

The Phenomenology of Belonging: Cosmopolitan Alienation and Communitarian Attachment

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Abstract

The paper explores the phenomenology of belonging through the lens of Heideggerian thought, focusing on the dialectic between cosmopolitan alienation and communitarian attachment. It explores the fundamental aspects of Dasein (literally, “being-there”), Bodenständigkeit (literally, “Rootedness”) and Gelassenheit (literally, “Releasement”), elaborated by Heidegger, and consider specifically how the processes of globalisation, mediated by technology and framed by institutional structures, have changed both the nature and experience of human rootedness and displacement. It use both personal and philosophical reflections to show that the ideals surrounding modern mobility and cosmopolitanism erode some of the sense of existential security and certainty that rootedness in place-based identity provides. At the same time, this paper investigates the moral challenges that emerge when universalist expectations are enforced with structurally disadvantaged populations, for example, in healthcare distribution and social policy. Instead of simply rebutting cosmopolitanism, this paper suggests a reconciliatory position that reconfirms the need for global solidarity and the importance of global cosmopolitanism with a point that emphasizes local embeddedness as well. The work argues that real belonging cannot be reframed as an either-or. It concludes that we must consider belonging as a phenomenology of living in tension, not competitive dualism.

Keywords: alienation, belonging, cosmopolitanism, Heidegger, Rootedness