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**Seminario Scienze Umanistiche**

***Space and Time in Social Sciences and Humanities:  
Other Spaces and Other Times***

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Time and space are the basic parameters of existence. To be, implies to exist in space and time. Human existence is a fabric woven by the warp and whoop of the space and time. There is a famous Socrates saying, 'know thy-self', other cultures have also emphasized the need for self-knowledge. The first step towards self-recognition is to recognise oneself through and in space and time. The whole purpose and objective of humanities and social sciences has been to facilitate this self-knowledge and identify paths to enlightenment, as man has to face the question of his own destiny.

All of us have an intuitive knowledge of time and space but to articulate this knowledge is very difficult. For a common person space implies that, in which things are here and there and time implies that, in which events are before and after. But it would be wrong to believe that space and time are two separate identities. Contemporary science also has taught us that space and time are the constituents of the same quantity called space-time.

The Idea of Modernity that has largely dominated modern history is premised on a particular conception of space and time that classical science has invoked, as usually the comprehension of the natural world is still mostly classical one. But this conception of time and space is now more than ever contested, in the first place by the contemporary science itself. This linear and quantitative conception of time and space had displaced an alternative understanding of these concepts, especially in eastern traditions. More attuned to space-centric metaphysics and symbolism, conceiving time more in cyclical than in linear terms, committed to more existential than mathematical or abstract approach that modernity and "reign of quantity" uphold, more oriented to present than to past or future, sharply distinguished from space in terms of disjunctive momentariness, emphasizing eternity over time, meta or trans-historical over historical, allergic to all ideas of progress or evolutionism and centred on the notions of the aesthetic and the mystical that somehow bypasses serial time and the ego/mind constructing it; the non-western understanding of time and space calls for a serious rethinking of the project of knowledge in social sciences. There is a classification of different nuances of eternity and states of consciousness that increasingly transcend conventional spatio-temporal limitations and even upholding a view of liberation or freedom that construes mind, ego as fetters and elaborating a whole set of rituals and art practices that dissolve time consciousness. The non-western views of space and time imply a whole new epistemology and ontology –



in fact are in line with Heideggerian displacement of epistemology by ontology. We can circumvent certain standing aporias in modernity without sceptical anti-foundational response of postmodernity by taking cognizance of alternative views of space and time, so argue many Eastern thinkers. The humanities have opened up spaces of dialogue with the philosophical and scientific other, that rationalistic modernity and secular postmodernity had vetoed. A sort of deconstruction of the social sciences and humanities that are founded on a certain privileged view of space and time could be affected by turning East. Western philosophers and ideologues have generally dismissed or ignored those views of space and time that questioned such notions as linearity of time, evolutionism and progress.

The seminar will concentrate on these alternative views from the east especially with reference to some schools of Indian philosophy.