Chapter 7

Phenomenology of the Book and Hermeneutics of the Text

Touching and Interpreting Space

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Books are an essential part of our daily literate culture. In them we find the places where the histories and thoughts of both individuals and societies endure. In them, imaginary subjects and different generations meet. In them, the transmission of knowledge and ideas take place. These are roles that are determined more by the textual content than by the book itself. A book whose text cannot be read is apparently a worthless space.

In the realm of philosophy, hermeneutics stresses the primacy of the text over the book. One of its creators, Hans-Georg Gadamer, considers all interpretation as a dialogue whose interlocutor model is the text: "The most important thing is the question that the text puts to us" (Gadamer 2004, 366). The text is a Socratic interlocutor that bursts in with a questioning voice and speaks to the reader, so that he stops listening only to himself. Its alterity resists the reader's immediate comprehension of it and suspends his previous expectations of interpretation. It opens him to dialogue. It both transforms the reader and makes him a co-player of the game of interpretation, generating, as well, a place for this playful encounter to happen.[1] Thus, philosophical hermeneutics ensures the textual primacy. The text—published or not in a book—is the privileged referent of interpretation because it is both the visible presence of the language of words and the audible presence of its voice. Comprehension and interpretation apply to the content that is decipherable for the reader (that appears to his eyes and speaks to his ears). Hermeneutics, thus, rarely applies to the materiality of the book. The materiality of the book is perceptible by touch: my hands grasp the book, feel its cover, its spine, its

book block, its pages, and so forth. These elements are materially perceived by haptic sense in the case of a physical book, and they are virtually perceptible by touch technology in the case of eBooks. They have different palpable properties: the weight and texture of the paper, the quality of the binding, even the typesetting and the page editing. These tangible materials make the text visible and readable, but they are not subjected to interpretation.

However, in the realm of art—also examined by hermeneutics, language is not necessarily language of words. In plastic, pictorial, musical language, the tangible forms and the readable content are inseparable. The infinite meanings that a work of art "expresses" is interpreted in its material representation. The importance of materiality in the realm of texts can be traced to cases, such as poetry books and artist's books. In the first case, the page editing and typesetting have a poetic role that must be interpreted to understand the textual content. In the second case, the inseparability of both dimensions is more evident. The artist's book is a book that pretends to be a work of art. It is worthy in itself—legible or not, and this is the reason why it is collectible. An example that brings together both cases is Stéphane Mallarmé's *Poésies* (1932). It is a book of poetry and one of the first artist's books where Mallarmé's poems are illustrated by Matisse's drawings. Leaving aside these few exceptions, the reader is interested more in the visible text than in the tangible book. Thus, he forgets that the original meaning of the word "text" refers to a "texture" and the material form of the book affects how the text is conceived, constructed, and read (Macken, 2018).

In opposition to the textual primacy of hermeneutics, phenomenology—more attentive to the lived body—can offer a balanced approach between material book and textual content. The book can be analyzed as an integral phenomenon where the tangible forms and the readable text are related. Although the same content may appear in different forms—hardcover or softcover, paper or eBook, paperback—the way in which it appears cannot be taken as a mere complement to the text, as something not worthy interpreting. Except for Henri Maldiney, however, little attention has been paid to this phenomenology of the book. Maldiney is sensitive to daily phenomena, and he believes that books are something we usually do not pay attention to, because we are driven by its content and hardly consider it as such. Hence, he examines the case of artists' books and poetry books in order to grasp the essence of the phenomenon "book," concluding that they aim at generating a meeting space. The book "is not a text closet" (Maldiney 2014, 38): it is not an already constituted place that can vary to contain the same text. It is a phenomenon where an open space happens and comes into existence. It is a phenomenon of spatialization that involves the encounter between the opening of the book and the opening of those who are open to it (Diez Fischer 2021a). Whatever the content is, the book "responds to its mission only if it

puts into play a poetics of space by responding to the poetic space that it has the duty of making visible" (Maldiney 2014, 27).

The aim of this paper is to bring together the phenomenological approach to the book with the hermeneutical approach to the text: What is it that can be touched in the open book by interpreting its textual content? What is it that can be interpreted in the open book by being tactful with its content? To answer these related questions, I will first examine the contributions of Gadamer's text hermeneutics. Secondly, I will examine Maldiney's contributions to the phenomenology of the book. Finally, I will show the impact of these contributions to understand how the space in the tangible book is generated so that an interpretive encounter with the readable text takes place. The hypothesis is that the intersection between the two approaches allows to understand the inseparability between the content of the text that is interpreted and the space of the book that is touched. This is the cornerstone of a *haptic hermeneutics*.

HERMENEUTICS OF TEXTUAL PLACE

The privilege given by hermeneutics to the readable and interpretable text entails minimizing the importance of the material and tangible book. However, Gadamer's hermeneutics offers a productive mediation that could foster a first approach to understand the mutual implication of book and text by acknowledging the need of tact with the text in the act of interpretation. According to Gadamer, tact is "the supreme virtue of the true interpreter" (Gadamer 1993b, 442). It does not refer to the realm of perceptual sense, that is, to the physical contact ("touch") with the text in the book. It refers to the interpreter's "sensitive approach" ("tact") to the text. When we interpret a text, it is necessary to "be tactful" with it. The finitude of our understanding requires knowing how to deal with the infinite interpretations opened by the textual content. This hermeneutical skill is neither transmitted nor taught. It is acquired by dealing assiduously with texts, accepting its unpredictability, for the text refuses our previous expectations of understanding it (Gadamer 1993a, 40). In short, the virtuous skill of tact regarding the infinitude of the text is formed in the interpreter's recognition of his own finitude. In this way, the alterity of the text opens a space for dialogue and generates the place where the hermeneutic sensibility is educated.

Concerning the virtue of tact, Gadamer is heir of different legacies (Diez Fischer 2021b; Diez Fischer 2021c). On the one hand, Helmholtz's legacy of the epistemological dimension of tact in the *Geisteswissenschaften*. On the other hand, the legacies of Humboldt, Herder, Husserl, and Aristotle concerning the linguistic, perceptual, and ethical dimension of tact. These

legacies deepen the hermeneutic virtue beyond what Gadamer has proposed. They reveal an inseparable link between tact as virtue and touch as perceptual sense. In effect, there is not only a metaphorical or analogical closeness between both meanings, but an intimate correspondence between them, as Heyd has shown when he claimed that "tact is conditioned by con-tact" (Heyd 1995, 221). The hermeneutic virtue of tact cannot be formed without the sense of touch. The tactile or haptic perception is fundamental because the body is attested as being my own (*my* body) thanks to a double sensation (touching-being touched). To feel oneself is to appropriate the body in tactile apperception. But the body's appropriation is inseparable from its affection. At the same time, not only touch offers my body to myself, but it also affects the body in exposing it to the others. It produces the sensation of *my* pain and *my* pleasure.[2] Just as touch exposes my body to the sensation of pain in dealing with otherness, so tact exposes myself to the painful denials of my interpretative expectations in dealing with text. Undoubtedly, the text denies my expectations of understanding, but it does not physically touch nor hurt my body. However, one could wonder if someone who is apathetic to feel any bodily pain would be hermeneutically tactful. How could the questioning voice of the text be heard without any *pathos* of feeling? In short, there is no virtuous hermeneutic intentionality without an embodied and powerless intentionality. The virtue of being tactful with the infinite content of the text is formed within the finite body—appropriated and affected—of the interpreter. The formation of the supreme virtue of tact in the textual interpretation presupposes the fundamental sense of touch in bodily exposure. Hermeneutics and embodiment are inseparable, just as interpreting and touching are inseparable in their ethical and perceptive dimension.[3]

This expansion of Gadamer's hermeneutics reveals some advantages and disadvantages for the purpose of this paper. On the one hand, its advantage is to be found in that it gives a key role both to tact in the interpretation of the text, and to the place needed for a dialogue to take place. The first approach between the virtue of tact and the tactile sense brings together hermeneutic interpretation and haptic embodiment. On the other hand, its disadvantage resides in that this approach does not attend to the connection between the virtuous interpretation of the text and the tactile sensation of the book. Hermeneutics fails to acknowledge the haptic perception of the materiality of the book. However, in touching the book, the reader exposes himself to the body of the book and feels his own body even before he starts reading and interpreting. What does the reader touch in the book when he picks it up and opens it to read it? How could we understand the virtue of tact in the hermeneutical process of interpreting? Maldiney's phenomenology of the book offers contributions that surprise a hermeneutics that is too distracted by the textual content.

PHENOMENOLOGY OF BOOK SPACE

Maldiney develops his phenomenological analysis of the book in *The Space of the Book* published in 1990 (Maldiney 2014). He does not start from the question about the essence of the book or its space, but from the examination of a unique and irreducible case: the artist's book. This is due to his idea of phenomenology. According to Maldiney, the understanding of phenomena happens in a communicative encounter between unique existents. Hence, the general understanding of the book requires the encounter between the artist's book and Maldiney. I will summarize four key conceptions of phenomena to understand the phenomenon of the book and the generation of space in its haptic exploration.

Firstly, phenomena cannot be attended to at the level of perception. Perceived objects are not phenomena. Real phenomena are unique and irreducible alterities that occur at the level of feeling and resist immediate comprehension. They call out our "passibility." Passibility is our capacity to suffer and open ourselves to phenomena at the level of feeling before perceiving them as objects. Because they are unique, they are strange to those things that are expected as being possible. Phenomena are "*trans*-possible" events insofar as they are *beyond* the possibilities that we can anticipate. Hence, receiving them at the level of feeling entails to be surprised by them: "Reality only appears in the very moment of our own surprised existence. This is very important. To be surprised by existing is a rare thing, because in a life existence is rare" (Maldiney 2007b, 182).

That the book is a phenomenon means that the book is not an object perceived by the reader, but the event of a unique and irreducible alterity that resists immediate comprehension. It is a transpossible phenomenon because it is beyond the anticipated possibilities of reading and writing. It calls out so that it can be received at the level of feeling: one suffers from it by opening oneself to it. Thus, the book surprises those who encounter it. In correlation to this openness of feeling, the book is an opening phenomenon. This is a key idea: whatever the content is, the destiny of the book is to be opened. Hence, the book is a work whose unique and irreducible appearance is its openness. It exposes itself. The book is outside of itself from the very moment it exposes itself to the one that will open it; in this exposure, it demands to be taken and to be open, and, therefore, it calls out the one who opens it to open and expose himself to the book. In short, it is outside itself and calls to be opened to those who open it. Hence, the book is a "face to face" encounter, and it is not an already "done" fact but an ongoing process of becoming by opening.

Secondly, the open encounter with the transpossible event communicates with the ground of the world. "By the marginal, the thing communicates not

with other things but with the ground of the world, which constitutes the moment of reality—prior to all thematization in terms of objectivity—of everything that exists . . . existing precisely the ground" (Maldiney 1974, 49). The ground of reality is, according to an expression that Maldiney borrows from Hofmannsthal, the "insignificant significance of Being." He also calls it by other names. The Void (*Wu chi*) and the Open, that he borrows from Chinese painting and from the poets, Hölderlin and Rilke. The Nothingness as *Rien* is at the root of *Res* (thing). Also, the ground (*Grund*) of every event, borrowed from Schelling. In short, the event of phenomena is a communicative encounter with the bottomless ground of the world, that is, with the Void, the Open, the Nothingness. This communicative encounter puts in tension the feeling and the lived body. On the one hand, the Void of reality redefines our feeling as "*trans*-passibility." Our capacity to suffer and to open ourselves receptively does not concern the world only, but what is *beyond* the entities, that is, the nothingness through which the world opens. Transpassibility is the transcendent quality that is proper to human sensibility. It is the capacity to become passible of "nothing" which is to become passible of "all" infinity of unexpected real things. On the other hand, the Void as the ground of the world is also the ground of our body.[4] That is why the horizontal dimension of Void as ground of the body intersects with the vertical dimension of depth as abyss. "I am open to the ground that constitutes 'this depth of things that makes them precisely things'" (Maldiney 2007a, 295). The real event bursts in, communicating and tensing both spatial dimensions of the lived body. It is destined to open and to lead towards the abyss of the world to rise and mobilize horizontally on the bottomless ground. The void is therefore the original landscape and the primordial crisis of embodied existence: "man is alone in the landscape, in a landscape without men" (Maldiney 2010a, 128). Being lost in the empty landscape feels like vertigo. Vertigo is the feeling of sinking and dissolving into the abyss due to the inversion of the near and the far. A vertiginous empty space cannot be inhabited, so those who are lost call out to each other. The encounter with another being transforms the void into a habitable space and, at least for a moment, it liberates us from being lost.

In the case of the book, its white pages connect us with the ground of nothingness which turns an encounter with a book into a transpossible event. The page is the minimal and fundamental unit of the book. More than a rectangular space already constituted, the page is the necessary emptiness for the transcendent movement of those who open and meet in whiteness. Whoever opens itself to a blank page feels its white emptiness like vertigo. He cannot live there. The vertiginous movement of the page demands him to receive it transpassibly and transform it into an open and habitable space. Thus, the book haptically involves one's body and obliges it to move into a space of encounter, that is, to get out of itself and to form forms. Whoever is "author"

is called to the graphic behavior that forms writing. He responds haptically to the demand of the book by engaging in writing with his body The letters on the white page. Whoever opens himself to the white pages of the book—reader or illiterate—is called to a transpassible gaze. He looks—before reading—and feels in his body the surprise of the communicative encounter with the white and empty depth of the page.

Thirdly, the transpossible event and the transpassible encounter with the ground sets in motion the transcendent transformation that is the proof of a co-birth into existence. This co-birth is the real phenomenon and the ground of all things. Firstly, the one who is lost comes into existence. Called to exist by the event, man responds by opening himself and going out of himself: "Everything is impossible, beginning with existence for him who is only there. It is necessary to leave if one were to take place" (Maldiney 2012d, 174).[5] Strange as it may seem, we do not exist. Being habituated to existence entails that we do not exist in the proper sense: we can say that we "are," but not that we "exist." Only rarely, in the encounter with the nothingness opened by the event, do we come into existence, that is, we leave our familiar habitat behind and take a step into the wild, so that we live in wonder. Secondly, reality and the ground of all things both come into existence. We exist because both reality and the ground of all things exist. The ground of nothingness transforms itself into itself and exists. In order to express this transformation, Maldiney uses the lowercase and uppercase letters: open/Open, nothing/Nothing. The nothing becomes Nothing and exists thanks both to the reception (*accueil*) of an event at the level of the vertiginous feeling *in* us, and to the recollection (*recueil*) *coming out of* us, internalizing the outside by our works and modes of being. That is our "existential transposability" (Serban, 2016): the transcendent capacity to be and to act beyond what we believe to be possible and passible.

In the case of the open book, there is a co-birth as far as the book is called into existence and becomes existent together with the one who opens to it. The white nothingness of its pages is received and transformed, existing as Nothingness and generating habitable space to exist. The writer of a book does not exist until he starts his transpossible adventure by writing; before writing, he is habituated to his being. Writing entails to come out of oneself. It is not just the engraving black strokes on a white support. Writing is the testimonial form of the graphic behavior of one's body in front of the irruption and reception of nothingness.[6] The empty space becomes a habitable space so that one can exist by the rhythmic encounter between the page and our writing. In this way, the book is not an object produced according to the writer's plan. It is the testimony of the nothingness that surprises and mobilizes him. Therefore, what is given to our gaze in the book is not primarily a textual content decipherable to the reader's vision; it is rather the proof of

coming into existence in the generation of open space. Whoever opens—not writes—a book is also habituated to being himself. His transpossible adventure of existing entails to go out, moved by the challenge that the gaze poses us. The *surface* of the open book becomes a *face* for the gaze. The book looks at oneself by calling on the white page—not in the black letters of its text, and the one who is lost is also calling by looking. Unlike the intentional gaze that reads, the transpassible gaze empties itself. It transpassibly receives the vertiginous nothingness of the surface of the page, and transpossibly gathers the proof of its existence.

Fourth and finally, the above claims bring together two key ideas: space and rhythm. On the one hand, space is the central category of every embodied *being* that is *There* (*Dasein*). Space is not a place. It does not pre-exist and then filled. It is generated from emptiness. It is the opening to exist that arises in and from nothingness. On the other hand, the communicative encounter, by which the vertiginous void is transformed into habitable space, is rhythmic.[7] Rhythm transforms the nothingness that sinks into open space that rises. "We are in rhythm" (Maldiney 2012a, 20), but rhythm is neither said of the existent nor of the event; it is *there, in between the two*. Rhythm is always in danger of annihilation due to the two possibilities in which the encounter and the movement do not take place: one possibility is inertia in a stopping "here" (lack of existential transpossibility), and the other is dissipation in wandering "outside" (lack of transpassibility) (Maldiney 2012c, 214). In between these dangers, rhythm is constantly reborn from nothingness and generates open space for movement and transcendent encounter. Rhythm articulates the transpossibility of the event (1) that demands our transpassibility (being open) (2), which awakens our transpossibility (being workers), (3) and whose results are, in turn, the advent of transpossible events (1). *There*, in this rhythmic intersection, the habitable space is generated so that the event of nothingness and the advent of existence become one.

In the context of the generative relationship between rhythm and space, Maldiney develops the key concept of "haptic vision" borrowed from Aloïs Riegl (Maldiney 2012b, 255). This concept assumes the phenomenological role of the sense of touch for the constitution of lived body. Touching and being touched are the original way of feeling and participating with my body in the intercorporeal process of space-making. Maldiney uses this concept to explain the embodied encounter with works of architecture, e.g., with the St. Sophia Cathedral. The work opens itself to the body that enters the building. The embodied visitor does not walk through the building optically but haptically. Looking and walking are the bodily behaviors that respond to its emptiness, because the body jumps over nothingness in every step it takes. Thanks to the immersion due to the tactile feeling, the body is involved in the encounter with the architectural work in an immobility tensioned by the horizontal of

the floor and the vertical of the depth. Thus, the rhythmic encounter between the visitor's body and the body of the building transforms the vertiginous architectural void into open and habitable space for the co-birth of existence.

Rhythm and space are key to understand what finally happens in the haptic encounter with the book. The art of the book is to create space in the pages. The space is "the foundation of the art of the book; where existing, starting from the page, the book appears in the authenticity of its essence" (2014, 19–20). The space of the book does not pre-exist on the pages. It is generated by the emptiness of the white pages in the rhythmic encounter between the opening of the book and the opening of the one who is lost and opens his body to the vertiginous nothingness. The rhythm is not something of the book nor of the embodied existent: rhythm is there in-between the two and is spatialized in every page and in the whole book.

In each page, the spatializing rhythm requires the white nothingness that calls to come out and to form forms. There is no rhythm and habitable space in which to exist if there is no emptiness. For this reason, the white void of the page is primordial.[8] The transpassible gaze feels the vertiginous emptiness of the white page and participates in the rhythmic genesis of the habitable space: "space and gaze unfold in each other as the ubiquity of emptiness and the openness of reception (*accueil*)" (Maldiney 2010a, 136). In this bodily generativity, the black strokes—letters, drawings, typography—and the white page are opposites in tension, just like *Yin* and *Yang*. In the encounter with the gaze, they are transmuted into rhythmic unity in the Void (*Wu chi*).[9] The gaze is not optical but haptic because it involves the standing body. The gaze descends and ascends vertically on the surface of the page, going down and up. It moves horizontally, approaching and moving away. Its vertical-horizontal behavior does not yet imply a reading and perceiving of the eye. It belongs to the haptic feeling of the body in the emptiness. The haptic gaze replicates the rhythmic and miraculous movement of embodied existence in tension with the ground, sustaining itself in and from nothingness. Like the rhythm of breathing, walking, or climbing a mountain, the body opens a book and looks at the page. It receives and gathers in an immobile tension the attitude of transcendence: it goes out of itself and exposes itself to the danger of becoming out of nothingness in each page.

By the spatializing rhythm between the page and the haptic gaze, the whole book opens itself and generates space in turning the pages. The verticality of each page passes over the horizontal of the book. It is the ebb and flow of the open pages. They rise and sink in the unfolding and folding of the book. This movement between the book and the hands goes from the initial Void to the final Void—the blank pages at the front and back of the book. Hence, one can understand the importance of the bodily rites of opening and closing the Sacred Books during the ceremonies. In short, the encounter with the

entire open book is the pathic moment of the embodied generation of space—touching and being touched opens the space. It is the rhythmic movement of diastole and systole, of perpetual going out of itself, to return and take place *there* existing. Therefore, every open being, called to exist, dwells in the open space of the book, not only the literate. Space is the unique and irreducible reality of all embodied existence that opens itself by exposing itself, and that acts and works in existing.

The spatial phenomenology of the book uncovers some advantages and disadvantages for the purpose of this paper. The advantage is to be found in the attention to haptic sensibility with the book and the embodied generation of open and habitable space to exist. Space exists and we exist because *our body is open and in touch with the open book*. The disadvantage, however, is the absence of a hermeneutics of the textual content in the space of the book. How does the text that interrogates and forms virtuous interpretation articulate with the book that generates space in the tactile encounter? Does the haptic behavior in dealing with the book generates space for hermeneutic virtue in dealing with the text? How does the voice of the black strokes articulate with the folding and unfolding of the empty, white pages? These questions lead to a second and final approach between the tactile sensation of the book and the virtuous interpretation of the text.

TOUCHING AND INTERPRETING IN THE OPEN SPACE

Gadamer's hermeneutics is based on being tactful with the text, but pays no attention to the fact that we are being touched by the open book. Maldiney's Phenomenology operates almost inversely. Some efforts are currently being made to bridge this haptic gap between text and book. The digitization of the literary medium urges the search for a more embodied hermeneutic experience for the interpreter (Naji 2021). Linguistic studies inquire into the haptic structure of language (Komel 2019). Hermeneutic studies expand their application field and deal with the materiality of things (Ihde 2022), with places (Janz 2017), with the flesh (Kearney 2015)—substituting book for body, reading for feeling, writing for sensing.

These efforts, along with the elements examined in this paper, encourage a communicative encounter between hermeneutics of the text and phenomenology of the book. In fact, they are both related to each other in many ways: for example, the text, as conceived by Gadamer's hermeneutics, can be considered as a transpossible event, as conceived by Maldiney's phenomenology. The text, like the book, are alterities that resist immediate comprehension and refuse anticipated interpretations and perceptions, respectively. Likewise, the text calls for our transpassible feeling. The listening reception of the text's

questioning voice empties us from our expectations and makes the impossible be possible, for it opens us to dialogue and makes us passible to the infinity of the text. In this way, each interpretation is transpossible and our existential transpossibility is to become the impossible, that is, to transform ourselves from deaf interpreters, who just listen to themselves, into virtuous interpreters, who are surprised by alterity. This transformation takes place in the rhythmic encounter and formative dialogue of hermeneutical virtue.

Given these proximities, which suggest the phenomenological grounds of hermeneutics, one could ask if it is necessary to pay more attention to the text than to the book? This question reveals the central contribution that the phenomenology of the book brings to the hermeneutics of the text. The book generates the open and habitable space in the tangible encounter which enables a dialogic space to take place so that the text is open for virtuous interpretation. In other words, the materiality of the book embodies the generation of space that makes possible the hermeneutical approach to the text. This involves the behavior of open and gathered bodies. This is the cornerstone of a haptic hermeneutics that links interpretation and touch, language and flesh, as two mediations of the same kind. In concluding, I would like to sketch out three guiding ideas for further research.

Firstly, the book generates space in the encounter because it is a body that opens itself to touch and exposes itself to be touched. The transformation of the void into habitable space entails this haptic encounter of open material bodies in touch. The book—not the text—generates habitable space because nobody lives within the bricks of a building, but in the open space left by these. If there would be no emptiness, we would only have monuments, not homes. All contact requires distance; otherwise, there is fusion. In fusion, it is not possible to approach nor to touch. For this reason, the book is sometimes considered as an intermediate meeting place between the body of the author and the body of the reader (Nancy 1993). This consideration turned writing and reading a matter of touch that takes place in its pages. However, the book is more than an intermediate place for the encounter between literate bodies. It is itself a tangible, exposed and open body that calls to be opened and touched. Those who are called are spatially closed and deaf beings who need to learn the virtue of knowing how to treat each other by opening the sense of touch. At this point, the book reveals the importance of being tactful in touch. Before any reading or interpretation of its text, the nakedness of the open book looks at us and demands that we touch it tactfully. Touching a book, opening its exposed body by opening oneself to it, entails a careful physical dealing. This phenomenon is a sensitive matter that articulates the rhythm of existence. It articulates the essential bodily action of touching, and the essential intellectual action of interpreting. Thus, the tactile perception of the space in the book is both the basis and the culmination of virtuous tact

with the texture of its text—that is why there are many different stories about the ways of opening and inhabiting a book (Borsuk 2018).

Secondly, the haptic encounter with the open body of the book generates inhabitable space not only for the interpreter's exposed body, but also for the textual bodies themselves. In visible terms, the text can only appear on the white of the page. It is neither seen in black on black, nor interpreted without tension. The empty space of book is needed for a hermeneutics of the text. In audible terms, the text can speak because the white void of the book is the rib cage for the voice of the text. No voice sounds in a place full of noise. Every voice requires empty space. In the human body, those spaces are the open mouth and the attentive hearing; in the body of the book, the white silence of its pages gives rise to the voice of the text before reading and listening to it. In short, only the haptic generation of space gives rise to the infinite vocal inflections of the text. That is why the book is not a place but an open void that no interpreter can fill in with his answer. The text can be a horizon for the seer and a dialogue for the listener because the book is a landscape in vertical and horizontal tension where the encountered bodies reverberate with each other by contact, just like embodied diapasons (Diez Fischer 2022). On the one hand, in the space generated by the contact with the body of the book, the text collides with the reader's anticipations and demands a virtuous interpretation from him. On the other hand, the reader's body interprets the text by intervening haptically in the book emptiness: he marks the page, makes some notes at the margins, highlights, and underlines words, etc. This haptic genesis of space goes unnoticed to the objectifying reading. Literate readers, busy with text, forget their bodies and do not feel the material interaction with this daily phenomenon of the book. Literacy often mutilates bodily sensitivity and introduces us into a place without inhabiting the space.

Thirdly, it is already clear that the generation of space is not governed by the vocal semantics of the text but by the bodily syntax of the book. Syntax are the rules of formal and material construction by which meaning can be articulated, although they themselves have no meaning. The syntax of the book finds an explanatory image in architecture (Macken, 2018). Along with Maldiney's phenomenology, hermeneutics of text also established some connections with architecture (Ricœur 1998; Genz 2017; Gschwandtner 2017; Seamon 2017). The spatial configuration of architecture (building) corresponds to the temporal configuration of text (narrating). The book is once again forgotten by hermeneutics. In effect, the book is the architecture that makes it possible to generate the needed open space for a text to take place. Layout, design, and typesetting are, like writing and gazing, architectural practices. The construction in the language, by which the narrative can be read, requires the construction in the materiality, by which the book can be opened and treated haptically. Thus, a text, although it can be deconstructed,

receives unity because the book has a first and a last page. Despite Borges' wish in *The Book of Sand* or *The Library of Babel*, the materiality of the book cannot be infinite. However, in the finitude of the book, the text is infinitely interpretable. The book is this miraculous provisional victory of matter over the ephemeral. Its architectural skill is to contain infinite meanings in a finite matter. The materials of the book both take place and generate space. Hence, touching its tangible body require the hermeneutical skill of being tactful.

Ultimately, these analyses bring together hermeneutics and phenomenology. The result of this encounter is twofold: the examination of the space of the book takes place in a text and the textual content appears in the touched material. In short, the book you are reading is more than a text. In the moment you open the book, you are exposed to the adventure of existence. Your hands touch the open space to exist.

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NOTES

1. Paul Ricœur (1986), another key thinker of this tradition, ratifies this primacy and consolidates pantexualism. He proposes the text as a model of acting and being. Every action can be understood as a text to be interpreted.

2. Ricœur (1990) outlines that the other can affect my body in two different dimensions: (1) the other in me, that is, the otherness of my own body, for example, when it gets sick and hurts me; (2) the other distinct from me, that is, other men, for example, when they hurt me or give me pleasure in my body.

3. For that reason, the formation of the virtue of tact also offers a gain for the sense of touch. Knowing how to treat others sharpens the very feeling by which one treats them. To understand is to understand oneself but also to apperceive oneself better.

4. The Taoist inspiration of Maldiney's meontology intersects here with its Heideggerian matrix and its phenomenological-genetic bodily basis. Villela Petit (2007) points out that the notion of ground in Maldiney is linked to embodiment through Scharmasow's influence on Husserl and Merleau-Ponty: "That which we name background is the underlying basis of all permanent configurations of things that are arranged around us. It is important to realize clearly that this background plane, universal basis, is firstly the surface of the ground beneath our feet" (Maldiney 2010b, 424).

5. "The ex- of ex-sistir is the prefix of an adventurous presence, of an exit into the open for openness" (Maldiney 2010b, 418–419).

6. In his idea of writing and language, Maldiney is influenced by Ricœur. Of his own act of writing, he says: "Writing for whom? This is not the first question. I write for those for whom the writing will awaken. . . . to what? To that for which I am writing. I write as a witness to the significance of Being that irruptively crosses me and envelops me. This leads to a book. But I am not the master of a work. I am the witness of a work (. . .)" (Maldiney 1991, 202).

7. "To awaken us from being lost without leaving the space of the landscape: the rhythm." (Maldiney 2010a, 129)

8. Christin (2009) has shown how the interpretation of this white as lack and absence is a Western ostracism caused by the very structure of our alphabet as an alienated code.

9. "Efficacy belongs to the strokeless, to the emptiness that opens white, providing a place to the black stroke" (Maldiney 2014, 36). The form of the words "is broken by the whites, by the voids that separate and free the words, giving them the pure function of naming that which makes them to call them. It is in the 'in-between' of the words, in these middle gaps, that the word is calling" (Maldiney 2014, 34).

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