

**Barbara Weber, *Zwischen Vernunft und Mitgefühl: Jürgen Habermas und Richard Rorty im Dialog über Wahrheit, politische Kultur und Menschenrechte*, and *Vernunft, Mitgefühl und Körperlichkeit: Eine phänomenologische Rekonstruktion des politischen Raumes*** (Freiburg i.Br.: Alber, 2013).

On the one hand, the idea of universal human rights is - from a Western perspective - self-evident and people wonder why its global implementation is that problematic. On the other hand, the dialogue about which concrete rights a human being ought to have seems to push a globalized society to the edge of its capabilities. From a philosophical perspective, however, we are witnessing two opposing modes of discourse: the communicative rationality-based ideal discourse situation (Jürgen Habermas) and the sympathy-based “Cultivation of Human Rights” (Richard Rorty). In the first volume, *Zwischen Vernunft und Mitgefühl: Jürgen Habermas und Richard Rorty im Dialog über Wahrheit, politische Kultur und Menschenrechte* (Freiburg: Alber 2013), political philosopher and phenomenologist, Barbara Weber, engages in a forensic search for the epistemological foundations of those two modes of dialogue. Carefully examining the differences and similarities of both theories, she concludes that what is missing is the grounding of reasoning and sympathy in embodiment. Surprisingly, she finds the role of the body in political philosophy as marked mainly by absence. Hence, her second volume *Vernunft, Mitgefühl und Körperlichkeit: Eine phänomenologische Rekonstruktion des politischen Raumes* (Freiburg: Alber, 2013) tries to attend to this gap.

Due to embodiment, an irreversible rift occurs, rending the fundamental condition of human existence. Through its spatiotemporal relationality, the body functions as the backbone of grammar—such as in speech and the grammar of space: I and Not-I, Here and There. Further, the public space is based on seeing and being seen: because our bodies are submerged into the same fabric of the world, we create a shared meaning and become sensitive to the gaze and existence of the other.

This book is a fundamental phenomenological reconstruction of the political space on the basis of embodiment. Thus, reconstructing political space in a phenomenological manner is much more than meeting a desideratum for research. It is, in fact, the disclosure of a blind spot in intellectual history. Its disclosure brings forth a reversal of meaning for many constitutive terms of political science, such as freedom, violence, and political space. To become aware of the vulnerability of the concrete human being and their embodiment sets the foundation for any ethical awareness and political responsibility.

This book concludes that the public space is dependent on the other’s gaze: that a space occurs in the midst of our shared gazes that are different and, by being different, connect us all. By contract, retreating into the monad of the self leads inevitably to the destruction of the public space. At the same time, this retreat prevents the self from enhancing its own power and freedom. Such withdrawal opposes the evolution of the self because an individual who is reduced to dwell in a private space is also deprived of that space’s social functions. Thus, this book is a plea for the

function and importance of embodiment as the grounding of public space – a space that is welcoming of the Others and Otherings.