

Spatial, Temporal, Somatic and Spiritual Boundaries. Seen as Virtual Reflection of Expanding Personal Selfhood

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Abstract

This paper represents an attempt to understand how could boundaries of values be tentatively outlined, described and addressed. Universal natural categories are observed, experienced and interpreted in the second reality of human mediated understanding. These circumstances are introduced in the discussion about various boundaries delimiting real world domains imbued with values that have been influencing the behavior and giving meaning to human existence throughout our history. The author ranks some spatial and temporal boundaries to indicate examples of their correlation with somatic and spiritual manifestations of what is understood as viable human values.

Keywords: value changes, spatial boundaries, cultural landscapes, time frames, personality development, spiritual manifestations, negative socialization.

Introduction

This paper was initially conceived in rather serene conditions before the New Year, but time has got out of joint and author's value system had been suddenly completely scattered. When personal selfhood drops to ground zero and you have to supplant helpful seclusion for depressing solitude of a hermit, what values may retain their residual aftershock retrospective meaning? These lines are written in a hectic attempt to reflect on ranges and limits of human value motivations. In everyday life we seldom recognize multiple boundaries surrounding us that give shape to our multiple value systems. They are perceived almost automatically as an intrinsic part of the culture that people belong to, so far as they stay on their own soil in both physical and spiritual

sense of the word. In this essay culture as a vestige of functioning values is defined as the ground on which humans settle, live, evolve and move around. Habitual culture can be viewed as an array of ready-made meanings that bring sense to the ways we are interacting, existing and journeying through all walks of life. Things change with passage of time and with the shift of location. Stepping off the accustomed trail one encounters another terrain, adjusts the focus of vision, notices unfamiliar horizons and faces existential choices of acceptance or denial. These terrains may be perceived quite differently. Some may see there rather attractive untapped opportunities that will open new vistas. Others will stop at the borderline anticipating insurmountable challenges that are fraught with doom. This term is not here due to misuse. It introduces the fourth individual and public psychological area – the zone of trauma that follows the zone of danger. There are multiple spatial, temporal, cognitive and moral attributes to human capacity of retaining piece of mind and remaining in one's static zone of comfort or dynamic zone of learning. Zone of comfort is one such area that usually keeps humans free from concerns about values. It would be relevant to outline the boundaries that encompass values. All the physical, psychological, somatic and mental domains of multiple values have their border fences delimiting the red lines not to be crossed and the road maps that operate within the safe range of each and every bounding space. Value borders are mental constructs but they are intrinsically connected with material objects and quite real artifacts. Let us begin their description by trying to range physical areas that embrace values.

Spatial boundaries

It seems natural to start reflecting about various humane spaces from the very beginning. The first cradle an infant feels secure and protected is mother's womb. The value of being safely encapsulated represents for a human in fetal position the whole universe that at postpartum either shrinks or expands to mother baby bonding. Attempting to differentiate initial borderlines of experiential patterns S. Grof introduced the concept of four basic perinatal matrices.⁹² Building blocks of uterine fetus attachment to external world form the stable value set imprinted in human subconscious even at perinatal period and has life-long effect. In infancy the space of secure domestic circles gradually expands.

⁹² Stanislav Grof, *Spiritual Emergency: When Personal Transformation Becomes a Crisis* (New York: Tarcher Putnam, 1989).

During the early development stages family domain is usually associated with invulnerable safe haven. With the gained ability of unrestricted physical movement available territory expands and according to L. Karsavin's triple identity theory⁹³ it is the first independent encounter of a child with an expanse of wild nature that forms our primary stable personal identity. It manifests itself in fearless and flamboyant puppy curiosity that connects individual with the world and provides the open lasting nexus to a growing and expanding individual value system. The two other equities are more malleable. The second side of personal identity can be called *hic et nunc* because it is being constantly shaped and evaluated by the changing social circumstances.

Next to the locus of home an individual will come across an array of civilized entities. Once inside each of them, the value of present moment impact would be experienced by every child. They flock to all kinds of places of attendance, to outdoor yard spaces and recreation areas. It is on these territories where all children align. Personal values are being shaped here in primary live socialization experience (the question arises: will these newly acquired values be mostly palpable, physically experienced, virtual, or all together?). Play ground is the only location where adults do not dominate and are either excluded or shifted to the periphery of children's coaction. Meeting and directly interacting with other kids, encountering someone else similar to you, but at the same time quite different, implies that initial positive and frequently negative toddler's enculturation takes place here. Concerted, unsettled or hostile attribution of effective modes of behavior shape up the new attitudes that differ from domestic ones. This allows trying on various new roles, gives rise to mental make-ups and sets up new self-reinforcing values. Later in regular school attendance earlier acquired predispositions will become socially prevailing and would lead to friendship, domination, submission, bullying, and other social effects and defects of public education, to peer role group interaction and extra-family mediation.

In public sphere there are many overt and covert interactions that have direct impact on values. For instance, largely neglected and widespread traumatic effect of being forced to attend toxic classrooms can hardly be cured even at early stages. The vicious circle can be broken by brisk change of location, by

⁹³ Dominic Rubin, "The Life and Thought of Lev Karsavin: „Strength made perfect in weakness...," in *On the Boundary of Two Worlds: Identity, Freedom, and Moral Imagination in the Baltics* (Amsterdam–New York: Rodopi, 2013), 480.

transferring a pupil to another school. This palliate may stop but it does not cure the widely spread tacit social ill. In adult world offices and institutions in many countries are contaminated with plethora of power-domination relations.⁹⁴ In fact this phenomenon is an indicator that the term “values” has besides its noble halo a dirty shadow of segregation. Comprehensive humanitarian analysis shall therefore include the acknowledgement and the study of the negative values’ destructive impact on the quality of human life. And in the 21st century modern societies are becoming much more sensitive to similar anomalies. Getting further down the negative social slope we may register the existence of functionally inverted meaningless institutions that retain the faade and keep seemingly working formal practices within inner office boundaries. Failed state is one such big spatial example of a case where external attributes of public institutions can be deprived of the much-needed substantial valuable content. We step here in the domain of bad fighting games. The most detrimental of them is zero-sum-game that excludes win-win situation.⁹⁵

Back to neutral waters. Larger interactive spaces will encompass compact urban and rural areas or scattered settings – neighborhoods, communes, kibbutz, mahalla, fraternities, fellow-countrymen connections, clubs, societies, constituencies, settlements and municipalities. These larger physical spaces have clear-cut spatial borders and are characterized by ranges of deep-rooted value sets. Can differences in values be also legitimated by being placed by birth or by chance in such a location? Will the mere spatial fact of living in the capital or in a small town, in a village or on a farm, being a local or newly arrived become instrumental in predetermining the volume and limits of one’s values? Spatial value boundaries in many ways do depend on the shapes of cultural landscapes. Living at the sea shore, say, in Alexandria, or at the banks of the Nile in Cairo makes a difference at least in terms of flight of imagination in perceiving the line of horizon. Highlander meeting with a lowlander would immediately feel the dissemblance in intrinsic choice of even mundane priorities. It is not so much the matter of altitudes but rather an expressed difference in attitudes towards the value of mountain valleys as such. However small their size might be, these spaces are turned into seats of distinct local

⁹⁴ Alexandra Woodall museum worker from «Sticks and Stones» project team presents UK Museum Association survey results of the 2019 study: “Bullying in museums.”

⁹⁵ Yves Lacoste, *La géographie, ça sert, d’abord, à faire la guerre* (Paris: Editions La Découverte, 2012).

cultures and their autochthonous language purview. For instance, language and folklore expeditions to central Viet Nam mountain areas have in recent decades discovered about forty hitherto unknown languages and dialects still spoken by people living in the nearby valleys and gorges.⁹⁶ Their spatial divisions and connections may actually remain same in the time span between the Internet and ancient Roman advances as had been shown in the discourse about ultra-stable traffic lines in the Alps and the corresponding communicative routes by Graf V. at her recent IFK lecture.⁹⁷ The single best road once selected remains valuable route to many generations. On the other side of the world cognitive linguistic studies have allowed to discover that, for instance, being an Islander in the Pacific makes one's points of reference and the system of orientation quite different from those habitually used on the continental expanses.⁹⁸ Examining Eurasian intermediate region endless expanses we will find there the "culture of big tolerances" that will be at odds with the range of value limits in the very compact European landscapes.

The idea of ranking territories according to their semantic and spatial connectedness underlies the concept of cultural landscapes. Their borders can be described with different degree of approximation. Formal bipolar scheme contrasts the opposition in "Center-Periphery" model laying emphasis on aspects of domination and subordination. Another model "Central-Non-Central" would be more appropriate to describe City-Suburb correlation. "East-West" and "West- Non-West" would be similar evaluations extended to the global scale. Adding the Third, Fourth and the Fifth World helps to present a richer more volumetric picture. (Similar differentiation is valid, say, for lead and wingman. In literary analysis of characters, in-depth description also involves the first, second, third and fourth man taken as protagonists' self-evaluation).⁹⁹ These examples help to validate the need for a thorough observation in dealing with

⁹⁶ Samarina I.V., "Ethnolinguistic situation in the North of Central Vietnam: Vietnamese ethnic groups and Vietnamese languages," in *Language policy and language conflicts in the modern world*, eds. A. Bitkeeva, V. Mikhailchenko (2014), 486-498.

⁹⁷ Graf V. Head in the cloud. Tracing the internet as embodied media in the Alps. IFK lecture.

⁹⁸ Bill Palmer, "Absolute spatial reference and grammaticalisation of perceptually salient phenomena," in *Representing space in Oceania: Culture in language and mind*, ed. Giovanni Bennardo (Australia: Pacific Linguistics, 2002), 107-157.

⁹⁹ A. Grigoryan, "The first, second and third personality," *Languages of Slavic culture* (2014).

notions of borders and the requisite dividing lines. This in cultural landscapes we would see a variety of zoning and neighboring - main areas, their foci points, places of power, areas of growth and zones of decay, the cores of typicality and basic areas, the kernel and the soft core, and then come perimeters, frontiers, transitory edges, and even the nucleus and protoplasm. In zoning fan type matrices will give at least 16 types of distinct spatial options with a distinct set of meaningful facets. And the complete set of national spatial options has to include 256 cells.¹⁰⁰ These spatial distribution of distinct meaningful indices gives a clue how both deep and broad should be the proper study of the role and boundaries of values today. How different may be the approach to boundaries of values can be illustrated by an absentee dispute between two great Russian writers, masters of public mind. First, Leo Tolstoy in his short story "How Much Land Does a Man Require?" gave a rigid moral response: "7 feet of land" describing a man who, in his peasant greed for maximum land, forfeits everything but dies as he finally grabs all the land that he wanted¹⁰¹. In his story "Goosebery" Anton Chehov responded: "He was a gentle, good-natured fellow, and I was fond of him, but I never sympathized with this desire to shut himself up for the rest of his life in a little farm of his own. It's the correct thing to say that a man needs no more than six feet of earth. But seven feet of land is what a corpse needs, not a man. And they say, too, now, that if our intellectual classes are attracted to the land and yearn for a farm, it's a good thing. But these farms are just the same as six feet of earth. To retreat from town, from the struggle, from the bustle of life, to retreat and bury oneself in one's farm – it's not life, its egoism, laziness, it's monasticism of a sort, but monasticism without good works. A man does not need seven feet of land or a farm, but the whole world, all nature, where he can have room to display all the qualities and peculiarities of his free spirit."¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ V. L. Kagansky, "Center - Province - Periphery - Border. The main zones of the cultural landscape," *Cultural landscape: issues of theory and research methodology* (1998): 73-99.

V. L. Kagansky, "Cultural landscape and Soviet habitable space," *Collection of articles* (2001): 576.

¹⁰¹ Leo Tolstoy, "How Much Land Does a Man Need?" *Wiki 2*, January 15, 2022, https://wiki2.org/en/How_Much_Land_Does_a_Man_Need%3F.

¹⁰² "Kryzhovnik. Anton Pavlovich Chehov," Russian Livelib, accessed January 15, 2022, <https://www.livelib.ru/quote/1070908-kryzhovnik-anton-pavlovich-chehov>.

Temporal boundaries

Human free spirit is not confined to continuous streamlined chronological time flow. It has its origins rooted in what is called historical time, but singles out only the gnostic aspects of events that have viable moral charge. Its present is not entirely determined by situational time. Moreover, we have a unique quality of stopping time and memory tool can revert the flow and bring the emphatic mementoes back. The spirit is positioned in the domain of the absolute time. That is why in Chronos it belongs to the cultural heritage of humanity where it resonates with the values that in Kairos have no temporal boundaries. Such resonances are not trimmed to the Procrustean bed of externally imposed consoling pictures of the world. Weltanschauung that shapes dignified personal image of the world is painful to be attained as it has to go against the grain of mundane values struggling for veracity in the continuous flow of everyday events.

Internal and external deictic time perceptions would yield a range of frameworks in the conceptualization of time flow values. Being within the temporal flow and in the constant “now” point the most widespread view, the so called “time arrow”, will place the future in front of us and the past would be left behind. There are other spoken secular references for inner evaluation of time flow, when future would be sensed as located above and the past viewed below the person being situated somewhere in the bottom. If the narrator steps out of the time line, the mode of writing would determine perception of the time line. Writing in English left to right we will feel that the past is remaining on our left and the future is then to be to the right. Writing in Arabic, Hebrew or Farsi from right to left time flow would be reversed, with the future approaching from the left and the past will remain detected on the right side of the room premises. Writing in classical Japanese or Chinese top to bottom we will imagine the future below and the past above us.¹⁰³

Human life time value is presumably linear as indicated by the hyphen between dates of birth and death. It encompasses a range of time related phases that have physiological, somatic, psychological and spiritual boundaries. The stages of human development and growth have their specific time rhythms that are vital not only in upbringing, rearing and maturing. Functional rhythms of organisms physiologically operate with vibrations that

¹⁰³ C. Fillmore, “Frames and the semantics of understanding,” *Quaderni di Semantica* 6 (1986): 222-254.

have their own distinct wave-lengths. They are mostly related to factors beyond our conscious control. Take the biological time daily rhythms, circadian rhythms, Tanner stages of puberty and a host of other characteristics with definite time constraints. They all have functional time spans and boundaries that are best described as static or fixed, though they will change with aging. Let us leave automatic time related boundaries at this point and come a bit closer to the consciously controllable life choices and actions that form the essence of what one is into in the course of living.

This is always a reflection about meaning and the essence of lived-up life. There are two ways to address the issue. Seen *de Profundis* or from the vantage point of life achievements, the individual manifestations of professed values show us examples of mental borders that were actually achieved, observed or transgressed during one's lifetime. Personal well-being has different temporal values separately registered by an individual in her or his two selves – an 'experiencing self' and in the 'remembering self'. The latter is what sociological polls in fact measure.¹⁰⁴ Non-secular criteria of evaluation in the Christian world remain practically unmeasured as they are rooted in an endless imaginative circle between the Fall of Man, original sin repentance and the anticipation of the Last Judgment in front of the coming Kingdom of God. The value and power of prayer defines in every single case the effect of timelessness of human predicament. In many civilizations and in different religious domains the value boundaries are defined and described by means of different time and space related narratives.

In Hindu cosmology the temporal boundaries of great values are originated in the cyclic time line that encompasses four yugas. This time line is not homogeneous. Affected by the entropy of human moral decay eternity wraps itself up in a dwindling time spiral. This cognitive model is just the opposite of contemporary secular Western business models practice in their incremental development spirals.¹⁰⁵ Value boundaries belong to the different worlds and in such cases, they will not be even contrasted on equal footing. But where does humanity find the benchmark for proper behavior and for representation of the world value structure?

¹⁰⁴ D. Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2013), 513.

¹⁰⁵ "What the Spiral Model," *The Economics Times*. India Times, accessed January 25, 2022, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/definition/spiral-model>.

Throughout human history temporal boundaries are traditionally linked to observation and calculation of celestial movements and planetary phasing. In the 20th century the solar 11 year cycles of Sun activity have been found to affect both human health and man-made infrastructure. Same cosmological interest and exact time limit cycle calculations were of paramount value for the Nile irrigation infrastructure in ancient Egypt 45 centuries ago, and not only to that pragmatic end. (A note of personal observation). Staying as a young man in Cairo for a year I once decided to meet the New Year on top of the Khufu pyramid. Having climbed to the 147 meter high platform on top, the night sky full of vibrant stars suddenly opened to my baffled eyes. I was amazed to see fantastic similarity of the three brightest Orion belt stars shining right above my head in the midnight sky with the same linear disposition of the three colossal artifacts on the Giza heights. Glittering pyramids were vital for connecting the shining vault of heaven with its earthy artificially replicated cartography. Both entities functioned as collective *alter ego* to the divine star promise of eternity opened in this endeavor both to the ruler and the ruled. How come that paramount life value was open to all? Because, each countryman possessed a glittering ceramic anthropomorphic figurine, a living duo Ka, that like a star in the sky was a pass from the final life breath to the eternal posthumous life in the image of Ba.¹⁰⁶ How powerful is such a belief in eternity of time and life continuity in comparison to our shallow set of primary school values that connects the colossal size of Khufu pyramid only with the vanity of a single despotic pharaoh. The imaginative link between a tiny polished figurine, available to every man, and the vision of absolute time is in my humble opinion evidence of how important tactile sensations were for somatic feeling of the promised unlimited life to the honest people in the ancient world.

Somatic boundaries

It has to be stated that neither sense nor senselessness are present on their own in the surrounding natural world on our planet. Meaning does not just appear out of the blue, unless we do not aspire for the celestial connection. This human link with cosmos is of paramount value both to individuals and to societies even if they forget to reflect on that. Deriving the meaning in movement or

¹⁰⁶ V. Nemchinov, "Comparative cultural study of 3D artifacts perception," *Role of Material Sources in Information Support of Historical Science* (2020): 623-639.

in stillness and ascribing values requires comprehensive somatic human mediation that is vital for any comparative body-mind-soul time-space orientation. Types of thoughtform constructs frequently fall out of the range of our awareness, but as human organism has multiple streams of consciousness operating sub Rosa, such negligence does not hamper the work of intuitive feeling and situational evaluation. It is hardly possible for us to perceive any nonverbal construct of values as the thought only works with the mind. Other bodily control centers and our subtle bodies operate nonverbally on their own functional levels. If one would still opt to define any nonverbal domain for the category of value judgment, then the closest extralinguistic concept to look for would be with the state of thoughtlessness. We cannot arbitrarily grasp the meaning even wholeheartedly believing that it is possible. Why? Because, eluding unambiguous definition, the problem of sense-meaning-value is directly unresolvable in principle. Yet there is a somatic-spiritual feeling that it had already been encountered and resolved before. What stands behind this certainty?

Mindfulness precludes us from completely ignoring the value imperative, but it may be slyly bypassed relying on similar notions that have evasive semantics and noumenal closeness. If straightforward, simple-hearted literal understanding of direct meaning can come along with its indirect sophistication then as A. Pyatigorsky argued: “if I can allow reflective transformations of the basic semantic state of consciousness, then any meaning can be experienced with any reflexive status.”¹⁰⁷ And this explains the internal speech tension and the need for imperative statement when an objective value is under consideration.

So in order not to stay dumb in stupor or speechless we do need to possess the feature of internal vocalization to constantly let go off our inner speech and to think for ourselves. But once the value notion has bent verbalized, got under the skin and managed to reach into the heart it grows into real feeling. Such an emotion evolves into the mood. It may become nonverbal when one hums a tune that sounds in the head, hears the inner music or visualizes a mental image that does not present itself in front of our face. Their value is as real within our somatic boundaries as would be the talk, the concert, the picture on the wall or any other external physical artifact that belongs to the cultural heritage of humanity.

¹⁰⁷ A. M. Pyatigorsky, “Languages of Slavic culture,” *Selected Works* (2005): 192.

Spiritual boundaries

Coming last but definitely first in their essential features spiritual values are easy to distinguish but hard to describe. Let us start approaching them by charting a few things that should stay outside their boundaries. Spirituality is incompatible with egoism and preoccupation with one's own self. Hence seclusion may finally not be the shortcut to spiritual being. At the same time it is doubtful if the intent to attain spiritual life can be set up as a conscious task. Such a requirement would probably encounter a number of insurmountable opportunities and lead in the wrong direction. And it will not at all help buying into someone's shoes on the pilgrimage to spirituality. This state of spirit cannot be practiced by good deeds and good intentions. It may simply happen or not happen. After all, spirituality is not something external. Internal spiritual boundaries are built on the feeling that precisely this, and not anything else, would be right to do now. Spiritual boundary is the feature of wisdom. Wisdom is curative. It cures the soul in need with the word. Wisdom comes with age. Spirituality is ageless.

But it starts at a very early age. Then, how a toddler can cope with such a challenge? Going on with what your surrounding insists is "right" to do, is not right. It is not about obedience or discipline. Quite the contrary. Bending and denigrating social pressure is the first step to the status of slavery, because one's own internal spiritual boundary is violated by such submissions. Perhaps this is the first failed crisis in personal development that deprives a child from spirituality. It is superimposed by negative socialization and the resultant social fear forces the victim to build up a protective shell around one's personal well-being. The self-supporting walls of this shell consist of clichés, stereotypes and stale platitudes that would at best secure mere physical safety zone, not more than that. The second developmental crisis occurs at the school-age, and if the role of a slave had been somehow overcome, it will turn a teenager into consumer. The worldview on that stage is predominantly focused on all possible ways of deriving pleasure and pursuit of entertainment. Needless to say, that this mode of living also cuts out the boundaries that lead to spiritual values.¹⁰⁸

Getting in the domain of spirituality implies that we are still in the realm of culture, though these areas frequently stand quite apart. Spirituality is a constant challenge to human trinitarian identity. To remain faithful to your own first identity, to

¹⁰⁸ I. Akimov, V. Klimenko, "On the nature of talent," *Student meridian* (1994): 209.

keep clear your child's gaze and the innocence of vision means that hidden motives are not let in to creep into the heart and whirl in the head. That is the principal psychological borderline to be protected by all means and shall be regained if challenged. "Truly I say to you, if you are not converted and become as the little children, you shall never enter into the Kingdom of the heavens."¹⁰⁹

Keeping your innocence in the face of evil is the ultimate spiritual boundary to be protected. It requires courage to maintain allegiance to your moveable current identity. Courage and determination are needed just to keep your own heart pure. Wide open eyes will let you stay innocent in your heart without sliding to being naive. That is where your third identity renders its powerful support. You will actively deal with it reading a good book, attending a concert, seeing a meaningful movie, a powerful theatrical performance and inspiring pictures by sincere artists. This third noospheric identity opens up the whole world of cultural heritage achievements and make its owner a true citizen of the whole planet. It will not let any mundane evil rub on into the consciousness.

Conclusion

It seems pretty clear that personal selfhood is maturing among values that evolve with time but still have the clear-cut boundaries that help us keep afloat as human beings. Belonging to virtual second reality of human culture, values are real phenomena, though they are predominantly happening in the mind, they touch the soul, they reinforce and elevate the spirit. Value boundaries are not only where the person is looking, but they are also in how the person is being looked at. Hence, value boundaries emanate perceptible vibrations. Those vibrations may be subtle, but they are there. Their energy is real and it helps us remain truly human.

¹⁰⁹ Quoted from Berean Lateran Bible. Matthew 18:4.

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