



Entity and place

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Abstract

The concepts of ‘entity’ and ‘place’ reveal intrinsic relationships, evidenced at different scales and levels of abstraction.

1 To be is (almost) to stand

It is possible to encounter the concept of ‘entity’ (being) in its abstract form, such as the $\acute{\omega}\nu$ [Gk] — that is, ‘the one who is’, implying a *living* entity. However, something this abstract is somewhat difficult to visualise, so an entity is often associated with (or recognised by) its physical features, and in particular with the *place* ‘where it stands’ or ‘where it is’. Regarding the identification of people, it has been a tradition in many Mediterranean cultures to add a toponym after a person’s name — for instance, Thales of Miletus.

The apparent intrinsic relationship between being and place appears to be older than Greek and Latin: the sources of ‘being’ $\epsilon\mu\acute{\iota}$ [Gk] and *essere* [L] originate from the Indo-European root ‘sta-’, which relates to ‘standing’ (Table 1). Even ‘existence’ points to the same direction, stemming from *existere* [L] ‘come into being’, from *ex-* ‘out’ + *sistere* ‘take a stand’.

SOURCE	MEANING	DERIVATIVES
<i>ont-</i> [Gk]; <i>ent-</i> [L]	to exist	ontology, entity
<i>sistere</i> [L]	to take a stand	existence
<i>sta-</i> [IndEu] ► <i>histanai</i> [Gk]; <i>stare</i> [L]	to stand	status, state, stasis, Stadt [De], system

TABLE 1 Entity and place

2 A place to be

Since the ‘place’ is often associated closely with entities, then the place itself gains prominence in languages. Indeed, there are many ways to indicate ‘place’ or ‘space’, as sampled in Table 2, and this diversity of words pointing to the same concept is an indication of its importance in peoples’ lives.

SOURCE	MEANING	DERIVATIVES
<i>locus</i> [L]	position	location
<i>planto</i> [L]	to fix in place	plant; plan
<i>plateia (odos)</i> [Gk]	wide/ open space	place
<i>pono</i> [L]	to put, place, set	position
<i>spatium</i> [L]	space, area	space
<i>territorium</i> [L]	land (around a city)	territory
<i>topos</i> [Gk]	place	topography, topology
χώρος [Gk]	space	χωροταξία (spatial planning)

TABLE 2 Expressions of ‘place’ or ‘space’

3 The space and administration of the city

The organised space has particular interest in civilisations, so a number of words accompany this concept — Table 3. The organised space is captured in words such as πόλις [Gk], *urbs* [L], or ‘city’. However, the ‘organisation’ of space comes in two main branches: the *form*, or its physical arrangement — where the ‘plan’ gains prominence — and the *function*, or its administration (or management) through the ‘policy’ — that is, the administration of πολιτεία [Gk]. At this scale of space, people gain group identity, such as citizens (πολίτες [Gk]) or δήμος [Gk].

SOURCE	MEANING	DERIVATIVES
<i>civis</i> [L]	citizen	civic, civilisation
<i>demos</i> [Gk]	people of a state	democracy
<i>planto</i> [L]	to fix in place	plant; plan
<i>polis</i> [Gk]; <i>urbs</i> [L]	city	policy, πολίτης (citizen), urbanisation
<i>status</i> [L]	standing	state, estate
<i>tuin</i> [Dutch]; <i>Zaun</i> [De]	garden, fence	town
χώρος [Gk]	space	χωροταξία (spatial planning)

TABLE 3 Organised space

4 The abstraction of the ‘system’

Contrary to the ‘concreteness’ of the organised space, entities and place (such as cities) can be abstracted as ‘systems’ — Table 4. A system (something that ‘stands together’) is a ‘set of related elements’, and these relationships account for ‘the whole being greater than the sum of its parts’; in other words, a system is something ‘live’, and not just ‘elements glued together’ (cohesively). The abstract or aggregate nature of the system lends itself for hiding special elements (such as individuals) from view when convenient or when understanding is insufficient — for instance, ‘victims of the [social] system’.

SOURCE	MEANING	DERIVATIVES
<i>co(n)-</i> [L] + <i>haerere</i> [L]	to stick	cohesion
<i>con-</i> [L] + <i>crescere</i> [L]	to grow together	concrete
<i>sta-</i> [IndEu] ► <i>histanai</i> [Gk]; <i>stare</i> [L]	to stand	status, state, stasis, Stadt [De], system

TABLE 4 System and other concepts

5 Hypothesis as the bottom line

At a smaller scale than the space of the city, and much closer to the scale of the individuals, lies [*sic*] the θέσις [Gk], or ‘position’. Besides its physical meaning, thesis is metaphorically used as one’s ‘position’ in an argument, which also determines one’s point of view — that is, what one sees (or does not see). As an extension to this, thesis is used in the academic context to signify a long essay of ‘position’ marked after some research. Having marked a ‘thesis’, we can define other relative positions such as an antithesis (an opposite place), and a hypothesis, or what lies underneath. Υπόθεσις [Gk] (supposition) is of particular importance in reasoning, as it becomes the foundation upon which thoughts, arguments, and conversations can be (tentatively) based — but it has yet to be proven to gain definitive value.

SOURCE	MEANING	DERIVATIVES
τίθεναι [Gk]	to place	thesis, hypothesis, antithesis, synthesis

TABLE 5 Thesis and related derivatives

Documentation

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