be uncovered by the use of mathematical models. In other words, reality is not what it appears to be but should be conceived and constructed by mathematical physics. Descartes based his justification of the new science on the principle of clarity and distinctiveness as the hallmarks of truth.

philosophy rooted in the "essences" of phenomena, i.e., an "eidetic phenomenology," worked out after a static analysis that he develops in his 1913 publication *Ideen I*.

If the first phase thus consists of justification and validation of science, the second phase accepts science as a fact, which no longer requires any justification or validation. Gurwitsch traces this phase to the work of the Swiss mathematician Leonhard Euler. For Euler, philosophy must be confined to the fundamental concepts of sciences, especially physics. However, a decision regarding the inclusion of a given concept into the domain of science is exclusively the job of a physicist and not that of a philosopher. The third phase begins with the work of Husserl, who, in his *Crisis*, views science not just as a fact but as a “problem” that is in need of philosophical understanding. Husserl calls the spirit of modern science Galilean Science, which mathematised nature. Through Galileo’s mathematisation of nature, nature itself becomes idealised.

The mathematical model makes the study of nature a routine affair.² Husserl compares the Galilean Science to a machine. The method of science, once formalised, renders science into a mathematical process. The successful operation of the machine guarantees the success of practical achievement, especially in the form of technology. Thus, the scientist seems to be satisfied with the success of the “machine.” If by “science” we understand merely the successful application of the method, then there is no crisis in science. However, for a philosopher of science, the mere working of the machine is no solace. They are bound to inquire into the nature and functioning of the “machine” itself. They raise radical questions regarding the meaning of science by tracing its roots. In that process, the philosopher tries to make evident the very presuppositions of science.

For Husserl, science, like any other cultural fact, is a product of human praxis. It takes shape from the interaction of the members of that professional community. It is an open community in so far as the works achieved by the predecessors are taken up and continued by the successors. Criticisms, confirmations, and corrections find their place in the activities of the community. This praxis aims at a justifiable agreement among its practitioners. Husserl criticises the Galilean style of mathematising nature. It misunderstands the objective nature as something hidden from the life-world, a reality to be explored beneath the appearances of the life-world. For Husserl, objective nature is a regulative principle, an idea with respect to which the members of the scientific community orient their work. The idea gets approximated in theories, which are the products of the scientific praxis. By such a regulative principle, the subjectivity and relativity of common experience can be overcome in so far as these ideals guide and direct the specific

2. However, unlike other “natural sciences,” mathematics is concerned with objects that are “ideal” or “abstract” and not meant as “real.” Husserl does not subscribe to naive realism or Platonism in talking about mathematical objects as “ideal.” In the light of Husserlian phenomenology, mathematical knowledge will be reliable to the extent that our intentions towards mathematical objects are fulfilled. See in this regard Tieszen [1995]. As pointed out by Mirja Hartimo, Husserl’s philosophy of mathematics is a “combination of constructivism, various kinds of structuralism, and Platonism” [2021, 173].

human activity. According to Husserl, to be objective means nothing but to have results attained by mutual criticism that withstands further criticism [1960, 5]. In other words, objectivity in science is the consensus or coincidence of judgements shared by the members of the scientific community. Now, we have to clarify the nature of this consensus. This consensus or coincidence is explained by the concept of truth. Husserl conceives truth as not predicated on judgements but on the state of affairs. It is an assertion of what is the case. This assertion is made possible by the phenomenological concept of "evidence." Evidence is a mode of consciousness, a manner in which an object is given to consciousness. The establishment of evidence has nothing to do with a mysterious vision; rather, it is an achievement of consciousness. It is established in the complex act of synthesis. The synthesis of evidence is a coincidence of empty intention and fulfilment. An intention is empty if we merely intend something as truly existing. In order to have evidence, we have to identify it with intuitive fulfilment. The evidence thus becomes the experience of self-givenness of something. Then, truth is an idea of the correspondence between meaning intention and meaning fulfilment [Ströker 1987, 31–53]. Nevertheless, Husserl talks about truth as idealised rational acceptability:

In the logical sphere, in the sphere of statement, "*being truly*" or "*actually*" and "*being something which can be shown rationally*" are necessarily correlated. This holds, moreover, for all modalities of being, all doxic positional modalities. Obviously, the possibility of the rational showing referred to here should be understood, not as empirical, but as "ideal," as an essential possibility. [Husserl 1982, 326]

Thus, the notion of truth as a regulative principle enables Husserl to reinstate objectivity in scientific praxis.

Husserl writes about the origin of geometry to elaborate his points. According to Husserl, geometry originated in the practical needs of measurement in our everyday life. Every historical community, however primitive it may be, possesses some idea of measurement. The accuracy of our measurement depends upon the purpose for which we measure [Husserl 1978, 67–68]. The whole of science, like other cultural enterprises, exists through tradition. They have not merely arisen causally. Being a tradition, it has formed through human activity. Now, this tradition is not something that is handed down passively. Tradition is dynamic in the sense that we renew our traditions by way of sustained inquiry. It is, however, not just a forward process from one stage to another; rather, it is a continuous synthesis in which the earlier stage retains its validity. It thereby makes up a totality in which each present stage functions as the premise for the future project. Thus, all our scientific activities have a further project that awaits its execution. Thus, for Husserl, the past is what is present-for-us as the past for our future project. A primitive formation of meaning occurs for every science;

the meaning becomes evident in future realisation. Thus, what is realised successfully, i.e., what is self-evidently given, is already there as *originaliter*. The meaning as present *originaliter* with its whole content lies within the mental space of the inventor. Now, Husserl asks, how is it that this projecting and the subsequent realising that is purely subjective becomes objective? It is true that this projecting and the realising occur within the mental space of the inventor. However, science, for that matter, is not a psychic phenomenon. Science is objectively there for everyone. In fact, it is an ideal object in the sense that it is accessible to everyone, all actual and possible undertakers of scientific inquiry. Husserl says the objectivity of such a praxis lies in its expressibility or communicability. Here, language has a vital role to play. Transference of the subjective to the realm of the objective occurs by means of language [Husserl 1978, 47]. However, the linguistic structures are not to be mistaken for the idealities of science. The idealities of scientific theories are related to the objects or states of affairs. Whenever we assert something in language, we can distinguish what is asserted from the assertion itself. In other words, a distinction should be made with respect to what is “thematic,” what is meant (its meaning) and the assertion. Ideal objects are precisely what are made thematic. Language is a function of humans and belongs to the horizon of civilisation. Living in a world, we are always conscious of the world as the horizon of our life. We are conscious of objects and things as the horizon of our actual and possible interests. Now, with this world-horizon, there always stands out the horizon of our fellow human beings whether they are present or not. We are conscious of them as “others” belonging to our external horizon. Each of us can enter into a particular mode of relation with the “others.” By “empathy,” we get along with others; it is a reciprocal “getting along.” Thus, we gain knowledge by the habit of living on a world horizon [Husserl 1978, 48]. Language, which belongs to this world-horizon, is its correlative. Thus, we human beings as human beings, fellow beings, the world about which we talk, and the language by which we talk are all intertwined. These are all inseparably united in a relational manner of a horizon. Thus, even if something is psychic, if it can be understood by others and is communicable to others as something psychic to a particular person, it is *ipso facto* objective [Husserl 1978, 49].

In his *Introduction* to Husserl’s “Origin of Geometry”, Jacques Derrida [1962] problematises the sedimentation of “meaning” carried through language as forming traditions. Thus, he argues for the primacy of writing. Derrida writes:

Speech [*langage oral*] has freed the object of *individual* subjectivity but leaves it bound to its beginning and to the synchrony of an exchange within the *institutive community*. [...] The possibility of *writing* will assure the absolute traditionalisation of the object, its absolute ideal Objectivity—i.e., the purity of its relation to a universal transcendental subjectivity. Writing will do this by

emancipating sense from its *actually present* evidence for a real subject and from its present circulation within a determined community. [Derrida 1962, 87]

This also then necessitates the “historical a priori” as conceived by Husserl. He remarks:

Of course, we need history too. Not, it is true, as the historian does, in order to lose ourselves in the developmental relations in which the great philosophies have grown up, but in order to let the philosophies themselves, in accord with their spiritual content, work on us as an inspiration. [Husserl 1965, 146]

However, the result of such an enquiry itself is not historical; it is, on the other hand, teleological or trans-historical [Soffer 1991, 30–39]. The Husserlian notion of the teleological differs from the Marxist view, which is absolutely historical or even “historicist.”³ However, Husserl’s rearticulation of the “historical a priori” in terms of teleology is a critical device of philosophical reflection that underscores a philosophical self-responsibility, as pointed out by Miettinen:

It is only on the basis of a teleological understanding of philosophy that we are able to free ourselves from that historicist preconception according to which all philosophical reflection remains ultimately a prisoner of its own time. Teleological reflection, rather than tying us into the great forces of history, aims at *liberation* and makes possible the emergence of something new. [Miettinen 2014, 275]

The historical a priori of geometry, i.e., the sedimentation of meaning of geometric objects in language and traditions that are part of the life-world, engenders a co-accomplishment by someone who understands what is produced by the other. Also, the identity of what is communicated and what is received is retained. This happens just as in the case of recollection, as in recollection,

3. Historicism rejects the notion of universal or objective validity and thereby characterises philosophy itself as a historically conditioned enterprise, as the Marxist view does. Marx calls his view “historical materialism,” which has been provided with a teleological interpretation in the dominant tradition of Marxism by all important Marxists from Engels onwards who place historical materialism within the framework of dialectical materialism of which the former is supposed to be a mere application. Only philosophers like Lukacs deviate from such a received interpretation of Marx. Husserl is convinced of the task of philosophy as one to understand human existence and thus attacks historicism. However, the result of such an enquiry itself is not historical; it is, on the other hand, teleological or trans-historical [Husserl 1970, 394–395], [Soffer 1991, 30–39]. It assumes historical importance to the extent that we need to engross ourselves in historical considerations to understand the task of philosophy. Husserl thus rearticulated the notion of teleology as a critical device of philosophical reflection that underscores a philosophical self-responsibility.

one retains what is presented before him. Retention can be activated by reawakening the original presentation, resulting in increased clarity regarding the past experience. It is lived through in a quasi-new and quasi-active way. As Husserl says:

[...] if the originally self-evident production, as the pure fulfilment of its intention, is what is renewed (recollected), there necessarily occurs, accompanying the active recollection of what is past, an activity of concurrent actual production, and there arises thereby, in original “coincidence,” the self-evidence of identity... [Husserl 1978, 49]

Thus, in reciprocal linguistic understanding, the product of one subject can be reproduced from person to person. The continuity of scientific knowledge shows in its unity of the propagated meaning transference. The new results are based on earlier results, and as meaning is grounded on meaning, the earlier theory gives something of its validity to the later one and becomes a part of it. Hence, there is no isolated theory that has no link with a past theory [Husserl 1978, 53]. This is more true of sciences like geometry, which has ideal entities as its objects. In the descriptive sciences, however, each proposition can be made self-evident without recourse to the whole chain. This is because the theoretical interest of the descriptive sciences lies in classifying and describing, a task that remains in the sphere of sense-intuition. Now, one may ask why we require an epistemology that traces back to the genetic questions. Husserl answers that it is essential in order to render the sciences self-evident. If we do not do this, we will be inclined to deal with “ready-made” concepts in a rigorous, methodical way. This practice makes the sciences lose their meaning. It works by and large due to the practical success of the sciences in being useful in applications. Instead of this, Husserl wants the actual reproduction of the primal idealities so that the sciences will always be firmly founded and become genuine. And making a science self-evident means to disclose its historical tradition. The disclosure is effected precisely by reproducing and synthesising the earlier sedimented meaning of propositions and axioms. Husserl notes:

[...] a genuine history of the particular sciences is nothing other than the tracing of the historical meaning-structures given in the present, or their self-evidences, along the documented chain of historical back-references into the hidden dimension of the primal self-evidences which underlie them. [Husserl 1978, 64]

A phenomenology of history counts the present as primary. What we know already is our present world and the present world is surrounded by an open-horizon which comprises hitherto known and unknown actualities. Now, the present and the history implied in it are coherent through its generative bond by the cooperative work and the reciprocal interaction by every scientist as a member of the scientific community. Husserl makes it evident that what

counts as primal self-evidence for the sciences is maintained by the community of scientists [Husserl 1970, 362].

3 Geometry and the spatial turn in Philosophy of Science

The primacy of the life-world has important implications for the phenomenological philosophy of science. Husserl maintains that the life-world is prior to the world of science. The world of science is a theoretical construction that comes later. However, this is not to rule out the reality of the scientific world; rather, it maintains that it is only through the life-world that we have access to the world of science [Soffer 1990, 83]. Gary Gutting, though sympathetic to the phenomenological critique of science, questions the rationale for assuming that scientific concepts or theories are wholly derivative from those of the life-world. He points out that mathematics, as well as the sciences that apply mathematics to the world, employ concepts that are irreducible to life-world concepts [Gutting 1978, 50]. Patrick Heelan, another phenomenological philosopher of science, also holds the same view. According to him, it may be the case that some modern measurement practices derive from life-world practices, but it is inconceivable that all current experimental practices derive from the life-world. Scientific entities such as “electrons” and “DNA” do not have a pre-theoretical presence in the life-world [Heelan 1987, 386].

However, Husserl himself provides resources to discuss the life-world in a manner that helps to meet the above criticisms. In “Appendix VII: The Life-World and the World of Science” of the *Crisis* text, he calls into question the contrast between the life-world and the scientific world [Husserl 1970, 382–383]. Steinbock notes that the life-world gets expanded and integrates the scientific truths. The scientific world validates the life-world as theoretical praxis becomes sedimented and forms part of the life-world [Steinbock 1994, 565]. Once it is accepted that the scientific world is part of the life-world and it gets integrated with the latter, we can hold that the current experimental practices too derive from the life-world, albeit the expanded life-world. Of course, it must be admitted that Husserl's construal of the relation between the life-world and the scientific world is not free from difficulties. However, he avoids the two extreme views prevalent in the philosophy of science of his time: the Physicalist view upheld by philosophers such as the later Carnap, according to whom scientific theories are elliptical descriptions of the physical world of public experience and, as such, are devoid of independent ontological content, as well as the view that the scientific world alone is real and the world of everyday experience is consequently unreal. Husserl seeks to preserve the autonomy of both worlds and even tries to relate them in such a way that

though the scientific world is ontologically grounded in the life-world, the life-world does not undermine the former's identity.⁴

Thus, though Husserl's views might appear not so radical, they made a fundamental departure from positivism, the official philosophy of science of his time. In effecting such a departure, he broadened our terms of discourse on science. It is against the background of such radical and broad terms of construing the aim and method of natural sciences that we have to understand the contribution of the *Crisis* text to the phenomenological philosophy of science. Then, Husserl could be regarded as one of the thinkers whose prolonged meditations on spatiality ushered in the transition from the modern to the contemporary understanding of space.

In Michel Foucault's short and rough spatial history of the West, "emplacement" has substituted the modern "extension," which itself had replaced "localisation" of the Middle Ages. Galileo constituted an infinite and infinitely open space, dissolving the medieval hierarchic, oppositional ensemble of places as mere points in the movement of a thing. The current "epoch of space" is defined by relations of proximity between points or elements, relations that can be formally defined as series, trees, or grids [Foucault 2008, 14–15]. According to Edward Casey, though Husserl regarded space as fully constituted, homogenous, and objective as per modern physics, he maintained a caveat by way of the lived body even in his initial, pre-*Crisis* forays into spatiality:

External space [*der Ausserraum*] is homogeneous, even though it presents itself as oriented in various ways. [...] But the lived body and its bodily space break the homogeneity asunder.⁵ [Husserl as cited in Casey 1997, 219–220]

In *Crisis*, Husserl explicitly points to the bodily basis of the abstracting and idealising operations of Euclidean geometry [Casey 1997, 230] by singling out

4. Husserl sought to preserve the autonomy of both worlds in terms of the formal structure of "whole" and "parts." The scientific world is a "part," more specifically a "piece," of the "whole" of the life-world [Husserl 1970, 382–383]. As a "piece" rather than a "moment" of the life-world, the scientific world is independent of the life-world—it subsists, can be presented apart and detached from the life-world, and becomes a whole in itself. As Soffer [1990, 88] points out, the foundedness of the scientific world on the life-world cannot be taken as the ground for denying the reality of the former.

5. Husserl points to the relation between corporeality and spatiality in *Ideen II* [Husserl 1989]. For him, "the here and now" of the lived body is significant in being the referential centre or "zero point" of orientation as well as in constructing the spatial world in its constitutive role of sensations. However, the sense of things in its entirety requires the presence of a plurality of lived bodies in conversation with each other such that the same "system of location" is given in another subject's viewpoint. Therefore, objective space, for Husserl, is founded on a change of location and empathy [Husserl 1989, 88].

the necessarily lived and extended body and its constitutive role in the life-world [Casey 1997, 223], [also see DuFour 2023, 338]. In the lived bodily experiences of kinesthesia and movement, especially walking, the lived body and the lived place are constituted as coherent wholes and linked up with each other [1997, 224].⁶ By incorporating the living body into discussions of space and place and emphasising its foundational role in the origin and orientation of space and spatial thought, Husserl established an axis, parallel to that of Nietzsche, to criticise and unsettle the modernist conception of abstract space [Casey 1997, 229], [Whaley 2018, 25], [Paç 2023, 504].⁷

Husserl's corporeal turn was further developed by later phenomenologists [Whaley 2018, 25–27], marking a spatial turn in phenomenology [Peters & Kessl 2009, 21], continuing to influence discussions on place⁸ and anticipating the contemporary heterogenous, network era of space. In addition to the notions of archaeology and historical a priori (for instance, see Hyder [2009], Aldea & Allen [2016]), the project of spatiality thus becomes another bridge between the works of Husserl and Foucault, continuing dialogues between their respective traditions [see Peters & Kessl 2009, 24].

To fully appreciate Husserl's contribution to philosophy of science, we may read the “Origin of Geometry” as portrayed in the context of the *Crisis* text through the critical lens provided by Bruno Latour. Latour attributes the stalemate of the Social Studies of Science to the one-dimensional science that keeps the ontology of science grounded in one pole alone, either “Nature” or “Society” [1992, 276–277]. Latour thus proposes another 90° shift after the social turn of the science studies, a turn which, in a way, fuses both “Nature” and “Society.” We identify this new turn proposed by Latour with the “spatial turn”⁹ that Husserl brought in with his notion of the life-world. The life-world, we submit, fuses the world of nature and society as one ontological entity that gives rise to science, as explained by Husserl in the “Origin of Geometry”. This line of interpreting the life-world resonates with the “informational reconstruction of quantum theory,” as pointed out by Berghofer, Goyal *et al.* [2020]:

Instead of reifying mathematical constructs, the idea is to formulate physically meaningful postulates from which the quantum formalism can be derived or reconstructed. This is the program of *reconstructing* quantum theory. Proponents of this program

6. For accounts and explorations of Husserl's sustained enquiries into the problem of space, see Casey [1997, 433, n. 78], da Silva [2012], and DuFour [2023].

7. Nietzsche criticised the modernist understanding of space by categorising mental instincts as “Apollonian” and bodily instincts as “Dionysian” [Paç 2023, 504].

8. As seen, for instance, in the works of the humanist geographer Edward Relph [Withers 2009, 640].

9. The “spatial turn” in Husserl may also be seen in the notion of “expanded life-world” that Husserl discusses in the Appendix of the *Crisis* text that we mentioned above, following Anthony Steinbock.

emphasise that this basic idea of deriving the formalism from physical postulates is successfully realised in other physical theories, special relativity being the prime example.¹⁰ [Berghofer, Goyal *et al.* 2020, 426]

The above approach suggested by Berghofer, Goyal *et al.* [2020] is one that is less “mathematical” and more “physical,” which coheres well with the project of Husserl in the “Origin of Geometry” that we characterise as the “spatial turn” in the philosophy of science.

4 Conclusion

No doubt, some of the central concepts of Husserl’s philosophy of science are problematic and, in the then prevailing climate, might have appeared too speculative to square with science as it was actually practised. However, it is significant to note that some of Husserl’s ideas come close to developments in the philosophy of science subsequent to Logical Positivism. His emphasis on the need to understand science in relation to a community of practitioners, the decisive role he assigns to tradition in the life of science as cognitive activity, and the importance he attaches to language in order to capture the epistemic character of science make him a precursor of the ideas we associate with philosophers of science such as Thomas Kuhn. Yet, he did not go as far as to adopt radical stances like science is to be understood only in sociological and not in methodological terms, or that science is essentially a tradition-bound activity called normal science to be occasionally disturbed by tradition-shattering activity. Also, the notion that scientific theories are putative descriptions constituted by the language that a theory uses to such an extent that the language determines reality and what is real is relative to the language of a theoretical framework—the ideas propounded and substantiated by Kuhn in his influential works.

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10. As noted in footnote 2, Husserl is not a naive realist or Platonist—he does not reify mathematical objects as Platonism does. See in this context Hartimo [2021].

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Between Ecocentrism and Anthropocentrism: Situating Gandhian Philosophy of Environment

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Abstract. While Gandhi is portrayed as an inspiration for proponents of ecocentrism, specifically Deep Ecologists like Arne Naess, Ramachandra Guha suggests that Gandhi was more concerned with anthropocentrism. Rather than ascertaining whether Gandhi was a Deep Ecologist, this paper aims to determine the implications of his philosophical anthropology for the Anthropocene. Dwelling on Gandhi's comprehension of the other, including non-human nature, we situate Gandhian environmentalism between ecocentrism and anthropocentrism as a weak form of anthropocentrism that can be interpreted as 'stewardship' with the potential for an ethic of care. The Gandhian ideals of *Swadeshi*, *Swaraj*, and *Sarvodaya* are invoked to discuss the significance and alignment of Gandhi's philosophy of environment to contemporary ideals of ecologically and socially sustainable societies.

Keywords: Deep Ecology, Gandhian Ethics, *Advaita*, Self and the Other, Environmentalism.

Tarp ekocentrizmo ir antropocentrizmo: beieškant gandiškosios aplinkos filosofijos vietas

Santrauka. Nors Gandhi įprastai vaizduojamas kaip ekocentrizmo šalininkų, o ypač *giliosios ekologijos* atstovų, tokių kaip Arne Naessas, įkvėpėjas, Ramachandra Guha teigia, kad Gandhi labiau orientavosi į antropocentrizmą. Vietoj bandymo išsiaiškinti, ar Gandhi buvo gilusis ekologas, šiuo straipsniu siekiama apibrėžti jo filosofinės antropologijos pasekmes antropocenui. Remdamiesi Gandhi Kito – įskaitant neįmogiškąją prigimtį – samprata, Gandhi environmentalizmą siūlome traktuoti tarp ekocentrizmo ir antropocentrizmo kaip silpnąją antropocentrizmo formą, kurią galima interpretuoti kaip „rūpestį“, kurioje yra potencialo rūpesčio etikai. Pasitelkiami Gandhi idealai *Swadeshi*, *Swaraj* ir *Sarvodaya*, kurių kontekste aptariama Gandhi aplinkos filosofijos reikšmė ir jos sąsajos su šiuolaikiniais ekologiškai ir socialiai tvarių visuomenių idealais.

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: gilioji ekologija, Gandhi etika, *Advaita*, Aš ir Kitas, environmentalizmas

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Introduction

Many a time, philosophy begins when reason vacillates between two equally plausible yet contradictory claims that are made about the same phenomenon. The Indian tradition of philosophy too attests to this – it is said that doubt arising due to contradictory knowledge occasions reflection. Many aspects of Mahatma Gandhi's thoughts are uncertain as they could be interpreted one way or another. As Akeel Bilgrami, an eminent thinker on Gandhi's philosophy, has pointed out, nobody can be sure on many occasions that they got Gandhi quite right (2002, 79). Gandhi thus continues to be a fertile resource for philosophers. In what follows, we wish to merely flag off the enigmatic nature of the relationship between humans and nature – the question that the crisis of the Anthropocene raises (Gutauskas 2024, 46) – in Gandhi's philosophy of the environment. The enigma gets accentuated when we have two different and opposing readings of Gandhi's engagement with the environment, one in terms of Ecocentrism, specifically Deep Ecology, and the other in terms of anthropocentrism.

Gandhi and the Enigma of Nature

Many environmental philosophers and Indian environmentalists often explicitly acknowledge their indebtedness to Gandhian philosophy. For instance, Arne Naess, who coined the term 'Deep Ecology', explicitly mentions Gandhi as a source of inspiration for it (Weber 1999, 349). Ramachandra Guha, a foremost environmental historian and a biographer of Gandhi, rightly recognises Gandhi as a source of inspiration for the environmental movement in India:

The [environmental] movement [in India] truly began with the Chipko Andolan in April 1973; in one of the first printed accounts of Chipko, a breathless journalist announced that Gandhi's ghost had saved the Himalayan trees. Ever since Mahatma Gandhi has been the usually acknowledged and occasionally unacknowledged patron saint of the environmental movement. (1994, 95)

Nevertheless, Guha is sceptical about Gandhi's environmentalism, a doubt indicated by the interrogative mood of the title of his article "Gandhi the Environmentalist?" (1994)¹. To understand why so many consider Gandhi "the patron saint of the environmental movement", we must recall that there are broadly two approaches within environmental ethics, namely, anthropocentrism and ecocentrism, each with a distinctive ontological basis in construing the relation between humans and nature. While in anthropocentrism, a separation between humans and nature is emphasised, a unity conception with an inseparable bond between humans and nature is assumed in ecocentrism.

Anthropocentrism construes nature as 'the other' and accords it only an instrumental value. The strong version of anthropocentrism construes nature as an object to be conquered and subjugated for the betterment of humans. In short, the guiding principle

¹ However, Guha elsewhere makes a persuasive argument that Gandhi's philosophy enables sustainable environmental practices (1997, 168).

of anthropocentrism seems to be that ‘nature is for the sake of humans’. Ecocentrism, on the other hand, assigns an intrinsic value to nature. The relationship between humans and nature in ecocentrism is a harmonious one. In certain understandings of ecocentrism, nature is perceived as sacred, and humans look up to nature with reverence and awe. Of course, within anthropocentrism, too, there could be a perspective where nature is seen as transcendently constituted by the human subject, *à la* Kant or Husserl, and yet maintain a separation between the ontological realm of nature and humans, unlike Deep Ecology². While it is true that the current scholarship surpasses the opposition between anthropocentrism and ecocentrism in advancing various nuanced stances within environmental philosophy, the focus here is how scholars interpret Gandhian ethics in relation to the environment and the non-human forms of life.

Deep Ecology is a branch of ecocentric philosophy, or Eco-philosophy, which has taken a more holistic view of nature, recognising that humans are among many other species in the ecosystem. The distinction between Deep and Shallow ecologies brought out by Naess was so significant that later debates in environmental ethics hover around this. According to Naess, Shallow Ecology views humans and their environment as separate entities. Thus, Shallow Ecology is tantamount to “weak anthropocentrism”³. According to it, only humans have intrinsic value; nature has only an instrumental value. Meanwhile, Deep Ecology views all living and non-living things as having intrinsic value. According to the philosophy of Deep Ecology, humans are just one order of being among others in the biotic community. Thus, it projects “the relational, total-field” image of the environment and humans (Naess 1973, 95). Instead of looking at nature from the outside, Deep Ecology locates humans as an integral part of the being we are dealing with. For Deep Ecology, it is impossible to say that nature ends here and that humans or other forms of reality begin there.

Many consider anthropocentrism a primarily Western mode of construing the human-nature relation and ecocentrism predominantly oriental. Thus, Lynn White Jr. (1967, 1203–1207) indicts Western Christianity as promoting anthropocentrism that lies at the root of our environmental crisis⁴. It is this very same sentiment that prompts the champions of

² We are thankful to the anonymous reviewer for pointing out this possibility to us.

³ Brian Norton distinguishes between two forms of anthropocentrism, namely, strong anthropocentrism and weak anthropocentrism. He writes:

“A value theory is *strongly anthropocentric* if all value countenanced by it is explained by reference to satisfactions of felt preferences of human individuals. A value theory is *weakly anthropocentric* if all value countenanced by it is explained by reference to satisfaction of some felt preference of a human individual or by reference to its bearing upon the ideals which exist as elements in a world view essential to determinations of considered preferences.” (Norton 2003, 165)

Here, a felt preference is a desire or need of an individual prompting him/her to act in accordance with the same without any rational assessment of the desire. In contrast, a considered preference is a desire or need that one expresses after careful deliberation.

⁴ However, there are studies that have discovered ecophile tendencies in the Christian faith, cultivating a positive attitude toward nature in Western countries such as Lithuania (cf. Kalenda, Č., 1996. About the Formation of Ecological Ethics. *Problemos* 50, 102–112. <https://doi.org/10.15388/Problemos.1996.50.6981>). There are also empirical studies that reveal the prevalence of environmental destruction in non-Biblical cultures of both the East and the West since antiquity (cf. Tuan, Y., 1968. Discrepancies between Environmental Attitude and Behaviour: Examples from Europe and China. *The Canadian Geographer* 12, 176–191. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1541-0064.1968.tb00764.x>).

environmentalism in India to appropriate Gandhi as their patron saint. In doing so, they seem to be not wholly without justification. After all, Gandhi condemned the Western civilisation⁵ in no uncertain terms in his *Hind Swaraj*:

The tendency of the Indian civilisation is to elevate the moral being, that of the Western civilisation is to propagate immorality. The latter is godless, the former is based on a belief in God. So understanding and so believing, it behooves every lover of India to cling to the Indian civilisation even as a child clings to the mother's breast. (1938, 46)

Coupled with the criticism of Western civilisation and the inherent evil of industrialisation, Gandhi's philosophy of *Ahimsa*, i.e., his principle of non-violence, and his firm belief in the essential unity of all beings make him the harbinger of radical environmentalism. In addition to activists such as Sunderlal Bahuguna, Baba Amte, and Medha Patkar⁶ who draw their inspiration from Gandhi, academicians such as Bhikhu Parekh portray Gandhi as espousing radical environmentalism. Parekh argues that Gandhi had not only a philosophical reason but also a political one for rejecting anthropocentrism:

If nature had no dignity and was a mere means to human self-interest, women, non-white races and the poor, who on a conventional definition of rationality could be presented as living close to nature or like animals, were fair game for those fancying themselves as fully rational. (1995, 87)

However, one may be at a loss to understand how Gandhi, given his characterisation as a firm believer in *Advaita*⁷, would be able to assert the intrinsic value of nature, as *Advaita* metaphysics does not regard nature as ultimately real. Again, in *Advaita*, 'moksa' or liberation is the realisation that plurality and diversity of beings is ultimately an illusion or 'maya'. Environmentalism, on the other hand, asserts the reality of the world as well as the plurality of beings. The self-realisation that environmentalism defines is the realisation of the non-difference of oneself and the processes of the natural world without sacrificing the plurality of beings.

Eliot Deutsch, however, interprets *Advaita* metaphysics as offering full-blooded ethics of the environment. He says:

The statement [*Brahma satyam jagan mithya jivo brahmaiva na aparah*] is affirming that Brahman, the oneness of reality, is the most fundamental ground of all existence; that the individual self, in its essence, is identical with this reality; and that this world, when taken as independent and self-sufficient, when taken as purely "objective" and separate from man, is a false world. (Deutsch 1970, 79–80)

⁵ Gandhi equated Western civilisation with materialistic values and contrasted it with the Indian civilisation which, according to him, is oriented towards spiritualistic values. Needless to say, this binary is problematic and perhaps may be intended by him as a critique of colonialism.

⁶ Sunderlal Bahuguna (1927–2021) led the 'Chipko Andolan' of the 1970s, a non-violent protest against deforestation in India. Baba Amte (1914–2008) and Medha Patkar (born 1954) led the 'Narmada Bachao Andolan' of the 1980s, a movement to save the Narmada River in India. Both movements are among the most celebrated among the Indian environmental initiatives.

⁷ Gandhi says, "I believe in *advaita*, I believe in the essential unity of man and for that matter of all that lives" (1927b, 421).

According to Deutsch, the *Advaita* metaphysics accords intrinsic value to nature and agrees with the idea of natural reverence. He points out that the concept of ‘*maya*’, rather than obfuscating the relevance of nature, provides the creative play required for a harmonious relationship between humans and nature. He writes:

With *maya*, with creative play, there is nothing more natural than “natural reverence”: it has its own kind of necessity, which is basically “aesthetic” rather than either rational or empirical in character. This necessity is concerned with rightness or appropriateness without a predetermined end. It is a working-with not a working-at: it is creative throughout. (Deutsch 1991, 271)

It is this ‘working-with’ dimension that, in a way, prompts Parekh to understand Gandhi as rejecting anthropocentrism in favour of ecocentrism. He notes:

Not man, but cosmos was... [Gandhi’s] starting point. The cosmos consisted of different orders of being ranging from the material to the human, each autonomous and standing in a complex pattern of relationship with the rest within a larger framework. It was polycentric and without a dominant centre to which the rest of the universe could be instrumentally related. Since man represented only one order of being, obviously he could not be the centre of the universe. And since Gandhi conceived the cosmic spirit as a principle of order and not as a creator, it too lacked the separateness, transcendence and independence necessary to constitute one. Man was an integral part of the cosmos, tied to it by a million bonds and incomprehensible outside of it [...]. (Parekh 1995, 86)

Having thus rejected anthropocentrism and allayed our fears about the availability of environmentalism from the *Advaita* perspective, it seems almost convincing to claim Gandhi for the cause of ecocentric environmentalism. Inevitably, his concept of *Ahimsa* lends him support for such an ethics. Or does it?

Gandhian Metaphysics of Human-Nature Relationship

Gandhi understands Hinduism as essentially proscribing killing. For a practitioner of *Ahimsa*, killing a living being is sinful. ‘Living beings’ for Gandhi include not only humans and animals but also all sub-human forms of life. However, it is impossible to live without killing some forms of life. Thus, living itself becomes sinful. This needs to be reconciled, and thus, Gandhi works out a practical reconciliation by saying that *Ahimsa* as a principle is the expression of perfection. Since all of us are only imperfect beings, we cannot practise *Ahimsa* in its perfection. He writes:

Ahimsa is a comprehensive principle. We are helpless mortals caught in the conflagration of *himsa*. The saying that life lives on life has a deep meaning in it. Man cannot for a moment live without consciously or unconsciously committing outward *himsa* [...] A votary of *ahimsa* therefore remains true to his faith if the spring of all his actions is compassion, if he shuns to the best of his ability the destruction of the tiniest creature, tries to save it, and thus incessantly strives to be free from the deadly coil of *himsa*. He will be constantly growing in self-restraint and compassion, but he can never become entirely free from outward *himsa*. (Gandhi 1927a, 291–292; emphasis added)

K. J. Shah (1969, 515) remarks that the general principles adopted by Gandhi and the principles of his thinking about specific concrete cases are sometimes not only different but also irreconcilable. He points out that, in order to draw limits to the principle of *Ahimsa*, Gandhi appeals to Hindu tradition. Hinduism has laid down that killing for sacrifice is not '*himsa*' (violence). What is inevitable, unavoidable, is not regarded as a sin. He lists three classes of violence that Gandhi mentions as unavoidable violence:

(i) We do destroy as much life as we think is necessary for sustaining the body, e.g. (a) we breathe, (b) we use disinfectants, (c) we eat food. (ii) We commit violence for protecting those under our care, or for the sake of others, i.e. for the benefit of the species, e.g. we kill (a) the carnivorous beasts, (b) a man run amuck. (iii) Sometimes we kill or commit violence for the sake of those whose life is taken [...]. (Shah 1969, 515)

In other words, Gandhi never made *Ahimsa* a fetish of principle. Once Gandhi said, "Should my child be attacked with rabies and there was no helpful remedy to relieve his agony, I should consider it my duty to take his life" (1953, 92). An actual case was of a calf that was in extreme pain due to an accident and seemed beyond cure. Gandhi permitted to kill it to relieve it from the painful struggle for its life. All these acts of violence may be explained as falling into the category of unavoidable violence and, as such, are exemptions to the principle of *Ahimsa*. Gandhi's notion of compassion as the ground of such outward *himsa* may even justify these actions as ultimately one of *Ahimsa*.

Some followers of Gandhi held that the principle that one must commit only minimum, unavoidable violence implied the non-tenability of non-vegetarianism. Thus, they concluded that one should be a vegetarian and not entertain non-vegetarians. However, Gandhi did not accept this extension of his non-violence on the grounds that enforcing temporary or permanent vegetarianism on non-vegetarians is greater violence than serving non-vegetarian food to them. Shah forcefully argues that Gandhi modified *Ahimsa* by rejecting the claim that "all life is one". He writes:

[For Gandhi] though in theory all life is one, in practice, some life is more equal than another. It is not only that the life of man is more important than the life of insects and carnivorous animals, but more importantly...the freedom of opportunity of a human being to eat meat is more important than the life of an animal. (Shah 1969, 523)

According to Gier (1998, 116), the oneness that Gandhi emphasises is often between human and God and not necessarily the whole of being. Thus, Parekh's arguments notwithstanding and despite the availability of ecocentrism within *Advaita*, Gandhi seems not to be an apostle of radical environmentalism. His environmentalism may be characterised as anthropocentrism in a weak form.

Conclusion: Between Anthropocentrism and Ecocentrism

A reading of Gandhi's philosophy of environment as one between ecocentrism and anthropocentrism seems justified by his famous remark that exemplifies the anthropocentric

concern of conservation and sustainable use of resources: “World has enough for everybody’s need, but not enough for everybody’s greed”. Guha narrates an incident to show that Gandhi, unlike radical environmentalists, was never interested in wilderness or its conservation:

When the Congress Ministries were formed in different provinces of British India in 1937, Thompson [a British educationist] tried hard to interest the national leaders in the cause of saving India’s disappearing wildlife, with (as he noted) ‘animal after animal...either extinct or on the danger list’. When he confronted Gandhi with the problem, the Mahatma merely joked, saying, ‘we shall always have the British lion’. But then, noting Thompson’s disappointment, Gandhi asked him to speak to Jawaharlal [Nehru], as one who might show more interest. (1994, 99)

Here, we think, lies the relevance of Gandhi’s enigmatic ethics of silence, as evidenced in the above account of the dwindling wildlife in India. The exalted status of science and the unchallenged notion of objective truths that the confidence of ‘enlightenment rationality’ brought to us with regard to our role in the whole of nature have been eroded with the advent of hermeneutical readings of natural science (Kockelmans 1997, 229). The way we understand the cosmos, too, has now changed. We have now come to realise that humans are not the centre of the cosmos. As Midgley (1994, 106) points out, we now accept that the universe is so much larger and much less neatly organised that the very idea of it having a centre does not make any sense.

The relevance of the Gandhian approach to nature in the Anthropocene epoch can be seen from the fact that nature cannot be understood purely in mechanistic terms. Cartesian dualistic ontology encourages Science to manipulate nature. Its fundamental bias is to treat everything as though it were an object and meant nothing to us⁸. At the same time, the radical environmentalism of Deep Ecology is also problematic as “it is impossible to avoid anthropocentricity as a condition of experience” of the perceiving human (Gutauskas 2024, 49), and it is precisely our human capacity for rational thought that allows for the recognition of the gravity of the crisis of the Anthropocene.

The crisis of the Anthropocene calls for an ethic of care towards nature, specifically in terms of local self-sufficiency and self-reliance in production and consumption for fiscal autonomy (the Gandhian ideal of *Swadeshi*). The Gandhian approach to the environment provides an antidote to the fragmented vision resulting from the crisis of the Anthropocene, propelled by the forces of global capitalism. For Gandhi, the ideal of *Swaraj* (disciplined rule from within) comes not merely by putting an end to the exploitation and degradation by those in power. Rather, it results from checking the evils of capitalism and thereby ensuring a more equitable distribution of the “products of labour” (Gandhi 1960, 16–17).

⁸ In *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, Edmund Husserl highlights the crisis in Modern Science by comparing it to a machine. The method of Modern Science, once formalised, renders it into a mathematical process that idealises nature and makes its study a routine affair. The *Modern Scientist* seems to be satisfied with the successful operation of the ‘machine,’ which guarantees the success of practical achievement, especially in the form of technology that manipulates Nature (Tharakan and George 2025, 140).

Gandhian environmentalism thus urges us to reflect on rejecting strong anthropocentrism. As Gutauskas suggests, nature as the other of the human self can “decentralise us and open up new perspectives” even without leaving our human centrality, forming our subjectivities in “an environment of new co-existence, and not only in the human social medium” (2024, 61). The nature of the relation between ‘self’ and ‘the other’ in Gandhian environmentalism can be construed as ‘stewardship’. Our awareness of the interdependence between humans and nature gives rise to the recognition that “one’s freedom presupposes the freedom of others” (Arp 2000, 74). This kind of interdependence engenders collective responsibility and motivation for political action as envisaged in the Gandhian ideals of *Swaraj* and *Sarvodaya* (welfare of all). The open-endedness of Gandhi’s principles and practices of care is such that he focused on the particularity of actual situations to determine the course of ethical action wherein the moral agent is seen as ‘exemplar’ (Bilgrami 2002, 88). Gandhian weak anthropocentrism as an ethic of care thus offers a non-Western approach to the environment that counters the apathy of strong anthropocentrism while also being sufficiently politically motivating in times of global environmental crisis, aligning with contemporary ideals of environmentally and socially sustainable societies.

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