Death, Sex, and the Body: Phenomenology and Foucault

Handout/worksheet on *Being and Time*, Chapter Three C, “The environs of the environment, and the spatiality of Dasein” (§§22-24).

In this subchapter, Heidegger discusses a kind of practical “spatiality” that’s a key element in being-in-the-world. It’s important to see that the kind of spaces and places discussed here are essentially *practical*, not just physical in the sense of being located in a three-dimensional Cartesian coordinate system. Thus, for example, something can be practically “far” although physically quite close, and vice-versa. (Heidegger generally reserves the words “distant” and “distance” for mere physical spatial separation.)

§22. The spatiality of handy intraworldly entities:

1. Take the computer you’re presumably typing on and the room you’re presumably sitting in. Describe it using the various “spatial” concepts that Heidegger develops in §22. What’s “handy,” i.e., “close” (p. 102)? How is the room you’re in “oriented”? Give a couple of examples of practical “vicinities” (p. 103) in the room. Here, the paragraph in §24 that begins at the bottom of p. 110 and ends at the top of p. 111 is helpful.

§23. The spatiality of being-in-the-world:

What Heidegger in this section means by “close” and “far” are things or possibilities that are *practically* “distant,” i.e., something we encounter as to-be-carried-out, but that remain to be carried out. As you move through a practical project, you “close in on” what was originally practically far off. Closing-in-on a possibility is to make it closer, i.e., closer to its being carried out.

Exercises:

1. How do you interpret the following sentence: “*An essential tendency toward closeness lies in Dasein*” (p. 105)?
2. Give an example of closing in on some originally far-off practical possibility.
3. **Here’s a very important thing to think (and write) about:** On p. 107, Heidegger describes using equipment that we’re relying on: eyeglasses, the speaker on a telephone, and the street I’m walking on. Oddly, however, he characterizes such entities as *far* – indeed, farther off than the person we’re seeing or speaking to on the phone or approaching on the street. Now it does seem correct to say that the person you’re speaking to on the phone is practically “close,” even though they might be objectively 1000 miles away. Nevertheless, this description is puzzling, since what’s far away in his sense is supposed to be a possibility yet to be completed. But we’ve already completed the process of finding the eyeglasses or phone, or stepping onto the street. Can you see any way in which Heidegger might be right in characterizing equipment we’re relying on as *far*?
4. If the person we’re speaking with on the phone can be quite “close” to us, can you think of an example of something that’s physically very close but practically quite far away?
5. Going back to your example of your computer and room, try to explain what Heidegger means by his claim that whenever we close in on something, we’re always *oriented* in some way or other. His example of entering a familiar but dark room where the position of the furniture has been reversed (p. 109) is helpful here. What can we glean about the *positive* phenomenon of orientationfrom this example of spatial *dis*orientation?

§24: Dasein’s spatiality, and space:

(The first paragraph in §24 refers back to the discussion of letting handy entities be deployed: pp. 84-86 in §18: Deployment and meaningfulness: the worldliness of the world.)

1. The last term having to do with the spatiality involved in our practical dealings with equipment is “making-room” (p. 111). Going back to your original example of your computer and your room, explain how you “make room” here in Heidegger’s sense.