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Place, Space and Hermeneutics

 Springer

Contributions to Hermeneutics

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Place, Space and Hermeneutics

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Foreword

Whether one's focus is a text or utterance, a practice or activity, even a building or a landscape, the task of understanding and interpreting is necessarily tied to the concrete situatedness of the interpretive encounter. This is so in two ways: first, because it is the encounter that itself gives rise to the need to understand and interpret (the situation thus draws us into interpretive engagement) and, second, because the very possibility of understanding and interpretation is predicated on that situatedness (the situation thus offers the means by which understanding and interpretation can proceed as well as constraining the manner in which it does proceed). This holds true whether we look to hermeneutics as designating the theory and practice of interpretation as it might apply across a range of "interpretive" disciplines—from art and literature through to politics, cultural studies, and history—or whether we look to hermeneutics, in its transformed Heideggerian sense, as the interpretation of being.

The notion of "situation" that is at play here already invokes ideas of both place and space. The interpretive situation involves the opening up of a space "between"—between interpreter and what is to be interpreted and between interpreter and other interpreters or interlocutors. It is this idea of interpretive or hermeneutical space that is thematized most recently in Günter Figal's work, but it is evident in the very idea of understanding and interpretation as involving a genuine *encounter* with what is to be understood or interpreted and the *openness* of that encounter (the latter nicely captured in the German *Spielraum*, which encompasses both "play" and "room"). Moreover, the interpretive situation, precisely *as a situation*, is itself already a place (the term comes from the Latin *situare* meaning to place) and as such is both open *and bounded*. This boundedness is evident in the way in which the interpretive situation or encounter is focused on that which is to be interpreted as well as the way in which the situation itself establishes the conditions under which understanding and interpretation are possible. It is evident too in the character of the space that opens up in the hermeneutical encounter as indeed a space *between*.

It is at just this point that that the primacy connection between hermeneutics and place in particular comes to the fore. All understanding is inextricably tied to place, just as all understanding also depends on the opening up of a space. Its being so tied

does not function, however, as a barrier to understanding (or to interpretation) but rather as its facilitating condition. The space that is opened up through the being-placed of interpretive encounter is the space of place but also the space of world. This is indeed the characteristic of place, namely, that it opens up to the world. To speak more generally, one can only be *in the world* through being *in place*, which means through being in *this* place (whatever place that may be), but in being in place, one is indeed in the world and not in that one place alone (as if it could even make sense to talk of any place, or of place in general, as separate and isolated in this way). This is a simple point, but it is easily overlooked. It is why, contrary to what is sometimes assumed, hermeneutics, properly understood, does not imply relativism or skepticism; it does not close us off from engagement with others, even those removed from us in space or time, nor does it rule out the possibility even of making claims that go beyond our current circumstances—our current place. It is thus that, so far as a philosophical hermeneutics is concerned, the placed character of understanding does not mean that understanding can only be understood as it arises in some place and as it relates to that place alone but, rather, through being placed that understanding is opened to the very character of understanding as such, as it is also opened to the world as it goes beyond any single place. This latter point is important even when the hermeneutic focus is turned, not only toward the philosophical analysis of place or space or any other notion but to the careful investigation of some place or places and the phenomena that belong with them. Here, the openness of place is evident in the way in which places unfold before us allowing us insight into the complexity even of a single place and that which belongs to it.

Though sometimes appearing indirectly, this opening up of place, as well as of space, is central to all of the essays brought together here. The volume provides important insight into a range of contemporary questions from a topologically or spatially oriented hermeneutic perspective, as well as offering a synoptic view of the way place, space, and hermeneutics themselves come together. In this latter respect, what Bruce Janz has done here is thus to bring together the so-called spatial and topological turns that are so often seen as characteristic of contemporary theory and join them with what might also be called the interpretive or hermeneutic turn—with the idea, so influential across much of the twentieth-century thinking, that there is nothing that is immune to interpretive engagement and that if one can understand at all, then one can always understand differently. Perhaps these turns have always been tied together, even if often implicitly, since the investigation of place and space so often brings to the fore questions of understanding and interpretation at the same time as the inquiry into understanding and interpretation seems inevitably to thematize issues of place and space (most notably through notions of situation, context, and horizon). Yet this volume nevertheless represents a significant accomplishment and a major contribution to the hermeneutic as well as topological literature precisely because of the way the volume does indeed make explicit the connections at issue here rather than allowing them to remain in the background.

Yet this volume does not operate only at the level of the broader philosophical considerations, or the thinkers associated with them, that may be said to be at stake in the attempt to think place, space, and hermeneutics together. Indeed, many of

these essays focus on much more specific hermeneutic applications and problems. This reflects the fact that this is not a volume dedicated specifically to *philosophical* hermeneutics but is rather an attempt to encompass the hermeneutical engagement with place and space as that occurs across the entire range of hermeneutics. This is an important task, since part of what is so significant about contemporary hermeneutics is precisely the way it extends beyond the boundaries of the philosophical and across so many different disciplines and modes of inquiry—just as the problems of understanding and interpretation that hermeneutics aims to address are similarly extensive and cross-disciplinary. In this respect, although hermeneutics is sometimes treated as more or less the same as, or perhaps a branch of, phenomenology, the reality is that hermeneutics is less closely tied to a particular style of philosophical questioning (even though it can be associated with such a style) than it is associated with a set of fundamental questions that arise almost independently of the style of questioning that is assumed. As soon as we ask after the conditions that govern understanding and interpretation, no matter what the context, or when we look to the concrete task of understanding and interpreting in specific cases, then we are engaged in some form of hermeneutics, and so too are we engaged in some form of inquiry into, and engagement with, place as well as with space—an engagement, that is, keeping in mind Gadamer's dictum that all understanding is self-understanding, always an engagement with our own place as well as with that of others.

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April 2016

Jeff Malpas

Acknowledgments

This volume is a natural conclusion of some of the earliest work I did on place and space, in the form of a website called “Research on Place and Space.” That site has been moribund for a long time, but when it was active, it connected me with dozens of place researchers around the world. It was through that digital tool that I started to see the ways in which concepts and practices of place research flowed across disciplines or in some cases didn’t. And so, my first note of gratitude is to all those who were involved in conversations around that site when it was active. Some of these people are in this volume, and others have been excellent information sources, interlocutors, and critics through the years.

Cathryn Anderson was an able and efficient editorial assistant toward the end of the production process for this book. I would also like to thank the Department of Philosophy, the Center for Humanities and Digital Research, and the Texts and Technology PhD program, all at the University of Central Florida, for the resources to be able to produce a volume like this. Jeff Malpas and Claude Romano were excellent series editors, and the staff at Springer made this process as straightforward as one could hope for.

It is perhaps a truism, at least some of the time, that we become fascinated with areas of research because they are mysteries rather than because they are already known and familiar. Place has been such an area for me. The places I have lived, comfortable as they might have been, have always had a sense of uncanniness about them, an unfamiliarity in the midst of the familiar. Lacan thought that *jouissance* came with some level of transgression, and the uncanniness of my own places, along with the welcome and comfort offered by family, friends, and colleagues, stands as a kind of transgression against the platial order I often feel at best on the edge of. And so, I am especially grateful to all those who have made those uncanny places into home throughout the years. There are, of course, far too many of these kind people to list here, and so I’ll just list one, the most important one.

Lisa.

Bruce B. Janz

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Introduction

Bruce B. Janz

Abstract Introduction to *Place, Space and Hermeneutics*

It was just 20 years ago that Edward Casey observed in *The Fate of Place* that, in philosophy at least, place had “disappeared ‘almost altogether’” (Casey 1997, x). He was certainly correct at the time, but if that was true it is noteworthy that since then a remarkable *anamnesis* has happened. Exploration of the nature and implications of place and space within philosophy has grown into a robust and diverse literature.

What is even more remarkable has been the influence that this work has had on other disciplines. In the early 2000s, I started a website called “Research on Place and Space” (now moribund, archived at <http://bbjanz.com>), mostly because it was impossible (and is still difficult) to search for work on place or space. Building that site showed me several things. First, the range of work being done was immense, so much so that one person could not keep up even noting the new citations, projects, websites, and events. Second, that there were many theoretical approaches to place, not all of them hermeneutical (see Janz 2005a for an outline of some of these approaches, along with some reasons for the rise of place studies). Third, both place and space were concepts being used in a vast range of ways, for many theoretical purposes (see Janz 2005b). At times “place” and “space” were used interchangeably, at other times not; sometimes other concepts were used as proxies. And fourth, the “spatial turn” in many disciplines came with a platial turn, which brought with it a new interdisciplinary attention to theoretical work being done in other disciplines. In other words, along with work in mapping, networks, migration, and other spatial phenomena, there was a renewed interest in the human experience of place, as well as the ways in which place itself is inextricably linked with the constitution of human subjectivity. This provided an opening for the humanities, and philosophy

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in particular, to move the discussion of place from being about the utility of place or the contextualizing aspects of place for human behavior to being something more.

This early exercise in digital humanities was important for other reasons as well. It became apparent that many disciplines were using elements of phenomenological hermeneutics in their theorization of place, but were doing so in a piecemeal fashion or without a very clear sense of distinctions and implications. “Hermeneutics”, after all, is a term that has a wide range of uses (some having little to do with the tradition of Heidegger, Gadamer, Ricoeur, and other recognized hermeneuticists). There are, of course, theological uses which long precede the ones rooted in phenomenology, as well as uses by legal scholars, economists, literary theorists, and others which only draw on parts of the twentieth century philosophical tradition. It is sometimes used as a general catch-all term for theories of meaning, interpretation, or textuality. There is philosophical hermeneutical engagement as we look at the places of thought developed in other disciplines, or as we think about the applied practices of artists or writers. Hermeneutics itself stands both as an account of universal understanding, and also as a product of an intellectual tradition at a particular time and place. It answers specific questions about modernity and its potentially alienating effects, the question of the nature and efficacy of the hold that historical and moral texts have on us centuries after their own production, and the ways that technology, bureaucracy and institutional structures cover over Being. In other words, it both lays claim to a universal theory of meaning while inevitably being a product of its own place and time. And so, not only is it sometimes used in less theoretically specific ways, but at some other times writers are using the tools of hermeneutics and calling them something else (often simply “phenomenology”).

In other words, there has been both vagueness and ambiguity in the use of the term “hermeneutics” when it comes to place and space, along with a wide range of theoretical and disciplinary engagements with both “place” and “space”. One reaction to this range of uses might be to wish for more clarity, but on the other hand one might also look at this as a kind of intellectually rich space, one that is moving and active and using a wide range of tools to address what is clearly a pressing human issue: the ways in which our ways of being in the world are related to our place(s) in the world.

This volume attempts both of these. The starting point is clearly the philosophical tradition of phenomenological hermeneutics, and in that sense the ambiguity is reduced. On the other hand, the contributions here reflect the range of applications and uses of phenomenological hermeneutics inside and outside of philosophy. Some chapters work through the implications of the hermeneutics of place, some focus on applications or implications of hermeneutics of place in specific areas, and others focus on the (sometimes unexpected) encounter between a hermeneutics of place and other traditions. The main hope for this volume is to re-ignite the use of hermeneutics as a way of theorizing and experiencing place, and to establish place as a central feature of hermeneutics.

This book is more curated than edited. In other words, there was a plan for topics, figures, and areas to be covered, and then the editor went out and looked for people to address those issues. This means that the volume aspires to more coherence than

one for which a general call for papers is issued. It does not cover all possible questions about hermeneutics and place, but the hope is that enough are addressed that new life will be breathed into hermeneutics of and in place.

This book was conceived in three parts. In part one, hermeneutics as an approach to place and space is examined. The contention is that hermeneutics has been used extensively to understand place, but it has been insufficiently examined as either a philosophy of or in place, or as a method for understanding place and human existence in place. Some of these chapters deal with classic areas in hermeneutics and theorize their relation to or dependence on place and space, while others focus on new areas that have received relatively little treatment in the past. Abraham Olivier starts us off by thinking through a possible tension, which is that hermeneutics addresses the universal while place is about the particular. The next three chapters, by Bruce Janz, Annike Schlitte, and Kyoo Lee, deal with three related spaces within hermeneutics – textuality, narrative, and dialogue. Hermeneutical reflection on a number of elements of place follow. Bahar Aktuna and Charlie Hailey work out the nature of place-making through the lens of the monasteries at Meteora Greece. Shaun Gallagher, Sergio Martinez and Melina Gastelum develop an enactive hermeneutics that brings time back to space. Thorsten Botz-Bornstein works out a hermeneutics of play that specifically focusses on place. Kevin Aho works out a hermeneutics of the body, our first place, in relation to health and illness. And Dylan Trigg presents a phenomenological perspective on place and non-place.

The second section takes up some figures who have been useful to place and space hermeneutical philosophers. Some of these have a clear and direct relation, some have been influential, and some have been on the edges, or might even be surprising to think about in the context of hermeneutics. Robert Mugerauer, Jean-Claude Gens, and Crina Gschwandtner focus on thinkers strongly identified with the hermeneutic philosophical tradition (Heidegger, Gadamer, and Ricoeur, respectively). Not all of these (in particular Ricoeur) are identified with work on place, though, and the goal of these chapters is to see the possibilities where they exist and suggest directions for new research. Cristina Chimisso, Babette Babich, and Kieran Bonner write about philosophers (Bachelard, Merleau-Ponty, and Arendt, respectively) who are often used by those approaching place and space from a phenomenological and hermeneutical point of view. Peter Gratton took the challenge of thinking hermeneutically about Henri Lefebvre, someone who had much to say about space (if not place), and someone who might be seen to not be entirely sympathetic to hermeneutic thought. Foucault's complex relationship to hermeneutics and place is taken up by Hans-Herbert Kögler. James Gibson and Yi-Fu Tuan are also included (the first written about by Daniel McConnell and Stephen Fiore, and the second by Paul Adams). They are not philosophers, but hermeneuticists and phenomenologists have found their work useful, and so it seemed appropriate to explore how close they might be to a hermeneutic approach to place. And finally, two very important contemporary philosophers of place are included: Edward Casey (by David Morris) and Jeff Malpas (by Paloma Puente Lozano). Both have been very influential on hermeneuticists of place, both within philosophy and beyond.

These chapters are meant as exploratory and creative. They go beyond just explicating what someone had to say about place and space. The goal is to open up new spaces for investigation and discussion, to establish new tools for considering place and space that are broadly sympathetic or at least potentially useful to a hermeneutic orientation.

The third section focuses on a range of areas in which hermeneutic phenomenology has engaged place and space. “Areas” here refers to disciplines as well as interdisciplinary spaces. There has long been excellent work done on the hermeneutics of place and space outside of philosophy departments, and a book such as this that purports to give a picture of the current state of scholarship in the area as well as offer creative new directions could hardly avoid engaging these spaces of thought. We could see some sub-groupings within this section. Chapters by Tim Cresswell on topopoetics and Keith Harder on place in visual art focus on the implications of a hermeneutics of place for the creative process of writers and artists. David Seamon (writing on architectural hermeneutics), Alan Blum (on the social life of the metropolis), and Andy Zieleniec (on the urban spatial sociologies of Simmel, Benjamin and Lefebvre) focus on built and urban environment. The social science encounter with hermeneutics and place is addressed by Pauline McKenzie Aucoin (anthropology), and Thomas Dörfler & Eberhard Rothfuß (writing on human geography). Janet Donohoe (writing on the environment), Eva-Maria Simms (on psychology and lived space, especially natural space), and Edward Casey (on body, place, and climate) explore aspects of natural place, with Golfo Maggini’s paper providing a useful contrast in reflecting on the implications within wholly virtual and technological space. Janet Wesselius (on hermeneutics, place, and feminism), Robert Bernasconi (on race), Pedro Tabensky (on hermeneutics and place in South African philosophy), and On-cho Ng (on hermeneutics in place, specifically in Chinese philosophy) conclude the section by looking at the ways in which hermeneutics and place works out within specific gendered, racialized, and cultural spaces.

Despite the comparatively large number of chapters, the aim of this book is modest. I make no claim to have covered all of the interesting questions about the intersection of hermeneutics and place/space, or all of the interesting thinkers, or all of the interesting disciplinary and thematic areas. The assembled papers are meant as reflections, as provocations, as new guideposts for further scholarship. Contributors were asked to do more than just sum up the state of things for their topics. They were asked to point out the avenues for future research, to interrogate undeveloped aspects of place studies or of hermeneutics, to be creative with their assignments. This is not, in other words, intended as a handbook to hermeneutics, place, and space, but rather a set of analyses and suggestions for new directions of thought.

The assumption throughout much of the twentieth century in hermeneutics was that time and temporality were the fundamental building-blocks of hermeneutic philosophy and method. Major works in the tradition such as Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, *History of the Concept of Time*, and Ricoeur’s *Time and Narrative* underscore its importance. Edward Casey, Jeff Malpas, and others have shown that place is as central to hermeneutic thought as time is, and especially with Malpas’s careful work on Heidegger, it is evident that this was more than just a late development in his

thought. It is my hope that this volume is useful to both hermeneuticists, to see new avenues of exploration, and to place and space researchers, who might see more clearly the possibilities in hermeneutics for understanding our human experience of living in the world.

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Part I
Elements of Place, Space
and Hermeneutics

Understanding Place

Abraham Olivier

Abstract Phenomenological interest in place has been focused most intensely on the claim that human experience is essentially bound to place. The phenomenological approach typically pursues the analysis of the essential or universal structures of our experience as worldly or bodily situated subjects. Place, however, trades in and relies on the particularity and contingency of the life world. This raises the question as to how the orientation toward the universal affects place, and how this relates to an alternative approach that takes place as its point of departure. As an attempt to answer this question I shall introduce an exterophenomenological approach toward understanding place as the grounding structure of experience. The result will be to show how place itself can be used as a methodological framework of understanding, thus as a hermeneutical tool.

Philosophical interest in place has been focused most intensely on the phenomenological claim that human experience is essentially bound to place. As Malpas puts it, “...the significance of place is not to be found in our experience of place so much as in the grounding of experience in place, and this binding to place is not a contingent feature of human existence, but derives from the very nature of human thought, experience and identity as established in and through place.”¹

The phenomenological approach typically pursues the analysis of the essential or universal structures of our experience as worldly or bodily situated subjects. Place, however, trades in and relies on the particularity and contingency of the “life world” (See Janz 2009, 6ff). This raises the question as to how the orientation toward the universal affects place, and how this relates to an alternative approach that takes place as its point of departure.²

¹ Cited from the back cover of Malpas’ *Experience and Place* (1999). Malpas’ book draws on a number of classical conceptions of place in literature and philosophy of which phenomenological conceptions are the most prominent.

² This question goes back to suggestions for this book project made by Janz. I am grateful for useful comments he made on the first draft of this chapter.

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My contention is that, given the primary focus of classical phenomenology on the analysis of the essential structures of subjective experience, for phenomenologists, the significance of place typically lies in the essentiality of the subjective experience of place more than in the grounding of experience in the contingency of place in its particularity. The so called “life world,” so I shall argue, is typically understood as an a priori, universal structure of human existence more than in terms of the particularity of place. Husserl’s call for a return to the life world seems to remain pertinent. The core question thus is, What phenomenological approach can claim to ground experience in place without losing its orientation toward the universality of essential structures of experience?

As an attempt to answer the above question I shall grasp the opportunity of adventurous exploration offered by this book and introduce an exterophenomenological approach toward understanding place as the grounding structure of experience. This attempt will be informed by some related discussions in the analytical tradition of philosophy.³ The result will be to show how place itself can be used as a methodological framework of understanding, thus as a hermeneutical key (Sections I, VI).

Section I introduces what I call the exterophenomenological approach. Section II shows how this approach serves as an alternative to standard phenomenological approaches to place. I concentrate on Heidegger’s approach⁴ by comparing his concept of “world” with a place such as a township in order to demonstrate my approach. Section III and IV argue that the exterophenomenological approach serves as a viable alternative to explain the “grounding” of experience, not only in, but, so I argue, *by* place. Section V concludes by showing some methodological implications of the exterophenomenological approach to place.

1 Phenomenology and Exterophenomenology

Exterophenomenology is best introduced in comparison with phenomenology. Consider the following standard definition of phenomenology:

Phenomenology is the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view. The central structure of an experience is its intentionality, its being directed toward something, as it is an experience of or about some object. An experience is directed toward an object by virtue of its content or meaning (which represents the object) together with appropriate enabling conditions. (Smith 2013, 1)

This definition captures the central aspects of what is classically understood under phenomenology. First of all, phenomenology is a study of structures of

³See, for instance, Robbins and Aydede (2009; p. 3ff); Gallagher (2009), Adams and Aizawa (2009, 78ff); see also Thompson (2007), Smith and Thomasson (2005), Malpas (1999, 11 ff.) for discussions comparing continental and analytical views.

⁴Like Malpas (1999, 15ff, 33; 2006, pp. 3ff) I focus on Heidegger and expand on Malpas’ view by arguing that experience is grounded in but also by place.

consciousness qua conscious or first-person experience. The focus on first-person experience is premised on the contention that experience is always lived experience, bound to an experiencing subject. What makes an experience conscious is the awareness that one is the one to have an experience and that one has of an experience while one is living through it.

Analytical philosophers often mistake phenomenology to be merely a first-person description of consciousness, that is, a subjective, private account of “what it is like” to experience, only accessible via the mind’s inward reflection on its own contents, in short introspection (Zahavi 2005, 4,5). However, phenomenology holds that experience essentially has an intentional structure in that it is always directed to or about the meaning of an extramental, publically accessible reality. Although experience is thought to be always first-personal, it is not considered to be confined to a private state but rather third-personally accessible through the meaning of whatever objects it is directed to.

But what is “experience” supposed to be? In contemporary theories of mind “phenomenology” is often confined to a characterisation of phenomenal experience understood as the sensory qualities or qualia of seeing, hearing or feeling, or what it is like to have sensations. However, classically phenomenology does not restrict experience to phenomenal experience, but rather takes it to include various types ranging from sensation, perception, thought, memory, imagination, emotion, desire, and volition to bodily awareness, embodied action, and social activity, including linguistic activity (Smith 2013, 3). As such experience is thought to represent or intend (be directed toward) external objects through impressions, beliefs, concepts, thoughts, ideas, images, desires, feelings, etc. These impressions, beliefs, concepts, thoughts, ideas or images make up the meaning or content of a given experience and are distinct from the things that they represent or mean.

It is important to keep in mind that in phenomenology the concept of representation differs from its use in typical analytical theories of representation such as in perceptual, representational and sense-datum theories.⁵ The underlying contention of these theories is that experience is a mirror-image of the objects that it represents. Either experience directly resembles mind-independent, exteroceptual objects, or it resembles objects indirectly as they appear, thus as mind-dependent, introspective objects. Phenomenological theories distinguish themselves from typical theories of representation by emphasizing the first syllable: re-presentation (Gallagher and Zahavi 2008, 91 ff.). To re-present objects means to have or make objects present or appear to us as what they mean to us, and what impressions, beliefs, perspectives, images, ideas, thoughts, or uses we shall have of them. Whereas typical theories of representation take experience to be an act that directly or indirectly represents entities as detached objects, inside or outside the mind, phenomenology holds that experience represents them as being present from within an act of engagement. Such an act of engagement may involve viewing objects from particular bodily perspectives (enactive perception) as Husserl and Merleau-Ponty show, or, to take

⁵My understanding of the way these theories treat representation is drawn from Aydede’s (2005, 5–30) discussion. See particularly Tye 1997, 332–333 in Aydede 2005, p. 25.

Heidegger's view, using them as equipment (ready to hand). In acts of engagement objects take the meaning that they have in our experience. Thus, what theories of representation typically take to be a representative act-object relation is in phenomenology viewed as a representative act-*meaning*-object relation.

Although phenomenologists believe that all experience, including intransitive experiences such as pain, nausea, or moods, is always in some way connected to objects, the classical phenomenological focus is yet not on the object as such but what it appears like, thus its meaning to the subject of experience. According to Gallagher and Zahavi (2008, 118), who defend the classical position, the fact that experience always involves the meaning of objects cannot lead to the conclusion that we should relocate subjectivity to the outside world. They accuse representational theories of doing just this. This conclusion, so they argue, leads to a reductive explanation of the quality of experience in terms of properties of objects. There is namely a notable difference between what the object is like for the subject and what the experience of the object is like for the subject (Gallagher and Zahavi 2008, 118–9). We can have different experiences, such as thinking, imagining, dreaming, of the same objects. What the object is like for a subject is world-representing, but what the experience of the object is like for the subject is primarily subject-involving.

Defenders of the classical phenomenological position thus resist shifting the focus on the subject to the object of experience. Exterophenomenology explores the shift of focus from the subject to the object by emphasising the hermeneutical significance of the meaning of exteroceptual objects. The “extero” of “exterophenomenology” is employed to put emphasis on the way experience is shaped by the meaning of the particular, external conditions of the life world qua place of acting and living, more than I think phenomenologists are typically prepared to grant. I shall argue that place is not only the site of experience but rather the hermeneutical key to understand its meaning. I aim to show how to understand place in its particularity as the foundation of the meaning of experience, yet without losing sight of the orientation toward the universality of essential structures of experience.

2 Heidegger and the Township

In order to explain my approach in more detail, the following section compares Heidegger's phenomenological analysis of place qua world with an exterophenomenological view of a place such as a township.

It is not easy to delineate the different meanings of place in *Being in Time*, especially because place, in German, *Platz*, encapsulates different terms such as *Gegend*, *Ort* and *Stelle*. It is not my intention to explore all the detailed nuances of place with reference to its German terms like Malpas has helpfully done.⁶ Rather it is more

⁶See Malpas 2006, pp. 27 ff.

important to point at the significance of place in the overall analysis of world and *Dasein* qua being-in-the-world.

To begin with, “Da-sein”, literally translated as “there-being”, basically means to be *placed*, to be involved in the world (Malpas 2006, 46ff, 74ff). In this fundamental sense, place refers to world and our being placed in it. This starts with being situated in our closest and most familiar environment, the equipmental networks in which we are involved. As Heidegger (*ibid*, 80) puts it, our being “in” the world has the meaning of being familiar with things in our environment, hence “in” is not simply understood as a spatial location but rather in terms of our placement in an equipmental environment. Place as such refers both to the larger realm (*Gegend*) within which items of equipment are placed in relation to one another (in, for instance, the workroom) and to what is more like a network of “places” (*Plätze*). Thus place refers to the network of involvements within which things appear to us in an equipmental ordering, “opening up” their meaning qua equipment.

As equipmental network place has a spatial and temporal component. Heidegger does not make the distinction between place and space systematically clear, but as I mentioned above, space is evidently understood in terms of equipmental rather than physical space. As such, space has two main characteristics. One is what Heidegger calls “de-severing”, the other “directionality” (Heidegger 1962, 138 ff.). “De-severing” means “bringing closer” the possible serviceability of objects populating our environment. By utilizing spaces to serve us we are “directed” by their possible use. These characteristics of space are clearly functions of place qua equipmental network which is “ready to hand” to serve our possibilities.

The fact that place serves our possibilities clearly has a temporal component as well, as far as it situates us in a setting where things are simultaneously placed together and yet directed toward their possible serviceability. If we view the world as equipmental space and as such as place qua equipmental network in which we are presently situated but toward which possibilities we are directed, then it is not difficult so see how time is a basic characteristic of place as equipmental space.

This short exposition of place shows it to be at the heart of *Being and Time*, even though it is not treated systematically as its central topic.⁷ Place refers to the world qua networks of things with equipmental meanings in which human being qua *Dasein* is essentially, spatially and temporally, involved. It is significant that for Heidegger our involvement in place manifests as a sense of familiarity, of being at home, residing, or dwelling in and belonging to it (Heidegger 1962, p. 79ff). By situating us in and serving us with equipping networks, place offers us personal possibilities, or as Heidegger used to put it, our “ownmost potentiality to be.” As place frames our ownmost possibilities, we identify with it, we claim ownership, we call

⁷Malpas (1999, 8, 32 ff.) and especially Malpas (2006, 2, 27ff) is justified in arguing that place is the central concept in Heidegger’s thought, at least, what *Being and Time* is concerned, in contrast to Casey’s view (Casey 1997, 243 ff.) that Heidegger treats place in indirect fashion.

it our place, our workroom, our abode, we reside in it as our space of belonging and dwelling.⁸

It is worth mentioning at this point, that there are, as Malpas (1999, 37) points out, strong affinities between Heidegger's and Merleau-Ponty's (1962, 405–407) understanding of world in terms of the *field* of our experience. As a field the structure of place is understood as an open and interconnected *region* within which things, other persons, geographical and abstract spaces can appear, be recognised, and interacted with. As such, so Malpas (1999, 36; 2006, 33ff) argues both in *Place and Experience* and *Heidegger's Topology*, place has the transcendental character of making possible the appearance of the mutual interconnectedness of things, persons and locations constitutive of our experience. An example of such a place is a workroom, which displays an equipmental interconnectedness of things as tools, or place as cyberspace formed by computer or internet networks acting as economic and social spheres of global communication, transportation and distribution of data (Luke 1999, 15ff, 37 ff.).

It is in their local or global platial interconnectedness that things obtain the contextual, that is, spatially regional and temporally situational, meaning that they have in our ordinary experience. In this sense we can view place as a *contextual web of meanings*. This is what the example of the township is meant to show.

Now, consider a place such as the township of Langa in South Africa. As my argument is premised on the contention that place trades in on particularity, let me consider this kind of township in some concrete detail.⁹ South African townships such as Langa are comparable with the inner-city black ghettos of Philadelphia, the *favelas* of Rio, the slums of Delhi, *barrios* of Caracas, the *banlieues* of Paris, council estates of Glasgow, which are by definition, physical locations of crowded housing and meagre services for the poor (Swartz 2009, 14, 186). Like Langa, townships are typically deprived of facilities belonging to towns, such as appropriate housing, water supply, safe streets, functioning schools and medical clinics. Not all townships are like Langa. Some townships such as Soweto or Mdantsane or even Alexandra have well-developed areas with proper housing, schools and hospitals. But typically, townships are underdeveloped; major parts of townships are informal (unplanned) settlements consisting mainly of shacks, which are makeshift structures not erected according to approved architectural plans, made of plywood, corrugated metal, sheets of plastic and cardboard boxes, lacking proper sanitation, safe water supply and electricity (Hall 2013, 109).

My contention is that the township is not a place in the sense that Heidegger's everyday world is a place. The township typically lacks what Heidegger (1962, 98–99) would call “available”, “serviceable”, “conducive” and “usable”, in short, “ready to hand”, equipmental networks. Predatory schools, miserable health services, pitiable housing, inadequate sanitation, poor water supply, are rather examples of basic equipmental networks which are genuinely “conspicuous”, “obtrusive”

⁸ See Malpas (1999, 33; 2006, 58ff; 2014, 15 ff.). See also Malpas' (2006, 19 ff.) defence against criticisms that Heidegger holds a nationalist notion of place qua “*Heimat*” as “homeland”.

⁹ The next exposition on townships is based on my analysis in Olivier 2015.

or “obstinate” in failing their purpose, in short, “unready to hand” (Heidegger 1962, 103, 104). Recovery strategies are hardly in place where normal functioning is impossible; where attempts to restore the “unready-to-hand” to the equilibrium of “ready-to-hand” merely return to the dysfunctional status quo.

One could object that a township is dysfunctional only by political or social standards but maintains some sort of minimal functionality in the sense of “ready to handness”, and that Heidegger was concerned with such functionality. After all there are schools, clinics, water supply and other equipmental systems also in a township such as Langa, and though their functioning is poor, it is at least presupposed. Granted, also townships presuppose a minimal form of functionality in the Heideggerian sense. But, this presupposition is juxtaposed by a setting in which the status quo is not “ready-to-handness” but rather constant “unready-to-handness”. In the Heideggerian sense things mostly work to serve as equipment enabling skilled activity, but in the township the contrary is the case and things which are supposed to work mostly fail to function duly or are simply absent. I do think Heidegger had a functionally enabling framework in mind - and so his critics even when they state that skilled activity is rarely smooth.¹⁰ The township analysis juxtaposes this functional framework by showing a dysfunctional, disenabling setting, one in a constant mode of “unready-to-handness.” Thus dysfunctionality is not a temporary state in the township but its defining feature.

The extero-phenomenological approach puts emphasis on the way experience is shaped by the meaning of particular, external conditions of a place of acting and living such as a township. How far can one drive this approach in reading Heidegger?

Consider two possible objections to this approach.

The first objection might be that Heidegger’s concept of world is not meant in any particularistic sense of place but rather as an a priori condition of being, universally inclusive of all places, including all types of contexts, also townships.

Granted, on the one hand, world (*Welt*), as Heidegger understands the term, is an a priori condition of being. On the other hand, in his understanding, the world is bound to the facticity of our experience of the ordinary environment (*Umwelt*).¹¹ As the township represents an environment that differs significantly from what Heidegger takes to be our ordinary environment, one can indeed read Heidegger towards shifting the focus from the universalistic concept of world as formal category to the particularistic concept of world in terms of place. This particularistic focus allows us to differentiate the universalistic conception of world qua equipmental web by referring to it in terms of a plurality of webs in which objects take different, contextually dependent, meanings. Indeed, we need to qualify the claim that Dasein is in the world by maintaining that Dasein is in *a* world, thus in a particular place. So the world is not one but rather many - places. Thus, being in Heidegger’s ordinary world and in the township could both be understood as to be placed in the world, but in worlds apart.

¹⁰ See Wheeler 2013, 19 and Dreyfus 1990, 100–102.

¹¹ See Heidegger 1962, 94 ff.

The second objection might be that it is at least not correct to make the distinction between Heidegger's world as one with possibilities and the township as one without any, because *Dasein* means for Heidegger *Möglichsein* (being possible), which means to have possibilities, regardless of contexts.

Places qua equipmental networks are, in Heidegger's view, supposed to equip *Dasein* to realise its potentiality to be. In the environment qua equipmental network *Dasein* is purported to pursue possibilities of its choice instead of reverting to options stemming from a disabling context. A universalistic reading of Heidegger would insist that essentially *Dasein* always has possibilities. However, this universalistic contention overrides the fact that a particular place such as a township can be disabling to the extent that it might deprive people of the *choice* of possibilities to realise their potentiality to be. The focus on place shows these as worlds apart, one with authentic possibilities, the other most basically without. Finally, the focus on a particular place such as a township shows how *Dasein* is subject to the contingency of particular places rather than being essentially enabled to be its possibilities regardless of place. This focus on place qualifies the claim that *Dasein* is *Möglichsein* with the addition that this is subject to place. This reading differentiates the notion of *Dasein* in terms of the particularity and contingency of place.

Given this focus on a place such as a township in its particularity, the question now is how the extero-phenomenological approach can serve to advance the claim that experience is "grounded" in (Section III), but also, *by* (Section IV) place.

3 The Place of Care

This question brings us to a more detailed exploration of the contention that experience is "grounded" in place qua contextual web of meanings. This can be well done once again with recourse to a comparison of Heidegger's analysis of our experience of the ordinary world with a place such as a township.

Our most fundamental experience of being in the world is, according to Heidegger, expressed by the term "care" (*Sorge*).¹² He introduces his concept of care as both a mode of concern with things and solicitude regarding others within the equipmental networks in which we are involved. The fact that we encounter things as equipment implies that these things are "ready to hand" also for others who will share our interest to use equipment and the networks of skilful dealings that we are mutually involved in, in short, others are essentially part of our world, *Dasein* is *Mitsein* (being-with) (Heidegger 1962, 149 ff., 154–156). However, in the main we do not show solicitude by caring for others in what Heidegger calls the authentic way of "leaping ahead" of them and so freeing them for their possibilities (*ibid*, 158–9). Our ordinary encounters with others is rather characterised by indifference in which the other is, what Heidegger famously calls, *das Man*, "ordinary

¹²Like Inwood (1999, p. 2), I take the English translation "care" to capture the encompassing meaning of the German *Sorge*.

man” (*ibid*, 164). The assumption is, however, that the ordinary equipmental networks that we are involved in function well to serve everyone so that everyone, and no one in particular, is taken care of in an indifferent way - everyone is no-one in particular.

My contention is that “care” does not completely capture social concerns in the township. The more appropriate word, I suggest, is “struggle”, a term that stems from the “freedom struggle” against apartheid.¹³ But that “struggle” has changed faces. In the township where nothing functions properly, where the houses are shacks without running water, the streets dirty and dangerous, where schools and also medical services are dysfunctional or not available, where violent crime, gangs, drugs, and sexual abuse have become normalised or even entertainment, people struggle, but what once was “struggle” in the sense of an extraordinary political resistance movement has been transformed to a mundane battle to cope with everyday life. The township lacks the infrastructures, the enabling equipmental network of possibilities, which constitutes Heidegger’s ordinary world. One takes care of or does not care about what is working, but one *struggles* with what is consistently *not* working, has never worked, or is absent.

In Heidegger’s world there is solicitude when we have the authentic choice to free each other for our possibilities (*ibid*, 158–9). It is open to discussion whether ordinary human relations are adequately captured by Heidegger’s practical or equipmental notion of care.¹⁴ For the context of the township at least, this notion of “care” does not seem to be pertinent. People in the township are caught in disabling networks in which they are not free to play enabling roles. If you are living in an enabling environment you might be able to, as Heidegger argues, liberate the other by “leaping ahead” of her and so freeing her for her possibilities. The prevalent dysfunctional and hostile world of the township lacks such an enabling environment. How do you, for instance, liberate your children for their possibilities if you cannot but deliver them to dysfunctional schools subject to all kinds of criminality?

One might object that Heidegger’s concept of care is an umbrella term inclusive of the concept of struggle; for instance, one struggles to care or to “leap ahead of” the other when it becomes a great effort to cope with what is “unready to hand”. So, why employ “struggle” if “care” can do the job as well?

Care presupposes an enabling world where things mostly work and where one struggles to cope only occasionally with disturbances. But in the disabling world of the township where one is in a constant mode of grappling with the problem of making things work, one only occasionally has the privilege to assume care for what works well. Care does not entail struggle, because we care about possibilities that are available in an enabling equipmental network but struggle with what is not available in a disabling context.

¹³This exposition of “struggle” is a reworked version of my discussion in Olivier 2015. “Struggle” is also the term Swartz (2009: p. 166) uses to describe the dominant mode of being in a township.

¹⁴See Dreyfus (1990), in Wheeler 2013, p. 33.

The major point of this comparison is to show how a place such as a township completely changes what Heidegger calls our most fundamental experience as beings in the world. What is decisive is not to oppose Heidegger's view but to qualify and augment it by showing how experience is "grounded" in place and how what we might take to be a fundamental experience all humans share is subject to the contingent conditions of particular places of living. No matter how much people might try to experience the township as a place of care, their experience of that place will remain one in which one struggles to survive.

4 The World in its Particularity and Contingency

Thus far I have defended the claim that experience is "grounded" in place and as such subject to the contingent conditions of particular places such as townships. In the next section I shall go a step further and argue that experience is not only grounded in but also *by* place in its particularity.

Recall that I pointed out in the first section that typical theories of representation take experience to be an act that directly or indirectly represents entities as detached objects inside or outside the mind. Phenomenology, on the contrary, holds that experience represents objects as being present from within an act of engagement. Thus representation means making present what objects, with which we are engaged by virtue of enactive perception or equipmental use, mean to us. In Heidegger's terms, we don't represent things qua detached objects "present at hand" for them to have meaning but rather we deal with things as being meaningful because they are "ready to hand" within an equipmental network of interconnected meanings. In this network we don't couple objects with the meaning that they might have as equipment, but rather we encounter them primordially in terms of their interconnected equipmental meaning. I called such an interconnection of meanings place. This means, we encounter objects primordially in terms of their platial meaning. So we don't have a process of engagement with things in a place, causing as another process, an experience of these things and this place; rather in a single process our interconnected engagement with things is of a platial nature and is as such constitutive of our experience. To emphasise this constitutive relation, I contend that experience is not only grounded in but *by* place.

This constitutive relation is contingent, for subjects are involved in and shaped by particular webs of meanings in interaction with other subjects within different spatial locations and temporal settings, thus the meaning of the same objects might vary from within different contextual webs of meaning. It is in this contingently constitutive sense that experience is grounded by place in its particularity.

Exterophenomenology has its focus on the constitutive particularity and contingency of place qua web of meanings within which people are involved but often also caught. Phenomenology typically places the onus on the universal structures of the experience of subjects in the world, and though the particular enabling conditions of their place of living is principally considered, the focus is on the subject of experience

itself and its universalisable essential features more than its particular placement in the world. Heidegger's analysis of Dasein, at least if understood from a universalist position, serves as a good example of how the concept of care is used and defended as the universal expression of our most fundamental experience of being in the world, no matter what the environment might look like. The particularity of the environment itself is overridden by a universalistic concept of world as the a priori enabling condition that structures experience. The fact that the environment might be disenabling rather than enabling and that the structure of experience might be place dependent, is not considered as a structural option. After all, the life world, that is, the particular conditions of ordinary living, to which Heidegger intended to return with his phenomenology, remains "forgotten".

Exterophenomenology advocates a return to the life world, a return to the particular way platial conditions in their contingency constitute experience. This approach is an alternative to phenomenology as far as it radicalises the focus on the intentional boundness of experience to the world qua place in its particularity and contingency. However, in the final section, I show that this position can be held without losing sight of the phenomenological orientation toward the universality of essential structures of experience.

5 Methodological Implications of an Exterophenomenology of Place

To recapitulate, I have introduced an exterophenomenology of place by suggesting a way to advance the claim that the significance of place lies not in the analysis of our experience of place but in understanding the way experience is grounded in and also *by* place. In conclusion I would like to show some methodological implications of an exterophenomenology of place.

Firstly, the exterophenomenological approach to meaning shifts the focus from the orientation toward universal structures of experience toward the exploration of the place-bound particularity of experience. The implication is that the understanding of place turns place itself into a methodological framework of understanding experience, in short, a hermeneutical key. Thus place is not just the site of the meaning of experience, but the way that we access its meaning.

Secondly, the exterophenomenological focus on the constitution of experience in and by place qua contextual web of meanings opens experience to third-personal inquiry on a universal level, even though place trades in and relies on particularity and contingency. We can all understand place from within an objective third-person inquiry, but we shall understand it in its particularity as a place of living. This means, we can universally understand the way that experience is constituted by place as a particular kind of experience. This is what the township example demonstrates. Within such a place a basic concept of experience such as care, for instance, becomes struggle. This will go for many other experiences in other places as well. The focus on place opens up the universally accessible particularity of experience as placed. This particularity will differentiate any general understanding of experience. Hence

we can say, from an extero-phenomenological perspective, place trades in experience as a universally accessible particular.

Malpas' (1999, 40; 2006, 35) and Janz's (2009, 29 ff.) idea of topography or mapping is a useful metaphor also for the extero-phenomenological approach. Instead of seeking to offer a map that captures, in abstract, the essential features of a landscape, one draws a map while one explores the landscape, which means that the map will be dynamically revised as long as the exploration continues. In a sense such mapping runs in circles as far as the landscape offers itself always anew to constant exploration. The essentialist features of universalistic mapping overrides such exploration. The platial approach advocates a return to the life world in its particularity and contingency as a living landscape. This particularistic focus allows us to differentiate the universalistic concept of the world by speaking of it in terms of *a* world qua plurality of contextual webs of meanings. Thus we can say, to be human means to be in a place, however, place in itself is not one but many.

Thirdly, used as a hermeneutical tool, place enables to understand the particular conditions constitutive of experience in a way that helps to address the problem of privacy discussed in the first section. If experience is taken to be constituted by our engagement with the meaning of things, persons, and locations, as placed in an externally based contextual web of meanings, then experience is released from the private, internal, subjective realm typically envisaged by philosophers of mind, and put on a level accessible to third person inquiry. In short, a study of how people are placed will lead to an understanding of much of their experience. I say "much" because, as phenomenologists reiterate, experience remains first-personal consciousness, which means, lived by a particular subject whose feelings, desires, believes, dreams, thoughts, pains and pleasures cannot be fully accessible to our own experience. So, for instance, although one can understand the experience of people living in a township such as Langa by studying their engagement with the web of meanings of things and others within this place, such studying will have to engage such people as phenomenologists in their own right, best capable of recounting their first-personal experience. Ideally, the engaged residents will change the questions as the trained scholar asks them. They show us the limits of our own questioning, in large part because they are the ones fluent in the place. The extero-phenomenological focus on place serves as a constant reminder that any objective analysis of experience remains accountable to, but also limited by, the placedness of an experiencing person. It is one thing to understand persons' experience by studying its grounding in and by place, another to be the person who lives in and is grounded by that place. The epistemology of third-personal enquiry will never completely reach the ontology of first-personal placedness. This is not because the experience of the other remains in the last instance elusive, but rather because the other is situated or embodied in place. I can't take over another body, and there is nothing elusive about that.

Fourthly, the extero-phenomenological focus on the grounding of experience in and by place has a critical aspect that can be associated with what is called a hermeneutics of suspicion. This pertains to the exploration of the conditions and limits of contextual webs of meanings. Some define place in terms of "belonging," or what

people would call “abode” or “home”. The township is a place that demonstrates that often a place shows people being displaced, homeless, expelled and not-belonging. Nobody cannot be at a place, thus in a sense place is an a priori of being. But it is one thing to be at a place and another to belong there. People who have no choice but to live in shacks in a dysfunctional place such as Langa take this as their home only because they have no other choice, but essentially they are displaced and their basic experience of the world will not be one of caring but struggling. A hermeneutics of suspicion explores in what sense people are allowed choices to take part in the contextual networks of meanings that they are delivered to or not, how far they are excluded from options other ordinary networks might offer or not. Typically our ordinary world offers, via the internet and its media, global networks of meaning, which are purported to be of open access. But, at the very least, these global networks, or cyberspace, presuppose a basic functional milieu. Children growing up in shacks in Langa – or ghettos of Philadelphia, *favelas* of Rio, or slums of Delhi – are not given this chance. Placed in such townships a significant amount of people will be denied access to the world wide web of meanings.¹⁵ A hermeneutics of suspicion is focused on circles of exclusion and inclusion in the contextual webs of meaning that the world offers in all its particularity.

Finally, the extero-phenomenological approach is not only of a critical but also creative nature. Consider the philosophically important concepts of world or experience. By taking seriously the particularities of a place such as the township, one is, for instance, challenged to qualify, differentiate or alternate general concepts of experience as disposition of care as demonstrated in Heidegger’s case. The consideration of the particularities of meaning bound to place challenges us to rethink or even reinvent our abstract concepts as used in universal discourse. By considering place, philosophers are thus challenged to augment, differentiate, alter or renew their abstract concepts of whatever they take to be the world and what really matters in it.

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¹⁵A billion people worldwide are believed to live in shacks, and if Mike Davis in his book *Planet of Slums* is right, most people will in the future (Davis 2006, 19ff, 24 ff.) See also *The Routledge Handbook of Global Citizenship Studies* (Engen and Nyers 2014).

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Is Place a Text?

Bruce B. Janz

Abstract Textuality is a central feature of much hermeneutics, and is implicit in much analysis of place from a hermeneutical point of view, but has not often been analyzed. This chapter considers the usefulness and limits of the metaphor of text for place. While there is no doubt that our engagement with place can be textualized, it is useful to a hermeneutics of place to hold the metaphor of textuality in abeyance and consider what other forms of meaning or its lack or absence might arise with the use of other metaphors. I consider other metaphors, specifically place as body, place as scene, place as image/visuality, and place as haunting, to try to highlight aspects of place that might be easy to overlook if we take the text to be the act of understanding itself rather than a metaphor with its own provenance and horizons.

There was a time, not all that long ago, when all we could talk about was textuality. From the time that Derrida told us that “Il n’y a pas de hors-texte,” or “There is no outside-text,” critical scholarship enthusiastically debated the nature and status of textuality, what form it took, how deep it went, how stable it was. This peaked in about 1994 (at least, according to Google Books Ngram Viewer, admittedly a blunt instrument when it comes to semantics), and sharply dropped off thereafter. From our vantage point today, discussing textuality seems almost quaint or outdated (“text” has also seen a drop in usage, but not as marked and not as clear when it comes to theoretical uses). At this point (and again Google comes to the rescue, this time Google Scholar) the majority of uses of the term seem to focus on digital studies and the shifting nature of texts as shared production and consumption and the changing nature of narrative in digital space.

The waxing and waning of concept usage is fascinating. Are we talking less about textuality because we have worked out all the issues by this point and have come to some sort of agreement on what we mean by it and how it works? Because the battle lines from the 1980s are no longer there? Because the problematic has exhausted itself, that is, the range of possible questions that a concept activates has

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been worked out, like an exhausted mine? Or have we just moved on to something else, as our conceptual ecology shifts focus?

The question is a significant one for anyone taking hermeneutics seriously, because “text” and “textuality” are concepts that have enormous (albeit sometimes ambiguous) currency. Classically, contemporary philosophical hermeneutics has depended on the metaphor of textuality, and despite its centrality, I will maintain throughout this chapter that it is a metaphor. The central transcendental question of hermeneutics, which is something like “How is understanding possible at all, and how is it implemented practically” quickly moves to what seems to be a similar question, but which is not: “How do we explicate the most ubiquitous image of the site and context of understanding, the text?” As has been pointed out, though, discussions about textuality have waned, and so we might imagine that the case for hermeneutics has been established. It is more likely, though, that those who regard human meaning as fundamentally textual have simply continued in this belief, and those who have always questioned the applicability of “text” as a model for human life have moved on to other questions. In other words, we may have simply exhausted the discussion about texts and textuality in the terms it has been presented in the past.

After a paper I gave at a conference on place and space, I asked the audience whether place was a text. The response I got was instant and incredulous – of course, what else could it possibly be? All intelligibility and all meaning, my audience thought, could only be textual intelligibility and meaning. The conference was not a literature or rhetoric conference, but an interdisciplinary conference on space and place, and so it was strange that the metaphor of textuality was not seen as a metaphor with a history of use and limits to usefulness, but as the very act of intelligibility itself, and the only obviously viable mode of understanding place. It is this assumption that I want to question in this chapter.

If the frame of reference is the hermeneutic tradition, the debt of understanding to a textual tradition is unsurprising. But it is still a metaphor. It still has its roots as a technology and a set of practices in a specific history and cultural space. This is not to say that texts only exist within a single cultural space, but that they are theorized and part of sets of practices that are the stuff of culture itself. Furthermore, there is more than just a metaphor, there are exemplars of the metaphor, which underscore a particular approach to understanding. It is not just any text that gives us the quintessential or ideal interpretive space. Religious texts first, and later artistic texts, in both Heidegger and Gadamer, are the best exemplars of textuality, and then these exemplars are absorbed into hermeneutics, leaving their traces. As Gadamer says, “[e]very work of art, not only literature, must be understood like any other text that requires understanding ... *Aesthetics has to be absorbed into hermeneutics.*” (Gadamer *Truth and Method* 2004, 157, italics in original; see Schmidt 2015 for more). In other words, even as textuality is the very nature of understanding in any form, the textuality that hermeneutics tends to regard as determinative has a particular history and form.

And so, the task of this chapter will be to prise apart the text from the act of understanding when it comes to how we address place. As Edward Casey, Jeff

Malpas and others have amply demonstrated via Heidegger and others, our fundamental mode of being is *platial* (Casey 1993; Malpas 2012). We cannot extract ourselves from place and regard it at arm's length, and we cannot think ourselves as anything but *platial*. Dwelling is as fundamental as temporality. But that then raises a question for the metaphor of the text. We can see in Heidegger, Gadamer and others that it is our encounter with the text, however that is conceived, that brings us into reflective being. Is text, then, just another term for place, or vice versa? If it is neither, what are the differences? Does text exceed place, or place exceed text, or perhaps both? Can we maintain the fundamental insight that place is constitutive of the self if we allow ourselves to think about place in a manner other than textual, or more than textual? And, assuming that we can continue to see place as constitutive of the self, what would it mean for place to be a fundamental act and site of understanding, but for that to be thought more broadly than the metaphor of the text?

I wish to re-ask the question in this chapter's title in a slightly different form. "Is place a text?" is perhaps more pithy, but the following question might be closer to the point: "Does textuality exhaust the possibilities of place?" Is place a text, or is place textualized as an act of understanding, but could be rendered otherwise, also as an act of understanding? And, if all concepts have their limits, what are the limits of thinking through textuality, and in particular the specific forms of textuality that hermeneutics has classically used as its exemplars? The title of this chapter is in the form of a question, as is my revision, which might suggest that this chapter is an answer to that question. Instead, though, I wish to use the question as an opening to consider the range of modes we have for understanding place. I wish to argue that place is not so much a text as it is a mode of questioning, and a site for questioning. We question places, and they question us, in a hermeneutical exchange that may seem dialectical (and takes that character in part from Heidegger and Gadamer in their discussions of the nature of questioning), but in fact also resembles the tensions and intensities that Deleuze and Guattari posit as the nomadic condition of the *bios*. The metaphor of textuality describes certain features of the site of questioning, and privileges some modes of understanding place over others. I want to suggest other possible metaphors for place that make other forms of questioning available.

"Text" is a term that has etymological and provenantial roots that run from Greek to Latin to old French, before arriving in English. A text is an inscription, but it has similar roots to words such as "textile" and "texture." In Latin text is the participial stem of *texĕre*, which refers to something that is woven or fabricated. ("text, n. 1," OED 2015) Origin is not destiny, of course, much less meaning, and the mere fact that the word "text" has these roots tells us little about its provenance (or to use a more Gadamerian term, its tradition). Gadamer, in *Truth and Method*, gives a kind of story of provenance about textuality, one which would see it as a series of successive broadenings towards a universal hermeneutic, which comes with successive broadenings of what counts as a text. (Gadamer 2004; see also Palmer 1969, pp. 38–45 for an extended discussion of this understanding of the history of hermeneutics). The text is originally exemplified by the religious text, a text that has continuous contemporary moral authority even as it recedes into history. Schleiermacher realizes that the techniques developed for the Bible may be relevant for any text, and sets forth a hermeneutics modelled on the religious text that accounts for the rich-

ness of meaning we derive from any text. Dilthey broadens hermeneutics to apply to social situations, effectively turning society into a text. Nietzsche and others realize that we can regard ourselves as texts, and fictional ones at that, texts not determined by their outside references but in their own terms (which is why “good” and “evil” are less important than “interesting” in the story we write about ourselves). Heidegger broadens the discussion further, making it possible to see not just ourselves as individuals but Being itself as hermeneutic. Gadamer grounds this Being in tradition, effectively turning textuality’s own provenance into its own frame, without regarding that frame as determinative or strictly causal.

In each case, the touchstone is a version of textuality, one which becomes more stretched over time, but which nevertheless has a provenance. As the text broadens, it becomes much more encompassing of all sorts of language events and signification (Heidegger, after all, focuses far more on language than on texts themselves, Silverman 1994, 54). Gadamer, indeed, maintains the link to textuality – *Truth and Method* came about because he wanted to make clear his “practice of the interpretation of texts and [his] teaching generally.” (Misgeld & Nicholson, eds., 63). One might, of course, see Gadamer as a kind of retrenchment toward textuality after Heidegger’s move to the hermeneutics of existence (as Odo Marquard remarked, perhaps Gadamer replaced Heidegger’s “Being-toward-death” with “Being-toward-the-text.” (Marquard 1981, 130)) Ricoeur, finally, reasserts a more limited version of textuality (a text is “discourse fixed by writing,” a preservation of textuality with a move away from the *Lebensphilosophie* in Dilthey’s definition of the text as “expressions of life fixed in writing”, Ricoeur 1981, 145), not to overturn hermeneutics but to address seemingly hostile approaches the model of understanding as textual from Marx, Freud, Saussure, and Derrida, among others (of course, Gadamer does the same in “Text and Interpretation”, Gadamer 2007).

It is worth noting that the expansion of the text also means a kind of move away from the text, at least inasmuch as the stance toward the text is one of interpretation. Heidegger, for instance, explicitly positions hermeneutics as the bearing of a message, and does not particularly emphasize textuality (one struggles, in fact, to find a direct reference to textuality, as opposed to language, works of art, or some specific form of “conversation” such as poetry). Having said that, one might say that the approach to the text is what has been broadened, such that the literal text falls away as an inadequate or distracting metaphor for understanding. So, as the text becomes a broader metaphor, so too does the approach to the text move from an inscription to language itself.

1 Place and Textuality

Textuality, then, is a core concept for hermeneutics. As Jeff Malpas among others has shown, place too is a core concept in hermeneutics (Malpas 2015). It is natural to think, then, that there is a relationship here, that place is simply a specific kind of text, or perhaps the necessary context of all texts. And, there is no doubt that there

are at least some textual elements to place. We read places. We write them, individually and collectively. They are not only meaningful, they are the structure of meaning, that is, they are the context in which meaning happens. Of course, not every place may be meaningful, but that is not the point. Not every text is meaningful either, at least not to everyone, not all the time. We recognize texts as being texts in another language, or perhaps in no language at all (for example, the Voynich Manuscript). Texts are the space of understanding for hermeneutics. In fact, we might expand the parallels between texts and places:

1. There is in both some sort of inscription. There is a “fixing” of discourse, whether intentional or not. A path through a wood inscribes a social space, even if it was not intended as inscription. Architecture orders space and in doing so suggests practices, even while remaining open to transgressive “readings” of their physicality.
2. There is reading, or there are readings. If place is a text, what does it mean to read it? It might mean comprehending place, but it might also mean performing, enacting, or practicing place. Enacting place (or “practicing” place, as de Certeau might have it, de Certeau 1984, 91–110) might turn it into space, but it might simply activate place, rendering its possibilities as actualities. Practicing place would mean tracing the paths that have been laid down before, but also creating new paths, even transgressing obvious or prescribed readings of places. Reading place, then, does not just mean the ability to apprehend the signifiers of place in a way that allows one to be at home in a place. It means creating and re-creating elements of a place in such a way that it is renewed. Gadamer’s annual festival is an apt platial image of the ways in which performative re-creation maintains the spirit and meaning of a place.
3. There might be a literacy or lack thereof. In other words, there might be an acquired ability to apprehend place. A person may not be versed in the vernacular of a place, or in the signifiers which come out of a subculture. There may, in other words, be something beyond the observation that place is like language. Language may or may not be a natural capacity for humans, but a particular language, that in which a text is written, is certainly not, even though we do not manifest our capacity for “language” in the abstract. Likewise, our engagement with place may only be manifest through our engagement with places, all of which function like a text in a language, requiring literacy and other sorts of familiarity. We might see this as the hermeneutic circle of place.
4. There may be authors and there may be audiences for both texts and places. We need not imagine a divine author to see places, even “natural” ones, as having human and cultural imprints, in concert with the imprints of nonhumans. This is true for any place – the textuality of place is always a layered, sometimes contradictory, always variegated affair.
5. There is a kind of boundedness for both places and texts. Meaning is made available through materiality and tradition. Places, like texts, show forth a world. There are horizons of meaning for both, and prejudices, in Gadamer’s sense.

6. There is reflexivity in both texts and places. The operative question asked by both a text and a place, especially for Gadamer, is “Who are you who can read me this way?” A reading shows forth a way of being. The ontological structuring of text and place in relation to our own subjectivity, at both the individual and the social level, is crucial. Neither text nor place are arm’s-length encounters, and neither are merely objects for analysis, interpretation, or deciphering without also being ways of showing the prejudices of the self in making specific choices about those things.
7. There are mediums. To the extent that we think about textuality on the model of print publication (which is for the most part assumed throughout the development of hermeneutic theory, despite Gadamer’s extension of textuality to art), we imagine that text is identical to its medium from a hermeneutic point of view. Place, too, is not just virtual, at least not from a hermeneutic point of view. Even digital place is not wholly virtual – it is the product of practices and performances that have various levels of reference to practices and performances in material space. If place is a text, it too is inscribed on something, in a way that can be read differently by different people, that can be rewritten and reinterpreted.
8. There are genres, that is, there are sets of conventions that we use to shorthand both texts and places. This suggests that in both there are narratives, some of which are common enough in some respects to merit a label. We have mysteries and vampire novels and poetry; we have strip malls and government spaces and national parks. With all these we can push the edges of the genres, and with all these we can wish for or imagine a (possibly idealized) genre-less form, texts and places that are wholly original. That wish is likely to go unfulfilled, though, as we continually trade on already familiar elements.
9. We can have a hermeneutics of trust and a hermeneutics of suspicion. There can be an apparent meaning of a place, and a meaning that is held back, or only available to some. Places can be banal or profound, as can texts. They can be derivative; they can hold one superficial meaning while disguising or eliding others. Places, like texts, are nothing without their engagement, without the kinds of reading they can be subjected to, and so we can easily imagine a place that presents itself as benign to someone while being something much more sinister to someone else, someone of a different race or culture or class.
10. There is an affective element to both text and place. We have an orientation toward both texts and places that shows us for who we are, that predisposes us toward particular reactions, formations, and implications. This affect is more than just an internalized subjectivity or prior attitude that colors an otherwise “objective” text or place, but arises in the encounter, as a mode of understanding.
11. There is no retrieval of an “original,” either with texts or places. We find ourselves within tradition in both cases, faced with a neverending chain of what has been.
12. For Ricoeur at least, the text is the “long route” through the analysis of language (as opposed to Heidegger’s “short route”, the analysis of Dasein), by

which he means the establishment of a world in which the text interacts with other texts as opposed to being the expression of a pre-judgment (see Ricoeur 1974, p. 11, and also Ricoeur 1976 for a fuller account). If taken in these terms, the text as metaphor for place suggests a kind of productive distancing, a “world” as opposed to a situation (Ricoeur 1976, 36–37).

Without question, then, the metaphor of textuality is useful for understanding place. There are, to be sure, potential problems with this parallel. For instance, what do we make of natural places? If texts and places are by definition the basis of and framework for understanding, are we committed to nature being a place only inasmuch as it has engaged with humans? Natural place is, for some, the quintessential place, and yet if it is, it might seem as if we are committed to some version of, on the one hand, either transcendentalism or romanticism (and in both cases, ultimately some version of anthropocentrism as well), or on the other some version of bio/zoo-semiotics. In other words, if the natural world is a text, it might either be a divine text or one that deals with meaning very differently from hermeneutics. If place is a text, we are faced with the question of whose text it is. Are we faced with the “book of nature,” the classic parallel between text and natural place, in which the meaningfulness of place is assured because of its divine authorship? Or is it just the palimpsest of innumerable natural actions, scientifically readable but not rooted in any textual tradition? It is perhaps no accident that when hermeneutics has considered the question of place, it has largely focused on built place – architecture, urban and rural space that has had human intervention. Heidegger’s essay “Building Dwelling Thinking” makes that connection clear – to dwell is to build in a specific manner, one which allows human existence to flourish (Heidegger 1975). Place, then, is understandable to the extent that it is not wholly other, to the extent that building has allowed *alethia* to occur. This makes the hermeneutic project a very human one (see, for instance, the range of approaches in Treanor 2015, all of which have in common a human engagement with the environment), which at least raises the question of what might happen if we imagine decentering the human in the interpretive act (of course, such an imagination is still a human imagination, and so the mere act of imagining does not move us into the space of the non-human). The result, for instance, of thinking about the environment hermeneutically has been to think of it narratively (e.g., van Buren 1995).

The same, it should be said, is true of other “places” that have no human engagement. If we live in the Anthropocene now, what do we make of the time before or outside of that age? All that is true of the limits of regarding nature as a place would also be true for regarding anything outside of the Anthropocene as a place. These questions are close to those raised by Quentin Meillassoux and Alain Badiou concerning to the critique of the assumption of finitude (for a more extended response to this, see S. Purcell 2010).

The response to these questions, I want to argue, does not lie in abandoning the hermeneutical project, nor even in abandoning the central metaphor of textuality, but in placing it alongside other metaphors and resisting the inclination to reduce metaphors to each other. This will have the effect of bringing fundamental difference and

dialogue within the bounds of hermeneutics itself, as a question at the heart of hermeneutics, rather than regarding hermeneutics as a method which is above and prior to all human practices of meaning. Seeing the fissures between disparate metaphors for place as a task for hermeneutics, as a space of dialogue within hermeneutics itself, will accomplish what has rarely been done with hermeneutics or indeed with most other dialects of philosophy – to see thought itself as being in place.

2 At the Edges of Textuality

So, clearly textuality is **a** central, perhaps **the** central metaphor for place. At the same time, there are frayed edges, places where the metaphor shows its limits. These are the places, I will argue, where many of the interesting questions about place arise. One way to see what those questions might be is to suggest other metaphors for place, with a hope that the fraying is productive. We have already seen that there is an exemplar of textuality that haunts the discussion within hermeneutics, the religious and the aesthetic text. We have seen that textuality is an intervention of some sort, and that nature itself may be one of those limits, the unthought limit that describes the border of the efficacy of the textual metaphor. One who is committed to the metaphor as more than a metaphor, that is, as the very nature of understanding itself, might be inclined to argue that everything can be textualized, and that person would be correct. But if we hold that impulse in abeyance for a moment, we can start to investigate the new ideas that emerge at the edges of our metaphors.

There are many possible alternative metaphors; we will only consider a few here.

These are: place as body, place as scene, place as image/visuality, place as haunting.

1. Place as Body David Morris, in his chapter on Edward Casey in the present volume says this: “[T]he discovery of periphenomena wakes Casey to place as itself undermining determinate presence, thence turning him to a topological variant of Derrida, or of Merleau-Ponty’s later ontology of an invisible that indwells in the visible yet is nowhere fully present. These works ... suggest a ‘deconstructive’ hermeneutics of place, that challenges any approach to place as a fully present ‘text’ already there to be interpreted.”

Morris’ comment on Casey points to the ways in which place, like body, is not always already present. To the extent that texts are fixed, places are not. Of course, texts might not be fixed either, inasmuch as they are part of layered and contradictory interpretations over time. And yet, it is at least possible that place has more fluidity, or at least viscosity, than a text demands. As Merleau-Ponty suggests, the invisible dwells in the visible, and just as the body shows forth those modes of being, so too do places. We might be tempted to subsume both bodies and places under the essential structures of meaning that texts move us towards – after all, to regard something as a text is to regard it as at least in principle interpretable. Bodies, and

places, also live at the edge of the uninterpretable. They are not simply what is not yet known, but may be what is never known.

But places, like bodies, also know. Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela developed the concept of “autopoiesis”, the idea that living bodies are self-organizing systems. Places operate in the same manner, at least in the sense that they operate as coherent, responsive, positive feedback models. They are not quasi-Romantic forms of consciousness (the dream of Gaia is a futile one), but they are contained but permeable modes of knowledge which require that we respond as knowledge responds to knowledge, rather than as knowledge responds to object of investigation. (Janz 2009)

In some ways, this is the form most appropriate for natural places.

2. Place as Scene The scene, unlike the dwelling, is a synchronic mode of place-making. The “gay scene” or the “jazz scene” is less about temporality (and hence the sense of being un-homed) than it is about shifting and provisional theatrical constructions of place. It is transgressive, place played off against place, edges always in play. Alan Blum (Blum 2003) gives the best description of the scene, and at the same time points out the central issue at stake in the scene: “One crucial interpretive site where the question of the scene – its parameters and boundaries – comes alive is around the issue of *becoming*, that is, of coming-to-be and perishing.” (Blum 2003, 168). It is all about the wager of the space – what does it mean to be in or out, and how can one’s actions be appropriate to the shifting patterns and requirements of the scene? Hermeneutics has tended to be a theory of being. Blum raises the question of how place, in this case a shifting social place, is a space of becoming. Hermeneutics has rendered moments of change as moments on the way to or from *alethia*, instances of the manifestation of being or its covering-over. Using the metaphor of scene makes it possible to think place not as fundamentally a mode of being, but of becoming, not as always provisional, lacking, and a form of negation, but as positive. In the scene, we do not move to a dwelling, but dwell by moving (for a picture of this, see Wise 2000).

3. Place as Image/Visuality Isn’t an image just a text? Certainly Gadamer assumed that – he moved very quickly to visual art, and *Bild* and its cognates renders the act of understanding ambiguous between language and visual sensation. And yet, it might be worth resisting this easy equation, at least provisionally and heuristically.

Visuality presupposes distanciation, as does textuality, but in a different manner. Ricoeur argues that the distanciation of the text embeds it in a world in which the mode of understanding is no longer specifically related to author and audience (as problematic as those both are), but to other texts. The distanciation of the image is not just about answering to a different set of imperatives, though. It is about remembering the creative event that occurs as an artist creates an experience. Gadamer knew this, but folded it back into textuality. Is there not creativity in the production of a text? Of course there is. But there is also a materiality in much artistic creation which is absent from most textual production, or at least incidental to it. There are, of course, always exceptions to this, but the point here is to create a tension, to resist the easy deflation of all art into forms of textuality. Keith Harder’s chapter in this

volume underscores this materiality – his description of working with the paint and engaging place through land art suggests a kind of presence to the edges of understanding, to the place that resists textualization.

4. Place as Haunting Derrida spoke of the “specters of Marx” and the “hauntology” that was part of political theory today (Derrida 1994). What is less recognized is that he uses similar terms in talking about place (“lieu”), which he does with surprising frequency in later writings. Derrida is usually seen as anything but a fellow traveler with hermeneuticists, based on the unsatisfying dialogue with Gadamer and his continual reconfiguration of phenomenology. At the same time, especially later in his life, he encounters his own places, not primarily to theorize “place” in some rigorous sense, but to think through his “debts and duties” to his places. And so, his childhood in Algeria, his love of Strasbourg, his French-ness, his Jewishness – all these are moments in which he finds a different kind of haunting, a different engagement with spatiality than those who only know his work on *khōra* might see. It is the cinders, the “there which is not there” that first comes from Derrida himself being haunted by the Holocaust, and then also being haunted by the troubled history of Algeria, and his own history within that country. Catherine Malabou captures some of this in *Counterpath* (Malabou and Derrida 2004), a sense of what haunts Derrida as he re-imagines his philosophy in the different places he finds himself throughout his life.

We might ask what kind of place can happen in this haunting. There is a sense that place is the moment of the event, the *Ereignis* in which haunting brings into being a specificity that distinguishes a place as having meaning. This is certainly consistent with Heidegger, and would be a debt that Derrida carries from Heidegger (and of course, also from Marx, as he outlines in *Specters of Marx*, 1994). And there are stories of haunting within the phenomenological tradition (Bell 1997). But there is another version of place, rooted in becoming rather than being, that we might see in someone like Deleuze and the concept of the virtuality. Here too we have place, but now a place of creation. Place is not just the object of or occasion for meaning to be expressed, but the locus of the encounter between world and self, and as such, it is the place of a new creation.

3 Conclusion

There is a seeming tension between the idea that hermeneutics “points to a universal ontological structure” (Gadamer 2004, 470) and one of the core aspects of hermeneutics, that dialogue and the encounter of difference is a central moment in understanding. Does hermeneutics itself exist in dialogue, and if so, dialogue with what (Janz 2015)? What is the other of hermeneutics that makes dialogue possible? My contention here is that hermeneutics itself has a place, an intellectual set of formative conditions and questions, along with an audience, as part of its development. It does indeed point to a universal ontological structure, but the operative words here are

“point to.” To the extent that we take any metaphor, including that of “text” as an already accomplished fact about the means of understanding, we have missed the potential for dialogue over the nature of understanding itself.

It might be argued that my version of textuality here has been too limited and, perhaps, too literal. My goal, though, has been to reinject the tradition of the text, its materiality and the fact that it is a technology, rooted in a cultural past, and that this does matter to how we have come to understand understanding. Furthermore, the point has not been to deny that place is a text – surely it is. But if we retain the memory of the materiality and technology of the text, we might see the frayed edges of the metaphor, and in a truly hermeneutical moment open the door to an encounter around the concept and experience of place.

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Narrative and Place

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Abstract The purpose of this chapter is to explore possible intersections between place and narrative, questioning an understanding that simply associates place with space and narrative with time and infers their separation from that. After introducing two directions from which the problem can be addressed, namely the role of place for the phenomena analyzed in terms of narrative, on the one hand, and the role of narrative for the understanding of place, on the other, the text pursues the first perspective and explores the relation between place and narrative with regard to the theory of the self, ethics, the theory of action and history. The concluding section briefly discusses the way narrative in turn contributes to the understanding of place. By showing the close relation between both terms in different philosophical problem areas, the text advocates a position that avoids the exclusion of time and history from the concept of place.

1 Introduction

If one considers the relation between place and narrative against the background of the so-called “spatial turn” in the cultural and social sciences, it might seem as if the two terms did not have much in common. The orientation towards space in this research movement is not uncommonly accompanied by a turning away from the predominant concentration on time and history, which includes narration as a temporal schema.¹ If place is furthermore regarded as derivative to space, then place and narrative seem to stand on different sides. With regard to literary studies, we can observe a similar opposition—due to an old tradition that associates painting with space and poetry with time (cf. Lessing 2007), spatial categories have long been neglected in the study of literary narrative texts.

¹ Edward Soja speaks of the aim, “to spatialize the historical narrative, to attach to *durée* an enduring critical human geography” (Soja 1989, 1). Michel Foucault, too, proclaimed an age of space that should supersede the age of history (cf. Foucault 1998, 175).

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In spite of this ostensible opposition, both in “spatial theory” and in literary studies we find several sources that remind us of the fact that space and time are comprehensible only in their correlation. At least since Bakhtin stressed “the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships” (Bakhtin 1992, 84) in his idea of the “chronotope”, space has even become a topic in narratology, as entries in handbooks reveal (e.g. Ryan 2014). Within the following text, I will not focus on the representation of places in narrative texts, but approach the question of the interrelation of place and narrative from a philosophical point of view. For that purpose, neither the connection between space and place nor between time and narrative can be treated as an unquestioned presupposition. Accordingly, it would be too hasty to assume that a seeming aversion of spatial theory against time automatically entails an aversion of a philosophy of place against narration. Instead, the interrelatedness of time and space becomes apparent in precisely this constellation of place and narrative. Before turning directly to this connection, however, we have to take a closer look at the two parts of the conceptual pair.

2 Place

For a philosophical occupation with place, the relation of place to space and time can be regarded as one of the focal points. Drawing on the phenomenological tradition, place is often conceived in connection with the space of experience, as opposed to a mere scientific abstraction like geometrical space. But since phenomenology has stressed the life-world experience of time in a similar way, several philosophical authors writing on place today avoid a strict opposition between space and time and rather try to show how place is connected to both – or even serves as an alternative concept to such an opposition (cf. Waldenfels 2009). Although the philosophy of place shares with the spatial turn an increasing attention to spatial categories and even explicitly rejects the modern “temporocentrism” (Casey 1997, X) in some cases, its close connection to the phenomenology of time thus makes it difficult to assume a strict opposition of time and space. Jeff Malpas, for example, warns against understanding place just as the subjective side of space and considers it a fundamental structure of our access to the world that is even prior to the difference of space and time (cf. Malpas 1999, 35). Edward Casey runs in a similar direction, and his remarks at the end of *Getting Back into Place* reveal that he expects place to subvert such dichotomies rather than to found new frontlines.²

²Cf. Casey 1993, 313: “place is prior only as subsisting *under* these most influential modern instances of the binary oppositions Western metaphysics has posited at every step of its imperialistic course.”

3 Narrative

If we focus on the philosophical discussion on narrative and leave the numerous linguistic and literary contributions largely aside, we can equally see that the relation of narration to time and history is the very subject of the philosophical debate and cannot simply be taken for granted. Nevertheless, their proximity is often emphasized (cf. Ricœur 1984, 3) and is omnipresent in narratological handbooks (cf. Scheffel et al. 2014).³

In contrast to the narratological discourse, most of the philosophers talking about narrative use this concept in order to analyze *other* phenomena. For now, we can differentiate between four main problem areas. The first one deals with the contribution of narrative to our understanding of history and its function for the study of history. Both the analytical tradition (Danto 1965) and the hermeneutical school of thought (Ricœur 1984–88, Carr 1986) have thereby referred to the principle of narrative with regard to the philosophy of history, albeit in different ways (cf. Wood 1991). The question of which approach to ascribe to such stories is controversial – are they a construction in retrospect, made from previously meaningless and incoherent historical material or do they form a structure of a historical reality itself?⁴

Besides the problem of the relation between narrative and history, narrative plays a decisive role for the discussion of action theory, ethics, and the concept of the self. Within the theory of action, we find a problem that resembles the question concerning the historical reality – is the narrative structure of human action the result of a constructive act or is the narrative structure inherent in human action or even identical with human time? Furthermore, the description of human actions as narrative units leads us to the question of whether this description entails ethical demands, so that one could speak of “narrative ethics”: *do* we understand our lives as stories or *should* we understand them like that – and in how far do normative claims result from such an understanding?

The debate on “narrative identity” analyzes the role of narrative structures for the understanding of ourselves. Since personal identity is a highly contested term in itself, it is not surprising that this is a controversial debate.⁵ Insofar as the idea of personal identity is connected with the notion of continuity over time, we again find the connection between time and narrative that has already been pointed out for history and literary fiction.

³An introduction defines narrative as “a basic human strategy for coming to terms with time, process, and change” (Herman 2007).

⁴Among continental philosophers, David Carr has argued for the latter, while Hayden White advocates the first thesis, together with many others in the field of cultural sciences; cf. White 1973.

⁵For a fundamental critique of the narrative approach, see Strawson 2004.

4 Intersections Between Place and Narrative: From Place to Narrative

In the remaining sections of this text, I will pursue possible intersections of place and narrative, starting from the four contexts mentioned above. The problem can thereby be approached from two directions, as expressed in the following questions: (1) What role does place play for the phenomena analyzed in terms of narrative? (2) How does narrative in turn contribute to the understanding of place? The following sections will deal with the first question, whereas the concluding section provides a brief discussion of the second one. Different from the ordering above, I will start with the theory of the self (4.1), followed by ethics (4.2), the theory of action (4.3) and history (4.4).

4.1 *Theory of the Self*

4.1.1 Subjectivity and Perception

Before we meet the concept of narrativity explicitly, it is worth looking at a treatment of subjectivity that takes space and place as one of its starting points. We can retrace this approach back to Husserl, who constructed the relation to the world and the *Other* starting from the bodily *Here* as a last point of orientation and reference (cf. Husserl 1963, 145f). I always perceive objects from a certain perspective that, in the interplay with the others' perspectives, constitutes the structure of my access to the world. The "last central *Here*" (Husserl 1952, 158 [my italics]), from which the world unfolds itself, is my bodily implacement in space. I experience my place as *here* and the other's place as *there*, that can only serve as *here* for me when the other is not *there* anymore. In taking a different perspective, I experience not only the difference between me and the other, but I also gain a complete understanding of what an object is. The other sees what shows itself to me only from one side, from a different side, and I can see that different side, too, when I walk around the object and take a new standpoint, i.e. when I move, when time passes. I cannot take this *and* a different perspective at the same time.

The boundedness to a certain standpoint and the ability to take different standpoints thus seem to gain a crucial meaning for our subjectivity, so that one can speak of a close connection between subjectivity and being in place, as Edward Casey proposes. The idea that the I which is connected to the *Here*, is first and foremost a bodily I, can be found in Husserl, but is further developed by Casey, who refers to Merleau-Ponty, when he connects place-memory and body-memory:

To be embodied is *ipso facto* to assume a particular perspective and position; it is to have not just a point of view but a *place* in which we are situated. It is to occupy a portion of space from out of which we both undergo given experiences and remember them. (Casey 2000, 182)

Casey observes that “if I feel a lived body as such (and as mine), it provides a distinct sense of (my) being here. And conversely; if I feel that I am here, I must also feel my lived body as the basis, the very vehicle, of this here” (Casey 1993, 52). I cannot lose my *Here* without losing myself. However, as Günter Figal has worked out with regard to Husserl in his recent book on space, my bodily *Here* is itself no place *sensu stricto*, but that which gives a specific place the quality of a *here* for me (cf. Figal 2015, 154–71). Although I refer both to my implaced body and the place as “here”, the place can become a “there” for me when I move, whereas I keep my bodily *Here* with me that can never become “there” for me. Still, my relation to the world unfolds basically in terms of space and place.

The close connection between subjectivity and place observed here on the level of perception does not seem to have anything to do with narration. It is sometimes argued, though, that the temporal structure of retention and protention, that inheres perception according to Husserl, can already count as a narrative structure (cf. Carr 1986, 45–72). By contrast, Dan Zahavi challenges the omnipresence of the narrative approach by claiming that the consciousness of the first-person perspective, which results from our spatial perception, precedes the narrative view (cf. Zahavi 2007). Notwithstanding the foregoing, narration certainly comes into play when a synchronic plurality of perspectives turns into a diachronic sequence, or when multiple perspectives have to be mediated intersubjectively in action and speech, whereby the other reveals him- or herself as a person.

4.1.2 Personal Identity

Paul Ricœur reflects on the first context, the diachronic stretch of our lives. This does not concern subjectivity as a structure of perception as in Husserl but questions of personal identity. Not the perceiving I that accompanies all my cognitive acts without becoming an explicit object of reflection, but the individual character of a person is at stake here, or, in other words, the question *who* I am. Just as the *I-Here* differs from the I of personal identity, the concept of place that is at stake here is a different one. Not the variable *Here* of perception that determines my position towards the objects in the world or the other is important in this context, but the unique, qualitatively different place, in which I have made a specific defining experience. Admittedly, even the I of perception is always in a concrete, specific place (just like the perceiving subject is always a specific and concrete individual), but on the level of pure thing-perception neither the first nor the latter comes into the picture. Finally, the temporal dimension is relevant in both cases. Whereas diachrony allows us to take different perspectives in perception, we are now facing the problem of how a person’s identity continues over time.

Ricœur points out in *Oneself as Another* that the “problematic [...] of *personal identity* [...] can be articulated only in the temporal dimension of human existence” (Ricœur 1990, 114) and defines the question in terms of the dialectic between sameness or “idem-identity” and selfhood or “ipse-identity” (ibid., 3). The conflict between both types of identity becomes apparent in the problem of permanence in

time – how can we explain the experience that I change constantly and yet have the continuing sensation that it is me who made all those experiences in the past? For Ricœur, the narrative self offers a way to cope with this problem, and in this point he agrees with authors like Charles Taylor and Alasdair MacIntyre. According to him, “a narrative understanding of ourselves [...] escapes the apparent choice between sheer change and absolute identity” (Ricœur 1991, 33). But how does place come into play here?

In order to tell a story about ourselves, we first of all have to remember our past. The meaning of places for personal memories can be easily pursued in novels like Proust’s *Recherche*, but also in everyday life. If we want to tell somebody something about us, we often start with telling where we come from and depicting the place where we grew up. That places contribute to our memory in a decisive way was thoroughly investigated by Edward Casey (cf. Casey 2000; Trigg 2012). As Casey states, “places are congealed scenes for remembered contents; and as such they serve to situate what we remember” (Casey 2000, 189). Moreover, they serve to anchor our memories in a context, which is necessary because we are not able to remember the temporal aspects of experience as such.

If place is involved in our memory of the past, it will be not far-fetched to think that it also contributes to our self-understanding as persons. Edward Casey holds the view in his later books on place that place has the “power to direct and stabilize us, to memorialize and identify us, to tell us who and what we are in terms of *where we are*” (Casey 1993, XV). In *Remembering*, he also stresses the “quasi-narrative” character of many memories but refrains from claiming that all memories have a narrative structure (cf. Casey 2000, 44). He therefore follows Gaston Bachelard’s idea to replace or at least supplement the idea of a life story with a “topoanalysis”, i.e. “the systematic psychological study of the sites of our intimate lives” (Bachelard 1994, 8). Bachelard regards the memory of certain places as an important contribution to our self-understanding, which is why Casey claims:

To come to terms with the inner life, it is not enough to constitute a biography or autobiography in narrative terms; one must also, and more crucially, do a topoanalysis of the places one has inhabited or experienced. (Casey 1997, 289)

In contrast to Edward Casey’s account, Jeff Malpas assumes a closer relation between narration, place and memory, as he connects the question of narrative identity directly with the topic of place. In *Place and Experience*, he develops the concept of a situated self, which is decisively influenced by its environment and standpoint, so that he can speak of the “dependence of self-identity on place” (Malpas 1999, 177). Not only in memory, but also in other contexts, place serves the function to identify a singular being and to situate it in the world: “Without places, beings would be only abstractions. It is place that make their image precise and that gives them the necessary support thanks to which we can assign them a place in our mental space, dream of them, and remember them.” (ibid., 176) The central claim is

that we are the sort of thinking, remembering, experiencing creatures we are only in virtue of our active engagement in place; that the possibility of mental life is necessarily tied to such engagement, and so to the places in which we are so engaged; and that, when we come

to give content to our concepts of ourselves and to the idea of our own self-identity, place and locality play a crucial role – our identities are, one can say, intricately and essentially place-bound. (ibid., 177)

In memory, the connection to place as a kind of materialization of time becomes particularly important. Since Malpas takes the view that memory is tied to narration, he can suppose “a parallel connection between place and narrative“ (ibid., 181). If we tell our life as a story, we start with depicting “childhood places“ (ibid.). Places are not only the subject matter of our stories, something we talk about, but they also serve as the standpoint from which we talk. Thus they form a fundamental condition of our being in the world, and we can become aware of their meaning in retrospect when we recount our lives. Malpas points out that the role of place for our lives is rarely made explicit, because one is inclined to connect narration rather to time than to space and place. He advocates a change of this common view, that includes the spatial aspects, too: “But, just as time and space are properly understood only together as interconnected forms of *dimensionality*, so, too, is narrative properly understood as connected, not to time alone, but also to space.” (ibid., 187).

4.2 *Ethics: Moral Orientation*

A close connection between narrative and place can be found in the works of several other authors talking about the individual life story, although place is no pivotal concept here as it is in Malpas’ and Casey’s work. An example for the use of spatial concepts is provided by Charles Taylor’s reflections in *Sources of the Self*, where he assumes an essential connection between identity and moral orientation. According to Taylor, everybody is encompassed by a horizon that opens up around a standpoint. He starts from the assumption that

the human agent exists in a space of questions. And these are the questions to which our framework-definitions are answers, providing the horizon within which we know where we stand, and what meanings things have for us. (Taylor 1989, 29)

For social coexistence, but also for our conduct of life it is indispensable that we have a certain standpoint, which we attribute to ourselves and which others attribute to us, and which arises from our cultural and biographical framework constituting our horizon. Without such a standpoint, we would have no place in the common space we inhabit together with others:

But a person without a framework altogether would be outside our space of interlocation; he wouldn’t have a stand in the space where the rest of us are. (ibid., 31)

That we have to orient ourselves in such a moral space, is not contingent for Taylor, but results from our form of life.

I define who I am by defining where I speak from, in the family tree, in social space, in the geography of social statuses and functions, in my intimate relations to the ones I love, and

also crucially in the space of moral and spiritual orientation within which my most important defining relations are lived out. (ibid., 35)

To conduct our lives means to orient ourselves to the good, in relation to which we take a certain standpoint. Since this standpoint is changing, we have to actively direct ourselves to the good by trying to give our lives a certain direction. In order to achieve this direction, it is best to “grasp our lives in a *narrative*” (ibid., 47). Making sense of any long-term goal, “requires a narrative understanding of my life, a sense of what I have become which can only be given in a story” (ibid., 48). Life is regarded as a pathway that explains how I have become the person I am. In modern times, the subject is often misunderstood as unrelated, point-like, but: “I don’t have a sense of where/what I am [...] without some understanding of how I have got there or become so” (ibid., 50) – this is why narrativity is so important:

[B]ecause we cannot but orient ourselves to the good, and thus determine our place relative to it and hence determine the direction of our lives, we must inescapably understand our lives in narrative form, as a ‘quest’. (ibid., 51f.)

The relation to place is especially striking here, for how could there be a quest without a *where* that serves as the scene of the search? The whole notion of searching does not make sense without place. Every one of us has, according to this view, a standpoint and a perspective resulting from this standpoint that constitutes his uniqueness. How he got to this standpoint, the way that led him to this place, can be made comprehensible in a story:

What we are constantly losing from sight here is that being a self is inseparable from existing in a space of moral issues, to do with identity and how one ought to be. It is being able to find one’s standpoint in this space, being able to occupy, to *be* a perspective in it. (ibid., 112)

As the reflections on perception have suggested, one should not consider this as a mere spatial metaphor. Instead, the experience of different perspectives and the awareness of one’s own standpoint appear as a crucial condition for our self-understanding and our understanding of the world, that recurs on different levels of reflection. Taylor therefore speaks of “signs that the link with spatial orientation lies very deep in the human psyche” (ibid., 28). It also becomes clear that the standpoint is not arbitrary and interchangeable, but also not static – moving on my way the environment is constantly changing with my perspective, but it is still *my* way and *my* perspective that constitute *my* life-story.

4.3 *Theory of Action*

If we turn from the individual perspective and one’s own standpoint explicitly to social interaction, we find in Hannah Arendt’s *Vita activa* a theory that considers place and space as preconditions for common action and intersubjective exchange. Arendt stresses repeatedly “that each human activity points to its proper location in

the world” (Arendt 1958, 73).⁶ Admittedly, what she has in mind here is not a concrete, historical and individual place, but concerns primarily the distribution of activities between a public realm of political action on the one hand and a private realm of the individual way of living, as to be found in modern societies, on the other hand. Still, her considerations do not stay completely abstract, insofar as she uses the Greek *polis* as an example of the successful localization of activities in the world. Whereas the sphere of the *oikos* in ancient Greece was characterized by the necessities and needs of life, the *polis* served as the realm of freedom – of the interaction with others, of seeing and being-seen, of speech and action, that all take place in the space arising between the acting persons. In speech and action, being human is actualized insofar as those actions reveal, *who* one is:

In acting and speaking, men show who they are, reveal actively their unique personal identities and thus make their appearance in the human world, while their physical identities appear without any activity of their own in the unique shape of the body and sound of the voice. (ibid., 179)

What follows from her view is that for *action* (the type of activity she prefers over the two others, *work* and *labor*) to take place, it needs an anchorage in the world.

Acting does not produce an object as work does but generates stories. Their place is the in-between, the “withworld”, in which human beings move and pursue their interests. Even if we do not speak about ourselves, the interests – “something which *inter-est*, which lies between people” (ibid., 182) –, form relations, connect and separate people. Besides the objects we talk about, “the web of human relationships” (ibid., 184) evolves between us, as the connection between the individual standpoints. When we are born, this web is always already there, in which we weave our thread,⁷ so that in the end our life story unfolds itself out of the interweaving with the others’ threads. These story-threads arise only if the aforementioned in-between exists that allows such a web of relationships to spread. Vice versa, the in-between emerges through the actions of people:

Thus action not only has the most intimate relationship to the public part of the world common to us all, but is the one activity which constitutes it. (Arendt 1958, 198)

The *polis* is the place, in which action is realized but it “is not the city-state in its physical location; it is the organization of the people as it arises out of acting and speaking together, and its true space lies between people living together for this purpose, no matter where they happen to be” (ibid.). The in-between that emerges from the encounter of different standpoints and perspectives is the space in which stories are being told that let the individuals appear and recognize others as persons.

⁶The German translation made by Hannah Arendt herself puts even more emphasis on place in this context. There she states that “something seems to inhere every human activity which indicates that it does not ‘hover in the air’ but possesses its own place in the world”, Arendt 1981, 90 [my translation].

⁷Cf. Arendt 1981, 226, where she speaks of “threads” (“Fäden [...], die in ein bereits vorgewebtes Muster geschlagen werden”).

Everywhere, where people meet, this space is at least potentially existent, but it disappears, when the activities that have elicited it, come to an end.

4.4 *History: Sites of Memory*

The importance of place for historical narratives results from the fact that neither historical nor literary narration can do without any relation to place at all. Stories always happen somewhere – they *take place* –, and an event that did not take place anywhere did not happen at all. This is why people have looked for the remnants of the ancient Troja with such enthusiasm or tried to find the factual place of the *Battle of the Teutoburg Forest*. If we agree that history and narrative are connected, and if narrative has something to do with the representation of events, it is only consistent to assume that places play an important role for the experience of history. In view of those considerations, one could say that the tie to place makes things graspable and vivid, and helps us to anchor our knowledge in a concrete locality. Thus place serves to root stories and events in the world of experience.

In order to illustrate the meaning of place for history we can refer to memory again, but this time with regard to collective memory. Paul Ricœur follows the transition from a phenomenological description of remembering to the level of collective memory and history, thereby devoting several passages to place in *Memory, History, Forgetting* (Ricœur 2009, 44–49, 147–53). Not only personal memories are tied to specific places, but also the commemoration of historical events – take, for example the associations connected with a place name like “Waterloo” or “Hiroshima”.

That history manifests itself in places, that it inscribes itself in space, is a widespread thesis in history today, as the works of the French historian Pierre Nora show. Even though Nora introduced the term “sites of memory” as indicating a lack – “[i]f we still dwelled among our memories, there would be no need to consecrate sites employing them“ (Nora 1997, 2) – it has become a core concept for the European commemorative culture, with memory and remembrance serving as a kind of alternative access to history.⁸ Places thus store memories, which – in contrast to the abstract idea of history – are located in concrete materiality. Memory is “rooted in the concrete: in space, gesture, image, and object“ (Nora 1989, 13), and sites of memory are “places in which memory is crystallized, in which it finds refuge” (Nora 1997, 1). However, since Nora counts symbols like flags or the Marseillaise among the sites of memory, the meaning of “site” or “place” in this context needs to be clarified, and it has to be explained how places possess the ability to store and maintain memory and how the relation between memory and place operates. Instead,

⁸ On this point, cf. Carr 2013, 46: “The moral of the story is that all the knowledge we have about the past is getting in the way of a direct connection to the past, and that this can be provided only by memory: But our memory is fading, and can be restored if we return to the ‘places’ of memory.”

Nora stresses the symbolic dimension that serves as one of three features of sites of memory according to his view:

Lieux de mémoire are simple and ambiguous, natural and artificial, at once immediately available in concrete sensual experience and susceptible to the most abstract elaboration. Indeed, they are *lieux* in three senses of the word – material, symbolic, and functional. Even an apparently purely material site, like an archive, becomes a *lieu de mémoire* only if the imagination invests it with a symbolic aura. (Nora 1989, 18f.)

But if persons, songs or rituals are counted among those sites, one is in danger of losing sight of the specific merit that the scene or locality of historical events has for memory, and of the question how the historically relevant meaning is connected to those sites.⁹ Within the philosophical discussion on place, this problem has already been identified, together with the missing connection to the phenomenological reflections on remembering and place (cf. Carr 2013; Malpas 2013).

5 Conclusion: From Narrative to Place

After pursuing the place-aspect from perception over personal identity and moral orientation to human interaction and history, we can now ask if there is also a reverse dependence – to put it simply: *do only stories need places or do places also need stories?* Concerning this last question, we can only collect some scattered thoughts at this point.

So far I have mainly tried to show in which way place serves as a precondition of our experience – how it influences the understanding of ourselves in perception and individual memory, how it contributes to moral orientation and social interaction, and how it serves as a materialization of collective memory and historical narratives. Now it is time to remember that place does not only function as a precondition of experience but also as an object of experience. And as such, stories can grow around it. Memory may need materialization and implacement, but place in turn comes alive and gains meaning when I have knowledge of its history.

The experience of historical and literary places shows that places are always imbued with cultural meanings and cannot be reduced to mere geographical facts. Instead, cultural and historical narratives decisively influence the character of specific places, and literary forms like founding myths of cities give evidence of the desire to provide a place with an identifying story. In our everyday experience, the intertwining between place and narrative is perhaps most clearly recognizable while travelling. In cities like Rome or Paris, every corner contains a story known to us either from history books or novels and we enjoy listening to them during a guided tour on site that offers us a suitable story for every place. Some places even become

⁹It is also worth asking whether this “symbolic” meaning is of the same kind in all of the examples or whether, for example, the meaning of a place like “Verdun” could not more appropriately be described as a metonymic relation.

attractive as the scenes of famous novels, which makes events like a guided tour through “Charles Dickens’ London” or “Literary Pub Crawls” so popular.

A particularly interesting example for both directions of influence is the small French town Illiers-Combray that received the second part of its name as a reaction to Marcel Proust’s depiction of a small town with the same name in *À la recherche du temps perdu*, that resembled the former Illiers. Illiers-Combray does not only illustrate, how central the description of a place can be for a novel, but it also illuminates the reverse idea that stories in turn contribute to the identity of places. If this is the case, we could say that narratives become an integral part of places – as Illiers-Combray shows – and that places in turn play a decisive role for the development of a narrative – be it historical or fictional.

What we observe with regard to history and literature has an equivalent in the theory of action. Hannah Arendt does not only consider how certain activities depend on places but observes a kind of interdependency between the activities in question and the realm to which they belong. The activity in question is not only determined by the sphere in which it takes place, and changes its character when transferred to a different place, but the activity in turn has an effect on the location where it is performed:

Whether an activity is performed in private or in public is by no means a matter of indifference. Obviously, the character of the public realm must change in accordance with the activities admitted into it, but to a large extent the activity itself changes its own nature too. (Arendt 1958, 46)

Jeff Malpas articulates a similar interdependency with regard to the relation between place and the self, when he suggests an “*interdependence*, rather than simply a one-way dependence, between place and person“ (Malpas 1999, 185). Thus not only subjectivity relies on implacement; space and place also rely on subjectivity, namely insofar as they are structured by the cultural and historical meanings developed in acts of narration:

The partial dependence of the ordering of space and place on subjectivity is reflected, in a particularly important way, in the role of narrative in such ordering. Narrative is that which can be seen as structuring, in a similar fashion, both memory and self-identity, as well as the places, the landscapes, in which self identity is itself worked out and established. (ibid.)

For the understanding of places, this means that they become accessible through narration; their specific meaning as concrete places comes alive in stories. Places are not only essential for the telling of our life story, but, if one wants to know anything about a place, a story can provide the best access to it. In accordance with Arendt, the activities that happen in a certain place contribute to its identity:

We understand a particular space through being able to grasp the sorts of ‘narratives of action’ that are possible within that space; we understand a place and a landscape through the historical and personal narratives that are marked out within it and that give that place a particular unity and establish a particular set of possibilities within it. (ibid., 186)

These few considerations suggest the assumption that place and narrative go together in many respects. With regard to our starting point, we could now say that place and narration are by no means opponents, but rather both figures of

mediation¹⁰ that bridge the pretended gap between space and time.¹¹ If one takes into account that Edward Casey sometimes draws a parallel between place and event, this impression is further intensified:

places not only *are*, they *happen*. (And it is because they happen that they lend themselves so well to narration, whether as history or as story.) (Casey 1996, 27)

From this point of view, it is possible to tell a different story about the relation of time and space – with the two appearing not as opponents, but as interwoven in concrete places and narratives.

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¹⁰For a different approach to a possible mediation between space and time, but also between subjective and objective time/space see Ricœur 1996.

¹¹For David Carr, place is such a rich concept *especially because* it contains a temporal dimension; cf. Carr 2013, 50: “Now I would like to argue that one of the things that constitutes the thickness and richness of place is that it has a temporal dimension that is entirely its own.”

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An Eco-Echo-Philopoetics of Dialog & Place: Why & When Should Language Alert & Alter Itself?

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Abstract How does one re-late to the other when dialoging? This piece sets out to explore the resonant ecosystem of a dialogically relational, relatively elastic dialogical place that itself becomes mobile, one that traverses its own topological confines and configurations including pathosemiotic vibrations and proliferations: topos as a dynamic zone of interstitial logos that stays autogenerative, autopoetic. Reframing the classical “call & response” reciprocity of hermeneutical discoursing, away from its often monorailed, anthropo-logocentric sites/sights & sounds where scaffolded speaking or logos itself is literally normativized or else finds itself antagonized by its structurally invisible and inaudible other, I try to imagine a somewhat alternative, more alternatively alter-native, ecosystem of dialoging, inclusive of (digital) “logging” that auto-feeds the increasingly datafied world today, all of which forces us to rethink the very concept of “communication,” a discursive territory once kind of familiar to us homo lingua politus. With border wars and material exploitations unfolding everywhere on the planetary scale, from global terrorism to environmental crisis, I find myself turning, for an anchor, towards a matrixial eco-echography of interspecies interstitiality where one does not come to “have,” control or even “experience” dialogs but rather constantly, contextually passes through synaesthetic networks of communication as an inter-being, a cosmic switchboard operator, a multi-nodal mobile point of multi-mediation as well as meditation. How could “you,” an old-fashioned thou of Buber’s I-Thou, be really faced, not just placed?

1 *Re: How Does One Relate to the Other When Dialoging?*

Where, if not far away, is my place ... (Mahmoud Darwish, *In the Presence of Absence*)

Poetry ...

the most paradoxical and complex form of contemplation ...

the most valuable contribution to a natural history of thinking and sensation. (Durs Grünbein, “Why Live Without Writing”)

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How do you position yourself “back and again” (*re*)—when linguistically “carried” (*latus*) over to me even when not talking, to me or at all, even to yourself perhaps, performing a kind of negative speech act, retreating or resisting ... or just repeating, to me or in you, what you just said as a way of not saying anything more or saying something more than what could be said?

Hermeneutics, the philosophical art of interpretation, understands this complex conundrum, that simple perplexity, of yours, namely, the question of where, *under* where, you *stand* when you try to or do seem to understand something coming from somewhere outside you or even inside. The message & the messenger (*Hermes*) arrive, sometimes not together, at times inexplicably, and yet in any event, inquiring minds, I, for one, the recipient, want to know: exactly from where & where at? Note the shift, I—to the other, (t)here, but where again?

The situation, let me try to explain. The fold of an envelope, single or multiple, appears to you, and as you open the envelope, you the receiver become I the reader-listener, and I the sender, you the writer-speaker. This switch can be bewitching, especially if you can(not) and (do not) want to follow its structural du-*pli*-city, for it is “(not) all about you,” for I am (not) you who I become; I mean, it is “all about you,” for I am you who I become; yes or no? The intersubjective ambiguity here is structural and its reciprocal palpability irreducible.

“When Thou is spoken,” Martin Buber observes in *I and Thou* that “the speaker has no thing for his object” (Buber 1960, 44): no thing, note that. Emerging there is a certain call, a kind of sonic hinge, somehow registered even if not heard *per se*, *per person*. You and I get immediately hooked into a co-dependent relation, like a Chinese “person,” a “human” being in Chinese, *ren* (人), where you and I lean against each other, almost choreographically, to form each and every one. To engage “the other” in such knotted spots & streaks of textual encounter means to enter into a contextualized zone for transformative entanglement with what is at issue or kept at bay, be it a shared-X-shattered desire or mutual devotion-X-devastation (Buzzeo 2015). Either way, U remain U, retained and rechained and reclaimed in the eyes of I that open up and close down in simultaneous succession like a revolving door.

Whence & whither this (u)topia called you & me, us—us, in turn, looking at them composing & composed by other yous & mes? For, “we and you do not speak the same language” (Lugones and Spelman 1983, 576): such a remark Maria & Elizabeth, for instance, made in 1983, loud & clear, while speaking & writing two different languages (Spanish & English) in parallel, still reverberates through the waves of feminism, now fourth, they say, that would perform such “difficult dialogues” (Davis 2012) at every turn—in what language then?—and whose theory? Indeed “Have We Got a Theory for You!” (Lugones and Spelman 1983)?

This kind of ironic self-questioning that sets the tone and parameter for culture war and in particular “minority” identity politics in the last few decades critically discloses the persistence of diacritical power dynamic in various, seemingly neutral, dialogical buffer zones. Take Wang Fengzhen, a prominent Chinese theorist, writing in 1997, who calls into question, if only more straightforwardly, the age-old politics of “dialogical” othering in “East-West” discourses colored and controlled by implicitly self-regarding or deluding “Western” postmodern visions:

Although the relation between the East and West is still unequal, one has to think of both the oppressive and the oppressed in order to understand the true character of the unequal cultural exchanges and thus to build a real national culture through equal dialogues. While “nation” is a historically determined mode of existence, it remains a primary determinant, no matter how poststructuralism deconstructs the process of nationalism. (Wang 1997, 51)

China must say no (!?) and Japan can say no (!?) (Ishihara 1991): from this sort of collective call for reconstructed cultural nationalism as a critical “response” to the perceived dictates of theoretical Occidentalism, which might come across to some as somewhat reactionary, “what I wish to underscore” with Rey Chow, just indexically in passing, “is the historicity that lies behind its emotional outburst, a historicity that is part and parcel of the prolonged reactive position in which China and Chinese intellectuals have been put vis-à-vis the West in the past 150 years” (Chow 1997, 148). Fair enough, usually, not everyone at the table is “equal” anyway, even if we are talking the roundtable, the Chinese style. But that would be a more abstract, secondary point here. What remains intriguing, more specifically, we are saying, is the “outburst” part, its positioned functionality vis-à-vis the structural set called the oppressed & the oppressor, its grammatologized ontology or Derridian hauntology where one is in the very addressing of the other & vice versa, as if non-existent per se.

Imagine, too, an aging self-regarding white American activist saying to you, “I marched for you in Montgomery, Alabama, and now you call that a white privilege!?” What’s wrong with us/them? “I-you” transitively extrapolated into “us-them” and vice versa, one could easily feel trapped and paralyzed in the dialogical traffic jam:

Sometimes she felt the need to give a word or two of explanation especially to her grandchildren, as she watched them from beyond her wall of silence; sometimes her children begged her to speak, as though it would prove something to them. And at these times she struggled as though in a nightmare to bring out one sound, and could not. It was as if by speaking she would have damaged something inside herself. (Davis 2009, 494)

Or,

If I called I’d say good-bye before I broke the good-bye. I say good-bye before anyone can hang up ... The day is hot. Is it cold? Are you cold? It does get cool. Is it cool? Are you cool? ... Wait with me though the waiting might be the call of good-byes. (Rankine 2014, loc 448)

You get the picture—or not?

So, a short story long, this is where I, or dare I say we, seem to be @: what keeps (distracting) my and your hermeneutical attention is the resonant ecosystem, topos in particular, of such a dialogically relational, relatively elastic dialogical “place” (be it a wall as seen & heard above, or a spot, a box, a field, a plane, “a personal space,” what have you) that itself becomes mobile, going meta-or-ultra-physical at once, discursively traversing its own topological confines and configurations including pathosemiotic vibrations and proliferations: the topos and trope of “place” as a dynamic zone of interstitial *logos* that stays autogenerative, autopoetic. Novelist

Donald Antrim says, “the world is a place of feeling ... try to take possession of that experience (Antrim 2014)”: well-put, except that I would replace “take possession of” with “make sense of” or even “pass on.” My basic sense, or hypothesis, which I want to share and explore with you here is that place, “a special ensemble” of unified or composed beings within a certain space, an X locatable or located as such, physical or metaphorical, psychical and social alike, is actually often if not always “pinpointable,” mark-able, as in the GPS (Global Positioning System).

A long story short then, the line of vocal thread I am following above would necessitate reframing in some ways the classical “call & response” reciprocity of hermeneutical discoursing, away from its often monorailed, anthropo-logocentric sites/sights & sounds where scaffolded speaking or *logos* itself is literally normativized or else finds itself antagonized by its invisible shadows, its generic, co-independent “other.” Dialectical dialogs that structurally draw on such “other” figures including alter egos, as seen in Socratic, Cartesian, Hegelian texts, etc., exemplify methodical exercises of inquiring minds in a collaboratively universalized “search” for truth; more responsorial dialogs by comparison, Augustinian or Heideggerian, too, still seem to linger around those dialectical edges, the hinge of closure & openness that would emerge in the form of crises, from nano-personal and mega-epochal.

Simply put, I envisage a somewhat alternative, more alternatively alter-native, ecosystem of dialoging, paying attention also to (digital) logging as we nowadays often talk and tap into ten thousand little digital “dialog boxes” at every second of our life online. Rapid, paradigm-altering, global, post- or trans-human developments in bio-technology and mediascape also force us to rethink the very topos and flow of “communication,” a discursive territory once kind of familiar to us *homo lingua politus*. With border wars and exploitations unfolding everywhere on the planetary scale, from global terrorism to environmental crisis, I find myself turning, for an anchor, towards a matrixial eco-echography of interspecies interstitiality where one, be it a good old hermeneut or an uninvited interlocutor-listener-reader, does not come to “have,” control or even “experience” dialogs as an objectified subject or a vocalized object in some human-only world but rather passes through synaesthetic networks of communication constantly and contextually as an inter-being, a cosmic switchboard operator, a multi-nodal mobile point of multi-mediation as well as meditation, just as water or air does, for instance, life-long members of “the book of nature,” whose countless pages our own bodies, too, come to populate.

To put the question, or task, in a Levinasian koan: how could “you,” an old-fashioned thou of Buber’s I-Thou, be really faced, not just placed? And would such interfacing not help us all dialog better, surviving our impossibly windowed or windowlessly territorialized dialogs? For now, “we have advanced from canoes to galleys to steamships to space shuttles – but nobody knows where we’re going” (Harari 2015, loc 6470)– or does any one? *Inter-sapiens* inter alia?

2 Hear Ye, Hear Ye, Where Are You? Are We with Us?

The following “Questions are Remarks” is remarking, while questioning, that:

Peter the voyant, who says, “Mother, what is that” –
The object that rises with so much rhetoric,
But not for him. His question is complete.

It is the question of what he is capable.

...

As far as nothing permits ... Hear him.
He does not say, “Mother, my mother, who are you,”
The way the drowsy, infant, old men do. (Stevens 1954, 462–3)

What makes Peter questionable? What question would one have about this one who asks *what*, not *who*? And to whom is he questionable? Who is questioning Peter who *is* asking, or saying, something that is after all most philosophical in the most classical, basic sense? “His question is complete,” you say? Or if not, *where* would be “the question of what he is capable” (Stevens 1954, 463)? “He will never ride the red horse she describes,” predicts Wallace Stevens the philopoet, about Peter Hanchak his grandson, about 2 years old then. The *where* here leaves bare Peter’s growing incapacity, his radical insularity or uncontestable security, while the pressure of *inquisition* that cannot but come from *outside* surrounds its innards like a ripple constantly coming back, echoing itself. When a question is posed, its place is ~~marked~~ out, turned inside out or outside in. This way, questions turn out to be remarks not meant to be remarks. The being of “what is X?” hears itself being repeated in “X is Y.”

Questions are remarks: re-mark such or else remake it. A question demands the loca(tiona)l identity of the respondent to whom it is addressed. Questions such as “Where are you, Adam?,” biblical or cellular, paternal or maternal, real or virtual—as in the case of God, the ultimate Caller—could mean, I’m saying, “I desire/have/need/want to or else could not place you,” as also mimed by the language of dialogical connectivity or interactive command system. So “where are you now?” Your cell-phone knows the answer in some sense but your interlocutor might not, literally or really. “Where are you now?,” I am asking. I mean, “I am talking to you” or about to.

In such broadly inter-operative situations where beings engage one another in one way or another, the you-question and I-remark aporetically “replaces” each other as the two poles become supplementarily concurrent, drawing each other out of each other. In other words, “*Je – marque*,” as Derrida puts it performatively:

Je – marque (I – mark(s)) ...

I – mark(s) first of all a division in what will have been able to appear in the beginning.
(*Je – marque d’abord une division dans ce qui aura pu paraître au commencement.*)

But – I mark(s) the division – ...

But – again, I mark(s) and multiply/multiples (*multiplie*) the division – (Derrida 1982, 275–6)

“You” and “I” as two subjects (“I” [as a “You”] – “You” [as an “I”]) or as a pair of an object and a subject take place at once with reciprocal reflexivity, through, that is to say, the inscriptive instantiation or instantaneous performance of each other: a dialog *takes* place and a dialog takes *place*, not just metaphorically but eventually and sometimes eventfully, life-alteringly—but how, where, exactly? You ask? For also: where *are* you today, really in this increasingly interstellarized universe? I could call you into question or being ... or both?

Consider “Hey, you!” An NYPD officer about to stop & frisk me would be, and might feel, quite different from you waving, beaming, wildly at me across from the street. Whether you read this vocal event as a dialogical activation of the other at hermeneutical checkpoints, an interpellation, or rather a friendly hello, a sociolinguistic pre-embracing of the other to come a la Buber and Levinas, note here that such can be extrapolated into “the call of Being” in the house or institution of Being a la, and contra, Heidegger.

Quite obviously, each specific scene of encounter will carry a different tonal texture and affective charge of interlocutory reciprocity. The focus of my reading here, more immediately, though, is on the very geometry of mutability, the generative topos of the subjectified (subject & object) beings entering into and held in dialogs, i.e., dia-localized beings that are to be released from the very hermeneutical frame that sets them up in the first place. “You, Adam,” or Addie, if you like, could be anywhere or everywhere, and the point is that s/he is (to be) somewhere, even when nowhere to be found ... “as far as nothing permits ... Hear him,” as the poet urges.

“Adam, you are somewhere there *inter alia*”: If the specificity of Adamic naming relates to species, that of divine calling is more special and general, involving space, a higher genus. From the biblical allegory and tragicomedy of human self-knowledge, we also come to see how such familiarized, generally habituated “you” that structurally initiates, mediates and sustains the traffic of *logos* (language/law/logic) becomes the ontologized place of and condition for dialog itself, a vocal anchor that the “I” or “we” addresses constructively, the second person, singular or plural.

Notably, as Jeff Malpas (Malpas 2015) highlights, Martin Heidegger in one of his most philopoetic phases ontologizes—seeks to singularize originarily—the placedness of a dialog into a proper & propertied condition for its eventuation, a sort of phenomenal & phenomenological “opener” of a world: “It is this happening of place that lies at the heart of what Heidegger himself refers to as the “topology of being” and to which he tells us all of his thinking belongs” (Malpas 2015, 360). Seen further, the Heideggerian topology of being is less intersubjective or prosthetic than the theological or worldly-existentialist versions such as the Sartrean dramaturgical variants of I-exit-you-exit-me-not, yet insofar as at issue is the question, more instantly, of which (kind of) call is being or is to be responded to and not to (as allegorically literalized by Heidegger’s questionable politics, which remains unaccounted for), the irreducible duo-modality of relational logos itself remains instructive as well as enigmatic. Which can of sound is opened or is to be closed, perhaps no one can really tell. As Professor Heidegger asks at the start of his rectorial address in 1933, specifically and hauntingly still: “Do you know about this spiritual mission?” (Stassen 2003, 2) (of the German university) ... and you read on, with

or without the parenthetical or parental guidance, registering while (dis)remembering who “you” are or would be in this context, as we continue to think with and through him on the “distant command of the beginning of our spiritual-historical being (*Dasein*)” (Stassen 2003, 9).

This fundamentally ambiguous “mission” of *Dasein*, its door to Being flung open and almost placially foreclosed at once, seems part of the complex, compromised legacies and situations Hans-Georg Gadamer’s postwar philosophy addresses assiduously. His rigorously self-reflexive, categorical focus on hermeneutics, auditory dialog in particular, can be read as a philosophical reset button that attempts to get to the bottom of it all, the bottom-line or base-line of human conditions such as worldly “prejudice” and “legitimate prejudice” (Gadamer 1975, 254–7) that are in a sense more bare *and* embodied than Heidegger’s pre-understanding:

And with listening there can be openness to one another. Only with this openness can the distanced and foreign traditional object “speak” and be understood. Ultimately for Gadamer dialogue takes place in order to hear what the other has to say. The achievement of this openness is precisely what is enacted through a dialogue of question and answer. Questioning is the logical structure of openness, and the art of questioning is for Gadamer the art of questioning further as the art of thinking that takes place in dialogue. ... For the interpreter to be able to answer the question, the interpreter must begin to ask questions. (Malpas 2015, 337–8)

And with Stevens, we saw and see how and where this quest could end up: its own missionary position?! And I imagine Gadamer, for whom coming to an understanding by eventually locating the communal base is the ultimate goal of a dialog, would say, in turn, a la Plato: “It has something to say to me. This too calls for a fundamental sort of openness” (Gadamer 1975, 344). His will to dialogue is this real, as “it is the art of thinking ... the art of leading a real discussion” (Gadamer 1975, 349).

A real question being, for instance: what if my iceberg does not overlap with yours? What if, after all such “open” searches, I would return to my circle(s) of life, expansively, and you, yours? Surely, I become you, you become me, in the structure of dialogic instantiation, yet how do I, or could I ever, get to turn to you without or outside this logical guardrail?

3 What I Say to You Will Not Be Heard ... Opening Up Like a Row of Corpses

For “... What I Say to You Will Not Be Heard/ It Will Be Unnatural/ It Will Be Like Something Opening Up/ a Row of Corpses” (Martin 2007, 9), you insist, as if really existing only through that insistence;

When the basement sweats, a mental note: the body is not indestructible. Click. One can create erosion. O, my tin cup is too full—it smothers—I stumble, stammer, the word, *strings*. (Martin 2007, 25)

According to Dawn Lundy Martin here the poet, the body, unspeakable and unspoken, is “not indestructible,” nonetheless. Why not? And why this double negation? Like a concrete building that stays concrete in its substantially mixed homogeneity, a row of corpses remaining recalcitrant to the call and act of logos becomes, in this scene, a counter-allegory of the subterranean Q & A. In place of a language barrier, this time, we hear a barrier language. Such is the material concreteness of a concrete matter. Logocentrism unfolds in multiple acts, a row, a raw law, of monolingualism/unilogocentrism, dialogism/dialogocentrism, multilingualism/plurilogocentrism that often proliferates or transactionalizes linguistic monadism and so on ... including teletechnologocentrism where algorithmic language, the “code,” composes and controls the IoT (Internet of Things) that mutely speaks for things that are circulated with smooth silence about their origins and destinations.

If, again, “where are you, Adam?” is, at the end of the day, reducible to or redeemable as “Adam, you are there (!)” in the sense noted above, what interests me is the sort of you still not “there there” yet otherwise present in some non-linear, non-narrative, non-dialectical forms, presenting its-yourself-ness strongly ... *persistently* none the less, “deep down” in some “sense,” however inexplicable by any globalized philosophical lingua franca. How might one, say, “smell” a language, for instance? Soil? Can one sense a soiled *langue* of some sorts? Catherine Keller’s “dirty ground” (Keller and Kearns 2007, 65) that “*is not foundation*,” I am also thinking, her hummus, that human humidity, that humility.

As Richard Kearney notes in his recent, illuminating “Carnal Hermeneutics,” hermeneutics that “discerns the world *as such*, this or that” (Kearney 2015, 99):

When the explicit “hermeneutic turn” occurred in the 1960s—with the publication of Ricoeur’s *The Conflict of Interpretations* and Gadamer’s *Truth and Method* (inspired by Heidegger and Dilthey)—we witness an embrace of language at the expense of body. The journey from flesh to text all too often lacked a return ticket. And so we find the “linguistic turn” of hermeneutics tending to veer away from the carnal as a site of meaning, replacing body with book, feeling with reading, sensing with writing—as if the two could be separated. (Kearney 2015, 100)

When, and why, should language alert and alter itself? If my dialogical journey is (addressed) to “you” in ways portrayed above, where could be that (no-thing of) you that moves cuttingly through the logos of and for you? Dwelling on this question, I wouldn’t be concerned with losing my hermeneutical return ticket, though, although still interested to see how and where I get to lose it to gain something new along the way, as in something lost in translation or transposition—yet also gained?! I am saying, wondering, that a shift, not just a turn or return, might be what we need. What matters, arguably a more pressing task especially in this age of the ironic disconnect between hyper-connected bio-techno-humans and their planetary self-destructions, seems not only to reconnect bodies and books, praxis and theory, realities and idealities, etc., etc., but to reconceive of the “book” itself more openly gaily, radically and extensively than those post-Nietzschean “textual” philosophers reportedly trapped in the net of language especially after the linguistic and hermeneutical turns of the last century.

For instance, we could, why not, revisit “the book of nature”? Quite clearly, that book, while never absent, has been somewhat overlooked in typical modern nature-culture debates. The return ticket Kearney is looking for might also be still discoverable between the pages in some form, and our job as bridge-building-and-walking chickens delivering eggs across generations, especially as self-documenting excuses for keeping libraries and building more, is to continue to guard the book of nature along the way, archivally and inventively, as nature is like a book where you must not tear away a single page as you will not know which part you are damaging—an insight I learned from a dinner table conversation last autumn with Professor Wei Liang of Hainan Normal University, China, an eminent biologist who specializes in cuckoo bird behaviors, who also stressed the importance of respecting nature while inspecting *it*.

So now, hear ye hear ye again I’m switching gears ... from the intersubjective space of dialogue to the eco-echography of dialog itself, a certain trail of.

4 Upon “Hearing a Tree Crying,” She Went Out

I recall her question that could be also a remark, yes, though on a different level. Wang Shifu (Master), a Daoist priest I met last winter in Mount Qingcheng, Sichuan, China, who, I heard, often spends hours taking out nails from the trees around her temple and along the mountain trails: “One morning, I was meditating and suddenly heard a tree crying, so I went out and saw these labels for tourists nailed to the trees at the entrance to the temple.”

Who was crying out and what was listened to? What is or do you call a tree that cries? Or, to switch gear again then: *who* could be the crier in the tree?—or is there? A log, even a dialog, seems in order ... wordless and wireless, but not worthless, certainly not, I’d think. As ‘an old Korean proverb says, “Even an ant crawling by makes its mark” ... It seems that ancient Koreans realized that ants leave odor trails ... Ant’s chemical language is much more economical than our verbal language.’ (Choe 2012, 60)

In such a literally animated, animal-chemical language, already part and parcel of the human languages symbiosystematically connected to *lingua anima* in the broader eco-system of the world, I also find myself dreaming a little revisionary dream, a post-Derridian dream of and with an ant which, on Derrida’s (self-)reading, holds the key to mysteries of life, especially, for him, its sexuated, originary differentials. While “reading traces” (Cixous 1997, 121) as a self-reflexive insect myself, “pursuing the text without respite” (Cixous 1997, 121), those traces “divided into small strangulations by so many annuli” (Cixous 1997, 121), I sense how & where “you,” too, or the two of you, could enter and exit this reading room, the cosmic-universal (dis)order of things, like time itself arriving-leaving unannounced, “as the scene in which every scene has its origin in languageless invisibility is a ceaselessly active actuality” (Quignard 2011, 7). Such “*in*, in short,” as Bruce Janz observes, acutely, “*inscribes a tension*”; perhaps, as he goes on to say, citing

Jean-François Lyotard, “Domesticity is over, and probably it never existed, except as a dream of the old child awakening and destroying it on awakening. ... Thinking, writing, is, in our sense, to bear witness for the secret timbre ... let us at least bear witness ...” (Janz 2008). So something like *ex libris* ...

How? You ask. How does one move from the world of *lingua franca* to that of *lingua anima*? If we are to work through the legacy of logocentrism and if that “leg” of the trip is not simply something we can destroy or desert for it forms the connective tissues of the book of nature itself, how could we rework the logos itself, re-channeling its uni or monolingual energies elsewhere in different *ways*? I do not yet have an answer but Catherine Keller and Laurel Kearns do, which I find especially inspiring:

The spirit ... did not in the Bible signify a way out of the creation, but rather a way to live gratefully within it. The mindful and moving spatiality of spirit, which names our collective endeavors, suggests the fluid medium for the sort of transdisciplinary thinking ... transdisciplinarity itself, aiming not just at dialogue between disciplines but action *beyond* them ... (Keller and Kearns 2007, 3).

That is to say, the book of nature, naturally, goes *beyond* the book, especially if you read it right, transformatively, that is; action becomes part of the language. The more “universal” “language” here, reconceived more holistically in planetary terms, would then encompass all kinds of alter-native signals from plants and animals as well as the ever expanding algorithmic logic of cybernetic network; with this, the concept of dialog itself should become more capacious enough to accommodate not only its own performative self-contradictions but also, arguably at more pressing points, to go against itself (*contra-dict*) transformatively by going outside of itself, its own skin, quite literally.

Doing a meditation through mediation and doing a mediation by meditation, being connected and attentive to the placental folds of the divided-connected world looking in and out at once: Master Wang seems to say just that by her wordless act, communing with her eco-neighbors as well as ego-, attuned to their languages without trying to master them. From her daily work of attending to the needs of the mountain she neither owns nor ignores, I sense a possibility that to relate to the other in a dialog in a matrixially open-ended ways, way more radically than some Heidegger-Gadamerian being-openers might have envisaged, may not necessarily lead to replacing it and its topos with one’s own voices or imaginations, which is one perennial Derridian worry, among many, that any good self-respecting narcissists would share (Lee 2002) but it could also mean to reach, or at least turn towards, a sort of third place, if there is one, where all sorts of insides and outsides merge and cross freely, nonanxiogenically, just like animal organs in action, sexual or otherwise, both being meaningless and meaningful in (un)equal measures, always in flux, already unfixed.

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Suspended in Mid-Air: Casting Nets and Making Places Between Earth and Sky at Meteora

Bahar Aktuna and Charlie Hailey

Abstract Cast in the beginning of time, the rock pillars of Meteora make room for an ascetic and monastic life supporting and supported by the monks who have dwelled there for almost a millennium. It is commonly accepted that the landscape of Meteora has a poetry-like quality. In step with the poetics of place, the testimonies of Meteora bring myths and facts harmoniously together. Textual and visual documentation of the place by its visitors and inhabitants, our own visits to Meteora, and UNESCO's documents, which designate the place as a World Heritage Site, open up horizons where we interpret how the poetic quality of Meteora originates from and sustains itself in the placemaking practices of its monks. Poetics of place comes from praxis. Furthermore, the practice of placemaking at Meteora depends on an aerial imagination initiated by casting nets, which connect inhabitants and guests to the loci of monasteries that are analogous to a bird's nest perched on top of rocks, isolated and introverted. Net and nest are constitutive figures of aerial placemaking in a landscape imagined as a practice and made possible through poetics.

1 Seeking Meteoros

To mount too high or to descend too low is allowed in the case of poets who bring earth and sky together. (Bachelard 1958, 147)

Knowing how to intervene within the landscape emerges from studying the land itself and from reading previous interventions. The monks of Meteora came to know the former, and we are studying the latter. To explore this process of place-making, our project focuses on this remote monastic community resting atop sandstone towers in central Greece. Those who founded Meteora sought both protection and isolation. "Suspended in mid-air" (*meteoros*, μετέωρος) more than five hundred feet aloft, they discovered limited access as well as boundless distance—two kinds of

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refuge, both achieved with verticality. The monks also developed a unique mode of movement vertically through air with ladders and nets.

Knowing how to make the place—intervening within air as much as land, a process for which there was no precedent—initiated another process of poetic discovery that continues today. Mixing myth with science, the ascetic with the aesthetic, practice with theory, word with text and tourism with monasticism, this hermeneutic project is about the process of understanding itself, within a particular case where *phronesis* (φρόνησις) and *poesis* (ποίησις) are uniquely intertwined.¹

Monastic practicalities and rigors, cast within the unlikely (impossible according to its World Heritage designation)² but altogether fitting medium of air, begin this process of unfolding and help frame a fundamental question about the phronetic-poetic relation: Where does the poetic originate in Meteora and how is it brought forth in the landscape itself and in its representations? For us, Meteora sets in motion the relation of *phronesis* and *poesis* through its interaction with land and air.³

Meteora's place-making uncovers two creative modes of truth that cross each other in the Meteorite cultural landscape. *Phronesis* is circumspection directed to excellence in actions and reached through practice (*praxis*). *Poiesis* is the way that leads to *techne*, know-how. Both fall within the mode of *logistikon*, which means they seek a mode of truth that has not yet been and will occur as it is sought. Whereas in *techne* the goal is outside of *technitis* (craftsman), in *phronesis* the goal is inside the *phronimos* (one who has practical wisdom): "...what φρόνησις [*phronesis*] deliberates about is not what brings πρᾶξις [*praxis*] to an end. A result is not constitutive for the Being of an action; only the εἶ, the how, is. The τέλος [*telos*] in φρόνησις [*phronesis*] is the ἄνθρωπος [*antropos*] himself. In the case of ποίησις [*poiesis*], the τέλος [*telos*] is something other, a worldly being over and against *Dasein*; not so in the case of πρᾶξις [*praxis*]." (Heidegger 1997, 35–36) At Meteoron, the poetics of place is made possible through not only the craft (*techne*) of monks but also the way that their religious beliefs enable them to see the world—the horizons opened up by monastic and Hesychast practice.

Sources for Meteora's history and practices are limited. To this day it is unclear what remains of fourteenth-century texts produced at Meteora monasteries, subjected to climatic damage, stresses of conflict, and economic pressure leading to sell-offs of monastery artifacts (Hellier 1996, 196). Undermining the stone towers' apparent solidity, earthquakes damaged the monasteries and their collections, antiquarian collectors—particularly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—plundered the monastery's libraries, and attacks from Italian and German armies in World War II further compromised the archives.⁴

¹ In his introduction to *Interpreting Environments*, Robert Mugerauer summarizes this reading of Hans-Georg Gadamer. (See Mugerauer 1996, xxvi–xxxii.)

² See ICOMOS's justification for Criterion V in Meteora's designation for World Heritage list status. (1988, 16)

³ For Martin Heidegger, "[p]hronesis is nothing other than conscience set in motion, making an action transparent." (1997, 39).

⁴ See Hellier for information on the attacks (1996, 203). A particularly strong earthquake occurred on January 15, 1674, and according to the St Stephen Monastery's codex records additional seismic events in previous centuries. (see Ambraseys 2009)

Most historical information on Meteora comes to us through nineteenth-century travelogues, which are often accompanied by illustrations created by the authors. Travelers have acted as witnesses to the place, and their testimonies fill an information gap. We rely on poetic practices of travelers who witnessed the place in history and saved their memoirs produced as both texts and images to convey the ‘picture.’⁵ Furthermore, both of us have worn the shoes of Meteora travelers and visited Meteora, Aktuna in 2011 and Hailey in 2012. Thus, we also depend on our recollections and observations of the place. Its nets and ladders no longer active, we have driven its access roads, traversed its stone passageways, toured Grand Meteoron’s chapels and grounds, watched the Plain of Thessaly unfold southeastward on our ascent, even purchased souvenirs from its remaining inhabitants. We are writing as architects, thinking about—and at times marveling over—how Meteora was built and how the places supported the monks’ practice of religious program.

2 Air and Nets

In the last stanza of “Imago”, Wallace Stevens (1950, 60) opens with the lines, “Making this heavy rock a place, / Which is not of our lives composed...” and closes with the lines, “*Lightly and lightly, O my land, / Move lightly through the air again.*” When he invokes a personified land to “move lightly through the air again,” Stevens begins a similar process of deliberation: first appropriating this alien “heavy rock” suitable for dwelling but then mobilizing that image to challenge its comforts and seek renewed poetic experience. Similar to Stevens’ rock, the sandstone pillar where Grand Meteoron (also known as the Monastery of Metamorphosis) sits today was once called “broad rock” by Athanasius, the founder of the first sky monastery of Meteora. The monks soon renamed the place when they identified their new order, which is known as Meteorites, and began constructing the monasteries. With place and inhabitants suspended, experience is grounded in the air that ties the place to the sky and the earth. For a sense of what Stevens invokes in his poem and what the traveler Vassily Grigorovich Barsky will draw, consider standing in a field where air moves around you as a breeze—technically called “true wind.” Now consider stepping onto a precipice where ground floats in the sky and it is possible to imagine this land’s movement creating other breezes—known as “apparent wind.” That transposition is a critical aspect of Meteora.

Meteora is a poetic revelation in the full sense because it takes us out of our habitual world and makes us aware of the air as a phenomenon, which participates as a leading agent. This inversion is fundamental to the essence of the place. The hanging nets are also significant emblems where poetic revelation occurs mutually with practical wisdom. They exemplify how the practice of place-making adds further to poetic revelation. The nets were used to shuttle monks, supplies, even pilgrims vertically

⁵On ‘picture’ Gadamer says that “word and image are not mere imitative illustrations, but allow what they present to be for the first time fully what it is.” (1989, 143)

between monastery and ground. They were practical tools for limiting access, but at the same time they invoked aerial imagination and, for the monks, offered mystical connections with the heavens:

It is a solemn spot for these aerial homes, where “lodge such as hold the body foe to soul,” and where the stillness of the air is only broken by the twittering of birds, or, it may be, by the mournful sound of the monastery bells, tolling the hours of prayer. (Hyde 1913, 142)

Visitors to the place point to other experiences that emerge from interactions with these nets to access the sky. Sometimes, this was a feeling of vulnerability as in the case of Reverend Henry Fanshawe, who visited Varlaam Monastery in 1853:

Looking up, we could only see the end of the rope, by which we were to ascend, hanging from a block with a great iron hook attached to it; but shortly after this was let down, accompanied by a strong and capacious net... I immediately seated myself in the middle of it, with my legs crossed under me à la Turque; but the monks called out that we should get in together... a shout from below, a pull from above, and we found ourselves swinging in mid-air... like a joint of meat suspended from a bottle-jack. (Hellier 1996, 205)

Other times fear infused the experience amidst the possibility of death, as in the case of Archimandrite Uspensky and Walter Hyde. Uspensky expresses the terror and relief of arrival to the monastery: “But as they were pulling me toward the wooden platform they turned me upside down over the abyss.... recovering a little from my panic, I asked the abbot to lead me straight to the church. There I fell on my knees before the icon of the Saviour. Tears splashed from my eyes....”⁶ (Nicol 1963, 15–16) And for Walter Hyde, the vertical passage to Grand Meteoron (the Monastery of the Metamorphosis) was a near-death experience. From the base of the sandstone pillar, Hyde shouted up to the monks who lowered a blanket and net attached to a rope. Hyde sat cross-legged on a net spread out on the rock platform, as the ends of the net were gathered above and attached to the metal hook at the rope’s end:

Now all was ready; at a given signal I felt myself slowly and gently lifted.... Up and up you go; now and again you take courage to peep down...and see the whirling trees and rocks below slowly recede. At times your knees graze against the side of the cliff and you feel like grasping at any shrub or blade of grass that you pass. You are terrified with doubts as to whether the rope is safe and whether there has ever been an accident. After being pulled up in this unceremonious manner for about two hundred and forty feet, I finally arrived at the tower, where two monks hauled me in with a hooked pole and landed me on the floor, a sorry muddle with no ideas of the cardinal points nor of zenith or nadir.... While waiting for my companion, I examined the room into which I had thus arrived from the sky... In this manner for many centuries a motley draught of pilgrims has been hauled up this aerial height.... (Hyde 1913, 150–1)

As he was lifted from the ground wrapped tightly in the net’s mesh, Hyde noted the “indescribable” sensation of “being thus hauled through space.” The 4-min ascent “like a big ball dangling and revolving in mid-air” leaves Hyde disoriented but then comforted by the ten-foot diameter windlass coiled with rope. Following the monks’

⁶Reflecting on Robert Curzon’s texts, della Dora also mentions that “[n]ineteenth-century travel accounts are full of entertaining tales of terrified visitors being ‘reassured’ by an abbot that a new rope was provided every time one broke.” (2013, 224)

practices of accessing the mid-air monastery, Hyde has entered this “eagle’s nest from the sky.” Along the way, he learns not only how the monks made it work but also comes to know his own role in that process of making a place suspended in air.

Harold Bloom interprets the last two lines of Stevens’ poem as a prayer. (Bloom 1977, 297) For *Meteora*, “Lightly and lightly, O my land, / Move lightly through the air again” is the hymn of those riding the nets from ground to sky. This chorus attends to an aerial imagination borne out of practice—the work necessary to build and maintain a monastery cast hundreds of feet in the air. Which is to say that, for the monks, this *imago* is experienced on a daily basis. For Hyde, what is routine for the monks proves difficult for the uninitiated. He finds such transport not only uncomfortable but also an “indescribable” experience. How do you describe the ineffable? More precisely, how do you build on air? Stevens’s *imago*, a moving image that also serves as the poem’s title, is the “necessary angel” that helps us see the earth—and our place within it—again.

3 Horizons

Looking back at the photographs taken from the monasteries, we are struck by the diverse horizons this outward look offers: some horizontal, others vertical—defined by edges of stone towers; some blurred, others sharply rendered; some near, others far. To the west and southwest, the Pindus Mountains ghost a high contour across the sky. To the east, another Pindus range layers a gradual incline where we can imagine Mt. Olympus at its zenith; and in the southeast, the plain opens and glides to a muted line, now curving with the earth’s surface and thickening with dust, smog and distant rock. At other extraordinary moments, there is no horizon, the space between sandstone towers dissolving into atmosphere’s whiteness. In the second canto of “The Auroras of Autumn (I-IX)”, Stevens (1950, 4) writes, “Whether fresher or duller, whether of winter cloud / Or of winter sky, from horizon to horizon. / The wind is blowing the sand across the floor.” He moves the air lightly “from horizon to horizon,” gathering together not just multiple viewpoints but insights that might otherwise remain at peripheries of understanding.

According to Heidegger, a horizon lets things come into presence: “A boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something *begins its presencing*. That is why the concept is that of *horismos*, that is, the horizon, the boundary.” (Heidegger 2001, 152) In *Meteora*, the horizon changes drastically as one moves through the landscape itself and its history. There are ways to listen to *Meteora* through the various horizons opened up by its different agents. We are disclosing how *Meteora* can speak to us.⁷ (Heidegger 1997, 12)

Our approach to both landscape and history relates to what Gadamer calls “intuitive revival.” (Gadamer 1989, 275) We attempt neither scientific retrieval of past events from our present location nor contextual simulation of past actors’ experi-

⁷Heidegger refers to this ‘speaking about’ and ‘speaking to’ as “*legen*in.”

ences. Our approach is rather a “mediation between history and the present in the act of understanding itself” where “there appears to be an obvious distinction between the original world structure established by a work of art and its survival in the changed circumstances thereafter.”⁸ (Gadamer 1989, xxii-xxix) Gadamer describes this process of understanding as a “fusion of horizons.”⁹ Many horizons enfold a place like Meteora, some distinct, others more obscure. By following the ‘old principle of hermeneutics,’ we start with the clear and move towards the obscure. (Heidegger 1997, 8) We begin our hermeneutic process with Meteora’s designation as a World Heritage site, the first in a series of horizons that lead us to the founder monks of Meteora by moving through the writings and paintings of nineteenth century travelers and Vasily Grigorovich-Barsky’s eighteenth century sepia-ink drawings.

4 UNESCO World Heritage

Meteora’s significance has not gone unnoticed within the global context. On December 23, 1988, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) officially declared Meteora as a World Heritage Site, adding it to a list of more than one thousand properties that reflect “the world’s cultural and natural diversity of outstanding universal value.” Among these global sites, Meteora is relatively unique in its designation as a mixed site, combining natural and cultural value, although initial assessments favored the latter over the former. UNESCO’s final inscription of the site points toward the inextricable linkage of nature and culture at Meteora as a “humanized landscape, the characteristics of which are due to persistence of farming practices and traditional arts and crafts linked to the stringent observance of monastic rules.” (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, 16)

Meteora meets five of UNESCO’s ten criteria for World Heritage Sites. Its frescoes justify Criterion II’s artistic interchange of values, construction of its monastery meets Criterion IV’s exemplary architecture and building, and the “humanized

⁸ See also Mugerauer 1996, xxx.

⁹ In this project, we are not “reconstructing the way the text came into being” and we acknowledge that our own interpretative thoughts contribute to what this place means. Here, we approach Gadamer’s horizon meld: “In this the interpreter’s own horizon is decisive, yet not as a personal standpoint that he maintains or enforces, but more as an opinion and a possibility that one brings into play and puts at risk, and that helps one truly to make one’s own what the text says. I have described this above as a ‘fusion of horizons.’ We can now see that this is what takes place in conversation, in which something is expressed that is not only mine or my author’s, but common.” (1989, 390) Later, Gadamer continues: “In our analysis of the hermeneutical process we saw that to acquire a horizon of interpretation requires a fusion of horizons.” (1989, 398) Mugerauer notes that this horizon occurs “where the past and present contexts come together to make something new of living value.” (1996, xxxi)

landscape” relates to Criterion IX’s ongoing ecological process.¹⁰ While these three are significant, they read as generic templates when compared with the more effusive language in the justifications of Criteria I and V.

Criterion I: “Suspended in the air” (the meaning of Meteora in Greek), these monasteries represent a unique artistic achievement and are one of the most forceful examples of the architectural transformation of a site into a place of retreat, meditation and prayer.

To meet the first criteria, the site must nominally “represent a masterpiece of human creative genius.” What the (ICOMOS) report finds is a combination of aesthetics and practice. In its cultural significance, Meteora provides both a “unique artistic achievement” and an act of “architectural transformation” of place “suspended in air” into a site for further activities of monastic life. Nikos Nikonanos’ commentary on Meteora further develops this interpretation: “the monks retired to this fantastic place, which gave them freedom to practice asceticism, adding to the already awe-inspiring creation of Nature the equally unreal products of human toil, ingenuity and aesthetic good taste.” (Nikonanos 1987, 17) With his statement, Nikonanos points out how the potential of nature is set free in the form of arts and poetic creation, enabled by the actions of the monks.

Criterion V: Built under impossible conditions, with no practicable roads, permanent though precarious human habitations subsist to this day in the Meteora, but have become vulnerable under the impact of time. The net in which intrepid pilgrims were hoisted up vertically alongside the 373-meter cliff where the Varlaam monastery dominates the valley symbolizes the fragility of a traditional way of life that is threatened with extinction. (ICOMOS 1988, 15–6)

The basis for the fifth criterion is culture, as well as “human interaction with the environment,” which has become particularly vulnerable to change. Meteora’s “impossible conditions” of access and daily life yield a system of environmental exchange and transport that extend this criterion beyond its typical application. Without “practicable roads,” the monks invented a practical, yet improbable, mode of transport with nets. Not only is Meteora vulnerable to natural and cultural changes that range from erosion to increasing tourism, its systems of daily life actually represent that fragility. The report invokes the image of monks and “intrepid pilgrims” lifted hundreds of feet in nets. Even more, that fragility is the foundation of how the monks made the place work. The nets are not just symbols, they are fundamental to the interaction of human with environment and, by extension, vital to the experience of this place “suspended in air.” Furthermore, they provide a mystical connection with the sky and heavens above.

The spirit of the Meteorite landscape has been in fact disturbed by the construction of stairs and car roads and the potential for the tourist flow opened up by this more efficient accessibility. As early as 1934, Papasotiriou noted in his guidebook:

It was inevitable that the Meteora should become a tourist attraction...the peace of the valley is frequently shattered by the roaring and hooting of coaches and cars.... Until quite recent

¹⁰ Note that in 2004 UNESCO combined the once separate categories of natural and cultural criteria into one list, changing natural criterion III into criterion IX.

years...there were two methods of getting up to the monasteries [nets and ladders]. In either case the visitor had to rely on the good faith and doubtful engineering of the monks before even making their acquaintance. (Della Dora 2013, 60)

Not until 1923 did stairs finally replace ladders and nets at Varlaam Monastery. Four decades later, roads allowed for closer vehicular access, although visits into the monasteries still require substantial walking. The construction of stairs is a turning point in Meteora's poetic revealing of place because it is linked to a loss of the original means of access—the nets and ladders that were risky and startling for the visitors and also linked directly to the idea of moving closer the heavens.

5 Origins of the Meteorite Landscape and Its Monasteries

Accounts of the natural origins of Meteora's landscape draw from both scientific and mythological explanations. According to scientists, 60 million years ago in the Tertiary geologic period, fluvial erosion ran through the Thessaly region of Greece, leaving behind sandstone masses. Seismic activity and weathering further sculpted this residual landscape into more than one hundred towers as high as one thousand feet from base to crest.

Tradition, which can carry knowledge of phenomena for centuries or millennia, also explains the origins of this landscape. According to Hellenic tradition, the entire “region of Thessaly was once a great lake, the waters of which were pent up by the continuation of Mount Ossa to the south-eastern spurs of Olympus. Through this barrier the great sea-deity Poseidon...was said to have a cleft passage...by a single blow of his trident.”¹¹ (Henson 1886, 44) Here, the knowledge of place is carried down for generations as a story—an interpretation of human beings, in a horizon that made sense to those who created it.¹² Donald Nicol describes this situation for Meteora:

The monks of the Meteora today are content to ascribe the origins of the sea of Thessaly to the time of Noah and its disappearance to the action of an earthquake. There is perhaps some truth in what they say, for the Vale of Tempe through which the Peneios now finds its way to the seas may well have been created by a series of earthquakes or volcanic movements. But the rocks of the Meteora are the bones of the hills that once covered them, left bare by a monumental process of erosion and denudation. (Nicol 1963, 5)

¹¹ Donald Nicol further explains this mix of legend and history: “It was commonly held in ancient times that the plain of Thessaly was once an inland sea: and this tradition may find some support in the geological formation of the Meteora rocks.... It was said that Poseidon the earth-shaker had blasted an outlet through the Vale of Tempe. Pindar knew that the honorary title of Poseidon in Thessaly was ‘Petraios,’ the rocky one, or he who split the rocks at Tempe. But for Herodotus it was the work of an earthquake. The tradition is widespread and dies hard.” (1963, 5)

¹² Henson notes the following: “According to one of the received modern methods of interpreting Hellenic myth, this story is an allegorical way of describing some great convulsion of nature by which the basin of Thessaly was in fact converted from a wide lake into dry land; and the physical formation of the country lends a certain amount of support to the theory.” (1886, 44)

Such mythical explanations are consistent with both the spirit and the scientific origin of this landscape. The spirit of the place comes from its outward appearance of a phenomenon, which cannot exist without a fictional quality. Echoing other traveler's reactions, George Curzon attributes Meteora's landscape to the work of Titans: "It was as though with a monstrous scalpel knife the mountain had at some time been flayed alive, and then with stokes of a titan's axe gashes had been hewn in the excoriated mass, and portions of it detached from the remainder, the severed lumps upstanding in grotesque shapes of pinnacle and sugar loaf and columnar spire."¹³ (Curzon 1891/1926, 323)

Despite its unique landscape, the cultural history of Meteora through tenth century remains largely unknown in written resources. At about that time, hermits began seeking refuge in Meteora's crevices, fissures, and caves. In 985, the ascetic Barnabas founded the small Skete of the Holy Ghost in the cliffs above Kastraki in 985.¹⁴ Initially hermits lived in the caves of the pillar-rocks, which resembled a "mammoth Gruyere cheese," and established the Theotokos of Doupiani. As early as the eleventh century, hermits, anchorites, and other reclusive religious figures occupied caves along the face of Meteora's sandstone cliffs. In the latter half of the twelfth century, a group of ascetics established the site's first monastic community as the Skete of Doupiani. (Nikonanos 1987, 18)

The largest transformation of the landscape began with Athanasius, the founder of Grand Meteoron (Monastery of Metamorphosis). In the middle of the fourteenth century, Athanasius left his long-term residence at Mt. Athos with another monk Gregory of Sinai to search for a new home that was secure from raiding pirates: "After wandering around Macedonia, they heard of a remote hillside in Thessaly where enormous rocks had been thrown up on their ends at the beginnings of creation." (Hellier 1996, 175) Initially they settled in a stone cave they called the Pillar, where Athanasius built a hesychasterion on a previously inaccessible peak.¹⁵ (Hellier 1996, 94) The place offered not only security but also tranquility. In his monastic practice, Athanasius sought *hesychia*, a sense of calm. (Hellier 1996, 176) Then, Athanasius decided to reach the highest peak of Platyliothos (Broad Rock) since "a hesychast could approach even greater spiritual perfection at such a giddy height." (Hellier 1996, 176) Athanasius and his companions climbed the rock and initially settled in a cave near the summit. According to legend, the birds in the Meteora region were so large that they lifted sheep into the air with their talons, and Athanasius was believed to have reached the tower's peak by flying on the back of a bird. (Markham, 216) Athanasius first named the site "metereon" (μετέωρος), and then renamed it "Grand Meteoron" after the construction of other monasteries. Soon

¹³Curzon continues: "A little to the right stands an even more uncommon brotherhood of rocks, projecting to a great height like a cluster of megalithic and inconceivable boars' tusks from the plain; and on the summit of these cones could be seen outlined against the sky the tiled roofs and towers of Hagias Trias and Hagia Stefanos, two of the nearest monasteries of Meteora." (1891/1926, 323)

¹⁴Chris Hellier designates this hermitage as the first of Meteora. (1996, 173)

¹⁵A hesychasterion is "a hermitage for solitary confinement and contemplation."

after this initial phase, Athanasius decided to reform the monastery's rules and established canonical rules based on coenobitic principles that emphasized the monastery's communal life. (Thomas and Hero 2000, 246–8)

6 Nineteenth Century Travelogues of Meteora

Twelve sheets would not contain all the wonders of Meteora, nor convey to you an idea of the surprise and pleasure which I felt in beholding these curious monasteries, planted like the nests of eagles, on the summits of high and pointed rocks. (Cockerell 1830, 509)

Robert Cockerell's 1814 letter suggests that traditional publications—like the folio's gathering of six leaves printed front and back for twelve pages—cannot hold a traveler's experience of Meteora. Paintings and texts created by travelers to Meteora offer multiple interpretations of this place and, to a degree, its place-making. Though still limited by its remote location and challenges of access, an increasing number of privileged European travelers included Meteora on their Grand Tours. By 1851, Edward Lear claims that “more has been done for these monasteries, both by pen and pencil, than for any place so remote from the ordinary routine of English travel.” (Lear 1851, 397)

Some of Meteora's visitors actually climbed the ladders and rode the nets, while others remained resolutely on the ground. This choice yields two genres of landscape depictions. Though he was critical of the monks, Cockerell stayed at Grand Meteoron to record drawings that look eastward across rifts of air to Varlaam Monastery. In 1851, Edward Lear, who had never witnessed “any scene so startling and incredible,” stayed below to make sketches looking up toward the monasteries framed by a visible sky. (Lear 1851, 395)

One sketch composed at 6 a.m. on May 16 shows the Mediterranean light illuminating the upper eastern face of the sandstone tower and Grand Meteoron's chapel. The morning sun also lights the tops of oak trees, but another unseen stone tower—likely Varlaam—casts the middle ground into deep shadow out of which two monks emerge. The intense light and high contrast ensures that the monastery rests clearly at the threshold between sky and stone. And we identify the nearby figures with those filling the net, in the distance but directly above, tenuously hanging along the western cliff face. Lear apparently includes the terrestrial monks with the earthly “atoms of life playing” at the tower's base.¹⁶

Lear contends with the constraints of time and the limits of representation. Despite his own cursory visit, he suggests that travelers should linger for much longer to understand this place through its “simplest and most classic poetries of scenery.” (Lear 1851, 397) And he links this understanding to making “real use” of

¹⁶Lear writes: “What a contrast is there between the precipices, from five to six hundred feet high, and these atoms of life playing at their base!” (1851, 395)

its beauty.¹⁷ Lear claims an artist can produce his work in a month. Although considered an extended visit, the artist's imaging of the scene remains a fraction of the monks' making of the place. Perhaps this longer stay requires not just a month but centuries like the monks.

Lear also claims that neither words nor images can capture the "exquisite landscape" and "magic heights" of Meteora, which is "infinitely more picturesque" than he had expected. In a footnote, he catalogues those who have drawn and written about Meteora, and like Cockerell, Lear again acknowledges the limits of representation; but later in the note, he claims that Cockerell's drawings do convey "a thoroughly correct idea of that place." (Lear 1851, 397–8) Lear acknowledges a difference between his visit and that of Cockerell's and suggests that the earlier traveler's time spent within the monastery provides insight to the place. Even though this understanding stops short of the sacred—Lear and Cockerell both decried the monks' practices—and does not address how the place is actually made, Cockerell's "idea of the place" approaches an eidetic production, though it is obscured by the colonially-informed "correctness" Lear claims.¹⁸

No pen or pencil can do justice to the scenery of Meteora. (Lear 1851, 82)

Robert Curzon, an English traveler, diplomat and author, visiting Meteora in 1837, noted that "nothing can be more strange and wonderful than this romantic region." In Curzon's initial approach, Meteora's monasteries appear distant and inaccessible, but the landscape and its "romantic path" soon disclosed these secrets:

On the tops of these rocks in different directions there remain seven monasteries out of twenty-four which once crowned their airy heights. How anything except a bird was to arrive at one which we saw in the distance on a pinnacle of rock was more than we could divine; but the mystery was soon solved. Winding our way upwards, among a labyrinth of smaller rocks and cliffs, by a romantic path which afforded us from time to time beautiful views of the green vale below us, we at length found ourselves on an elevated platform of rock, which I may compare to the flat roof of a church; while the monastery of Varlaam stood perpendicularly, above us, on the top of a much higher rock, like the tower of this church. (Curzon 1865, 247)

Similar to other nineteenth-century travelers, Curzon's Meteora is a picture of a beautiful natural landscape. He remains at a distance from the monastery although he attempts a connection by converting the land itself into a religious space, which takes the form of a place of worship.

In Curzon's view, Meteora's container—nature's stone formations and the monastery's bounding facades—is not simply disconnected from its content—nature as

¹⁷ Lear continues: "To make any real use of the most exquisite landscape abounding throughout this marvelous spot, an artist should stay here for a month: there are both the simplest and most classic poetries of scenery at their foot looking towards the plain and mountain..." (1851, 397–8)

¹⁸ Recent studies have claimed that these travelers understood the landscape of Meteora "less of a (sacred) place than a collection of landscapes to be enframed by the artist and 'taken away' in pictorial form." (della Dora and Maddrell 2014, 60) But the differences between Lear and Cockerell's experiences suggest that there are also differences of degree, if not kind, in these secular artistic productions.

environmental system and the daily practices that make Meteora a functioning monastery.¹⁹ The container becomes the content in two respects. Curzon remains outside monastic practices and instead moves within the natural context of Meteora. Curzon translates that context into a human construct—the stone platform is a roof and the sandstone pinnacle is its tower. When Curzon views this location, he discovers space without the circumspection and deliberation that the monks have cultivated with phronesis.²⁰ When landscape becomes a church, “pure dimensions” replace the measure-taking that phronetic and poetic place-making requires.²¹

7 Practices and Poetics of Dwelling: Vassily Grigorovich Barsky

On May 23, 1745, at the cusp of a Mediterranean summer, Vasily Grigorovich-Barsky scaled the sun-warmed rungs of Grand Meteoron’s ladders. His compound name signaled both exile and belonging. Two decades before his visit to Meteora, he added “Barsky” to disguise himself as a Polish Catholic and gain entrance to a Jesuit School. When his plan was exposed, Barsky left his home in Kiev to begin a traveler’s education. The remaining half of his life would be spent on the road, visiting and documenting holy sites and participating in their communal life. He was fascinated with Greece and worked as librarian at Mt. Athos. He then followed Athanasius’ footsteps, traveling inland to Meteora.

Barsky is one of the first well-known travelers to Meteora, and his understanding of its landscape is very different from that of nineteenth-century travelers. Barsky’s estrangement and his life on the road allowed him a unique interaction with this place. His identity as a novitiate gained him access to the monasteries, while his exiled status permitted him a degree of distance to consider how the place was made. Barsky composed seven sepia-ink drawings that accompanied his journal entries. These compositions are studies, working documents that capture his process of discovering the place. He is documenting patterns, systems, and relations rather

¹⁹ Della Dora and Maddrell have suggested that “what mattered to [Curzon] was the container rather than the content.” (2014, 60)

²⁰ Closer approaches to the monasteries (in this time period) yield a similar emphasis on the container. When John Pentland Mahaffy visits Meteora in 1890 and makes a detailed drawing of Holy Trinity from its façade, he focuses on outward appearances rather than the monastery’s inner world: “So also I will here pass by with a mere mention the eyries of Meteora in Thessaly, perched upon strange pinnacles of rock, like S. Simeon upon his pillar. The approach to, and descent from, these monasteries in a swinging net is indeed a strange adventure to undergo, and more painfully unpleasant than most such adventures, but at the top there is little of interest...”

²¹ In parallel, Heidegger says that “space is not in the subject, nor is the world in space. Space is rather ‘in’ the world in so far as space has been disclosed by that Being-in-the-world which is constitutive for Dasein.... When space is discovered non-circumspectively by just looking at it, the environmental regions get neutralized to pure dimensions.... Space essentially shows itself in a world.” (1962, 146–147)

than merely depicting the *eidos* (outward appearance) of place. Consequently, Barsky provides not only what Christian Norberg-Schulz calls a “meaningful and coherent environmental image” but also a composition charged with air and *techne*. (Norberg-Schulz 1971, 24)

His drawings reveal the inner workings of monastic life, showing us what is otherwise largely hidden. His work helps us understand Meteora’s place-making as a poetic process whose poetics emerge from the praxis within the place. While nineteenth-century travelers focused on landscape as a phenomenon of natural beauty, Barsky shows the cultural beauty of place (Figs. 1 and 2).

Barsky’s drawings consequently demonstrate how to build on air, particularly in terms of measure-taking and cultivating. The former takes place in the monks’ adjustment of the distance between them and heaven, both in practice and in the poetic creation of place. They situate themselves closer to the sky, and their actions are related to praying many times throughout the day. Measure-taking at Meteora

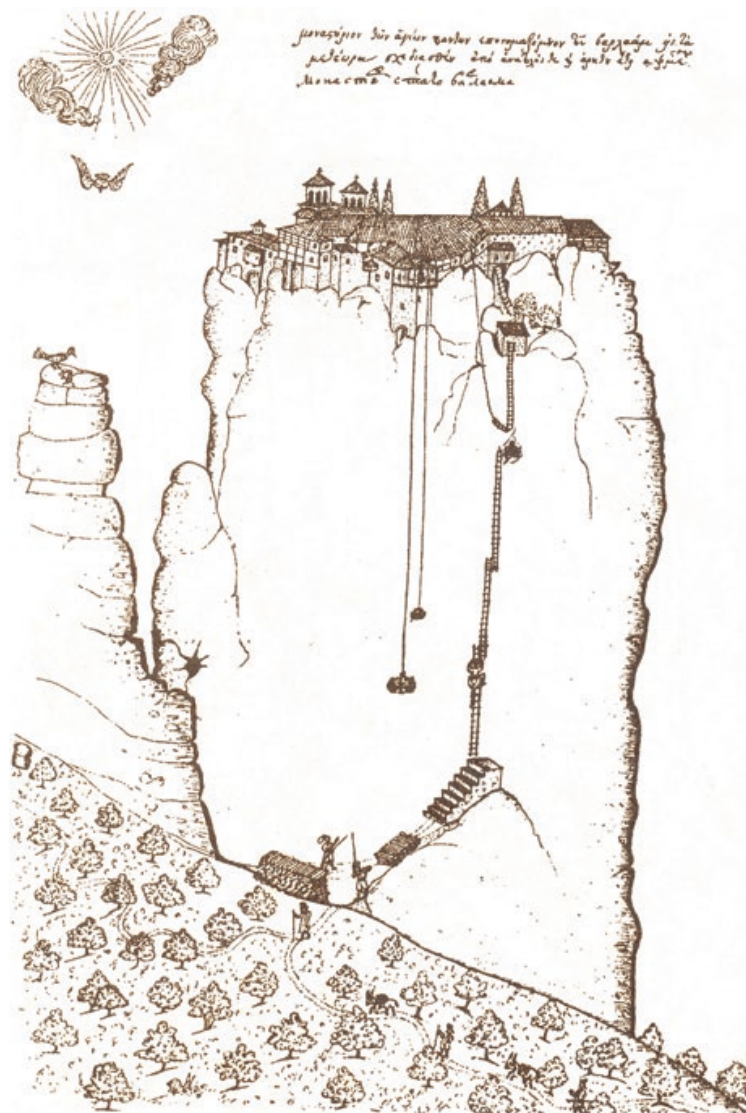


Fig. 1 Vassily Grigorovich Barsky, *Monastery of Varlaam at Meteora*, 1745

Fig. 2 Barsky, *Monastery of St. Stephen at Meteora*, 1745



occurs between earth and sky and in the monks' daily rituals and interactions with people, landscapes, and animals. This taking measure constantly relates the monks to God through self-formation, education, and cultivation (*bildung*). (Gadamer 1989, 9–10) Cultivating is the formation of the self: “*Bildung* evokes the ancient mystical tradition according to which man carries in his soul the image of God, after whom he is fashioned, and which man must cultivate in himself.” (Gadamer 1989, 10) As creative modes of truth, both *phronesis* and *techne* have the processes—*praxis* and *poiesis*—that lead place-making in the sense of the making and guarding of the image of the divine. The image of the divine, deeply experienced by Barsky, guides him to have a unique perception of Meteora compared to other travelers (Fig. 3).

Barsky draws the Grand Meteoron as if it is a cloud. He understands the place from inside out as opposed to many nineteenth-century travelers who understood it from outside in. For Barsky, the practice of dwelling comes first and leads to the beauty of place whereas in others the beauty comes from the geology of place. He also draws Meteora as if it is in the process of being built. With his inward understanding of place, he re-makes the place as he experiences it (Fig. 4).

Fig. 3 Barsky, *Monastery of St. Nicholas Anapausas at Meteora*, 1745



8 Measure-Taking

In his drawing of the Grand Meteoron, Barsky is taking measure through air not just between ground and sky, but between heaven and earth. The broken run of a ladder signals this break with earth's groundedness. Only a hoisted basket, which hovers along the gap in the ladder, suggests the connection. By dwelling up in the air with the monks, by being a part of the practice of everyday life in the monastery, Barsky comes to express in the drawing what this practice reveals as a position towards God and the heavens.

What Barsky depicts is not only in his imagination but also exists in the landscape. The way that Barsky draws the material of stone allows him to explore the monastery's interstitial location—bridging what is above and below. In his drawing of Grand Meteoron, a thin contoured edge of stone tethers the monastery to the ground, the lightest of connections. Like a body understood through the delicacy of its capillaries, other stone contours such as fissures, cuts and rifts are so many roots

Fig. 4 Barsky, *Monastery of Rousanou at Meteora*, 1745



sounding the air between heaven and earth.²² The grain of stone, not the stone itself, negotiates skyward monastery and earthbound landscape (Fig. 5).

Barsky places us on level with the monastery's church cupola. The horizon, which is at our eye level, lines up with the ridgeline of roofs and then passes through the windows of the cupola, which is the only element that breaks the line. Topped by a cross, the cupola is the place where the heavens cross the earth—a feature emphasized by the strong vertical axis of building contours, ladders, and ropes. Another more implied line—an axis of air, its thickness measured in the break between ladders—is the mirror line between monastery and ground. Across this line, earth reflects sky. Orchards on the ground show up in skyward plots. Trees grow from stone. Barsky brings other pieces of earth into contact with the sky. These fragments might ordinarily be considered as background, but here they fold

²² Bachelard describes a similar mode to approach living history: "For there is a map of the universe in the lines that time draws on these old walls.... A poet knows all this. But in order to describe in his own way a universe of this kind, created by chance on the confines of sketch and dream, he goes to live in it." (1958, 144)

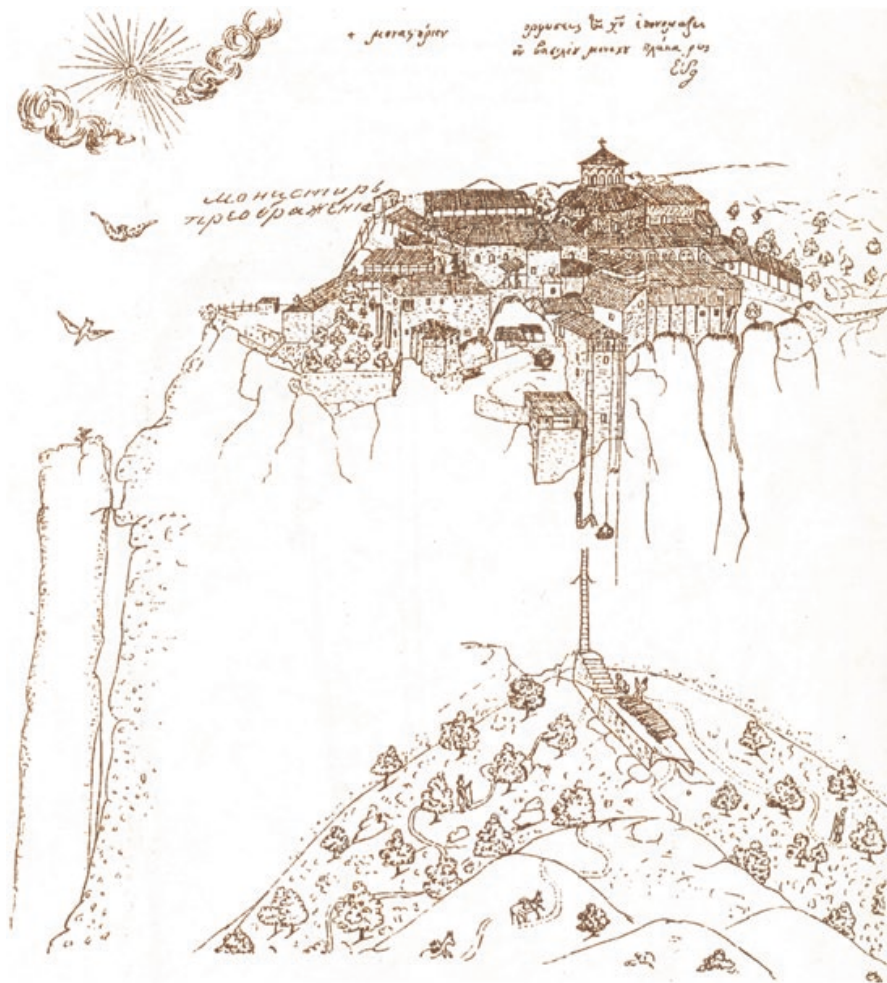


Fig. 5 Barsky, *Monastery of Great Meteoron (Metamorphosis)*, 1745

up and attach to the monastery's architecture—in Grand Meteoron's case, the sloping arcade (along the right edge) holds a floating piece of ground. Barsky himself cultivates the place between earth and sky.

Barsky also renders a working landscape, one that illustrates the practical logistics of this indeterminate zone, its daily activities as well as its construction. On the ground, donkeys laden with packs move along winding paths towards the ladder access point. People with staffs traverse other paths toward the same destination. Their hats identify them. On the right, a pantalooned figure wears a *cappa floccata*, the traditional Greek shepherd's hat. A figure on the left wears a robe and a "stove-pipe" hat, the Greek Orthodox head-cover that includes the *epanokailimavkion* over a *kalimavkion*. On the monastery's grounds, a small farmyard hovers to the left, and an orchard extends to the cliff edge.

Meshed with these daily rituals is the implication that the monastery is continuing to be built. Stacked lumber waits on a platform, tended by two figures. A net filled with supplies has just lifted from this access point's run of stairs, seven risers high, which lead to a smaller platform. Not only does the monastery remain in the process of building, but its construction appears to proceed downward from the

roofs, grounded by the horizon line. In the sky, the monastery's roofs have the weight of ground, and Barsky has rendered the roof tiles more heavily than the stone walls, where coursing is only lightly suggested. As if to emphasize this reversal, a canopied well draws water from an unseen source. The well's centrality suggests self-sufficiency but also a degree of need for connection to the earth, though Barsky intentionally makes this link through air.

In the sky, a feminine sun²³ radiates light framed by swirling clouds. Below the sun, two birds rise and fall between the horizon and their perch on top of an extraordinarily thin stone tower. The birds are bigger than people, their size closer to the monastery roofs. For Barsky, the monks' monastery is analogous to the bird's nest in the sense that it is perched upon a peak, oriented toward the sky. For Barsky, nets are also analogous to the bird nests in the sense that they gather and pile their inhabitants on top of each other.

9 Anterior: Nets and Nests

In a wondrous conflation of far and near, present and past, Bloom reads Stevens' *imago* as a "lightness of the anterior image" that—although idealized—warms February's air, relieves "a poverty of dirt," and offers an antidote to "poetic comfort" that yields "a world of homogeneity." (Bloom 1977, 297) In terms of place, anterior implies frontality and nearness, but it also comes before in time. Closer yet earlier. "*Move lightly through the air again.*" (Stevens 1950, 60) Akin to Gadamer's view of history, it is necessary distance and fulsome proximity. Meteora provides its occupants with just this anterior place. And it provides us with an anterior world—its earlier practices made present—through which to understand the phronetic and the poetic. The place, its interpretation, and its implications for place-making all held within what Gadamer calls the "hermeneutic universe":

It should be admitted that, say, an ancient image of the gods that was not displayed in a temple as a work of art in order to give aesthetic, reflective pleasure, and is now on show in a museum, retains, even as it stands before us today, the world of religious experience from which it came; the important consequence is that its world still belongs to us. What embraces both is the hermeneutic universe. (Gadamer 1989, xxxi)

Nests and nets find a place in this hermeneutic universe. Nests by necessity are aerial and sheltered, giving tenuous protection. They are separated from the ground,

²³ In his drawings, Barsky includes celestial bodies as important symbols for the order of universe, while they are absent in the sketches and paintings of 19th century travelers. In Greek, *Ilios* is masculine but in Barsky's drawings Sun is feminine. Heidegger connects the circumspection of phronesis with the discovery of the sun's places: "Regions are not first formed by things which are present-at-hand together; they are always ready-to-hand already in individual places. Places themselves either get allotted to the ready-to-hand in the circumspection of concern, or we come across them.... Thus the sun, whose light and warmth are in everyday use, has its own places—sunrise, midday, sunset, midnight; these are discovered in circumspection and treated distinctively in terms of changes in the usability of what the sun bestows.... These celestial regions, which need not have any geographical meaning as yet, provide the 'whither' beforehand for every special way of giving form to the regions which places can occupy." (Heidegger 1962, 137)

yet they provide a new, now intimate, ground. Meteora's monasteries are close to the heavens and disconnected from the ground, originally separated, but also linked, by the time it took to hoist the net. In his drawings, Barsky presents the nets as a mode by which the monks weigh the world. Hanging from the sky, they are the connecting tissue between sky and ground, but they also read as ballasts, weights that keep the monastery lightly tied to the ground (Fig. 6).

They cast their net into the world below; sometimes they enclose and draw up in it an inquisitive traveler, sometimes a brother Coenobite from Mount Athos, sometimes a Neophyte yearning for solitude and religious meditation; once they received in this manner an Emperor who came here...to exchange the purple of Constantine for the cowl of St. Basil. (Wordsworth 1839, 207–8)

Works of art always spring from those how have faced the danger, gone to the very end of an experience, to the point beyond which no human being can go. The further one dares to go, the more decent, the more personal, the more unique a life becomes. (Bachelard 1958, 220)

Fig. 6 Barsky, *Monastery of the Holy Trinity (Agia Triada) at Meteora*, 1745



The monks could not practice their aerial place-making without this very particular landscape and without the specific tool of the nets. They measure the world around them, they sound the depths of air between earthly and heavenly forces, and they offer themselves to the place when they cast the net or climb into what Bachelard would call the net's "intimate immensity." Wordsworth underscores that casting nets is communicating, as it also facilitates aerial place-making: "In this singular manner do the Monks of Meteora communicate with the earth three hundred feet beneath them." (Wordsworth 1839, 207) Nets also allow monastic communication with the heavens. In harmony with Stevens' refrain, a traditional Meteorite hymn sings the following:

The net says to the monks, be careful, not only do I lift you up from the ground to the top,
but also to heaven. (Sofianos 1991, 11)

Birds gather the landscape in their nests, like the monasteries gather their context not only visually but systemically. Bachelard describes both nests and monasteries when he notes: "When a thing becomes isolated, it becomes round, assumes a figure of being that is concentrated upon itself.... [and from Michelet] The bird, which is almost completely spherical, is certainly the sublime and divine summit of living concentration. One can neither see, nor even imagine, a higher degree of unity." Bachelard 1958, 239) It is this potential unity, through self-formation and self-reflection, that brings us back to phronimos—the figures of the monk, the net-traveler, and the nest-maker.

The monks made a place that admits us to a process of understanding places. In doing so, their work demonstrates how the poetic might emerge from and with the phronetic. Recalling how Barsky rendered Meteora's lines of stones so lightly, we find this insight from Bachelard: "For there is a map of the universe in the lines that time draws on these old walls.... A poet knows all this. But in order to describe in his own way a universe of this kind, created by chance on the confines of sketch and dream, he goes to live in it." (Bachelard 1958, 144)

To interpret Meteora is to understand how to build on air and how we might live in the sky. The place reminds us of verticality: "It possesses the verticality of the tower rising from the most earthly, watery depths, to the abode of a soul that believe in heaven...[and]...illustrates the verticality of the human being." (Bachelard 1958, 25) Poetically, the monks fulfill the full potential of the place through devices like the nets. Just as phronesis is the "virtue which enables us to apply courage to a new situation," (Caputo 1987, 217) there is, according to Bachelard, "virtue in living up near the sky." (Bachelard 1958, 27) And the monks of Meteora provide us with access to a mode of place-making that combines the practice with the poetics of dwelling (Fig. 7).

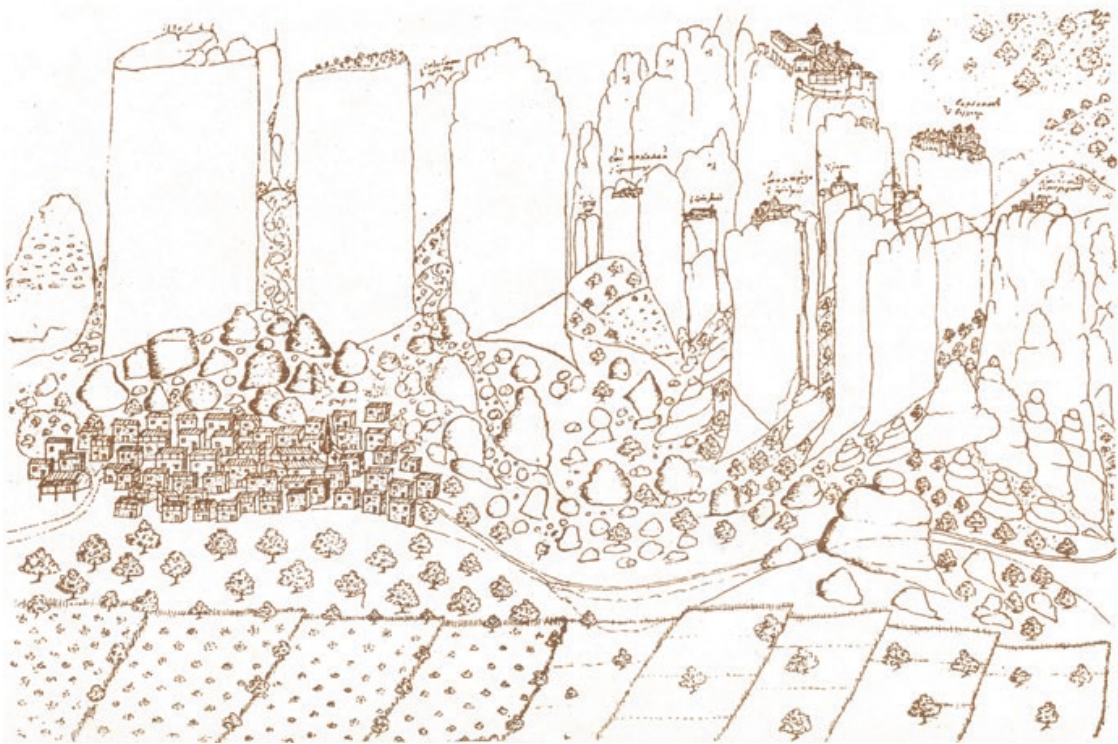


Fig. 7 Barsky, *The monasteries of Meteora shown together*, 1745

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Action-Space and Time: Towards an Enactive Hermeneutics

Shaun Gallagher, Sergio F. Martínez, and Melina Gastelum

Abstract We argue that the understanding of space, as an extended, simultaneous totality, although useful in some scientific contexts, is not true to our embodied experiences of space. It is an abstraction, involving a de-temporalization of space that falsifies our experience. From the phenomenological-enactivist perspective, space is not already there, neutrally constituted in its objective extension; rather, it is enacted, put in place relative to action affordances that are both corporeal and intercorporeal. Moreover, these action affordances are permeated by an intrinsic temporality, so that the experience of space is fully temporal because it is fully embodied. Space, as the experienced phenomenon of a delimited embodied enactment, is also hermeneutically situated so that meaning emerges for the embodied agent just because of its dynamical relations to a set of physical and social affordances.

Bergson (1988) famously argued against the spatialization of time (*durée*). Spatialization should be considered a falsification since it pictures succession and *durée* as a simultaneous or instantaneous or durationless totality. On this view, the assumed contrast between space and time is just this: that space is there (present) all at once, and time is not.

We pursue an inversion of Bergson's argument in this chapter, namely that this understanding of space, as an extended, simultaneous totality, the objective product of a geometrization, although useful in some scientific contexts, is not true to our

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embodied experiences of space and that it is in fact an abstraction, a kind of de-temporalization of space that falsifies it. This is not just the idea that, phenomenologically, no one can ever experience all of space at once – that there is always a corner to turn or a horizon that leaves the totality incomplete – but also that even before turning the corner, and far short of the horizon, our experience of space is fully temporal because it is fully embodied. From the phenomenological perspective, space is not already there, neutrally constituted in its objective extension; rather, it is enacted, put in place (in processes that involve dis-placement and replacement) relative to action affordances that are both corporeal and intercorporeal. Moreover, these action affordances are permeated by an intrinsic temporality. Space, as the experienced phenomenon of a delimited embodied enactment, is something situated, not in a larger framework of a geometrically abstract extension, but in a hermeneutical situation that includes the embodied agent dynamically related to a set of physical and social affordances.

1 Bodily Movement and Agentive Time

To set the stage we want to establish two things. First, Husserl's (1991) analysis of the intrinsic temporal structure of experience applies not just to consciousness, but also to embodied action. Berthoz, for example, suggests that the Husserlian analysis of the retentional-protentional structure of experience is a model that also works for the processes involved in motor control (Berthoz 2000, 16; also see Gallagher 2011; 2016). Intrinsic temporality can be found in the dynamics of bodily movement and action, and manifests itself at both the subpersonal and the personal levels of analysis. Second, its application in the context of embodied action makes it clear that this intrinsic temporality has an enactive structure.

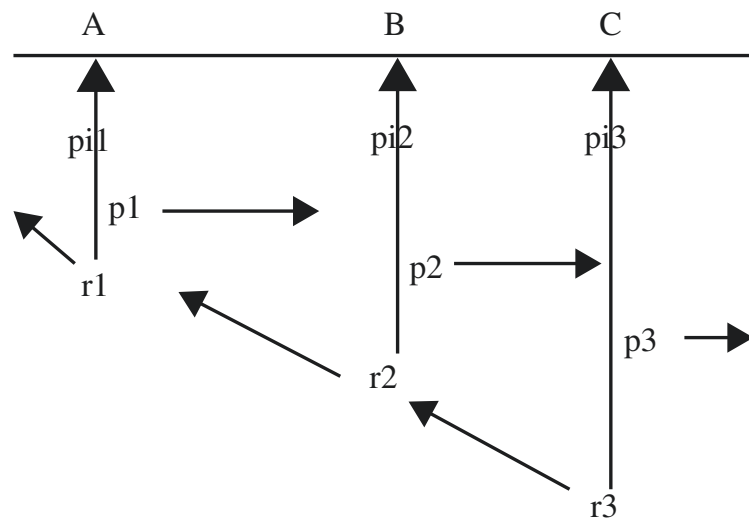
This intrinsic temporality is not objective time that can be measured by a clock, although action certainly does take place in time, and it may be important in various contexts that its duration can be measured. Phenomenologists distinguish objective time from lived time (e.g., Husserl 1991; Merleau-Ponty 1962; Straus 1966). The latter is time as we experience it passing, sometimes seeming to pass slowly and sometimes rapidly. Intrinsic temporality includes more than lived or phenomenological time; it includes a temporal structuring that shapes action and experience.

Husserl's model is represented in Fig. 1. He applies this model to the conscious perception of a melody. The horizontal line ABC represents a temporal object such as a melody of several notes. The vertical lines represent abstract momentary phases of an enduring act of consciousness.

Each phase is structured by three functions:

- *primal impression* (pi), allowing for the consciousness of an object (a musical note, for example) that is simultaneous with the current phase of consciousness;
- *retention* (r), which retains previous phases of consciousness and their intentional content;
- *protention* (p), which anticipates experience which is just about to happen.

Fig. 1 Husserl's model of time-consciousness (From Gallagher 1998)



In the current phase, simultaneous with C, there is a retentioning (r3) of the previous phase of experience, and this just-past phase includes its own retentioning of the prior phase. This means that there is a retentional continuum – r3(r2[r1]), and so forth – stretching back over recent prior experience, on the order of seconds. There is also a double intentionality to this retentional aspect. Retention retains the prior phases of consciousness (longitudinal intentionality), but since those phases include primal impressions of the then current notes (B and A respectively) retention also retains the prior notes of the melody (transverse intentionality), in the sequential order in which we heard them, which generally reflects the order in which they were sounded. Imagine if that were not the case. If there were no retention of previous notes, then we would not hear a melody. Indeed, if our experience were of only one moment at a time without experiential connection to previous moments, it would be impossible to make sense of the world.

Protention, in turn, provides consciousness with an intentional sense that something more will happen. This protentional aspect allows for the experience of surprise. In listening to a familiar melody, there is some sense of what is to come, a primal expectation of the notes to follow. If someone hits the wrong note I am accordingly surprised or disappointed, in the same way that if a person fails to complete a sentence, I experience a sense of incompleteness as my protention is unfulfilled, or what I experience fails to match my anticipation. The phenomenon of “representational momentum,” where movement or implied movement results in the extrapolation of a trajectory that goes beyond what was actually perceived, also provides evidence of protention (Wilson and Knoblich 2005). The content of protention is never completely determinate since the future itself is indeterminate. Indeed, in some cases the content of protention may approach the most general sense of ‘something (without specification) has to happen next.’

A full intrinsic temporality of retention and anticipation helps to structure movement and action as well. To make sense out of its experience, for example, the human animal (like many other kinds of animals) needs to keep track of how

previous movement has brought it to its current state. This is especially true if the movement is intentional.

In regard to action and motor control, this intrinsic temporality is expressed in Henry Head's definition of the body schema. According to Head, the body schema dynamically organizes sensory-motor feedback such that the final sensation of position is "charged with a relation to something that has happened before" (Head 1920, 606). Merleau-Ponty borrowing Head's metaphor of a taximeter suggests that movement is organized according to the "time of the body, taximeter time of the corporeal schema" (1968, 173). Body schematic processes incorporate past moments into the present:

At each successive instant of a movement, the preceding instant is not lost sight of. It is, as it were, folded into the present. Movement draws together, on the basis of one's present position, the succession of previous positions, which envelop each other. (Merleau-Ponty 1962, 140, trans. revised)

An experiential spatial ordering of the body in its proprioception (position sense) emerges from a temporal ordering of action. Such retentional aspects of movement are integrated with anticipatory or prospective aspects. There is good evidence for this in all kinds of embodied processes. For example, there is more organization in the movements of very young infants than the casual glance reveals. Although infants younger than 3 months of age seemingly lack proper coordination (their arms and legs seem not to be in sync, and this may have something to do with adjusting to their newfound gravity (Hopkins and Prechtl 1984; Prechtl and Hopkins 1986)), this is a matter of degree. Video studies show that close to one-third of all arm movements resulting in contact with any part of the head lead to contact with the mouth, directly (14%), or following contact with other parts of the face (18%) (Butterworth and Hopkins 1988; Lew and Butterworth 1995). Moreover, a significant percentage of such movements are associated with an open or opening mouth posture. The mouth *anticipates* arrival of the hand. This kind of coordination begins even earlier. Ultrasonic scanning on fetuses shows that similar hand–mouth movements, reflecting "a striking similarity between prenatal and postnatal movements" occur between 50–100 times per hour from 12 to 15 weeks gestational age (DeVries et al. 1984, 48).

In both infants and adults, anticipatory or prospective processes are pervasive in low-level sensorimotor actions. Similar to the mouth's anticipation of the hand, when I reach down to the floor to grab something, my body doesn't go off balance and fall over; it anticipates that possibility and angles backward in order to adjust its center of gravity as I bend forward (Babinski 1899). Our gaze anticipates the rotation of our body when we turn a corner (Berthoz 2000), and more generally, visual tracking involves moment-to-moment anticipations concerning the trajectory of the target. On various models of motor control, a forward model employs a copy of the efferent motor command (efference copy) to anticipate the consequences of the action prior to sensory feedback, allowing for fast corrections of movement (Georgieff and Jeannerod 1998). Reaching for an object, for example, involves feed-forward components that allow last minute adjustments if the object is moved,

and the grasp of my reaching hand tacitly anticipates the shape of the object to be grasped. This is not blind automaticity since the grasp is shaped according to the specific intentional action involved (see Jeannerod 2001; MacKay 1966; Wolpert et al. 1995). Berthoz (2000, 25) suggests that anticipation is “an essential characteristic” of motor functioning. Similar anticipations characterize the sensory aspects of perception (see Wilson and Knoblich 2005 for review). Since these prospective processes are present pervasively, even in infants, the “conclusion that [anticipatory processes] are immanent in virtually everything we think or do seems inescapable” (Haith 1993, 237).

2 Enactive Temporality

The enactivist view holds that perception and cognition are action oriented, that is, they are characterized in most cases by a structural coupling between the agentive body and the environment, which generates action-oriented meaning (e.g., Varela et al. 1991; Noë 2004; Di Paolo 2009). When, for example, I perceive something, I perceive it as actionable. That is, I perceive it as something *I can* reach, or not; something *I can* pick up, or not; something *I can* hammer with, or not, and so forth. Such affordances (Gibson 1977, 1979) for potential actions (even if I am not planning to take action) shape the way that I actually perceive the world. One can find the roots of this kind of approach in phenomenologists like Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty. Merleau-Ponty (1962) is most often cited in this regard, but Merleau-Ponty himself points us back to Husserl’s analysis of the “I can” in *Ideen II* (Husserl 1989), and to his analysis of the correlation between kinaesthetic activation and perception (1998; see Zahavi 1994 and Gallagher and Zahavi 2012 for further discussion). Moreover, if perception and action are enactive, their intrinsic temporal structure is also.

On an enactivist interpretation, the primal impression is not the origin and point of departure (as “something absolutely unmodified, the primal source of all further consciousness and being” [Husserl 1966a, 67]), but the “boundary” between retention and protention (Husserl 2001, 4), or the result of a dynamical interplay between retention and protention. This claim is consistent with Husserl’s idea that the point of departure, rather than being the primal impression, is the empty (i.e., as yet unfulfilled) protentional anticipation (Husserl 2001, 4).

As we saw, the protention-primal impression-retention model applies to action and non-conscious motor processes, as well as it does to consciousness. In this regard, when we look at action we can say that at any one moment the body is in some precise posture – as captured by a snapshot, for example. That momentary posture, however, is a complete abstraction from the movement since in each case the body is not posturing from moment to moment, but is constantly *on the way*, in the flow of the movement such that the abstract postural moment only has meaning as part of that process. One could argue that *objectively speaking*, at any moment the body actually is in a specific posture, occupying a precisely defined space. But if

that postural moment is anything, it is the product of an anticipated trajectory of where the action is heading. Furthermore, we can define that abstract postural moment only when it is already accomplished – but that means, only in retention, and as an end point of what had been a movement characterized primarily by anticipation.

Pre-reflectively, consciousness and action have this structure. There is no impression of the present, or posture in the present, taken as a knife-edge; rather, as Husserl suggests, primal impression is already fulfilling (or not) protentions that have already been retained, and in doing so is already informing the current protentional process. We should abandon the idea that primal impression is a direct, straight and simple apprehension of some now-point of a stimulus that is unaffected by retention and protention. The perception of a currently sounding note, for example, is already modified by my just past and passing awareness of whatever came directly before. In that sense, primal impression is already modified by the retentional performance of consciousness. There is no primal impression that is not already qualified by retention. It is not that in a now phase of consciousness I have a retention of a past phase *plus* a primal impression of a current stimulus (S). It is not an additive function. A description of the full experience of a melody is not well formulated by saying that I first experience (in primal impression) note A, and then (in a new primal impression) note B, as I retain note A. Rather, the primal impression of B is already qualified (impacted, transduced, modulated) by the just previous experience, just as one's present posture is already the result of previous movement. So the primal impression of B is never simply that; it is something that has worked its way through the retention of the previous primal impression of A. Accordingly, the primal impression of B would be a different experience if it were preceded not by the primal impression of A, but by a primal impression of something that was not A. Thus, for example, the primal impression of the note B-minor sounded at a certain point in Bach's *Concerto in B minor* will be different from the primal impression of the note B-minor sounded at a certain point in Vivaldi's *Concerto in B minor*. The notes will also sound different in some way.

Protention also has similar dynamical effects. On the one hand, the primal impression of A when occurrent, is producing a determination of what my protentional horizon currently is – e.g., a protention of B ... C ... D ... and so on. Whatever I anticipate must be related to what I am currently experiencing, and thus it must be related to the coordination structures in which the agent is embedded. On the other hand, the primal impression of B, when occurrent, is already qualified by the previous protention (currently retained), whether that was a protention of B (now fulfilled), or something else (now unfulfilled). Generally speaking, then, primal impression constrains the current protention, and is constrained by the previous protention. The occurrent primal impression is partially either the fulfillment or lack of fulfillment of the previous protention and provides partial specification of what I am anticipating.

The primal impression is itself structured by its very dynamic participation in its relations to retention and protention (and vice versa). The intrinsic temporality of experience and action seems to have a fractal character (Gallagher and Zahavi

2014). The structure of intrinsic temporality is protention-primal impression-retention. But each element also reflects this structure again so that any closer examination of primal impression (or retention or protention) finds that same structure repeated – again, not in an additive way, but with a kind of fractal effect – an effect that multiplies itself in such a way that any attempt to define primal impression in itself always finds the effects of retention or protention already included.

If thinking of intrinsic temporality in this fractal way is suggestive, it is more true to the dynamic nature of these processes to think of them as enactive. One can say that there is no primal impression – no current intuition of the present stimulus (S) – without it already being anticipatory (on the basis of what has just occurred), so that my primal impression of the present is already involved in an enactive anticipation of how my encounter with S will work out. Protention, primal impression, and retention are in an *enactive* structure in regard to S in the sense that a certain anticipatory aspect (already shaped by what has just gone before) is already complicating the immediacy of the present. Consciousness is not simply a passive reception of the present; it enacts the present, it constitutes its meaning in the shadow of what has just been experienced, and in the light of what it anticipates. As in the case of action, the intrinsic temporality of experience should be considered as pragmatically directed towards the meaningful possibilities the agent sees in the world. This lines up well with Husserl's conception of embodied experience as an anticipatory "I can" which draws on my prior experience and my current state. As Husserl put it, "every living is living towards." This anticipatory intentionality is an apprehension of the possibilities or the affordances in the present, of what S *can be* for my experience; possibilities that will be fulfilled or not fulfilled as our enactive perception trails off in retention.

Nothing is an affordance for my enactive engagement if it is presented to me passively in a knife-edge present; that is, nothing would be afforded if there were only primal impressions, one after the other, without protentional anticipation, since I cannot enactively engage with the world if the world is not experienced as a set of possibilities, which, by definition, involves the not-yet. (Gallagher and Zahavi 2014, 96).

Thus, the enactive character goes all the way down, into the intrinsic structure of experience and action.

3 Enactive Temporality in Space Perception

We have indicated that perception of the surrounding world is enactive. I see things in terms of the 'I can', or in terms of the action affordances that are structured by intrinsic temporality. This applies to very basic experiences of space. Perceiving something as nearby or as distant is relative to the action situation defined not in terms of objective measurement, but in terms of embodied skill (how skillful I may be in reaching or moving), as well as agent interest (how much effort am I willing or able to invest in the movement – something that is clearly modulated by energy

levels, fatigue, pain, and other affective aspects of embodiment – see Gallagher and Bower 2014). Spatial nearness or farness are defined in pragmatic terms. All of this reflects anticipatory aspects and can be framed in terms of the intrinsic temporality of action possibilities. This has been a consistent theme in phenomenology.

This has also been consistently emphasized in recent embodied approaches to cognitive science. Marc Jeannerod (1997), for example, made a clear distinction between pragmatic and semantic processing of visual information, where spatial information, and therefore information about how I can reach and grab an object is included in pragmatic processing. An object that is too far to reach or too heavy to move also has a different semantic significance than if that object is reachable or movable (Jeannerod and Gallagher 2002). Likewise O'Regan and Noë's (2001) analysis of sensory-motor contingencies suggests that various spatial aspects of our surrounding environment play a role in how we perceive objects and how we can act in reference to them. As Proffitt (2006) succinctly puts it, we “scale the geometry of spatial layout to the economy of possible human action.” Indeed, these kinds of modulations of spatial significance are not only tightly connected to action, they also show up in language use. The semantics of demonstratives, for example, depends on the distance of an object from the perceiver's body (Coventry et al. 2008). Generally, ‘this’ comes to signify anything reachable; ‘that’ indicates something outside of peripersonal space. We can grasp *this*, or at least touch it; we can only point to *that*. This specific kind of meaning is modulated by the presence of other people depending on where they are located in space relative to the object.

The idea that space can be characterized as typically a view from a fixed location has been criticized since Gibson (1979) and Haber (1985). Several experiments point to a significant difference between space experienced in blind locomotion to a previously seen target and the perception of visual space. As shown by Loomis et al. (1992), although subjects are able to locomote blindly to a previously seen target without much systematic error, there is a perceptual inequality of frontal and sagittal intervals that indicates an anisotropy in the mapping from physical to visual space. In one of their experiments they go beyond these well-established results to show that subjects “mark off nearly equal frontal and sagittal intervals with blind walking to the interval endpoints when the intervals are physically equal,” even when the same frontal and sagittal intervals were judged as unequal from the origin of blind locomotion (Loomis et al. 1992). The authors discuss several possible hypotheses that could account for the disparity in question. But the important point for us is that such results support the idea that space as experienced in visuomotor coordination is not the same space experienced by the visual system dealing with the focal perception of space (Trevarthen 1968). Visuomotor coordination enacts space in a *temporal* structuring of the task relative to action affordances, an experienced space that is not reducible to the geometrical space implicit in the focal perception of space.

Such temporal structuring embodied in visuomotor coordination suggests that our perception of space cannot be detached from our anticipations of actions. Moreover, such anticipation of actions do not seem to be restricted to the perceiving agent's actions. Tversky and Hard, for example, show that “the mere presence of a person in a position to act on the objects induced respondents to describe the spatial

relations from that person's point of view" (Tversky and Hard 2009; also Surtees and Apperly 2012). This suggests that spatial relations are perceived differently depending not only on the potential actions of the perceiving agent, but also on what one sees as a possible action of another agent (also see Teneggi et al. 2013).

Our perception of space is thus modulated by social factors. In this regard, in the case of (at least) two persons interacting, their coordination structuring will also implicate a change in the intrinsic temporality of each subject. In other words, coordination and interaction will affect the intrinsic temporality as well as the perceived space of the action possibilities of the subject embodied in the dynamics of the (social) environment.¹ Coordination with others takes place in a dynamical manner that both reiterates and modulates intrinsic temporality. "Intrinsic temporality of experience thereby embodies the dynamics of the environment. Our dynamical perspective is thus relational as well" (Laroche et al. 2014, 3). Studies by van Elk (2014) and by Soliman and Glenberg (2014) provide evidence for extending these effects in ways that are modulated by social and cultural practices – religious culture and more general cultural differences, respectively.

Tversky and Hard's results support the view that the dynamics of solo action carry over and are modulated in joint action (also see Marsh et al. 2006). Additional research shows that patterns of intentional as well as unintentional coordination in solo and joint action can be modeled by the same coupled-oscillator dynamics (Schmidt and O'Brien 1997). Several studies point to the conclusion that the articulatory process of postural sway in communicative actions (and not vocal patterns or rhythms latent within a speech signal) leads to interpersonal postural entrainment. Such entrainment "should facilitate social interaction by placing individuals within a common frame of reference" (Fowler et al. 2008, 274).

A coordinating structuring, arising from interactions among several agents and the environment, constitute not only a social context, but reorganizes the experience of space. With respect to the effects of joint and collective actions, the reorganization of space is not only captured in the objective terms of the architectural structures of the built environment (see below), but also in a way that modulates the lived body and the way that space is experienced.

Good evidence for this claim can be found in the phenomenon of the joint body schema. There is well-established evidence for changes in the experience of peripersonal space (and its underlying neural basis) during tool use, often described in terms of the incorporation of tools into the agent's body schema (Berti and Frassinetti 2000; Farnè et al. 2005). For example, Maravita and Iriki (2004) showed bimodal neurons in the parietal cortex have both somatosensory and visual receptive fields

¹ This dynamical coordination that structures its own temporality is embodied in the interaction of the agents, but interaction in an enactive perspective is not just space-time coincidence:

We must go beyond a view that identifies interaction as simply the spacio-temporal coincidence of two agents that influence each other. We must move towards an interpretation of how their history of coordination demarcates the interaction as an identifiable pattern with its own internal structure, and its own role to play in the process of understanding each other and the world. (De Jaegher and Di Paolo 2007, p. 492)

focused on the hand. Thus, neuronal activation increases for the visual receptive field as one looks near one's hand. After use of a tool that extends one's reach (e.g., a rake), the visual receptive field expands to include the effector end of the tool even if that end is outside of peripersonal space. To put it another way, peripersonal space extends to include the area around the end of the tool. The same kind of extension of peripersonal space can be found during joint action. In experiments by Soliman and Glenberg (2014), two participants coordinated their actions for 5 min by moving a flexible wire back and forth to cut through a candle, a task that required close coordination to keep the wire tight. Using complex visual vs tactile interference measures previously used to demonstrate incorporation of tools and extension of peripersonal space during tool use, Soliman and Glenberg confirmed that peripersonal space expanded to include the space around the other participant, which they describe as the establishment of a joint body schema. In effect, a form of enactive spatiality emerges from joint action and various forms of intersubjective interaction.

4 Enactivist Hermeneutics

Not only do we perceive space along the lines of these different pragmatic and intersubjective modulations, we also tend to arrange the environment pragmatically and aesthetically. As Mark Johnson writes in regard to architecture and embodied action, “we live in and through our ongoing interactions with environments that are both physical and cultural. The structures we make are loosely adapted to the functions we perform.... [We] order our environments to enhance meaning in our lives and to open up possibilities for deepened and enriched experience” (2015, 33). If we take architecture in a very basic sense to be the way that space is meaningfully organized in our surrounding environment, then we suggest that the hermeneutics of architecture is an enactivist hermeneutics that joins architecture to the temporality and spatiality of embodied action and intersubjective interaction.

To be clear, what we propose is not about reducing meaning to pragmatic action; embodied action is richer than that. It can be (in positive terms) aesthetic, hedonic, expressive, intersubjective, ethical, and so on. Enactivist hermeneutics should, as proposed by Ricoeur (1988, 208), in phrases borrowed from Reinhart Koselleck (1985), reflect a “negotiation between the *space of experience* and the *horizon of expectation*.” For enactivism, the world (meaning, intentionality) is not pre-given or predefined, but is structured by cognition and action, and shows up as an affordance space (Brincker 2014; Gallagher 2015) or a “landscape of affordances” (Rietveld and Kiverstein 2014). Architecture, understood as a kind of knowledge, is the study of an order that we bring into existence, “not only as a building, but as a human situation, in the space-time of experience” (Pérez-Gómez 1998, 24).

Another way to say this is that an enactivist hermeneutics involves the acknowledgement that interpretation is always *in* and *of* a hermeneutical *situation* where ‘situation’ includes not only the horizontal limits of interpretation, but the interpreter

him- or herself, understood as an agent, and the affordances (physical, pragmatic, social and cultural) that are relative to that agent.

The very idea of a situation means that we are not standing outside of it; hence we are unable to have any [purely] objective knowledge concerning it. We always find ourselves within a situation, and throwing light on it is a task that is never entirely finished. This is also true of the hermeneutic situation (Gadamer 2004, 301)

Body and environment are co-relational and defined relative to each other; and this co-relationality shapes our interpretations of what things mean and what value they may have. A nice example of this can be found in Ian Waterman's experience as a disability access auditor. Waterman lost proprioception and sense of touch from the neck down at age 19. Subsequently he has had profound difficulties in controlling his movement, which he must do by visual and conscious control of his body (Cole 1995). Without proprioception his body schema is significantly compromised (Gallagher and Cole 1995). This situation dramatically altered his action affordances. His own dynamic relations with the environment are as different as his consciously controlled movement is from typical movement. Yet, he was able to turn this into a positive advantage, using his own disability to professionally evaluate built environments in terms of accessibility for the disabled. Someone in a wheelchair necessarily has a different set of affordances, and Waterman, although not in a wheelchair, is able to see what those affordances and disaffordances are better than most (Cole 2016, Ch. 1). That is, his interpretation of the environment and the architecture is directly tied to the different affordances of his own (and others' disabled) embodiment. He suggests:

Architects should sit and watch how people get through buildings. If they did then things might change.... I just cannot go into a building, hospital or hotel, and not think whether it meets a broad spectrum of disabled people's needs. I just cannot turn it off, it is like breathing. (Ibid, p. 25).

Perception and sense making, like breathing, are embodied, situated, and intersubjective. As William Clancey (1997) suggests, human thought and action are situated "because what people *perceive*, how they *conceive of their activity*, and what they *physically do* develop together." For enactivist hermeneutics, the agentic situation is not equivalent to the external setting, or the surrounding world, objectively defined. It includes the interpreter – which means the particular embodiment of the perceiver, the agent. As such, situations and their meanings are relative to affordances that are physical (relative to individual motoric abilities/disabilities and skills), but also social and cultural.

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Hermeneutics of Play – Hermeneutics of Place: On Play, Style, and Dream

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Abstract I show that Gadamer’s thoughts on *Spiel* (game or play in English) are essential for the definition of a hermeneutics of place. From a hermeneutic point of view, places are experienced whilst the subject is both in the place and part of the place. There is a dialectical relationship between the individual and a space that is always already at work for that individual. Similar to what happens in play, the experience of the place overcomes subjectivity, which means that an “experienced place” has its own essence independent of the consciousness of the one who is in the place.

In this context, style as a hermeneutic notion becomes important for the definition of “cultural places.” This is linked to the ontology of play. The game has not only laws and rules but any game must be played in a certain way. Furthermore, if play represents a model of non-foundation, the style provided by the game is equally non-founded. A hermeneutics of place will thus focus on play and style and elaborate how both interfere with places. I also introduce the notion of dream because it clarifies the ontological particularity of “played spaces.”

I want to show in this chapter that the notion of play is important for hermeneutically meaningful definitions of places. Hans-Georg Gadamer names a long section in Chapter 3 of *Truth and Method*, “Play as the Clue to Ontological Explanation.” In 27 pages, Gadamer explains the concept of play and its significance for aesthetics. In general, Gadamer’s hermeneutics is determined by the notion of “historicity” (*Geschichtlichkeit*) claiming that within every process of understanding we are constantly referred back to our own historical position. The process of understanding has no theoretical or methodological grounding but interpretation, as it is endlessly changing between reading and rhetoric, produces a long chain of signifiers without ever referring to an absolute divine logos. Gadamer’s pages on play support those ideas about understanding. They also echo Martin Heidegger’s and Eugen Fink’s thoughts on the hermeneutics of non-foundation, that is, about philosophical positions holding that reason and interpretation are ultimately founded only “on

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themselves” and can therefore be likened to the circular movement of games: “Being means ground – ground means Being” (“*Sein heißt Grund – Grund heißt Sein*”), writes Heidegger in *The Principle of Reason*, and concludes that here “everything is circular” (“hier dreht sich alles im Kreis”) (1957, 205; 1996, 127).¹ In the end, Being is not more than a “simple plain presence that is without why” (“*ein schlichtes Vorliegen ohne Warum*,” *ibid.*).²

I believe that Gadamer’s thoughts on *Spiel* (game or play)³ are also essential for the definition of a hermeneutics of place. One of Gadamer’s central terms, the “fusion of horizons,” is a spatial metaphor. Gadamer describes the horizon as something that we “walk into” (hereinwandern) and which walks with us (286). By inter-linking philosophical considerations of play and of space, hermeneutics transcends the Newtonian ‘common sense’ model of space, which sees space as uniformly empty and filled with discrete objects and believes that all distances are clearly measurable. For a hermeneutics of place, space is not geometrical but experiential. A hermeneutic vision of place distinguishes neither objective space markers nor purely subjective experiences that can be made within the place, but insists on a dialectics between the individual and a space that is always already at work for that individual. The place we experience has always already presented itself to us as meaningful. Being in a place always presupposes that we are already engaged with the place. In the end, we can also understand *ourselves* through places.

¹ In this chapter I will always give the page number of the original text first and then that of the translated text, if there is only one page number, the number refers to the English translation.

² See also Botz-Bornstein 2012 on this topic.

³ In this chapter, I refer to ‘play’ and ‘game’ as interchangeable terms. The distinction the English language makes between play and game needs to be explained. A problem is that what non-English authors like Gadamer, Huizinga (1970), Derrida or Wittgenstein, call ‘*Spiel*’ or ‘*jeu*’ cannot consistently be translated as *either* game *or* play. For example, both in the English translation of Gadamer’s *Wahrheit und Methode* by G. Barden and J. Cumming and in Huizinga’s own English translation of *Homo Ludens* the word *Spiel* (Dutch ‘*spel*’) is translated as play. Equally, Derrida’s ‘*jeu*’ in “La Structure, le signe et le jeu dans le discours des sciences humaines” (in Derrida 1967) has been translated by Alan Bass with play, while Wittgenstein’s ‘*Spiel*’ is constantly translated as game. The problem is that in English the distinction between game and play is not very clear and not reflected much in theoretical literature. Edward B. Tylor in his *Primitive Culture* (1891) puts forward the fact that to play a game is something all participants of the game must have agreed to, whereas a play can also be played against the will of some participants. One can be played with but one can’t be ‘gamed with’. To me this seems to be the most relevant argument concerning the distinction between the two terms. Mary Midgley writes about the *Homo Ludens* that it “concerns Play in general, but including Games, and [Huizinga’s] point is that Play is an essential element in all highly regarded human activities...” (1974: 241). This means that game is here conceived as a sub-category of play, which is certainly consistent. However, on further scrutiny the rigorous distinction between play and game turns out to be problematic. Midgley’s main point is that games can be considered as games only when being conceived as games by the people who play them. All other human activities which are not games in the proper sense but in which we can observe some gamelike moment must be called play. However, what are we doing when we “see play” in those activities? We see them *as* games. This means that game and play are not different in regard to their essence.

1 Place and Play

1.1 The Creation of Places

Heidegger points to the spatial dimension of “being-in-the-world” by recognizing the “here” and the “over there” (*das “Hier” und das “Dort”*) as dependent on a being “there” (“*da*”), that is, as Being that is already spatial in the form of *Dasein*. This signifies a shift from abstract space to a concrete place: as *Dasein*, space is concretely there and not merely geometrically defined. As a result, the place of *Dasein* can never be geometrically closed but is open (*unverschlossen*), as Heidegger explains in *Being and Time*: “The over there is the determinedness of something encountered within the *world*. ‘Here’ and ‘over there’ are possible only in a ‘there’, that is, when there is a being which has disclosed spatiality as the being of the there. The expression ‘there’ means this essential disclosedness.”⁴

In his later works, Heidegger presents “being-in-the-world” more explicitly as the project of a concrete world that can be inhabited. He does this, for example, by analyzing terms like dwelling and building. However, in spite of the fact that he will write a lot about play, the association of *concrete space* with play is never central to his work. Like Eugen Fink’s, Heidegger’s thoughts on play most typically focus on a “play of the world” theme (to which we will come below) and much less on, for example, “dwelling” as a playful activity.

It is Gadamer who submits the hermeneutic ideas about the spatiality of “being-in the world” to particular reflections on the relationship between play and concrete lived space by writing, for example, about the *Spielraum* (literally: “play-space”) in which all plays takes place:

Correlatively, the space in which the game’s movement takes place is not simply the open space in which one “plays oneself out” [*sich ausspielt*] but one that is specially marked out and reserved for the movement of the game. Human play requires a playing field [*Spielraum*]. Setting off the playing field – just like setting off sacred precincts, as Huizinga rightly points out sets off the sphere of play as a closed world, one without transition and mediation to the world of aims. (2004, 113/107)

For Gadamer, the concrete place and play are linked. First, play is a spatial phenomenon for the simple reason that most games take place within a space. The typical to-and-fro motions or circular motions with which play is often associated, remain spatial even when the associations are metaphorical. Computer games might have changed the situation to some extent; nonetheless, even when describing actions taking place in a computer game we will most often use spatial markers.

⁴“Das Dort ist die Bestimmtheit eines innerweltlich begegnenden. ‘Hier’ und ‘Dort’ sind nur möglich in einem ‘Da’, das heißt wenn ein Seiendes ist, das als Sein des ‘Da’ Räumlichkeit erschlossen hat. Dieses Seiende trägt in seinem eigensten Sein den Charakter der Unverschlossenheit. Der Ausdruck ‘Da’ meint diese wesenhafte Unverschlossenheit.” *Being and Time*, German 132, Engl: 125. I cannot follow Joan Stambaugh who translates the last sentence as: “Through disclosedness this being (*Dasein*) is ‘there’ for itself together with the *Dasein* of the world.”

For Gadamer, it is important that the place created by games is not experienced as a geometrically delineated sub-reality inscribed into a larger non-played reality, but that games *transcend* this reality and create a new reality founded only on the game itself. By doing so, they create a place: “The playing field on which the game is played is, as it were, set by the nature of the game itself and is defined far more by the structure that determines the movement of the game from within than by what it comes up against – i.e., the boundaries of the open space – limiting movement from without” (112/107). Here Gadamer’s thoughts are in keeping with Heidegger’s idea of *Dasein* as a space that is not geometrically closed but open (*unverschlossen*). However, if the game were simply without borders, it would “*sich ausspielen*” (exhaust itself) into the infinite Newtonian space that acknowledges no center. With clearly defined geometrical borders, on the other hand, play becomes a purely mundane activity. The conclusion is that games cannot be played within space but that they need a *place* in order to exist.

More precisely, games *are* places. Most generally, places are created through movements executed within space. The idea is similar to how Michel de Certeau believes that the space of cities becomes “real” only *through* the process of walking. For de Certeau, it is the walker and not the city planner who explores, experiences, and *establishes* the borders of the place. The limits might have been drawn by the planner beforehand but they come into existence (either as limits or as non-limits) only once they are experienced as such:

If it is true that a spatial order organizes an ensemble of possibilities (e.g. by a place in which one can move) and interdictions (e.g. by a wall that prevents one from going further), then the walker actualizes some of these possibilities. In that way he makes them exist as well as emerge. (...) In the same way, the walker transforms each spatial signifier into something else [which] increases the possibilities (shortcuts, detours). (De Certeau 1984, 98)

De Certeau insists on the spatial *possibilities* and *potentialities* that become actual through the activity of walking. It is important that they had been mere possibilities *before* becoming actual. This, on the other hand, is not true for geometrical spaces. In a modern mall, for example, the spatial possibilities are extremely limited, which is why “walking”, in this case adopts a completely different status in an environment in which geometrical limits have been fixed beforehand and are enforced through rules (and guards). De Certeau’s findings also work in parallel with the ontology of games explained by Jacques Henriot, who is a foremost specialist of the philosophy of play and who writes: “The first condition for the existence of play somewhere in the world is that it is possible to imagine something other than what merely is. (...) The Perhaps, the Not-yet, which are the source of all games, exists only where we have a being for whom there can also be an absent being” (Henriot 1989, 630, my trans.).

Another point concerning the creation of places is that games take place within a mood. Games often give the impression of producing themselves within a certain “atmosphere,” which can be identified as the place of the game. The link with space is obvious in Heidegger’s philosophy. For Heidegger, the *Stimmung* (mood) is always spatial in the form of a being-in-the-world because, as he writes in *Being*

and Time, the “mood has always already disclosed being-in-the world as a whole and first makes possible directing oneself toward something.”⁵

Ontologically speaking, we should leave the primary discovery of the world to the mood, which is also in keeping with anthropological accounts of play developed by Heidegger’s contemporary, the Swiss anthropologist Gustav Bally who, in discussing games, wrote that “it is the mood (*Stimmung*) that determines the [playing] field” (Bally 1945, 19). Bally refers here to the play instinct of animals and holds that the hunting animal, by encircling the prey through circular movements, “is taken over by a power that fuses the hunting animal and its surroundings into a dynamic unity” (ibid.). Here the “mood” becomes clearly spatial.

However, whenever we say that games take place within a mood, the word “within” should not be understood in an empirico-geometrical sense. There are feelings and impressions “in” games, but they have not been *inserted into* the space of the game like one inserts bricks into a wall or images into a word file by clicking on the “insert” button. Like in rituals, the feelings and impressions in a game *create* the place. With regard to rituals we might want to call this place “spiritual” and believe that it is able to change peoples’ consciousness. Likewise, to be “in” a game requires a different or heightened form of consciousness and *this* is precisely what creates the place.

1.2 Gadamer, Fink, Heidegger

Gadamer’s efforts to establish a “place of the play” are paralleled by Fink’s ambition to think the world not in terms of space, but to think space in terms of an interpretation of the world. This means that both philosophers approach the problem of play and space from opposite ends. For Fink, the *Weltstellung* (the “worldly position”) of the human is prescribed by objective geometrical measurements within space [*Raum*], which is precisely the reason why the Newtonian system can grasp geometrically limited space, but not the “world space” or the “played world space” [*Spielweltraum*]. For Fink, all there is, is a “played world space,” which geometry cannot grasp. Therefore he holds that “the space and time of the played world space [*Spielweltraum*] are neither place [*Ort*] nor duration within ‘real’ space and time” (110). What he means is that there are no fixed positions [*Stellen*] within the played world space. The result is that while Gadamer moves from space to place, Fink’s “real” space is not the personal place but “world space” (Fink 1960: 35). In other words, what is “the game of space” for Fink, is the “place of the game” for Gadamer. Those spaces are not the same but what they share is the belief in space as a quality that needs to be defined from the perspective of play.

Heidegger, when talking about the spatial dimension of being-in-the-world, sees space as a place in Gadamer’s way. However, less often than Gadamer he insists on

⁵ *Being and Time*, Engl. 129, German 137. “Die Stimmung hat je schon das In-der-Welt-Sein als ganzes erschlossen und macht ein Sichrichten auf (...) allererst möglich.”

the link between the concrete place as a form of play. As mentioned, in general, Heidegger is more on the side of Fink. Play enters his philosophy more often through concepts like the Fourfold (*Geviert*), composed of sky, earth, divinities, and mortals whose “mirror play” (*Spiegelspiel*) mirrors (*spiegelt*) the world as a “worlding of the world” in the form of play (*Spiel*). This, once again, parallels Fink’s “played world space” (in Heidegger 1954).

1.3 Subjectivity

It has been said above that to be “in” a game requires a different or heightened form of consciousness. However, this does not mean that the game is purely psychological. On the contrary, the game remains *topical* simply because it is not the subject (the player) who invests feelings and impressions into a space from which he can still feel geometrically separated. The game is not sustained by elements of consciousness (that is, by subjective elements) that have been objectified by a subject beforehand and are subsequently used or applied in a game. The game finds its own consciousness directly and *through* the action of the game. This is how games overcome purely mechanic stages of being and become playful in the proper sense. If feelings and impressions were merely “inserted into” the game from an outside point of view, the game could not acquire the consciousness of a real game. It would merely be a mechanical and rule-following activity. Gadamer writes:

Insofar as this production takes place mechanically according to laws and rules and not through unconscious genius, the process of composition will be consciously reperformed by the interpreter; but if it is an individual, truly creative product of genius, then there can be no such re-creation according to rules. Genius itself creates models and rules. It creates new ways of using language, new literary forms. (188)

For Gadamer games are never a matter of mere subjectivity. Any subjectivity can be objectified while games can’t. Gadamer also shares those ideas with Fink for whom play is without subject because “the world is play without a player” and “the play of the world is not the play of a person” (Fink 1960, 241). This is also the reason why Gadamer’s description of understanding as “gamelike” cannot be called subjectivist in the sense of “relativist.” Any subjectivism remains anchored in a subject, just like a relativist position must always be issued from a subjective point of view able to spell out “in relation to what” this or that item is supposed to be relative. In Gadamer’s model of the game (and, correspondingly, in his model of game-like understanding), the subject *is part* of the playful action and therefore also part of the playful consciousness. As a consequence, nothing is relative here. The most appropriate way of defining a game is to call it a “place of consciousness” (a place that *is* a consciousness) and not a space within which subjects can *acquire* a certain consciousness.

Very clearly Gadamer abandons the early German Romantic concept of a truth that can be *understood* (by a subject) in endless approximation although it cannot be

objectively *explained*. The latter model of understanding vs. explanation is not a place-based model but one founded on (endless) linearity. Nor can truth be provided through the “community aspect” of play. Deconstructive criticism has often held that Gadamer engages in a “metaphysics of presence” because he discards the idea of disruption and discontinuity in favor of communal agreement (cf. Bernstein 2008, 587–588).⁶ True, games can only be played as long as all participants agree (see note 3). Still Gadamer holds that what happens in games is a *dissolution* of the subject. How can communalism work without subjects? The conclusion is that the players of a game do not form a “community,” at least not in the conventional sense of the word. The latter point is important for a hermeneutics of space. Places are not established in the form of communities.

1.4 Play, Style, Art

The purpose of Gadamer’s section on play in *Truth and Method* is to extend the model of the game to that of art. By finding play in language as well as in art, Gadamer counters the subjectivist thinking approach (*subjektivistischer Denkansatz*) of modernity (1986b, 5). Also this step has been prepared by Heidegger when writing in *The Origin of the Work of Art* that “as a work, it belongs uniquely within the region it itself opens up. For the work-being of the work presences in and only in such opening up.”⁷ Gadamer expresses the same thought by involving the notion of play:

When we speak of play in reference to the experience of art, this means neither the orientation nor even the state of mind of the creator or of those enjoying the work of art, nor the freedom of a subjectivity engaged in play, but the mode of being of the work of art itself. (2004, 102)

Given the particular spatial dimension of games, I would extend the game model not only to art but also to places (as opposed to spaces) in general. If, as Gadamer says, the “hermeneutic situation exists always beyond self-consciousness” (1986b, 5), the same must be true for places. For hermeneutics of play, places are not founded on the absolute rules of geometry but appear as self-sufficient cultural phenomena that do not depend on outside rules. In common language, we call those “played places” that are determined by (or produce) a certain consciousness, “cultural places.” The borders of those cultural places are fluid. When talking about cultural places that are determined by (or produce) a certain consciousness we often use the term “style.” Obviously, cultural places have a certain style. Style is also important for any considerations of play itself since games are always played in a certain way. Without coincidence, style is also one of the most classical topics of hermeneutics.

⁶See Botz-Bornstein 2013.

⁷Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, Engl.: 20). German: “Das Werk gehört als Werk einzig in den Bereich, der durch es selbst eröffnet wird. Denn das Werksein des Werkes west nur in solcher Eröffnung” (1980a, b, 26).

Friedrich Schleiermacher declared in his *Hermeneutik* (1836) that “the entire aim of hermeneutics should be seen as the understanding of style” (1959, 108). I would go even further and hold that the “affinity between the structure of experience and the mode of being of the aesthetic” (“*Affinität zwischen Struktur des Erlebens und Seinsart der Ästhetischen*,” WM 74) manifests itself as style.

To conclude this section, it can be said that a certain link between play and style is based on the following observations: the game has not only laws and rules, but any game must be played in a certain way; and if play represents a model of non-foundation, the style provided by the game is equally non-founded. This, in return, means that style is created through games in the form of a spatial phenomenon called (cultural) place. A hermeneutics of place will thus focus on play and style and see how both affect places. Later I will also introduce the notion of dream because it clarifies the particularity of “played space” that is developed in this chapter.

2 Truth, Method, and Play in the History of Hermeneutics

Before examining how reflections on play and style can contribute to a hermeneutics of place, the intrinsic link between hermeneutics and play needs to be backed up in reference to the history of hermeneutics. The hermeneutic tradition has often vaguely alluded to this link without spelling it out more clearly. However, looking more closely, the “hermeneutics and play” theme turns out to be important because it determines how much truth and how much method can be contained in an act of interpretation.

Hermeneutics has been linked to the idea of play not only since Gadamer’s pages on play in *Truth and Method* or since the day Heidegger decided to elaborate on the “gamelike” structures of the hermeneutic circle in *Being and Time*. A hermeneutics of play is much older. Strictly speaking, hermeneutics has established a relationship with play ever since theories of interpretation abandoned their romantic conception of *Einfühlung* (valid at least since Herder) as a dominant criterion of interpretation, and refused to believe in the validity of subjective feeling. Reflections on the hermeneutic circle remain central to this kind of hermeneutic discourse. Schleiermacher’s predecessor Friedrich Ast (1778–1841) announced that the hermeneutic circle can represent a positive possibility of understanding and that a theoretical “solution” (*Lösung*) for the circle requires a “going through” it: “The further I progress with the understanding (*Auffassung*) of the particular, the more obvious and living becomes the spirit, the idea of the whole, that I had grasped already in each particularity, unfolds itself in front of me.”⁸ The circle receives a still more positive treatment by Schleiermacher’s student August Boeckh. Boeckh discovers an instance of the circle while attempting to coordinate grammatical (general) and subjective

⁸Quoted from Wach 1926, 98: “Je weiter ich in der Auffassung des Einzelnen fortschreite, um so offener und lebendiger wird mir der Geist, umso mehr entfaltet sich die Idee des Ganzen, die mir schon in jeder Einzelheit entstanden ist.”

(individual) forms of interpretation when writing: “The linguistic explanation based on the objective, general point of view we call grammatical interpretation, the one which is based on subjectivity we call individual interpretation.”⁹

Boeckh refers to a word reminiscent of the Romantic word *Einfühlung*: a *Gefühl* (feeling), by which he means “a feeling through which will be recognized at once [those things that] had been recognized by somebody else.”¹⁰ Obviously, Boeckh is struggling. By highlighting the “feeling”, Boeckh’s book, which is called *Methodology*, becomes profoundly un-methodological. Boeckh writes that with the feeling, “imagination as a hermeneutic activity takes the position that reason used to occupy”¹¹ and concludes that no theory and no pure technique of interpretation can produce understanding: “Nobody will become a good interpreter and critic through theory just like nobody will become a philosophical thinker through logic.”¹²

The latter argument is certainly strong. On the other hand, in pointing to “imagination” as a principal hermeneutic activity, the philosophy of the hermeneutic circle becomes fuzzy and even dangerous. Would it not be better to leave the circle aside and establish, by means of certain canons and codes, the lines on which an interpretation can shift from the general to the individual or from the individual to the general? Boeckh himself points to the potential insipidity (*Geistlosigkeit*) of circular structures in interpretation because, given the circle, the interpretation will infinitely turn around within its own horizon. The hermeneutic circle can too easily become a “bad circle” (*schlechter Zirkel*) of interpretation (cf. also Rodi 1990, 74–75). Therefore Boeckh suggests that any “bad circle” should be transformed into an “open circle” which he also calls a “spiral” (Boeckh, 139). A circle is “bad” when it represents a restrictive model for a methodology of understanding. The hermeneutic circle is senseless as long as we understand it as a technical device conceived as an answer to methodological questions. The “good circle,” on the other hand, will not be founded on formal regulations but on the circular movement it produces, which means that it is founded on itself.

By calling the circle a spiral, the circle – which is senseless as a method – is supposed to provide truth precisely at the moment it is no longer seen as merely a formal methodological device. It has been found that Heidegger’s philosophy of interpretation developed in *Being and Time* follows precisely the lines of such a spiral. Ronald Bruzina writes that “what we have here is actually neither a circle nor a back-and-forth movement, but something more like a spiral: a movement that changes with each return to modify, amplify, correct, and deepen an initial conception and question and the inquiry these spawn” (Bruzina 2006, 82).

⁹“Wir nennen die Spracherklärung aus jenem objektiven allgemeinen Standpunkte grammatische Interpretation, die aus dem Standpunkte der Subjektivität individuelle Interpretation” (Boeckh 1877, 84).

¹⁰“...ein Gefühl, vermöge dessen mit einem Schlage wiedererkannt wird, was ein anderer erkannt hat” (ibid).

¹¹“...tritt an die Stelle des Verstandes die Phantasie als hermeneutische Tätigkeit” (ibid).

¹²“Durch die Theorie wird niemand ein guter Exeget und Kritiker werden, so wenig als man durch Kenntnis der Logik ein philosophischer Denker wird” (76).

After Boeckh, Dilthey has adopted much of this non-methodological spirit. Though Dilthey was influenced by Anglo Saxon currents trying to found human science on empirical methods, in essence his thought remains non-methodological. Dilthey developed his philosophy under the influence of Boeckh and described understanding as the interplay (*Wechselwirkung*) of *Erleben* (experience) and *Verstehen* (understanding) within which the self and the world appear as interlinked. The world as it is understood by the subject is always a world that has already been understood. Dilthey's point of view is similar to Boeckh's: we can transform the bad circle into a good circle by using a "living intuition" (*lebendige Anschauung*), a term referred to by both Boeckh and Dilthey. Boeckh had pointed out earlier that it is necessary to trust in the "divinatory power of the spirit" (*divinatorische Kraft des Geistes*, Boeckh, 184) of the interpreter.

Both Boeckh and Dilthey are looking for truth beyond method (though without abandoning method). For Gadamer, Dilthey's example shows that "there is no method of human science" (7), a conviction that has led Gadamer to the elaboration of a modern philosophical hermeneutics which withstands all constraints of well-structured methodologies. A whole chapter in *Truth and Method* is devoted to the question of "how this tradition became so impoverished and how the human sciences' claim to know something true came to be measured by a standard foreign to it – namely the methodological thinking of modern science" (21).¹³

After Dilthey, the hermeneutic circle becomes a basic concept for theory of interpretation with Heidegger. Heidegger clearly claims that the circle should not be seen as a *vitiosum*, but as a "positive possibility of a most original understanding" (Heidegger 1986, 153). He uses the word "*Ausstehen*" (to endure, to tolerate, to put up with, to withstand)¹⁴ to refer to this "coming to terms with" the circle in order to derive a benefit from an apparently negative situation. Even more, through the enduring attitude of *Ausstehen*, Heidegger's conception of the circle will become an "existential condition of Being-there" (ibid.). In an important passage in *Being and Time* Heidegger writes:

But if interpretation must in any case already operate in that which is under-stood, and if it must draw its nurture from this, how is it to bring any scientific results to maturity without moving in a circle, especially if, moreover, the understanding which is presupposed still operates within our common information about man and the world? (Heidegger 1986, 195)¹⁵

¹³ "...wie es zur Verkümmern dieser Tradition kam und wie damit der Wahrheitsanspruch geisteswissenschaftlicher Erkenntnis unter das ihm wesensfremde Maß des Methodendenkens der modernen Wissenschaft geriet" (1986a, b, 29).

¹⁴ Miles Groth translates "*Ausstehen*" as "withstanding" which carries the "standing" present in "understanding."

¹⁵ "Wenn aber Auslegung sich je schon im Verstandenen bewegen und aus ihm her sich nähren muß, wie soll sie dann wissenschaftliche Resultaten zeitigen, ohne sich in einem Zirkel zu bewegen, zumal wenn das vorausgesetzte Verständnis überdies noch in der gemeinen Menschen und Weltkenntnis sich bewegt?" (Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 1986, 152).

Heidegger's affirmation of the circle does not signify a resignation in the sense of an intellectual fatalism. The hermeneutic circle does not condemn us to eternally stay in the sphere of "common knowledge of man and the world." On the contrary, Heidegger asks for an active affirmation of the circle because it negates everyday life and helps us to *verwinden* (improperly overcome) the conventional character of Being (that is, the "man" or the "*durchschnittliche Seinsverständnis*"). Two decades later (1949), in a projected introduction to "What is Metaphysics" (now contained in *Wegmarken*), Heidegger explains that the *Ausstehen* is also experienced as "care" or "sorrow" (*Sorge*): "This withstanding [*Ausstehen*] is gone through in the name of sorrow [*Sorge*]. The ecstatic essence of existence is thought of as sorrow, just as, conversely, sorrow is experienced adequately only in the ecstatic essence of existence. Experienced in this way, withstanding is here of the essence for thinking *ekstasis*."¹⁶

The term "*ausstehen*" is similar to the term "*aushalten*" (to endure, to hold out) as it appeared in *Being and Time* where Heidegger wrote that "if being-towards-death has to disclose understandingly the possibility which we have characterized as *such*, then in such being-towards-death this possibility must not be weakened, it must be understood as a *possibility*, cultivated as possibility, and *endured as possibility* in our own relation to it."¹⁷

Heidegger also develops Dilthey's thoughts about a philosophical grasping (*Begreifen*) of a "living mental context" ("*lebendiger Zusammenhang der Seele*"). Like Boeckh's "feeling," Heidegger's *Ausstehen* cannot be defined by means of a methodology. Gadamer's step to develop a hermeneutics by putting forward a position sharply opposed to the methods and doctrines of conventional historical philology is based on those premises. Gadamer asks for a negation of the personal point of view of the historian in order to "retrace" (*nachvollziehen*) the historical situation from its very inside (cf. also Szondi 1975). Gadamer's strategy is much more extreme than Dilthey's who merely required that philosophy should stop being a "founding mental activity" (*begründende geistige Tätigkeit*) in order to become an understanding activity. Dilthey recognized the impossibility of any "last foundation" (*Letztbegründung*) of knowledge in understanding and in philosophy. However, as shown above, he will still put into the center of his hermeneutics the act of a "lived understanding" (*erlebtes Nachverstehen*) trying to describe a coherent part of reality (*realer Zusammenhang*) (Dilthey 1984, 71).

¹⁶"Dieses Ausstehen wird unter dem Namen der Sorge erfahren. Das ekstatische Wesen des Daseins ist von der Sorge her gedacht, so wie umgekehrt die Sorge nur in ihrem ekstatischen Wesen zureichend erfahren wird. Das so erfahrene Ausstehen ist das Wesen der hier zu denkenden Ekstasis" (1985, 16).

¹⁷Eng. 262. German: "Im Sein zum Tode [...] muß die Möglichkeit ungeschwächt als Möglichkeit verstanden, als *Möglichkeit* ausgebildet und im Verhalten zu ihr als *Möglichkeit ausgehalten werden*," which leads to "expectance" (Erwartung) (261).

3 Hermeneutics of Place in *Truth and Method*

It is against the above historical background that Gadamer's statements about play in *Truth and Method* are supposed to give modern hermeneutics its actual characteristic profile. This was particularly important at a time when hermeneutics seemed to revolve around its own delimitation in relation to its tradition on the one hand, and to a neo-positivist *Wissenschaftstheorie* (exemplified by Apel and Habermas) on the other.¹⁸ The notion of play matters very much for the formulation of this position and it had been prepared by two preceding generations of hermeneutic philosophers.

The question of this chapter is: how can a hermeneutics of play and of non-foundations be related to the phenomenon of the place? It has already been shown that Gadamer adheres to a notion of play as an activity that is not determined by the subjectivity of the player but only by the "mode of being" of play. The preceding historical section has shown how consistently this position flows out of the hermeneutic tradition. Gadamer purports that "play fulfills its purpose only if the player loses himself in play" (103). This means that the playing subject undergoes a conceptual shift from *consciousness* to *experience* (*Erfahrung*), which is also significant for any definition of "place." Also a place is experienced whilst the subject is both "in" the place and part of the place. Like with regard to games, any distinction between the subject and the place can only be made by abstracting *from* the concrete place and by re-describing it in geometrical terms as a "space." However, in that case, the subjectivity will have been objectified. With regard to places, such an objectification is not possible. Like in the case of the game, the "subjectivity" of the place *is* the place itself, which means that the subjectivity *is* the experience. By experiencing the place, the subjectivity of the person has been overcome because the person is part of the place. In other words, an "experienced place" has its own essence independent of the consciousness of the one who is in the place. The last sentence is a paraphrase of Gadamer's famous statement that "play has its own essence, independent of the consciousness of the one who plays" (103). I merely replace play with place and believe that many sentences in Gadamer's "play section" can be submitted to the same treatment.

As mentioned, Gadamer does not merely address play but also or especially the experience of works of art. He suggests that "the 'subject' of the experience of art (...) is not the subjectivity of the person who experiences it but the work itself" (103). Furthermore, Gadamer insists that play "has the character of a work, of an *ergon* and not only of *energeia*. In this sense, I call it a *Gebilde* (structure)" (110).

¹⁸According to Peter Szondi, German literary criticism used to understand Heidegger's point on the circle as a sedative: "Aus dem Skandalon des Zirkels, in dem das Verstehen denn seine Bedingung erkennen muss, wurde ein Beruhigungsmittel. Daß *das Entscheidende* (...) *nicht ist aus dem Zirkel heraus- sondern in ihn in der rechten Weise hineinzukommen* – eine These, die zweifellos ihre Richtigkeit hat -, ließ man sich von Heidegger nicht zweimal sagen und beantwortete fortan Fragen und Zweifel methodologischer Art mit der Pauschalauskunft, man bewege sich eben im hermeneutischen Zirkel" (1975, 13).

Similar things can be said about the “place.” The important point is that the “mode of being of play” does not require the existence of a subject who is behaving playfully (104). Such an assumption would not make sense since the game *transcends* subjectivity. Instead, all we can say is that the game is played in a certain way or that it has a certain style. The English expression to “take place” very well illustrates how games do happen: they “take place” by creating a place. For any ontology of places this must mean the following: all we can say is that the place is experienced *in a certain way* and that – as a possibly cultural place – it has a certain style. Another suitable formula is Heidegger’s expression “setting-itself-to-work” (“*sich ins Werk setzen*” suggested in *The Origin of the Work of Art* (Engl. 19, German 9)).

It remains to say that Gadamer’s hermeneutic view of space is also incompatible with eco-centric views of space at least inasmuch as a great deal of eco-centric thinking holds on to a Romantic view of the world. The eco-centrism of environmentalism shifts space away from the anthropocentric perspective towards an abstract perspective of intrinsic natural values. This ethical view of space strongly differs from Gadamer’s aesthetic approach because within the former, an abstract perspective is reinforced with the help of science, while for the latter playfully hermeneutic approach, the perspective remains given to interpretation. For hermeneutics, both we and the place are always already infused with meanings. An eco-centric perspective cannot accept such a constellation.

3.1 Dreams

As mentioned, it is useful to introduce the notion of dream into the play-place discussion because it clarifies the ontological particularity of “played spaces.” In the end, I want to show that play, style, and dream are held together by a hermeneutic philosophy of place.

The link between space, dream and play has been exploited by various authors, for example by Italo Calvino who found that both cities and dreams follow “absurd” rules, which turns the experience of city space into a dreamlike undertaking:

With cities, it is as with dreams: everything imaginable can be dreamed, but even the most unexpected dream is a rebus that conceals a desire or, its reverse, a fear. Cities, like dreams, are made of desires and fears, even if the thread of their discourse is secret, their rules are absurd, their perspectives deceitful, and everything conceals something else. (Calvino 1974, 44)

The proximity of city space and dream space has also frequently been made in the context of Walter Benjamin’s studies of modern cities, especially of the iron-and-glass covered passageways called “arcades.” In his unfinished “Arcades Project” (“*Passagenwerk*,” written between 1927 and 1940), Benjamin examines Parisian city life of the nineteenth century. Similar to Michel de Certeau, for Benjamin the act of walking (explored in depth by the *flâneur* and by the dandy) constitutes the experience of the city as a place. In particular, Benjamin identifies the *time* of space

that is experienced (created) by the flâneur with the time of the game as it is experienced by the gambler when writing: “The phantasmagorias of space to which the flâneur devotes himself find a counterpart in the phantasmagorias of time to which the gambler is addicted” (Benjamin 1983b, 12). From here the step to the “city experienced as a dream” is only a small one as becomes clear when Benjamin quotes Baudelaire from his foreword to *Spleen de Paris*:

Who among us has not dreamt, in moments of ambition, of the miracle of a poetic prose, musical without rhythm and rhyme, supple and staccato enough to adapt to the lyrical stirrings of the soul, the undulations of dreams, and sudden leaps of consciousness. This obsessive idea is above all a child of giant cities, of the intersecting of their myriad relations (Baudelaire 2009 quoted from Benjamin’s “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire,” 1983a, b, 605).

The overlap of space and dream depends on the parallels between play (that is, the flâneur’s random way of walking through the city) and dream. When this parallel is strong, the arcade becomes an “allegory of the dream,” as Christine Boyer has found:

A dreamer could become lost within these convoluted interiors that inverted the inside and the outside and shifted about in space and time. At each step the flâneur takes, whether in the city of Paris, Berlin or Moscow or Marseilles, new constellations of images appear that resemble the turns of a kaleidoscope. (Boyer 1996, 51)

Benjamin’s above identification of walking time with play time, both of which are related to the creation of a dreamlike time and space, brings us back to Gadamer who emphasizes precisely this point when thinking about rituals and celebrations. When time can no longer be defined subjectively, it necessarily turns into play-time or dream-time: “The temporal character of celebration is difficult to grasp on the basis of the usual experience of temporal succession. If the return of the festival is related to the usual experience of time and its dimensions, it appears as historical temporality” (121). Gadamer still draws a more explicit link between play and dream when writing:

The player, sculptor, or viewer is never simply swept away into a strange world of magic, of intoxication, of dream; rather, it is always his own world, and he comes to belong to it more fully by recognizing himself more profoundly in it. There remains a continuity of meaning which links the work of art with the existing world and from which even the alienated consciousness of a cultured society never quite detaches itself. (129)

3.1.1 Gadamer and Paul Valéry

Gadamer’s reflections on play come not only close to Benjamin’s, but also to those of Paul Valéry who issues a veritable philosophy of dreams in his *Cahiers* (Gadamer mentions Valéry several times in *Truth and Method*). Similar to what Gadamer does with play, Valéry establishes an “egoless” notion of dream when asking: “Why does one say ‘I dreamt’ when it would be better to say ‘it has been dreamt?’” (Valéry 1929 II, 321). This means that dream is not dreamt by a subject but that dream is a structure or an *ergon* dreaming itself. Again, the expression to “take place” turns out

to be the most appropriate one in this context. Dreams “take place” by creating places for themselves.

In Gadamer’s terms, this means that “the dream plays itself.” Neither play nor dream are subjective experiences to be apprehended from a certain point of view. While Gadamer refuses to see the game as an individual-subjective phenomenon, Valéry refuses to reduce dreams to mental states spelled out by an individual soul because in the dream, the ‘I’ does not exist as a separate entity but is always part of the dream: “In the dream simply everything is dream,” writes Valéry. Valéry also more explicitly likens the dream to a gamelike experience holding that the dream is always a “composition without objective [sans but]” (II, 91). Like Gadamer’s game, the dream is a mode of being able to generate experiences that follow their own rules.

The self-sufficiency clinging to play and dream becomes particularly obvious when looking at how the words ‘play’ and ‘dream’ are used in language. Gadamer was struck by the repetition of the same word in the phrase “to play a play” (*ein Spiel spielen*), a pattern occurring in many different languages. He could as well have been struck by the expression “to dream a dream.” The circular structure of the phrase “to play a play” has to do with the spatial condition to which games are bound. The “play as it is played” cannot be observed *as something* from an outside position but all the player and the play can do is play. Therefore we can only say that we “play a play.”

Also the dream is not, according to Valéry, “*of the world but it is a world.*” This means that there is no distinction between the dream and the world, which is why *in the dream we can only dream*. Heidegger’s famous formula that “the world never is, but worlds” (*die Welt weltet*) from *Der Satz vom Grund*, which fascinated a “philosopher of place” like Henri Lefebvre, refers to the same constellation, the more so as it is inspired by Heraclitus’ Fragment 30 on which both Gadamer and Fink have also been drawing.¹⁹

When I say “the animal eats,” I can distinguish two entities: that of the animal and that of eating, just because I can occupy an outside position from which both

¹⁹ Heraclitus Fragment 30: “This world, which is the same for all, no one of gods or men has made; but it was ever, is now and ever shall be an ever-living fire, with measures kindling and measures going out.” (Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, V, 14, 104, 2). Like Fink, Heidegger points to the “Weltzeit” (ἄλων) and suggests the formula “the world worlds:” “Es ist die Welt, die weltet und zeitigt, indem sie als *cosmos* die Fügung des Seins zum erglühenden Erglänzen bringt” (*Satz vom Grund*: 187). The *Weltzeit* concept appears also in “Wozu Dichter” where Heidegger refers once again to Heraclitus’ concept of play: “Heraklit denkt das Sein als Weltzeit und diese als das Spiel des Kindes” (1980b, 280. Engl.: 2002b, 274). Heidegger continues his reflections by explaining that Heraclitus managed “Das Hohe aus dem Geheimnis des Spiels denken. Während Gott spielt wird die Welt. Heraklit: Das Seinsgeschick, ein Kind das spielt. (...) Das ‘Weil’ versinkt im Spiel. Das Spiel ist ohne warum. Es spielt derweil es spielt. Es bleibt nur Spiel. Das Höchste und Tiefste” (188). Of course, the central theme of this meditation on the “play of the world” is the Fragment 52 (“Eternity is a child playing draughts, the kingly power is a child’s”), which has been of utmost importance also for Nietzsche. Gadamer refers in *Truth and Method* to Heraclitus as the “most profound of all early thinkers” because he did “discover the depth of meaning contained in the play on words” (406).

entities appear as distinct. Even when I am myself eating, the distinction will be maintained. However, when I am dreaming, the dream and the dreaming are one. In other words, instead of two elements that have been inserted into a space, those two elements *form a place*. The same is true for play.

Another formula expresses the same idea: in play and in dream there is no perspective. While the normal subjectivizing-objectivizing way of dealing with reality approaches reality necessarily from a certain point of view, in dreams “there is [only] the rule of the linear and the superficial. There is no perspective [and] everything appears to be word for word (*mot à mot*),” in the words of Valéry (III, 55). The game as a philosophical model is supposed to represent a state of non-foundation because it serves as the ground of what cannot be grounded otherwise. The lack of perspective is essential as Eugen Fink has also pointed out. He finds that “the lack of a point of view can stimulate the human play drive: reason, sense, and end will be grasped through the metaphor of the game” (Fink 1960, 157).²⁰

Also Gadamer addresses the problem of the “point of view” recalling that in interpretation theory, the point of view has been introduced in the form of the subjective ego-position in order to simplify interpretation. Gadamer mentions the eighteenth century German philosopher Chladenius who used a “point of view” concept derived from optics as well as from the philosophy of Leibniz. In Chladenius’ theory of interpretation, the perspectival view is supposed to explain “why we see a thing in one way and not in another” (182). The problem is that any point of view is based on geometrical devices (its derivation from optics makes this particularly obvious); and a theory of interpretation based on perspective necessarily turns the place into a geometrically determined space. Only an “ego-less” way of seeing, which is current in dreams as well as in games, is able to abandon the perspective.

4 Conclusion

It has been shown that in Gadamer’s philosophy, play occupies the position of ‘being’: “Thus we say that something is ‘playing’ (*spielt*) somewhere or at some time, that something is going on (*im Spiele ist*) or that something is happening (*sich abspielt*)” (104). This is what play has in common with dreams. Play and dreams merely “happen,” they are events, just because they are not played or dreamt by a subject. “In being presented in play, what is emerges,” writes Gadamer (112). The place gives play the possibility to emerge, which means that Being needs to “take place” and that the place (like the play and the dream) is the Being.

It has also been shown that the notion of style occupies an important position in this discussion because the self-sufficient ontology of dreams and of play is closely linked to that of style. Also the being of style is, as Gadamer says about play, a matter of self-realization, of sheer fulfillment, and of *energeia*. Like play, style has its

²⁰“Das Fehlen eines Standpunktes kann den menschlichen Spieltrieb provozieren: Grund, Sinn und Zweck werden erfasst in der Bedeutungsmetapher des Spiels.”

telos within itself. Given the proximity between play and art, from which Gadamer concludes that neither art nor the artist have their own existence but that there is only “action,” we can postulate that for a hermeneutics of place, style is a similar kind of action.

A hermeneutics of place should thus be determined by a “play-style-dream” triangle. It is not possible to explore here all questions and fields of research that this triangle is able to inspire, but I suggest that a future hermeneutics of place revolve around six questions derived from the above play-style-dream connection:

1. Does play have a certain style?
2. Does the dream have a style (through which it obtains its particular way of being)?
3. Does the theoretical notion of style have qualities that are dependent on an ontology of the dream?
4. Does the dream have play-like quality, that is, does its activity (especially in the domain of aesthetics) have affinities with play?
5. Does style proceed with the lightness of play?
6. Can play appear like a dream?

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A Hermeneutics of the Body and Place in Health and Illness

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Abstract This essay explores the ways in which hermeneutic philosophy has shaped current research on the body. Using the experience of health and illness to frame the discussion and drawing on major figures such as Wilhelm Dilthey, Hans Georg-Gadamer, and Martin Heidegger as well as a number of contemporary theorists, the aim of the essay is to show how hermeneutics challenges core naturalistic assumptions we have about the body by bringing our attention to the situated place of the body *as it is lived*. By focusing on the ‘lived-body’ (*Leib*) rather than the ‘corporeal body’ (*Körper*), hermeneutics illuminates the tacit, situated understanding we have of the world, how the experience of illness can shatter this understanding and transform our self-interpretations, and the extent to which our bodies and their various ailments make sense to us only through the public meanings we give to them.

In 1986, Hans Georg-Gadamer published a short essay entitled ‘Bodily Experience and the Limits of Objectification’ describing the ways in which modern science and the practice of medicine in particular have resulted in, what he calls, a “violent estrangement” (1996, 70) from ourselves as situated and embodied beings. Gadamer’s aim in this essay is to articulate the inseparability of the ‘lived-body’ (*Leben*) from ‘life’ (*Leib*) and suggests that modern medicine, rooted as it is in the methodological assumptions of natural science, operates under an objectifying framework that is fundamentally incapable of seeing this connection. By bringing a “hermeneutic awareness” (1996, 71) to the phenomenon of embodiment, Gadamer not only attempts to identify the boundaries or limits of objectification in medicine but also offers a robust, experiential account of ‘*what it means*’ and ‘*what it feels like*’ to be ill. In this chapter, I try to show how Gadamer, along with a number of key figures in hermeneutic philosophy, has had a significant impact on the ways in which we understand the situated experience of our own bodies and how this understanding challenges a number of core assumptions in mainstream medical practice.

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I begin by introducing Paul Ricoeur's (1981) seminal distinction between two approaches to hermeneutics as they pertain to the question of the body, an *epistemological* and an *ontological* approach. Recognizing that any attempt to understand human beings is already distorted and incomplete insofar as it is bound up in a socio-cultural world, epistemological hermeneutics allows us to reframe the question of 'what' the human body is by undermining both the representational theory of knowledge and the naturalistic conception of the body as an encapsulated, causally-determined object. And ontological hermeneutics reveals how the question of what it means 'to be' human cannot be answered by appealing to our corporeal, object-like qualities because human existence is not an object or thing, but a situated, self-interpreting activity. Drawing on current research in the phenomenology of the body, I go on to explore the ways in which the experience of illness affects our self-interpretations and disrupts our taken-for-granted competencies regarding spatial orientation, intentionality, and motility. The aim of the chapter is to use the experience of illness to widen our understanding of the body beyond the limited frame of naturalism and illuminate the ways in which our embodiment exists and makes sense to us only through the socio-cultural interpretations and meanings that we give to it.

1 The Body in Epistemological and Ontological Hermeneutics

The epistemological approach to hermeneutics takes its definitive form in the work of Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911), who attempted to offer a methodological account of the 'human sciences' (*Geisteswissenschaften*) that broke with the representational models of knowledge that characterize the 'natural sciences' (*Naturwissenschaften*). The epistemological view of the natural sciences takes its cue largely from early modern figures like Newton, Galileo, and Descartes. These philosophers establish the idea of 'certainty' as the foundation for any genuine knowledge and that the criterion for certainty hinges on experiential verification that can then be abstracted into mathematical laws. As Gadamer explains:

In the seventeenth century, experience ceased to be a source or starting point of knowledge but became, in the sense of 'experiment', a tribunal of verification before which the validity of mathematically projected laws could be confirmed or refuted. Galileo did not happen to acquire the laws of free-falling objects from experience... they came from conceptual projection: '*mene concipio*', that is, 'I conceive'—or more precisely, 'I project in my mind'. What Galileo thus 'projected' in the idea of a free-falling object was certainly no object of experience: a vacuum does not exist in nature. What he understood, however, precisely by this abstraction were laws within the skein of causal relationships, which are intertwined and cannot be disentangled in concrete experience (1996, 5).

Here we have the groundwork of modern natural science laid out. First, we get a dualistic view of the world, where material objects are separate and distinct from us (the cognizing subject or *ego cogito*), and these objects have spatial extension and

are in causal interaction with other objects. Second, this view assumes the ability of the scientist to abstract or pull objects out of their relational context. This means encountering objects from the anonymous and de-situated perspective of theoretical detachment, as valueless, quantifiable matter in a spatiotemporal coordinate system. Finally, we see the methodological aim as one that attempts to explain the causal interactions of objects by placing them under mathematical laws of mass and motion. This epistemological framework creates the standard picture of the human body in contemporary medical science, a picture well captured in the German word *Körper*. The ‘corporeal body’ (or *Körper*) is a reference to a discrete, causally determined substance and is, as Gadamer writes, “readily susceptible to objectification and processes of measurement” (1996, 134). *Körper*, then, is the decontextualized anatomical body that the physician encounters in the clinic, a body ready to be quantified using various diagnostic technologies. Indeed, to objectify the body in the clinical setting is simply ‘to measure’ it, and all life functions and biological phenomena are subsumed under the general laws of quantification. The human being, on this view, is reduced to numerical data.

Obviously, what is missing from this objectifying picture is the experience of the human body *as it is lived*, and it is here that another German term for the body, *Leib*, is especially instructive. With etymological roots in the words for ‘life’ (*Leben*) and ‘experience’ (*Erlebnis*), *Leib* is not a reference to an objectively present corporeal thing, but to the lived-body, to *one’s own* bodily experiences, feelings, and perceptions as they are expressed, lived, and made intelligible within the context of a ‘life-world’ (*Lebenswelt*). And I can never methodologically detach or disengage myself from my own body because it is already mediating how I encounter and make sense of worldly things in everyday life. In this regard, my body exhibits a tacit practical knowledge or ‘know how’ shaped by the fact that I am already actively bound up in the meanings and purposes of a particular sociocultural context. And my practical embeddedness reveals there is no Cartesian separation between ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ or between ‘self’ and ‘world’. My body is, in short, a dynamic physical, social, and cultural place, a site of meaning. The epistemological account of the theoretical subject set over and against objects is itself derivative and dependent on a more primordial phenomenon, namely, the involved practical knowledge of our own bodies. For Dilthey, the structural complexity and incompleteness of our situated experience means it can never be captured with the precision and exactness of mathematical laws. The interpretive study of humans, rather, requires its own epistemological approach, a ‘human science’ or *Geisteswissenschaften* that takes as its object the embodied, pre-theoretical ‘know-how’ of humans themselves, a form of knowledge that extends not only into our everyday practices but into human phenomena more generally, from cultural institutions and artifacts to languages, historical events, and artworks.

One of the signature contributions of Dilthey’s account of the human sciences is the recognition that our embodied practices and gestures are best understood not in terms of an ‘inner’ mental state but as a spontaneous ‘*expression*’ reflective of a particular worldly context, and it is on the basis of these contextual expressions that we come to interpret and understand who we are and what is significant in our lives.

On this view, the crisp, precise movements and emotionally detached ways of speaking that the physician embodies in the clinic are expressive of a particular culture, and the physician understands who she is by embodying the mannerisms and gestures valued within this context. The upshot is that the cool and dispassionate attitude of the physician, one that tends to regard the body as an object of measurement, is not value-neutral; it is, rather, a purposive and value-laden practice or *way of life* embedded in a life-world, one that identifies detachment and objectivity as the default standpoint for genuine knowledge. This is a self-interpretation that would have been largely unintelligible in other contexts, in, for example, the life-world of ancient Greco-Roman culture or medieval Europe.

From the perspective of epistemological hermeneutics, then, to understand or have knowledge of human practices is to have some understanding of the sociocultural conditions or ‘structures’ that shape and give meaning to these practices. But there is a fundamental incompleteness or circularity to this kind of epistemology because any account of human practices is already distorted by the contextual situation that the epistemologist has grown into. Consequently, there can be no ‘God’s eye view’ or ‘view from nowhere’ in the *Geisteswissenschaften* because we can understand and interpret human phenomena only from within our own limited and situated perspective. This means one of the conditions of being human is the fact that we are always bound up in our own interpretive or hermeneutic situation, and there is no way to fully extricate ourselves from it by means of methodological detachment, because as we now see, the value of such a method is itself historically situated. Recognizing the structural circularity of the human condition in this way allows us to shift the discussion of the body from an epistemological to an ontological perspective. Understanding that traditional epistemology tends to regard the body in terms of a quantifiable object (or *Körper*) and fails to see how such a view is actually parasitic on the practical ‘know-how’ of the lived-body, we can now begin to examine the *way of being* of the hermeneutic subject.

Ricoeur describes the transition from epistemological to ontological hermeneutics in terms of “[digging] beneath the epistemological enterprise itself, in order to uncover its ontological conditions” (1981, 53).¹ The idea here is that a special kind of inquiry needs to take place, one that is prior to any theory of knowledge or account of how we understand others, and this inquiry concerns the *existence* or *way of being* of the entity that already understands. Hermeneutics, on this view, is not “a reflection on the human sciences, but an explication of the ontological ground upon which these sciences can be construed” (Ricoeur 1981, 55). The conception of ontological hermeneutics was pioneered by Heidegger, who suggests human existence (or *Dasein*) is not to be understood in terms of an object or substance — an immaterial mind, a causally determined body, or some combination of the two — but in terms of the interpretive activity or event of ‘existence’ itself. Thus, “man’s ‘substance’ is not spirit as a synthesis of mind and body; it is rather *existence*” (Heidegger 1927/1962, 117). Beginning his account with an analysis of human life as it is lived

¹ I am thankful for the numerous conversations with Charles Guignon over the years on the nature of hermeneutic philosophy. For a rich and comprehensive account of the distinction between epistemological and ontological hermeneutics, see Guignon 1999.

in ordinary situations, Heidegger shows that in the mundane activities of handling equipment, interacting with others, and fulfilling workaday obligations, we already embody a tacit understanding of the world and of our self. This is why he can say that “to exist is essentially... to understand” (Heidegger 1982, 276), meaning that, in the midst of everyday life, we express a pre-reflective familiarity with the world, a familiarity that reveals the extent to which we are already concerned about who we are, that “[our] being is [already] an *issue* for [us].” (Heidegger 1927/1962, 32)

Although Heidegger spends little time discussing Dasein’s ‘bodily nature’ (*Leiblichkeit*), the lived-body is clearly implicated in his project (Aho 2009, 2013). He first makes it clear that Dasein should not be conceived as a physical object, ‘*ein Körper*’ that is present-at-hand. This is why he maintains that, when approaching the question of human existence, “we are not presented with a mere corporeal thing” (Heidegger 1927/1962, 238). The body, from the perspective of Dasein, is not something we ‘have’; it is who we ‘are’ as an embodied *way of being*. Thus, “we do not ‘have’ a body; rather we ‘are’ bodily” (Heidegger 1979, 99). Our unique way of being is expressed in the self-interpreting activity that *makes* or *constitutes* our identity as a particular kind of person. On this view, there is no essential or pre-given nature that fundamentally determines who we are. I am a ‘self-making’ or ‘self-constituting’ being insofar as I have the capacity to *take a stand* on who I am by interpreting my socio-historical and physiological givenness and engaging in the worldly projects that *matter* to me and are made available by the historical context into which I have been ‘thrown’ (*geworfen*). To this end, I am always ‘on the way’ (*unterweg*), always fashioning and re-fashioning my identity as I negotiate the contexts of cultural meaning I find myself in. This helps to explain Dasein’s temporal structure in terms of what Heidegger calls “thrown projection” (1927/1962, 145).

As a self-interpreting way of being, I already find myself *in medias res*, that is, already situated in a way that both limits and lays open an array of possibilities I can take over. My contemporary Euro-American context, for instance, opens up the possibility for me to be a medical doctor while simultaneously closing off other possibilities. Thus, it is within and against the background of this situation that I can ‘press forward’ or ‘project’ (*entwerfen*) into the future—e.g., going to medical school, obtaining credentials, and completing a residency—that will give shape and coherence to my self-interpretation as a doctor. Out of the present, then, my existence seamlessly stretches backward into the past and forward into the future. Although Dasein is both *not yet* (future) and what it *was* (past), Heidegger makes it clear that the future takes precedence over other modes of time because it indicates the forward-directedness, the ‘for-the-sake-of-which’ (*das Worumwillen*) that my life invariably takes as I interpret and give meaning to my situation. This is why he says “*the primary meaning of existentiality is the future.*” (Heidegger 1927/1962, 327) Dasein embodies this temporal structure in the flow of everyday life, and these self-constituting practices are performed with a smooth, mindless transparency until there is a disruption or breakdown. Examining Dasein’s agency from the perspective of illness is especially instructive in this regard insofar as it illuminates the experience of breakdown in terms of the dialectical relationship between *Körper*

and *Leib* and reveals the crucial role that the public plays in shaping our self-interpretations.

2 The Hermeneutic Body in Health and Illness

One of the most innovative and influential aspects of Heidegger's ontological hermeneutics is his account of equipment in *Being and Time*. By arguing that humans are already enmeshed in contexts of meaning and embody a tacit understanding of how to handle and negotiate these contexts, he radically dismantles the traditional Cartesian picture of the self. The human being is no longer viewed as an encapsulated mind that is trying to gain knowledge of objects, but as an embodied agent that skillfully uses tools and engages with others in a way that can never be made theoretically explicit. Using the analogy of hammering in the workshop, Heidegger shows that we understand the hammer only in relation to other tools such as nails, screws, and boards, as well as goal-directed projects like building a desk or shingling a roof. The idea here is that a tool makes sense only in holistic, practical contexts; it always "belongs to other equipment. [Thus], taken strictly, there 'is' no such thing as *an* equipment" (Heidegger 1927/1962, 68). This means a tool shows up as intelligible for us only in terms of its contextual interdependence and because we already understand and are familiar with the context as a whole. And our understanding is realized not by means of any theoretical examination of its properties but by mindlessly "seiz[ing] hold of it and us[ing] it" (Heidegger 1927/1962, 69) for various serviceable tasks. The hammer, in this case, reveals itself to us *as a hammer* in the act of hammering. Indeed, we are not aware of the tool as an object separate from us in the course of everyday life. We are bound up in the equipmental context to such an extent that the tool disappears or 'withdraws' (*zurückzuziehen*) from our cognitive grasp. It is only when we take the deliberate stance of reflective detachment or when it is broken and unusable that the tool reveals itself to us as an object. Heidegger's point here is that the objectifying view that serves as the methodological benchmark of modern science is actually derivative on the pre-objective handiness of everyday life. And we can take this workshop analogy and apply it to the phenomenon of our own embodiment.

In the same way equipment is already employed in serviceable tasks, so too are our bodies, as my hand, for instance, mindlessly reaches for the car keys, opens the door, or picks up the cell phone. Indeed, Heidegger traces the roots of the word 'organ' back to the Greek *organon* which literally means tool or instrument. Thus, "the [bodily] organ is a *Werkzeug*, a working instrument." (1995, 213) And like the tool, my hand is also connected to a larger totality, to the shoulder, chest, torso, and my entire perceptual field, and it disappears or withdraws from my awareness in purposive activities (Aho and Aho 2008; Cerbone 2000). When things are functioning smoothly, my body is seamlessly enmeshed in the context I find myself in and already understands how to maneuver through and handle various situations. This embodied activity opens up a mediating horizon through which I can deal with

things. In this way, the lived-body occupies space in a fundamentally different way than corporeal objects. The lived-body stretches beyond the skin, constituting a dynamic experiential field of meanings that I am already engaged in and familiar with. And this familiarity has little to do with ‘inner’ mental events that accurately represent ‘outer’ objects. Being-in-the-world dissolves the ‘inner/outer’ distinction altogether. I comprehend the meaning of things not by examining the content of my mind but by affectively grasping the whole horizon or field I am involved in, and this understanding emerges through a process of acculturation, of embodied immersion that begins in early childhood. As Dilthey explains:

Before the child learns to speak, it is already wholly immersed in a medium of commonalities. The child only learns to understand the gestures and facial expressions, movements and explanations, words and sentences, because it constantly encounters them as the same in the same relation to what they mean and express. Thus the individual becomes oriented in the world... (2002, 229–30)

The significance that things have in our workaday practices is shaped by this immersion. The meaning of the act of a professor walking in front of students in the lecture hall, for instance, is determined not by students reflecting on perceptions in their own minds. It is determined, rather, by the shared arrangements and patterns that persons raised in Western culture have grown familiar with. Thus, the student understands the professor and the significance of who they are by seamlessly grasping and enacting their place in the interlocking web of public meanings that constitute the academic world.

Interestingly, Gadamer will refer to this smooth, practical competence in terms of ‘health’, and it is characterized by a forgetfulness of oneself as one disappears into the flow of everyday life. ‘The enigma of health’, then, is Gadamer’s reference to the body’s own transparency and hiddenness; it is an embodied, rhythmic equilibrium that remains “constantly concealed from us” (1996, 112). Health, on this account, is not a condition determined by the absence of pain or the proper functioning of bodily organs and nervous systems. It is, rather, “a condition of being involved, of being-in-the-world, of being together with one’s fellow human beings, of active and rewarding engagement in one’s everyday tasks” (1996, 113). Absorbed in this state of balanced engagement, there is a background sense of ‘well-being’ where I feel comfortable and ‘at home’ in the world. Following this lead, Fredrik Svenaeus (2000, 2011) has shown that when stricken with illness, this tacit sense of feeling connected and ‘at home’ is replaced with the uncanniness of feeling ‘unhomelike’. In this state, things that used to be familiar and comforting become unintelligible and strange. The taken-for-granted coherence and intelligibility of my world becomes a disorienting, alienating, even hostile place. Understood this way, *my* world is replaced with *the* world. Writer Tom Spanbauer captures this uncanny sense of disconnection in describing his own debilitating experience with AIDS. He writes:

[In illness] things in the world are just things. Your house, table, your notebook, your computer, your bed, your toothbrush. Your clothes, your shoes, your socks, your car. Food. They have a life of their own unconnected to you. It’s as if you’re already dead and the world does not recognize you. And something even more. Because the things in the world don’t

recognize you, because your world isn't *your* world any more, it's just *the* world, instead of the familiar connection, you feel the empty place where you used to be connected, and without that connection, the way you're floating, things appear to you as having an energy barrier around them. And the energy of that barrier is a whole new weird deep anxiety. (2013, 293)

The experience of disconnection Spanbauer is describing, obviously, occurs on a spectrum. The more severe and debilitating the illness, the more profound is the sense of 'unhomelikeness'. The idea here is that the pains, difficulties, and discomforts of physical illness shift the perception of our own embodiment from the seamless engagement of *Leib* to the alienating and disorienting object-ness of *Körper*. Insofar as I am estranged from the world, I am also estranged from my own body; *my* body becomes *the* body. The trembling that accompanies Parkinson's disease, for example or the arrhythmias of a weakened heart are felt as phenomena that are foreign to me and disruptive to my being-in-the-world. Drew Leder (1990) develops this idea apropos of pain by referring to it as a kind of 'alien presence', one that tears us away from the smooth taken-for-granted equilibrium of health and the body emerges as a strange and clumsy object. This experience of estrangement prompts what Leder calls, "a *hermeneutical* moment." (1990, 78)²

When pain disrupts the flow of everydayness, we are not only disabled physically, as a self-interpreting being, our very identity is threatened. We become confused and anxious about the meaning and significance of this disruption. Thus, in cases of chronic and intractable pain, our bodies become an interpretative preoccupation. In a state of heightened alertness,

[w]e obsessively probe and palpate even when this increases discomfort. We read books on the body, seeking self-diagnosis, or ask friends for answers. We go back through the past, reflecting on our bodily history and possible origins of the current problems. We pose tests to see what diminishes or increases pain. Even at times when the discomfort disappears we wonder why and hold watchful vigil. (Leder 1990, 78)

Being torn away from health, then, not only affects workaday motility and basic sensory motor functions, but as beings that are structured in such a way as to care about and give meaning to who we are, it can also pull us into an obsessive and alienating relation to ourselves, where our own body becomes an object of anxiety, one that influences and shapes our self-interpretative projects, as we turn to medical experts, therapists, and various technologies to help us understand and make sense of the unsettling experience. And this estrangement can be magnified in public situations when our pain or disability becomes visible as a mark of deviance or abnormality. In these instances, the sufferer emerges as *the other*, and this illuminates a deeper aspect of our embodied being-in-the-world.

Because our own bodies can be experienced as both subject and object, it can function as the living, mediating horizon on the basis of which I feel, perceive, and engage the world, but it can also function as, what Jean-Paul Sartre calls, a

²Here I am especially indebted to Jenny Slatman (2014) and her masterful overview of phenomenological accounts of self-alienation and the multiple ways the ill-body is shaped by various social forces.

‘body-for-others’ (*corps pour autrui*), a thing to be judged and objectified. Figures such Frantz Fanon and Iris Marion Young have written from the perspectives of race and gender respectively to illuminate how one’s capacities for movement and sensory motor functioning are profoundly shaped by social judgments and the hierarchical arrangements of the public world. Fanon, for example, shows how the pre-reflective grip the white European has on the world is largely missing for the colonized person. This is the result of having a new set of cultural practices, institutions, and meanings forcibly imposed on an indigenous way of being, where the colonized subject finds herself a stranger on her own soil, unable to make sense of these newly imported social patterns. In this way, she finds herself outside of the sphere of everyday familiarity and feels the gaze attributed to her “racial [and] epidermal” foreignness (Fanon 1967, 112). Fanon describes this experience in terms of physical immobility and disorientation, a kind of paralyzing immanence where the colonized subject internalizes the objectifying gaze of the white European, sees herself as *the other*, and becomes imprisoned, “walled in” (1967, 117) by the color of her own skin. Young develops the idea of being physically confined in immanence from the standpoint of a woman acculturated into a patriarchal world. According to Young, because she is objectified and defined as a delicate and fragile thing, the woman’s experience of spatiality and motility is inhibited and restricted in a way that a man’s is not. “The young girl acquires many subject habits of feminine body comportment — walking like a girl, tilting her head like a girl, standing and sitting like a girl... The more [she] assumes her status as feminine, the more she takes herself to be fragile and immobile and the more she actively enacts her own body inhibition” (Young 2005, 43). In a similar way, the ill person is objectified as deviant and abnormal by internalizing the gaze of the healthy other.

As the ill person struggles to negotiate the stairs, open a door, or properly engage in a social situation, she disrupts or falls outside the flow of everydayness and is objectified by others for it. The blush of shame or embarrassment arising from her perceived lethargy, fatigue, and awkwardness amplifies the experience of illness, reminding her of her own unstable grasp on the world.³ Thus, to the extent our identities are constituted through our situated involvements with others, illness is invariably mirrored and reflected back on us in public situations. The gaze of the other leaves a powerful stigma, not only mediating the ill person’s sensory motor agency, but giving shape to her very self-interpretation. This helps explain what Heidegger means by “the real dictatorship of [*das Man*]” (1927/1962, 126). *Das Man*, understood as the background of ‘publicness’ (*Offentlichkeit*) that we are always already immersed in, is a manifestation of tacit domination that “supplies the answer to the question of *who* [we are]” (1927/1962, 128). A starker formulation is found in Sartre who writes, “The Other’s look fashions my body in its nakedness, causes it to be born, sculpts it, produces it as it *is*... The Other holds a secret—the secret of

³Thomas Fuchs (2003) describes this phenomenon in terms of a “vicious circle [that arises]... when a clumsy person gets ashamed, which in turn undermines spontaneous bodily-ness so as to make one even more clumsy, etc. The way our body is pre-reflectively lived influences the way we feel towards others, and vice versa.” (225)

what I *am*.” (1956, 475) We see, then, that the seamless grip the body has on the world is shaped by how we are situated in a given hermeneutic context and how the particularity of our own embodiment—whether this refers to sex, race, disability, illness, or some combination therein—interacts with this context. Understood this way, the interpretive background of norms and practices that constitute *das Man* is invariably inscribed into the material flesh of the body, influencing the ways in which we feel, perceive, and move through the world. And those who stand out as *other* or *different* from this background, those who fail to ‘body-forth’ in the same way, have a more difficult time disappearing into the shared patterns and movements of everyday life. An explicit manifestation of this phenomenon has been described, by Kristin Zeiler, in terms of ‘excorporation’ (Zeiler 2013; Malmqvist and Zeiler 2010).

Whereas ‘incorporation’ refers to the seamless and tacit weave between body and world that emerges gradually through the repetition of shared practices, ‘excorporation’ occurs when this weave suddenly snaps, and one’s own body reveals itself as an object of one’s attention, an obstacle or barrier that inhibits and disrupts the flow of everydayness. In the context of illness, one can imagine a child born with a severely deformed or disfigured hand who is raised in a family that doesn’t recognize or acknowledge this as a disability. The child mimics the behavior of her parents and siblings and slowly becomes habituated into the normative practices of the house, skillfully handling utensils and negotiating various situations. In this integrated state, her hand does not show itself as a malfunctioning thing or object that is separate from her because it is already bound up in familiar sensory-motor activities. But when she leaves this comfortable and non-threatening situation and goes off to school for the first time she realizes that what belonged to her at an inconspicuous pre-reflective level has now become an object of awareness. She feels the painful and dehumanizing look of her classmates; she stands out, becoming aware of her different-ness for the first time and is unable to function in her former way. Enmeshed in the tacit familiarity of her home, she was oblivious to her own disability. Now, because her context of meaning has shifted, she sees herself through a different set of eyes, not from the supportive and non-judgmental look of her family but from the confused and disapproving gaze of strangers. And her emerging feeling of shame or embarrassment is grasped *as such* only because of how she is situated in this new public context. Her affective awareness as someone different, in other words, is accessible to her only through the web of significance that she now finds herself involved in.

In this way, the phenomenon of ‘excorporation’ reveals the extent to which a shared background of cultural significances already structures the understanding we have of ourselves and of ‘*what it means*’ to be, in this case, healthy or ill. Similarly, it shows how the interpretive meanings we attribute to ourselves are not the result of some ‘inner’ reflection on the contents of our own minds. Meanings are unconsciously absorbed and enacted in public which, in turn, opens up possible ways for us to interpret ourselves in the future. This conception of selfhood suggests we exist only in the interpretations we fashion for ourselves in dialogue with the possibilities laid out by our culture, and there is no way to fully detach or rise above this situated

predicament. Finally, it illuminates how our self-understanding is, in no way, fixed and static. In the case of the young girl, we see how the interpretation she has of her own body and her experience of spatiality and functional motility is dynamic and ongoing, changing dramatically as she moves from one situation to another. And her interpretation will have to change in some way in order to accommodate this contextual upheaval and the new meanings that are opened up for her.

We see, then, that the hermeneutic standpoint allows us to view the body as more than a material thing waiting to be diagnosed and quantified by the methods of natural science. This is why Heidegger writes, “Most of what we know from the natural sciences about the body and the way it embodies are specifications based on the established *misinterpretation* of the body as a mere natural body” (1979, 99, my emphasis). The suggestion here is that prior to any method, *my body* exists as the mediating, affective, and situated place on the basis of which I can interpret and make sense of who I am. The hermeneutic critique of modern medicine, then, is part of a wider critique of *methodologism* in general that has become the default setting in the natural sciences. From the perspective of methodologism, it only through the application of standardized diagnostic procedures—e.g., blood tests, measuring heart rates, biopsies, CAT and MRI scans, etc.—that we can acquire genuine knowledge about the body. This view presupposes that the body is an object with fixed properties that exists independently of our discursive practices and cultural modes of interpretation. Moreover, it suggests that knowledge of the body requires the health care professional to suspend or bracket out the assumptive world of everyday life and the subjective interpretations and experiences of the patient in order to provide scientific explanations that are unprejudiced and objective. However, it is the uncritical acceptance of this view in mainstream medicine that results in, what Gadamer calls, “a violent estrangement” (1996, 70).

Methodologism may be appropriate for the natural sciences where the aim is to analyze data for the sake of testing, predicting, and reproducing various empirical hypotheses. But medicine is more than a natural science, and illness does not just involve diagnosing and treating the body as object; illness is an affective event that emerges and becomes intelligible only against the historically situated background or place of our own embodiment. Ontological hermeneutics shows us that prior to the objectifying framework of medicine we are already living our bodies, already enmeshed in a world and trying to make sense of our life. The challenge to medicine, then, is to recognize the limits of methodologism, not because it is ineffective but because it invariably distorts and covers over the experience of ‘*what it means*’ and ‘*what it feels like*’ to be ill. Gadamer warns that when the doctor is confined within this paradigm, she all-too-often simply “reads off the data provided by technologically sophisticated measuring instruments... instead of learning to look for illness in the eyes of the patient or to listen for it in the patient’s voice” (1996, 98). On this view, medicine’s account of the body needs to be broadened in a way that includes the question of what it means ‘to be’ human, where the doctor realizes that opening up a dialogue with the patient to help them contextualize, understand, and give meaning to what they are living through may be just as important as fixing the machine-body.

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Place and Non-place: A Phenomenological Perspective

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Abstract The distinction between place and non-place has occupied a critical role in both the philosophy of place and human geography for the last 20 years. In a distinction that stems from Marc Augé but is traceable to Edward Relph, “place” is thought as being relationally constructed, laden with meaning, and shaped by a broader history; home being emblematic of place. “Non-place,” on the other hand, is taken to mean places divested of meaning, homogenous, and largely interchangeable; airports, supermarkets, and pre-fabricated office complexes being examples. Whilst this distinction has tended to be pervasive and influential in phenomenological accounts of place, critical analysis on the relation between place and non-place has been sparse. This paper aims to (1) develop an analysis of the distinction, ambiguities, and tensions between place and non-place. (2). To question and interrogate what kind of difference is involved in this distinction. (3). To address the role intersubjectivity and affectivity plays in the “sense of place.”

Let us imagine ourselves nestled within the tranquility of a French villa. The place is a retreat, seemingly remote from the concerns and anxieties of the “real world” back home. Within its homely embrace, a series of windows overlooks a forest, enclosing the villa within a world of quiet intimacy. Here and there, we discover corners to withdraw into, nooks to dwell in, and rooms to retreat to. When opening the door on the world outside the villa, far from being confronted with a world hostile to that of the sanctuary, the surrounding forest and pathways toward the beach instead reinforce the peaceful sense of place. Indeed, it is a singular place, perched above the sea, with a distinct character, and quite unlike anywhere else.

As the vacation draws to an end, as it must do, it will be necessary to leave the world of the villa in order to return home. A short drive takes us to the airport, where we are now waiting in line to check our luggage in. Unlike the space of the villa, which is characterised by alternating textures and divergent tones, the spatiality of the airport is both flat and homogenous. At no point is the fluorescent light broken up by the existence of shadows. The effect of this constancy is that the airport is deprived of

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depth. In objective terms, the distance between the villa and the airport is negligible. In experiential terms, however, the villa feels distant and ungraspable. The adjustment we must undergo in the airport is full of resistance, as though our bodies were unprepared to let go of the atmosphere of the villa. As a result, we experience the airport as an oppressive place, at odds with the villa, and having no memorable or intrinsic qualities, other than being a place we must pass through in order to get home.

1 Introduction

Our relationship to place is both complex and dynamic, involving an entire series of dimensions that continue to shape and reshape how different situations present themselves to us. Places themselves are never neutrally presented to us nor are they statically emplaced in the world. At times, they unfold with significant meaning, while at other times they become transient sites, indistinct and interchangeable. The experience of having been cloistered in a villa before being exposed to an airport is one way to draw out the contrast between different if not divergent spatial experiences. What is evident in such experiences, which are all too common, is that our perception of a given place is mediated by several factors, not least our personal history, our intersubjective relations, our bodily mood, our experience of time, and so forth. How a place appears for us is in large contingent on where we are going and where we have come from. As seen in this way, the contrast between a villa and an airport is telling. Paired together, we are immediately drawn to describing the villa as having a “sense of place,” whilst the airport, in sharp contrast, appears to lack platial qualities altogether. Yet if we know what this distinction means intuitively, then understanding it at a conceptual level is a different (and more difficult) task. In this chapter, I propose to consider the ways in which a “sense of place” both appears and disappears for us. My central argument is that this distinction is not fixed in place, but instead dynamically structured by our affective mood, our pragmatic needs, and our intersubjective relations.

To speak of a disappearance of place invokes what is often termed “non-place” or “placelessness,” concepts that have occupied a critical place in humanistic geography and spatial theory over the last several decades. Since the publication of Marc Augé’s 1992 book, *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity*, the term “non-place” has come to refer to interchangeable and homogenous sites of late modernity (Augé 2008). Airports, strip malls, supermarkets, office blocks, and executive hotels are all exemplary non-places, insofar as they are defined by a lack of historical relation to their surrounding environment, together with the absence of a specific identity (p. 63). For Augé, these places are produced under the conditions of “supermodernity” and carry with them a set of thematic qualities. They are places in which non-verbal communication takes precedence, which encourage “solitary individuality,” and which are defined by their ephemerality. Alongside the term “non-place,” the concept of “placelessness” has also assumed a central role in contemporary discourse on the phenomenology of place, especially from the perspec-

tive of human geography, where it is employed to delineate between an authentic and inauthentic relationship to place (cf. Relph 1976). In the case of a figure such as Edward Relph, the concept of placelessness is inextricably bound with contemporary culture and society. Thus, the standardization of landscapes stems, in his evaluation, from “an insensitivity to the significance of place,” which in turn can lead to the “the casual eradication of distinctive places and the making of standardized landscapes” (Preface). Far from neutrally defined, place and placelessness operate in a dialectical sense, with the latter employed as a site of critique, not only for environmental aesthetics, but also for contemporary society and culture more broadly.

There are further variations on the place/non-place, place/placelessness distinction, which I have unpacked elsewhere (Trigg 2012). There are, moreover, importance differences between the non-place and placelessness distinction. While both concepts, I think, tend to hinge on the homogeneity of place, their accents are subtly different. In the case of placelessness, the concern is tied up as much with our relations with places as it is places themselves. For someone such as Relph, for example, it is not just that places have become standardized, but so too has our relationship to the environment become distanced and disconnected. In the case of Augé’s non-places, the concern falls less with our relation with airports and supermarkets—which, after all, are presented as transient places, and therefore devoid of the possibility to form enduring relations—and more with the social production of places themselves, quite apart from their phenomenological standing. Despite any such differences, what is important is that each of these terms stands in contrast to the notion of place as being imbued with certain values, not least as a centre of cohesion, belonging, and continuity. Drawing on Edward Relph, David Seamon’s definition is helpful. For him, place is “any environmental locus in and through which individual or group actions, experiences, intentions, and meanings are drawn together spatially” (Seamon 2013, 11). Seamon’s stance reinstates the sense of place found in Relph as involving the quality of “insideness”—a state in which a person identifies with and belongs to a place (Relph 1976). Moreover, “existential insideness” is a foundational concept for him, inasmuch as it describes an “authentic” relation to place devoid of self-consciousness or pretense (55). In line with Relph, what is notable time and again in the literature is that the term “place” is loaded with an affective if not ethical value from the outset. Place is homely, and home is decidedly palatial inasmuch as it serves as a point of attachment for the dweller. By contrast, the existence of non-place is not only diametrically opposed to what constitutes a genuine, authentic mode of dwelling, but also threatens the very existence of place.

2 The Problems with Non-place

While these distinctions might be helpful in terms of delineating different types of place in a broad sense, conceptual clarity nevertheless remains vague. What kind of distinction is at stake between place and non-place, or place and placelessness? For that

matter, to what extent is the subjective experience of place as placeless or a non-place even tenable? In this chapter, I will consider these questions. My response is that while I recognize the relation between what Augé terms “supermodernity” and the emergence of a certain type of spatiality, I nevertheless find the binary distinction between place and non-place (and also place and placelessness) untenable for at least two reasons.

First, from a Merleau-Pontean perspective, the bodily experience of place operates on several layers, problematizing the rigid (and often hierarchical) distinction between place and non-place (Merleau-Ponty 2012). This multidimensional analysis of bodily subjectivity renders our experience of place ambiguous, with a primordial level of spatiality operating alongside a reflective level. By contrast, what tends to be at the foreground of both classical and contemporary research on place is a prescriptive if not normative account of what constitutes a sense of place, and, accordingly, what constitutes a threat to place, quite apart from the role the body plays in the formation of place.

Edward Relph’s influential writing on placelessness is exemplary here. For him, place is under threat in multiple ways, and to return to the original meaning of place “one must circumvent the grand delusions of technology, ideology and obscure theory that beset the late-twentieth century and that cause environments to be made and processed like sliced bread” (Relph 1993, 26). Against this, Relph directs us to search for “vital qualities that are essential” to places (26). With Relph, Augé is also suspicious of technology as both displacing and disembodying us from our immediate environment. In the preface to the second edition of *Non-Places*, he reflects on the emergence of “portable telephones,” claiming “the individual can thus live rather oddly in an intellectual, music or visual environment that is wholly independent of his immediate physical surroundings” (Augé 2008, viii). Irrespective of to what extent one may or may not be sympathetic to such a view, and quite beyond whether technology, society, and modern culture alienates us from the spirit of place as Relph and Augé suggests, without attending to the body’s multilayered relation to the world, any account of the formation of the place remains incomplete. Indeed, to assess whether contemporary culture and technology displaces and disembodies us requires an understanding of how the body is placed in the first instance.

The second problem with non-places stems from the lack of attention given to our affective, intersubjective, and pragmatic relations to the world. In contrast, places such as airports and service stations are framed as being already defined in advance of experience, effectively reducing place to a caricature of itself. It is worth noting, however, that the tendency to impose a determined quality on a place in advance of experiencing it is not exclusive to airports and supermarkets. Our means of navigating and getting placed in the world is contingent on the ability to project and anticipate in some minimal sense the type of place we are entering at any given moment. Indeed, the habitual rhythms of our everyday existence tend to solidify the character of a place, such that it becomes innocuously embedded in our world. Nowhere is this solidification of place clearer than in the home, which we tend to expect will conform to our anticipations in and through time. Of course, one difference between the characterization of an airport and one’s home is that whereas the stability of the home is held together in a moment of idealistic desire, the supermar-

ket seems to persistently endure as supermarket irrespective of our desires. Thus, once more, in the extant literature on place and placelessness, these concepts are presented as being comparatively static, and, to some extent retaining their identity independently of our relational experience. While there has been considerable attention on how affectivity and intersubjectivity enhances our sense of home, what has been overlooked is how these aspects inform our experiences of less central places, such as supermarkets, transit terminals, and departure lounges.

Nowhere is the lack of attention on affective and intersubjective dimensions clearer than in Marc Augé's original account of non-place, where the concept itself derives from another division between space and place (Augé 2008, 64). Augé grants that there is a certain dynamism involved in this pairing, but suggests nonetheless that "place and non-place are rather like opposed polarities...they are like palimpsests on which the scrambled game of identity and relations is ceaselessly rewritten" (64). For Augé, we live in a time of "hotel chains, leisure parks, large retail outlets, and finally the complex skein of cable and wireless networks that mobilize extraterrestrial space for the purpose of a communication so peculiar that it often puts the individual in contact only with another image of himself" (64). It is true, of course, that when we begin to ask how a hotel chain differs from a villa, then we are instantly confronted with a series of complex factors, not least cultural, societal, political, aesthetical, and gendered dimensions, each of which sculpt and shape the way we experience the world consciously or otherwise. Moreover, we know from experience how certain places affect us in a way that other places do not. But whether or not this felt sense of platial differences merits the division between place and non-place is questionable. What is required is a careful analysis of how places appear to us as having a certain character and how that character then recedes. We will pursue this aim through the work of Merleau-Ponty.

3 The Bodily Experience of Place and (Non)-Place

The reason for turning to Merleau-Ponty is twofold. One, through his careful explorations of spatiality, Merleau-Ponty reveals how our experience of spatiality is predicated on different levels of bodily existence. Two, Merleau-Ponty draws to our attention the rapport between spatiality and affectivity, a dimension often overlooked in the literature on place. Time and space prohibit us from detailing the moves Merleau-Ponty makes in *Phenomenology of Perception* concerning the inseparable relation between body and world, together with the critique of intellectualism and empiricism that allows him to posit the body as a specific kind of intentionality. As such, we will proceed directly to his account of spatiality itself (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 253).

Consistent with his broader project, Merleau-Ponty's analysis of spatiality attends to the genesis of meaning and to the primordial spatiality, which underpins our second-order reflections on space. In this respect, he is critical of the depiction of space as a static Aristotelian container, which could be understood in isolation from the

subjects inhabiting and dwelling there. For him, spatiality is not a neutral backdrop, but an active field of force, defined by a global meaning, as he writes: “Space is not the milieu (real or logical) in which things are laid out, but rather the means by which the position of things becomes possible” (253–254). His phenomenology is thus archaeological in the sense that it gravitates toward sedimented layers of meaning and “relations that are beneath this world,” which, if not fully thematized in experience, are nevertheless operative throughout (254). Merleau-Ponty begins this foray into spatiality by asking that we consider our experience of space “prior to any theoretical elaboration” (254). His example is the directionality of “up” and “down.” To what extent are these divisions fixed in place or otherwise malleable? Merleau-Ponty takes us through an experiment, in which a subject is made to wear glasses that invert his image of the world (255). A movement of re-orientation ensues: on the first day, the subject experiences the world as inverted; on the second day, he experiences his body as inverted, yet perception itself is gradually reestablished; soon after, “the body is progressively brought upright and appears to be finally in the normal position, above all when the subject is active” until finally bodily gestures themselves become integrated into a new field of perceptual experience (255). What Merleau-Ponty wants to show with experiments such as this is the readjustment of the world back to a “normal” dimensionality is not reducible to the modification of habit nor is space something external to us, such that we adjust to it as though it were unchanged by an absolute space indifferent to our own relation. For that matter, our orientation in space is not a question of projecting “up” and “down” into an otherwise neutral world, without any constancy therein. As ever, Merleau-Ponty seeks a third-path, unveiling within the empiricist-intellectualist division a third pathway, which is more primordial than that of abstract space, as he has it: “We must seek the originary experience of space prior to the distinction between form and content” (259).

In another experiment, a subject sees a room through a mirror reflecting the room at forty-five degrees (259). In a glance, up and down are redistributed “without any motor exploration” (259). What this demonstrates, so Merleau-Ponty suggests, is that “orientation is constituted by an overall act of the perceiving subject” (259). This act occurs on a pre-reflective level, prior to being formalized in either intellectualist or empiricist terms. Merleau-Ponty speaks in this sense of “spatial levels” that are arranged and rearranged in space through the intentionality of the body, which is not always concordant with that of the “visual field” (260). It is true, of course, that my visual field can shape how I experience a room. Consciously and deliberately, I can single out objects within a room. Moreover, if I so desired, I could also assume different perspectives on a room, be it an aesthetical outlook or a technical perspective. Despite this free play of perspectives, a sense of a room’s existence is not reducible to that visual field, but instead anchored in a primordial spatiality, which makes the experience of orientation and disorientation possible in the first case. As Merleau-Ponty sees it, our bodily relation to the world is multidimensional, involving different levels of bodily and spatial existence. The body that is situated in the world is not my body taken as a physical and objective thing. Rather, it is the “virtual” body that is delineated as a “system of possible actions,” each of which is attuned to retaining an experience of the world as a whole.

This virtual body is a body defined by a set of pragmatic relations, such that the world is presented to me in a meaningful fashion. Indeed, for Merleau-Ponty, the “origin of space” stems from the “organic relations between the subject and space,” anchored at all times with a meaningful relation to the world (262).

Merleau-Ponty’s analysis of space as being structured by a primordial mode of intentionality is instructive in the sense that it reveals to us how space is “always ‘already constituted’” before it has become an object of inquiry (262). To this extent, our very experience of being placeless presupposes the continuity of our orientation, such that “being is synonymous with being situated [and] we cannot dissociate being from oriented being” (263–264). What this means is that there is no primordial attunement to spatiality that is exemplified with our relation to certain places and otherwise diminished in other places. Our relationship to an airport and to a villa is each framed by a primordial level that allows for us to be placed within these environments irrespective of their specific texture.

If we are, to use an archetypically phenomenological phrase, *always already placed*, then this does not, of course, discount that our felt experience of place can vary radically. In specific terms, certain places can induce a sense of being at ease in the world, whereas other places are liable to provoke anxiety (cf. Trigg 2013b, 2016). Think of the difference between being in your home and being in a hospital waiting room. Here, we might explain the difference in these places in terms of the situations they entail. The idea(l) of the home is that it welcomes us as a place of repose, in which we take leave of ourselves. By contrast, the anxiety of the hospital waiting derives in part from the spatiality itself. In large, however, the hospital as a place of anxiety is predicated less on the spatiality itself and more on the experience of *waiting*. Thus, if we are in the home waiting impatiently for a phone call concerning news of a missing person, then the home becomes transformed from a place of repose to a place marked by agitation. Such experience not only demonstrates the malleable quality of place, but also reinforce our invariant bodily grip on place. This pre-reflective hold on place persists in and through the different environments we encounter, even those apparently divested of a specific quality of their own.

Let us move from the hospital to the supermarket by considering another exemplary non-place: Walmart. The difference between one Walmart and another does not reside in specific cultural and historic differences between each location, as though the Walmart in Jackson, Mississippi occupied a different relation to its locale than the Walmart in Memphis, Tennessee did. Rather, their difference exists solely in the proximity or distance between them, rather than within their inherent identity. The history of a Walmart store is a history that is not localizable to a specific store; instead, the history is taken up in a homogenous history common to all branches of Walmart. The same is true of the spatial experience of Walmart. Once in a Walmart, the objective is seldom to linger or dwell, as though the place were the object of our concern. Rather, it is a place of coming-into and then departing-from with haste. There are, of course, certain exceptions to this pattern, as when the supermarket becomes a focal point for meeting others, but even within these circumstances, it is not the specificity of the place that encourages the meeting, but the context that leads people there; that is, shopping. As such, there is nothing to see and nothing to

do in one Walmart, which would otherwise be lacking in another Walmart. Throughout this homogeneity, in which one place repeats another, we remain for better or worse, in place. True, our corporeal liaison with Walmart may be insignificant if not unwelcome—the bland aisles, harsh light, and dizzying stream of customers may well get under our skin—but this insignificance and irritation only testifies to the constancy of our emplacement within the world.

This tacit alliance with place is structured in line with Merleau-Ponty's analysis of spatiality. There, a shift occurs from a focus on the perceptual and intentional relation to spatiality toward a primordial, pre-personal, and anonymous subjectivity, for whom, in Merleau-Ponty's formulation, "a world exists before I am there, and who marks out my place in that world" (265). Thus, my perception of place is only partially my own. Throughout, another layer of intentionality is at work, communicating with the world in a manner that is "more ancient than thought" (265). It is thanks to this invisible adhesion to the world, that our critical ability to reflect upon place is made possible, such that "space can magically bestow upon the landscape its spatial determinations without itself ever appearing" (265).

4 Affectivity, Mood, and Lived Space

If we are, as I say, always already placed, then how does our affective relation with place modify this relation? One of the limitations of the formulation of non-place, as it is presented in Augé and others, is the lack of attention to our complex relation to places, which can modify the felt experience of places in innumerable ways. Places such as airports and strip malls are presented as having already defined features embedded within them, irrespective of the relation we may or may not develop with places. It is for this reason that certain places are formulated as non-places *de facto*. Hence the repetition of strip malls, parking lots, airports, highways, and so forth within this literature. As seen from the perspective of humanistic geography, what these places have in common is that they are in large interchangeable and anonymous, aspects that constitute the principal threat to place (cf. Relph 1976, 143). Judged by the literature, there is a streak of determinism at work in the production of placelessness and non-place. Moreover, the subject who encounters these place is in large a neutral subject, passive (and pacified) in the face of urban space. If we took Relph's diagnoses at face value, then we might be tempted to think that a person living in suburbia would have a deficient and inauthentic way of being in place quite apart from how they actually experience their home. Indeed, what this literature tends to overlook is precisely the complexity and richness of our relations with places, and how these relations are informed at all times by specific modes of being-in-the-world.

In response to this characterization of place, let us take a comparatively uncontroversial claim; namely, that our relation with the environment is neither neutral nor objective, but instead involves a multiplicity of features, which shapes the world around us. In the first case, consider how the world assumes a specific meaning for

us contingent on our particular situation in the world. If I am in the middle of a city and suddenly feel a pang of anguish that I have left the door to my home open, then in the ensuing retreat back to the home, the city itself is experienced as an obstacle, unyielding in its indifference to my quest to secure the home. Block after block, and building after building are experienced as immovable and, moreover, devoid of all specificity. Such an experience of the city—the same blocks and the same buildings—is different as to how I experience it when I first arrive. There, it presents itself to me as a rich vista of possibilities, each of which I take in slowly and pleasurably.

The spatiality of the world is delimited and defined in terms of the affordances that make themselves available to us depending on our given pragmatic needs at any given moment. Yet if our experience of spatiality is mediated at all times by a set of specific needs, at the same time these needs are situated within a more pervasive atmosphere, which shapes the way the world is presented to us in a pre-cognitive manner. Merleau-Ponty terms this *lived space* (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 293). He develops this concept by contrasting it with the “perception of space,” space that is taken from a largely disinterested perspective (293). Even within this abstract analysis of space, we see already how our being-in-the-world involves an “inherence in the world” that is both structural and affective (293). Indeed, our relation with spatiality is imbued throughout with an affective dimension, thus Merleau-Ponty will write, “each explicit perception in my journey through Paris—the cafés, the faces, the poplars along the quays, the bends of the Seine—is cut out of the total being of Paris, and only serves to confirm a certain style of a certain sense of Paris” (294). To describe Paris, or any other city, is not to describe individual parts, as though they could be given in isolation. Rather, those parts exemplify and embody a “latent sense” that makes up Paris as a whole (294). The idea of Paris itself is a kind of lived spatiality, which affects how we experience the specificity of Paris in its parts. For this reason, “an initial perception without any background is inconceivable” (294).

The idea that our perceptual experience of the world is imbued with a “latent sense” together with a “certain past of the subject” has an important implication, namely; the manner in which a place appears for us derives not only from the objective properties of the place itself, but also from the specific bodily subjectivity that both perceives and interprets that place. We can think of this in the context of our villa residency. What is it that imbues this site with a “sense of place”? On the one hand, there is manifestly something in and of the place that engenders a distinctly *patial* feel. It is a singular place, full of idiosyncratic features, which distinguishes it from the broader environment. But those aspects do not reside in and of themselves, as though the nooks and crevices were waiting for the subject to animate them. Nor, however, is the sense of place superimposed through an act of imagination upon what is otherwise a neutral canvas. Rather, body and world, subject and place combine in a dialogical fashion, each shaping and affecting the other. A sense of place, then, is not an objective quality of the world itself, but instead a dynamic that emerges in a complex way.

At stake in this dynamic emergence of place is the hermeneutics of the world more broadly. That places are never given to us without mediation means that in order to understand the meaning they articulate, it is a question of interpreting them on several levels. A hermeneutics of place is the practice of carefully interpreting

how places present themselves for us, and is in this respect, a critical mode of engagement. Of course, this task is complex, given that the way in which a place becomes infused with meaning is seldom obvious. We enter a place, and are struck from the outset by its presence, which can either unnerve us or put us at ease. How a place does this is not always apparent, and to understand the genesis of a place's meaning, it requires attending not only to the specificity of the place as an objective presence in the world, but also to our own affective rapport with that presence.

We can localize this hermeneutic emergence quite precisely to our corporeal relations with the world. What is it to register a sense of place? It is, in large, to comport oneself to the world in a particular way. Upon closing my door to the world, the home greets me in a familiar and constant fashion. In response, I exhale at finally being at home, before freeing my body of the burden of the world. Exhaling, I perceive the home for what it is: an environment that can be depended upon and which I am relieved to return to. The home thus unfolds for me as a sanctuary of sorts, which renews and reinforces what I take to be a sense of place, a point that Edward Relph reinstates: "The deepest sense of place seems to be associated with being at home, being somewhere you know and are known by others, where you are familiar with the landscape and daily routines and feel responsible for how well your place works" (Relph 2009, 26). As seen in this way, the sense of place emerges as a multisensory crystallization of what we value both within ourselves and in the world.

In contrast, the disappearance of a sense of place is interwoven with the absence of these rich values. Following Relph's logic, to speak of a sense of non-place would thus mean designating a place that indicates alienation, unfamiliarity, and a profound lack of connection. Following the logic of phenomenology, on the other hand, this division is undercut by the ambiguous nature of the body's relation with place, a relation that is mediated at all times with the mood with which we attune ourselves to the world (cf. Heidegger 1996). Thus, if I arrive home when extremely tired, then it is not only that the home appears dull and obscure, but that my experience of my body and my relation to others is also permeated by an atmosphere of tiredness. The sense of place as a sense of the home's presence is underplayed and diminished, and at times the home may free itself of my connection it, becoming a unit of space I occupy rather than a meaningful home I dwell in. Does this mean that the sense of place has disappeared, as though there is something deficient in the home? Quite the contrary: any such disappearance belongs neither to the place in its objective existence nor to insularity of my own inner experience. Rather, my experience of the home as a whole is interpreted through the mood of tiredness, such that the world becomes an expression of that state. Seen in this light, the tired world—and, for that matter, the anxious or depressed world—is the expression of an existence that is consistent and continuous with "the total life of the subject," including that of non-tired existence (294).

5 Toward a Hermeneutics of the Airport

If our experience of the world is interwoven with both our pragmatic needs as well as the latent sense of a place that is taken up in the specificity of our bodily existence, then how do these invariant dimensions structure our rapport with non-places? Let us maintain our relation with the airport, an environment that is critical for both Relph and Augé. To do justice to the experience of an airport, one would need not only to describe the spatial features of the airport in cultural, social, and political terms. We would also require attending to the specificity of the body that interprets those dimensions in the first place. We would, in other words, require not only a hermeneutics of the environment, but also a hermeneutics of the body (cf. Trigg 2013a). Without attending to these dimensions, our understanding of place remains uncritical and unreflective. Let us consider this attitude in Augé.

There is no doubt that Augé sees the proliferation of airports as involving a solitary form of individualism, in which broader relations are destroyed and where “the individual feels himself to be a spectator without paying much attention to the spectacle” (Augé 2008, 70). As with Relph, Augé characterizes non-places as passive and pacifying spaces. They are spaces that encourage a voyeuristic kind of gaze, deprived of a meaningful relationship to the environment, and sealed off from the intersubjective realm. Indeed, Augé seldom speaks of other people, claiming that the “only face to be seen, the only voice to be heard...are his own” (83). More than this, within this solitary existence, non-places are spaces in which the ephemeral dweller is relieved of his or her identity, now afforded the chance to engage in the “passive joys of identity-loss, and the more active pleasure of role-playing” (83). For this reason, Augé defines “traveller’s space” as the “archetype of *non-place*” (70). In sharp contrast to Augé, the British writer J.G. Ballard also reflects on the peculiar anonymity of the airport. For him, however, the scene is different. “Airports and air-fields,” so he writes, “have always held a special magic, gateways to the infinite possibilities that only the sky can offer” (Ballard 1997, 26). Maintaining this felicitous tone, Ballard sees airports, not as spaces of solitary individualism, but as the site of an unusual commonality:

Airports have become a new kind of discontinuous city, whose vast populations...are entirely transient, purposeful, and, for the most part, happy. An easy camaraderie rules the departure lounges, along with the virtual abolition of nationality—whether we are Scots or Japanese is far less important than where we are going...Air travel may well be the most important civic duty that we discharge today, erasing class and national distinctions and subsuming them within the unitary global culture of the departure lounge (26–27).

Ballard redirects the voyeuristic gaze of Augé’s traveller to a look of hospitality, now freed from the demand of belonging to one particular group. It is true that Augé, in agreement with Ballard, grants that individuals can have relations with these spaces, but such a rapport is not mediated via the singularity of our complex relations with the world, but instead through disembodied words and texts, as he writes: “Certain places exist only through the words that evoke them, and in this sense they are non-places, or rather, imaginary places: banal utopias, clichés” (77).

Reduced to a set of signs and impersonal labels—Gate 20, Passport Control, Connecting Flights—the airport becomes a space of rigid determination, depriving the airport traveller of their identity, as he or she becomes part of the anonymous identity of being an airport traveller (81). Augé is no doubt an incisive commentator on the insidious power relations structuring the experience of an airport, remarking “the passenger accedes to his anonymity only when he has given proof of his identity” (82). But his characterization of non-places as deficient spaces is conceptually and phenomenologically unsound insofar as it neglects the manifold ways in which places such as airports are interpreted beyond their cultural and societal aspects.

Against Augé’s reading of the airport, let us consider the role other people play in redefining our relation to places. As we have seen in Merleau-Ponty, the division between place and non-place must be considered a second-order distinction that privileges visual observation, and which is distinct from the way that space is always already constituted for us in a primordial way. We are at all times interwoven in the thick texture of place, which wraps itself around us, such that we are never truly placeless much less spaceless. Moreover, this primordial involvement with place is thematically illuminated by the meaningful and affective relations we have with places. A place is never entirely neutral, but always present as belonging to both a global mood and the pragmatic needs we have at any given moment. What is especially critical to this dynamic character is the role other people play in shaping our sense of place.

Consider the following scenario. If I am anxious and arriving at an airport in order to take a flight, then I will experience each element of the airport as either reinforcing or otherwise assuaging my anxiety. Under such circumstances, individual aspects of the airport stand out against a general mood of anxiety. Consider here the security gate. Passing through the security gate presents itself not simply as the means to get from one point to another, nor is it a necessary but inconvenient aspect of travelling, and that alone. If I am an anxious flyer, then the security gate appears for me as a barrier that simultaneously reinforces my commitment to the prospect of flying whilst also underscoring my distance from home. Having passed through the gate, the possibility of returning to life outside of the airport is diminished, and, as a result, my anxiety is heightened. Indeed, once through security, the outside world now seems all the more remote, even though in comparative terms it is close by. As a result, I experience the post-security zone of the airport as an insular world, seemingly disconnected from the surrounding world, and indeed, inhabiting a different order of life altogether.

Let us then suppose I spot a familiar person on the other side of the departure lounge. Having not seen this person in several years, with her warm welcome, my experience of the airport as unassailably remote from my home life is modified. Now, the presence of a familiar face redefines my relation to the airport. Where the place previously presented itself as uninviting and cold, now an atmosphere of familiarity is diffused throughout, countering the felt experience of anxiety, which had hitherto been the predominant affect. This newly founded atmosphere is not contained to the immediate space of the departure lounge, as though familiarity were spatially circumscribed. Rather, what is “restorative” in this encounter is that the familiarity of the other person connects the departure lounge with a life outside of the immediate space. Does this brief encounter render a non-place a place? To

phrase the relation in this way only reinforces the dualism problematic to the approach illustrated by Marc Augé and others. As intersubjectivity becomes an interspatiality, so a place such as an airport becomes a con-fused space, a layered space where paradoxical aspects are not resolved into a unified whole, but instead becomes emblematic of the ambiguous nature of our spatial experience more broadly (cf. Trigg 2017).

Such examples are by no means atypical. In their commonality, what they reveal is that our experience of a place—even those apparently as static as an airport—is dynamically present to us and never fixed according to the cultural value attached to that place. As such, to speak of place as a concept with an already fixed set of qualities is misguided. Place is not the raw canvas upon which our experiences take place. Rather, it is the means in and through which our affective and intersubjective relations are expressed. As we have sought to show in this chapter, the expressive capacity of place problematizes fixed divisions installed in a perspective manner, not least the division between place and non-place.

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Part II

Figures and Thinkers

Topos Unbound: From Place to Opening and Back

Robert Mugerauer

Abstract The essay presents four dimensions of Heidegger's thinking on place: first, his basic insights on Da-sein, place, and opening; second, the details of how he worked out the relationships of things, place, locality, sites, the fourfold gathering, space, and horizon; third, his deepest thoughts in his last works that move beyond horizon to region (*Gegend*), *Gegnet* (abiding expanse), and *Einräumen* (clearing away, making room for); fourth, his ultimate letting go of the entire line of thought from Aristotle onward that conceives place as *topos*: that is a body's place is the innermost motionless boundary of another body outside it and containing it, to say what he could of the unbounded which does not come toward us—The Open, The Free.

1 Introduction

Heidegger and Place. “What? Again? Haven’t we all read “Building, Dwelling, Thinking” and “The Thing” and digested all there is?” Yes, Heidegger and place again for many reasons. First, the subject matter is complex and difficult; if several thousand years’ of thinking about space, including Heidegger’s, has not led to a full interpretation, it is not likely that those of us thinking by way of Heidegger have completed the task. Second, Heidegger’s often changing thinking and saying consistently are as intricate and subtle as Shakespeare’s or Borges’. Third, usually explications of Heidegger on place stop too soon, not adequately taking account of his deepest, most profound, final yet still-tentative work.

My project here is to carefully attend to what Heidegger said so that we can better think along, actively engaging him. Despite our obligation to critical thinking at all times, who are we to presume to correct or surpass what Heidegger, who worked his whole life to think this through, could do? Better to be properly humble, to carefully unfold what is there but not easy to find or follow; to try to realize the full implications that *are* our responsibility to work out. The task is especially difficult because we remain so substantially within the assumptions of the metaphysical

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tradition and the habits of representational thinking, but need to learn and practice originary thinking to understand either Heidegger or place.

In addition to attending to what Heidegger says on the subject, I will show that it is equally important to recognize *what he is doing*. I contend that on the one hand he is practicing what he calls two-track thinking, carefully working through and against what the Western metaphysical-representational tradition has held on these matters; then elaborating the originary alternative which he traces out from the “other beginning,” lost soon after the early Greeks caught a glimpse of it. Then, even as his originary thought powerfully enlarges the meaning-realm of place-related phenomena, displacing the representational concepts, Heidegger more radically pushes further, undoing his own accomplishment by dissolving the spatial-substantive language of his own successful hermeneutic.

Remembering that the process of presentation rarely matches the processes of discovery, this essay will lay out Heidegger’s thinking on place in four passes, covering first his basic insights on Da-sein, place and opening; second the details of how he worked out the relationships of things, place, sites, the fourfold gathering, and space; third, his deepest thoughts in his last works that move beyond horizon to region and *Gegnet*; fourth, his ultimate letting go of the entire line of thought from Aristotle on *topos* onward in which a body’s place is understood to be the innermost motionless boundary of another body outside it and containing it, to say what he could of The Open, The Free.

I take my title from the starting point of our tradition, Aristotle’s definition of place, which itself was soon set aside by other theories that shifted attention to space, variously named over the centuries then dominated by the modern idea, codified by Newton, of space as absolute, homogeneous, infinite, and symmetrical. I will show how Heidegger worked from Aristotle’s ideas of *topos* (place) as the bounded, through the forgetting of that during the history of representational concepts of space, to finding a resolution in unbinding place altogether. To hold Aristotle’s definition in mind:

Place (*topos*) is the innermost boundary of the containing body at which it is contact with the contained body. ...

For this reason, too, place is thought to be a kind of surface, and as it were, a vessel, i.e. the container of a thing. ...

Further, place is coincident with the thing, for boundaries are coincident with the bounded. (*Physics*, Bk. IV, Ch. 4, 212a-b)

2 The Basic Insights: Da-sein, Place, and Opening

Being and Time forcefully sets out Heidegger’s basic insights into the relation of place, human beings, and Being. Though crucial for the topic itself and the rest of his thought, this dimension does not need to be belabored. In puzzling though how our tradition has become preoccupied by beings to the point of forgetting Being, Heidegger argues that there is no special skill or exotic attitude needed to become

aware of Being; we all already are but not reflectively so. This is the distinct character of humans within the realm of living beings: we not only are aware of rocks, rivers, and roads, but additionally can understand *that they are*. In his technical terms, we alone have the capacity to understand not just the presence of things, but the presencing of presence, of what is present.

For such meaning to come into the world a clearing would have to be made, an opening opened, just as there needs to be a clearing in a forest for light to enter, enabling us to see a deer standing there. But that physical image is only a metaphor for the occurrence of meaning. Where would such a clearing occur, at what place, for the meaning of Being to be able to appear? In humans at their highest capacity, that is, when they manage to live as *Da-sein*. The “Da” in “*Da-sein*” means “there”; *Da-sein*: being-there. We would be the place, the there, where the lighting (the truth, using the tradition of thinking of truth in terms of illumination) of Being could happen (Heidegger 1996, 8). To be such a place is our calling, our essential nature so to speak. “Man is, and is man, insofar as he is the *ek-sisting* one. He stands out into the openness of Being. Being itself ... is as this openness. ... “World” is the lighting of Being into which man stands out on the basis of his thrown existence (Heidegger 1977, 228–229, cf. 204, 207, 211).

Though the project is not fundamentally a human one, but *Ereignis*’, we do need to participate properly. In the advent of the turning-opening the greatest possibility and responsibility for humans would be to respond appropriately to the call of being. Our greatest vocation would be to hear, then answer the call of enowning; to open ourselves to and as such an opening (Heidegger 1999, 23). Staying in the opening, we are called on to learn to think and say the opening (Heidegger 1999, 39). That is why Heidegger used the word “*Da-sein*” to name the openness within which we can hold what comes. Later, he originarily recovers another name: “mortals.”

3 A Detailed Working Out: Things, Place, Sites, Fourfold Gathering, Space, Horizon

While *Da-sein* remained important throughout Heidegger’s career, in his later thought he turned to more fully explore the dynamic through which things, in their places and in space, gather into the worlds within which we carry out our lives. These dimensions are difficult, complex, and unclear. Even more so are their relationships obtaining among them, all further obscured by the tangles of inversions and reversals of the interpretations that have occurred over the last two and a half millennia as well as the need to deconstruct that tradition, replacing it with an originary thinking—the language for which did not exist, which meant that Heidegger found it his task to find first articulations, passing through revisions and reversals, even outright failures, as he was the first to admit.

One of Heidegger’s great skills was to combine investigation into and use of the particulars of our ordinary world and powerful interpretive theory, phenomenologi-

cally allowing the second to emerge from the first, even while the latter reciprocally provides a gentle guide in understanding the telling examples. In order to better think place he avoids abstractions, instead in essays such as “The Origin of the Work of Art,” “The Thing,” “Building Dwelling Thinking,” “Art and Space,” and “Conversation on a Country Path,” Heidegger presents a concrete description of particular things, such as bridges and farmhouses, and detailed analysis of how they generate place and space. Because this is opposite our usual way of thinking, in which we believe that what first exists is empty space which then becomes filled with things, Heidegger’s initial move alerts us to the fact that he is not going to think of space and place as we assume.

In his later works Heidegger increasingly manages to think originarily. One of the most important thematizations concerning place occurs when he goes beyond thinking of objects, replacing that concept with a quite different understanding of things. He finds a crucial direction by retrieving the old word for thing. “Thing” derives from “Dinc” in Old High German (and variations in Scandinavian languages). The ancient word “means a gathering, and specifically a gathering to deliberate on a matter under discussion, a contested matter. In consequence, the Old German words *thing* or *dinc* become the names for an affair or matter of pertinence” Heidegger 1971a, 153; 1971b, 174). Thus, what is needed is thinking thing as gathering-giving.

In “Building Dwelling Thinking,” “The Thing,” “The Question Concerning Technology,” that pick up the theme after the earlier attempt in “Origin of the Art Work,” Heidegger works out details of what particular built things such as bridges, power plants, and houses are, which really amounts to what they do, what they bring forth. For example, he spends six pages describing and analyzing how the bridge is a thing that gathers the fourfold into world (Heidegger 1971a, 152–58). The bridge “brings stream and bank and land into each other’s neighborhood,” guiding and attending the stream through meadows, its piers resting upright and so bearing the arches that the latter “leave the stream’s waters to run their course,” simultaneously holding the stream’s “flow up to the sky,” alternately taking it “under the vaulted gateway and then setting it free once more” (Heidegger 1971a, 152). Letting the stream run its course in the way it gathers earth and sky to each other, the bridge “at the same time grants their way to mortals so they may come and go from shore to shore” and escorts mortals in this daily coming and going, “on the way to the last bridge” [death] as they “bring themselves before the haleness of the divinities,” whether the latter’s presence is “as in the figure of the saint of the bridge” or “obstructed or even pushed wholly aside” (Heidegger 1971a, 152–53). Poetically said, “The bridge gathers to itself in its *own* way earth and sky, divinities and mortals” (Heidegger 1971a, 153).

More poetically put in his originary language, Heidegger says:

The thing things. Thing gathers. ...

Thing: we are now thinking this word by way of the gathering-appropriating-staying of the fourfold. ...

The thing things. In thinging, it stays earth and sky, divinities and mortals. Staying, the thing brings the four, in their remoteness, near to one another ...

[in] simple belonging to one another. ...

This appropriating mirror-play of the single onefold of earth and sky, divinities and mortals, we call the world. The world presences by worlding. ...

The fouring presences the worlding of world. The mirror play of world is the round dance of appropriating. ... Out of the ringing mirror-play the thinging of the thing takes place. ...

The thing things world. (Heidegger 1971b, 174, 177, 180–184)

In a more standard mode, “Building Dwelling Thinking” explores *how* the full, manifold dynamic of the fourfold gathering actually works in one of Heidegger’s most substantial analysis of thing, space, and place—issues carried over and further elaborated in “Art and Space” some 15 years later. In the former he works out a complex answer involving at least a half dozen phases or relationships and perhaps a dozen major phenomena and originary words (Heidegger 1971a, 153–60). In his intricate tracing out, over and over, the composite and flow of the aspects more than eighteen times a clear master figure of the dynamic of the phenomena emerges. As Heidegger unfolds the dynamic of the phenomena:

Things are originary places (*Ortes*)→

which admit and allow sites →

wherein the 4-fold can gather into World →

eventually representationally conceived
as space (*Raum*).

For things to gather the four into fourfold world (Heidegger 1971a, 153) as a concrete, historical occurrence, there must be a way for the four to gather, that is, somewhere where this can come about. In contrast to representational science and philosophy that think of bridges and houses as objects which are situated in space considered to be absolute (pre-existing), homogeneous, and isotropic, originary thinking explores how room must be made for the fourfold to gather: the fourfold needs be admitted and installed into a site. It is this site for and of the four that subsequently allows the historical constitution of abstract space (*Raum*) in the ordinary and scientific sense of space in which objects are located and as a set of positions, intervals, mere distances (*spatium*, *extensio*) to be occupied and traversed, or as abstracted and three dimensionally represented in order to be conceptually manipulated (Heidegger 1971a, 154–55, 157–58). In short, out of the occurrence of the gathering of the four into world, historical events and relationships come about that allow the founding and joining of what we conceive of and functionally operationalize as space. Of course, it is within the fourfold gathering, among things, that embodied mortals would have their stay, that is, would dwell (Heidegger 1971a, 156).

But how is such a site for the gathering, given? By things, insofar as things are gatherings and assemblies. The *way* things gather is such that they gather the four in a manner that provides a site. This is possible insofar as place first is given, where the advent of place makes room. Here is a remarkable insight and claim, more striking even than this nested set of relationships: in order for things to gather the four in such a way as happens, not only must there be place, but the *things must themselves be places* (Heidegger 1971a, 154). This is an amazing thing to say. Yet, just as amazing and usually overlooked is that Heidegger says in a wild and originary way the

same as did Aristotle in *Physics*: “Further, *place is coincident with the thing*, for boundaries are coincident with the bounded.” (*Physics*, IV, 212a, 30)¹

To be sure, the bridge is a thing of its *own* kind; for it gathers the fourfold in *such* a way that it allows a *site* for it. But only something *that is itself* a place can make space for a site. ... That for which room is made is always granted and hence is joined, that is, gathered, by virtue of a place, that is, by such a thing as a bridge. *Accordingly*, spaces receive their being from places and not from “space”. ... Things which, as places, allow a site we now in anticipation call buildings. ... These things are places that allow a site for the fourfold, a site that in each case provides for a space. (Heidegger 1971a, 154)

Heidegger has unfolded at least four new interpretations in these seven dense pages: that things are places; the dynamic sequence: thing/place → allowing a site for the fourfold to gather → permitting and providing space; the originary event that occurs when or as things open, allow, admit, install, gather; buildings now characterized as the constructing and preservation of things/places.

It is crucial to appreciate the “world-event” Heidegger describes here. He is working to undo the tradition in which the originary has fallen into oblivion. The primal scene does not begin with fixed, pre-given objects in a containing pre-given space which then are arranged into a desired or intended design. Such subsequent organization and the spaces objects take up, Heidegger contends, depend on the originary event in which aspects of earth and sky, for example, are first brought forth. In the case of the bridge,

It does not just connect banks that are already there. The banks emerge as banks only as the bridge crosses the stream. The bridge designedly causes them to lie across from each other. One side is set off against the other by the bridge. (Heidegger 1971a, 152)

The gathering that things facilitate and achieve is newly eventful.

The location is not already there before the bridge is. Before the bridge stands, there are of course many spots along the stream that can be occupied by something. One of them proves to be a place, and does so *because of the bridge*. Thus the bridge does not first come to a place to stand in it; rather, a place comes into existence only by virtue of the bridge. (Heidegger 1971a, 154)

There are many places, but for our understanding of where we are and what we are doing they need to be related to each other. If I say I will meet you at the fountain that is at the end of the bridge that crosses from the town hall to the library, I have brought many things and places into relationship so as to specify a locale. Heidegger calls such an interplay or assembly of individual places and things a locality.²

Moving from thinking of things as places that bring forth earth and sky, and gather them with mortals and divinities, Heidegger returns to the issue of what building is as constructing, and how it belongs to dwelling. Indeed, building is

¹Also usually overlooked is the fact that Heidegger’s famous example of the jug as a thing which gathers world echoes Aristotle’s explanation of thing and place: he explains place in terms of the dynamic of water poured in and gone out of a vessel, and the relation of “that which a thing is” to “that in which a thing is” in terms of a jug and wine (*Physics*, Bk IV, Ch. 1, 208b, 210a–b, 211b).

²The phenomena of locality (*Ortschaft*) is rarely considered in analyses of Heidegger’s ideas on space and place. I have benefited from the notable exceptions: Angus 2001 and Malpus 2006.

doubly a production in that it brings forth things (erecting houses for example) and, in thus establishing them as places that hold and make room, it also “brings the fourfold hither into” the thing (Heidegger 1971a, 159). Understood as proceeding out of our capacity for dwelling and as “already [having] responded to the summons of the fourfold,” building—bringing forth by constructing—“is a distinctive letting dwell” (Heidegger 1971a, 159). To be genuine and successful, building produces responsibly, that is, “it corresponds to the character of things” so that it is able to set them freshly into their own, to leave them to themselves.

Obviously, the coincidence between that which stays (mortals for a while, and things for longer or shorter spans) and that which provides a site for gathering and tarrying (things, places, buildings—mortals’ constructions) is a powerful constellation. But clearly Heidegger is not claiming that human construction establishes entire epochal edifices of historical worlds—hence the insistence that building and our capacity for dwelling proceed from our already belonging with the gathering of fourfold. More needs to be said about the granting of things, of places. How is it that places come to be granted? How and where is granted the place/thing that gives the site for the gathering of the fourfold within which mortals dwell and by virtue of which they can build things in a manner that preserves those things and the fourfold, letting them be (each in its own and all in their belonging together)?

In trying to answer these questions Heidegger pushes further, from what we experience and can figure out. Each world occurs with or within a given horizon, the context in which things and events are intelligible, whether in our ordinary lifeworlds or in specialized scientific, political, or artistic actions. As first clarified by Husserl and then adapted by Heidegger, our finite perceptions, experiences of all sorts, and understandings occur within concrete historical worlds. Put otherwise, all our experiences occur within the specific horizon that situates or delimits our world in space and time, enabling it to have coherence and be differentiated from other worlds. Here, then, with a directionality that moves centripetally in from the horizon to the many aspects and people of our world, horizon is the locality of all the places, sites, things and even spaces that constitute our specific world. With this inner-directionality, what we call our historical-cultural horizon is another name for the outer limit within which we carry out our finite lives and find whatever meaning we can. That is, it is a boundary.

Raum [space] [actually, originarily] means a place [*Ort*] cleared or free for settlement and lodging. [Such a place] is something that has been made room for, something that is cleared and free, namely within a boundary, Greek *peras*. A boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something begins its presencing. That is why the concept is that of *horismos*, that is, the horizon, the boundary. [Place] is in essence that for which room has been made, that which is let into bounds. ... Accordingly, spaces [*die Raume*] [in our ordinary and also originary senses] receive their being from places [*aus Orten*] and not from ‘space’ [representationally, abstractly conceived]. (Heidegger 1971a, 154)³

³ Note: Here Heidegger confusingly uses space [*Raum*] two ways without distinguishing space as metaphysical-scientific abstract space (that he wants to replace) from space as experienced ordinarily in our lifeworld and thought originarily. I retranslate so that the latter meaning is clearly named with “place,” rather than being tangled with the connotation that is being rejected.

4 Deepest Thoughts: Horizon, Region (*Gegend*), *Gegnet* (Abiding Expanse); *Einräumen* (Making Room), Opening, & a Return Back

Where horizon delimits what is within—our finite possibilities, our place, our placement—it is interpreted in terms that still are the same as those of Aristotle’s *topos* and *centripetal bounding*!. But what of the horizon itself? Because there are many horizons over the course of human life on earth, some account of their relationships is necessary, and because from the vantage point of a horizon we can see that it is not the final “outside.” *It too has its place. It too is embraced by something beyond it. Heidegger calls this surrounding that surrounds horizon “region” (die Gegend). Region is the surrounding open, the opening that enables horizons to come about. Horizon has its placement inside the inside of the boundary of region.*

In the dialogue on a country path in which a scientist, scholar, and teacher discuss thinking, Heidegger focuses on the subject of region at length (“Conversation on a Country Path,” hereafter Heidegger 1966, 64–66, 69, 75–77, 79, 83–86). The three participants discuss “what lets the horizon be what it is”, Heidegger 1966, 63–64). The teacher says that “What is evident of the horizon ... is but the side facing us of an openness [*ein Offenes*] which surrounds us,” which directly leads the scientist to the question, “But what is this openness as such ... ?” (Heidegger 1966, 64 [7]). The teacher answers, “It strikes me as something like a region [*eine Gegend*], an enchanted region where everything belonging there returns to that in which it rests” (Heidegger 1966, 65 [38]).

Within their region things are intelligible since they are more particularly situated within the corresponding horizon that centripetally delimits the meanings and possibilities that can obtain in a specific world where things and places enable the fourfold to gather. Thus, a region (*Gegend*, via *gegenen*-regioning) surrounding its particular horizon and thence concrete world, specifies the scope, scale, or span wherein a historically assembled group of humans actually dwell amidst things and places—accordingly region is “prior to,” more primal than place.

To recall once more, then expand the series: just as there are multiple places in our world that need to be related to each other for our understanding and actions, which is accomplished by working out their locality or place/placement, and where these places admit sites within which the fourfold gathers as distinctive, concrete historical worlds, so each world needs to be delimited, that is, bounded, by its horizon. Since there have been and will be more worlds in space and time, there are multiple horizons each of which is within a surrounding region. Regions would grant the occurrence of horizons and their worlds within. But there are multiple regions, which in turn need to be related to one another and interpreted in some kind of unity. Accordingly, Heidegger seeks to think from individual regions (*die Gegenden*) to the “region for everything [which] is not one region among many, but the region of all regions [*die Gegend aller Gegenden*]”: “what is in question is the region” (Heidegger 1966, 65 [38]).

In “Conversation on a County Path” and “Art and Space” Heidegger retrieves the older form of the word “region” (*Gegen*): “*Gegnet*” which means “open expanse” [*freie Weite*] (Heidegger 1966, 66 [39]; 1973, 6). *Gegnet* is further explicated by Heidegger as “that-which-regions” (echoing “that which calls for thinking” in *What is Called Thinking?*). Developing one dimension further, *Gegnet*, as “free expanse,” is even more originary than region (and thus, horizon, world, and place). This would be as far as the matter can be thought, not only because of the limits of what Heidegger is finally able to think but because it would appear that there is nothing further which would give or grant *Gegnet*. *Gegnet*, that-which-regions, “opens itself, so that in it openness is halted and held, letting everything merge in its own resting.” *Gegnet* is “openness itself” [*Das Offende selbst*]; or even more heavily stressed, “is the opening of openness” (Heidegger 1966, 66 [40], 68 [42], 69 [43]).

It would seem that here we have reached the ur-phenomena, that which rests in itself, not nested within some further dimension—that which opens itself, out of which, in the unfolding dynamic of giving and granting, provides the (sub-) openings for each dimension, cascading all way back to place and Dasein.

At this furthest extreme (at the point of a turning back) to account for the dynamic cascade of giving and granting that comes toward us, opening and maintaining world-eventful opening, Heidegger makes a bold advance in trying to answer the fundamental, yet deeper question of *how* places might be granted. The key to *how* places might be granted, he contends, is found in clearing away. Places and things could be brought forth if there first were a clearing out. Thought along a long path that began with *Being and Time* more than 42 years before and ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’ almost 35 years earlier, what then was considered in terms of with a forest clearing reoccurs in “Art and Space” as “to clear out (*roden*), to free from wilderness.” He retrieves the old word for this sort of clearing out: *räumen*, which means to clear away, to make room for.

In clearing-away a happening [*ein Geschehen*] at once speaks and conceals itself. (Heidegger 1973, 5).

How does the clearing-away happen? Is it not making-room [*Einräumen*]? (Heidegger 1973, 6 [9]).

Making room (*Einräumen*) would, for our sphere of dwelling, building, thing, and place, be the name for originary granting.

At this point Heidegger is doing several things at once: though he still speaks of *Ereignis* (Appropriation) he gradually replaces the term with *Gegnet* and *Einräumen* (the region and clearing away) as naming the originary granting and as beginning to speak about time in addition to space. In “The Thing” Heidegger thinks through thing-place as staying (since thing is that which remains in place and since “stay-ing” says both “remain, abide” and verbally says “to hold something in place, to bring and keep it at a halt,” and all this as a dimension of appropriating:

What is gathered in the gift gathers itself in appropriately staying the fourfold.

Appropriating the fourfold: it gathers the fourfold’s stay, its while, into something that stays for a while: into this thing, that thing.

We are now thinking of this word [thing] by way of the gathering-appropriating-staying of the fourfold (Heidegger 1971b, 173-74 [46]; cf. 181)

Similarly, *Gegnet* is not just spatial as has been emphasized thus far, but also temporal in that what emerges in the regioning comes to rest.

Teacher: The region gathers, just as if nothing were happening, each to each and each to all into an abiding, while resting in itself. Resting is a gathering and a re-sheltering for an extended resting in an abiding. (Heidegger 1966, 66)

It is a significant move, then, to bring *Gegnet*-opening together with *Einräumen*. They both say the same: the open—region—lets all into an abiding (*in das Verweilend; Weile*); *Gegnet*, opening, so opens itself “that in it openness is halted and held” (Heidegger 1966, 69 [39–40]). The “spatial” is “temporal” in all dimensions. Heidegger emphasizes the interplay, even a unity and convertibility of space and time: “So the region itself is at once an expanse and an abiding [*die Weite und die Weile*] (Heidegger 1966, 66, [39]). It abides into the expanse of resting. It expands into the abiding of what freely turned toward itself” (Heidegger 1966, 66 [39–40]). *Gegnet would be the abiding expanse (die verweilende Weite)* (Heidegger 1966, 85, [64]) which lets all come forward and then return, the originary source. In *Gegnet*, then, we hear gathering, returning, re-sheltering, resting, abiding, all from and in the “abiding expanse.” (*die verweilende Weite; die Weile der Weite; “Sie weitet in die Weile des frei”*) (Heidegger 1966, 66 [40], 67 [41], 77 [42]).

By adding *Einräumen* to regioning-opening, Heidegger clarifies that and how two simultaneous (spatial-temporal) levels of meaning operate. Thought spatially or temporally, at the most comprehensive or primordial level, the region (as *Gegnet*)—as regioning, opening expanse, and as *Einräumen* (as well as *Ereignis* or *Es gibt*)—is prior to everything insofar as the first granting-letting of openness, gathering, sheltering, coming to one’s own, and abiding occur and hold. At the concrete level of things and humans—and of the many regions within world that would correspond to what Heidegger also calls “sites,” since “human nature remains appropriated to that ... from whence we are called,” there is a return to the first origin of opening and thus to things and humans gathering with everything else to which they belong, and thereby back to themselves. Such a return in which “everything belonging there returns to that in which it rests,” names and thinks the dynamic, including the unfolding historical which rests in *Gegnet* and in what occurs as *Gegnet*. It rests in what, coming to pass in man, regions him into his nature. (Heidegger 1966, 79).

We need to remember that thinking things means leaving aside representations, in this case the hard-to-avoid concepts of cause and effect and transcendental-horizontal relations—trying to originarily think the “relation” of *Gegnet* and thing “only as regioning” (*Vergegnis*) (Heidegger 1966, 76–77 [52–53]). That would mean (a) understood originarily, “the things which appear in *Gegnet* no longer have the character of objects,” but rather that of things properly speaking (Heidegger 1966, 67) and that the relation of *Gegnet* to things is not one of cause and effect but of what is prior—the opening, the granting—to what is subsequent—being given. He once said that appropriation is ‘pre-spatial,’ that is, it opens place in the first place. (cf. Heidegger 1972b hereafter TB, 16); the same holds later for region, free expanse, which provides the directive, and is thus ‘prior,’ to place and thing. *In the opening as expanse, things come forth; in the opening, as whiling, things stay.* *Gegnet* “also lets

things endure in the abiding expanse.” (*Die Gegnet veweilt nun aber auch das Ding in die Weile der Weite*) (Heidegger 1966, 75[52]). 61]).

To return to the way Heidegger unfolds the core issue via *Einräumen*, opening and clearing-away would seem to be an instance, perhaps the paradigmatic one, of making room for the possibility of things, places, sites, and world to concretely, historically belong to each other” (Heidegger 1973, 6). Nor surprisingly when at the limit of what can be thought of enspacing (*Einräumen*), “Art and Space” continues to work out the implications for understanding place and returns, working back across the phases treated above interpreting and explaining the operative dynamic through the entire cascade, all the way to *Dasein*.

In fact, the dynamic of granting, giving, opening is not separate from the unfolding “outward” that we have followed, as we can see from quotations already cited. I distinguished the two dimensions—that which comes toward us and that which has withdrawn (now partially retrieved in Heidegger’s work)—because place is our major subject matter. But, it is important to briefly make explicit the forceful granting and giving devolving from what appear at each point to be the ultimate dimensions. As Heidegger has worked it out over his career he gradually thinks the series: (1) what could be said cautiously and provisionally in terms of being (earlier he said that the self-giving into the open, along with the open region itself, is being itself” (LH, 214); (2) naming the event of being, gathering-granting opening “*Ereignis*,” (which Heidegger found a worthwhile further disclosure because appropriation is different in nature, because it is richer than any conceivable definition of being); (3) *Es Gibt, Gegnet, and Einräumen*.

The way back can be more direct, since covering how an open place occurs, unconcealment happens, or giving and granting come forth, at each and every stage—with their significant differences—would require another essay. (Note that Heidegger uses “make room,” “open,” “unconcealment,” as he does “*Ereignis*,” all through his career, but not with the strength and precision of the final works.) The same would be the case should we try to attend to the many different ways we are require to respond appropriately in each phase of disclosure. Rather than to try to cover each step here, I will give some “reminder” quotations and comments, but keep the focus on place as seen from *Gegnet* and *Einräumen*. As to what we need to learn to do, we are variously called to open to the open, cease representational thinking and learn originary meditation, give up the urge to willful control in favor of releasement (*Gelassenheit*) where thinking would be “to release oneself into the openness of *Gegnet*” (Heidegger 1966, 72; cf. 77–82). In all cases the core call is some version of originary letting ourselves into what opens toward us by letting go of representational thinking: “the task of thinking is to learn to open to the opening” (Heidegger 1966, 77).

As to the primary phenomena, we can follow the unconcealments and dynamic back from *Einräumen* and *Gegnet* to place in a relatively simple arc. *Einräumen* is the clearing away that *opens, that enables the unconcealment to occur, the granting to be given; “because Gegnet* regions all, gathering everything together and letting everything return to itself, to rest in its own identity” (Heidegger 1966, 66) it is the ur-opening, reigning over the individual regions, the particular regionings (Heidegger

1966, 65) which are the surroundings for the individual horizons. Thus, the opening region would be that which lets horizons be, “that which alone permits all sheltering,” “gathering all” and as that “in which everything returns to itself” (Heidegger 1966, 65; cf. 72–73, 83). Each spatial-temporal-meaning horizon delimits the world for us. World, the gathering of the fourfold, is enabled by the primordial clearing away, for example by establishing “the openness for man’s settling and dwelling” as well as by releasing the places at which gods appear or from which they have disappeared, or where “the appearance of the godly tarries long” (Heidegger 1973, 5).

Or, to close the loop into the unfolding that we started with: *Gegnet* and *Einräumen* grant places, which in relation to each other are an assembly as locality (*Ortlichkeit-Vesammlung des Orts*), and which in Western metaphysics became abstracted and conceptually constituted as space). Places, in preserving and opening a region, hold something free gathered around them which grants the tarrying of things under consideration and a dwelling for man in the midst of things. (Heidegger 1973, 7 [11]). Thus, “finally,” we know that it is *Einräumen* and *Gegnet* that so grant. In granting the tarrying of things a great fusion occurs: “*ein Verweilen gewährt*”: the gracious granting, giving, allowing of tarrying—which describes the sway of things, since things, as places, both gather and persist, staying open, holding open and allowing the site for the gathering of the four (Heidegger 1973, 7 [11]) (Fig. 1).

What Heidegger has done: press from where we are deeper into the dimensions—(a) moving one by one through those aspects that come toward us, that give themselves to us (as does the face of the sky), while at each phase another aspect withdraws; (b) seeing how in each and all the giving, granting, opening, making room, and whiling are enacted. There may be more. What if, at the end in a final thinking as letting go of a still-anthropocentric concern we could let dissolve altogether the idea, still Aristotelian, that *Gegnet*, *Einräumen* would have their place too, inside the inner boundary of yet another surrounding dimension? This would be letting the Open go—letting be the Open itself, the Free itself into its own.

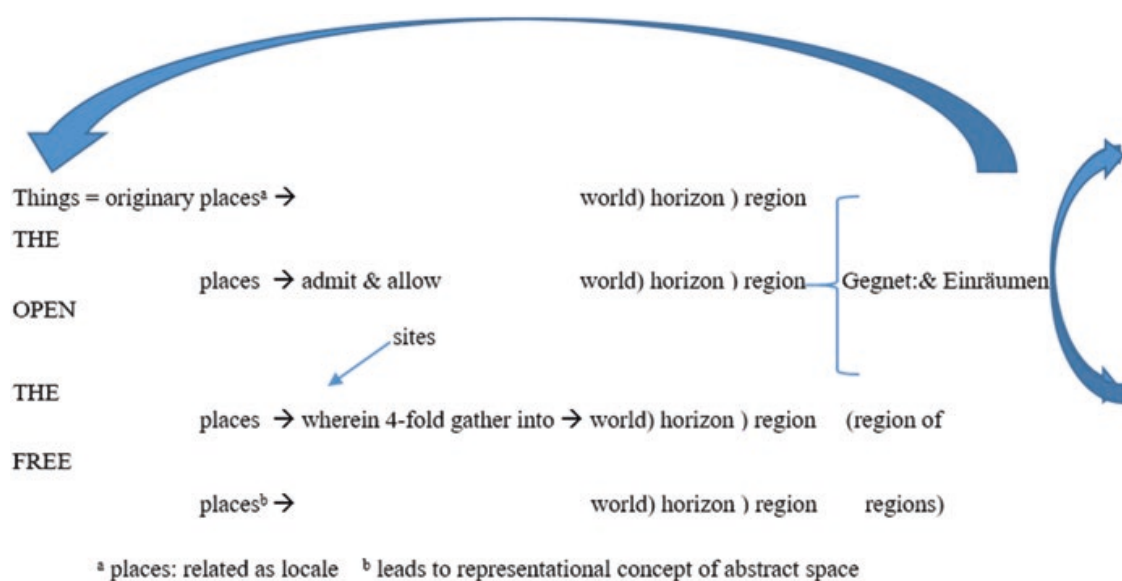


Fig. 1 The reciprocal dynamics of multi-layered opening

5 Letting Go: Opening, the Free

We can say that being and time have dissolved into the more originary abiding expanse and expanse of abiding, within which things are let tarry for their while. All such keeping, holding open, staying and remaining that are concentrated in things and place are devolved from *Einräumen* and belong together as place-occurrence, so that letting go of thinking by way of bounded topos—an Aristotelian series of Russian dolls with each dimension in its place inside the inner boundary of what surrounds it—would be a letting go altogether of both any further surround and any directionality coming toward us. This would be releasing, letting be, what withdraws to itself.

Toward the end of his thinking Heidegger increasingly speaks not so much of opening in this or that mode, of disclosure in this or that aspect, but—to capitalize the name as we once did Being, now long disappeared—of the Open/Opening; the Free. Here, Opening, as a “primal phenomenon,” if still thought in its directionality toward us is “that within which alone pure space and ecstatic time and everything present and absent in them have the place which gathers and protects everything”; ‘the place of stillness which gathers in itself what grants unconcealment to begin with. That is the opening of what is open’ (Heidegger 1972a, 65–66, 68). But, is that what it finally is in itself? In his interpretation of *Parmenides* the unconcealment that can occur in the opened opening, *Aletheia*, is the Free (148–155, 159–160). He tells us that the word “*Friede* means the free, *das Frye*, and *fry* means: preserved from harm and danger, safeguarded,” really “to spare. ... Real sparing is something positive and takes place when we leave something beforehand in its own nature, ... when we ‘free’ it in the real sense of the word into a preserve of peace” (Heidegger 1971a, 149).

The Free itself would lie at the other end of the spectrum of what was seen of Dasein in *Being and Time* as the granting came toward us: on the one hand our nature is not fixed: we are our possibilities. On the other, though rich in things and occurrences, in alternatives, we are finite such that with what is given to us within our horizons and our choices our possibilities are delimited. We have existential possibilities:

Possibility does not refer to a free-floating potentiality of being in the sense of the ‘liberty of indifference’. As essentially attuned, Da-sein has always already got itself into definite possibilities. As a potentiality for being which it is, it has let some go by; it constantly adopts the possibilities of its being, grasps them, goes astray. (Heidegger 1996, 144; cf. 193)

At this point in trying to understand place, it is our finite possibilities that show themselves as they are: our encounter with the “primal” puts us at a limit of what we can think and say, as Heidegger points out in regard to regioning which is “the prior, of which we really cannot think ... because the nature of thinking begins there. Thus man’s nature is released [*ist gelassen*.] to that-which-regions in what is prior to thought”; the same holds for “the open holding sway in the essence of unconcealment ... because it first discloses all that is close and the far as well” (Heidegger 1966, 83; cf. Heidegger 1992, 161). Perhaps though we could begin to deal with the

question of whether, for our part, we could let go, whether we could free the Open/Opening, free the Free. *Farthest away, the Opening would open away. At the far extreme and not coming toward us, whether instead to withdraw into concealment or to go its own way, would Opening, the Free, have completely open possibilities, with nothing foreclosed; be fully undetermined so as to be nothing other than possibility? Who could say? Neither could science predict it, nor any prophet foretell.*

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The Configuration of Space Through Architecture in the Thinking of Gadamer

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Abstract Although Gadamer stresses the importance of temporality, historicity and tradition, the aim of this contribution is to underline the uniqueness of architecture in *Truth and Methods*' investigation relative to the essence of a work of art. The uniqueness of architecture for Gadamer lies not only in the fact that it gives space for the expression of all other kinds of artworks; a building has to be understood as self-sufficient and as autarchic, but also as inscribed in the concrete historical life. A further aspect of the uniqueness of architecture originates in the fact that a building determines our way of life or our dwelling even in a political sense.

The thinking of both Gadamer and Heidegger is defined by the prevalence of the notions of temporality, historicity and tradition, so much so that we often overlook the philosophers' peculiar reflections on spatiality. Both offer their reflections through the examination of works of art, Gadamer in the field of architecture and Heidegger in the field of sculpture. To understand why these two fields are essential, it should first be noted that the study of the experience of art is crucial to *Truth and Method*. This study intends to unshackle the notion of truth from the confines of its gradual reduction and over-simplification throughout the history of Western philosophy. The highlight of the analysis developed in Gadamer's *magnum opus* investigates the uniqueness, not so much of plastic arts in general but rather of architecture. The very term "architecture" quietly hints at the "prevailing" nature of this art form, at least compared to other plastic arts. Indeed, what would justify that the work of the τεκτων (tekton), the craftsman who tools the felled tree, namely the woodworker or carpenter, and in a broader sense any craftsmen who gives shape to materials, be defined as αρχιτεκτων (architecton)? Moreover, the exemplary nature of architecture in the context of the development of a hermeneutics that aims to explain the essence of our understanding of the *texts* transmitted by tradition, or more broadly to clarify the nature of our essentially *linguistic* existence in the world, is not immediately evident. The material in *Truth and Method* focusing on architecture and its extension in the author's later contributions will enable to highlight the two

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major reasons underlying the significance that Gadamer recognizes in our experience of architectural works. In the third part of this paper, we will extend Gadamer's analysis of architecture beyond the purely aesthetic sphere, in order to highlight a third reason for treating the study of this discipline as fundamental. This will lead us to another aspect of Gadamer's hermeneutical thinking, his ethics.

In *Truth and Method*, the pre-eminence of architecture is predominantly of a methodical nature. The structure of the book places the example of architecture within the last pages of the first part, in order to fully convince the reader that Gadamer's thesis concerning the mode of being of a work of art is relevant. The prerogative of architecture derives from its capacity to highlight, more than any other art form, the "homelessness and placelessness" (1993c, 398; 2007, 224) of works of art in general when – disconnected from the context of the world of life to which they belong and which they also shape – they are simply considered in the context of what Gadamer calls aesthetic differentiation, in other words when paintings and sculptures only survive in museums, that is to say as mere ghostly "shadows".

Gadamer's thesis is that architecture is "itself decorative in nature" (1990a, 163; 2004, 151) and that "the concept of the decorative [serves] to complete our inquiry into the mode of being of the aesthetic" in general (1990a, 164; 2004, 152). It is necessary to draw attention to the words 'decoration' and 'decorative' because, as Gadamer is well aware, their most common meaning prevents the reader from understanding his thesis. Defending the decorative nature of architecture, and ultimately of all forms of art, is easily misunderstood, because Gadamer's rehabilitation of the decorative and the ornamental could lead one to believe that it falls within the realm of an alternative, which he refutes and which confines architects such as Adolf Loos, who is at the origin of the movement known as "brutalism". As we know, in the famous *Ornament and Crime* (1908), the Viennese architect stigmatises the decorative and the ornamental, and he thus ran against Art Nouveau and advocated the use of noble raw materials and transparent structures.

However, in *Gadamer for Architects*, Paul Kidder rightly points out that the German philosopher uses the word decorative in another sense: that of *decorum* as defined by Vitruvius in *De architectura*. What does *decorum* mean? In his French translation, De Bioul notes the following:

The French word *decorum* derives from the Latin word *decor*, which means what is appropriate, in accordance with decency, convention and custom, and both terms have similar meanings. Another derivative is *décorer*, for it also meant the beauty resulting from the evenness of the features and propriety of the body. However, the French meaning of the verb was not as wide as the Latin; it was reduced to the order and arrangement of ornamental displays used to embellish a place [...]. The word *decoration* did not fit at all, and therefore I had to replace it by propriety or convenience (*bienséance ou convenance*) (1816, 25).

In 1816, when this translation was published, the connotation of the word decoration had in effect already changed. However, while the primary meaning of the term is obscured by the idea that the decorative is what comes to be contingently and arbitrarily superimposed upon something without properly belonging to it, such a meaning is found in the example of Clément Marlot's poetry, for instance in his

Epigram CCXXXIII: “Villon, Cretin ont Paris décoré” (1731, 160), where “décoré” is used in the sense of illustrated, glorified. Indeed, even in the customary contemporary use of the word, I believe that it is possible to uncover the idea that a table decoration, when perfectly proper, is not what comes to be superimposed upon the table as a form of outside embellishment, but what fits the table, what suits it – even if very minimalistic – to illuminate its essence as such. In other words, to decorate is to highlight, and therefore supplement the essence of something.

To go back to the artistic understanding of the word decoration, Kidder reminds us that “*decorum* [...] refers to the fittingness of a work’s form to its meaning and function” (Kidder, 29). It is in this sense that Vitruvius uses the example of a temple – its structures, and particularly its columns – stating that it must be suited to the divinity that it is meant to honour. Vitruvius then explains that a temple built to Jupiter should have no roof, because Jupiter is “continually known to us by [his] presence night and day, and throughout all space” (1914, Book I, chap. 2, 14). However, Vitruvius also states that an edifice should equally be suited to its location or to its environment. Gadamer thus draws on the classical sense of the decorative from a perspective that Paul Kidder correlates with Heidegger’s famous analysis of a bridge in “Building, dwelling, thinking” (1951) (Kidder, 29).

Therefore, it becomes clear that the last paragraph on architecture in *Truth and Method* heralds the necessary “reinstalling the old, transcendental meaning of the beautiful” (1990a, 164; 2004, 152). This means that Gadamer not only broadens the Vitruvian sense of *decorum*, but that he refers more broadly to the ancient understanding of the term, “one that was more or less equivalent to the very idea of ‘beauty’. The beautiful, in this ancient conception, is the form of the good.”¹ What can we infer from the decorative essence of the architectural work of art?

The location or environment on one hand, and function or purpose on the other, demonstrate the fact that architectural works cannot be regarded as simply the result of creative inspiration. If it is true that the architectural work “has a place in the midst of the activities of life” (1993c, 396; 2007, 221), that it cannot be disconnected from its practical ends, we understand how Gadamer can claim that “buildings are never utopias” (1990b, 80) – i.e. the product of pure imagination – or, in a way that may initially seem odd, that “a building is never only a work of art” (1990a, 161; 2004, 150), so much so that it is characterised by its freedom vis-à-vis all practical purposes, that is to say, in Kantian terms, by its finality without end. Architectural works compel us to reiterate the question of what truly defines a work of art.

The second inference to be drawn from the proposition that the nature of the architectural work is decorative is that we must hold together two concepts of the work, in simultaneous fashion. The first concept is the autonomy of the work in its capacity of self-containment, so that nothing may be removed or added to it; in the eyes of Gadamer, this capacity is missing in the term *Werk* (work), which he proposes to replace by *Gebilde* (shape). The second concept is the relationship of the artwork to a world that transcends this autonomy, namely a world of practical purposes, and a pre-given rural or urban environment. In other words, although it may

¹ Kidder, 30–31, referring to 1990a, 490–491; 2004, 480–482.

be difficult to understand, architecture establishes that the closure of a work of art as defined by Gadamer does not imply a separation or isolation from its environment.

However, the integration of a building into a world cannot be reduced to the propriety for a purpose or for a given environment. In a perspective that extends beyond that of Vitruvius and beyond Heidegger's reflection on a Greek temple or a bridge, Gadamer emphasises the historicity of this world, and therefore the building's sense of belonging to history, namely its future. In other words, the "place-in-life" to which Gadamer refers is also the work's place in historical life. In the words of *Truth and Method*: "Works of architecture do not stand motionless on the shore of the stream of history, but are borne along by it" (1990a, 162; 2004, 150). In other words, the beauty or glory of architectural monuments is not timeless, in the sense that while they remain the same, their glory is transformed. This is a new approach to the thematic development of what Gadamer calls occasionality in the preceding pages of *Truth and Method*. The term refers to the circumstantial nature of works of art in general, in other words, their contingent and changing, but no less essential connection to a world, as demonstrated in particular by the necessity for plays and musical compositions to be staged or interpreted (1990a, 152–153; 2004, 141).

Gadamer's understanding of the buildings' integration into the course of history is evident from his 1939 contributions to a *Festschrift* for the art historian Richard Hamann, who attended Simmel's and Dilthey's classes in Berlin. While Gadamer does not agree with Hamann's critique of individualism, his *Festschrift* for this art historian credits him for having "set art back into the cultural context in which it belongs, and thus to give art a meaning for the history and destiny of a people, which art, as the highest expression of the world of education, had lost and abandoned" (Grondin 2003, 437). However, unlike Hegel, Gadamer does not intend merely to replace the emergence of a given work in the historical context, which also bestows it with meaning. Indeed – and this is much clearer as it concerns a building rather than a text – this integration process implies that the presence of a building, its glory and, therefore, its meaning as well are expected to *change* over time. In a 1985 article entitled "The End of Art", Gadamer states the following:

[A] building also rises in the rustling sound of the sea of life, and there are always humans who not only admire it, but integrate it into their lives [...]. An unprecedented emphasis is laid, by which the old becomes new (1990b, 81).

What follows this passage provides three seminal examples of the various lives that monuments will lead throughout history: the transformation of Bordeaux in the eighteenth century; Haussmannian architecture in Paris; and, the result of the philosopher's own hermeneutical experience, a building that Gadamer discovered for the first time when he returned to his hometown of Breslau:

When I walked out of the undestroyed main train station, my gaze almost immediately fell upon a gigantic church, which I had never seen before in my whole life. In reality, all sorts of monstrosities from the late nineteenth century had crumbled since I had left, and the church appeared to be new. This is how a building acquires unexpected new spatial energies (1990b, 81).

Close attention should be drawn to the expression “spatial energy”, which may seem odd at first. However, to carry on with our examples, we could also mention the rehabilitation of buildings, which by altering their functionality give them a new life: warehouses or factories, or even train stations turned into museums or housing apartments. On one hand, the building is still the same, and on the other hand and simultaneously, it no longer is. These examples remind us that the glory of buildings or works of art in general is as likely to decline or even be eclipsed (the work then becoming virtually invisible) as it is to be given a new life, when the old is integrated into the new and becomes new itself. In other words, the old is transformed into the new as the new is integrated into the old, as with the transformation of the Parisian district of Les Halles with the construction of the Centre Pompidou.

Consequently, there are two very different ways to consider the historicity of a work of art. The first one places it *in* its historical context, which is how Hegel and art historians proceed. The second, which Gadamer endorses, invites us to consider *the historicity of the life of the work itself*. We must therefore consider simultaneously the autonomy or the ideal condition of the work of art, which Gadamer goes as far as defining as “close to the ahistorical dimension of mathematics” in “The Marburg Theology” (1964) and the necessity of taking the historicity of its life into account (1987a, 206–207, 139). Although it may seem paradoxical, the identity of “the same” and “the other” characterizes the metabolism of living creatures in general, as long as these creatures change over time while remaining the same. Moreover, architecture allows us to illustrate in a particularly comprehensive fashion the nature of what is commonly referred to as “reading”, in other words, the hermeneutical experience of appreciating a work of art. We will now focus on this second reason by which special attention should be drawn to this form of plastic art.

In “Über das Lesen von Bauten und Bildern” (“On the Reading of Buildings and Pictures”), published in 1979, 19 years after *Truth and Method*, Gadamer sets out by focusing on the fact that the phenomenon of understanding is contained within the context of the question-answer structure, rather than by implementing a method. However, the meaning of this structure may be confusing. Understanding does not refer, as it does in the case of the natural sciences, to the process of answering an initial question so that we may then move on to another matter. We could say that in the experience of art, I do not question myself, but I am being questioned. The one being questioned is the one facing the enigmatic phenomenon of what is given, or rather imposed upon the self; the questioning refers to the enigma of the work, which imposes itself while it fades away.

Examples of plastic arts given by Gadamer in this article are rather conventional: a cathedral, Giorgione’s painting *The Tempest*, and more allusively, Picasso’s cubism. Gadamer describes his experience in a Baroque cathedral as follows: “I have visited the Cathedral of Sankt Gallen on numerous occasions and have experienced the *singular spatial impression* of the building deriving from the strange and magnificent formal unity between the nave, the crossing in the transept, and the choir” (1993b, 331). The seemingly contingent priority of the architectural example, to which reference is made prior to the two pictorial examples, could be justified on two accounts. On one hand, Gadamer experiences the *space* on a sensorial or carnal

level, much more so than as a confrontation with a given figure in a space, or than the discovery of a space defined by all the figures featured in it, as in Giorgione's painting. The experience relates to spatiality as a dimension in and of itself. On the other hand, Gadamer only experiences this spatiality gradually, as he walks around the interior of the cathedral. This experience does not apply as directly to pictorial works, which we simply observe.

What follows this passage in "Über das Lesen von Bauten und Bildern" defines reading, which is generally used in reference to textual work, on the basis of this experience:

We must "read" the building, which means that not only must we see it (*anschauen*) – as we would do with a photographic reproduction – but we must also go where it is, walk around it, enter into it so that we gradually come to build it, so to speak (1993b, 334).

If here "reading" means staying close to the building, exploring it for the sake of gradually understanding it, the same is also true of a book, or a city, where one must get lost over and over again before beginning to know one's way around. Thus we understand why a photographic representation, in other words a mere visual representation, a map or a model, turns out to betray a "false sense of familiarity" with these veritable works of art (1993c, 396; 2007, 221). This will appear even more clearly if we fathom the abyss between the knowledge of a city provided by a map and that gained by walking around the actual city. Another stage of this reading process, described in "The Artwork in Word and Image" (1992), refers to another more unexpected example. Compared to walking around, which enables us to discover a spatial dimension and allows it to develop, this other stage of the reading process is the one that refers to the moment when walking around is interrupted by astonishment – which is another way of talking about the person being taken aback or questioned.

"The Artwork in Word and Image" focuses on architecture and the decorative by referring to the experience which "causes us to pause in the midst of our purposeful doing, for example in a room of a church or in a stairwell when suddenly we stand there and remain entranced" (1993c, 396; 2007, 221); the sparkling beauty of the staircase reveals itself through a moment of astonishment, which implies having used it previously for its merely practical purpose, in other words having walked the stairs. The example of the staircase is interesting on several levels. First, unlike churches, it is not one of the typical examples that comes to mind when speaking about architecture, unless it is monumental. A staircase is a place of passage or transition, like a bridge or a door; it is not easy to apprehend as a work characterised by its closure and self-containment. When set in a well, it becomes a simple architectural *element*, usually an element of *interior* architecture. Secondly, its functionality is in a sense secondary, but all the more evident as it refers neither to the sacred, nor to the manifestation of a political power. However, we know that from the early nineteenth century, stairwells are an architect's favourite because they can incorporate materials such as stained glass or metal. Lastly, in this particular case, Gadamer is not thinking about a staircase in general, as the passage might suggest,

but about a very specific example, which incidentally allows us to perceive in very specific terms what kind of construction would move the German philosopher.

Gadamer does not mean the stairs where Smerdjakof falls in *The Brothers Karamazov*, and to which he refers on several occasions when he writes about the evocative power of novelistic description (1993a, 75–76). The staircase described by Dostoyevsky is a dramatic place and not the subject of a hermeneutical experience of beauty, or a work with which one needs to spend time. The staircase that Gadamer has in mind is in Heidelberg and it is one that he has often walked. In an interview with art historian Catherine Hürzeler, published shortly after his demise, Gadamer recalls an anecdote from the 1950s, at a time where he was a member of the committee in charge of overseeing the architectural development projects of the University of Heidelberg. As such, he was part of the discussion about the development of Marstallhof, where the destruction of a building constructed in the first half of the nineteenth century by neoclassical architect Friedrich Weinbrenner had been planned, to be replaced by a new larger and more convenient building designed by Otto Ernst Schweizer. Although in vain, Gadamer opposed the project, because he had experienced “the increase of being” represented by the stairwell of the old building:

The staircase was so beautiful, Gadamer says, that I always needed a while to walk up the stairs, for I constantly had to stop. It was a wonderful staircase.²

While in hindsight Gadamer’s argument to save a building from destruction relying on the uniqueness of the building’s staircase might be considered weak, it is nonetheless remarkable that people felt the need to photograph the staircase, as proven by the photographic archive kept in Marburg. Upon close examination, this staircase seems to have three main characteristics. The first and most striking feature is the number of arches, creating a space reminiscent of that of a church: arches fitted with windows in the outer wall of the well, which ends in a semi-circular upper part, and arches featured in the internal lateral walls of the stairwell. Secondly, because of the inner edges, this well is believed to be of an intermediary design, halfway between a rather dark well, whose interior is comprised by an opaque wall, and the characteristically bright one, whose interior consists of a single low wall or a ramp. The third characteristic is the result of the first two: this stairwell with remarkable high ceilings on each floor is unlike the stairwells whose internal lateral walls are closed or open, as it attracts those who walk its stairs towards a loftiness, which due to its invisibility is all the more intriguing and enigmatic. As established by several passages in Gadamer’s entire work, extending the hermeneutical reflections on architecture beyond the realm of the purely aesthetic points to a third reason why architecture should hold a privileged place among other art forms.

Truth and Method emphasises the fact that “architecture gives shape to space” (1990a, 162; 2004, 150), that it “creates” space and “leaves it free” (1990a, 163;

²Gadamer 2006, 245–246. Stored in the Bildarchiv der Kunst und Architektur, Bildarchiv Foto Marburg, the picture of this staircase can be seen at: <http://www.bildindex.de/obj05233469.html#home>. Accessed 20 June 2014.

2004, 151), i.e. opens up the soil and space, creating the context where other art forms may thrive (1990a, 162; 2004, 150). Gadamer refers only briefly, indeed in passing, to this dimension of architecture. In *Truth and Method*, he focuses on the exemplary nature of architecture in matters relating to the experience of art and its claim to truthfulness. However, two readings of this passage are possible: although they are not exclusive, they are nonetheless distinct because they lead in two different directions that go beyond the analysis of architecture as defined in *Truth and Method*. The opening of the space liberated by a building is likely to result in a so-called first ontological reading, whereas the second reading is directly correlated to an important aspect of hermeneutics: the practical or ethical aspect. What space are we talking about here?

It is clearly possible to understand this liberation and shaping of the space on the background of Heidegger's thinking, but as we shall see, the parallel between Heidegger and Gadamer serves primarily to point to the singularity of Gadamer. As we know, Heidegger conceptualised the opening up of the spatial dimension by considering sculptures in two speeches entitled "Remarks on Art-Sculpture-Space" (1964) and "Art and Space" (1969). Just as sculpture is not a "plastic" art in the sense that, as is commonly believed, it gives shape or a form to a material, the art of building does not give shape to a material, but "liberates" space. In pursuit of the question at hand, it is in this sense that the expression "spatial energy" of a building must be understood. To the degree that it is a work of art, every building is characterised by the uniqueness of the space that it is able to create or bring to life.

"The Artwork in Word and Image" employs Heidegger's expression of spatial shaping to refer to architecture, but states that in doing so it also "offers all the other arts a *place-in-life*" (1993c, 397; 2007, 223). Far from considering this space as that which essentially provides a "place-in-life", questions like those raised by Heidegger would lead us to focus on the essential character of the constitutive void of any building, or for example that of the Marstallhof' stairwell, or the streets and squares of a city, so long as this void is what allows entry, circulation or departure. It is also in this sense that the idea of God as the "architect of the world" should be understood. He is not an architect because He is a surveyor, or, as a demiurge, has given shape to things, but because He opens or "frees" a dimension within which "living creatures" can grow. However, the more "urban" nature of Gadamer's thought, to use a term coined by Habermas, tends to lead him towards another aspect of his thinking, to consider the ethical nature of architecture; the same would be more difficult to achieve with sculpture.

When Gadamer writes that architecture "shapes", "frees" space, the space to which he refers is above all that of the living world. "The Artwork in Word and Image" reminds in this sense, that architecture has an effect on "the whole surrounding world in which human life plays itself out" (1993c, 397; 2007, 222). To cite Harries Karsten, we could therefore speak of an ethical function of architecture, which simultaneously takes on meaning in a political sense, since a given architecture organises or disposes of a certain common ethos (2000), and precludes other ethical options. We can take as an example the specificity of the traditional Japanese house, which does not feature individual rooms as in the West, or perhaps the

invention of the agora, or even the Panopticon of Jeremy Bentham. In other words, a building creates a space for possible human habitation, which is at least as primitive as the habitation of a language, or as a poetical habitation. However, this ethical dimension is simultaneously political if, as indirectly suggested by the examples of the transformation of the cities of Bordeaux or Paris in “The End of Art”, a building is most often part of a set making up the village, the city or the megalopolis. In other words, “architecture” should also be understood in the larger frame of urbanism.

Therefore, if all that has been said of a building also applies to a city, it is surprising that Gadamer did not care to explicitly include a reflection on urban architecture in his analysis. Georg Simmel had already undertaken the aesthetic study of Rome, Florence and Venice as “works of art”, that is to say, as “units of life” symbolising a varying “conception of the world” (1992a, 303 and 1992b, 262): the “solemn” unit of Rome; that of Florence, “which provides the superb and unequivocal assurance of a homeland to the soul”; and the “dreamlike” and ambiguous unit of Venice (1992b, 72, 260, 263). Simmel thus declares the following about Rome:

The tension between the multiplicity and unity of what the work of art offers to our intuition and sensitive impression is believed to be the unit of measurement of the work’s value. It is in this sense that the city of Rome presents itself as a work of art of the highest order. [...] The interweaving of ancient remains [...] and recent constructions symbolises this, or, if you prefer, it offers the same dynamics as Roman life in a more fixed form. The construction of its own living unit is based on very different elements, which give it strength by the magnitude of their unparalleled tension in an incomparably evident fashion (1992a, 303, 304).

Or about Florence, whose past does not overshadow the present:

There is probably not another town where the overall impression, the visible aspect, memories, nature and culture display such unity, and in the eyes of the beholder are so similar to a work of art (1993, 70).

However, Gadamer was also familiar with the works of his “first friend” in Marburg, Oskar Schürer (1977, 28), whom he met in Richard Hamann’s circle. As Gadamer reminds us in *Philosophical Apprenticeships*, Schürer intends to “describe the city as a work of art”, and, although he “was not the first to acknowledge the significance of this theme for art history” (1977, 85), he made a name for himself with biographies of cities such as Prague, Augsburg, Metz, or Vienna. Drawing on Schürer’s reflection, Gadamer states the following about the city:

Such a world cannot be contemplated *a priori* from the objective distance of a form, but it is one in which we live, that flows through our veins, a world whose silhouette becomes gradually clearer to the one who inhabits it (1977, 86).

Having to enter it and having it flowing through us clearly describes the occurrence of an experience, in terms which apply to any experience of art. However, Gadamer goes as far as quoting a passage from Schürer’s work, which shows how the work imposes itself on us by making us “change our lives”, in the words of Rilke, to the extent that one might wonder if reading these biographies has not also contributed to the development of Gadamer’s hermeneutics:

Their *laws* become clear to us when we walk across them. No detail catches our attention in a petty fashion, but the whole welcomes us, drives our research and our discoveries here

and there, and grows through us to *shape us* in accordance with its own laws. It is not only space that seeks to be accommodated in its entirety, but also the entire corpus of historical epochs, which works its way up to emerge from all the upper layers and crust, [...] in order to suddenly reveal and make us experience the whole as the comprehensive symbol of simultaneity, of a single and unique moment. [...] this does not *happen to us* by means of a purely conceptual understanding, but as a process which we *carry out ourselves*.³

A hermeneutic of art benefits from considering the city as a work of art, as conceived by Simmel and Schürer, since – unlike texts, images or buildings – it is more difficult to define its precise boundaries. For unless it has been turned into a museum within its own walls and has subsequently lost its vital dynamism, it is harder to succumb to the temptation of isolating a city from its spatial environment⁴ and historical being.

The problems posed by the development of the global megalopolis, in which a growing part of the population lives, clearly highlight the profound ethical and political dimensions of the function of urban architecture, as this art form infers a mode of being-with, a particular ethos. Simmel wrote his 1903 essay, “The Metropolis and Mental Life” with this dimension in mind. As we know, the expansion of the net-like structure of a great megalopolis, which aims essentially to enable circulation and movement, questions the very notion of the traditional inhabitability of the world. In fact, these urban spaces have little in common with old-world cities such as Bordeaux, Paris, Breslau and Heidelberg. The words of Gadamer echo this crisis: “The absence of a homeland is the frightening consequence of the development of the modern industrial world for humanity, and it leads us to seek a homeland” (Gadamer 2000, 158). It is the very same crisis that is questioned in the aforementioned interview of Gadamer by Hürzeler or in Jean-Pierre Vernant’s conference entitled “Espace et Ville”, the result of an encounter with Gadamer in 1993 (Vernant 2004, 133–134).

Delivered in 1996 in Heidelberg, the conference ends by pointing out the unpredictable future of what we still call a city in the sense of Hestia *koinè*, that is to say as the very space where human social life develops in an increasingly urbanised context. Vernant also highlights the possible replacement of urban social life, where people meet in shops and cafés, by a virtual social space, where the Internet allows users to access the “outside world” from their homes “so that the occupants, their feet in their slippers, will not have to move as the entire cosmos can be delivered to their homes?” (Vernant 2004, 140) For Gadamer, the challenge represented by the uninhabitability of a world, in which so-called “non-places” are sprouting up and that the likes of Butler and Agamben are carefully analysing, is the necessity to invent new forms of solidarity. Gadamer discusses this task anew by referring to Plato’s *Politics* (301 e):

³Gadamer 1977, 87 (I underline, J.-C. Gens). See also Gadamer 1952, 12.

⁴About the relation between a town and its environment, see March 12, 1907 letter of Simmel to Husserl, where he writes about Firenze: “die Heimat meiner Seele, soweit unser einer überhaupt eine Heimat hat. Freilich nicht die Stadt allein, sondern die Stadt in ihrer Landschaft” (2008, 570).

I believe Plato to be right when he considers that which supports (*Träger*) life in common, the ideal State, since its remnants can never be completely removed nor never entirely impossible to detect. Even in a night of almost total oblivion of our being [...], there are still elements of solidarity, compassion and gratitude, as well as the notions of remaining and staying (*Wohnen und Weile*) (1987b, 344).

The exemplary nature of architecture applies to the hermeneutics of both art and texts, because it corrects and completes the thesis stating that, by revealing its enigmatic nature to the one who experiences it, a work of art is essentially self-contained. In some sense, it is indeed easier to acknowledge the autarchic and ahistorical dimensions of this art form, since it also accesses this so-called sacral status in museums. More than any other art form, architecture reveals another dimension common to any work of art, which may at first seem contradictory to the previous one: its integration into a world of life, which represents the “decorative” nature of a building and its inscription into a contingent historical process. The work of art is transformed, all the while retaining its essential identity. Consequently, the work must be understood in terms of its closure and openness, ahistoricity and historicity. Furthermore, architecture’s privileged status rests on the more readily accepted reality that in order to comprehend an architectural building, one must enter into and walk around it, evaluating it from multiple points and perspectives. While this dimension of comprehension could certainly also apply to a musical composition, reading as well is acquired in the encounter with buildings. The third peculiar characteristic of architecture is evident when considering that, at least in sedentary societies, architectural buildings shape the space in which other art forms and even human social life occur. In other words, more than any other art form, architecture refers to the political dimension of our existence.

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Space and Narrative: Ricoeur and a Hermeneutic Reading of Place

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Abstract In this contribution I apply Ricoeur's hermeneutics to the topic of place, arguing that place is always interpreted and that there is a hermeneutic tension between "metaphorical" and "physical" space. I draw on some of Ricoeur's writings on architecture, but also push his thought on narrative and other hermeneutic considerations further to think about place and space more broadly. I conclude by working out some of the implications of Ricoeur's thought for environmental thinking.

Paul Ricoeur did not address the topic of place or space very often or in great detail. He broached it once or twice briefly—in an address to architects in Paris (1998: 44–51) that took up an earlier piece from a conference in Milan (1996: 64–72) and in a very brief section on "inhabited space" in his seminal work *Memory, History, Forgetting* (2004: 147–53). He focuses far more extensively on the topic of time in many of his works, occasionally even in contexts where spatial language might be more appropriate than temporal.¹ Because Ricoeur's writings on this topic are so

¹Time is one of the central themes of *Time and Narrative* but many essays focus on this topic also. The section on "historical time" following immediately on the one on space in *Memory, History, Forgetting* is longer and the book as a whole frequently deals with the question of time in a variety of ways. Similarly, time is an important topic in *Course of Recognition* and to some extent also in *Oneself as Another*, when Ricoeur focuses on continuity and preservation of the self and its identity. Occasionally Ricoeur even seems quite suspicious of the meanings assigned to space, especially when these are mythical or religious—he is fairly critical of Mircea Eliade's explorations of cosmic space in a couple of essays (cf. "Manifestation and Proclamation" where he calls it "anti-hermeneutical" [1995: 49–50]) and thinks this "nature spirituality" as dated and overcome by modern science. Finally, the essay on creation in *Thinking Biblically*, which one would surely expect to consider questions of place or space—it is considering the biblical account of the creation of space and place, after all—focuses entirely on time and interprets the Genesis story solely as an account of origin. Similarly, he repeatedly considers the issue of "biblical time" (e.g. in an essay with that title reproduced in *Figuring the Sacred*), but there is no equivalent consideration of "biblical space," which is somewhat curious in light of the deep significance paradise or especially the notion of the "holy land" have in the Hebrew Scriptures. He seems to think consistently that "biblical places are eminently metaphorizable" (1995: 163). See also his analysis of the myth, ritual, and the symbolism of the sacred in *Interpretation Theory* (1976: 60–69).

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slim—even as it certainly is not a theme antithetical to his thinking—this essay is more a contribution in the spirit of Ricoeur, trying to think through aspects of a hermeneutics of space in a Ricoeurian sense. For this I borrow, on the one hand, some of Ricoeur’s style and way of proceeding in philosophical argument and, on the other hand, try to draw on the resources of his thought for thinking through certain elements of the topic of place. While the essay is not an attempt to “guess” what Ricoeur “might have said,” it does make conscious use of his ideas and philosophical methodology in order to articulate certain insights about the intersection of hermeneutics and place/space² that I think are not incongruent with or unfaithful to his philosophy.

Let me begin, as Ricoeur often did, by articulating a wager of three presuppositions or claims, and then seek to fill them with meaning by working them out more fully. First, and maybe most obviously, place is always interpreted. There is no objective, neutral, or “pure” place. Places require interpretation to be meaningful as places. This first insight, secondly, requires a balance between the side of “interpretation” and the side of place, that is to say, a hermeneutics of place extends between and holds together what might be called a “metaphorical” or “narrative” sense of place—where space reaches its furthest point of interpretation—and an emphasis on literal, physical, and even “natural” place or space. Neither should be lost from view. Finally, I would like to suggest or wager that this has significant implications for philosophical and environmental thought in terms of its ties to the earth and any discussion of the “natural” environment. Thus, a recognition of place as hermeneutically configured, as always already interpreted, while also responsible to its phenomenological physicality, its genuine experience of place, allows us to fill with meaning how we experience and speak about place and space.

1 Place and Interpretation

First, we must recognize that place is always already interpreted. There is no objective, neutral, or pure place. This is obviously a central hermeneutic claim that Ricoeur frequently reiterated in regard to any attempt at interpretation.³ We never start without presuppositions, the point is to examine them and make them productive. To begin with presuppositions is to acknowledge that we speak from a particular

There is, understandably so, very little written about Ricoeur and space. For a brief exploration in a comparison with Enrique Dussel, see Sebastian Purcell (2011: 52–69 and 2010: 289–298). Richard Kearney also briefly discusses Ricoeur’s hermeneutics and its usefulness to questions of the body in one section of his contribution “The Wager of Carnal Hermeneutics,” (Kearney and Treanor 2015: 15–56).

²David Wood draws useful distinctions between place and space in his “My Place in the Sun” (Clingerman et al. 2014: 281–96).

³E.g., “There is no philosophy without presuppositions.” (1967: 348). Hermeneutics is what makes discourse coherent (350). This is also the context in which Ricoeur develops the move from first to second naïveté through the movement of critique.

place—both literally and metaphorically.⁴ Yet, this fundamental hermeneutic insight also applies to how we approach physical places and environments, especially encounters with new locales. They are shaped by our preconceptions and by our previous experiences with place. Whether a home or a natural environment is perceived as comfortable and welcoming or hostile and dangerous, depends on our previous experiences of similar spaces and how we have processed them. Descriptions by explorers abound with examples of this; the new is always interpreted in terms of the familiar. What we already know serves to some extent as the context for and measure of what we encounter, while is also informed and even transformed by the new. When we return from travel or long absence we see the familiar places with different eyes and encounter them anew. Our interpretive horizon has been expanded by the experience of new places and the vista of new spaces. Even more fundamentally, human action, on which Ricoeur expends great energy, takes place in places and cannot be separated willy-nilly from its physical contexts.

Place also calls for interpretation. Thus, nature writers and ecological activists try to shape our interpretation of a place as beautiful, valuable, and worth preserving or maintaining.⁵ The way they present the place influences how we perceive it, whether we have direct experience of it or not. Similarly, historical groups try to shape perceptions of houses or areas they want maintained or turned into historic sites, especially if this involves legislation or the need for fundraising (as it usually does). Even our experience of the larger universe is significantly shaped by the way it is presented in images and narratives in museums, publications, and space programs more generally. Spaces become meaningful places by being presented, by being interpreted in certain ways. This includes “the power of fiction to *redescribe* reality,” namely via “their capacity to open and unfold new dimensions of reality by means of our suspension of belief in an earlier description” (2007: 175). While the above are examples of conscious attempts to interpret places in particular ways, such interpretation often happens unconsciously. We become aware of it only when places are altered, when we come home after leaving for college or some other long absence and find that a cherished tree has been cut down, a building has been painted a garish color, or the old ice cream parlor has gone out of business. The sense of loss, of something missing, something that “ought” to be there or be differently, points to our overall interpretive image of a place that connects its various parts into a meaningful whole.

Ricoeur does acknowledge—at least briefly—the importance of place as a locus for memories. “The memory of having inhabited some house in some town or that of having traveled in some part of the world are particularly eloquent and telling.

⁴Ricoeur acknowledges this at least metaphorically when he contrasts Gadamer and Habermas and he says repeatedly that “each speaks from a different place” (2007: 294).

⁵This has significant implications also for how we think of or present “wilderness.” It is a recognition both of the ways in which wilderness was always already interpreted in the establishment of national parks, for example, but also of how we talk about experiencing it or preserving it. I return to this issue briefly in the final part of this essay.

They weave together an intimate memory and one shared by those close to one” (2004: 148). These memories give meaning to our lives and orient them in particular ways. We identify with the places where we have lived—sometimes even by rejecting them and trying to flee them. Often we are shaped by these places in profound ways that affect our speech, our patterns of behavior, our political orientation, our sociological status, and so forth. In this way human bodies and the land on which they dwell are intimately connected and shaped by each other. We do not just alter the land around us, it also marks us. Ricoeur recognizes that “in memories of this type, corporeal space is immediately linked with the surrounding space of the environment, some fragment of inhabitable land, with its more or less accessible paths, its more or less easy to cross obstacles” (2004: 148). He acknowledges Ed Casey’s important work on phenomenology of space and especially on the importance of place for memory and points to the importance of the body in this context: “The body, the absolute here, is the landmark for any there, be it near or far, included or excluded, above or below, right or left, in front or behind, as well as those asymmetric dimensions that articulate a corporeal typology that is not without at least implicit ethical overtones, for example, height or the right side” (2004: 149). He distinguishes three kinds of spaces: bodily or lived space, geometric space, and environment or public space.⁶ Architecture plays an important role for him in bringing these spaces together. Any lived space is always already constructed, but any construction assumes living.⁷

In a conversation with neuroscientist Jean-Pierre Changeux, Ricoeur also hints at some of these connections, while being wary of speaking of consciousness as a place or container that has “contents”—consciousness has a relation with the world instead of being a “place” (or “box”) in it (2000: 119). The two briefly consider the notion of “conscious space.” While Ricoeur acknowledges the “neural basis of consciousness,” he argues against the idea that consciousness could be limited to or located in the brain as a physical place. But he goes on to argue for an intimate connection and parallel between time and place in memory. Space is experienced through the body and the ways in which we feel its movements and locations. The body experiences itself in relation to space: “This space is oriented, actively explored, crisscrossed with viable paths and more or less surmountable obstacles—it is, in a word, a habitable space” (2000: 137). Objective knowledge configures this space, both personal and shared, into geographic sites, no longer firmly connected to one experiencing body (as “here” or “there”) and yet experienced as a kind of internal space that orients us. Time leaves similar traces in memory. Yet, the two are

⁶“In conclusion, from the phenomenology of ‘places’ that beings of flesh and blood occupy, leave, lose, rediscover—in passing through the intelligibility belonging to architecture—up to the geography that describes an inhabited space, the discourse of space too has traced out an itinerary thanks to which lived space is turn by turn abolished by geometrical space and reconstructed at the hyper-geometrical level of the *oikoumene*” (2004: 153).

⁷The French language does not distinguish in the same way between “place” and “space” as Edward Casey does in his work on these topics. While *lieu*, *place*, and *endroit* primarily mean “place” or “location,” *espace* means both “place” and “space,” but can also have a metaphorical and a temporal connotation. The *Grand Robert* employs *espace* to define the other three terms.

not only parallel, but connected: “Events occur in the world and are linked to places... In the case of the most memorable events, these places are ‘marked’ by collective memory, as a result of which the events are inscribed in historical time—that is, in the world around us.” Hence memory is lodged in the bodily “self of flesh and blood” and its feelings and experiences, “which in their turn are situated in an environment, and particularly in places where we have been present with others and which we jointly remember” (2000: 145).⁸

This is, then, a more general point that applies not only to memory: Places enable us to understand ourselves and thus we might say that interpretation calls for space. Analyzing how we are shaped by a natural, social, cultural, and political environment that is located in a particular and specific place, helps us understand ourselves and others better. For Ricoeur, the goal of interpretation is always not just a better understanding of what is interpreted, but also an increased understanding of ourselves: “By ‘appropriation’ I understand this: that the interpretation of a text culminates in the self-interpretation of a subject who thenceforth understands himself better, understands himself differently, or simply begins to understand himself” (2007: 118). We understand ourselves better when we take account of the places in which we find ourselves, the places that nurtured us, and the places where we dwell. Accordingly, loss of place or displacement, as caused by war, famine, and any other sort of disaster, constitutes a significant harm to identity and self-understanding. The self becomes quite literally “displaced.” This has important implications for questions of resettlement, immigration, drawing of political boundaries after wars, significant landscape changes via mining or other highly invasive technologies, and similar events or measures that alter environments irrevocably.

2 Between Metaphorical and Natural Space

Ricoeur often speaks of place in metaphorical fashion. That texts refer to a world is the most frequent claim he makes about the interpretation of texts.⁹ The first task of hermeneutics is “to seek in the text itself, on the one hand, the internal dynamic that governs the structuring of the work, and, on the other hand, the power that the work possesses to project itself outside itself and give birth to a world that would truly be the ‘thing’ referred to by the text” (2007: 17). Ricoeur reads texts as providing a space for certain ways of being and dwelling. The activity of interpreting means “to explicate the type of being-in-the-world unfolded *in front of* the text” (2007: 86). This is closely linked to the aforementioned emphasis on self-understanding. The world of the text helps me to understand myself but also makes room for transfor-

⁸Ricoeur also admits that something like “traces” are left in our minds as “inscriptions” of memory, although he speaks of it as ambivalent, as much a “sign of its absent cause” as of its “present effect” (2013: 150–51).

⁹It is a claim reiterated in practically every essay included in *From Text to Action*, as well as many other texts (e.g., 2007: 84–86; 1976: 80–88).

mation: “For what must be interpreted in a text is a proposed world that I could inhabit and wherein I could project one of my ownmost possibilities. That is what I call the world of the text, the world proper to this unique text.” (2007: 86). For Ricoeur, this is the particular power of fictional texts. Their very purpose is to create worlds that might challenge us and present us with new opportunities for living: “Through fiction and poetry, new possibilities of being-in-the-world are opened up within everyday reality” (2007: 86). The world of the text has a direct effect on the world in which the reader or author dwell. Ricoeur sometimes uses quite violent language for this impact. Thus, the “world of the text may *explode* the world of its author” (2007: 298; emphasis mine). It involves decontextualization but also recontextualization (2007: 298). Texts narrate and create a world. Ricoeur uses fairly physical language to speak of this world: we enter it and live in it.¹⁰ And we are genuinely challenged and transformed by this world; it has a real effect on who we are and how we live in the world: “To understand is not to project oneself into the text but to expose oneself to it; it is to receive a self enlarged by the appropriation of the proposed worlds that interpretation unfolds” (2007: 301). This would seem to imply that “metaphorical” space of the text has an impact on the real physical or natural space of the reader (and even also the author).

This kind of “physical” language for the space of interpretation is even stronger in *Interpretation Theory*. Discourse always refers to a world (1976: 22). In his analysis of ostensive references he stresses its relation to spatiality: “There is no identification which does not relate that about which we speak to a unique position in the spatio-temporal network, and there is no network of places in time and space without a final reference to the situational here and now. In this ultimate sense, all references of oral language rely on monstrations, which depend on the situation perceived as common by the members of the dialogue. All references in the dialogical situation consequently are situational” (1976: 35). The world refers to “the ensemble of references opened up by every kind of text, descriptive or poetic, that I have read, understood, and loved”—it turns “Umwelt” (environment) into “Welt” (world) and thus enlarges “our horizon of existence” (1976: 37). Distanciation, surely a “spatial” metaphor, refers not only to the “spatial and temporal gap” between us and the text, but to the cultural estrangement between the original context and ours and the attempt to reach a new proximity via reading and appropriation. The text has the

¹⁰This is also true of the way in which he speaks of hermeneutics more generally: “Hermeneutics, I shall say, remains the art of discerning the discourse in the work; but this discourse is only given in and through the structures of the work” (2007: 83). Furthermore, this “enables us to say that the author is instituted by the text, that he stands in the space of meaning traced and inscribed by writing. The text is the very place where the author appears.” (2007: 109). In fact, it is ironic how often Ricoeur will use quite spatial language for the process of interpretation without explicitly addressing the topic of place, for example: “To interpret is to follow the path of thought opened up by the text, to place oneself en route toward the *orient* of the text” (2007: 122; emphasis his). (I think part of this hesitation to talk about the original context of a text may be due to Ricoeur’s desire to distance himself from the Romantic mode of interpretation that attempted to return back to the author and the original locus of the text. He often stresses the symbolic or metaphorical nature of the text and its ability to mean anew in quite different situations and contexts.)

ability of “world disclosure,” which opens new ways of being to the self and even “gives” it “a self” (1976: 95).

Yet, ironically, most of the time Ricoeur explicitly refuses to think of this as a literal world and separates the world of the text from the “real” world even when such a link would seem to exist.¹¹ For example, he says in regard to texts that do not “show” anything explicit: “Far from saying that the text is then without a world, I shall now say without paradox that only man *has a world* and not just a situation. In the same manner that the text frees its meaning from the tutelage of the mental intention, it frees its reference from the limits of ostensive reference. For us, the world is the ensemble of references opened up by the texts. Thus we speak about the ‘world’ of Greece, not to designate any more what were the situations for those who lived them, but to designate the non-situational references that outline the effacement of the first and that henceforth are offered as possible modes of being, as symbolic dimensions of our being-in-the-world. For me, this is the referent of all literature; no longer the *Umwelt* of the ostensive references of dialogue, but the *Welt* projected by the nonostensive references of every text that we have read, understood, and loved.” (2007: 149). Yet, Heinrich Schliemann went to dig up Troy precisely because he loved the texts. Or—to give a purely fictional example—the re-creation of Hobbiton for the filming of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy and the *Hobbit* in New Zealand has become a major tourist attraction: people actually want to walk (or pretend to walk) in the paths of the fictional world of Middle-earth. Finally, and more importantly, John Muir’s beautiful descriptions of the Sierras did actually lead to increased protection of those places and the establishment of the first national parks.¹² The narrated world and the “real” world to which it refers are hence not as disparate as they might seem.

In fact, Ricoeur himself argues somewhat later that there is a parallel between architecture and narrative. He summarizes this insight briefly in *History, Memory, Forgetting*: “As for the act of constructing, considered as a distinct operation, it brings about a type of intelligibility at the same level as the one that characterizes the configuration of time by emplotment. Between ‘narrated’ time and ‘constructed’ space there are many analogies and overlappings” (2004: 150). This is worked out in far more detail in several versions of an article on architecture and narrative. He posits at the outset that “architecture is to space what narrative is to time” and then goes on to explicate three ways in which they function in parallel fashion. He recognizes that both architecture and narrative are means of configuration that put something into place or make it happen. Space and time are hence both constructed and narrated in similar fashion. The distinction Ricoeur had made earlier between

¹¹ To some extent that is true even in the passage from *Interpretation Theory* above. He concludes his discussion of ostensive reference by insisting that the concrete “here” and “there” of the text refers to an absolute one that functions as an “as if” (1976: 35). The “world” of the text frees it from the situational reference (1976: 36). In fact, it is non-ostensive reference that is able to get at the sense of the text and open a “possible world” (1976: 87).

¹² See Brian Treanor’s discussion of this in “Narrative and Nature: Appreciating and Understanding the Nonhuman World” (Clingerman et al. 2014: 181–200).

lived and chronological time he now translates into the tension between lived place and geometrical space.¹³ The “now” point of time corresponds to the “here” point of space. Rather than “presence” it is “site” that matters for space.¹⁴

He goes on to apply his notion of threefold narrative mimesis to place: (1) dwelling/living as a form of pre-figuration, (2) constructing as a form of configuration, and (3) re-reading of towns and places of habitation as a form of re-figuration. As life prefigures narrative, so living or dwelling is the presupposition of constructing. At the first stage, “*mise en intrigue*” becomes “architectural making,” namely a “spatial synthesis of the heterogeneous.” Building and constructing, second, “take charge of” living or dwelling. Architectural “signs” for the “reader” are “inscribed” in the building. Configuration becomes the inscription of an enduring object. He also transposes the notions of concordance and discordance, so central to his analysis of narrative, to architectural use of “irregular regularities.”¹⁵ The architect has the same intention of discordant coherence that the narrator does in composing a story. Similarly, like a fictional work, an architectural work is a “polyphonic message.” The phenomenon of inter-textuality applies to space also, namely the “reservoir of edifices” that provide the context for new buildings. Here time and space interact much more fluidly. As narrative is an act of constructing, of configuring space, so constructing itself takes time: “constructed space is condensed time” (1998: 44–45). This, in turn, again requires interpretation: “The final word is given to ‘reflected living,’ a dwelling that redoes the memory of constructing” (“Architecture et narrativité, n.d.: n.p.”). Relying on Arendt, Ricoeur acknowledges that public space is both metaphorical and material.

As narrative reveals and transforms the reader who also approaches the narrative with his own expectations shaped by previous experience, so “we can read and re-read our places of life starting from our way of living” (Ricoeur n.d.: n.p.). Dwelling is the response to “constructing” (which predominates in second stage of mimesis). Ricoeur stresses that an architectural project does not just have to be planned, but also accepted. People must “live in” or “inhabit” it. He describes this in terms of the movement of interpretation: “a receptive and active inhabiting implies an attentive re-reading of the urban environment, a continual re-apprenticing of the juxtaposition of styles, and thus also of the histories devised, of which the monuments and all edifices bear the trace” (Ricoeur n.d.: n.p.). He links this insight again to his primary concern at this stage, the notion of memory. Such constructing creates a “place of memory.” The “plural reading of towns” (familiarizing and defamiliarizing) requires a work of memory which is also a work of mourning. He ends this particular piece

¹³ One might suggest in light of this that Ricoeur recognizes the difference between place and space outlined by Casey, but would probably argue for greater balance between them, while Casey seems to argue more strongly for a recovery of place over the predominance of space in the modern period.

¹⁴ The following two paragraphs are a summary of the three pieces on narrative and architecture (n.d., 1996, 1998), which draw out the same parallels in slightly different fashion.

¹⁵ The interplay of concordance and discordance is worked out most fully in chapter 3 of the first volume of *Time and Narrative*.

with a challenge adopted from Walter Benjamin: “Let us stroll in the places of memory” (Ricoeur [n.d.](#): n.p.).¹⁶

These couple of texts in which Ricoeur begins to acknowledge the importance of place are entirely focused on architecture. He did not venture to examine the role of place in narrative or the importance of interpretation for physical spaces more broadly. Yet many of the insights he first suggests here for architecture could be applied more broadly. Surely not only buildings designed by architects are constructed places. Indeed, we have significantly altered the natural environment on the entire planet and humans have always had an impact on the places in which they dwelt, albeit on a smaller scale before the invention of technology and the population explosion.¹⁷ Any form of dwelling constitutes a configuration of physical spaces, turning them into livable places or habitats. And the reverse is also true: any even purely fictional place is rooted in and prefigured by our actual experience of physical environments and natural spaces. Not always does such a fictional configuration of space necessarily lead to a physical alteration of actual places in some simplistic linear fashion. And yet one can certainly say that places are transformed by their refiguration in poetry and fiction. Not only do we see the Yorkshire moors differently after having read the Brontë sisters’ novels or experience Istanbul at a deeper level after having read some of Orhan Pamuk’s novels, but we also consciously protect, restore, or transform places as we feel their poetic weight, as many outdoor museum spaces and various natural habitats demonstrate. The back and forth between the “metaphorical” and the “physical” is often quite fluid and cannot be neatly separated. A good example of this might be the metaphorical weight the stone image of the old man’s face in New Hampshire’s White Mountains used to have. Hawthorne’s story was informed and to some extent inspired by the natural image, but the story in turn shaped how the image was interpreted and functioned in popular lore, becoming so significant as to represent the state of New Hampshire on various levels (highway signs, the quarter, etc.). Here poetic and metaphorical weight were deeply interwoven with a physical and natural place.

This interweaving is significant and is always at work in the experience of place at least on some level. A hermeneutic circle goes back and forth between the “natural” and the “narrated.” We must be attentive to place as it presents itself and constantly check our representation of it against its “reality,” while always acknowledging that any experience of it already constitutes an interpretation, a particular way of seeing and experiencing. We experience no place as “pure” or “uncontaminated” physicality. All places are experienced, hence interpreted, and carry greater or lesser symbolic significance. At the same time no metaphorical or fictional place can lose its link with the natural or physical or earthy location in which it is

¹⁶ He ends the other version in the same fashion (1998: 51).

¹⁷ See Ponting (1991). (See also the more popular version by Jared Diamond, *Collapse*.) This is obviously not only true of humans, but most living species alter their environments at least to some extent in order to survive and flourish there. Whether such alterations are interpreted as productive or destructive is often very much dependent on whose species’ point of view one selects.

rooted entirely. Any attempt to sever this connection harbors danger. Let me point to two examples of dangers going in opposite directions in the final section.

3 Implications for Ecological and Philosophical Thought

Several significant implications might be drawn from this balance or tension outlined above. I will focus here on only two: on the one hand, the tendency in certain parts of the philosophical community to operate entirely in alternative universes or virtual worlds, on the other hand, the environmental crisis and philosophical thinking about the earth.

First of all, I think we should worry about operating philosophically as if the ties to our own world, to our physical context on this earth and to our material bodies, were negligible and could easily be discarded. Ricoeur himself voiced some concern about this in a couple of brief comments in *Oneself as Another*. Although the book as a whole does not really address the issue of place or how space may shape or even determine identity, Ricoeur expresses reservations about some analytical proposals about identity, precisely because they abandon the earth. Let me cite the passage, which analyzes the difference between technological fictions and literary ones, in its entirety:

Characters in plays and novels are humans like us who think, speak, act, and suffer as we do. Insofar as the body as one's own is a dimension of oneself, the imaginative variations around the corporeal condition are variations on the self and its selfhood. Furthermore, in virtue of the mediating function of the body as one's own in the structure of being in the world, the feature of selfhood belonging to corporeality is extended to that of the world as it is inhabited corporeally. This feature defines the terrestrial condition as such and gives to the Earth the existential significance attributed to it in various ways by Nietzsche, Husserl, and Heidegger. The Earth here is something different, and something more, than a planet: it is the mythical name of our corporeal anchoring in the world. This is what is ultimately presupposed in the literary narrative as it is subjected to the constraint making it a mimesis of action. For the action "imitated" in and through fiction also remains subjected to the constraint of the corporeal and terrestrial condition. (1992: 150)

Ricoeur is critical of the "puzzling cases" employed in analytical philosophy, precisely because they "render radically contingent" "this corporeal and terrestrial condition which the hermeneutics of existence, underlying the notion of acting and suffering, takes to be insurmountable" (1992: 150). Our earth bodies matter to our identity as does the physical environment of this earth where they are found and rooted.

Ricoeur questions whether we are even able to imagine such mere contingent and variable use of "the corporeal and terrestrial condition" (1992: 151). Not only are such scenarios difficult to imagine but they lose something essential. Our physical corporeality and earthiness are not dispensable. He asks: "However, in order that the capacity for imputation, whose significance is purely moral and legal, not to be arbitrarily assigned to persons, must not the existential invariant of corporeality and worldliness, around which revolve all the imaginative variations of literary fiction,

be itself taken as indispensable on an ontological plane?” (1992: 151).¹⁸ Ricoeur actually thinks that it might be necessary to forbid such exercise of imagination or at the very least its putting into practice. This hesitation expressed, despite his extensive use of analytical scenarios and overall very generous treatment of them, points to the possible destructive impact of a philosophy that continually separates us—if just imaginatively—from the earth.¹⁹ If the good life is lived with and for others in just institutions, then these institutions must have a place on earth and take their and our rootedness seriously. He admits in the conclusion that he has not thematized the notion of world in the book, but suggests that “there is no world without a self who finds itself in it and acts in it; there is no self without a world that is practicable in some fashion” (1992: 311). He then goes on to a brief analysis of the role of the flesh and embodiment in the notions of acting and suffering.²⁰ Thus, although Ricoeur does not pursue this issue further, he recognizes the importance of body and place in human identity at least on some level.

These concerns about technological hypothetical cases used in analytical philosophy can be expanded more broadly to our increasing extensive exposure to virtual reality. There is plenty of evidence to suggest that spending too much time in the virtual world alienates children from the concrete places and spaces around them and makes this virtual world seem more “real” than the “real world.”²¹ Ricoeur warned of a similar danger long before the revolution in information technology in a very early essay on “Universal civilization and national cultures” in *History and Truth*:

All meaning and every goal having disappeared, it becomes possible to wander through civilizations as if through vestiges and ruins. The whole of mankind becomes a kind of imaginary museum: where shall we go this weekend—visit the Angkor ruins or take a stroll in the Tivoli of Copenhagen? We can very easily imagine a time close at hand when any fairly well-to-do person will be able to leave his country indefinitely in order to taste his own national death in an interminable, aimless voyage. At this extreme point, the triumph of the consumer culture, universally identical and wholly anonymous, would represent the lowest degree of creative culture. It would be skepticism on a world-wide scale, absolute

¹⁸ Similarly, in his conversation with Changeux, he speaks of intentionality as linked to the world, in which actions and capabilities are learnt and manifested (2000: 164).

¹⁹ Somewhat later, he also censures the fact that “in the analytic theory of action” “action sentences are taken out of their social environment” (1992: 155).

²⁰ Unfortunately, even this analysis of human corporeality does not really raise the question of place, although he refers to Husserl’s idea of the “spatiality of the flesh” articulated in unpublished manuscripts (1992: 325). He also notes that for Heidegger “the spatial dimension of being-in-the-world appears to involve mainly the inauthentic forms of care” and suggests that “if it is not the unfolding of the problematic of temporality... that prevented an authentic phenomenology of spatiality” (1992: 328) without seemingly realizing that the same thing could be said about his own philosophy. It is most curious that Ricoeur leaves it at this and makes no attempt whatsoever to go on and provide some sort of account of spatiality himself. For a moving example of the relation between physical space (or the lack thereof) and embodiment, see Ed Casey’s discussion of solitary confinement: “Skin Deep: Bodies Edging into Place” (Kearney and Treanor 2015: 159–72).

²¹ It also suggests that it increases the condoning of violence to which one becomes anesthetized, although a direct causal link between viewing violence and exercising it (as opposed to becoming immune to it and minimizing reactions of pity or compassion) has not been proven conclusively.

nihilism in the triumph of comfort. We have to admit that this danger is at least equal and perhaps more likely than that of atomic destruction. (1965: 278).

The thrust of the essay is a critique of globalization and the homogenization and standardization of life it introduces and even imposes.²² Although Ricoeur does not explicitly comment on the issue of place here, he is clearly critical of an erasure of our meaningful connections with particular local places and the specific culture they embody. “Earthiness” matters—care for place is meaning-giving and philosophically important. Imagining ourselves away from this earth, whether virtually or philosophically, harbors dangers.

Secondly, the balance or paradoxical tension between the metaphorical and the literal, or the fictional and the natural, also has implications for environmental thought.²³ Much ecological thinking talks about the earth as our home and seeks to compel protective action by articulating our rootedness in the physical environment. Yet, even understanding the ecological connectedness or interdependence of all living species does not necessarily mean that people actually care about the environment or feel compelled to alter their destructive lifestyles.²⁴ The merely physical is not sufficient, but something more is needed. We must be moved to care about places and must “see” them as worth protecting and preserving (or leaving alone). An activity of interpretation is required. Interestingly, in commenting on Casey’s work, Ricoeur says that “the attraction of wild nature emerges reinforced by the opposition between the constructed and the nonconstructed, between architecture and nature. This later does not allow itself to be marginalized. The best of civilization cannot abolish the primacy of wilderness” (2004: 151). Maybe the notion of wilderness—even as it no longer literally applies to any place on earth—is necessary for human identity (cf. Cameron, 2006: 28–33). But I think this is also a compelling argument for the need for some metaphorization or at least “interpreted” representation of natural spaces, such as occurs, for example, in nature writing, which has often been dismissed as romanticized. Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring*, Annie Dillard’s *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, and John Muir’s writings about the Sierra Nevada, all in quite different fashion, were so powerful precisely because they also appealed to the imagination and were not merely “factual” descriptions of data, even as they were certainly not untruthful but deeply rooted in observation of actual

²²“Lastly, it can be said that throughout the world an equally universal way of living unfolds. This way of living is manifested by the unavoidable standardization of housing and clothing. These phenomena derive from the fact that ways of living are themselves rationalized by techniques which concern not only production but also transportation, human relationships, comfort, leisure, and news programming as well. Let us also mention the various techniques of elementary culture or, more exactly, the culture of consumption; there is a culture of consumption of world-wide dimensions, displaying a way of living which has a universal character” (1965: 274).

²³For several discussions of the relevance of aspects of Ricoeur’s philosophy for environmental thought, see the aforementioned collection (Clingerman et al. 2014).

²⁴So someone living in a wealthy area of southern California, faced with the consequences of the year-long drought, reportedly said to the NYT: “Let the fish die; I’m watering my lawn.” (NYT, Feb. 2015)

places.²⁵ They were and continue to be, precisely *interpretations* of place in the best sense. I think if we are to protect this earth and its many species from the increasingly dire future we are currently preparing for it, natural places have to become meaningful to us in new ways. We have to imagine ourselves differently in this world and Ricoeur was right to insist on the role poetry and fiction might play in envisioning this alternate world and in inviting us to enter and dwell anew in its spaces.

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²⁵They also all help us see—a point I do not have the space to develop further here—that place is shared, with other people and other species. When it is no longer shared, when we come to occupy it alone either because we have actively destroyed the other species that used to dwell there or indirectly by making the place uninhabitable for them, place is impoverished or even dead. Place requires sharing.

Gaston Bachelard's Places of the Imagination and Images of Space

Cristina Chimisso

Abstract This chapter explores Gaston Bachelard's hermeneutics of place, or 'topoanalysis', in the context of his philosophy of the imagination. In turn, his philosophy of the imagination is considered as part of his whole philosophical project, which includes his philosophy of science, and is based on his view of the 'double anthropology' of the 'diurnal man' and the 'nocturnal man'. By broadening the narrow focus on *The Poetics of Space*, which has been predominant in Anglophone criticism, we can better understand Bachelard's approach to the analysis of space. I examine Bachelard's approach to the study of space, and consider his use of Jungian analytical psychology, phenomenology and hermeneutics. I conclude that he consciously, and indeed explicitly, steered away from any fully-fledged and rational method in his study of place. I also argue that the aims of his philosophy, including his hermeneutics of place, are pedagogical.

1 Introduction: The Mind and Its Places

In *The Formation of the Scientific Mind*, Gaston Bachelard contrasted the alchemist's workshop with the chemist's laboratory. The former was in the private home of the alchemist who had undisputed control over the experiments that took place there, just as he had over his pupils. In fact, the alchemist's teaching was a moral initiation rather than transmission of rational knowledge (Bachelard 2002 [1938], p. 58). Alchemic theories for Bachelard were developed from human beings' first and most immediate image of the world; this is an image dominated by emotions and desires. The alchemists did not see just combinations of substances, but rather copulations from which offspring was issued; they did not see metals as inorganic, but rather as having not only life but also souls (Bachelard 2002 [1938], Chapter 8). In a private space, the alchemist's imagination for Bachelard could rule unchecked by peers and free from the constraints and rules of public spaces. For the alchemist there was no distinction between his home and his workshop, between private and public, and between nature and his private image of it.

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By contrast, the scientist's laboratory is 'no longer at home, in attic or cellar', but rather in a public space, which scientists leave in the evening to go back to their homes and families (Bachelard 2002 [1938], p. 58). In the laboratory, the scientist must overcome the alchemist's imaginative approach to nature and strive for a rational and objective method. This can only be done in a public space, in which rationality regulates both the relationships among people, and those between minds and objects. The instinctive images and ideas that the alchemist used as a basis for his art, become 'epistemological obstacles'¹ for the scientist, who needs to conquer objective knowledge against spontaneous images, dreams and desires that 'naturally' dominate the human mind. For Bachelard the 'too intuitive and too personal' character of alchemy must be a warning to science teachers who should aim to 'shield' their students from the emotional lure of some phenomena (Bachelard 2002 [1938], p. 61). He thought that, when engaged in rational discussion, we should aim at abstraction, and fight against our longing for images and personal meanings.

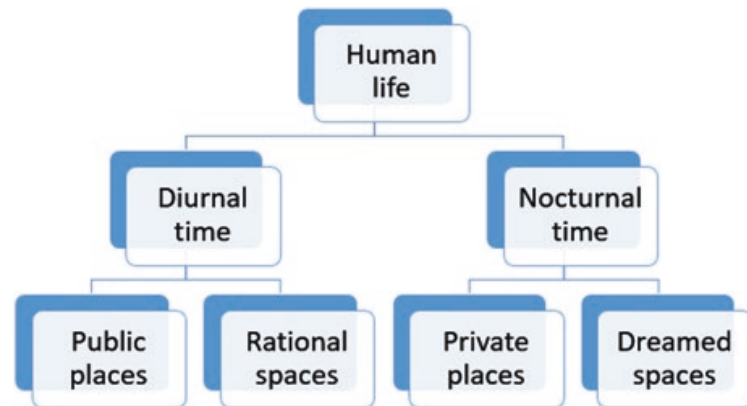
But what happens when scientists leave their laboratories, and teachers their schools? And can we all really give up the world of images that is our first approach to reality, and that for Bachelard dominated our view of nature until the relatively recent emergence of science?² Sigmund Freud thought it impossible for people to give up pleasures that they have once experienced. He suggested that when children grow up and have to stop playing, they substitute that pleasure with day-dreaming (Freud 1985 [1908], p. 133). Bachelard presented us with a very similar situation. Scientific rationality demands that we give up spontaneous fantasies: we can no longer connect the study of chemical substances to dreams about sex, reproduction and life. At the same time we cannot, and indeed should not, give up the pleasure that the imagination affords us. We may not be able to 'play' in an alchemic workshop, but we can still day-dream. Our early imaginings should find a place in our adult life: Bachelard contrasted psychoanalysis with 'rhythmanalysis', which he described as 'a theory of childhood rediscovered, of childhood that remains a possibility for us always, always opening a limitless future to our dreams' (Bachelard 2000 [1936], p. 153).

Whereas the alchemist enjoyed a holistic life, the scientist, the philosopher and any modern person have to lead double lives. Bachelard envisaged a 'double anthropology' of the rational 'diurnal man' and the day-dreaming 'nocturnal man' (Bachelard 1972b [1953], p. 19) (Bachelard 1971 [1960], pp. 53–4, 212). For him, each of us should lead a life that follows a rhythm between rational and social time on the one hand, and imaginative and solitary time on the other (Bachelard 2000 [1936], chapters 1–2). These times correspond to different spaces. Here 'space' can be understood in two different ways, in relation to either type of time. Science is carried out in public places, and their configuration should not stimulate the imagination. Science also creates abstract spaces: the spaces of geometry. Bachelard celebrated the epistemological break that non-Euclidean geometries had brought

¹The concept of epistemological obstacle, alongside with that of epistemological break, is central in Bachelard's epistemology.

²For Bachelard, science only emerged at the end of the eighteenth century.

Fig. 1 Places and spaces of Bachelard's double anthropology



about. Non-Euclidean spaces are to be grasped by reason, rather than being represented by images. The places of the imagination follow the same axis in the opposite direction.³ For Bachelard there are places where one can dream, and these would be rather different from those of scientific work. There are also dreamed spaces, which include the places we remember, although these are infused with our dreams, just as the places about which we read are infused with the memory of the places of our life (Fig. 1).

For Bachelard before the emergence of modern science there was a certain unity of the human mind, as the imagination and rationality were not properly distinct. By contrast in modern scientific times there is a dichotomy of the mind, and indeed of life, and Bachelard's life was no exception. In the unfinished book he was writing at the end of his life, he remarked: 'my work life [has] two almost independent halves, one under the sign of the concept, the other under the sign of the image...' He wrote that he lead a 'double life' (Bachelard 1988, p. 33, 34). These lines echoed those at the end of *La Flamme d'une chandelle*, when Bachelard emphasised that that book only showed half of his life, and that 'after so many reveries', he was impatient to learn again 'difficult' and 'rigorous' books thanks to which the mind 'constructs and reconstructs' itself (Bachelard 1961, pp. 111–112). These books would have been about science and rationality.

In these quotations, Bachelard hinted at the fact that he employed different methods in his books about science and about the works of the imagination, respectively. Whereas his philosophy of science did not change significantly, his interpretation of the works of the imagination underwent a conscious evolution. At first, he mostly, although not exclusively, analysed the works of the imagination from the point of view of the diurnal man, or scientific rationality. In works such as the *Formation of the Scientific Mind*, he aimed to 'psychoanalyse' objective knowledge, or, as he put in the *Psychoanalysis of Fire*, 'to cure the mind from its happy illusions' (Bachelard 1964 [1938], p. 4). He never changed his mind about the negative role that the imagination played in dialectic of scientific knowledge, but at the same time

³Here I follow Bachelard's view of his own investigation and indeed of our approach to objects: from the first, immediate encounter with an object, we can follow an axis towards objectification and science, or in the opposite direction, towards subjectivity and poetry; see (Bachelard 1964 [1938], pp. 2–3).

he became increasingly interested in analysing the works of the imagination in their own right.

His hermeneutics of space, or topoanalysis, as he called it, is part of his philosophy of the imagination, for which he sought a different approach from that of his philosophy of science. I shall discuss his search for this new approach in the third section of this articles, after taking a tour of some of the places that Bachelard analysed in his works. I shall conclude with a reflection on the aims of Bachelard's hermeneutics of space.

2 Dreamed Spaces and Places Where to Dream

Notwithstanding the variety of emotions that Bachelard connected with particular places, his hermeneutics of place is above all about 'healthy' day-dreaming, and about places that suggest peace, silence, safety, rest and intimacy. The house (or home) [*la maison*], in all its embodiments, plays a major role. The house 'shelters day-dreaming, the house protects the dreamer, the house allows one to dream in peace' (Bachelard 1994 [1957], p. 6). Our imagination can work freely in a space that protects our subjectivity, that is in a space in which we are free from the demands of 'diurnal life', including social interactions, production of knowledge and production of objects. Precisely because it is a place where we experience day-dreaming, the house acquires great oneiric significance. Dreams feed on memories, and memories of former homes are preserved through dreams. For Bachelard, diurnal life, or 'the real world', disappears when our memory takes us back to the home of our birth, which is the house 'of absolute intimacy' (Bachelard 1992b [1948], p. 95). It goes without saying that the memory of our birth home is not objective: the oneiric home and the remembered home are interwoven in a dynamic unity that only exists in the dreamer's mind.

For Bachelard, although we may dream of ourselves as living with another person, or with our family, generally in the oneiric home we are alone. Solitude is the dreamed condition, just as it is the condition of happy reverie. The images that Bachelard suggests emphasise this isolation: the hermit's hut (Bachelard 1994 [1957], pp. 31ff), the house 'besieged' by winter (Bachelard 1994 [1957], p. 38), and the 'dark summers in the house' (Bachelard 1994 [1957], p. 45).⁴ Within the house, there can be deeper levels of isolation: one's room (Bachelard 1994 [1957], pp. 13–14), and even corners. In his words: '[e]very corner in a house, every angle in a room, every inch of secluded space in which we like to hide, or withdraw into ourselves, is a symbol of solitude for the imagination: that is to say, it is the germ of a room, or of a house' (Bachelard 1994 [1957], p. 136). The corner 'becomes a negation of the universe'; once again, Bachelard counterpoised nocturnal and diurnal life: the withdrawal into a corner give us pleasure (Bachelard 1994 [1957],

⁴ 'The dark summers in the house' suggest a house in which shutters prevent sunlight and heat from entering, a rather geographically and culturally specific image.

p. 136), because it is rest from diurnal work, and affords us solitude. Images of intimacy can become increasingly small and concentrated, and include wardrobes, chests, drawers, and even small boxes, which suggest secrecy and 'an intuitive sense of hiding places' (Bachelard 1994 [1957], p. 81).

The withdrawal and refuge that the house provides can take other forms in our imagination, such as nests and shells. Nests for Bachelard are 'simple houses', and images of 'rest and quiet' (Bachelard 1994 [1957], p. 98); they afford a special solitude, but they are ambiguous, as they may simultaneously suggest refuge and danger (Bachelard 1972a [1943], p. 242). Nests, and even more so shells, are closer to nature than houses, and therefore more primitive; they can indeed be 'prehistoric', as Bachelard labelled Jack London's 'reverie' about nests (Bachelard 1972a [1943], p. 241). Reading and dreaming about them 'bring out the primitiveness in us' (Bachelard 1994 [1957], p. 91). Primitiveness for Bachelard is connected with the life of the imagination, with poetry and emotions. Unlike reason, which for him evolves and brings about change, the imagination maintains its links with our primitive self. Unlike Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, whose theory of 'primitive mentality' had a tremendous influence on a number of disciplines in the inter-war France, Bachelard believed that the 'primitive' approach to the world is not lost to modern people, but rather survives in their imagination. This is why our dreams are populated by primal images.

Bachelard considered the house in its multifarious versions (as room, corner, nest, shell and others) as the image of intimacy. This is the 'centrality' of the house. But he also analysed the house in its 'verticality'.⁵ Bachelard's vertical house is a synthesis of all other oneiric dwelling places; it has three or four storeys, each of which is the image of a psychic state. The house's cellar 'roots' the house in the earth (Bachelard 1992b [1948], p. 110), and in so doing it 'partakes of subterranean force'; descending into the cellar is a way to relive 'the primitivity and the specificity' of one's fears (Bachelard 1994 [1957], pp. 18–19). The ground floor is that of common life; it comes as no surprise that Bachelard had little to say about this floor which represents the 'platitude of common life' (Bachelard 1992b [1948], p. 110). The interpretation of the upper floors may at first sight look rather confusing. In *La terre et les reveries du repos*, Bachelard assigned 'sublimations' to the upper floors. In *The Poetics of Space*, he offered a more detailed analysis, in fact he appeared to offer more than one. At first, he seemed to follow Carl Jung's lead, and presented a house in which the cellar is the image of the 'irrational' unconscious, whereas the roof represents rationality. He employed Jung's images of the cellar and attic in order 'to analyse the fears that inhabit the house'. Bachelard quoted Jung as saying that 'the conscious acts like a man who, hearing a suspicious noise in the cellar, hurries to the attic, and, finding no burglars there decides, consequently, that the noise was pure imagination' (Bachelard 1994 [1957], pp. 18–19). Lucy Huskinson has pointed out the discrepancy between Bachelard's quotation and Jung's original, in which the conscious acts like a man who hears a noise in the attic and goes to

⁵ Bachelard discussed verticality more generally in (Bachelard 1992a [1947], Chapter 12), and in (Bachelard 1972a [1943]).

check the cellar. Factually, as Huskinson shows, Bachelard relied on a French translation (of a different work from that erroneously indicated in the English translation of *The Poetics of Space*) that had already reversed attic and cellar. Huskinson interprets Bachelard's use of the inversion of Jung's image as evidence that Bachelard's household is affected by a less disturbing personal complex, whereas the Jungian household is 'within the grips of an autonomous complex'. In other words, Bachelard's image would be closer to a Freudian conception of the unconscious, 'by recognising only those personal complexes that can be repressed by the rationalisations of the lofty attic...' (Huskinson 2012, p. 72). I agree that Bachelard did not deal with 'disturbing complexes', and that he did not espouse Jungian psychoanalysis to the full, just as, I would add, he didn't Freudian. In fact, we should not attempt to read Bachelard's topoanalysis in terms of the production of a full theory of the psyche, or indeed any theory. He had quite different aims, as I shall discuss in the Conclusion, and a rather different approach from psychoanalysts, as I shall discuss in the next section. Here, it is important to point out that Bachelard read Jung, and his image of the psyche as a house, just as he read his other sources, including poetry and literature. In his analysis of the verticality of the house, Bachelard's use of Jung is not particularly different from his use of the writer Henri Bosco and the poet Joë Bousquet, just to mention two.

It is clear that Bachelard used the theory of the house as image of the psyche simply as an image, and indeed as one among others. Only a few pages after the passage discussed above, Bachelard presented the oneiric house as having three or four floors connected by stairs, that go down to the cellar, and also go up to the bed-chamber, which for Bachelard is a private space for dreaming. They also go further up to the attic, but this time the attic is not the image of rationality. The stairs to the attic are more 'primitive', because they lead to a 'tranquil solitude', which promotes the poetic exercise of one's imagination. Elsewhere, Bachelard presented other oneiric values attached to the attic: the attic brings to the house the elevated qualities of a nest, and it can also be a source of terror, similarly to the cellar in the *Poetics of Space*. As Bachelard put it, the attic is a 'changeable universe' (Bachelard 1992b [1948], pp. 109, 110). These variations make sense in Bachelard's approach because he did not aim to offer any theory, system or even a definitive catalogue of symbolic values that we may attach to places.

3 Another Method? Towards a Hermeneutics of Dreamed Spaces

Bachelard did not change his mind about the imagination being an obstacle – a necessary one – in the dialectic progress of science. In his books on science, he always held the view that the scientific mind should be 'rectified' and 'purified' from instincts and dreams, and that we should aim at a 'hortophychism' (Bachelard 1970 [1934–1935]); (Bachelard 1986b [1949], p. 48 and passim); (Bachelard 1951,

especially Introduction); (Bachelard 1972b [1953]). However, at first, as mentioned, he studied the works of the imagination from the point of view of science. Then he started engaging with the 'nocturnal man' in addition to the 'diurnal man', and studying the works of the imagination in their autonomy. In order to do this, the rationalistic method that he employed in his science books proved increasingly less suitable. After *The Psychoanalysis of Fire*, he dropped the term 'psychoanalysis' from the title of his books on material reverie. He explained this choice in *Waters and Dreams*, where he wrote that his approach was now to 'live them [water images] synthetically in their original complexity' (Bachelard 1983 [1942], p. 7). Since the goal of his books on the imagination was no longer 'to cure' the mind, psychoanalysis, and especially Freudian psychoanalysis, was no longer his method of choice.⁶

Psychoanalysis, which studies dreams, was for him also less suited for his object, namely reveries, that is conscious imagining (Bachelard 1994 [1957], p. 26). In a process which recalls his own 'philosophy of no' (Bachelard 1968 [1940]); (Bachelard 1984 [1934]), Bachelard said 'no' to psychoanalysis, and adopted a new approach that in fact dialectically incorporated psychoanalysis. Indeed, in his works on the imagination, and the study of space in particular, psychoanalysis is still present, but more as a source of images and suggestions than as a method. In his study of space, Bachelard repeatedly mentioned Jung. Jung could be suitable to Bachelard's project in various ways, first of all for his rejection of Freud's 'rationalistic materialism' (Jung 1928, p. 151). Bachelard, author of a book titled *Rational Materialism* (Bachelard 1972b [1953]), reserved the 'rational materialistic' approach for the life of the scientific mind, whereas he aimed to study images, including our images of space, in an immediate, non-normative and subjective manner.

Bachelard also employed the Jungian concept of archetype. This, however, should not be taken as a full acceptance of the Jungian theory of archetypes. Bachelard believed that there is a 'primitive' and imaginative self that, unlike reason, does not evolve, and therefore is similar in people of all times. However, he never suggested that archetypes could be acquired and then inherited. Moreover, although he linked images to archetypes, he warned his reader that there is no causal relation between an image and an archetype (Bachelard 1994 [1957], p. xvi). More to the point, Bachelard had no theory; he rather observed that such images as the house would elicit the same set of emotions and reveries in a number of disparate authors. Another important set of concepts that Bachelard received from Jung is that of *animus* and *anima*. These were very fitting for his own dualism of the active rational life and of the imaginative life. However, the way in which he borrowed them also shows that his aims were quite different from analytical psychology or any other fully developed theory of the psyche. He realised that Jung's *animus* and *anima* would be received by his readers as sexist; he must have read Jung's pronouncements, such as 'a man should live as a man and a woman as a woman. The part belonging to the opposite sex is always in the dangerous neighbourhood of the unconscious' (Jung 1928, p. 170). Bachelard certainly had many normative ideas

⁶Bachelard's use of psychoanalysis was rather eclectic from the beginning: he variously employed Freud and Jung and above all Marie Bonaparte and René Allendy.

about how to live together in his rationalistic books. However, in his books on the works of the imagination he did not want to tell anyone how they should live their diurnal life. Indeed, as the father of a female philosopher who had published books on rationality and on Husserl, he may have found it difficult to accept that ‘a woman would find it boring if her husband examined her on the *Critique of Pure Reason*’, as Jung had remarked (Jung 1928, p. 177). Bachelard therefore made it clear that ‘in trying to indicate... how the masculine and the feminine – especially the feminine – help fashion our reveries, we are limiting our observations only to ‘oneiric situations’. As for ‘the woman’s situation in the modern world’, he left it to ‘experts’ Simone de Beauvoir and F. J. J. Buytendijk. How little Bachelard was concerned with evaluating male and female psychology outside his own reverie is apparent by his lumping together the author of *The Second Sex* with an author whose aim was to show that ‘there is an ‘essential’ difference between men and women, a difference in nature, capabilities, inborn qualities, abilities, talents and character, and *therefore* a difference in vocation, mission and destiny’ (Buytendijk 1968, p. 26).

It is crucial to take Bachelard seriously when he tells us that we should read his books on reverie in *anima*, because they have been written in *anima* (Bachelard 1971 [1960], p. 212). Reading in *anima* for Bachelard means to suspend critical engagement, and to receive images ‘in a sort of transcendental acceptance of gifts’ (Bachelard 1971 [1960], p. 65). Bachelard’s topoanalysis, that is his exploration of dreamed spaces and spaces where to dream, is not a method in the strict sense of the world, and I agree with E. S. Casey who calls it ‘less a method than an attitude’ (Casey 1997, p. 288). Not by chance, Bachelard’s chapter of *The Poetics of Reverie* dedicated to *animus* and *anima* is about ‘Reverie on reverie’: he invited us to read his lines as we read poetry rather than rationalist philosophy.

In the last years of his life, Bachelard gave up his ‘former obsession with psycho-analytical culture’ (Bachelard 1971 [1960], p. 3), and adopted a new approach that he called ‘phenomenology’, which he defined as the ‘consideration of the *onset of the image* in an individual consciousness’ (Bachelard 1994 [1957], p. xix). When reading descriptions of places, such as a house, a nest or a corner, Bachelard was no longer interested in the causal link that they may have with their authors’ psyches or lives. This marked a sharp departure from the method he had employed in *Lautréamont*, where he reconstructed the poet’s biography and complexes from an analysis of his work (Bachelard 1986a [1939]). Similarly, he was not interested in these images’ cultural past or historical setting; ‘no scholarship’ is needed for their reception, but rather a ‘naïve consciousness’ (Bachelard 1994 [1957], p. xix). Like Husserl’s, Bachelard’s phenomenology is descriptive rather than normative, and is carried out by the individual. However, Bachelard’s phenomenology is neither a method nor a science, unlike Husserl’s presentation of his phenomenology in his *Cartesian Meditation* (Husserl 1960 [1931]). As Paul Ricoeur has emphasised, for Bachelard there was no crisis of the sciences, as there was for Husserl, because for the former ‘crises take place entirely within objectivity... and can be resolved only through the progress of the sciences’ (Ricoeur 2007, pp. 161–62) (Husserl 1970 [1936]). For Bachelard, the sciences and rationalistic philosophy set the norms for our objective knowledge and our collective living, whereas his phenomenology and

hermeneutics describe the personal experiences that we have when we withdraw into ourselves and let free our poetic and primitive self. Unlike Husserl, Bachelard never thought of phenomenology as a philosophical science that could be applied to the whole of human existence, nor did he think that it could 'clarify all species and forms of cognition' (Wrathall and Dreyfus 2006). Bachelard's is a 'phenomenology of the soul' (Bachelard 1994 [1957], p. xx), as opposed to the mind; he explained that 'a consciousness associated with the soul is more relaxed, less intentionalized than a consciousness associated with the phenomena of the mind. Forces are manifested in poems that do not pass through the circuits of knowledge' (Bachelard 1994 [1957], p. xxi). Objective knowledge, which for him is always discursive, is the domain of science. His phenomenology of the soul is an immediate activity, which does not aim to produce a theory of knowledge, nor literary criticism. In fact, in his study of space, he wrote that he had to forget his learning, and that 'nothing general and co-ordinated [can] serve as a basis for a philosophy of poetry' (Bachelard 1994 [1957], p. xv).

Bachelard's reference for his phenomenology was Eugene Minkowski's *Vers une cosmologie*. In this rather peculiar study, phenomenology, psychopathology, and the philosophies of Louis Lavelle and Henri Bergson support 'a voyage' in the author's 'consciousness' which merges with 'the idea of a voyage around the universe' (Minkowski 1999, p. 13). What in particular Bachelard took from Minkowski is a less defined, and in his eyes richer, relationship between the subject and poetic images. Minkowski called this relation 'reverberation' [*retentissement*], as it avoids causality and undue generalisations. Bachelard was attracted by the dynamic and consciously imprecise character of the concept of reverberation, which suggests a relationship between the subject and the world that is 'more primitive' than their mutual opposition, as Minkowski writes (Minkowski 1999, p. 106).

Bachelard's hermeneutics of place may recall Martin Heidegger's hermeneutics in several ways. In particular, Bachelard's presented our relationship with space as pre-scientific and indeed pre-reflective, and in this it recalls Heidegger's presentation of how the *Dasein* inhabits the world. Moreover, when Bachelard wrote that he planned to study images' 'direct ontology' (Bachelard 1994 [1957], p. xvi), he did not refer to any theory of being. His ability to understand the being of images of space is rather close to Heidegger's assertion that the *Dasein* is ontological not in the sense of having a theory of being, but rather in the sense that the *Dasein* is 'in such a way that [it] has an understanding of Being' (Heidegger 1962 [1927], p. 32). However, one of the many differences between Bachelard's and Heidegger's hermeneutics is that in the former's time is irrelevant. Time for Bachelard is the dimension of science, and does not play a role, indeed is negated, in his exploration of our pre-discursive relationships with images, including images of space. Bachelard's rejection of time makes his hermeneutics equally distant from Ricoeur's, in which the "lived experience" of phenomenology corresponds, on the side of hermeneutics, to consciousness exposed to historical efficacy' (Ricoeur 1976, pp. 116–7). More importantly, Bachelard's hermeneutics is a far more modest enterprise than Heidegger's or Ricoeur's; it is not aimed at any comprehensive theory of being and it is only half of his philosophy: he may talk about ontology in discussing images of

space, but he also discussed ontology and indeed ontogenesis when analysing scientific discourse. In *The Poetics of Reverie*, published only two years before his death, he emphasised that *anima* is not the whole of life, and expressed the wish to write another work of *animus*, that is a work of philosophy of science (Bachelard 1971 [1960], p. 212). His hermeneutics of space is about the imagination and dreams; but these make up only half of human existence. As I shall argue in the Conclusion, he aimed to put forward a pedagogy for the nocturnal man, just as he had done for the diurnal man in his books about science.

4 Conclusion

Bachelard's hermeneutics of place offers the reader an exploration of our relationship to those spaces that are meaningful to us. These spaces are dreamed spaces that feed off and recreate the places of our lives; first of all, the house of our birth, which we re-live in the oneiric house. The latter in turn re-shapes and loads with new meanings our birthplace. Bachelard employed elements of psychology, psychoanalysis and phenomenology in order to produce a 'topography of our intimate being' (Bachelard 1994 [1957], p. xxxvi), which is by no means aimed at an objective description. He made his renunciation of a structured method in his approach to space even clearer when he suggested that his topoanalysis is in fact topophilia (Bachelard 1994 [1957], p. xxv, 149).

His hermeneutics of space is about intimacy and solitude; this in his anthropology means that it applies to half of human life, the solitary part dedicated to rest, poetry and reverie, and opposed to rational activities, science and objective thought. These two halves correspond to the two philosophies that Bachelard developed in his life: a rationalistic philosophy of science, and an imaginative philosophy of reverie and poetry. These two philosophies are opposed as to contents, methods, and the parts of the mind that they engage. They are also opposed with regard to the conditions in which they are carried out: one only in a dialectic exchange with other people, and the other in solitude. Time is central to the philosophy of science, which describes and explains the discontinuous progress of science. By contrast, time is absent from Bachelard's philosophy of the imagination, including his hermeneutics of space, in two distinct ways. The first is that for him the imaginative part of our mind is our 'primitive self' which does not undergo the changes that reason does. Second, the contents of reveries and poetry that Bachelard presented do not exhibit narratives; he studied autonomous images, considered in their singularity. Both views are debatable. He did not offer an explanation for the supposed lack of narratives of our imaginings, because he presented it in works in which he adopted a non-rationalistic approach that does not require justifications.

It is tempting to find a symmetry between Bachelard's philosophy of science, in which time is central, and his philosophy of the reverie in which space is important. This could suggest that Bachelard substituted time with space in his hermeneutics,

and in so doing he distinguished it from Heidegger's and Ricoeur's.⁷ However tempting and tidy this symmetry is, really it is stretched. I have already hinted at the great differences that separate Bachelard's project from Heidegger's and Ricoeur's. Bachelard's project was not only far more modest, but also partial, in the sense of only being half of his philosophy. More to the point, Bachelard investigated places as he did other images. He developed his thought about the house of one's birth and the oneiric house, the cave and labyrinth as part of his philosophy of the imagination of matter, alongside for instance the image of the snake and the root (Bachelard 1992b [1948]). Places are a central part of Bachelard's study of images but on his part there is no attempt to use space as the key-stone of a system or theory. In the English-speaking world *The Poetics of Space* was translated early (1964), while some of Bachelard's books have been translated into English more recently or are yet to be translated. As a result, his analysis of space has mainly been read out of context, as a stand-alone philosophy, rather than as part of a much larger project.

If he did not aim to present the reader with a theory, or a philosophy of space, what was the aim of his topoanalysis? Just as his philosophy of science, his study of the works of the imagination, including his topoanalysis, was pedagogical.⁸ Bachelard wanted to teach us how to live well; in his words, 'there is no well-being without reverie' (Bachelard 1971 [1960], pp. 152–3). His 'project' was to 'live as the great dreamers of images lived before him' (Bachelard 1994 [1957], p. 117): reading about dreamed spaces would enable the reader to have better and richer reveries. The 'therapeutic' approach that he had renounced came back in another form. The aim was no longer to 'cure the mind of his happy illusions' but rather to teach the mind how to dream well. His concerns were 'wellbeing' (Bachelard 1971 [1960], p. 152–3), 'tranquillity' (Bachelard 1971 [1960], p. 173), and seizing the 'felicity of speech' offered by the poet (Bachelard 1994 [1957], p. xxx). His topoanalysis concerns 'simple images of *felicitous space*' (Bachelard 1994 [1957], p. xxxv). Many of his readers have received his work as a guide to wellbeing and indeed happiness. Bachelard has been seen as a teacher of 'the art of solitude' (Mettra 1983, p. 107), and offering 'repose', the 'happy origin' of which is reverie (Laurans 1983, p. 155). His was a pedagogy of reverie, which was successful with some of his readers, such as the poet Jean Lescure who wrote that Bachelard had taught him how to be happy (Lescure 1983, p. 11).

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⁷ See for instance (Kennedy 2011).

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Merleau-Ponty's Hermeneutic Reflections on Certainty and Place: Science and Art

Babette Babich

Abstract From behaviour to perception, including the artist's consciousness of his art and its truth, of language and literature, signs and symbols, including his writings on the topic scientific truth but no less the question of humanism thought together with the question of terror, Maurice Merleau-Ponty's style of hermeneutic pheno-menology articulates a scientific reflection on space, perception, but also bodily creativity that is simultaneously meditation, musing, poetising, reverie. Merleau-Ponty thus carries the Husserlian project of phenomenology through incarnate experience in time, attuned to levels of awareness and sense and a lived-world viscosity.

1 Haunting Certainty

Merleau-Ponty offers a hermeneutic of the body that is at the same time a hermeneutic of place. His dual attention bespeaks the tensions of the body, the reciprocity of the seen and the unseen, attending to the seer, as one conscious of consciousness, seeing is always attuned to *seeing as*. In this sense the visible, the object, the thing is also already 'present' as Maurice Merleau-Ponty writes. This 'haunting' claims me as I am conscious of it in ways that only begin to know themselves as such:

The visible can thus fill me and occupy me only because I who see it do not see it from the depths of nothingness, but from the midst of itself; I the seer am also visible. What makes the weight, the thickness, the flesh of each color, of each sound, of each tactile texture, of the present, and of the world is the fact that he who grasps them feels himself emerge from them by a sort of coiling up or redoubling, fundamentally homogeneous with them. (Merleau-Ponty 1968: 113)

There is in this a reflection on perception as well as on the felt as such, that is the haptic, here regarded as opposed to the primacy of vision as the heart of the phenomenology of perception. As Merleau-Ponty reflects in *Mind and Eye*:

He sees himself seeing; he touches himself touching; he is visible and sensitive for himself. He is a self, not by transparency, like thought, which never thinks anything except by

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assimilating it, constituting it, transforming it into thought—but a self by confusion, narcissism, inherence of the one who sees in what he sees, of the one who touches in what he touches, of the sensing in the sensed—a self, therefore, that is caught up in things, having a front and a back, a past and a future.... (Merleau-Ponty 1964a, 162–163)

With this reference to touch, that is the haptic realm, there is a parallel between Merleau-Ponty and Wittgenstein, specifically with respect to space and intentional embodiment.¹

Thus the later Wittgenstein begins his reflection *On Certainty* by referring to the hand, that is, present: “If you do know that here is one hand, we’ll grant you all the rest” [*Wenn du weißt daß hier ein Hand ist, so geben wir dir alles übrige zu*] (Wittgenstein 1969: 2). Wittgenstein’s reflection on space, as Wittgenstein’s own footnote clarifies for us, returns to G.E. Moore’s 1939 “Proof of an External World.”² For analytic philosophers, of course, if we needed Colin McGinn and a certain ambiguous (ah! Sex!) scandal to remind us of this, the hand remains central. In Wittgenstein, the philosophical context is as obvious as the German expression, *es liegt auf der Hand*, itself and in turn, another way to speak of certainty. In addition, there is also in Wittgenstein’s the mention of the hand a reference to Immanuel Kant and thereby to space along with the notion of congruence (Geir 1981: 34ff). As Wittgenstein also points out with respect to Kant’s observation of isomorphism, the:

Kantian problem of the right and left hand which cannot be made to cover one another already exists in the plane, and even in one-dimensional space; where the two congruent figures a and b cannot be made to cover one another without moving them out of this space. The right and left hand are in fact completely congruent. And the fact that they cannot be made to cover one another has nothing to do with it. (Wittgenstein 1922: 86)

For Wittgenstein, however if one changed the dimensional spatiality of space there is no paradox and the variational profile he suggests is quasi-phenomenological: “A right-hand glove could be put on a left hand if it could be turned round in four-dimensional space” (Wittgenstein 1922: 86).

The topological problem corresponds to Wittgenstein’s dialogue with Moore and thence to Kant but Merleau-Ponty is taken up as we know with the “phenomenology of perception.” To this extent, the variational distinctions Merleau-Ponty undertakes to consider are lived in the round which lived quality excludes a variational rotation in Wittgenstein’s “four-dimensional space.” For Merleau-Ponty, it “is not consciousness which touches or feels, but the hand” (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 316). and to just this extent Merleau-Ponty cites Kant as writing that the hand is “an outer brain of man” (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 316).³ The haptic is the body in its attuned sensory

¹ See, informatively here, Stengel 2003 and Cassou-Noguès 2009.

² Moore 1939. If one connects Wittgenstein with Merleau-Ponty on the haptic or tactile access to the world, readings are often liable to the limitations of analytic philosophy. By contrast, Wittgenstein’s speaks of “life” in a fashion that corresponds to certain themes in more properly continental phenomenology: “7. My life shows that I know or am certain that there is a chair over there, or a door, and so on.—I tell a friend e.g. ‘Take that chair over there’, ‘Shut the door’, etc.” Wittgenstein 1969: 2.

³ See Merleau-Ponty in this locus for context and citation reference.

expression, capable of both touching and of being touched. The proprioceptive and haptic sense of being touched finds one in a “tactile ‘world’,” (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 317) more than a locative here as opposed to a there, orientated in one way as opposed to another, as Merleau-Ponty describes psychological experiments with vision in conflict with haptic and other senses. In this case:

as the subject of touch, I cannot flatter myself that I am everywhere and nowhere; I cannot forget that in this case that it is through my body that I go to the world, and tactile experience occurs ‘ahead’ of me and is not centred in me. It is not I who touch, it is my body; when I touch I do not think of diversity, but my hands rediscover certain styles which is part of their motor potentiality. (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 316)

The concern with perception in its spatiality occupies Merleau-Ponty. But his concern is not with the object, that is the thing perceived, but the conditions of the same possibility of perception for the embodied subject and its “echoes” of constancy, inclinations, habits, and thereby of the object in all aspects, all variations, reverberating in it: “And in so far as my hand knows hardness and softness, and my gaze knows the moon’s light, it is a certain way of linking up with the phenomenon and communicating with it” (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 317). Thus the object also arrays the subject in advance:

The surface which I am about to recognize as the surface of the table, when vaguely looked at, already summons me to focus upon it, and demands those movements of convergence which will endow it with its ‘true’ aspect. Similarly any object presented to one sense calls upon itself the concordant operation of all the others. (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 328)

Here Merleau-Ponty’s hermeneutic reflection on perception carries the Kantian element into his own phenomenological concern with being in the world. In this way, Merleau-Ponty reads Kant through *Sartre’s* Hegel if, as Jacques Taminiaux would observe, echoing Hannah Arendt, this is also *Heidegger’s* Kant. Attending to the conditions of perception and apperception along the thread of the body, as Nietzsche writes of this, following his Ariadne, *am Leitpfaden des Leibes*, traces the ecstatic labyrinth as Merleau-Ponty writes in *The Visible and the Invisible*:

he feels that he is the sensible itself coming to itself and that in return the sensible is in his eyes as it were his double or an extension of his own flesh. The space, the time of the things are shreds of himself, of his own spatialization, of his own temporalization, are no longer a multiplicity of individuals synchronically and diachronically distributed, but a relief of the simultaneous and of the successive, a spatial and temporal pulp where the individuals are formed by differentiation. (Merleau-Ponty 1968: 114)

Reflecting on the synchronic and diachronic, once again: the ‘spatial and temporal pulp’ of the differences that stand out as such, apart from me, apart from the perceiver, yields the spatiality of space—but this is not emptiness as such but interval, lamellar levels, spaced nothingness or intervals between the self of the one who perceives and is conscious of perceiving and the things themselves. These things are perceived by and above all “for a self caught up in things, that has a front and a back, a past and a future” (Merleau-Ponty 1964a: 163). To this extent “things” correspond to the self caught up in them, existing:

only at the end of those rays of spatiality and of temporality emitted in the secrecy of my flesh. And their solidity is not that of a pure object which the mind soars over; I experience their solidity from within insofar as I am among them and insofar as they communicate through me as a sentient thing. (Merleau-Ponty 1968: 114)

Thus in an unpublished text sent to Martial Gueroult, Merleau-Ponty opposes the “perceiving subject” to a kind of “absolute thinker” instead invoking “a natal pact between our body and the world, between ourselves and our body” (Merleau-Ponty 1964d: 6). Merleau-Ponty’s aesthetic of perception takes up the traditional conventionality of perspective,⁴ reading the history of signs, of the unspoken or unsaid that is also made visible against a background, set behind an image painted or layered in color or texture. Medieval paintings, Italian renaissance designs, are blocked in by color expanses, outlines tracing the painterly experiment with vision itself. This concern with the senses, the eye, the haptic, even the olfactory (as Merleau-Ponty cites Cezanne’s assertion that the painter should be able to paint the *smell of things*), is concerned with the same flesh that also concerns the so-called existentialist or incarnate and lived tradition of philosophic reflection and description in Sartre, Camus, Beauvoir.

Merleau-Ponty’s concern with the physiological capacities of the body to which extent as he writes, “knowledge and communication sublimate rather than suppress our incarnation” corresponds to what he speaks of here as “the double function of our body” (Merleau-Ponty 1964d: 7). This double function is both perception and signification, in both cases charged backward *and* forward.

Through its “sensory fields” and its whole organisation the body is, so to speak, predestined to model itself on the natural aspects of the world. But as an active body ... it turns back on the world to signify it. (Merleau-Ponty 1964d: 7)

Expressing his own originally scientific formation as a psychologist drawing upon the resources of Husserlian phenomenology, Merleau-Ponty himself never once imagines that phenomenology begins or indeed ends with Husserl—as indeed only Husserlians are inclined to suppose. Indeed, one may make a crucial distinction between analytic-style continental and more typically continental appropriations of Wittgenstein and not less of Merleau-Ponty, as Merleau-Ponty is increasingly read even on the continent through an analytic lens (this would be most recent readings).

If I here further refer not only to Heidegger and Nietzsche but also to the broader resources of hermeneutics (see, for instance, Busch and Gallagher 1992), Merleau-Ponty himself also adds his own contextualizing hermeneutic and phenomenological references to the natural sciences including their own interior crises, each to be distinguished in themselves. Hence Merleau-Ponty both sets phenomenology (as one must) in connection with the sciences themselves but he also takes care to historicize (that is to hermeneuticize) phenomenology, pointing out that:

⁴Patrick Aidan Heelan 1983 has drawn attention to Merleau-Ponty’s concern with perspective but see too Prendeville 1999 as well as the analytic and historical overview in Gilmore 2004, especially pp. 297ff, and van de Vall 2005.

Husserl's philosophical endeavour is basically directed toward the simultaneous solution of a crisis in philosophy, a crisis in the sciences of man, and a crisis in science as such which we have not yet passed through. (Merleau-Ponty 1964e: 43)

By reflecting on this threefold crisis, and it should be emphasized that this reflection also means that he takes this archetypically Husserlian reflection seriously, Merleau-Ponty highlights the threat of "irrationalism." Today we may still speak of this ongoing "crisis in science as such," including the nineteenth century language that Nietzsche had employed to characterize this same "permanent" crisis in terms of 'genealogies' and of 'twilight.' Influenced as we are today by Lyotard and others, we also speak of postmodernism and by way of Foucault and not less of Bruno Latour we also speak of archaeologies, etc. For, as Merleau-Ponty, reflects, "Reason itself appears to be the contingent product of certain internal conditions" (Merleau-Ponty 1964e: 44) which only meant that the Husserlian project of thinking philosophy as indeed of the human sciences as indeed of natural science itself "through to their foundations." (Merleau-Ponty 1964e: 43) In each case, for Merleau-Ponty the Husserlian endeavour is to show how each enterprise as a knowing enterprise is possible. To raise the question then of the conditions of epistemic possibility entails a return to reading Husserl in the context of his own inquiry but it also involved an attention to other traditions in philosophy and, for Merleau-Ponty, to the advances in psychology not to decide or resolve either the thinking of crisis or the question of the conditions of the possibility of science but rather for the sake of advancing the same knowing project itself. This is thus a radically rigorous science.

In practice however, Merleau-Ponty goes yet further in the direction of life-world science. Hence although Merleau-Ponty makes the identifiably Husserlian case that if "a being is consciousness, he must be nothing but a network of intentions" (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 140), he singles out Sartre's (and that is always also to say Simone de Beauvoir's) existentialism in particular, noting that the distinctively phenomenological method:

is found in Descartes and Kant. In our opinion Husserl's originality lies beyond the notion of intentionality; it is to be found in the elaboration of this notion and in the discovery, beneath the intentionality of representations, of a deeper intentionality, which others have called existence. (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 121n)

Phenomenology so regarded appears not only in Hegel who writes on nothing less than the 'phenomenology' of spirit or the psyche but with respect to society and history in Marx as well as Nietzsche but also (and this is to distinguished from Nietzsche), in the existentialism of Merleau-Ponty's lived and incarnate space or else of Bergson's understanding of space in terms of the subject's consciousness of and for itself, explicitly read as Merleau-Ponty reads this consciousness of self in and through Descartes as well as Freud and Kierkegaard:

We shall find in ourselves and nowhere else, the unity and the meaning of phenomenology. (Merleau-Ponty 1962: viii)

2 Science Beyond Scientism

Where Merleau-Ponty differs from Sartre⁵ in his return to life-experience, or else from the other interlocutors he engages on the side of art, like Claudel and Ponge, Cezanne and Valéry, or Bachelard on the creative side of science, it is because Merleau-Ponty maintains, again like Husserl, what both regard as a rigorously scientific ideal of philosophy, reflecting between the mind and truth. Hence in continental philosophy of science both Patrick Aidan Heelan and Joseph Kockelmans are drawn to Merleau-Ponty⁶ as other readers have also been drawn to this same “disarming” scientific disposition, as Ben-Ami Scharfstein on reflected that this would be common to both Merleau-Ponty and Bergson.⁷

At the same time, Merleau-Ponty—like any true scientist I would hold—is not as liable to succumb to scientism as are many scholars today, scholars in the analytic continental philosophical traditions—from Gary Gutting and Joseph Rouse to several others—who write on Merleau-Ponty and science are liable to suppose for their own part, a supposition which can cloud readings of Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy of science. Instead, as a thinker and as himself a scientist, Merleau-Ponty exemplifies the scientist’s familiarity with science, meaning not so very much (though it also means this) that the scientist knows science’s limits but rather that Merleau-Ponty concerns depart from a rigorous “theory of truth and then with a theory of intersubjectivity” (Merleau-Ponty 1964d: 6–7). This familiarity allows him to advert to the reciprocal coincidence of artist and scientist. Hence both Merleau-Ponty and Walter Benjamin (and Hannah Arendt too) invoke Paul Valéry (who for his own part engages science), emphasizing that, as Merleau-Ponty cites Valéry, the “painter ‘takes his body with him’” (Merleau-Ponty 1964a: 162). The same turn allows Merleau-Ponty to explore the potential of modern technology and science for art from the artist’s point of view as well as for the philosopher.

In this way, Merleau-Ponty’s “Cezanne’s Doubt” is attuned to science’s own practices as a means to approximate or recreate the perceptual space of the world in a painting.⁸ For his own part, Patrick Aidan Heelan drew on this insight for his own later reading of van Gogh and Cezanne in his *Space-Perception and the Philosophy of Science*. (Heelan 1983) Heelan noted the importance of attending not to the theoretical ideal of perception of the things of the world and hence the ‘how’ dictating

⁵Both Sartre and Merleau-Ponty channel and echo, even without citing, as it can with reason be argued that both are deeply influenced by Beauvoir. See, among other recent readings, the range of contributions to O’Brien and Embree 2013.

⁶See in addition Compton 1992 and more recently Marratto 2012, as well as albeit without insight into the term ‘phenomenology’ despite its presence in the title (this is an analytic reading), Baldwin 2013.

⁷There is a wide range here from Gary Gutting and Joseph Rouse to Dorothea Olkowski but see more straightforwardly drawing on conventional style philosophy and offering a useful reading between Descartes and the Husserlian ‘natural attitude’ with a focus on moral judgment Godway 2007.

⁸For a valuable discussion related to the present context, see Taminaux 1991.

what must be their 'right' appearance to us (thus Merleau-Ponty cites Malebranche in this regard: "Our world, as Malebranche said, is an unfinished task", Merleau-Ponty 1964a: 6), but to the experimental-practical 'real' that is the real world of the artist's and the spectator's and the lived subject's experience of the world.

Thus, just as many other scholars, from Alphonse de Waelhens to Michel Harr as well as Veronique Fóti and Galen Johnson as well as the present author⁹ have observed, Merleau-Ponty uses his insights into the artist's own dialogue not only with things but, as Heelan also emphasizes, varying the foundational possibilities of perception, not unlike the empirical practice of the same experimental psychology that is a reference point for both philosophers in phenomenological thinking on perception.

Attending to the artist and the writer as well as to the scientist and the reflective practitioner of science, Merleau-Ponty foregrounds a rigorously science-attuned or informed (rather than 'scientific') conception of philosophy, "Philosophy is irreplaceable because it reveals to us both the movement by which lives become truths, and the circularity of that singular being who in a certain sense already is everything *he happens to think*" (Merleau-Ponty 1964c: 113). Thus Merleau-Ponty reflects that:

Scientific views, according to which I am a moment of the world, are always naive and hypocritical, because they take for granted, without mentioning it, this other view, that of consciousness, through which first a world forms itself round me and begins to exist for me. (Merleau-Ponty 1962: ix)

Science is not the ultimate court of appeal because science itself only takes its departure from and, ultimately, must return to, as Husserl expresses this, "the things themselves." Yet this also means that the concern of the knower has to be to raise the question of truth, precisely to the extent that is the role of philosophy to inquire after the conditions of the possibility of philosophy as such, of the human sciences, as of science in general, to return to our earlier reference to the tripartite crisis so significant for Husserl as indeed for Merleau-Ponty and which also attests to the one limitation he would set on science, namely its claim to having a "monopoly on truth." (Merleau-Ponty 1964f: 35)¹⁰ For the same Merleau-Ponty who writes on the *phenomenology* of perception and who engages in a philosophical discussion regarding the "*primacy* of perception," to:

To turn back to the things themselves is to return to that world prior to knowledge of which knowledge speaks, and with regard to which every scientific determination is abstractive,

⁹One can for this go back to no one less significant for the history of phenomenology than Waelhens 1962, as well as more broadly Kaelin 1962, in addition to Place 1973. See too, if also from an analytically minded point of departure, Crowther 2013 as well as Rajiv Kaushik's more literary review (Kaushik 2011) and Johnson 2009. In addition, see, classically, Michel Haar's "Painting, Perception, Affectivity" (Haar 1996) as well as Fóti's own earlier essay, "Painting and the Re-orientation of Philosophical Thought in Merleau-Ponty" (Fóti 1980), in addition to Babich 2014.

¹⁰Here, of course, Merleau-Ponty's view of science accords with both Nietzsche's and Heidegger's philosophies, to invoke Rom Harré's plural usage here, of science.

dependent, and a sign; it is like the relationship of geography to the countryside where we first learned what a forest, a prairie or a river was. (Merleau-Ponty 1956: 60)

This point follows the distinction Heidegger makes between the flowers of the hedgerow and the botanist's knowledge of the same in his *Being and Time*. The same effectively natal compact or "primacy" includes for Merleau-Ponty the aspect of being-in, as Heidegger speaks of this, which Merleau-Ponty expresses in a vital attention to space and place. Phenomenology for Merleau-Ponty can in this way be attuned to science, as it also is for the Heidegger of *Being and Time*, without subscribing to the always present danger of an overdependence on science (scientism).¹¹ As Merleau-Ponty reflects, "Perception is not a science of the world, nor even an act, a deliberate taking up of a position. It is the basis from which every act issues and it is presupposed by them" (Merleau-Ponty 1956: 62).

In this way, Merleau-Ponty offers a critique of the physical sciences reflecting Husserl's identification of the ongoing crisis in the sciences. Science "makes its own limited models of things" as he writes but precisely by means of such modeling, "Science manipulates things and gives up dwelling in them" (Merleau-Ponty 1964a: 351). This is an inevitable consequence of scientific modeling, which "gives itself internal models of the things, and, operating on the basis of these indices or variables, the transformations that are permitted by their definition, science confronts the actual world only from greater and greater distances" (Merleau-Ponty 1964a: 351). This same distancing yields what Max Weber called the "steel hard enclosure" (often translated as "iron cage") of science and for Merleau-Ponty it also tended to the habitual and thereby a certain variety of magical thinking: "When a model has succeeded in one order of problems, it is tried out everywhere else" (Merleau-Ponty 1964a: 351). Where we, just to use our own present day conventionalities see codes, specifically genomic ones, everywhere, in Descartes's day, things could be modeled as machines (functionally including the 'thinking' thing itself). Merleau-Ponty invokes a variant of the machine by speaking of the process array, the 'gradients' deployed in chemistry and engineering, which model influences his own notion of the "perceptual field." For Merleau-Ponty, the problem with the model is its inevitable circularity:

To say that the world is, by nominal definition, the object *x* of our operations is to adjust the scientist's epistemic situation to the absolute, as if everything that was and is has never existed save in order to enter the laboratory. (Merleau-Ponty 1964a: 352)

Science 'works' in this efficient sense by deploying just these models, transforming its own action in accord with the economic modality of contemporary 'efficiency' within these same constraints. Against this efficient scientific perspective, Merleau-Ponty's philosophy draws upon while also sidestepping the restrictions of a modelling which cannot but require the 'foreswearing of science.' (Merleau-Ponty 1962: viii) This foreswearing in turn testifies less to the inadequacy of scientific observation than the exigence of philosophical reflection that cannot simply limit itself to the making of models. Once again, and this is also a point that Heidegger

¹¹ See Babich 2007 for an overview including Merleau-Ponty.

makes as well: “philosophy has an original role distinct from that of science” (Merleau-Ponty 1964f: 35). The aim is not *opposed* to science and it is not meant to suggest a restriction: “In this primordial historicity, the agile and improvisatory thought of science will learn to ground itself upon the things themselves and upon itself, and will once more become philosophy...” (Merleau-Ponty 1964a: 352). Thus, Merleau-Ponty observes that it is:

necessary that the thought of science—surveying thought, thought of the object in general, be placed back in the “there is” which precedes it, back in the site, back upon the soil of the sensible world and the soil of the worked-upon world such as they are in our lives and for our bodies, not that possible body which we may legitimately think of as an information machine, but this actual body I call mine, this sentinel standing silently under my words and my acts. (Merleau-Ponty 1964a: 352)

Irretrievably bound to a lived world of human meaning and possibility, the systematic character of embodied being in the world thus constitutes Merleau-Ponty's contribution to phenomenology: ‘our own body’ he writes, ‘is in the world as the heart is in the organism’ (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 203). This reflective emphasis on embodiment as the constitutive engine of perception and being, measure and estimation, reflects a distinctively French (it is shared by both Sartre and de Beauvoir) conception of phenomenology as a true dialectics of ambiguity.

3 Art Futures

The painter's vision is a continued birth.—Merleau-Ponty

The future of art is the dialogue of art with the still unspoken past possibility not yet brought to expression to which it answers and a future address spoken to an as yet unsaid possibility that may emerge in reply.

Andre Malraux' museum “without walls” (Malraux 1953: 13) offers the ideal vision of the museum as this is the child of the catalogue, the sheer facticity of the art book, its columbarium of pages, its fetishizing assemblage of art plates and illustrations, exploded into exhibits, halls, institutions. Once exploded, they fall away of themselves into sheer indications, representations. But for Merleau-Ponty who argued that “the theory of the body is already a theory of perception,” we need more than the mind for art. This critique is today all the more prescient as the virtual art galleries and museum simulations of the newer multimedia computer technologies, promise to bring the ‘work of art’ into the privacy of one's home, in one's pocket, always fantasized as, potentially, ready to hand, perhaps even in some near future, as can be suggested by cognitive neuroscience working in concert with entrainment technologies, via direct brain uploads. Apart from the flat flatness of CD graphics or computer video resolution of the newer technologies, despite the new fashion for curved screens—a flatness even more insipid than Merleau-Ponty's much noted ‘flatness of being’—it can be countered, in parallel with Merleau-Ponty's artifactual claims contra Malraux, that such phenomena do not reveal the presence of History

and Reason in art or promise the redemption of consumer alienation by transforming the philistinism of the culture industry.

As collocations of style, such “museums of the mind,” (Malraux 1953: 13) prove for Merleau-Ponty little more than the dynamics of the artifact itself and as such. This artifice is the consequence of the framing movement of the hand holding the camera or magnifying glass as the subtly stylized (and stylizing) gesture of the artist *in nuce* that can for Merleau-Ponty also be said to be ‘in every man.’ (Merleau-Ponty 1964c: 66) For Merleau-Ponty, describing this artfulness in terms of gesture or perceptual style is not to deny the miraculous character of the achievement but only to shift its locus. “Here the spirit of the world is ourselves, as soon as we know how to *move ourselves* and *look*” (Merleau-Ponty 1964c: 66). This means that in the simple act of taking a look, human consciousness takes dominion everywhere, as Wallace Stevens’ eye organized itself around the poetic gesture of a jar set into a round and open hegemony over hill and countryside.

All my changes of place figure in principle in an area of my landscape; they are carried over onto the map of the visible. Everything I see is in principle within my reach, at least within the reach of my sight, and is marked upon the map of the “I can.” (Merleau-Ponty 1964a: 162)

Every bodily act thus at least partially accomplishes what the culture of contemporary museum aesthetics names ‘the installation’: “Just my glance toward the goal already has its own miracles. It too takes up its dwelling in being with authority and conducts itself there as if in a conquered country” (Merleau-Ponty 1964c: 66).

The senses are sovereign, gathering, collimating, interpreting systems. But they are not systems apart from a world:

Immersed in the visible by his body, itself visible, the seer does not appropriate what he sees; he merely approaches it by means of the gaze, he opens onto the world. And for its part, that world in which he participates is not in-itself or matter. (Merleau-Ponty 1964a: 162)

This theory of the body as theorizing perception, as the core of Merleau-Ponty’s aesthetic phenomenology has two special consequences for the spatial perception of art and philosophical aesthetics. From the very beginning, (citing the paintings in the caves at Lascaux), the:

first sketches on the walls of caves set forth the world as “to be painted” or “to be sketched” and called for an indefinite future of painting: so that they speak to us and we answer them by metamorphoses in which they collaborate with us.’ (Merleau-Ponty 1964c: 60)

I am called or better said ‘claimed’ by the work as I am called by any perceptual thing: “Things have an internal equivalent in me; they arouse in me a carnal formula of their presence” (Merleau-Ponty 1964a: 164). This evocative perceptual dialectic means that, and now we are back to the same levels with which we began, the layers, the lamellae, “the animals painted on the wall of Lascaux are not *there* in the same way as the fissures and limestone formations” (Merleau-Ponty 1964a: 164). The *there* here is a matter as much of difference as it is of place and of presence to and presence in the place of (seeing being seen). Speaking of these same extraordinary paintings one is brought, Merleau-Ponty reminds us, before a very different disposition of surface and ground, given over to apprehending this difference as difference

in presence: neither 'there' nor 'elsewhere' "Pushed forward here, held back there, supported by the wall's mass they use so adroitly, they radiate about the wall without ever breaking their elusive moorings" (Merleau-Ponty 1964a: 164). Quoting Cezanne's "Nature is inside," Merleau-Ponty reflects on the place of the cave and the place of the paintings themselves: "I would be hard-pressed," he writes:

to say where the picture is that I am gazing at. For I do not gaze at it as one gazes at a thing, I do not fix it in its place. My gaze wanders within it as in the halos of Being. Rather than seeing it, I see according to, or with it. (Merleau-Ponty 1964a: 164)

Seeing 'with' or 'according' to the cave paintings of Lascaux or seeing 'with' van Gogh or Cezanne both of whom tried to take painting in van Gogh's words 'further,' is to invoke the potential poetry or music of all vision brought to impossible yet actual attunement.

Writing that this insight brings us before "all the problems of painting," Merleau-Ponty remains attuned to the body in its world: "These exchanges, as he writes, "illustrate the enigma of the body, and this enigma justifies them" (Merleau-Ponty 1964a: 164). In other words and here the attunement to reciprocity that is the earmark of the phenomenological method is patent. And Merleau-Ponty, philosopher of perception and perceptual space, pays the attention he pays to painting because "painting celebrates no other enigma but that of visibility" (Merleau-Ponty 1964a: 166).

There is an insuperable imperative to 'return' as Husserl says, 'to the things themselves' just because, as Merleau-Ponty writes, "Things have an internal equivalent in me; they arouse in me a carnal formula of their presence" (Merleau-Ponty 1964a: 165). The problem of painting thus goes back or toward, for Merleau-Ponty the very earliest of instances, he refers, we cite again, to Lascaux raise again the question of space, the question of the *where*: "I would be at great pains to say *where* is the painting I am looking at" (Merleau-Ponty 1964a: 164). Speaking of the levels now of luminosity and presence, the animals painted there "spread around the wall without ever breaking from their elusive moorings in it" (Merleau-Ponty 1964a: 164). This "spread" is itself a physical diffusion, elsewhere I have written that the style of these paintings is also perhaps a testament to the body, bearing witness to space once again, the height on the walls, the depths of darkness, and likewise testifying, perhaps to pigments carried in the mouths of these artists, blowing outlines with breath, spraying forms. "My gaze wanders in it as in the halos of Being. It is more accurate to say that I see according to it, or with it, than that I see it" (Merleau-Ponty 1964a: 164).

Here, Merleau-Ponty turns through a reflection on the image, the picture, the painting, the mime, to reflect on resemblances, invoking the painter (and sculptor) Giacometti, as Merleau-Ponty sees the artist as a kind of scientist on a quest for the world, and it is here that he reflects on the eye, "computers of the world, which have the gift of the visible" (Merleau-Ponty 1964a: 165).¹²

¹²I echo a point Alexander Nehamas makes (Nehamas 2007) and I further explore some of the complexities and some of the limitations of this eroticism in Babich 2014.

Merleau-Ponty means this consummate claim to assert a clear, if and to be sure, masculinist eroticism: “Painting awakens and carries to its highest pitch a delirium which is vision itself, for to see is *to have at a distance*” (Merleau-Ponty 1964a: 169). Challenging as Merleau-Ponty goes on to do here what would seem to be the sympathetic word of the young critic, the young Bernard Berenson who wrote, “apropos of Italian painting,” of the voluptuous delight “of tactile values, the error is in failing to attend to the space of vision itself. “It gives,” Merleau-Ponty writes, “visible existence to what profane vision believes to be invisible.” And the point here is also contra the “muscular sense” that is the agent intellect, active vision, beyond itself in the world, as just this is not needed. Instead what is given is a “texture of Being of which the discrete sensorial messages are only the punctuations or the caesurae. The eye lives in this texture as a man lives in his house” (Merleau-Ponty 1964a: 166).

In this way, Merleau-Ponty’s painter is, as we have seen that he reads Cezanne, as everyone reads Leonardo, as much an artist as a scientist as a philosopher because the artist asks of the world the same questions as the scientist and the philosopher. Addressed to things of the world, the “painter’s gaze asks them what they do to suddenly cause something to be and to be this thing, what they do to compose this worldly talisman and to make us see the visible” (Merleau-Ponty 1964a: 166). But even more than this latter and last question, the artist adds an element of the same address, the same responsiveness of the thing seen, catching themselves then “in the act of painting ... adding to what they saw then, what things saw of them” (Merleau-Ponty 1964a: 169).

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Arendt's Multi-perspectivism and the Tension Between Place and Space

Kieran Bonner

Abstract On the surface it appears as if Hannah Arendt has said little on hermeneutics or place. Yet she provides insights into ways of thinking about space and place, once we recover the way her approach overlaps with a particular kind of hermeneutics, the phenomenological hermeneutics of Heidegger and Gadamer. In that light, place and space can be seen as unspecified resources for her theorizing. For example, for Arendt the reality of the public realm is dependent on the simultaneous presence of innumerable perspectives. The public object is realized when many spectators, from their different locations see “sameness in utter diversity.” This is a reality that comes into being not through abolishing different spatial locations but rather by multiplying them. Multi-perspectivism, the need for many spectators to be differently located, or even more strongly, for one spectator to think through the many perspectives on an object from their own position, provides a way to recognize her unarticulated contributions to space and place. With a primary focus on *The Human Condition*, this chapter addresses the formulation of the modern decline in a sense of place as articulated by Casey and Augé as overlapping with the decline in the public realm as articulated by Arendt. Both can be treated as instances of world alienation. The chapter goes on to articulate the way Arendt's tri-partite division of labor, work and action offer ways of rehabilitating the concept of space from its modern sense of immensity to a formulation of ways that space and place, world and polis, can dialectically support each other. To develop these conceptions of place and space, it is argued, is simultaneously to develop a sense of what multi-perspectivism looks like.

The reality of the public realm relies on the simultaneous presence of innumerable perspectives and aspects in which the common world presents itself and for which no common denominator can be devised. For though the common world is the common meeting ground of all, those who are present in it have different locations in it. ... Being seen and being heard by others derive their significance from the fact that everybody sees and hears from a different position. ... Only where things can be seen by many in a variety of aspects without

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changing their identity, so that those who are gathered around them know that they see sameness in utter diversity, can worldly reality truly and reliably appear. ... The end of the common world has come when it is seen only under one aspect and is permitted to present itself in only one perspective (Arendt 1958, 57–8).

Arendt's description of the reality of the public realm is poetic and paradoxical. This is a common world "for which no common denominator can be devised." In fact, the attempt to devise a common denominator makes its reality disappear; the attempt to present the common world "under one aspect" is its end. Rather, the reality of the public realm relies on the "the simultaneous presence of innumerable perspectives," perspectives that cannot be counted but, she asserts decisively, can still be known. What is known is that many spectators see from their different locations "sameness in utter diversity." This is a reality that comes into being not through abolishing different spatial locations but by multiplying them. For Arendt, spatial location is a decisive resource: explication of this resource offers the promise of recovering her conception of space. The variety of aspects of any thing is revealed through the different locations that spectators take and this is what makes the thing a public object. However, the aspects are as innumerable as are the perspectives made possible by the different locations.

If the reality of the common world is revealed to those who are differently located in space, then the particular spatial positions do not seem to imply or need a concept of place. The common world that emerges from a multi-perspective positioning appears to offer the possibility of a public realm that is not limited to a particular place and time. Does this make the concept of place irrelevant to Arendt's political thinking? A paradigmatic public object for Arendt is the ancient Greek polis. That short-lived experiment in democracy would seem to be an object in the world that is limited to a particular place and time. In *The Human Condition* (1958) in particular, Arendt describes the brief appearance of this ancient political body as both tied to its place and time in ancient Athens and as having universal significance for the practice and understanding of contemporary politics. Its instantiation, for Arendt, points to a particular place and time in history, but in a way that speaks to our time and place.

If this is true, then place and time are unspecified resources for Arendt's theorizing. Place and space initially seem to be relevant for her theory but in ways that remain to be articulated. What she does articulate, however, is the need for a multi-perspectivism that enables us to know that we see the same public realm in utter diversity. The confidence in the knowledge of what we see comes from a multi-perspectivism, the need for many spectators to be differently located, or even more strongly, for one spectator to think through the many perspectives on an object from their own position. Arendt calls the latter political thinking (1961, 241). To develop conceptions of place and space in Arendt's work is to simultaneously develop a sense of what multi-perspectivism looks like.

1 Arendt and Hermeneutics

The above notwithstanding, Hannah Arendt must seem like an unusual inclusion in this comprehensive book on hermeneutics, place, and space. On the surface, it appears as if she has said little on any of these items. Arendt was reluctant to talk about method in general and her own method in particular. When pressed, she admitted to doing a kind of phenomenology: “I am a sort of phenomenologist” she once said to a student, “but, ach, not in Hegel’s way—or Husserl’s” (Young-Bruehl 1982, 405). If her reference to her method of phenomenology is rare, her reference to hermeneutics is practically non-existent. Neither Young-Bruehl (1982) nor Canovan (1992) mention hermeneutics in their authoritative texts. In Richard Palmer’s (1969) influential and comprehensive overview of the field of hermeneutics, she does not merit a mention.

Yet, as I propose above, Hannah Arendt provides insights into ways of thinking about space and place, once we recover the way her approach overlaps with a particular kind of hermeneutics: phenomenological hermeneutics or radical interpretive inquiry (Bonner 1994, 2016). *The Human Condition*, it has been argued (e.g., Parekh 1981, 68–69), is intended “to provide a more satisfactory phenomenology of human activities that are relevant to politics” (Canovan 1992, 102). Canovan goes on to point out that Arendt’s phenomenology is enclosed within theoretical commitment arising out of her reflections on totalitarianism and modernity as well as on the “intense dissatisfaction with the Western tradition of political philosophy” (102). As a phenomenology that recognizes and includes in its analysis ethical and political dimensions (Arendt 2003; Bonner 2016), it is closer to hermeneutics than to Husserlian phenomenology (Brennan and Malpas 2011). It is well established that Heidegger (1977b), responsible for reviving hermeneutics as well as initiating what has been called phenomenological hermeneutics (Palmer 1969), and whose later work has been very influential on rehabilitating the idea of place in relation to space (Casey 1997), was Arendt’s teacher. Despite significant and noteworthy divergences, he is a decisive influence on her work (Canovan 1992; Villa 1996; Kristeva 2001). This also means that her work intersects with that of Gadamer (1975, 1986; Bonner 2006; Grondin 2003), though they profoundly disagree on the meaning of the Platonic inheritance (the latter will be taken up later.) In her personal library, there are two of Gadamer’s works in German, *Truth and Method* and *Hegel’s Dialectic*, both underlined and annotated by Arendt.¹ Arendt’s work, therefore, operates within an influence of writings on the hermeneutics of place and space.

As I have shown in other work (Bonner 1994, 1997, 1998), Arendt’s multi-perspectivism falls within a big tent approach to hermeneutics: it is a radical interpretive inquiry that, while centered, also disrupts disciplinary boundaries. Whether with *The Human Condition* or *The Life of the Mind*, Arendt articulates multidimensional ways of being in and knowing the world. The division of human activity into labor, work, and action, and the division of the life of the mind into thinking, willing,

¹ Hannah Arendt Center, Bard College, Annendale on Hudson, New York.

and judging (Arendt 1978), are paradigmatic examples of a multi-perspective approach that is symptomatic of hermeneutic analysis. Taking *The Human Condition* as our example, while elucidating the nature of one phenomenon, human activity, she comes to develop three fundamental and, analytically-speaking, mutually exclusive ways of doing activity—labor, work, and action. This multi-perspectiveness is not just another theoretical orientation but is crucial both to the preservation and practice of freedom and for the art needed to recognize the full reality of the public realm in its full multidimensionality. Understanding reality is for Arendt both a theoretical concern, insofar as it is intrinsic to the creation of knowledge, and a concern of praxis, insofar as it is intrinsic to political thinking.

Phenomenological hermeneutics, particularly as exemplified by the early Heidegger and by Gadamer's corpus, is clearly a type of philosophy. As noted above, Arendt resists the tradition of philosophy (Dolan 2000, 261). For example, in *The Human Condition*, Arendt argues that political philosophy conceptualized and dominated the understanding of the *vita activa* in a narrow and hierarchical fashion. That is, the active life, which in ancient Greece found its highest expression in the *bios politikos*, was formulated as inferior to the *bios theoretikos* from Plato on. It is this hierarchy that Marx sought to reverse in his *Theses on Feurbach* (1978). As Arendt argues, in turning the tradition on its head, Marx still remained trapped within the conceptual framework of the very tradition of political philosophy he saw himself as rejecting. Thus Arendt's sense that a more radical de-structuring (a method that she, like Derrida, learned from Heidegger) of that tradition is needed to recover the full multidimensional reality of the active life and of the public realm. Arendt develops her understanding of the active life in explicit rejection of the tradition of political philosophy because she says:

My contention is simply that the enormous weight of contemplation in the traditional hierarchy has blurred the distinctions and articulations within the *vita activa* itself and that, appearances notwithstanding, this condition has not been changed essentially by the modern break with the tradition and the eventual reversal of the hierarchical order in Marx and Nietzsche (1958, 17).

Through her analysis of the tradition of political philosophy, she comes to the recognition that political action is formulated in terms of making or production. This orientation goes back to Plato, who conceptualized statecraft in terms of the craftsman, an understanding that is politically problematic because it makes both instrumental thinking and violence intrinsic to the political process. Just as one has to cut a tree down to make a table, it becomes plausible that one needs to destroy a society to bring about a new order. This orientation is also politically problematic because it sustains an illusion of mastery and control. For Arendt, the political actor, “instead of being like the master artisan, lives instead in the ambiguous situation of an actor who is the sufferer as well as the agent” (Taminiaux 2000, 167). Political action, while centered on a new beginning, is also concerned with reconciling oneself to human finitude—as Gadamer argues that the experienced person does (1975, 310–325). In summary, while she rejects the identity of philosopher, which in turn can be seen to make her work less abstract and more sociologically

relevant (Walsh 2015, Bonner 2016), the principles identified above show her work has strong overlap with the phenomenological hermeneutics of Heidegger and Gadamer (Brennan and Malpas 2011).

2 The Tension Between Space and Place

Just as dominant Western economic, philosophical, and political paradigms made theorizing human activity and the practice of politics problematic, so too does theorizing place.² In *The Fate of Place* (1997), Casey shows how the idea of place has been marginalized in Western thought. The “rich tradition of place-talk,” he says,

has been bypassed or forgotten for the most part, mainly because place has been subordinated to other terms taken as putative absolutes: notably Space and Time. ... Beginning with Philoponus in the sixth century A.D. and reaching an apogee in 14th century theology and above all in 17th century physics, place has been assimilated to space. ... As a result, place came to be a mere modification of space (in Locke's terms)—a modification that aptly can be called ‘site,’ that is, levelled down, monotonous space for building and other human enterprises (x).

In the nineteenth century, place was “reduced to locations between which physical bodies move” (x), subjecting it to a concept of time conceived chronometrically and universally. “The triumph of space over place,” Casey says, “is the triumph of space in its endlessness, its coordinated and dimensional spread-outness, over the intensive magnitude and qualitative multiplicity of concrete places” (201).

If place is conceptualized as a “location between which physical bodies move,” it is not an accident that this has consequences for practice and everyday life. “As people walk less within their neighbourhoods, they talk less with their neighbours. ... Identification with the place-based community in which they live is thereby diminished” (Jamieson et al. 2000, 478). Along with this is the visual similarity between and within urban districts so that a

Toronto subdivision looks much like one in Calgary or Vancouver [or Montreal]; downtown high-rises across the county reflect a similarity of design; and strip malls are the same everywhere. This loss of distinction has important aesthetic implications but also erodes the community attachment and pride essential to quality of life (Jamieson et al. 2000, 464).

De Certeau has been particularly insightful with regard to this modern development. In “Walking in the City” (1984, 92–93), he proposes that spatial practices like walking both escape and resist the fiction of knowledge of the city developed through the “scopic drive” (“the lust to be a viewpoint and nothing more”) of the “space planner urbanist, city planner or cartographer.” The totalizing tendency of this same “scopic drive”—“the desire to see the city,” as de Certeau himself saw it from what was then the World Trade Centre—has also been seen as contributing to a loss of a sense of place noted by theorists like Augé (1995) and Casey (1997),

²I draw significantly on my 2007 work for this section.

planners like Jamieson, Cosijn, and Friesen (2000), and of course, in the “global cities discourse,” by people like Sassen (2000) and Friedmann (1986). De Certeau’s critique of the lust to be a viewpoint coincides with Arendt’s critique of Plato’s model of the craftsman for political action and Gadamer’s critique of the presumption of knowledge of the Absolute in Hegel’s dialectic.

Edward Casey makes the same point about contemporary cities (1997, xiii). “Perhaps most crucially,” he says,

the encroachment of an indifferent sameness of place on a global scale—to the point where you cannot be sure which city you are in given the architectural and commercial uniformity of many cities—make the human subject long for a diversity of places, that is, difference-of-place that has been lost in a worldwide monoculture based on Western economic and political paradigms.

He goes on to formulate the loss of a sense of place as “not just a matter of nostalgia.” It is, rather, “an active desire for the particularity of place—for what is truly ‘local’ and ‘regional’—is aroused by such increasingly common experiences. Place brings with it the very elements sheared off on the planiformity of site: identity, character, nuance and history.” Similarly, Augé defines place “as relational, historical and concerned with identity” (1995, 77).

In other work, I have addressed the kind of methodology needed to create knowledge that can conceptualize the particularity of place, whether urban (2007; 2013) or rural (1997). But if place is in the process of being rehabilitated from dominant Western economic, political, and theoretical paradigms, what about the concept of space? Are there ways of rescuing space from conceptualizing it as “the triumph of space in its endlessness, its coordinated and dimensional spread-outness, over the intensive magnitude and qualitative multiplicity of concrete places?” (Casey 1997, 201). In what follows I will first show how Arendt’s work shows the ethical and political implications that are intertwined with the “triumph of space in its endlessness.” I will then address the possibility of rehabilitating a sense of space from the above conceptualization based on what her multi-perspectivism allows for. In order to do this I return to Arendt’s now famous distinction between labor, work, and action from *The Human Condition*.

3 The Activity of Labor and the Rise of World Alienation

According to Arendt, there are three fundamental activities of the human condition, the condition that life has been given to us humans on this planet earth. “Labor is the activity which corresponds to the biological processes of the human body, whose spontaneous growth, metabolism and eventual decay are bound to the vital necessities produced and fed into the life process by labor” (1958, 7). The activity of labor is concerned with individual and species survival. The second fundamental activity, work, “provides an ‘artificial’ world of things, distinctly different from all natural surroundings” (1958, 7). This activity is concerned with producing artifacts that will

outlast our individual earthly existence and so connects us to past and future generations. Action, the third dimension of human activity, is beginning something new. "As a general category of human activity, action is closely related to speech, and Arendt often talks about speech and action in the same breath, as phenomena that arise from human plurality and disclose the uniqueness of each individual" (Canovan 1992, 131).

Labor, work, and action each need a community or realm if they are to have a reality in the world. All three are potentials, what we, by virtue of being human, are capable of. Arendt, of course, is not just descriptive but is also prescriptive in the sense that without the development of all three, our opportunity to be fully human is greatly lessened (Canovan 1992). Without the activity of labor we would not survive; without the products of work, human existence would be more nomadic than worldly and we would not have a tangible connection to our ancestors or descendants; without speech and action we would be without a human relation to the unpredictable, which allows us to recognize human uniqueness. "Plurality is the condition of human action because we are all the same, that is, human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else whoever lived, lives or will live" (Arendt 1958, 8). Here we note the resonance of this with "seeing sameness in utter diversity."

All three phenomenologically distinct activities can be understood in relation to the idea of space. For the life process, solidarity and closeness are encouraged. What bounds humans together under the condition of the life process is the urgency of life's needs. The problem with the modern age is its emphasis on, nay, through consumerism, its celebration of the priority of life needs. The urgency of the biological life process, which drives the laboring activity, has taken over the free space the other activities require and has put in its place an image of the good life as the life of consumption. The potential to develop a fully human life is not only stifled but our individual and collective ability to recognize reality and question the ethical implications of our actions are seriously impaired (Arendt 1964, 2003). Implicit in her argument, also, is that a fully human approach to social inquiry requires developing the skill to see and understand an object from many perspectives.

Our very socialization into modernity makes thinking through the multidimensional reality of the *vita activa* difficult. Against the weight of the tradition of political philosophy, and in order to articulate a conceptually clear alternative to our modern situation, Arendt returns to the experiences of the ancient Greeks, in order to recover the inspiration behind their interest in establishing a realm dedicated to developing the human capacity for speech and action. Here, we have a people, surrounded by tribal organizations, by monarchies, and by tyrannical empires, who themselves had experienced all of these forms of organization, and yet, who went on to invent or create the first formal democracy, the polis. "The pre-polis past of Greece is the source of the Greek political vocabulary that still survives in all European languages ... with the result that our very word 'politics' is derived from and indicates this one very specific form of political life" (2005, 45).

According to Arendt (1958, 28–38), the polis was established in contrast to the household, and it was only in the polis that one developed one's capacity for

speaking and acting well. This public realm was established so freedom and excellence could flourish as these are displayed in and through action. By virtue of both speech and action, human individuality and uniqueness could appear in the full light of the public realm. Dealing with, and responding to, the *unexpected* is the sine qua non of action. Because “labor assures not only individual survival, but the life of the species” (Arendt 1958, 8), it was undertaken for reasons of necessity.

The distinctive trait of the household sphere was that in it men lived together because they were driven by their wants and needs. ... Natural community in the household therefore was born of necessity, and necessity ruled over all activities. The realm of the polis, on the contrary, was the sphere of freedom, and if there was a relationship between these two spheres it was a matter of course that the mastering of the necessities of life in the household was the condition for freedom of the polis (Arendt 2005, 30–31).

The polis, in privileging the freedom of action and speech, was the realm of persuasion and so required the exclusion of violence. Just as Homer’s heroes had to be persuaded to join in the Trojan War adventure (Arendt 1958, 186–187), so, too, in the polis, one could not be forced but only persuaded to participate.

The good life, as Aristotle called the life of the citizen, therefore, was not merely better, more carefree or nobler than ordinary life, but of an altogether different quality. It was “good” to the extent that by having mastered the necessities of sheer life, by being freed from labor and work, and by overcoming the innate urge for all living creatures for their own survival, it was no longer bound to the biological life process (1958, 36–37).

The household and the public realm, therefore, are not just separate points on a plane but are rather different dimensions in space, different ways of being, as it were.

Arendt, of course, was very much aware of the way modernity shapes our understanding of these human actions (1968, 38–50). With the rise of the modern age we get the “emergence of society—the rise of housekeeping, its activities, problems, and organizational devices—from the shadowy interior of the household into the light of the public sphere.” (38) By virtue of the dominance of “the social,” what was once solely the concern of the private realm, that is, the welfare of the individual and the collective, has now become the dominant concern of the public realm. The equality embedded in the rise of the social is a leveling one, an equality that is measured in terms of sameness rather than distinction, as in the ancient polis. The visual sameness that to Casey blights the contemporary city is experienced in the social realm as leveling. “Society demands that its members act as though they were members of one enormous family, which has only one opinion [i.e., welfare] and one interest [creation of wealth].” (39) Society has replaced monarchy (one-person rule) with bureaucracy, which Arendt calls rule by nobody. “Rule by nobody is not necessarily no-rule; it may indeed, under certain circumstances, even turn out to be one of its cruelest and most tyrannical versions” (40), she says in reference to our modern administered society.

Arendt, in an unacknowledged way, builds on the work by Weber (1947), who shows the connection between the rise of modernity and the rise of bureaucracy. Here, she also foreshadows the work of Michel Foucault (1977, 1982), concerning

the interrelation between the rise of modern society and the rise of the social sciences. Foucault's detailed description and analysis of the way the social science disciplines further the disciplinary technologies' interest in producing "a human being who could be created as a 'docile body'" (132), are well established. Compare that with what Arendt writes in 1958:

It is decisive that society, on all its levels, excludes the possibility of action which formerly was excluded from the household. Instead, society expects from each of its members a certain kind of behaviour, imposing innumerable and various rules, all which tend to normalize its members, to make them behave, to exclude spontaneous action or outstanding achievement. (40)

Foucault's docile body differs only in the refinement of the analysis from Arendt's "behaving" subject. Both provide us with ways of seeing how the modern notion of equality connects with behavior and docility (Bonner 2016, 205–9).

The convergence of Arendt's and Foucault's work here highlights some political implications of the subjection of place to the modern conception of space. Whether Foucault's panopticon or Arendt's social realm, humans are seen more as points on a spatial plane that, through surveillance, disciplinary power, and the rule of nobody, are to be managed and administered. In this case not only is space constituted abstractly, it allows for the conceptualization of human activity as a matter of administration. It is not difficult to see the convergence of modern relations of ruling with Casey and Augé's work on the dominance of space as "spread-outness" in regards to the decline of a sense of place in the world. The hegemony of the modern conceptualization of space leads not only to a visual sameness in relation to particular places, it also makes possible the docile society: the conception of place as a point on a spatial plane not only has implications for the decline in aesthetics and sense of community in the places we live but also for the rise of structures of domination that marginalize political action. Arendt's term to describe these intertwined developments is world alienation. "The modern growth of worldlessness," Arendt says elsewhere (2005, 201), "the withering away of everything *between* us, can be described as the spread of a desert."

Speed has conquered space. ... The fact that the decisive shrinkage of the earth was the consequence of the invention of the airplane, that is, of leaving the surface of the earth altogether, is like a symbol for the general phenomenon that any decrease of terrestrial distance can be won only at the price of putting a decisive distance between man and earth, of alienating man from his immediate earthly distance (1958, 250–251).

Arendt's work shows the dangerous political elements that emerge with the modern conceptualization of space and the reduction of a sense of place. Her work enables us to bring together the loss to modern urban dwellers of a sense of community and visual aesthetics with human political subjection: when space is formulated as "endless," it makes possible a society dominated by the rule of nobody. In this formulation, Arendt coheres very closely to Gadamer's formulation of modern algebra. Through "the devices of modern algebra ... mathematics 'succeeded in freeing itself from the shackles of spatiality,' that is from geometry. ... Modern mathematics freed man from the shackles of earth-bound experience and his power of

cognition from the shackles of finitude” (1975, 264–265). While the alignment of seventeenth century physics with modern technological developments allow for the formulation of space as “immensely available” to human mastery, allowing us to conceive of ourselves as outside and above the power we exercise (Heidegger 1977a), such expansion of human mastery has had the ironic consequence of making humans subject to the rule of nobody. “World alienation, and not self-alienation as Marx thought, has been the hallmark of the modern age” (Arendt 1958, 254). With this world alienation, we also get a corresponding loss of common sense and a rise in the problem of nihilism (Bonner 2001). “A notable decrease in common sense in any given community and a noticeable increase in superstition and gullibility are therefore almost infallible signs of alienation from the world” (1958, 209). It is to address this deficit that makes the rehabilitation of a hermeneutic of space necessary.

4 Multi-perspectivism and Rehabilitating the Concept of Space

As stated, the distinctions between labor, work, and action and the realm each makes possible (life, world, public) rely on and reproduce an implicit sense of space. If the activity of labor is concerned with individual and species survival, then the space between people is incidental to the needs that drive people together to take care of their survival.

The split between subject and object, inherent in human consciousness and irremediable in the Cartesian opposition of man as a *res cogitans* to a surrounding world of *res extensae*, disappears altogether in the case of a living organism, whose very survival depends on the incorporation, the consumption, of outside matter (Arendt 1958, 312–313).

When life is the “highest good,” as is the case in the world of jobholders, the desire to dominate nature in order to serve this need becomes natural. The integration of science, technology, and life survival (Grant 1969) all mean that even when space is understood from a “scopic” perspective, that distance will disappear in the incorporation of outside matter for the sake of survival. That the finitude of the earth’s resources rebels against this “spread-outness” in the form of global warming now seems ironic (in a Weberian way) under “the victory of the *animal laborans*” (Arendt 1958, 320). The critique of the dominance of the concept of space that animates the literature on the need to recover a sense of place relates to Arendt’s critique of the victory of the *animal laborens*. The “scopic drive” intensifies the illusion of human mastery, at the service of survival, leading to the rise of world alienation.

The possibilities for a different relation to space are implied in the second fundamental activity. Work “provides an ‘artificial’ world of things, distinctly different from all natural surroundings” (Arendt 1958, 7). This activity builds a “world” that becomes a home for humans that is more than a mere environment to survive in or an object to be consumed. Rather, the activity of work is oriented to producing

artifacts that will outlast our individual earthly existence: through these artifacts—from heirlooms, to houses, to cities, to works of art, and ultimately to texts of stories of great deeds and great words (e.g., Homer's *Iliad*)—we are connected to past and future generations.

With fabrication and the world that fabrication establishes, we have the beginning of the space of appearances. The world is established through worldly objects built by human artifice.

The man-made world of things, the human artifice erected by *homo faber*, becomes a home for mortal men, whose stability will endure and outlast the ever-changing movement of their lives and actions, only in so much as it transcends both the sheer functionalism of things produced for consumption and the sheer utility of objects produced for use (Arendt 1958, 173).

The human relation to the world is mediated by artificial things, which establish a sense of a world through their ability to demonstrate durability. Works of art are paradigmatic here: as artifacts handed down and preserved from generation to generation, their “thing-like” status, or as Arendt would say their “objective” status, give concrete examples of things that outlast our individual earthly existence. “From the viewpoint of sheer durability, art works clearly are superior to all other things; since they stay longer in the world than anything else, they are the worldliest of all things. Moreover, they are the only things without any function in the life process of society” (Arendt 1961, 209). Such worldly objects also establish a dimension of space in a second sense by demonstrating the way a voice from the past (whether Homer or Shakespeare or even anonymous) continues to speak to us today in ways that are relevant and vital. This relation to space is not the Cartesian *res extensae* but instead includes a temporal dimension, embodied in the artifacts that surround us, and through them convey a sense of permanence on this planet. Yet, the sense of the world that they convey is “intangible,” not unlike the intangibility of person shown through action. As Gadamer says, “the world that appears in language, and is constituted by it, does not have, in the same sense, being-in-itself, and is not relative in the same sense as the object of the natural sciences” (1975, 410).

This notion of world transforms space into the multidimensional. For example, some cities, especially great cities like Rome, London, Paris, New York, Montreal, Dublin, etc., meet Casey's criteria for being places but also Arendt's criteria of being a worldly space. They show an objective thing like existence providing a connection between past and future, but also through an embodied engagement make available “nuance, identity, and history” as a lived experience. Arendt's work here is not only indebted to Heidegger (Canovan 1992, 106–107) but intersects significantly with Gadamer's. Understanding “takes that in which it takes place [i.e., world] as process and puts it between the parties like a disputed object. World is a common ground recognized by everybody, binding on all who communicate in it” (Gadamer 1989, 206). Arendt, in less philosophical terms, describes the world as that which lies between humans, “gathers us together and yet prevents our falling over each other” (1958, 137). The fabrication that establishes the world “creates space between individuals that does not exist by nature, and this existential space

enables individuals to move about, take up different positions and see their common world from different points of view, giving them a grasp of reality that no one can achieve on his own” (Canovan 1992, 107–108). In other words, not only is this concept of space not accessible “to the methodological ideal of rational construction that dominates modern mathematically based natural science” (Gadamer 1975, 414), it is analytically not accessible to a detached philosophic gaze. It is on this basis that Arendt grounds the distinction between truth and reality, and while the former is the concern of Cartesian science and solitary philosophy (Descartes 1999), the latter is the concern of a more social and political theory. We are now beginning to see the way the reality of the common world interrelates with the multi-perspectivism that makes a grasp of reality possible.

To fully develop this sense of a world we need to formulate another dimension of space, which action makes possible, the public realm. Action, the third dimension of human activity, is “the only activity that goes on between [humans] without the intermediary of things [of the world] or [the] matter [of survival]” (Arendt 1958, 7). By action, Arendt means individual initiative, the beginning of something new. Through the human capacity for speech and action, humans can begin something new and unpredictable, which, in turn, shows human uniqueness (Arendt 1958, 175–188). Though action goes on between humans without the intermediary of things, it is not the closeness of intimacy (Arendt 1958, 3–31). It is here, more than labor and work, where space is most important. Arendt explicitly uses the concept of space unlike the more implied uses in labor and work, calling it “the space of appearance” (1958, 207–212).

The polis, properly speaking, is not the city-state in its physical location; it is the organization of people as it arises out of acting and speaking together, and its true space lies between people living together for this purpose, no matter where they happen to be. ... It is the space of appearance in the widest sense of the word, namely, the space where I appear to others as others appear to me, where men exist not merely like other living or inanimate things but make their appearance explicitly. ... To be deprived of it means to be deprived of reality, which humanly and politically speaking, is the same as appearance. To men the reality of the world is guaranteed by the presence of others, by its appearing to all (Arendt 1958, 198–199).

The public realm requires a space where humans can appear to each other. If the products of human artifice add a worldly dimension to space on earth, then the public realm adds a human dimensionality to space. Through the space of the public realm, humans through words and deeds show their uniqueness. As the space of appearance for words and deeds, humans, through their ability to initiate and speak, show their unique personhood (Arendt 1968).

Action and speech are so closely related because the primordial and specifically human act must at the same time contain the answer to the question asked of every newcomer: “Who are you?” ... In acting and speaking, men show who they are, reveal their unique personal identities and thus make their appearance in the human world (Arendt 1958, 178).

While the activities of life, work, and action are analytically distinct, the latter two support and strengthen each other. The public realm provides an opportunity to bring together the world of human artifacts with the world of words and deeds.

Without being talked about by men and without housing them, the world would not be a human artifice but a heap of unrelated things to which each isolated individual was at liberty to add one more object; without human artifice to house them, human affairs would be as floating, as futile and vain, as the wanderings of nomad tribes (Arendt 1958, 204).

Talk provides for the world of things and the world of things houses the impermanence of speeches and actions. The public realm is the space that allows people to appear through the uniquely human capacities of speaking and beginning something new. The world embodied in human artifacts houses this public realm: the words and deeds that take place in this realm provide an alive and contemporary relevance to the depth of the world. In a very real sense, the space of appearances provides for the way the speeches and actions of humans *have a place and not just a space*.

Arendt's concept of action, and the public realm that it both gives birth to and is sustained by, allows for the full integration of place and space. Without the space of appearances, the human affairs that preoccupy our words and deeds become inconsequential; without the space for organized remembrance, human speech would be as wispy and impermanent as a cold breath on a winter's morning—there, gone, lost. With the space of appearances (whether the ancient polis, or the councils or soviets of revolutionary France, Russia, or the United States) they change the course of history. Analytically speaking, the polis not only allows for but requires the integration of space and place—as we think of Athens, Paris, or Boston (1963). As short lived as the polis experiment in ancient Athens was,

its bare existence has sufficed to elevate action to the highest rank in the *vita activa*, and to single out speech as the decisive distinction between human and animal life, both of which bestowed on politics a dignity which even today [when we think of Martin Luther King or Mandela] has not altogether disappeared (Arendt 1958, 205).

Whenever the dignity of politics arises, it is a particular display of the integration of place and space when humans come together to act in concert and give human speech a memorable place.

In a very unique way, Arendt's multi-perspectivism allows us to recognize as an empirically imaginable possibility the integration of place and space in the reality of the public realm. The rehabilitation of the concept of space that Arendt's multi-perspectivism makes possible also allows for the recovery of an analytic sense of place, places that are haunted by remembrances. Though the reality of the public realm has an ephemeral quality—in terms of human history the polis was short-lived—that unique instantiation provides for its recovery through words and deeds. The different locations that each speaker displays become a way to recognize “sameness in utter diversity.” In this case identity *emplaces* such words and deeds.

When Casey and Augé define place in terms of its particularity and uniqueness, it coheres well with the plurality required for human uniqueness to appear. What both sets of theorists have in common is that the reality of the public realm and the reality of a sense of place are real within this hermeneutic circle. To conclude with a difference that haunts this paper, within this circle, the multi-perspectivism that the philosopher Gadamer draws on when he says that “the same tradition must always be understood in a different way” (1975, 278), to elaborate Aristotle's con-

cept of *phronesis*, and the multi-perspectivism that the political theorist Arendt uses when she says “political thought is representative. I form an opinion by considering a given issue from different viewpoints, by making present to my mind the standpoints of those who are absent” (1961, 241), are recognizably similar, despite their deep differences on the significance of the Plato/Aristotle heritage (Gadamer 1986; Arendt 1958). Are we not also here seeing “sameness in utter diversity?”

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Lefebvre, Hermeneutics, and Place

Peter Gratton

Abstract Though not a hermeneutical thinker himself, Henri Lefebvre offers an important challenge to thinking the hermeneutics of place with his 1974 *Production of Space* dominating many discussions of spatiality in recent decades. I first offer an overview of Lefebvre's projects and then focus on his relationship to the thinking of space and dwelling in Martin Heidegger. Lastly I turn to his account of the urbanization of the world and its resonances with those thinking an event that would create another world from within the everyday collisions of neoliberal spaces and the possibilities of moving beyond them.

Those seeking to bring the writings of Henri Lefebvre within the orbit of hermeneutics face the significant problem that Lefebvre's methodology during his long career was the dialectics of Marxism. His avowed philosophical parentage was the trio of Hegel, who posited most clearly the modern belief that spatiality is in service to the state; Nietzsche, who offered the glimpse of modernity's reactive production of those anarchical impulses opposing state spaces; and Marx, whose account of production are central to Lefebvre's depictions of space and the world (Lefebvre 1975, 21–24; 2003, 42–49). In a crucial methodological essay from the mid-1970s, *Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche ou le royaume des ombres*, Lefebvre asks himself why Martin Heidegger was not among this triumvirate:

[Heidegger] obscures the more concrete history of Hegel and Marx, without attaining the power of Nietzsche's critique of history. Heidegger's philosophy, a disguised, barely secularized theodicy, strives to rescue traditional philosophy without subjecting it to a radical critique. Although he touches on it, Heidegger evades the notion of metaphilosophy [or movement into the concrete]. He substitutes for it so-called fundamental ontology, a variant, whether we like it or not, of metaphysics. (Lefebvre 2003, 49)

Needless to say, this reading is one-sided, yet the very fact that he raises Heidegger's name in the first place—and none others in the same way—is indicative of a certain force that his writings had over him, and hence a certain hermeneutical orientation. Indeed, he goes on to argue that Heidegger “was among the first to perceive and

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foresee the dangers inherent in overvaluing technology,” and his “critique of modernity” helps us to understand the ways in which the “appropriation of nature... tends to destroy it,” which will be key points in Lefebvre’s own work (ibid., 49). We can represent, then, opposing readings of Lefebvre’s relation to Heidegger and hermeneutics in terms of two contrasting interpretations: Stuart Elden’s *Understanding Henri Lefebvre* (2004a) and Geoffrey Waite’s “Lefebvre without Heidegger” (2008). Elden’s claims that Lefebvre’s “reading of space is heavily indebted to Heidegger,” even if “his understanding of production is a taking forward of Marx” (Elden 2004a, 98). What Elden calls for, then, is a Lefebvre-inspired “Left Heideggerianism” that would operate “between Marx and Heidegger,” with both the philosophical depth of Heidegger and the concrete analyses of the political economy of space from Marx (ibid., 101). Waite calls this “vapid” given his own argument that Heidegger is eminently concrete on his own with no need of Lefebvre; Heidegger, he avers, always had an esoteric fascist project pre- and postdating the events of the 1930s anathema to any politics of the left, let alone a “Left-Heideggerianism” (Waite 2008, 100–103). One gets the sense that Waite still uses a typewriter, all to literally hammer his points onto the page, attacking Elden for being a “Left-Liberal intellectual historian...that Marxism must combat as being non-Marxist and non-Communist” (ibid., 95).

The point is not to adjudicate this dispute, which would rerun so many arguments on the left as to what uses Heidegger’s philosophy can be put given his non-Marxian orientation. This would also have the upshot of dubiously offering Heidegger up in this chapter as metonymic for all of hermeneutics. Rather, the task here is less grand than answering the call for a new program for the left or coming to conclusions about what is to be done with Heidegger’s philosophy given his reactionary politics. Moreover, it’s not to portray Lefebvre as a hermeneutic philosopher: he doesn’t offer theories of reading or interpretation and he often takes to task those who emphasize language as the *modus operandi* of our being in the world. However, I would argue that all hermeneutic thinking is ultimately a consideration of place, that is, we are always interpreting the world, ourselves, and texts *in medias res*, and the *da* of *Dasein*, of our being-there is never some abstracted space, but one produced in and through particular spacings of the political that Lefebvre was attempting to diagnose. What I offer here, then, is an overview and critical discussion of Lefebvre’s thinking of space, given that it both contests and extends the central insights of hermeneutical thinking. It’s perhaps true, as Jeff Malpas writes, that Lefebvre never offered a philosophical thinking of place, but it’s also the case that his thinking of the production of space is a counter to those who would offer an *a priori* accounting of the spatiality of place without its specific instantiations in a given historico-political context (Malpas 2008, 88; 2012, 65–6). If Lefebvre can be faulted for not providing a transcendental discussion of place, then that’s only inasmuch as there is no such thing as an *a priori* account of place: if thinking all begins in a place, then one can never suggest that there is a universal account of place as such, since that would have the effect of de-politicizing and rendering neutral conceptions of space and

place that are anything but. Far from describing the production of space as non-political, the point is to show how it is political and social through and through:

No sooner has space assumed a political character than its depoliticization appears on the agenda. A politicized space destroys the political conditions that brought it about, because the management and appropriation of such a space run counter to the state as well as to political parties; they call for other forms of management—loosely speaking, for ‘self-management’ [that is, what he’ll call *autogestion*]-of territorial units, towns, urban communities, regions, and so on. (Lefebvre 1991, 416)

In other words, space and place (Lefebvre uses the French *espace*) are not *a priori* categories, as in Kant, but rather something produced in, through, and as the social, which is Lefebvre’s fundamental claim.

1 Lefebvre’s Background

Let’s begin with an overview of Henri Lefebvre’s sprawling works, before zeroing in on his account of space in such crucial texts as *The Production of Space* (1974). Born in 1901 in Hagetmau in the Pyrenees, Lefebvre’s first intellectual forays were on and behind the pages of the radical journal *Philosophies* in 1920s and 1930s. The journal was formed to push back against the dominant Bergsonism and neo-Kantianism of the French intellectual scene, providing for new readings of Spinoza, Hegel, Marx, and Nietzsche as well as reflections on concrete political questions of time. Lefebvre’s first article was a critique of the Dada movement, though he would form friendships with surrealists such as Breton and Aragon, a background important for understanding his considerations of the festival as a means for reconfiguring dominant modes of spatiality. After *Philosophies* and its replacement *L’esprit* were dissolved, Lefebvre took up, after military service, work in a factory and then as a self-described “existentialist philosopher-taxi-driver” (Elden 2004b, 3). Following his joining of French Communist Party in 1928, Lefebvre would turn to teaching as a *professeur de lycée* at Privas and later in Montargis, while also undertaking careful studies of Marx as well as the daily life of such industrial centers as the region of Privas. In 1936, he published *La conscience mystifiée*, with Herbert Guterman, which followed up that decade’s publication of Marx’s 1844 *Paris Manuscripts* to discuss the import of alienation for Marxian theory.

By the outbreak of World War II, Lefebvre was an established and important intellectual in the Communist Party, which led to his removal from his teaching post during the Occupation. From that point on, he joined the resistance, writing critiques of the Vichy regime for communist pamphlets, working with others to derail German trains, and outing collaborators of the regime (Merryfield 2002, 72). Based in the Pyrenees, Lefebvre became interested in the rhythms of rural life, which took up several of his more important writings and run counter to the view of him as simply an urban theorist. After the war, Lefebvre eventually became a professor of sociology at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique. In 1958 came his two-decades-long break with the Communist Party and Lefebvre spent the years

leading up to May 1968 passing through various leftist groups, such as the Situationists and the Maoists, while also moving to the University of Strasbourg (1961–1965) and Nanterre (1965–1973). Though in his late 60s, Lefebvre's work on the creation of “moments” that undo state spaces made his work integral to the youth movements of the 1960s, and as he entered his eighth decade, Lefebvre embarked on his most productive and influential period, which included *La droit à la ville* (1968), a book with an imposing afterlife haunting protest movements worldwide; *L'irruption de Nanterre au sommet* (1968), his reflections on the events of that year; *La production de l'espace* (1974); and his imposing four-volume *De l'état* (1976–1978), just to skim the surface of a voluminous number of writings. In the 1980s, Lefebvre published the third volume of his long series on everyday life, *Critique de la vie quotidienne III: De la modernité au modernisme* and at the time of his death, in 1991 at age 90, continued work on the intersections of time and place in terms of his “rhythmanalysis” in *Elements de rythmanalyse: Introduction à la connaissance de rythmes*.

Risking an almost violent reduction, we can mark out four crucial ideas under which Lefebvre's influence remains: (1) first, his dialectical Marxism offered a creative thinking of sublation as fully material, as an act that was irreducible to a given logic of negation and affirmation, since it is a promise of a future beyond that opposition. Lefebvre's major work on Marxism of the 1960s and 1970s was to oppose the structuralism of Althusser, who he believed fetishized language and wrongly separated out the early Marx who wrote on alienation from the later, supposedly “scientific” Marx of *Das Kapital*. (2) His critique of everyday life. Beginning in the 1930s, Lefebvre gave himself a wide berth to consider the undertheorized production of quotidian life, which capitalism sought to colonize in order to render its inhabitants as mere consumers, and which nevertheless, through unproductive leisure, was a space with revolutionary potential, a point influential on the Situationists, among others. (3) Already a term of art for worker's self-rule at sites of production, Lefebvre took up the term *autogestion* in key places in the 1960s and 1970s as an update of Lenin's depiction of communism as a withering away of the state (Lefebvre 2009, 149–50). An “opening toward the possible,” *autogestion* must not be merely local in scope, but truly global, since anything but would immediately collapse into its own reactionary policing of borders. *Autogestion*, as a political strategy, is when “members of a free association take control over their own life, in such a way that it becomes their work [*oeuvre*], [which] is called appropriation, de-alienation” (ibid., 150). *Autogestion* is implacably “grassroots” and “conflictual” and thus is opposed to anything like the “dictatorship” of the proletariat, which would end its vitality. (4) The right to the city is Lefebvre's response to the urbanization of the planet under which capitalism unfolds its banner, as opposed to the earlier forms of industrialization. The right to the city targets this “form” of capitalism, attempting to produce spaces of *autogestion* in the interstices of capitalism's uneven development and undermine administrative rationality of the state.

2 The Production of Space

While *The Production of Space* and ancillary works postdates some of Lefebvre's writings on these four concepts, it will be clear quickly how Lefebvre's "spatiology" relates to them in crucial respects. Here is the most cited of Lefebvre's formulations regarding space: "(Social) space is a (social) product. ...The social and political (state) forces which engendered this space now seek, but fail, to master it completely; the very agency that has forced spatial reality towards a sort of uncontrollable autonomy now strives to run it aground, then shackle and enslave it" (Lefebvre 1991, 26). Lefebvre's aim is to correct what he believes to be a modernist emphasis of time and historicity over spatialization. This is not to say that time and space are separable from one another but rather to show how capitalism operates by way of the production not of simple commodities *in* space but by the production of space itself (ibid., 175). What remains unclear in Lefebvre is what to make of his claim above that "(social) space is a (social) product," since, using Heideggerian parlance, he often proceeds from both sides of the ontico-ontological difference. On the one hand, he produces discussions of Greek and other historical instantiations so as to suggest that space is the ontological condition of possibility of sociality, a point that seems to dominate his reception (e.g., 1991, 53). "Since *ex hypothesi* each mode of production has its own particular space," he writes, "the shift from one mode to another must entail the production of a new space" (ibid., 46). Yet in an ontic vein, he will also write "space is *becoming* the principal stake of goal-directed actions and struggles," since "space is assuming *an increasingly important role* in supposedly 'modern' societies" (ibid., 410; 412, my emphases). In his view, "productive forces" since Marx, have "taken another great leap--from the production of things in space to the production of space" (ibid., 383). Otherwise put, "the problematic of space...has displaced the problematic of industrialization" that Marx had diagnosed (ibid., 89). In this way, he seems to want it both (1) that space is the *passe-partout* to understanding different periods of sociality and (2) that space is more and more crucial to understanding the capitalist milieu given that it is produced by the machinery of capitalism. (No doubt, in typical Marxist fashion, where there is confusion, he would just note it's a dialectic of the two.) In any event, Lefebvre depicts space as a "concrete abstraction," since to speak of it as such requires moving into discussions of particular milieu while attending to what is formalizable in that milieu, namely its spatiality. Even absolute space for Lefebvre is perspectival, not geometric, as in Descartes, since it looks to what is left and right, high and low (Elden 2004b, 190). In this way, he separates out, as Heidegger does, the concepts or theorization of space that reduces its qualities to quantification, from its concrete engagement in gestures and sense. Lefebvre introduces a triadic relation of three spatial modes: space as perceived (*perçu*), conceived (*conçu*), and lived (*vécu*). To these three ways of engaging space Lefebvre affixes these three modes of decoding them:

1. *spatial practices* are those that "secret[e] that society's space," which are the networks, routes, and material spaces that are "cohesive" but not necessarily

“coherent” in the neo-capitalist milieu. This is the real spaces in which production and reproduction happen. Writing in Fordist economic era, Lefebvre nominates the “extreme but significant case” of the “daily life of a tenant in a government-subsidized high-rise housing project” as paradigmatic of the spatial practices of the early 1970s (Lefebvre 1991, 38). These practices cash out the dialectical relation of the two other elements below.

2. *Representations of space* are the conceived spaces of a certain “know-how” by which the knowledges of urban planners, architects, scientists, mapmakers, and others are put to work. These representations, he argues, are abstractions, but as a know-how, akin to Foucault’s own usage of the French *savoir* over *connaissance*, they are neither true nor false, or rather, produce the measures of the true and false and how they are quantified. Just as Marx held that abstract labor was quantified through the measure of money, which in turn had concrete effects, abstract spaces have a “real ontological status” in “specific buildings, places, activities, and modes of market intercourse over and through space,” while nevertheless reductive of all qualitative differences in spatiality and practices (Merryfield 2002, 111–2). But while representations of space tend towards homogenization, towards an enframing that cannot admit ontological difference, Lefebvre qualifies that there is always in capitalism uneven development and thus differences of landscape that can’t quite be paved over. This “space that homogenizes,” as he puts it, in one of his ubiquitous attempts at aphorism, “thus has nothing homogeneous about it” (Lefebvre 1991, 112). This is the ultimate attempt to “produce space” as a “triumph of homogeneity,” an “inherently violent” leveling of differential spaces to reproducible units in manner analogous to the production of commodities on an assembly line (ibid., 337; 387).
3. Representational spaces (*espaces de représentation*) are spaces as “directly lived through its associated images and symbols,” space as inhabited which the imagination, by way of philosophers and poets, “seeks to change and appropriate” (Lefebvre 1991, 39). As we’ll note below when we say more about this kind of space, Lefebvre is clear in several places that his thinking of it owes much to Heidegger.

This triadic relation is not to be taken as a “model,” which would have the force of reifying space in terms of an abstraction, but as a fungible diagnostic for considering different modalities of spacing across the world. As an example, he offers the notion of the body as perceived (“the practical basis of the outside world”), as conceived through physiology and various sciences, and as lived via rich cultural symbolism, where the “heart” or the sexual organs are irreducible to perception or a given science. This last notion of spacing, “representational spaces” as lived (*vécu*), has the power to reconfigure the balance between common sensical “perceived” space and the official “conceived space” offered by state and corporate apparatuses. Lefebvre calls to mind the Dadaist and surrealist movements as offering new views of space, but Elden is right to mention Heidegger as a key influence here. In the “rage for measurement and calculation” (Lefebvre 1970, 161), Cartesian notions of space replace dwelling (*habiter*) with the notion of habitat (*habitat*), which is

Lefebvre's quasi-Heideggerian rewriting of Marx's notion of alienation in spatial terms and, of course, is not far from Heidegger's own reading of Cartesian space in *Being and Time* (Lefebvre 2003, 81). This habitat reduces all living to mere reproduction and consumption, one that he argues can't even be described at the level of "animality," which "is much more complex in its spontaneity" (ibid.).

For Lefebvre, Heidegger is important for the "restoration" of the notion of dwelling, especially in his readings of Hölderlin. A crucial term in Lefebvre's works on space, *habiter* is also the typical French translation of Heidegger's *wohnen*, to inhabit or dwell (Elden 2004a, 96). Lefebvre's description of Heidegger as "restoring" dwelling is also double-sided, since Heidegger's work only attempts to "restore" the habits or habitation of a previous class structure, namely those aristocrats who could truly dwell in previous times (Lefebvre 1991, 314). However, he also is a reminder of a line of thinking that considers space otherwise than as a habitat or commodified units. In *Urban Revolution*, Lefebvre writes:

Even though [Heidegger's] "poetic" critique of "habitat" and industrial space may appear to be a right-wing critique, nostalgic and atavistic, it nonetheless introduced the problematic of space. The human being cannot build and dwell, that is to say, possess a dwelling in which he lives, without also possessing something more (or less) than himself: his relation to the possible and the imaginary. (Lefebvre 2003, 81)

The problem that Lefebvre cites in the second half of this quotation is that whatever Heidegger had to say about possibility rising above actuality and so forth, Heidegger is insufficiently concrete. Lefebvre writes:

Heidegger, now, shows us a world ravaged by technology, that through it ravages leads towards another dream, another (as yet unperceived) world. He warns us: a lodging built on the basis of economic or technological dictates is as far removed from dwelling as the language of machines is from poetry. [Heidegger] does not tell us how to construct, "here and now," building and cities. (Elden 2004a, 97)

In short, Heidegger leads by way of "descriptions" that only interpret the world, not change it. No doubt, the charge is misplaced if by concrete one precisely means that one needs to be pouring the concrete for new buildings and cities. It is also typical of Lefebvre's readings of Heidegger he doesn't comment on the latter's critique of a long tradition's hold over what gets called "the human," "the imagination," the "lived," the "perceived," and so on, words that Lefebvre treats as terminologically straightforward. Nor does he dwell for more than a moment than necessary on what dwelling might mean other than what would fit into these and other pre-fabricated notions on loan from Marxism. For example, when Lefebvre takes Heidegger to task for simply thinking production as a "making appear" or "a bringing-forth [*un surgissement*]" (1991, 122), this is a problem only insofar as Lefebvre doesn't recognize that Heidegger's rethinking of *physis* would upset the neat lines he wants to have between natural "creation" and artificial and capitalistic "production." This opposition between nature and culture, *physis* and *technê* is in line with so many others in the West, but is also critiqued in one of Heidegger's essays, "The Question Concerning Technology," that Lefebvre invariably comments upon. Interpreting the world is not a staid stepping back that does not involve a praxis; it is a praxis itself.

For that matter, any thinker of *autogestion* should refuse the gesture of a philosophy that tells others what is to be done, what is to be built, however concrete that may sound.

And yet, whatever the myriad counter-motions readers of Heidegger can and should make, the invocation of place throughout the recent Continental philosophical literature on it follows Heidegger in describing “absolute space,” as Lefebvre calls it, but while losing all manner of political bite and often languishing in repeating Heidegger’s invocations of the pastoral and the not-so-beaten paths. Is a philosophy of place only to leave us at the *da* of *Dasein*, at the worlding of the world? Can it think a philosophy that is as urban as it is urbane? This would mean treading uneasily in thinking of Heidegger *with* Marx via Lefebvre, a move that could too quickly allow one to pick up what one likes as if philosophy was an *à la carte* buffet, as if Heidegger’s discussions of technicity were some sort of existential analytic of Marxian alienation, or as if Lefebvre’s notion of *habiter* should be literally domesticated in terms of a hermeneutic understanding of dwelling. The Marxian critique of philosophers has always been that they are one-sided, that they refuse the concrete, and that, whatever alibis they might construct, they are always going to privilege theory over praxis, the *a priori* or ontological over the *a posteriori* or ontic, and thus only ever go on about this place or this jug without excavations of the forces of production behind it. In sum, they can provide at best an account of one of the forms of spatialization above, as perceived, *or* as conceived, *or* as lived, but not the dialectic relation among and between all three. On the other hand, the hermeneutic philosopher will respond that rather than providing a thinking of space and place, the Lefebvrian-type philosopher can only provide something like a reportage of common sense notions of space to which she gives political valence by claiming them as the result of historical dialectics or some other onto-theological motor of history. We would seem at an impasse, where each claims the other as the part in the whole: the hermeneutic philosopher replicating the ideas produced by the spatialization of capitalism but claiming them as ontological conditions of possibility; the Lefebvrian providing an account of but one moment in the long story of Western metaphysics. However, despite this impasse, I want to pull the writings of Lefebvre together with a certain hermeneutics of the event of the world, not to deny the differences between their accounts but to show a certain commonality in attempting to think a future worthy of the name, a witnessing of the coming of the world on the flip side of whatever legacies (Western metaphysics, ontotheology, the spatialization of capitalism after industrialization, etc.), one I’ll show has promise in another thinker influenced by Heidegger and Marx, namely Jean-Luc Nancy, whose thinking of the world invokes many Lefebvrian terms and claims. In this way, I’d like to attend to Lefebvre’s invocations of the global and the creation of the world (*mondialisation*) that, without a doubt, have a resonance with a certain thinking of the “sense of the world” and its event discussed in such thinkers as Nancy and Heidegger.

3 Lefebvre, Nancy, and Mondialisation

When attending to the global or the world as such, we would seem to lose all too quickly attention to the production of differences in different milieu and places. Turning to the world, then, would risk pulling back too far, it would seem, to survey the whole and thus losing a vantage point on the local. But for Lefebvre, such a conceived notion of space and place is precisely one he wishes to dislodge since it is a thinking in line with onto-theological conceptions of the world. Lefebvre writes:

When Heidegger utters “*Die Welt weltet*” (the world worlds [*le monde se mondifie*]), this statement, which is close to tautology, has great meaning. He means to say that the world-wide [*mondial*] conceives itself in and by itself and not by another thing (history, spirit, work, science, etc.). ...It does not exist before it creates itself, and yet, it proclaimed itself... through all the powers, technologies, knowledge, art. (Lefebvre 2009, 276)

For Lefebvre, the production of spaces in capitalism, the production of the “world-wide” (*mondiale*) through globalization (*mondialisation*), by way of a world-wide market, as Marx argued, offers the greatest peril, not least to “nature” as that which is dominated and which in turns threatens human existence, and thus capitalism appears in the midst of something like a death drive (Lefebvre 1991, 71; see also Nancy 2007, 34). Lefebvre argues that capitalism is both totalizing and fragmentary: it homogenizes spaces even as it produces divisions of labor within various forms of knowledge that make us unable to see vast connections from within our specialized silos. The task, he argues, is to see the links between the everyday, between the quotidian spaces that are anything but wholly leveled out, and the world-wide, the opening of a world that is without a “why,” without a dependence on some ground or pre-given direction beneath it. Jean-Luc Nancy echoes this, citing the same Angelus Silesius passage so dear to Lefebvre in his own discussions of the “without why” of the world, while also differentiating the world from a habitat or *habitus* (Lefebvre 1991, 70):

If the world...is not the representation of a universe (*cosmos*) nor that of a here below, but the excess—beyond any representation of an *ethos* or of a *habitus*—of a stance by which the world stands by itself...then one must address principle of such an absence of principle directly. This must be named the “without-reason” of the world, or its absence of ground. It is not a new idea to say that the world is “without reason”... We know quite well that it is found in Angelus Silesius (“the rose grows without reason”) but one that does not always notice how it works within all the great formulations of the most classical rationalism. (Nancy 2007, 47)

Nancy and Lefebvre differentiate terms often taken interchangeably: *globalisation* (globalisation) and *mondialisation* (world-creating or world-producing). In globalization, the world is taken as a market, that is, as something that can be bought and sold, and hence the only sense of the world is the accumulation of fragmented spaces, particularly at the level of states, yet an opening to the world, to the world-wide (*mondiale*) is also made, and here Lefebvre suggests there is an event in thought that occurs when the world is grasped as a whole whereupon new possibilities and spaces can be created. Here Nancy is useful since he separates out creation

from production, even the capitalist “production of space,” which is a “fabrication that supposes a given, a project, and a producer” (Nancy 2007, 51). Lefebvre’s thinking of the urban planet focuses on its “terricide,” a closing down of the world’s opening, since “homogenization exerts itself on a worldwide scale, producing a space whose every part is interchangeable (quantified, without qualities)” (Lefebvre 2009, 278; 204). For Nancy, this is the production of the world (*monde*) as a something both dirty and unworldly (*immonde*) in terms of a “general equivalence” (Nancy 2007, 34). Globalization is a making concrete and materializing of philosophical conceptions of the world that Heidegger argued in *Being and Time* were onto-theological. It is an attempt to fabricate a world where all spaces are fragmented and wholly equivalent. This production brings us to the limits of considerations of the world as a “totality” or “*mondialité*,” Lefebvre argues, since the world and the world-wide are ever incomplete given that it’s the spacing of possibilities, and the “world worlds,” it creates and does not merely “produce space,” in and through the spacing of the everyday, all while not reducing one space to another. Lefebvre writes:

We are confronted not by one social space but by many—indeed by an unlimited multiplicity or uncountable set of social spaces...the *worldwide does not abolish the local*. This is not a consequence of the law of uneven development, but a law in its own right....[S]ocial space, and especially urban space, emerge[s] in all its diversity--and with a structure far more reminiscent of flaky *mille-feuille* pastry than of the homogeneous and isotropic space of classical mathematics. (Lefebvre 1991, 86)

In this way, Lefebvre tries to disrupt the opposition between the global and the local, since any thinking of the former is dependent on “representations of space,” on a world as “conceived” and hence back within Cartesian notions of space. For this reason, the local is not “in” the world any more than the world is but a container with relations of parts to a whole. Analyses of Heidegger that follow too closely his account of everydayness in *Being and Time*—as opposed to his later considerations of the event of the four-fold in this thing or that, such as a jug—tend to view the quotidian as undifferentiated, as leveled-out and filled with idle chatter, that is, overrun by what Lefebvre calls the world as perceived, as held in common sense. But Lefebvre’s claim is that while capitalism attempts to colonize and homogenize the spaces and rhythms of the everyday, it is through the everyday and the “local” that another world, so to speak, is possible. This would be a world to come that is non-representable, since this would only reify and make permanent the current “representations of space” and our current “orientation.” Lefebvre calls for a new “*sens*”—the term can be translated as orientation, direction, sense, or meaning—of the world. Here are the final lines of *The Production of Space*, where Lefebvre writes:

The creation (or production) of a planet-wide space as the social foundation of a transformed everyday life open to myriad possibilities--such is the dawn now beginning to break on the far horizon....We are concerned with what might be called a ‘sense [*sens*]’: an organ that perceives, a direction that may be conceived, and a directly lived movement progressing towards the horizon. (Lefebvre 1991, 422–3).

This opening of a sense or new direction is read back by Lefebvre into the triad of perceived, conceived, and lived, but nevertheless requires thinking that which is on the “furthest horizon” (ibid., 422). To some extent, for Lefebvre, as for Nancy a generation later, globalization offers both the threat of global annihilation and the chance for another sense of the world, for inventing the “right to difference”: “The world revolution—through which the world will become a ‘world’—is happening, in ways that are stranger, richer and more unexpected than were ever imagined a century ago”. For Lefebvre, this would have to be a world that is urbanized, given the direction of capitalism at the time he was writing. Nancy argues for an opening of existence in terms of singular-plurality while Lefebvre looks to materialist and radical possibilities of creating urban societies now on the margins of our repetitive, “cosmopolitan” cities: the “city historically constructed...is only an object of cultural consumption for tourists, for aestheticism, avid for spectacles and the picturesque”. Ironically, the creation of the world, in Nancy’s sense, would call for the end of the city as we know, and perhaps any urbanism we know under that heading. Nancy writes:

The city spreads and extends all the way to the point where, while it tends to cover the entire orb of the planet, it loses its properties as [the urban]. That which extends is no longer properly urban...but megapolitical, metropolitan, or co-urbational...In such a network, the city crowds, the hyperbolic accumulation of construction projects (with their concomitant demolition) and of exchanges (of movements, products, and information) spread, and the inequality and apartheid concerning the access to the urban milieu (assuming that it is a dwelling, comfort, and culture), or these exclusions from the city that for a long time has produced its own rejections and outcasts, accumulate proportionally. The result can only be understood in terms of what is called an *agglomeration*. (Nancy 2007, 33)

For Lefebvre, underneath this “agglomeration” is a potentiality of an urbane urbanism beyond the vulgar repetition of the same in globalization. Lefebvre’s famed “right to the city” calls for an urbanism that produces something other than the production of space under contemporary capitalism, which means the invention of new spaces and places, new modes of being-with and dwelling in and as the world, irreducible to what we understand by the world and what we understand by the urban. We are, Lefebvre writes correctly, facing a “trial by space,” one that requires more than just a defense of the “hermeneutics of space,” but rather a repoliticization of those places in which the misery of the masses is anything but an abstraction. In a 1969 television interview, Heidegger commented on the last and eleventh of Marx’s “Theses on Feuerbach.”

“Philosophers have only interpreted the world differently, what matters is to transform it [*Die Philosophen haben die Welt nur verschieden interpretiert, es kommt drauf an, sie zu verändern*].” When this statement is cited and when it is followed, it is overlooked that changing the world presupposes a change in the positing of the world. A positing of the world can only be won by adequately interpreting the world. That means: Marx’s demand for a “change” is based upon a very definite interpretation of the world, and therefore this statement is proved to be without foundation. (Hemming 2013, 18)

Lefebvre, of course, never tired of citing the eleventh thesis, arguing at points that Heidegger had failed to move from the first half of the sentence to the second, while

Heidegger himself always thought Marx to be too mired in an onto-theological view of worldhood to posit any event or *Ereignis* beyond the current one. Yet, because of his attention to the local and the everyday, Lefebvre does not leave us with the quietism inevitable if all change must be global and hence totalizing (why work against obstacles that seem insurmountable?), and hence leaving us only the world as it has been conceived, even in the works of Marx. Rather, since the world is available in this or that production of a certain space, another world is possible *hic et nunc*, here in the everyday, where the *mundus* can be otherwise than mundane. That is the promise of Lefebvre's politics, in and after reading his work, here and now and every day.

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A Discursive View from Somewhere: Foucault's Epistemic Position

Hans-Herbert Kögler

Abstract Michel Foucault's work is concerned with positioning knowledge in discourse and power. Despite being defined by multiple reorientations, an underlying focus remains the rejection of any transcendental or essentialist notion of the subject, truth, or meaning. Foucault's efforts are driven by the aim to situate subjects, knowledges, and truths; experience is understood to be defined by specific settings. Yet if Foucault's concern is thus the concrete positioning of our experience, the question arises how such positionings are themselves undertaken: from which discursive position is the reconstruction of discourses itself possible? And in which way is the analyst of power herself embedded in power practices, possibly engaged in acts of domination and objectification? In this essay I follow Foucault's own (in the end problematic) attempts to answer these methodological questions. Through a careful reconstruction and engagement of Foucault's efforts to define his approach as a pure description of discursive events, or to situate his genealogy alongside the oppressed and marginalized agents, the essay arrives at a hermeneutic grounding of discourse and power analysis which avoids the pitfalls of his own proposals. At the core of Foucault's discursive view from somewhere, we shall find the hermeneutic potential for a dialogical reciprocity between theorist and agent. The new vision of a mutual perspective-taking between discourse analyst and social agent fuses both sides into the perspective of situated reflexive agency.

Michel Foucault's work is centrally concerned with positioning knowledge in discourse and power. Hermeneutics, in turn, is defined by its unique relation to place.¹ The ubiquity of place is reflected in the essential importance that we grant to the situated pre-understanding of the interpreter (Gadamer [1960] 1989, 267–382.) What is less clear, however, is how the *hermeneutic situation* that defines the pre-understanding of the interpreter is constituted. What exactly entails this situation,

¹For a concise introduction to the central problematics of place within hermeneutics, see Malpas 2015.

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how is it structured, and what aspects influence or determine how meaning is understood? Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics famously declared that "all being that can be understood is language," but the issue remains whether *language* itself is influenced by diverse ontological layers of existence.² It is in this vein that Foucault's work catches the eye of hermeneutics. Foucault can help us, I argue, to expand our ontological perspective of the hermeneutic situation and thus to better understand interpretation generally.³ Specifically, I will advance three claims with regard to Foucault.

First, I argue that the issue of place—i.e. the problematic of one's location, of the position of the subject, of grounding a phenomenon in its concrete context of social production—is absolutely central to Foucault. Foucault's work underwent dramatic changes and shifts in orientation, but as an underlying current remains a critique of transcendental or essentialist notions of the subject (as grounding knowledge), of truth (as defined by universal standards), and of meaning (as free from power and institutional force). All these topical efforts are driven by the aim *to situate subjects, knowledges, and truths*. What Foucault develops in terms of discourse analysis, power analysis, and an aesthetic-existential ethics is all geared towards *positioning* hitherto differently defined philosophical entities: truth and knowledge is to be situated in the concreteness of discursive events and formations; the individual subject is to be understood as emerging from concrete practices of power and domination; and ethical attitudes are to be located in concrete practices of self-formation.

Second, I argue that Foucault's epistemic position requires a thorough methodological justification.⁴ In Foucault's diverse analyses, truth owes its force to its location in discursive formations, individuals are defined and shaped by social power practices, and agents are seen as capable of situated ethical self-government. In all these projects, experience is understood as defined by its specific settings. Yet if Foucault's concern is the positioning of our experience, the question arises how those positionings are themselves undertaken, i.e. from what methodological and epistemic perspective they can be launched and claimed: From which *discursive position* is the reconstruction of the discourses possible? In which way is the *analyst of power* herself embedded in power practices and possibly engaged in acts of

²In this context, the proposal made by a "critical hermeneutics" is (a) to emphasize and defend the universal character of linguistic mediation as the ground of the interpretive process, and yet (b) to assert that we must take note within reflexive interpretation of the dimensions of conceptual schemes, social practices of power, as well as individual self-relations. Critical hermeneutics thus challenges the grounding of pre-understanding, interpretation, and dialogue in solely intentional or linguistic media and suggests the need to include an analysis of social structures and power within a theory of understanding. Different conceptions have been presented by Ricoeur, Thompson, Hoy, and myself, among others; see Roberghe 2011; Kögler 1999, 2008; Ricoeur 1974; Thompson 1984; Hoy 1979. See also esp. the related work by D. Healy, S. Zabala, W. Outhwaite, L. Zuidervaart.

³In turn, the integration of Foucault's work into a hermeneutic context will also help address some tricky epistemic and methodological issues in Foucault's work itself.

⁴Those who brush aside methodological reflections fail to acknowledge that Foucault's whole project, if it is not to collapse into a series of more or less novel empirico-historical investigations, is premised on a new reflexive attitude, on an ethos of challenging one's hitherto cherished beliefs and assumptions so as to allow for new and different ways of realizing one's self.

domination and objectification? And finally, how is the *reflexive agent* able to project herself freely in light of discursive and social constraints?⁵

Third, through engagement with Foucault, I argue that we arrive at a hermeneutic position which mediates the agent's situatedness in discourse/power constellations with the project of an ethically oriented reflexive agency. I will show how a hermeneutic grounding of the Foucauldian projects avoids self-refuting contradictions without assuming an untenable 'view from nowhere.' Foucault himself first introduced a positivistic approach when dealing with the reconstruction of discursive formations; he later presented us with standpoint-epistemological reflections when asked about his own relation to power and oppression; he finally, perhaps as a response to the challenge for a normative justification, rejected codified moralities in favor of existential self-realization. In the end, none of these answers suffices to preserve the challenging nature of Foucault's approach.⁶

In a first step (Sects. 1 and 2) I will show how methodological problems in Foucault's concept of discourse lead to a new hermeneutic approach based on the linguistic capacity of perspective-taking. In a second step (Sects. 3 and 4) I will take up Foucault's analysis of power with regard to the attempt to forge an epistemic coalition between genealogical interpretations and situated agents' experiences. My discussion culminates in the need to develop an account of hermeneutic reciprocity between analyst and agent by reconstructing the condition of possibility of assuming a reflexive attitude vis-à-vis discourses and power practices. Such an account is finally sketched (Sect. 5) in terms of an intersubjectively grounded theory of reflexive agency.

1 Positioning Experience and Truth in Discourse

The basic idea of discourse analysis is to challenge a universal or absolute conception of truth by showing all truth-claiming judgments to be grounded in discourse. Underlying this assumption is less the universal claim of the linguistic mediation of all experience, but rather the more specific approach that *those* experiences which

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⁶The challenging nature of Foucault's analyses consists in positioning agents in discourse, power, and ethics such that our own locations become uprooted and challengeable; his analyses are interventions with the aim to reveal the contingency of power-induced self-conceptions in order to allow a change for the better. Foucault's refusal to present articulated definitions of truth, freedom or morality is thus not due to a dystopian acceptance of the status quo, but rather grounded in the concern that any substantive proposal could function in new discourse/power regimes. I intend to show that by arriving at a hermeneutic conception of reflexive agency, the epistemic and normative grounds of Foucault's approach can be articulated without falling into the trap of a false representationalism of the true and the good.

can be articulated *in terms of truth* are dependent, for that purpose, on their position within a discourse, or more specifically a “discursive formation.” Discourse is thus not defined as a universal medium of all experience (as in Chomsky’s or Habermas’ quite different conception of linguistic or communicative competence). It is not understood as the infinite possibility to articulate thoughts via linguistic expressions based on a universal set of rules or premises. Instead, a discourse or discursive formation is a *historically particular framework* for the linguistic articulation of experience which regulates the experience of something as something as valid *only for a certain time and domain*. Discourses on madness, sexuality, punishment, etc. constitute networks of rules and assumptions that predefine how one can speak about and experience the respective experiential domains. For instance, the discourse on madness underwent radical transformations according to which ‘madness’ was disclosed, roughly, as potential truth (Renaissance), irrationality (enlightenment), and disease (modernity) (Foucault [1961] 1988a). Discourses regulate internally, according to their concrete sets of premises, what and how something can become the object of experience and shared truth-talk.

The Foucauldian concept of discourse thus entails the idea that to be capable of becoming a candidate of a shared experience, of becoming a truth, an experience must be able to be articulated, be captured in terms of beliefs and conceptions. Yet those beliefs and conceptions will be framed according to shared assumptions—assumptions that are more far-reaching and constitutive than usually assumed in philosophical and historical approaches. For Foucault, the idea of discourse entails that there is a *deep level of experiential world-formation* (which Heidegger would have called ontological), which in turn determines the *object- and event-level of experience* that happens within a thereby disclosed world (the ontic level in Heidegger). Driven by a historically transformed Kantianism, and thus in spirit strongly constructivist, Foucault details four different dimensions of discourse that together constitute its concrete constellation as a “historical apriori” for experience.⁷ A discursive formation regulates which *objects of experience* can become foci of attention; it sets up the position of the *subject of knowledge*; it lays out a *conceptual order of assumptions*; and it entails a frame of *possible actions and practices*. (Foucault [1969] 1972a, 40–70). The novel and challenging idea is to give up the project to determine the truth of a discourse by relating its claims to one or the other of those dimensions: i.e. to invoke the order of objects, or the universal position of the subject, or a universal conceptual order, or even a teleological order of praxis or history in order to assess truth claims. There is thus no trans-discursive safe-haven from which the discourse-internal truths can be judged *as true or false*.⁸

⁷In his introduction to his translation of Kant’s *Anthropology*, Foucault locates his own work in proximity to that of Ernst Cassirer, emphasizing the interest and role that symbolic forms or media play in the construction of reality. In *The Order of Things* (Foucault [1966] 1970), he introduces his influential concept of ‘episteme’ as that order which constructs, beyond and somewhat between the empirical level of immediate experiences and the abstract level of theories, the determinate order of knowledge formation.

⁸This means that a discourse always entails both true and false statements; the grounds that determine what can be truth or false is itself prior to truth or falsity.

Historical discourses themselves regulate such truth-talk, and they do so in ever evolving, historically and culturally concrete frameworks of understanding, such that a transcendental or universal 'view from nowhere' is ruled out.

Foucault's attempt to develop a theory of discourse follows after he developed several productive and influential studies on particular instances of discursive formations, thematizing the Western experience with madness (*Madness and Civilization*), the body and health (*The Birth of the Clinic*), and life, language, and work (*The Order of Things*).⁹ The methodological reflection that follows (in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*) is marred by a unique mix of methodological self-reflection and positivistic resolve. Foucault now sees the need to reconstruct what underlies his own use of *the concept of discourse*, especially with regard to his aim of challenging both universalistic and merely narrative conceptions of the history of ideas. He is aware of the challenge entailed in the project to *historicize* Kant's *a priori* such that it retains its experience-constituting features and yet is historically determined, i.e. to show how (a) discourses define the realm of *any possible experience* that can become the candidate of truth, thus determining what can be said by whom under what conditions and in which conceptual frame, and (b) that such conditions are *historically contingent*, do not derive from a transcendental or universal framework but from 'regional ontologies.'

Yet how precisely can we determine the identity of a discourse; how can we theorize its uniqueness and boundary? Foucault attempts to answer the question about the identity of discourse via a bold positivistic move. Describing himself provocatively as a 'happy positivist' and summing up his core methodological credo, he envisions "the project of a *pure description of discursive events* as the horizon for the search for discursive units that form within it..." Focusing on the emergence of 'discursive events,' which are to lead to the construction of discursive units in which they are located, he suggests that a truly novel way of approaching historical concepts and ideas be thereby possible: Instead of attempting to reconstruct the 'meaning' as the deep and to-be-unearthed dimension of discourse, "the analysis of the discursive field is oriented in a quite different way: we must grasp *the statement* in the exact specificity of its occurrence; determine its conditions of existence; fix at least its limits, establish its correlations with other statements that may be connected to it, and show what other statements it excludes." (Foucault [1969] 1972a, 28). Accordingly, for Foucault, a discourse is made up of statements, and so in order to get at the core of discourse analysis, demarcating 'the statement' from other well-established conceptions of linguistic units, such as sentences, propositions, or speech acts, seems at first promising. (Foucault [1969] 1972a, 79–87)

Foucault sets out to show that a discursive statement is not a grammatical sentence, since several sentences can express the same statement, and not all statements have necessarily the form of a sentence (as graphs or images may also play a signifying role in a discourse). A statement is also not identical with a logical proposition, as, for instance, 'the present king of France is bald' is one statement but entails, as Russell had shown, two propositions. Inversely, 'it rains' and 'it is true that it

⁹ See previous footnotes for references, and also Foucault [1963] 2003.

rains' entails two statements but just one logical thought with the same truth conditions. Finally, a statement is also not identical with a speech act, since, for instance, the act to promise may entail a set of statements and thus not match a one-to-one analysis of speech act and statement.¹⁰

Foucault then turns to the idea that perhaps the material realization of *the statement* can serve as a source for the individualization and identification of discourse. Yet here we have to realize that, for instance, the keyboard of typewriter is not a statement, whereas a line used as example in a typewriting manual is. Accordingly, both the analysis of linguistic units as well as the reflection on the difference between signs as such and signifying signs in a statement point to the contextual nature of statements, i.e. that the statement is itself determined via the role it plays within a discursive formation. Foucault thus arrives at the at once complex and dark formulation that "the statement is not so much one element among others, a division that can be located at a certain level of analysis, as (rather) a function that operates vertically in relation to various units, and which enables one to say of a series of signs whether or not (discursive units) are present in it." While the statement is certainly dependent for its material expression on the reality of signs, it is so only insofar as "one may then decide, through analysis or intuition, whether or not they 'make sense,' according to what rule they follow one another or are juxtaposed, of what they are the sign, and what sort of act is carried out by their formulation (oral or written)." (Foucault [1969] 1972a, 86–87).

In other words, the material body of signs only entails the discursive formation as a *cognitive-experiential grid* that awaits for its discovery the reconstruction by the discursive analyst. Semiotic formations still need to be interpreted to be shown to entail the respective discourse. As we saw, in Foucault's ontological order of things, to be an element of discourse is not congruent with being a sentence, a thought, or a speech act, nor can it be reduced to its outer semiotic form. This is because discourse constitutes its own *reality of symbolic mediation*, a reality that emerged in its uniqueness in Foucault's own archaeological studies. Carving out statements as the most basic unit turned out to draw on the preconception of their existence or 'function' within particular discourses. Thus, if Foucault wants to establish the uniqueness of discourses as a medium of experience and truth, the question how to determine *the identity of discourses* still has to be answered: How can a discursive formation be identified such that we establish its reality-disclosing character? How can we understand the particular rules that determine this uniquely configured fourfold of subject-position, object-domain, conceptual order, and strategic options that make up a discursive formation? And finally, from which position is the discourse analyst able to identify the discursive formation, that is: how is she

¹⁰As one easily can see, distinguishing statements from sentences, propositions, and speech acts does little more than to enforce Foucault's underlying pre-conviction about discourses as regional ontologies, as constituting "historical *a priori*" that cognitively predetermine how agents encounter certain realms of experience, and what can be a candidate of serious truth claims. For a good analysis of Foucault's failure to avoid hermeneutic pre-assumptions, see Honneth 1993.

put in her epistemic position such that she can access the rules and assumptions that define the experience of the agents while remaining implicit to their intentional understanding?

Methodologically, Foucault opposes both structuralism and hermeneutics, as he neither intends to reconstruct universal rules that allow for an infinite number of performances, nor does he aim to interpret what an author, age, or collective group may have intended or 'meant' with their speech acts.¹¹ Yet the question is how the discovery of this specifically *discursive mediation of reality* is theorized. At stake is the *discursive realm* within which agents are bound to speak and to understand themselves, and yet to avoid 'explaining' this dimension via universal rules or to pre-discursive intentional states. Foucault does acknowledge that a *theory of discourse* is needed, but claims that "this theory cannot be constructed unless the *field of the facts of discourse* on the basis of which those facts are built up appears in its non-synthetic purity." (Foucault [1969] 1972a, 26, my emphasis) This move, however, would lead us straight back to the positivist attempt to isolate the basic units of discourse—the 'facts of discourse'—that are then to be subjected to a "pure description of discursive events." This move, however, led to the circular discussion concerning discursive statements itself presupposing their place in discourses.

Accordingly, the need for a conception of linguistic understanding that does justice to the situated nature of the discourse analyst—to the discursive place of knowledge—has arisen.¹² How can we both acknowledge that by analyzing discursive formations, the analyst herself is situated in some discourse *and* that she is able to advance justified claims regarding the nature of other discourses? How can we accept that one starts from certain rules and assumption—pre-conceptions that necessarily impact how one conceives and constructs what one experiences—without denying or undermining that one gives an account of *other discourses*? We have shown that we need a conception which does acknowledge such a situatedness without leading to a self-refuting subjectivism, such that we would remain as discursive analysts imprisoned in our own discursive formation. Foucault's own positivistic credo fails, since it simply supersedes his own situatedness, as he presents himself as the exception to discursive limits, and thus leaves open the extent to which his conception of discourse as such should be deemed valid. The productive and challenging claim of the discursive location of truth is thereby dramatically weakened and threatened with inconsistency. This is so since the analyst claims for the objects

¹¹ "... a statement is always an event that neither the language (langue) nor the meaning can quite exhaust." (Foucault [1969] 1972a, 28); see also Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982. We should, however, be aware, as Bruce Janz rightly reminded me, that the view of hermeneutics that Foucault opposes, namely one based on meaning as generated by an individual or collective intentionality, has largely been overcome in the tradition stretching from late Dilthey to Heidegger and Gadamer. Indeed, their aim at the particular power of discursive world-disclosure shares a lot, despite all remaining differences, with Foucault's own approach towards discursive mediation. See Kögler 1999 for the relation between the two perspectives.

¹² Foucault never thematizes this need, whereas hermeneutics always assumes the interpreter to be per se situated in a shared interpretive community within which one's interpretive acts are but contributions to an ongoing and never concluded dialogue. See Kögler 2015.

of her analysis that discourses construct the experience of reality, but at the same time claims exceptionality with regard to her own subject position which objectifies these discourses: the agents who are analyzed are allegedly pre-constructed according to discursive formations, while she herself is miraculously exempted from such a constructedness. She would thus have to be deemed capable of perceiving the discourses ‘in pure descriptions of their objectivity,’ thereby claiming for her discourse a glassy essence revealing the things themselves, and thus denying in her own case the core claim of discourse analysis, namely that discourse mediates reality.

2 Discourse Analysis and Perspective-Taking: Towards a Hermeneutic Grounding

A possible solution to this apparent dilemma, however, presents itself if we consider the process of reconstructing discursive boundaries as a *hermeneutic experience* in which the understanding of the discourse increases with the interpretive endeavor. The move here is to reject the very idea of a pure description, and to accept that all understanding begins with a certain set of beliefs and assumptions that the interpreter necessarily brings to bear on her object of understanding. All understanding begins with, and is bound by, some place, the hermeneutic situation.¹³ Foucault thinks he needs to reject any hermeneutic pre-conception, because his endeavor is driven by the goal to reveal a unique dimension of discursive reality-mediation. He must believe that accepting his own intentional pre-understanding would lead him back into an affirmative circle of accepting those conceptions of the epoch, the world spirit, of value-orientations etc. that he wants to overcome. However, while I believe that a methodological rejection of intentionalistic conceptions is justified when it comes to meta-historical constructions like the world-spirit (Hegel), class-consciousness (Marx), epochal self-understanding (Dilthey), etc., Foucault was ill-advised to reject *all intentional understanding* as a necessary starting-point for discourse analysis. Foucault simply did not conceive of the additional possibility that there is a mode of intentional understanding *within discourses*—an embedded linguistically mediated intentional understanding—which is not in the same manner problematic as the meta-historical concepts that entail a *grounding subjectivity*. In other words, Foucault makes the mistake to reject all subjectivity because he perceives the valid needs to reject *trans-historical* accounts of subjectivity and ‘the subject,’ accounts that render history meaningful according to some pre-conceived master-scheme.

My claim is thus that a discursively mediated mode of intentional pre-understanding—as one’s cultural *a priori*—is embedded in our everyday under-

¹³I take this view to be present in late Dilthey, early Heidegger, and also Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics, to restrict our view to hermeneutics. A good developmental approach how agents acquire such language/knowledge configurations is found in Paul Harris’s view (Harris 2000) who emphasizes the constitutive role of imagination and perspective-taking in our linguistically mediated cognitive development.

standing of language, which is really an understanding of reality according to a more or less determined set of beliefs and assumptions, which are always acquired within a set of intersubjective relations and practices.¹⁴ The discourse analyst, just like any other agent, is initially bound by those pre-conceptions. Yet far from being a negative border or limit of understanding, they enable her to take the first step, to identify what a text, a practice, an institution or an artwork is about. Discursive statements are thus not, as Foucault provocatively suggests, to be turned into 'monuments,' squeezing and ejecting all traces of intentional understanding out of their experiential pores so as to reveal their intra-discursive systematicity. But they are also not—Foucault is to be endorsed here—to be treated as 'documents' which reveal the innermost logic of some meaningful intentional force. Rather, they are to be treated as meaning-conferring backgrounds for situated agents who intentionally construct their realities, expressed in beliefs and assumptions against a bedrock of practices, without themselves becoming hypostatized into some higher meaning or teleology. The configuration of these backgrounds is understood to be creating ('granting') a horizon of meaningfulness without themselves being the outcome of some intentional act or plan. The critical sting of discourse analysis against meta-narratives of history and societal evolution is hereby preserved, without, however, denying the unavoidable starting-point of intentional pre-conceptions for any interpretive endeavor.¹⁵

The pre-reflexive identification of some meaning or concept in a linguistically articulated context is thus the unavoidable starting-point for discourse analysis. Without some pre-conception of madness, disease, life, language, and economy, no analysis of the respective discourses is possible. Yet this initial place of understanding is but a *starting ground*; it is the location which gets the process of encountering different discursive formations *off the ground*. The identification of a discourse begins with one's own background assumptions. But when it proceeds, the process of reconstructing the intra-discursive order is carried on by *interpretive perspective-taking*. Such perspective-taking is a general and integral feature of all linguistic human understanding, and it can help explain how one's discourse analysis is both situated in one's own place and yet capable of carrying one outside of one's usual conceptual boundaries. The cognitive process of perspective-taking, which is intertwined with our language learning such that it allows us to take on complex symbolically mediated roles as engagements and interpretations of reality, is thus the background disposition on which the discourse analyst can draw (Harris 2000; Mead 1934; Sokol and Sugarman 2012).

Now confronted with another discursive order, we cannot but relate it to our pre-understanding; the attempt to integrate it into our order of things is natural and in

¹⁴It is no objection, but rather an incentive for analysis, that such 'everyday understanding' is always already infused with more or less understood scientific concepts which trickled down through teaching and all sorts of media into the amalgam which defines one's situated pre-understanding of the world.

¹⁵With this move Foucauldians can still stay clear of neo-evolutionary or progressivist meta-narratives like those found in Habermas' theory of social evolution.

some sense unavoidable; yet when confronted with some strange, peculiar, possibly absurd phenomenon, we have the choice to dismiss it as false or wrong (or even to ignore it as ‘semantic noise’), or else to now take up the challenge to reconstruct the underlying perspective, to take the perspective of the other. In the latter case, we aim to reconstruct the underlying assumptions that ‘explain’ the phenomenon, that render it ‘sensical’ according to different background assumptions such that we understand how someone can orient herself according to this perspective. For instance, as Foucault analyzed in the *Order of Things*, we may find it strange to consider a walnut a remedy against different levels of head injuries, unless we understand that the order of knowledge and the order of nature are correlated via analogies. To arrive at this new perspective, Foucault posed the question about the other underlying perspective, asking: “How, at the end of the sixteenth century, and even in the early seventeenth century, was similitude conceived? How did it organize the figures of knowledge?” (Foucault [1966] 1972, 17).¹⁶ A statement like Mark Twain’s “Anybody hurt? No... (only) killed a nigger” seems horrific (and still is after we understand its background), but begins to make sense in a discursive order where non-white agents are excluded from personhood.¹⁷ The approach here is underwritten by imaginative perspective-taking, in which the analyst adopts the fictional position of the place of the other, and now re-constructs, literally: re-builds the understanding from the grounds up. In such a process, the sensible place of a discursive statement in the order of knowledge—i.e. in the other’s cognitive perspective—is what needs to be established, because at the outset of the interpretive process, the statement, in its strangeness, absurdity, wrongness, still lacks a context that renders it coherent. The aim of the discursive analyst is thus to create this background, to articulate the framework of the other perspective in explicit terms for us. It is thus that we come to identify a discourse as such-and-such, and within it the particular discursive statement as its sensible contribution and element.

One major epistemic gain of this procedure falls perfectly in line with one of Foucault’s most famous self-descriptions, namely that he aims to be an ‘anthropologist of our own culture.’ Because the other perspective is one that is distinctly different, as it takes off at phenomena or experiences that do not fit into our interpretive scheme, its underlying beliefs and assumptions *have to be articulated*. Such articulation is generally not necessary with regard to our own assumptions. Yet if we articulate the discursive order of another perspective, we are able achieve a certain *self-distanciation*, because we have now adopted, as a possible way of world-experience, the other perspective, which brings us into a position of outside with regard to our own (Kögler 1999). In the end, Foucault hoped to achieve just such a position of a ‘thought from outside,’ to push us into an epistemic limbo with regard

¹⁶ Similarly, for Foucault’s important reconstruction of the conception of the sign in the classical age (enlightenment), Foucault asks: “What is the sign in the classical age?” (Foucault [1966] 1972, 58).

¹⁷ The sequence in “The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn” (chapter 32) is about a steamboat explosion and reads: “Good gracious! Anybody hurt?” (Aunt Sally); “No’m. Killed a nigger.” (Huck); “Well, it’s lucky; because sometimes people do get hurt. (Aunt Sally).

to all our cherished assumptions about identity, madness, life, punishment, sexuality, and so on. This outside position is due to a critical hermeneutic circle: it is not possible to simply push ourselves outside, to leave behind what we think, perceive, and feel, by a mere wish; yet if we adopt a concrete perspective of another way of experience, we concretely become (the) other, we engage in a process of reflexive self-transformation because the explicit articulation of the background assumptions of another perspective puts us necessarily into a new, more reflexive and open relation to our own.¹⁸

We may ask, however, why such a position of the 'outside of (customary) thought' should be adopted at all. Why should we aim to position ourselves outside the boundaries of our discourses and transcend their accepted notions of truth and reality? What should compel us to question the results and interpretations of accepted scientific and social discourses? Why should we reject the established conceptions of our life, culture, and identity that we inherited from our traditions? In studies like *Discipline and Punish* and *History of Sexuality, Vol I: The Will to Knowledge*, as well as in his lectures delivered at the College de France in the 1970s, Foucault turns his attention to the wide field of social power (Foucault [1975] 1979; [1976] 1994; 2010a, b). What now receives special attention is the phenomenon of power-generated *social selves* whose self-understanding and identity is mediated by power-impregnated social discourses. Foucault envisions a 'genealogy of power' as a complementary approach to discourse analysis, which is to target and reveal these processes and practices of power regarding the self.¹⁹ We will see that to develop a genealogical position in a consistent manner—one that can both target the power-induced functions of discursive practices (including the use of truth) and position itself as a genealogist that claims to critically reconstruct social reality—will again require hermeneutic resources. However, our methodological reflection concerning perspective-taking will now be integrated into a full-fledged theory of reflexive agency geared towards establishing hermeneutic reciprocity between genealogical analyst and situated agent.

¹⁸The criterion for a successful analysis of another discursive perspective is therefore not the judgment of intra-discursive truth according to our own discursive order, as the aim is precisely to transcend this epistemic place for a new transformed position. The criterion is rather the intersubjectively shared possibility for others to follow one's path, to reconstruct once more the discourse analyst's reconstruction and deem it as truthfully earned and experienced through the encounter with the object of understanding, the other discursive formation.

¹⁹With regard to our prior discussion of discourse analysis, the relation between discourses and social power is of particular interest. The function of truth is now rendered more specific, more poignant. Truth is not only shown to receive its place in a discursive formation. Rather, the construction of social realities, specifically the constitution of selves in their various modes of existence and self-understanding, now becomes a function of truth. Truth becomes synonymous with authoritative scientific discourses that naturalize and thereby legitimize practices of population- and self-control. See also Foucault 1972b.

3 The Epistemic Challenge of Genealogy as a Critique of Power

Naturally, the concept of power promoted to a central analytical place now requires special attention. Just as with Foucault's concept of 'discourse,' 'power,' too, must be cleansed from intentionalistic or agent-centered traces. For Foucault, power is a holistic, pervasive, quasi-systemic medium which constructs and shapes the social world in deep and complex ways; disciplinary practices focus on the body; they manipulate behaviors, rituals, schedules, and spatial arrangements to construct 'docile bodies;' agents subjected to processes beyond their understanding or control.²⁰ Power is thus not 'in the possession' of some leader, individual, group, or class; rather, it's dispersed within widespread social practices and institutions; it operates as a 'micro-physics' of power, as an encompassing spider web of strategic relations enweaving the situated agents; power is thereby relational, which gives it a both systemic and instable character, as it grounds social relations like a frame, and yet is at the same time structurally open to challenge, resistance, and opposition: power always entails a counter-power (Foucault [1975] 1979; [1976] 1994). If power is thus inextricably bound up social practices and institutions, it is clear that it also mediates and structures *the discourses* within which agents and society understand themselves. Discourses are thus but moments in strategic games; they are functions to control, observe, and discipline, which also reveals a new dimension of truth. Foucault connects the human and social sciences to the pervasive influence of power, suggesting that disciplines like psychiatry, social welfare, pedagogy, criminology, etc. emerged together power practices within which they maintain certain functions, most centrally the constitution of *power-defined self-identities*. Foucault's approach to a genealogical critique of power in modernity is thus well expressed by the slogan that *instead of liberating the modern self from power, the aim should be to free us from the modern conception of the self*, simply because its conception itself has its roots in power (Foucault [1976] 1994).

Yet if discourses are now grounded in power with the effect to constitute our self-identity, the question concerning *Foucault's epistemic position* arises with a new twist and in a new way. We now have to ask: from which position, from which social and epistemic place, is Foucault able to undertake his analysis of power, if our discursive self-understanding is itself a product of pervasive and ontologically constitutive power relations? Being embedded in modernity would mean that his own self is also constituted within power practices, that he himself has been subjected to modes of disciplining, normalization, and discursive control. Foucault grants as much when he calls for a rejection of the 'fascism within us.'²¹ Foucault gives up the

²⁰Most famous became his use of Bentham's idea of institutionalized inmate observation, the Panopticon, in which an invisible observer installs self-observation and thus self-objectification within subjects via their inescapable visibility towards such an observer. See Foucault [1975] 1979.

²¹In an introduction to a volume by Gilles Deleuze in France.

detached and neutral positivistic view that merely describes discourses from an allegedly uninvolved position. He now accepts that he is embedded within social struggles regarding power (Foucault 1980, 1988b). And yet precisely this move poses its own challenges: If Foucault places himself *within* the struggles over power, but similarly maintains that he is capable of analyzing *how* power practices function, he obviously assumes, at least with regard to his own epistemic position, a place that is not just merely an unconscious and uncontrollable effect of power, but rather a position that is able to objectify power itself, to subject it to a reflexive analysis, to create a critical open space between himself and the objectifying practices of power that produce 'docile bodies' and 'subjected subjects.' So how can the genealogist both maintain her situatedness in power practices and yet claim that she reconstructs and thereby challenges the normalcy of power?

This question poses itself immanently to every genealogist who understands what the idea of genealogy as a critique of power entails. This is so because the *analysis* of power cannot be understood as a *prolongation* of the power that is analyzed. Supporters and critics of Foucault go wrong if they simply endorse the view that we never escape power because power is everywhere anyway, because power is ontologically ubiquitous. The general (and rather vague) claim that we have to accept the ontological ubiquity of power under-addresses the issue, since the genealogical critique is clearly undertaken *to break the spell of the disciplinary and normalizing power practices*. This can be seen by a closer look at the discursive construction via human-scientific discourses and associated control-practices, which work by *objectifying agents in a particular way*. This particular mode of objectification is defined by theoretical and methodological discourses which asserts the identity of X via a scheme of essentialized object-definition coupled with empirical research methods. For example, the identity of a woman, a homosexual, a criminal, etc. is projected onto certain behaviors or physical features, thereby attributing an inner essence to the self (the essence of that individuality-type), which then gets empirically validated by means of the human-scientific disciplines. Social practices and institutions maintain these self-identities by forcing agents to comply, one way or the other, with certain behavioral patterns that prolong these respective behaviors which are taken to express the inner identity of 'their' selves. The discursive-political construction of self-identities constitutes a self-fulfilling prophecy of the social construction of reality via an attribution of essentialized identities.²² This mode of objectification works because the subjects are treated (by others or by themselves) *as objects*, because they are not themselves included in the reflexive interpretation and assessment of their results.²³ Accordingly, Foucault's genealogical

²² See also Ian Hacking (2000) who emphasizes that the discourse on social constructions aims to undermine the sense of inevitability that inheres in such projections of identity.

²³ If agents are at all presented and confronted with these results, it is in the name of objective science and scientific authority that proclaims the truth about their identities and being; if agents come to accept these claims, they prolong the objectifications of their being by means of self-objectification, similar to the panoptic sense of self-observation in which the subjected subject internalizes the external and invisible control by becoming her own observer.

critique cannot possibly be understood to merely extent or even support objectifying and normalizing power: What is rather at stake is *the reflexive awareness* of how certain discourses and practices entrench selves within certain self-identities.

Agents themselves are thus the addressees of a power-oriented discourse analysis. The goal of a genealogy of power is to create reflexive reconstructions of how modes of subjectivity-formation have defined *our own* identities. The point is to create a critical distance between one's own agency and the entrenched schemes of understanding, such that a critical work on oneself with the aim of new and different ways of self-realization becomes possible.²⁴ The endeavor of a genealogical analysis of power via discursive identity-schemes is *per se*, as a process of cognitive self-understanding, geared towards *undermining* the one-dimensional objectification that inheres in standard social-scientific practices of objectification. Now if Foucault's approach is opposed to existing power practices which entail a certain relation to truth, and yet claims validity for his genealogical analysis of power, we require an account of how he justifies and validates his genealogical analyses. Foucault could be seen in trouble with regard to two dimensions. (a) If, as we saw he argued, social-scientific truth is functionally correlated with power practices, then we need to understand how genealogy can be exempt from truth-power effects, since Foucault is himself engages in social studies. The participation in a social-scientific discourse is bound by epistemic standards, not by successful strategic influences, and so it seems he needs to come up with an alternative account that legitimizes his own analyses.²⁵ (b) Power practices require, as Habermas claims, that the correlated discursive accounts of reality be true (Habermas 1988). Strategic power can utilize discourses and their respective knowledges successfully precisely insofar as they reveal their objects adequately. For instance, it seems a requirement for therapeutic interventions that they be based on true psychological accounts; economic accounts must be accurate if they are to solve an economic crisis, etc. Accordingly, power itself remains dependent on truth, and not vice versa. Yet how are we now to take this analysis into account and yet integrate into our perspective the productive insights of Foucault's genealogy of power?

4 A Critical-Hermeneutic Analysis of Genealogy as Standpoint-Epistemology

To begin with, we have to insist, as shown in the section before, that the discourse analyst is not strategically advancing power and truth as it is used in the

²⁴This formulation evokes a direct link to late Foucault's project of an existential ethics of self-government. While we are not taking up Foucault's own way of addressing this issue, it shows that we find in Foucault himself an opening towards a new account of agency. See also footnote 29.

²⁵If I bribe or threaten my senior colleagues to the effect to award me tenure and promotion, my work cannot claim to have earned their academic respect; if I falsify data and research results, I have not proven a theory or the existence of a state of affairs, even if my deception should achieve the desired outcome.

contexts she is analyzing.²⁶ Situating oneself in contexts of power is a methodological qualifier that accepts that one's own pre-understanding is always based on situated background knowledge co-defined to some extent by power relations. However, being thus situated does not mean that the genealogist is *in the same way* projecting 'truth' and adequacy onto its own objects as in objectifying social-scientific accounts. The discourse analyst, instead, objectifies the real-existing objectifications of social agents, which as agents get objectified according to conceptual schemes and research regimes. These objectified objectifications have a different methodological and ontological status than those of objectifying social-scientific accounts. For a genealogical discourse analysis, the 'nature' or 'identity' of social agents is not constructed as an essence or fixed identity that the scientific discourse is set to reveal; rather, the so-called identities are themselves seen as emergent from complex social situations. If those self-identities are now analyzed and objectified as emergent from discourse/power constellations, they are not afforded a fixed essence; instead, they are seen as a constructed reality whose 'truth' is dependent on the power-defined setting which helped to constitute the respective self-identity.

With this clarification we can answer the Habermasian challenge that 'truth' itself is required to make 'power' function. The point is not to deny that such self-identities exist as they are represented by social-scientific accounts. Rather, what is at stake is to dig deeper than the existing truth-power correlations, such that the (real!) constructions of identities can be seen as derived from (equally real) power constellations. The reality that exists because of social power structures is thus, true, disclosed by the respective social-scientific discourses; the point, however, is not to reject this discourse-power correlation as somehow 'not true' (as in 'not real'), but to show that these really existing self-identities, precisely insofar as they exist as represented by social-scientific discourses, are *in fact constructed according to more encompassing social arrangements*.

This new approach to the social situation of agents is now importantly paralleled by the methodological assumption that these interpretations are ultimately part of a hermeneutic situation *which analysts and agents share*. Therefore, the truth claims made by the discourse analyst are never claims that are merely *about* the agents—as the 'objects of science'—but should always be claims made *with the agents*; they are, ideally, to derive from a contact and exchange with the situated knowledge of the agents themselves, and are ultimately also to be evaluated with those agents themselves. Genealogical accounts are thus not objectifying regimes *about the agents*, but reflexive reconstructions to be shared and evaluated *with the agents*. It is this thought which finds a basis in Foucault's own epistemological reflections. Foucault envisions a standpoint-epistemology of sorts, as based on an *epistemic coalition* between *academic genealogy* and *situated agents* in order to bridge the gap between the theoretical position of the discourse analyst and the situated posi-

²⁶ Foucault's answer to these challenges does not exist as an explicit response to these and similar claims, but he did reflect of his own epistemic stance in ways that are productive, as we will see later.

tion of the agent, so as to build a bridge between his own genealogical approach and what he calls *local knowledges* (Foucault 1988b).²⁷ Experiences and articulations of power-situated agents that have begun to surface within new post-Marxist social movements can thus be understood as a challenge, a rejection, an opposition to the received ‘official’ knowledge about women, gays, non-Western subjects, criminals, the mentally ill, etc. A methodological cooperation with situated subjects would allow the genealogist to epistemically build on the *experiential truth* of those who encounter power first-hand. By including their voices, one could integrate their knowledge into one’s account of power practices and discursive relations, therefore practically verifying the genealogical accounts from the ground up.²⁸

Yet with a closer look, the preliminary character of this suggestion, as well as the need to boost its force with hermeneutic ideas, become apparent. The epistemic value due to the experiential character of the local knowledges is beyond doubt: situated agents possess a privileged opportunity to report on the micro-practices of coercion, oppression, confinement, and generally on social pressure and constraint. Since power is exercised through concrete sites and practices, its adequate analysis requires an always renewed contextual contact, it needs to come from the prisons, factories, military barracks, refugee camps, post-colonial contexts, etc. The genealogist has to open herself to these experiential inputs: while she provides something of a map, a general framework delineating the terrain of the social, the agents are forced to exist in that terrain, so they know the multiple and complex pathways as they experience the effects of power first-hand on their bodies, their thoughts, their life plans. The advantage of these local knowledges, as presented and required by Foucault, is that they avoid social-scientific abstraction, generalization, and thus self-objectification: agents here are seen as not buying into self-alienating methodologies, but instead reveal their real experiences of power, social life, and their existence.

Yet if we merely construct the knowledge of situated agents this way, have we not, once again, bought into an objectification of agents based on what our genealogy of power would demand? Have we not idealized those who are situated such they provide us with exactly that local knowledge that we need to fulfill the truth claims of a contextual genealogy of power? Have we not, in the end, reduced agents once more to entities that fulfill our epistemic expectation of what we as genealogists expect, what we want them to say, report, challenge, bemoan?²⁹ To

²⁷ It is here where we see most clearly the connection between the hermeneutics of place and the issue of Foucault’s epistemic position. Local knowledges are always tied to our experience of place, and Foucault provides us with the starting point for an account of the power relations inherent in this hermeneutic situation.

²⁸ The idea, I suggest, is to target the discourse/power regimes of objectification from two sides: one from within the academic field, with a genealogical account that mobilizes all epistemic resources to question empirical research paradigms that disempower agents; and the other coming from the objectified agents themselves, as they begin to speak out against these forms of objectification, oppression, and subjection.

²⁹ A further related concern may be that we already pre-select those agents and groups about whom we intend to speak about their own oppression and situational objectification, as we do not include marginal oppressed groups like white supremacists, for instance.

explain my concern, let me first state, as a premise of my argument, that in order to establish an epistemic coalition between genealogist and agent in a *non-objectifying manner*—so as to avoid falling into the trap of a renewed instrumentalization of the agent for genealogical research—we have to conceive this exchange as a *true dialogue* in which both sides engage each other with their own substantive interpretations of the social situation. Only under conditions of hermeneutic reciprocity can the potential of a coalition between genealogy and stand-point epistemology be unfolded. To make it stronger: only if agents are not merely reporting on their situated experiences, but do so in light of a knowledge of the (theoretical) accounts that have objectified them, and in awareness of the genealogical accounts that attempt to unmask them—only then can their knowledge be a true reflection of their social situation.

However, if we thus reformulate the methodological partnership of genealogy with a stand-point epistemology of situated agents, we find ourselves confronted with a hermeneutic predicament since the actual knowledge of the agents poses a real limit to the ideal of hermeneutic reciprocity. Agents are experts on the 'this-and-there' of their concrete contexts, yet they are not conversant with the genealogical level of abstraction and analysis. Thus the epistemic benefit of the locally *limited* knowledge proves to be a double-edged sword with regard to the intended exchange for several reasons. First, knowing how my prison functions does not mean to understand another's school, and not even necessarily another's prison-experience. Within each domain and institution, significant differences exist in institutional philosophy, ingrained norms and value-orientations, and established inter-subjective practices, and agents lack the resources and capacities for a comparative overview. Second, social institutions and practices structurally shape how agents perceive their situation: biases and prejudices define their self-understanding, which in turn limits the value and insight of their contribution by affecting the explanations given for certain social ills ('Mexican migrants take away our jobs') or the insight into a much-needed solidarity with other oppressed groups ('we are poor but at least we are not homosexuals'); agents may thus have distorted views of social reality or be caught in a 'logic of distinction' (Bourdieu) in order to arrive at self-identity and dignity via the denigration of a social other. Third, agents in life-worldly power situations are *per se* not exposed to the formal theoretical training that develops the meta-cognitive skills necessary to create synthetic and comparative accounts. This latter capacity is precisely what the genealogist (with her academic training background) brings to the situation. So how can the required hermeneutic reciprocity possibly be conceived, and how could it methodologically be established?

5 Towards a Theory of Reflexive Social Agency

Our previous discussion established an overwhelming methodological need: namely to reconstruct how a dialogical exchange between genealogical accounts of the theorist and the situated agents that have been subjected to discourse-power formations could be possible. The challenge is how theoretical knowledge can be mediated and exchanged with the concrete knowledges of the situated agents and their experiences such that this mediation is not a one-way street within the academic self-understanding of the genealogist and her community, but a true in-between the situated agents and their theoretical other. Merely *proclaiming* an epistemic coalition between genealogist and agent will not do. Instead, we have to inquire into how the recognition of the situated agents as contributors to the critique of power can be mediated with their concrete situatedness, which itself must be understood, at least in part, as a product of the very power practices we are aiming to expose.³⁰

With regard to the genealogist, we assumed that she (a) is herself subject to discourses and power effects, i.e. that she is equipped with a pre-understanding that is necessarily to some extent affected by the current contexts, and yet (b) that she is not objectifying the discourse-power formations and the respectively situated agents in the same manner: her discourse aims not at objectification of agents but at the challenge, transcendence, interruption, and questioning of discourses and power. In this context, the analyst had to be granted cognitive capabilities to undertake such a project, capabilities that were lacking in situated agents (while agents, to be sure, were seen as closer to experiential truth). However, if we realize that we grant these epistemic dispositions to the analyst, and now focus our look on the side of the situated—power-impregnated, discourse-mediated—agents, we can advance the discussion by extending the same capabilities as a hermeneutic potential to the situated agents themselves. In order to arrive at this position, we face the need to move our discussion up one level of abstraction and generalization. What we now have to consider are the *shared premises of both analysts and agents, such that they can*

³⁰ Foucault himself searched for ways in which the agent's self-understanding can be analyzed and built into a conception of social and historical analysis. Foucault continues, after a lengthy pause, his *History of Sexuality*, with a surprising shift: He envisions his work as defined by three axis of analysis, one oriented towards discourses (or the symbolic mediation of reality), one towards power (capturing the social practices which define and situate agents), and a third one oriented towards how agents understand themselves (Foucault [1983] 1990a; see also [1983] 1990b). Foucault acknowledges now that the reflexive self-relation—the capacity to take a position vis-à-vis oneself as an individual agent—had not received the ontological credit it deserves. The new three-fold ontology of discourse-power-self-relation remedies this insofar as, for instance, the discourse of sexuality is now thematized under the viewpoint *how selves construct themselves* on the basis of the envining historical, cultural, and social contexts. Foucault also envision an 'aesthetics of existence' in which the self relates to itself as an object of aesthetic formation. Finally, Foucault also rediscovers the early modern discourse on enlightenment as a productive source of reorientation. In provocative readings of Kant's essay on enlightenment, Foucault sees the emergence of an entirely new way of philosophical reflexivity: To an 'analytics of truth' aimed at universal standards Foucault opposes an "*ontology of the present*" as an approach in which the concrete configuration of one's time and place is put to a test.

mutually engage their perspectives, can produce a shared account of social life through an intersubjective cognitive exchange. If we arrive at a theory that targets what both share *as reflexive agents*, we are put in a position to reconstruct what we may call the dialogical potential inherent in social agents. I thus propose here to move towards a more general theoretical dimension with regard to social agency, such that agents are not merely analyzed concretely in this or that historical, cultural, social formation. Instead, following our discussion we need to thematize what constitutes social agency more generally, analyze the formation of selves with regard to general features which inhere the discursive-social formation of agency, and ask what conditions must be in place such that reflexive agents with the respective capabilities of dialogical exchange emerge. The upshot of such an approach would be an account of social agency that both entails *empirical* and *normative* aspects.

If possible, this project would provide us with two important new tools of social criticism: On the one hand, it would detail *universal features of agency* whose empirical contexts and levels of realization could be determined. This would mean that we could analyze social practices and institutions with regard to how they compare to what our account deems necessary for reflexive social agency. Even before the details of this account are laid out, we can see that this move liberates us to develop general accounts of agential development and self-understanding that make our analyses of existing social contexts more concise and poignant (1). On the other hand, it could also generate a normative framework of how agents may orient themselves vis-à-vis oneself *and* the other within social contexts. It would thus directly connect with Foucault's theme of a care for the self, which would now be transformed into the care to become a dialogical self that respects and recognizes the reflexive agency of the other (2).

- (1) The *social-theoretical dimension* is driven by the intuition that intersubjective norms embedded in practices and institutions foster the development and emergence of reflexive selves. The concept of recognition, which from Hegel onward through Mead, Sartre, and recently Charles Taylor and Axel Honneth, attains a central position here (Mead 1934; Honneth 1996; Taylor 1994).³¹ The ontological account assumes that recognition is essential for developing self-relations in specifically productive ways, i.e. entailing capabilities that are normatively relevant. In our context, the development of certain cognitive capacities that allow for the participation in intersubjective dialogues that transcend one's own immediate context, such as the imaginative perspective-taking that grounds discourse analysis, as well as the general ability to take a reflexive and transformative perspective vis-à-vis one's beliefs and assumptions, are crucial. We have to inquire into the extent to which such critical capabilities will be attained by agents given certain social environments, whether and how they can be traced

³¹ For an account reconstructing specifically agency from such intersubjective roots see Kögler 2012; A. Caillé and F. Vandenberghe develop an impressive genealogy of modern social theory as culminating in an intersubjective turn, the integration of which may best be achieved by a return to M. Mauss' account of the gift; see Caille and Vandenberghe 2015.

back towards the agent's socialization in specific fields and institutions.³² The hermeneutic framework suggests that such an impact should not be focusing merely on self-identity but grasp one's general acquisition of a whole outlook on reality and being. However, of particular interest will be the way in which the institutions provide settings for capacities that lead to the development of particular agentive capabilities. For example, an educational setting premised on certain value-orientations is critically compared to the actual dispositions it is able to generate in agents.

- (2) The analysis of the empirical base of reflexive capabilities is complemented by a *normative reconstruction* of how we *should* approach the other within a mutual exchange. This normative analysis probes our intuitions concerning what seems right as an adequate recognition of the other. It concerns an 'ethos of understanding' vis-à-vis other situated human agents. We are not merely suggesting that such an attitude is required, but are interested to see it taken-up as an actual value-orientation by the agent. Such an approach entails at least three basic commitments that would serve as entry conditions with regard to a dialogical exchange with the other.
- First, *the subject has to take a fallibilistic approach towards her own beliefs, assumptions, and value-orientations*. If understanding is supposed to be a truly mutual exchange with the other, the willingness to revise or give up one's own position in light of the insights and evidence of the other about the issue at stake is crucial.
 - Second, *we need a reflexive awareness of the social and cultural place within which one's own perspective is grounded*. To assume for oneself a standpoint above discursive and social constraints is more likely to lead to a paternalistic talking-down the view of the other in case of radical disagreement, and thus undermines the desired dialogical in-between with the other.
 - Third, *the other is to be approached as an agent with equal rational powers*. The principle of hermeneutic reciprocity requires us to recognize the other as a rational subject with whom we share the ability to engage in a to-and-fro movement between our own and the other's position vis-à-vis an issue.

Clearly, the equal rationality assumption presents a strong idealization given insights into the limits that one may perceive with regard to concretely situated others. Keeping in mind that *the view of the other is always a discursive view from somewhere*, all three dimensions have to be understood as equally crucial parts intersecting in one's dialogical disposition. Any objection towards the other based on our perception of the other's social position is to be fed back into the dialogical chain

³²The agent here is treated as the resultant monad that reflects structurally the social situation from which she emerges—thus staying with the methodological approach of non-essentialism that defined Foucault's outlook, albeit we are taking it to one more level of abstraction. Practical contexts and institutions can be conceived as fields within which situated agents receive their identity-formation; they are there ontologically shaped with specific outcomes. Of course the focus is precisely on those capabilities that can in turn critically assess and transform the very fields within which they emerge.

and then evaluated. Thus, the intentional attitudes towards certain positions are mutually cleared against the reflexive assessment from which social position or perspective they stem.

To be sure, the capabilities of agents to engage in such a demanding process need to be established and generated by their social situation, which in turn will be improved and evaluated by agents attempting to install critical and mutually respectful discourses among themselves. We are operating on the methodological premise that such a bottom-up process creates, over time, the conditions of possibility for reflexive dialogue that will allow it to socially exist.

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A Place for James J. Gibson

Daniel S. McConnell and Stephen M. Fiore

Abstract We first contextualize Gibson's views within the broader space of theories about perception. We do this to illustrate how Gibson's perspective, more so than many others, is most intimately connected with place. For, unlike many dualists, and those drawing on inferential theory, Gibson's foundational claim is that place is directly perceived. As such, one's experience of place is not representational in nature. Phenomenologically, there is no translation of sensory input when one experiences place. Then, to make our case for how the Gibsonian perspective can be conceptualized as a theory of place, we describe the fundamental concepts of direct perception and affordances. Although Gibson did not specify what would be meant by a place, his theory of perception inextricably links an organism to the environment in which it interacts. From this, we then provide a Gibsonian perspective on place. We conclude by linking Gibsonian theory to a subset of philosophical concepts via current ideas in Cognitive Science. Our purpose here is not to provide a definitive conclusion as to how Gibsonian ideas align with these concepts. Rather, we hope to plant the seeds for further exploration of the concepts of meaning and purpose, their context in psychological theory, and how they may bridge the gap between psychology and ecology and a broader interdisciplinary theory of place.

What does it mean to be in a place? This is another way of asking what it means to be *present*. A current of thought, bridging from philosophy of mind to psychology and perceptual theory, has skirted this question for over a century, culminating in James J. Gibson's ecological approach to perception. In Gibsonian terms, being in a place means to perceive that place, and, to perceive that place requires action; purposeful movement grounded by interaction within that space. In this chapter, we propose that the fundamental tenets of Gibsonian theory provide a robust foundation for defining what we mean by place.

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We first contextualize Gibson's views within the broader space of theories about perception. We do this to illustrate how Gibson's perspective, more so than many others, is most intimately connected with place. For, unlike many dualists, and those drawing on inferential theory, Gibson's foundational claim is that place is directly perceived. As such, one's experience of place is not representational in nature. Phenomenologically, there is no translation of sensory input when one experiences place. Then, to make our case for how the Gibsonian perspective can be conceptualized as a theory of place, we describe the fundamental concepts of direct perception and affordances. Although Gibson did not specify what would be meant by a place, his theory of perception inextricably links an organism to the environment in which it interacts. From this, we then provide a Gibsonian perspective on place. We conclude by linking Gibsonian theory to a subset of philosophical concepts via current ideas in Cognitive Science. Our purpose here is not to provide a definitive conclusion as to how Gibsonian ideas align with these concepts. Rather, we hope to plant the seeds for further exploration of the concepts of meaning and purpose, their context in psychological theory, and how they may bridge the gap between psychology and ecology and a broader interdisciplinary theory of place.

1 Theoretical and Historical Context

Before we attempt to illuminate the ways in which Gibson's approach defines the nature of place, we next contrast his ideas with competing perspectives, which, in their own way, cast the concept of place in a very different light.

Gibson's perceptual theory is usually recognized for its claim that perception is direct and non-inferential, representing a radical departure from classical views of perception. As traditional perceptual theories would posit, the information available to the senses is incomplete, distorted and impoverished compared to the richness and detail of both the environment and our perceptual awareness of it. These theories attempt to explain how perception creates such riches from a poverty of stimulus by invoking various and sundry inferential processes. Perception, then, is indirect. The sense organs register only meaningless sensations, and thus these sense data cannot inform a perceiver about its environment. The perceiver must infer the meaning of sensation, relying on past experience, or other a priori knowledge, that must do the job of translating the meaningless input into a meaningful mental representation of the world.

This indirectness is implicitly dualist. One who is indirectly perceiving a place is not in direct psychological contact with that place. Instead, one only directly experiences a representation of the place, and is in some sense otherwise apart from it. This type of thinking led the phenomenologists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to define the subject matter of psychology as being the qualities of such mental representations, with little concern for the environmental context of perception. This perspective is also seen in Gestalt perceptual theory, which had as its goal the description of the mind's innate organizing principles that determined the nature

of perceptual experience. For the Gestaltists, phenomenal experience was said to match reality, via the principle of isomorphism, but was separate from reality. Following that, much of twentieth century cognitive psychology was devoted to classifying the form of the representations, such as whether they were spatial (e.g. Kosslyn 1973), episodic (e.g., Tulving 1972), phonological (e.g. Baddeley 1992), or studying the processes by which we scan (Sternberg 1966), manipulate (e.g., Shepard and Metzler 1971) and organize (e.g., Rosch 1973) representations, and so on.

Explicit dualism is much older. The Cartesian view of mind defines it as non-spatial and immaterial. While the body might occupy a place, the mind cannot, by definition. The Cartesian view of place is that of the three-dimensional space defined by the analytic geometry. The mind, being non-spatial, cannot be assigned coordinates in this space. Hence, Descartes' explicit substance dualism described a mind that is disembodied and correspondingly, displaced.

The functional psychology of the late nineteenth century was a notable departure, couching psychology within the context of the environment. For John Dewey, Harvey Carr, James Rowland Angell, and others, behavior was adaptive. There was a clear Darwinian influence, suggesting that psychology was properly the study of cognitive and behavioral processes that were selected for by evolutionary pressure. The strongest possible statement of this view might be that the evolution of consciousness itself subserves the need of adapting to the environment. Such a view requires a mind that exists within and is acted upon by the natural environment. It follows, then, that mind must be materialized and embodied. It should be emphasized that the place in which this mind is embodied is not the Cartesian notion of space, but rather it is the natural environment - more specifically, it is the ecological niche of the perceiving animal, that is, the place in which it evolved.

Though this school of thought entails a rejection of substance dualism, it perhaps failed to eliminate fully the "ghost in the machine". Dewey's functionalism never became a dominant paradigm, given the rise of behaviorism (which, by removing mind and meaning from psychology, did not consider the question of place and presence). Despite perhaps a general acknowledgement that dualism is an untenable form of psychology, hints of it persist into the twenty-first century. The continued consideration of indirect perceptual theory, qualia, and representational or computational accounts of cognition belie a tendency to describe the phenomenology of perception in terms that separate it from reality. But, to do otherwise requires an explanation of how perception can work in the absence of inferential processes whose job is to construct a representation of the world. It was not until Gibson's ecological theory of perception that a viable alternative appeared.

2 Gibson's Approach to Perception

Early in his career, Gibson had wrestled with what he viewed as flaws in Cartesian perspectives on perception. It was his work with pilots in WWII that provided a key insight into problems with the traditional approach to space and perception and,

ultimately, phenomenal accounts of perception. In *The Perception of the Visual World* (1950), Gibson noted that perception of the spatial environment was not a perception of a Cartesian space populated with elements assigned to spatial coordinates. Rather, Gibson rejected this “air theory” of perception and proposed in its place a “ground theory”.

Gibson realized that humans, and most animals, are terrestrial creatures. Perception always occurs in relation to a ground plane. Even birds, who fly above the ground, do so with reference to the ground, and must often return to it. The consistency and omnipresence of this ground thus provides a foundation for place – the place, or grounding, of perception. The perceptual world consists of surfaces seen against, and in relation to, the ground.

Implicit in this formulation is that action (i.e., movement, whether it is the pilot’s flight that Gibson studied in WWII or just normal human locomotion) also occurs in relation to the same ground plane. Gibson (1966, 1968) later made this point explicit, as he further developed his theory by incorporating the idea that perception is active. Perception of a place occurs via movement within it, and we are never truly stationary. Properly speaking, Gibson’s approach entails that perception cannot be studied in the absence of how it is used to control action, and action cannot be studied in the absence of the perceptual processes that guide it, and further in terms of how it generates information for perception. Gibson defined this as the perception/action cycle, summed up by the adage “we must perceive in order to move, but we must also move in order to perceive” (1979, p. 223). Perception/action is thus an irreducible system and the appropriate level of analysis for experimental psychology.

To be in a place, to be *present* within it, means to act and to perceive within it. But this claim only holds if all traces of dualism, of indirect perception, of claims that appearance is not reality, can be eliminated. There are two important parts of Gibson’s theory that bear on these issues. The first is his theory of direct perception, and the second is the related theory of affordances.

2.1 *Theory of Direct Perception*

Gibson defined direct perception as perception that is not mediated by sensation and inferential processes. Perception is thus not a cognitive process, but is a type of behavior, an action. As above, the challenge typically faced by theories of perception is to explain the apparent co-relation between the richness of perception and the richness of the world, despite the poverty of stimulus from which perception is thought to derive. This is also known as the problem of perceptual constancy. How does perception cohere to the real constant properties of the world despite the variable properties of sensation?

The problem of size constancy illustrates the issue. How does one perceive the size of an object? The usual answer is that light reflects from it, entering the observer’s eyes and an image of it is then projected onto the retinae. This image then stimulates the retinal photoreceptors, creating the elementary visual sensations that

must become a veridical perception. From projective geometry we know that the image size will be related to the object's actual size. So a perceiver could use image size as the basis for perceiving actual size. But if this object happens to be a ball that is then thrown to the observer, an obvious problem arises in that its projected image size will grow exponentially, despite the fact that the ball's actual size remains constant. Because perception of the ball is coherent with its constant size, one sees it as getting closer, not as getting larger. As Gibson (1968) pointed out, we are never truly stationary in our environment, and, thus, the retinal images of all things in our surroundings must be continually growing or shrinking. Yet we nevertheless perceive a world of stable objects of constant size. Traditional theories thus argue that the retinal image, as the beginning of vision, is incomplete and insufficient to explain perceptual constancy. The process of visual cognition, then, is said to entail various inferential processes that supplement the ambiguous retinal image. Multiple theories have been proposed which are typically divided into categories known as bottom-up (e.g., Locke's *Associationist Theory of Ideas* or Marr's *Edge Detection Scheme*) and top-down (e.g. Kant's *Categories of Thought*, Helmholtz's *Unconscious Inference*, and the Gestalt *Organizing Principles*).

While theorists debated the relative merits of bottom-up and top-down perceptual mechanisms, Gibson side-stepped the issue entirely by rejecting the notion that vision begins at the retinal image, and consequently rejecting the idea that perception begins with impoverished sense data. He described his theory as ecological because of the proposal that perception begins in the environment, not in the eye. He noted that animals inhabit a world of richly structured ambient energy arrays. While his approach can, and has been, applied to all of the senses, Gibson was a visual scientist and presented his theory primarily in terms of vision. For Gibson, then, the beginning of vision was not the retinal image, but rather something he called the ambient optic array.

To start, Gibson distinguished physical optics from what he called ecological optics, by distinguishing between radiant and ambient light. Radiant light is the type of light of interest to physicists who study optics. It is the light radiated by a light source, and is homogenous and unstructured. As radiant light fills an environment, it comes into contact with surfaces in that environment. In the process, radiant light becomes ambient illumination, which is heterogeneous and structured. When striking a surface, the light is altered. Radiant light is composed of multiple wavelengths, and some of these will be absorbed by surfaces, others will be reflected. The intensity and direction of the reflection will vary in relation to the surface texture, which can vary from diffuse reflections from matte surfaces to specular reflections from glossy surfaces. Thus ambient light is structured in ways that are specific to the properties of the objects from which it is reflected. For Gibson then, ambient light is the type of light that helps us understand perception because it tells us something about objects; that is, it provides information.

The ambient optic array is the set of all such structured ambient light rays, in the form of nested visual solid angles projecting to a potential point of observation. An eye that occupies that point in space defines an actual point of observation, and is thus capable of seeing the surfaces defined by these visual angles. It should be noted

that this need not be a chambered eye with a lens capable of projecting an image of these visual angles onto a retina. A compound eye, which does not have a retina and does not form images, would also be capable of seeing the same surfaces by virtue of the same optic array. Because seeing animals evolved within a natural environment that is saturated with patterned ambient light, eyes of various types evolved for the same basic purpose: to detect these patterns. Evolution led to more than one solution, but there should be little reason to believe that visual perception occurs in fundamentally different ways across species. This reinforces Gibson's point that the retinal image does not hold a special status as the starting point for vision, in that even animals without such images are capable of vision.

It is the specificity of this structure in the optic array that is most important, however. While retinal images may be ambiguous with regard to properties such as the shapes and sizes of objects in the world, patterns in the optic array are not. As such, the patterns count as information. Retinal images are usually said to contain cues to *suggest* properties of objects, and which serve as the basis of perceptual inference. The optic array, instead, contains information to *specify* properties of objects. Information, by definition, does not require inference. Any animal equipped with an eye¹ can detect this information. Detection of information is equivalent to perception of the properties of objects that created the information. Because this process is unaided by inference or other perceptual processing, and is not mediated by sensations or a priori knowledge, it is said to be direct and immediate. This is Gibson's theory of ecological optics.

The possibility of direct perception fundamentally changes the relationship between perceiver and environment. No longer need it be said that perception is a constructed phenomenal experience, at some remove from the natural environment. Instead, direct perception is an act that places the perceiver in its environment. Perception is thus of the environment, and not a representation of it. In this way, Gibson had proposed a theory of direct realism.

2.2 *The Theory of Affordances*

Direct perception cannot be fully understood without its theoretical complement, that of affordances. Gibson (1979) sought to connect perception and action as systems that mutually depend on each other, describing the perception-action cycle

¹ It should be noted that the eye is not an organ independent of the nervous system, but is rather an extension of the nervous system, which itself is composed of multiple integrated neural systems relevant to perception and action. In this context, referring to the eye is just a convenient shorthand for a complex nervous system which has the job of subserving perception/action via the detection of ambient information. Because coordinated activity requires the recruitment of what is usually thought of as peripheral (sensory and motor) and central (visual cortex, motor cortex, etc.) systems, as well as autonomic processes that perform fine, graded adjustments to calibrate metabolic processes to the energy demands of ongoing movements, it should be emphasized that the nervous system is functioning in its entirety in the control of perceptually-guided action (Bingham 1988).

with the claim that, “we perceive in order to move, but also move in order to perceive.” To explain how this is true, Gibson created a new kind of ecology, based on the affordance. According to Gibson’s straightforward definition, “The affordances of the environment are what it offers animals, what it provides or furnishes, for good or ill” (1979 p. 127).

Despite the apparent simplicity of this idea, the exact definition and ontological status of affordances has been debated ever since. The issue is challenging in that affordances, which are properties of the environment, are not *just* properties of the environment. To illustrate the issue, consider the following example. A small rock may afford grasping. This affordance of graspability is partly a property of the rock, but surely is also a property of the agent doing the grasping. The rock does not afford grasping to all animals – rather, it affords grasping to those with effectors capable of grasping, and whose effectors are appropriately sized to the rock. It is thus immediately apparent that the affordance depends as much on the actor as on the rock. Affordances have been variously defined as dispositional properties of agent-environment interactions (Turvey 1992), or as relations between animals and environments (Chemero 2003).

The affordance is important in Gibson’s theory because it is the thing that binds perception and action. But, apropos to the present chapter, affordances define the opportunities for action in the place one is inhabiting, that is, the environment in which one is interacting. Perception thus functions to detect these affordances. As the perception/action cycle is about continuously interacting with one’s environment, it is thus about continuously perceiving and making use of affordances. Both perception and action are based on the affordance.

Now that we have provided a summary of the foundational components of Gibsonian theory, we next use this to provide a unique definition of place. That is, as noted, Gibson was less concerned with the epistemological status of place as a construct. Rather, he was focusing on developing a robust theory of how organisms perceive and interact in a complex and stimulus rich world. Nonetheless, as we next show, the components of his theory of perception provide fecund ground from which to produce a novel approach for conceptualizing what we mean by “place”.

3 Towards a Gibsonian Definition of Place

Gibson classified places according to the affordances contained therein. To explain how affordances are inherent to an understanding of place, consider, first, an affordance-free place. In his rejection of the air theory of perception, Gibson (1950) referenced the Ganzfeld experiments of Metzger (1930). To create a Ganzfeld effect, one can place halved ping-pong balls over the eyes of observers, and control the illumination to ensure that the visual field is homogenous and empty. What would it be like to be in such an empty space, which in one sense might be equivalent to an empty Cartesian space? Gibson (1950) asked “Let us imagine the perception obtained by an observer in the nearest possible approach to empty visual space.

Assume that his environment consisted wholly of atmosphere without any opaque objects. He could live for some time at the center of such a sphere of air...If he opens his eyes he can see, and the question is *what* will he see?" (p. 4, emphasis in original). Gibson answered the question thusly:

He can turn his eyes in any direction but they will not focus or converge and he cannot fixate or look at anything for there is nothing to fixate on. He will see luminosity or color... [that] is unlocalized in the third dimension; its distance is indeterminate. The sea of light around him might vary from bright to dark and from one hue to another but the quality of color would be neither that of a surface on the one hand nor would be extended in depth on the other. It is neither near nor far. The space he sees is certainly not two-dimensional in the sense of being flat but it is also not three-dimensional in the sense of being deep. [There is] no texture, no arrangement, no contours, no shapes, no solidity, and no horizontal or vertical axes. The observer might as well be in absolute darkness as far as he can *see* anything. [What] an observer would perceive... would not be space but the nearest thing to no perception at all... [He] would have no impression of up or down... would have no equilibrium and could not maintain a posture... [and] experience a profound and complete disorientation. He could thrash about but could not change his position in phenomenal space, and in fact he would have no position in a visible environment (1950, p. 4–5, emphasis in original).

Gibson had not yet proposed the theory of affordances when he wrote this depiction of empty space, but it is clear that this space contains no affordances. It contains no surfaces to act on. Such a space cannot be a *place* at all, in the sense that it cannot be an environment. In brief, the starting point for an environment, and thus for a place, is the affordance. Because the ground plane is fundamental to perception, it must also be fundamental to action. Thus, and more broadly, it is also fundamental to ecology, biology, and psychology, providing the affordances that it does to terrestrial animals. The simplest place that can be a place, then, is not the Ganzfeld, but a ground plane. To a terrestrial animal, a solid and stable ground affords standing, control of posture, sitting, laying upon, and locomotion. The means by which any of these actions are achieved may vary depending on the anatomy of the animal. But, importantly, all terrestrial animals can perform the actions listed above on a ground plane. It is this universality of the ground that makes it fundamental – and it is surely no coincidence the word fundamental itself derives from the Latin *fundament*, which means foundation, but is also used in reference to the surface of the earth.

But while a ground plane can be the foundation of an environment, it cannot, by itself, be habitable. While it affords most of the actions terrestrial animals can perform, it does not provide for survival, and offers no purpose for action. As Gibson (1979) framed it, the concept of place is dependent on not just the presence of affordances, but on the types of affordances present. Places are defined by their affordances. Thus, just as the affordance is a relation between animal and environment, so is a place.

This ground plane must be accompanied by many of the basic things necessary for survival. The terrestrial animal needs an atmosphere that affords breathing, and which also serves as a medium for transmitting the various ambient energy arrays to which the sensory organs are sensitive (e.g., propagation of light for seeing, sound pressure waves for hearing, and dispersal of molecules for smelling). There must be water that affords drinking, and perhaps also cooling. There must also be other

living entities, the biota, which among other things, may afford eating, which we might say is the affordance of edibility. Edible things include certain plants and prey animals. The presence of prey implies the presence of predator, and thus a habitable environment must also afford shelter. Where there is no natural shelter, the animal must be able to create its own.

As Gibson asked in reference to the various ways humanity has altered the world, “Why has man changed the shapes and substances of his environment? To change what it affords him” (1979, p. 130). This ability to modify one’s environment in such a manner epitomizes both the affordance and the Darwinian idea of adaptation as applied to all animals. That a rabbit can dig a burrow is dependent upon both the characteristics of the ground and the rabbit. The soil must be soft enough for digging, relative to the sharpness of the rabbit’s claws and strength of its forelimbs, but also dense enough for the burrow to be stable and not collapse in on itself. Sandy ground may be soft enough for digging but will not support underground chambers. This is how the natural environment selects the features that enable survival, and also how the affordance, as relation between animal and environment, emerges via the process of natural selection. The effectivity of being able to dig evolved within an environment that affords digging. The specific form of the effectivity, that is, for the rabbit, sharp claws and forelimbs of a given strength, evolved as an attunement to the affordance. As Chemero (2003) argued, affordances do not drive natural selection, but rather emerge as animals adapt to their environments.

This latter example highlights the importance of purposeful action. Affordances support purpose and intentional behavior. As argued previously, the ground plane itself does not provide purpose to action. One walks upon it because one has somewhere to go. The rabbit digs into it because the rabbit seeks shelter. Both of these entail the presence of something else besides the animal and the ground, whether a predator or a destination.

The biota itself provides additional affordances. Gibson (1979) hinted at the possibility of social affordances, in that we may perceive the opportunities for interaction with others. Between conspecifics, this may involve mating, protection, conflict over position in a social group, and more. Across species, predator/prey relationships fall into this domain. In general, approach/avoidance behaviors, observable in nearly all animal species, may be seen as supported by information about social affordances.

Importantly, all of the living things *in* the place, are part of the place. This is especially the case following the implications of Gibson’s theory of direct perception, which does away with the traditional dualist distinction of subject and object in perception and intention. Evolving within a given environment, adapted and attuned to the affordances therein, the flora and fauna cannot be described independent of this place, their habitat.

From this, we can see how the nature of a place can be different things to different members of the same species who do very different things there. Species use different affordances, yet all participate in mutual interaction to create this place. The place of a beehive is different if you are a drone or a queen. The place of a rural town is different if you are a farmer or a shopkeeper. Nevertheless, these individuals share this place, and together with all the others who do so as well, their collective

actions create an emergent, coordinated pattern of group behavior that may be called community. This can be viewed as participatory place-making. Specifically, each member of this place acts, and interacts, in service of some purpose. From the perspectives of embodied and enactive cognition (DeJaegher and DiPaolo 2007; Varela et al. 1991), meaning is created through one's actions in the world, and exists in the form of such actions. This is referred to as sense-making. Intention and purpose is achieved by enacting a particular affordance. Following an ecological psychology, place is created through perceiving and acting in the world. This can be seen as place-making.

Places are made, and continue to exist, then, to the extent that organisms continue to live and work within them, in terms of the natural affordances of that place. Chemero (2003) argued that an affordance is a relation between perceiver and object. We similarly argue that a place is a relation between the environment and those who perceive and act within it. More broadly, this means that place is the collection of all affordances that exist as relations between a given environment and any species inhabiting it, at least to the extent that such affordances are perceived and used. Just as affordances vary across species with different effectivities, so does the place. And this place is “made” by the actions and interactions of the biota and the affordances provided therein. It is the mutuality of sense-making within a space, made possible by its affordances, that engenders participatory place-making.

To conclude, affordances can thus be seen as defining the character of an environment, and giving it its particular sense of place. Different environments contain different affordances for different species. Because affordances are specific to the relations between a given species and its environment, then accordingly, each environment, with its constituent biota, is a different place.

4 Towards a Phenomenology of Place

Now that we have reviewed the fundamental tenets of Gibsonian theory, and demonstrated its value in helping us understand and define place, in this final section, we show how these ideas can complement and, to some degree, be integrated with, some of the core ideas of phenomenology. The connection of Gibson to phenomenology is both direct and inextricable. What we mean is that Gibsonian theory, although not necessarily articulated in the language of phenomenology, is one with experience at its core. It is the direct experience of an agent as it interacts with its environment that we submit defines a place. We offer a notional formula that provides a functional relationship for these features (adapted from Lewin 1935, 1951; and Kihlstrom 2013).

$$P = f(A,E)$$

“P” stands for the external “place”, not just all of its constituent elements, but all of its potential. “A” stands for “agent”, that is, some organism inhabiting the place. “E” stands for “environment” and is used to describe the features of that environment that afford interaction with the agent. We offer this pseudo-mathematical conceptualization to convey the idea that place can be defined by particular combinations of an agent and an environment. The comma means that the particulars of how these combine are dependent upon the embodiment of the agent, and how the agent’s physical needs and goals interact with that environment to provide an experience of “place”. As such, this is a general formulation meant to be applicable to a variety of organisms. With this as a stepping off point, we next posit a relationship to a set of phenomenological concepts and use this to explain how they influence each other. We do this through connections to current theories of embodied and enactive cognitive science.

4.1 *Being*

Gibson’s ecological approach to perception and action entails a directedness to existence. Animals are embodied and situated in their environment, and their behaviors are directed to the things within the environment. The particular embodiment of some agent drives their interactions with that environment and what it affords. Thus, rather than just “being”, they are “being-in-the-world” as Heidegger would say. Gibson (1979) avoided treating perception as independent of action, so it is perhaps better to say that direct perception and action connect an agent to its environment, to that world. We have called this place-making. Whereas the dualist Descartes concluded that “I think therefore I am,” perhaps more appropriate is the materialist counter, “I move therefore I am” (Gassendi). In fact, early in his career, Gibson noted that perception and being are the same (Reed 1988). To follow, then, he might have provided his own counter, “I perceive therefore I am.” A later Gibson might have revised this to be “I perceive and act therefore I am.” But this statement is also incomplete. “I am” implies something like a generic state of existence. So we can now address this via linking Gibson’s concept of direct perception, and place-making, with Heideggerian notions of being in the world. Specifically, the irreducible perception/action cycle constitutes a hermeneutic circle, enabling *presence* (Dasein). Put another way, *I perceive and act therefore I am here*.

4.2 *Meaning*

In contrast to traditional cognitive psychology, and representationalist accounts of mind, we prefer a synthesis of Gibson’s ecological approach with radical embodied cognition (Chemero 2003; Wilson and Golonka 2013), to reconsider the nature of meaning, what it is, and where it is to be found. Specifically, meaning is no longer

in the head, it is in the world. Such a theory, then, calls into question the need for representation of a world. If perception is not in the business of creating mental representations of some place, and a priori representations are not needed to mediate sense data, this begs the question of what purpose they serve in psychological theory? We submit that perception is, instead, a physical act. It occurs when a perceptually capable agent inhabits and moves about within its environment. The job of perception is performed by the moving body of the perceiver through a place. The combination of this, then, is presence. In short, an embodied agent is placed in its natural environment via direct perception. This step removes the last vestiges of Descartes' "ghost in the machine". The essence of it is best captured by the sub-title of Mace's (1977) review of Gibson's theory, "Ask not what's inside your head, but what your head's inside of."

4.3 Purpose

To be in a place, to be present, is for an agent to perceive and act within an environment, and is dependent on the presence of affordances. But the agent must have a purpose, or something to do in the environment, which must then afford the actions required to achieve this end. And the agent must perceive and use the relevant affordance. *Presence* occurs, then, when an agent is able to achieve its goals via the direct perception and use of affordances. Through these actions, an agent is placed in that environment; the agent is present in that environment. The agent has something to do there, and the means to do it there, and this must involve place-making. Presence and purpose are thus inextricably linked. The more an agent finds purpose in a place, with the ability to detect and use affordances to support actions toward that purpose, the more that agent is in the place, and the more that agent is present.

5 Conclusion

We submit, finally, that a place affords, not just being and meaning, but also purpose. In presenting a Gibsonian notion of place, we have shown that it must contain the affordances that support the needs and goals of those that live within it. As there are real places that support the realization of being, meaning, and purpose, there are also desolate places that do not. In contrast to the fiction of the Ganzfeld that Gibson used as a thought experiment, real desolation may be found in the physical remoteness of arid deserts, or the arctic tundra, and yet also perhaps in the poverty and decay of some urban environments. Although there will be exceptions, we submit that, for many, to live in such places is to be faced with the possibility of the negation of possibility and purpose. We maintain that, in such instances, one could never truly feel present, and, therefore, may never experience being, or meaning.

These views on the inseparableness of meaning, purpose, presence, and place may lay the groundwork for a truly ecological psychology. This theoretical framework necessarily rejects the disembodied methodological solipsism of computational cognitive psychology (e.g., Fodor 1980), in favor of a naturalist view that unifies ecology and psychology by treating animal-environment interactions, and places, as first principles in both the biological and social sciences.

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Tuanian Geography

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Abstract Yi-Fu Tuan is skeptical of methods, including those of hermeneutics, but his approach closely parallels the prescriptions of several hermeneutic philosophers. He seeks to empathize with all kinds of human experience by reading across various works from literature and the arts, as well as history, biography, social science, philosophy and theology. In Tuanian hermeneutic circles, geographically contingent understandings of the world propel people between a pole of experience characterized by rootedness, security and certainty, and an opposing pole characterized by outreach, expansiveness and imagination. One pole signifies stasis, the other, transformation, but elements of each pole infiltrate and animate the other. These Tuanian contrasts reveal many ways of being-in-the-world and how they mix and blend in ways that are always subtle and full of nuance. For example there is always a certain distance in what is nearby and a kind of nearness in what is far away. Tuan thereby provides a lens on the ambiguities and ambivalences that attend the human experience of dwelling in the world.

The best educators don't lead; they gesture. "Over there" they say with a wave, inspiring students to wander. There is no point in staking out a completely clear trail or specifying a destination because in the realm of thought the value of each path lies in its uniqueness. To gesture avoids redundancy.

With his 22 books and over 70 articles, Yi-Fu Tuan gestures in a direction we could call the hermeneutics of space and place. He does not attempt to formalize a hermeneutic method, mapping out a pathway for disciples. Nor does his approach mark him as a scion of any particular hermeneutic scholar such as Schleiermacher, Heidegger, Dilthey, Gadamer, or Ricoeur. Instead, what he does with surprising grace is reveal the ambiguities and ambivalences that attend the human experience of dwelling in the world along with the inseparability of self and world. Throughout his career, he has explained these relationships in terms of space and place, empathizing with the many ways in which people have balanced the opposing pulls of space and place in various cultural contexts.

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Tuan explicitly frames his work as humanist (Tuan 1976) but he is not a humanist in the sense of replacing spirituality with rationalism or treating the self as wholly autonomous. By “humanist” what he means is an approach that draws broadly on the humanities for source materials and enters into questions of “geographical knowledge, territory and place, crowding and privacy, livelihood and economics, and religion... by way of human experience, awareness, and knowledge” (Tuan 1976, 266). In Tuan’s view, humanist geography should reveal “how geographical activities and phenomena reveal the quality of human awareness” (1976, 267); it is committed to “interpreting human experience in its ambiguity, ambivalence, and complexity” (1976, 275). This program sets aside the question of methodology but in practice Tuan has achieved his humanistic goals by reading across the grain of multiple texts, seeking to empathize with all kinds of human experience in the world—glorious, run of the mill, or ghastly—while resisting the tenacious scientific impulse to isolate objective facts from subjective impressions. For these reasons it might clarify his project to call it a *humanist hermeneutic of space and place*. To consider Tuan’s contribution to the hermeneutics of place and space we will briefly situate his work relative to the discipline of geography, and particularly the agenda of geosophy; next we will explore the disparate links to hermeneutics; finally we will follow Tuan on some of his explorations.

1 Tuan and the Rest of Geography

References to “geographers such as Yi-Fu Tuan” appear frequently in surveys and histories of the discipline of geography, yet the list of accompanying names is short: Edward Relph, Anne Buttimer, occasionally David Seamon, David Ley, or Graham Rowles. Tuan was clearly not the only geographer asking questions about geographical experience in the 1970s and early 1980s, but these scattered efforts never really constituted a “school.” He was an examiner on Relph’s PhD committee at the University of Toronto but this close tie was an exception to the rule. The “geographers like Tuan” charted parallel rather than intersecting paths. Tuan’s work is distinct from the others in its interest in weaving together literature and the arts, suggesting hermeneutical phenomenology as opposed to the more mainstream phenomenology of the others.

An edited volume on humanist geography showed not only his extensive influence at the turn of the twenty-first century, but also somewhat paradoxically the failure of others to echo his work (Adams et al. 2001). This is perhaps because he did not devote his attention to spelling out a prescribed research methodology. In a self-effacing explanation of his relation to the scholars mentioned above, Tuan describes himself as being less scholarly and tending “to wing it” (personal correspondence March 30, 2015). Many would protest that there is very little “winging it” in his work since he takes a great deal of care weaving together appropriate quotes and observations from novels, short stories, poems, scientific studies, historical accounts, biographies and religious writings. But perhaps Tuan’s method has

never felt to him like a method. In this light we might accept that his approach displays a skeptical view of method not unlike that of Gadamer, who in effect argued that the best hermeneutic “method” is no method (Gadamer [1960] 1989; Grondin 2003, 3). In any case, Tuan demonstrates the art of sailing across a wide array of texts and creative products without clinging to the nest of formal theory. Not only was this approach unprecedented in the 1970s, it remains an anomaly in the 2010s making Tuan, in his own words, “an oddity” (Tuan 1999, 94).

Despite its singularity, Tuan’s approach was neither unanticipated nor uncalled for. In a famous article published in geography’s flagship journal before mid-century, J. K. Wright enjoined geographers to explore *terrae incognitae*—unknown territories—lurking behind the fantastic variety of worldviews: “The imaginative perception of others, the feeling for place that many a sensitive traveler has recorded, may be keener and more accurate than ours and may often be borrowed to advantage” (1947, 10). Under the rubric of *geosophy* Wright called for efforts to gather and interpret “geographical ideas, both true and false, of all manner of people—not only geographers, but farmers and fishermen, business executives and poets, novelists and painters, Bedouins and Hottentots” (1947, 12). Acknowledging that such an endeavor must incorporate various kinds of subjectivity, Wright went a step further and challenged the assumption that subjectivity is the opposite of objectivity (1947, 5, 12). There was a rhetorical objective, as well; geosophy would help “prevent the oncoming generations of geographers from becoming too thickly encrusted in the prosaic” and make the discipline better at “firing the artistic and poetic imaginations of students and public” (Wright 1947, 15). Geographers should become “*scholars in the humanistic sense*—men widely read in the classics of geography and also in general literature and in literary criticism and history” (Wright 1947, 15 italics added). Despite Wright’s persuasion, few geographers heeded the call for geosophy until three decades later when Tuan took up the torch.

2 Tuan and Hermeneutics

Tuan seldom refers to philosophy (or geosophy for that matter) in his published works. He is happier forging ahead than trying to formalize theories. Reading across countless creative expressions of place and space, citing cleverly and strategically, he carries his readers in hermeneutic circles between text and experience, representation and world. These are not Schleiermacher’s, Heidegger’s, or Gadamer’s circles (Schleiermacher 1978; Heidegger [1927] 1962; Gadamer [1960] 1989), but nonetheless they are interpretative circuits. They are motivated by the same intent as that which underlies the proponents of hermeneutics: to tease out meanings of human life from the vast repository of human creativity—both collective and individual. Tuan’s hermeneutic circles depend on fundamental assumptions that preoccupy many geographers while bringing such assumptions to light in unusual ways. Geographically contingent understandings of the world are shown to propel people between one pole of experience characterized by rootedness, security, grounding

and certainty, and an opposing but interpenetrating pole characterized by outreach, expansiveness, possibility and imagination. This approach is suggested by titles such as *Segmented Worlds and Self*, *Morality and Imagination*, *Cosmos and Hearth*, *Dominance and Affection*, and above all, *Space and Place* (Tuan 1977, 1982, 1984, 1989, 1996). At the most abstract level, these existential dialectics involve the encounter between continuity and discontinuity (Tuan 1984) which can sound abstract, but Tuan reminds us that life always involves a body with its capacities for movement and sensory modes that selectively filter the world (Tuan 1974, 5–12, 45–58).

Just as Dilthey calls attention to historical contingency by introducing the notion of *Geisteswissenschaften* (Palmer 1969, 98–99) Tuan emphasizes the geographical contingency of human experience. Different times have distinct worldviews, like *Weltanschauungen*, but these vary, as well, from place to place. Familiar places therefore provide a foundation for understanding what lies beyond the perceived and the known, extending all of the way out to the world and the cosmos. Tuan investigates multitudinous expressions of space and place, drawing out subtle commonalities and differences in human expressions of all sorts, recalling his own discipline's various interests including geomorphology, biogeography, economic geography and cultural geography. He leads the reader back iteratively to the tensions between the expansiveness of human worldviews and their grounding in place-based experiences. There is a kinship between this project and the work of Dilthey, whose "*Ausdruck*" indicated the full gamut of ways in which the inner world has been manifested in the outer world (Dilthey [1907] 1954). Tuan likewise reads the meanings of various arts, architecture, religion, and other human achievements as manifestations of culture and human experience, but rather than offer a name or definition of the terrain he simply segues from one manifestation to another.

Tuanian geography shares with hermeneutics a commitment to an inclusive notion of human expression but parts ways in drawing attention to spatial rather than temporal contingency. Tuan positions this shift as counter to phenomenology, suggesting that analyses of subjective viewpoints must be balanced by geographical empiricism: "Phenomenologists, eschewing objectivity, tend to emphasize the 'point of view' or the subjective" (Tuan 2014, 34). He questions phenomenology's success in balancing the specific with the general, the concrete with the abstract, and ultimately place with space. Tellingly, he suggests that Heidegger's work would be better if it were if more like that of a novelist than a philosopher (Tuan 2014). Integration of the subjective and objective is precisely what hermeneutical phenomenology was calling for, with *Dasein* as particularly well-known articulation of this synthesis, but Tuan's reading reflects the difference between calling for interpretation of human experience (a philosophical approach) and actually assembling particular expressions of human experience (a Tuanian approach). The latter actually fuses subjective and objective in a way the former cannot.

Tuan also offers a third option to complicate Heidegger's well-known distinction between the ready-to-hand and the present-at-hand. While the ready-to-hand is the world encountered through human utilization—the tree as lumber, the river as a source of hydrological power—and the present-at-hand is the world translated into

abstract relationships—the tree as an entry on a botanical chart, the river as part of a watershed (Wollan 2003, 37)—Tuan effectively demonstrates a third category of experience. This category is rich in emotional impact and meaning but divorced from purely utilitarian purposes; it is to encounter something as neither merely useful nor wholly abstract—the tree becomes a *center of felt meaning*, the river becomes a *focus of care*. Emphasizing this third path and showing little in the way of direct influence, Tuan's motivation nonetheless parallels Heidegger's. From a geographical point of view, what is perhaps Heidegger's most important insight may be found in his 1936 lectures "On the Origin of the Work of Art" which asserts that a work of art "holds open to man the inner struggle between earth and world" (Palmer 1969, 160). By this he means the inevitable tension between what is given as the environment "out there," and the multitudinous ways in which people have transformed their environments into worlds through material and symbolic appropriation. This active and directed quality of being, peculiar to *human* being, saturates Tuan's corpus.

Citations of philosophy are rare in Tuan's work but he does explicitly reference Maurice Merleau-Ponty whose *Phenomenology of Perception* showed the world we perceive as a direct outcome of the modes of perception we utilize to apprehend it (Madison 1992; Tuan 1971, 1976, 1977). Tuan's work is imprinted, as well, by the sensibility of Paul Ricoeur, who wrote: "To speak of a world of the text is to stress the feature belonging to every literary work of opening before it a horizon of possible experience, a world in which it would be possible to live" (Ricoeur 1991, 26). Worlds unfold through both sensation and representation. Tuan offered a brilliant summary of this situation in an early book chapter: "Sensations, perceptions, and ideas occur under two aspects: the one clear and precise, but impersonal; the other confused, ever-changing, and inexpressible, because language cannot clothe it without arresting its flux and making it into public property" (1979b, 392). Ricoeur captured a strikingly similar relationship between experience and language, place and what Relph (1976) would call placelessness: "I am not merely a situated onlooker, but a being who intends and expresses as an intentional transgression of the situation. As soon as I speak, I speak of things in their absence and in terms of their non-perceived sides" (quoted in Busch 1992, 26). Using different words, Tuan and Ricoeur both indicate that language falls short of the world-mapping task we assign to it; while Tuan shows us enforcing immutability on what always exists in flux, Ricoeur shows us enforcing visibility on what is normally invisible. In either case, a chasm or an abyss opens up between the human attempt to "map" the world and the world that is being mapped (Olsson 2010).

Tuan had already honed his explanation of the interpretive task by the late 1970s, arguing "Place is not only a fact to be explained in the broader frame of space, but it is also a reality to be clarified and understood from the perspectives of the people who have given it meaning" (1979b, 387). In this passage, the term "space" evokes a field of quantifiable relationships associated with measurable, objective attributes, a construct of spatial analysis that reduces place to location and subordinates place to space. In contrast, Tuan wants place to be understood as primary. It is an inescapable context of action. If we value place the littlest things have great value: putting

on one's socks, exchanging pleasantries with a store clerk, tending the hearth. Through such commonplace events people acquire a sense of security and are rooted in a world that is close at hand (including Heidegger's ready-to-hand). At the same time, dissatisfaction with the minutiae of daily life generates impulses that push people away from the familiar to encounter the unknown (a distancing more visceral and emotional than the present-at-hand).

In his call to understand place, Tuan sought a hybrid between explanation and understanding, and rather than entirely avoid use of "space" with its connotations of abstraction and quantification, he insisted that "space is oriented by each centre of consciousness" (Tuan 1979b, 390). Space therefore derives from place rather than vice versa yet it remains a problematic concept because it seems to exist above or beyond human subjectivity; the "question of objective reality is tantalising but unanswerable, and it may be meaningless" (Tuan 1979b, 389). To this Tuanian interest in lived experience we can add another Heideggerian argument that the "character of understanding will best be grasped not through an analytical catalogue of its attributes, nor in the full flush of its proper functioning, but when it breaks down, when it comes up against a wall, perhaps when something it must have is missing" (Palmer 1969, 133–134). Tuan follows this line of thought repeatedly by exploring what it is to be lost, disconnected, cut-off, at loose ends and adrift, or conversely claustrophobic, confined and entrapped. Significant portions of *Morality and Imagination*, *Cosmos and Hearth*, *Escapism*, and *Romantic Geography* (1989, 1996, 1998, 2013) treat these darker themes, while *Landscapes of Fear* (1979a) is almost entirely dedicated to them. Tuan admits he is a pessimist, driven to show how people heal rifts and reconnect to each other mainly because he expects the opposite and finds such acts of goodness surprising (2008, viii). The breakdown of human connectedness fascinates him, but reconnection has the appeal of the miraculous.

Tuan's approach, which he defines as "narrative-descriptive" at one point, distances him methodologically from the hermeneutic philosophers. This difference is driven by his suspicion that theory can be "so highly structured that it seems to exist in its own right, to be almost 'solid,' and thus able to cast (paradoxically) a shadow over the phenomena it is intended to illuminate" whereas he finds theory more helpful when it can "hover supportively in the background" (Tuan 1991, 686). Hermeneutic philosophers offer programmatic statements prescribing *how* to interpret the meanings of things but Tuan steps from quote to quote like rocks in a stream—texts and other creative works forming points of stasis in the swirling river of human consciousness. His writing allows meaning to emerge artfully from intertextual perambulations but self-consciously remains distinct from the literature it explores: "The first order of business for those who want to be good writers is to remove fat and adornment—those purple passages that erupt like skin rash—from their prose. Erupt like skin rash. See how easy it is to slip into poetry?" (Tuan 2002, 163).

In short, Tuan resonates at a theoretical level with various hermeneutic programs, including those of Heidegger, Dilthey, Gadamer and Ricoeur, as well as the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty, but he avoids aligning itself with any particular theorist and in some ways he departs significantly from the hermeneutic tradition.

This is evident in the lack of fit between Tuanian notions of being in the world and his interest in a form of engagement that treats things as neither ready-to-hand nor present-at-hand. It is also indicated in Tuan's direct engagement with texts and lack of interest in prescribing how and why one *should* engage with texts. Tuan's writings can therefore be seen as demonstrating hermeneutics but not necessarily following hermeneutics.

3 Tuanian Contrasts

The defining trait of Tuan's oeuvre is its tireless effort to empathize with the fundamental contrasts of human experience. Unlike Marxian contradictions which produce tension or crisis, Tuanian contrasts are nuances: nuances of being in the world, nuances of engaging with the world, and nuances of laying claim to bits and pieces of the world. These are all finely-delineated points on the spectrum between space and place, where various ways of being-in-the-world mix and blend in surprising ways. Opposites do not remain separate but interpenetrate each other: the hearth is physically located in the cosmos even as the cosmos twinkles in the hearth.

The principle of polar opposites united by mutual inclusion evokes what Entrikin calls "betweenness" (1991), as well, providing a foundation for self-identity. People seek out group identities and places in which they can immerse themselves, whether as part of a family, team or nation (Tuan 1982, 1998) yet despite such efforts, they feel isolated as if they were "spinning loose on [their] own axis" (Tuan 1984, 246). Perplexingly, neither the cozy familiarity of place nor the beckoning possibilities of space offers the solidity that is craved by the self. We are stretched uncomfortably between space and place and when we reach out to engage with space we fatefully plummet back into place. The Arctic explorer, Fridtjof Nansen, who spent the winter in a snow-covered hut on an arctic island found himself fantasizing about his wife and daughter back at home: "There she sits in the winter's evening, sewing by lamplight. Beside her stands a young girl with blue eyes and golden hair playing with a doll. She looks tenderly at the child and strokes her hair. Her eyes grow moist, and heavy tears fall on her sewing..." (Tuan 2013, 99). But that winter camp had to serve as home and Nansen grew profoundly attached to his cook stove and the "faint rays of light which shone from the lamp" (Tuan 2013, 100). Self is incoherent—torn between space and place.

In a rare moment of abstraction, Tuan observes that "people feel uncomfortable with things that have fuzzy edges" and therefore they frame the world in "polarized categories of the continuous and the discontinuous, the linked and the discrete" (Tuan 1984, 247–248). His implication here is that polarities are imposed on the world through our ways of inhabiting it. Dwelling is a meaningful action that draws boundaries and separates place from space. Normally he does not tell us this idea but shows it by juxtaposing excerpts from hundreds of texts. In *Space and Place* he writes: "Place is security, space is freedom: we are attached to the one and long for the other" (1977, 3). In *Cosmos and Hearth*, he writes: "Hearth, though nurturing,

can be too confining; cosmos, though liberating, can be bewildering and threatening” (1996, 2). In *Segmented Worlds and Self* he elaborates: “The problem is ... how to nurture a sense of self without losing touch with other people altogether; how to escape from the world and yet still be in the world—a world, however limited, of one’s own design, or a world over which one has some control” (1982, 169). Again and again he grapples with the dilemma of seclusion and engagement, the craving for both refuge and adventure. He not only dissects these contrary pulls by drawing on the arts and humanities, he also suggests that we use the arts and humanities to resolve the opposing pulls: “a painting or sculpture, other than the stains and scars of time, stays much the same. To it, I can return” (Tuan 2004, 22). Likewise photographs and poems function as virtual places (Tuan 2004, 23, 25, 28). This conceptual shift suggests that place animates representations in more than one way, both referentially (communication of place) and experientially (communications in place/as place), and the hermeneutic task of exploring space and place is complicated by this slippage.

Polarities of self-identity are closely tied to the forces that pull us both into and out of place. Connectedness stifles identity in conformity while isolation prevents identity, however distinct, from making a difference to others. Tuan highlights the complications of this interplay, showing how hard it may be at times to retreat enough to feel a coherent sense of self and to reach out enough to feel a sufficient sense of connection. We are caught in the middle. Yet place and space can be reassuring as our skillful encounters with both ideally allow us to strike a balance between losing ourselves in the crowd and losing ourselves in a cloistered existence—to find ourselves through the dynamic interaction of these two ways of being.

Tuan turns to literature, the arts and popular culture to demonstrate the existential pulls of space and place. Let us look a bit more carefully at how he does this. Quoting *Wind in the Willows*, he invites us to see ourselves in the figure of Mole, a retiring creature who nonetheless craves the “splendid spaces above ground,” spaces that call to him at the end of the day when he has retreated to his cozy burrow (1996, 1). The film *The Cure* (1995) offers a different vision of this polarity between cosmos and hearth. The reader is introduced to Dexter, a boy living with AIDS, and his friend, Erik.

One night, Dexter woke up drenched in sweat. He had had a nightmare... that he was adrift in deep, dark space with no hope of rescue... Erik’s answer? He threw his gym shoe at Dexter and said, “Next time you find yourself in deep, dark space, ask yourself, ‘what on earth is Erik’s smelly old shoe doing on my lap?’” (Tuan 2013, 35)

The latter example demonstrates the binding power of love—love in the guise of friendship. As a geographer, Tuan’s treatment of love speaks to questions of being in space and place. Love of one’s fellow humans quite often implies a commitment to a particular place—helping overcome its flaws and heal its ailments, while suffering, if need be, from those very flaws and ailments. Socrates is an exemplary man, Tuan suggests (2008, 103) because he remained in Athens and acceded to the death penalty when he could have abandoned his community and survived. Yet in being

good, people also rise above the limitations of their personal “place” in the world, revealing a better way of existing and contributing that spirit to the places where they live.

4 Cultural Variation

Tuanian contrasts prompt very particular forms of balance in different social contexts—varying in ways that are inevitably cultural but also deeply personal. The interfolding of the near and the far, the intimate and the distant, appears with kaleidoscopic variety in Tuan’s works. He tells us that Michelangelo “slept with his workmen, four to a bed” (Tuan 1982, 73). He marvels that “cottagers of seafaring background use pocket telescopes to observe their neighbor’s activities. Distance notwithstanding the Shetlander can, from his own home, keep a neighborly eye on who is visiting whom” (Tuan 1977, 61). He reflects on the six-part Chinese television series called *River Elegy*: “China’s great symbols—Yellow River, Great Wall, and Dragon—[were] all shown to belong to a peasant and authoritarian past. By contrast, the color azure is somehow linked with the progressive forces of science and democracy... [a] blue frontier, where cultures mix and undergo rebirth...” (Tuan 1996, 66). Each example demonstrates a particular place’s balance between the existential pulls of near and far.

Tuan addresses these vital contrasts most directly in *Romantic Geography*:

What are polarized values? They include darkness and light, chaos and order, body and mind, matter and spirit, nature and culture, among others. Every culture has its own set that is subtly different from those of other cultures. With all of them, there is a family resemblance—a similar evocation of values such that one pole contains the ‘negatives’ of darkness, chaos, body, matter, and nature, and the other pole, the ‘positives’ of light, order, mind, spirit, and culture. (The inverted commas are put there as a reminder that the values are reversible.) (Tuan 2013, 9)

Do these polarities suggest struggle? While Tuan notes conflicts and contestation, he stresses the reconciliation and harmonization of extremes. For example, he mentions that the rituals of American society “undoubtedly have their high and solemn moments, but these are attenuated by the sane feeling that children’s laughter, stray balloons, and the smell of popcorn are never far away” (1993, 242). Does this point toward a universal principle or at least a constant for humankind—something akin to yin and yang? Tuan does not follow this author’s own (perhaps reductionist) impulse to consider this point; he is content to follow polarities through countless nuances evident in different times and places.

In keeping with this theme, he shows that there is distance in what is nearby and nearness in what is far away. The poem “Neighbors” by David Allan Evans is quoted in both *Humanist Geography* (Tuan 2012, 26) and in *The Good Life* (Tuan 1986, 107). A middle-aged couple is stolidly washing windows and the pane of glass between them suggests all of the barriers that can intrude and create a brittle division when the warmth has gone out of an intimate relationship: “they are waving/to

each other/with rags/not smiling.” Conversely, Tuan reminds us that “the distant view can be fond or tender rather than cool” (1993, 15). His hermeneutic circles not only juxtapose geographical proximity and distance, but at the same time they bring about a kind of folding where the extremes of near and far overlay and interpenetrate each other. Tuan suspects that close emotional relationships inevitably impose a barrier of dominance or at least mutual evasion between the self and the other. At the same time he makes a point of showing unexpected glimmers of warmth and love in the most remote places and spaces.

5 The Ethics and Politics of Binaries

Edward Soja famously called for the promotion of a “thirdspace” unifying culturally-constructed opposites. Following calls by Homi Bhabha, bell hooks, and other feminist, postcolonial, postmodernist and poststructuralist scholars to overcome exploitative dualities, and drawing most directly on Henri Lefebvre’s tripartite system—*le perçu*, *le conçu*, and *le vécu*—Soja sought to fuse “subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential, structure and agency, mind and body, consciousness and the unconscious, the disciplined and the transdisciplinary, everyday life and unending history” (Soja 1996, 57). Geographers following this lead worked to deconstruct binaries (Cloke and Johnston 2005). The goal of this project is assumed to be emancipatory since binaries are blamed for perpetuating patriarchy, colonialism, capitalism and racial exploitation.

In light of such efforts, what are we to make of Tuan’s treatment of contrasts such as space and place, dominance and affection, cosmos and hearth, morality and imagination? Did Tuan actually launch geography’s binary-deconstructing efforts rather than Soja, or is he a last holdout in the pro-binary camp? Ironically, the either-or structure of this question sets up another binary that needs to be interrogated. Tuan does not exactly attack binaries nor does he exactly defend them. His microscopic scrutiny of space and place leaves nothing intact; whichever binary he chooses to focus on is revealed to be internally contradictory and fluid. Each of the positions evokes the opposing term: “On the attachment scale, points in the middle range are necessarily ambiguous, but I have come to see that the extremities are not as firm as I thought, for they contain the seed of their opposite” (Tuan 2004, 8). This parsing of Tuanian geography by Tuan himself is in line with efforts to deconstruct, destabilize, disrupt and interrogate dualities.

At the same time, Tuan’s effort lacks iconoclastic zeal; he is not an activist. When he looks around (or reads around) at all of the spaces and places of the world, he quite often likes what he sees, and his writings convey approbation:

Geography has directed my attention to the world, and I have found there, for all the inanities and horrors, much that is good and beautiful. The near total neglect of the good is an egregious fault of critical social science, making even its darkest findings, paradoxically,

less dark, if only because they are not contrasted with the bright lights that also make up the human picture. (Tuan 1999, 115)

Insofar as Tuan very often starts with dualities and he finds much that is good, this means that Tuanian contrasts are not all bad. When he considers cosmos and hearth, he revels in the calm sanctuary of the hearth while celebrating the quest to reach distant shores. Even in his gloomiest book, *Landscapes of Fear*, the concluding chapter asserts that things were worse in the past so social change is moving in the right direction. “In the larger view, the human story is one of progressive sensory and mental awareness... culture, through laborious and labyrinthine paths traversed over millennia, has greatly and variedly refined our senses and mind” (1993, 240). Progress itself depends on Tuanian contrasts between cosmos and hearth, dominance and affection, morality and imagination, space and place, so despite generating tension these contrasts are not, in themselves, problematic.

When moved to state his own moral imperative, Tuan offers the following: “To perceive truly, which I take to mean the same as perceiving justly or morally, seems to call for the power of attending to both the particular and the universal” (1989, 177). If some scholars hope to overthrow inequities and injustices, Tuan counters that the purpose of research has been for him: “salvation by geography” (1999, 90–116). This stance is indicative of a powerful moral commitment, but one that is expressed primarily as humility and openness to the world. It reveals “my temperamental inclination to see the world from another’s point of view, to grant that my opponent may have a case, however misguided” (1999, 74). Thus, unlike the majority of human geographers at the turn of the twenty-first century, Tuan does not see himself as the hero in a saga of Power versus Subversion. Instead he serves as a tour guide in world where Everyman reaches the existential poles of nearness and farness only to discover tunnels through to the opposite pole.

6 Final Thoughts

How does Tuan position *himself* between the experiential poles of space and place? By way of a self-referential gesture, he writes “My own life path shows that I am neither rooted... nor driven to tramp the world... Yet I not only understand, but can feel the tug of both positions” (Tuan 2004, 7–8). This quote appears in *Place, Art, and Self*, the same short book that articulates his personal experience of topophilia: “Death Valley is a tourist attraction. Many go there for its visual novelty—its strangeness. For me, it has always been far more. In my very first encounter with the desert, I felt as though I had met my geographical double—the objective correlative of the person I am, absent the social façade” (Tuan 2004, 19). In *Who am I*, he also speaks to this connection: “Over time, I was forced to conclude that, for me, beauty has to be inhuman—even inanimate—to be a balm to the soul. Thus my love of the desert” (Tuan 1999, 55). It is in the vast silent spaces of stone, light, wind and sand that Tuan feels comforted, nurtured, and sheltered. How ironic it is that Tuan’s

initial encounter with the existential worm hole between near and far was a morning when he woke up, young and full of life, in a place called Death Valley.

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Edward Casey: Subliminal Hermeneutics in the Wake of Place

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Abstract This chapter first provides a brief map of Edward S. Casey's work, as a guide to its relevance to the hermeneutics of place. It then articulates two of Casey's distinctive contributions to this topic: his study of moving, bodily implacement as key to the determinate appearance of things in places, places and place itself; his highly innovative work on what he calls periphenomena. Periphenomena, such as glances and edges, are peripheral to phenomena, yet guide our moving, bodily implacement, and are ingredient in our encountering places, and things in places, as determinate phenomena. Periphenomena, though, are beneath direct notice and inherently escape clear determination or delimitation—they are what I call subliminal. These two contributions together imply a third, underlying point that I draw out of Casey, namely that a hermeneutics of place and indeed all hermeneutics turns on a hermeneutics *of* place, that is, an account of hermeneutical activity as itself arising from and granted by place—yet the place that grants meaning is not some already fully given and determinate foundation, but is subliminal. This has ethical implications.

Edward S. Casey's rich and detailed work on place (now spanning at least seven books) harbors many insights regarding the hermeneutics of place—even though he does not directly address this topic under that heading.¹ So I begin by briefly mapping his work in its relevance to the hermeneutics of place. This lets me descry an underlying methodological and conceptual trajectory that contextualizes the main task of this chapter, namely, articulating two of Casey's distinctive contributions to the hermeneutics of place, and then drawing out a deeper implication.

¹ A Google book search confirms that there are only one or two usages of the word “hermeneutic” in Casey's books. As noted below, though, this is perhaps a case in which hermeneutics is so central that it is not mentioned as such.

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Casey's first distinctive contribution is his study of moving, bodily implacement as key to the determinate appearance of things in places, places and place itself²—and thereby crucial to the hermeneutics of place. The second contribution arises from Casey's more recent and highly innovative work on what he calls *periphenomena*. Periphenomena, such as glances and edges, are peripheral to phenomena, yet guide our moving, bodily implacement; they are thus ingredient in our encountering places, and things in places, as determinate phenomena. Periphenomena though, are beneath direct notice and inherently escape clear determination or delimitation—they are what I call *subliminal*. These two contributions together imply a third, underlying point that I draw out of Casey, namely that a hermeneutics of place and indeed all hermeneutics turns on a hermeneutics *of* place, that is, an account of hermeneutical activity as itself arising from and granted by place—yet the place that grants meaning is not some already fully given and determinate foundation, but is subliminal. This has ethical implications.

1 Mapping Casey's Path to a Hermeneutics of Place

Casey's first book, *Imagining: A Phenomenological Study* (IMG, Casey 2000a, 1st ed. 1976), already exhibits the detailed phenomenological description characteristic of all his work. As Casey himself later notes, in *Imagining* he presumed that descriptions of inner, subjective experience could exhaustively encapsulate the phenomena. In *Remembering* (REM, the sequel to IMG, Casey, 2000b, 1st ed. 1987), place intrudes and bursts this inner bubble, because Casey discovers that memorial phenomena are not merely in the head or even in the body, but reside in place.³ *Remembering* is thus an important turning point in Casey's work, because it shows that place is “ingredient” in our descriptions, in the phenomena and in philosophy itself: Casey's philosophy undergoes a sort of eversion from the interiority of subjectivity, into outside place as philosophy's condition. The “Prologue” to part three of *Remembering* (144–5) nicely captures this conceptual and methodological turning point: Casey writes that the book is “in effect retracing the history of phenomenology,” since part one analyzes memory acts on inner, Husserlian, intentionalistic lines, and part two gives a Heideggerian study of memory as worldly, whereas part three invokes Merleau-Ponty to relocate memory as operative in the body and world—in place as beyond, and radically challenging, philosophical or subjective interiority.

In his next two books this result leads Casey to study place not only as a crucial topic of philosophical, but as the *topos* within which alone philosophy operates. *The Fate of Place* (1997a, FP) comprehensively studies the concept of place in the

² Malpas (2013) provides a concise and insightful discussion of implacement in Casey's work, connecting it with Malpas's concept of “topology” as a structuring dynamic intrinsic to the very being of place.

³ See the prefaces to the second editions of IMG and REM, as well as the introduction and interviews with Casey in Cruz-Pierre and Landes (2013).

history of Western culture and philosophy (from the pre-Socratics to Nancy), against its broader background, showing how place and our rootedness in place has come to be forgotten, in favor of abstract space, and time and interiority. Against this cultural, historical, and philosophical background, *Getting Back into Place* (1993, *GBP*), *FP*'s counterpart and prelude, studies, diagnoses and challenging the forgetting of place, via a descriptive phenomenological project that reveals how our dwelling and bodily, moving experience—what Casey calls *implacement*—is intimate with place. In turn, this reveals that key features and dynamics of place resist reduction to an abstract space. Insofar as hermeneutical practice entails memory and attention to our ways of accessing things as determinate and meaningful, Casey's discussions of the body and *implacement* across *REM* and *GBP* offer valuable insights (discussed in Sect. 2 below) on the hermeneutics of place, especially on how the 'reader' and 'reading' of place dynamically spring from within the 'placial text' itself.

Casey's next two books, *Representing Place* (2002, *RP*) and *Earth-Mapping* (2005, *EM*), study our efforts to make place manifest in things we make. *RP* culminates in a study of how place is re-presented in maps and painting, and is perhaps the closest Casey comes to direct study of hermeneutics of place (and where he most mentions Gadamer), since the issue is the relation between depictions of place and the presence of place itself—which is akin to questions about the relation between interpretations and texts. Casey's notable emphasis is on the way the representational relation already depends on our *implacement*—how place itself undergirds its interpretation. This is even more emphatic in *EM*'s studies of land art, since land art draws out landscapes by reshaping them from within. Together these studies deepen the point that place itself grounds our encounters with the presence of place. *Up Against the Wall: Re-Imagining the U.S.-Mexico Border* (Casey and Watkins 2014), a study of the US-Mexico border and the wall built on it, is a case study of a particular place, that ramifies the above approach in a gamut of psychological, experiential, environmental, sociological and political dimensions, and also draws on Casey's later 'edge-work.'

Perhaps the most important and innovative turning point in Casey's place-work arises in *The World at a Glance* (*WG* Casey 2007) and *The World on Edge* (*WE*, Casey 2017) which discover that determinate thingly and placial phenomena turn on periphenomena that are less than present and determinate. If discovering the role of place in remembering turns Casey to Merleau-Ponty's bodily phenomenology, the discovery of periphenomena wakes Casey to place as itself undermining determinate presence, thence turning him to a topological variant of Derrida, or of Merleau-Ponty's later ontology of an invisible that indwells in the visible yet is nowhere fully present. These works, as we shall see in Sect. 3, suggest a 'deconstructive' hermeneutics of place, that challenges any approach to place as a fully present 'text' already there to be interpreted.⁴ Especially relevant are chapter 11 of *WG*, on the glance as guiding environmental encounters (discussed in Sect. 4), and *WE*'s studies of how edges work in architectural and environmental encounters.

⁴On this issue, cf. Bruce Janz's chapter in this volume.

This map flags key points in Casey but also indicates an ever more radical methodological and conceptual path, that ever more wakes to the way philosophy follows in the wake of place⁵—a placial parallel to the increasing radicalization of reflection in Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy (that would also put to pasture Meillasoux’s claim (2010) that phenomenology neglects the “great outdoors”).

It also lets me specify what I mean by *hermeneutics of place* vis-à-vis Casey. If *hermeneutics* originally designates a study of how we come to grasp a text or text itself as having determinate meanings, Casey lets us glean an account of how we come to encounter and interpret places and thence place itself as having a determinate meaning.⁶ Where psychologists are interested in how we have a sense of where we are, or how maps or other navigational practices help us figure this out, Casey broaches the question of how a where stands out as meaningfully determinate in the first place, and how place itself grants such wheres—analogueous to the question of how a word has a meaning, and how text itself grants such meaning. While Casey does not directly take up this question under the heading “hermeneutics of place,” my map shows how we can pursue it as a sideline implicated in his phenomenological studies of the structure of appearance of determinate wheres and determinate place.

In fact, mapping his work suggests to me that perhaps Casey does not mention the hermeneutics of place as such because the question of how we encounter place as having a determinate meaning is in fact the center of his work. That is—and this helps anticipate what follows—the heart of Casey’s work is what I call the *place-implacement doublet*. This is Casey’s twofold discovery that (1) any access to meaningful place already presumes implacement, that is, depends on our being in place as granting access to place as meaningful; yet (2) place does not possess this meaning in advance, since it appears as determinately meaningful only through moving implacement—and exhibits a subliminality that can never be exhausted. With respect to meaning, the implacement-place doublet is roughly parallel to the reader-text relation—but subliminality indicates something ontologically deeper at work. To catch this, consider that (as discussed below) periphenomena lead to place as subliminal, never fully present; but if Derrida shows that meaningful texts turn on a supplement that can never be present, in meaningful place *there is nowhere for that supplement to be except as less than present right in place itself, subliminally*: there is no “*dehors du texte*” because there is in principle no meaning outside place.⁷ The non-presence of place, which is key to its meaning, is in place “inbourne” (to use a Joycean turn of phrase), or, if phenomenology echoes in William Carlos Williams’s poetic saying “No ideas but in things,” Casey’s hermeneutics of place would be echoed in saying “No meaning but in place”—whilst showing that place

⁵This ‘wake’ language runs through *WG*, with Casey playing on waking to things and following in their wake, and also referencing *Finnegans Wake*, a book notable for imbricating language in geographical, dreamt, and imagined landscapes, and embodying landscape in language.

⁶Note that this sense of hermeneutics of place is beyond the five noted, with respect to the environment, in the ground breaking collection edited by Clinger et al. (2014).

⁷Malpas (2013) very powerfully draws out this principle.

does not offer an ‘in’ in advance (as would abstract space). There is no (determinate) there there, except by moving in place.

For Casey, then, hermeneutics *of* place would ultimately designate something like a specific, although underlying, region of hermeneutical *ontology*: it concerns our access to the meaning of the being of place, or to the meaning of being as springing from the being of place as meaningful, yet subliminal. I now develop this point by tracking Casey’s contributions to the hermeneutics of place vis-à-vis implacement and periphenomena.

2 Place as Proliferative, the Place-Implacement Doublet, and the Moving Body

What is conceptually beneath all the above points is what I shall call a ‘proliferative tendency’ in Casey’s place-thinking: a tendency to think about place via descriptions that proliferate into concrete details—which is a tendency that Casey’s place-thinking follows because he encounters place as itself being a kind of fundamental proliferation.

The issue is well indicated in “Smooth Spaces and Rough-Edged Places: the Hidden History of Place” (1997b), and unpacking it provides an insight into all of Casey’s place-work. This article, which (as Malpas (2013) notes) succinctly summarizes *FP* as well as key points of *GBP*, begins with “a puzzle of sorts,” namely “That time is one; space is two—at least two.” Casey’s point (which is deliberately provocative and at least initially puts asides complications about time) is that all times can seemingly be encountered or conceptualized as being and having their determinate character within one uniform, already laid out dimension—a ‘time-line’. We can, e.g., think of recording the when of events via a global, universal time. In contrast, even though our GPS systems might likewise promise to locate the where of everything in a global, universal coordinate system, Casey’s study of bodily implacement, and even our encounters with more abstract spaces, show that space and place do not exhibit a uniform unity: what is distinctive of spatial and placial determinations is that they inherently proliferate, for example, into three orthogonal dimensions, near-far, ahead-behind, left-right, or compass directions, etc.

That is, while time, at least the inner time of synthesis, affords and operates by ingathering all whens into one unified time, place outruns any such unity. To sense placial differences you have to follow after them and things outside you, not gather things into your own inside time. For Casey, the concept of *space*, as an abstract universal, is an attempt to pre-empt the proliferative difference of outside place and lay out uniform differences that would be given in advance; place, in contrast, indicates non-uniform differences that are not already given. Indeed, for Casey, this contrast suggests an ontological and phenomenological diagnostic of place: place is not a determinate container, it is rather the manifesting of differences that cannot be

contained; you encounter place or something place-like wherever you find yourself orienting to and encountering differences that are not of your manufacture, or subsumable to a simultaneous unity, but must be followed.⁸ Ultimately, for Casey, place is proliferative of difference because it is the original site in which difference can first of all be: place is fundamental proliferation. This is why space and place are always “at least two,” doubled, not coincident with themselves.

This gives a way into the key conceptual move of *GBP*, namely showing that our being in place is never a matter of fully and definitely occupying a location that would be fully determinate in an abstract space set up in advance or and apart from our moving in place. *GBP*’s study of the body in place (chs. 3 and 4) spells this out by focusing on what Casey calls “indefinite dyads.” These are directional or dimensional differences, such as left-right, ahead-behind, up-down, that cannot be detached from a moving body oriented by these directions and dimensions, and where these directions and dimensions do not, however, emerge apart from the places through which we move—in ways oriented by these very directions and dimensions (there is a circular dynamic at work in this). Here the contrast with time is helpful: whereas our active moving and orienting, including our evolution and growth, proliferates determinate differences, directions and dimensions of place, this is not so with time. Time’s flow is already univocal, and there is nothing that we do that either engenders the before and after of time, or proliferates time into other dimensions or differences; these differences are just given. (The complication is that we do find such differences proliferating when we look at intensive *durée* or ecstatic temporality as, e.g., engendering differing times of childhood, adulthood, senescence, and so on.) Indefinite dyads, dynamically unfolding via bodies moving in places, contrast with differences that are in principle everywhere definite, which is what space as an abstract container with three already specifiable orthogonal dimensions ensures, by assigning in advance definite locations to everything that space contains; with indefinite dyads, what is to the left vs. right, or above or below, or even whether such a difference is salient, depends on what you are, how you are moving, where you are, and what that where is like.

To give an example and draw out implications, Bachelard’s *Poetics of Space* (1964) famously draws attention to houses as privileged places in human life. While Bachelard does not himself quite suggest it, one might think that one’s house has this privilege because it harbours within itself the meaning it bears as a place, or conversely that memory and habit inside us overlay an outside place with the sense of home (note that the house/home distinction doesn’t quite work in French). The hermeneutical question of how we interpret this place as home would thus involve a kind of reading of a place that is meant to be there as a sort of text that is already and fully given outside oneself, or involve memory leading us to read meanings into places that are themselves neutral. Casey helps emphasize how these hermeneutical positions gets place wrong, that the situation is more complex, that places bear their determinate meaning only in our moving through them: we encounter home as a

⁸ Casey thus works with a subtly different contrast between space, place and time than Malpas, who conceptualizes place as prior to space as differentiated from time.

familiar and determinate place via our moving path, turning left here, right there, going up, down, so many steps forward or back, leaving and returning home. If an evil genius replaced one's house with its geometrical mirror double, or reversed one's sense of left vs. right, or moved one's house to a different neighbourhood, one would encounter not one's home but a quite disturbing or perhaps even malevolent place, as testified in the classic dream structure "I was in my home, but it was not my home, everything was in the wrong place, turned around..."⁹

Put otherwise, Casey's emphasis on place as proliferative, and the place-implacement doublet, signals that place has meaning and salience only via a kind of *différance* that operates not via temporal deferral and repetition, but rather placial moving, wandering, dithering—where this moving is not accomplished by something the body bears within itself, but via the body as inherently everted into place as granting movement possibilities. Determinate place thus arises via what I call *procession* (cf. 2010), that is, the ways the body actually proceeds through places, but also the way that place is itself processional, determinately being what it is only via being spread out as overlapping, nested, intercalated, interdigitated regions. That is, the being of regions as determinate places arises through place as itself intensively spreading out and processionally straddling itself. (Procession is a placial analogue to the succession of past, present and future as intensively interweaving and determining one another in ecstatic temporality.)

This result, condensed out of Casey's work, signals a key principle and distinctive contribution he makes to the hermeneutics of place, namely that any account of how we come to grasp places or place as determinate, meaningful and salient, must attend to and begin from the bodily place-implacement doublet as an emphatically dynamic nexus wherein placial differences are engendered as determinate in the first place. Meaningful place is thus, as it were, a moving target: it is not as if place has in and of itself, in advance, a fully determinate and eternal meaning; but it is not as if place is devoid of meaning (as in space as neutral, abstract, indifferent void). Rather, the very being of place is a matrix (to use Casey's word) of differences that multiply, double, redouble, proliferate—but not in the manner of a Derridean *différance* or supplement that is (temporally) always yet to come, *a-venir*. Instead, these differences involve a *sub-liminal* that, everywhere you go, is nowhere fully there 'beneath' place, and everywhere spills into the next place, undermining efforts to delimit place via limits that are already fully here or there. Spelling this out is our next topic.

⁹Cf. Jacobson 2004, 2009 and 2015 which together suggest that home is not a place to which one can readily return as an already given and fully present place, but is an always an open question—a gift of shelter, versus something to be taken for granted.

3 Edge, Glance, and Place as Subliminal Horizon of Meaning

Casey's recent work on glances and edges as periphenomena makes a strikingly original contribution to phenomenology and philosophy. In effect, Casey is identifying what would in another context be called an unconscious dimension of perceptual and cognitive life, but he reveals this unconscious as operative out front of us, in everyday perception and in the places we encounter. This result is also complementary to the emphasis on passivity in Husserl (2001) and Merleau-Ponty (2010) that is now attracting scholarly attention, but again, Casey is innovative in trying to catch hold of this as appearing right there on the periphery of phenomena. On my view, these innovations lead to what I call a *subliminal phenomenology*,¹⁰ which reveals, right within the phenomena, the way that the phenomena are less than fully present or given.

The quickest way into the underlying point is to condense Casey's contrast between the gaze and the glance. Phenomenologically, if we describe our experience of gazing, we find that the gaze presumes to give us an encounter with an object that is fully present, and gives us the sense of our being detached from this object, and also somewhat detached and aloof from our situatedness in place. All of this is well captured by thinking of the gaze as a masterful attitude, that has things under its view or thumb, that gets things without being gotten by them.

In contrast, Casey's extensive studies and rich descriptions of glancing first of all show that glancing is in fact quite powerful and important in our encountering things and places as meaningful, yet glancing accomplishes this without fully grasping or objectifying things in the manner of the gaze. Think of walking into a café, looking for a place to sit, or a friend; or walking home through a park. Our way of doing so is typically led and predominated by a glancing about that does not fully see what is there as fully there, as readily identifiable or determinate objects. Yet this glancing orients us to what we see, and where we are headed—and it also can catch us in new things. Think of glancing around, finding where you are heading, and... wait a minute, what was that? Your glance caught something important, but not as a determinate, meaningful X; seeing it as a determinate X requires a looking back that does not just glance, but gazes. The phenomena that catch our eye thus show up via a fringe of glances that are not themselves phenomena, but periphenomena.

Second, while gazing detaches us from things and places, glancing does not, indeed in glancing we find ourselves being bounced around by or following along in the wake of things and place (as in a glancing blow that fails to find its landing point); we are oriented by the surfaces of things versus presuming to grasp them in their own objective depth. Casey nicely indicates this issue via attention to orientation and disorientation: imagine moving through a place distractedly, in a glance-guided way, and then finding your way-finding disrupted, e.g., wandering a route home without thinking about it or where you are, by glancing about, and suddenly

¹⁰I discuss this in Morris 2013, which is complementary to this piece.

finding you are lost, perhaps even stumbling to a halt as you round a corner into an unfamiliar scene. Describing this experience, especially the stumbling disorientation at its end, highlights the way that the orientation-disorientation is of an I moving in the midst of place. In contrast, when gazing, the I tends to stand out as a central, orienting here, that is its own place, a kind of lookout onto things. (Note that there are acoustic and tactile analogues of glancing and gazing: think of a sighted person navigating from bedside to bathroom in the dark.)

This description of glancing and its role in encountering places and things in place deepens Casey's previous results about the place-implacement doublet, by showing that the meaning of place emerges not just through a moving, lateral tension between the body and place, or a proliferation of placial differences behind this lateral tension: there is also a kind of phenomenal tension or distance between phenomena and periphenomena, between presence and absence, right within place and things in place—and Casey shows that this second tension is engrained in very being of the phenomenon place.¹¹ This comes out through his attention to issues of surface and depth in *WG* and attention to the role of edges in *WE*. There is not enough room here to rehearse these points in detail, but they are well summed up by a trope that percolates through both these books, especially *WE*, namely that the periphenomena lead us to encounter “more in less,” a “logic of the lesser.” That is, glances and edges reveal phenomena as fringed with periphenomena that are *less* than fully determinate, definite and delimited, since describing the activity of glancing and the edges of things reveals that they involve something inherently unstable, labile, fugitive—quite the opposite of crystalline, fully present, idealizable things. Yet, this ‘less than’ precisely opens the way for and engenders something more than that: definite things and places on which our gaze can fix. In contrast to the sort of tendency that we find in Cartesian or Kantian views, or even in some recent cognitive science, in which the phenomena appear as inherently impoverished and incomplete, so we can only grasp their determinate meaning by judgements that fill in details via appeal to idealized models, for Casey a sort of incompleteness *right in things* is a resource for encountering an indwelling determinate meaning. (This is not an unexpected endpoint for a thinker who starts out working on the imagination, then turns to remembering as manifest in place.)

Phenomenologically, with glances and edges, Casey is as it were calling attention to the sort of incompleteness and horizon character that Husserl discovers, the way that we encounter the meaningful essence of things not as an ideal or something that could be fully present, but via a *Wesensschau* that dynamically unfolds within things. But, whereas Husserl tends to detect horizons by getting us to reflect on them as operative within the temporality of subjective synthesis, Casey's work on glances and edges shows how the horizon is manifest right in things in places, not just in the temporality of subjectivity. Ontologically, I think this leads to the point that the horizon of our encounter with meaningful things and places *is right in place itself*—once we see that place is not a fully given and determinate space or

¹¹ I.e., what Barbaras 2006 identifies as a distance within the being of the phenomenon, that for Barbaras echoes life and desire, Casey finds in place.

container, but is within itself incomplete, double, proliferative, generative. (This ontological point, which I think is more or less explicit in Casey's work, thus echoes Heidegger's descriptions of how we encounter and access things as lead to ontological points about being, time, and in Heidegger's later work, time-space or place.)

Hermeneutically, the point here is that the horizon of the interpretation of place is in place itself, but again, not by that horizon being fully spelled out or determinate, but rather via a indwelling non-presence of place, a generative capacity of place itself as proliferative matrix of difference. *Place is itself the subliminal horizon of meaning*: a horizon right within place, beneath its surface as it were, but in such a way that it is not present as fully delimited. The horizon of place interpretation is thus not borne within us or inner temporality, but outside us, in place as engendering meaningful things, by being less than fully determinate: the meaning and grammar of place is itself 'inbourne'. This echoes Malpas's concept of place as a dynamic topology, but with a notable inflection toward place as having power via a less, rather than a more; and is akin to Heidegger's emphasis on *Abgrund*, abyss, as the 'ground' of the meaning of being, or, as a noted above, topological inflection of Derrida's concept of textual meaning as hinging on a supplement that can never be made present. But Casey's staunchly earthy descriptions, his way of following pell-mell in the wake of these-here phenomena and periphenomena brings these points to the surface in a strikingly different way than Heidegger or Derrida.

4 Hermeneutics of Place, in Depth

My final point is one that I want to draw out of Casey, namely that this result does not just pertain to hermeneutic activity concerned with place, but all hermeneutical activity.

Darwin's conceptual discovery regarding evolution first of all hinges on him encountering and conceptualizing organisms and species as functions of places: the determinate character of organisms and species is not quite borne within them entirely, but from their history of dwelling in places. We can notice and say something similar about languages written, spoken, or gestured: they are borne of places, and we cannot imagine a language that did not originate someplace, in relation to what that place offers, and in relation to the way language users are emplaced in that place. Those who study human languages (or language-like features of animal behaviour, e.g., variants in calls between orca pods and lineages (cf. Rendell and Whitehead 2001)) notice this: linguistic taxonomies parallel human migrations and lineages (even if globalization is changing the way this works). We could also cite cases, especially the decoding of Linear B, in which interpreting a written language entails making guesses that certain repeated terms are place names, or names of flora and fauna local to the region: things that matter in the place that the language addresses. Any reader of a novel or story, or learner of a language, knows this: if you don't get the place where things are happening, or what people do there, or what they encounter, it's difficult to grasp the meaning of a text or what words mean.

This would lead to the point (and Malpas's discussion of topology would complement this, I think) that all interpretative practice first of all requires attention to things meant as belonging to a place of meaning. But Casey shows us that grasping that place of meaning entails attention to place itself as the subliminal and thence contingent horizon of meaning. What I am trying to get at here is the way that *all* hermeneutics first of all requires attention to our inhabitation of places, as having an indwelling incompleteness. Hermeneutics is *of* place, it springs from place. Hermeneutics is thus also in depth, in the sense to which Merleau-Ponty and thence Casey (cf. Casey 1991) draw our attention, by contrasting depth with width and height: whereas we can encounter width and height as given out of front of us, we encounter the depth between us and things only by inhabiting and moving about in that very depth from within (glancing is in this sense a depth phenomenon, vs. gazing, even though glancing paradoxically is driven by the surfaces of things). Similarly, hermeneutics, as being *of* place, is such that we have to be in the depths of place to be able to engage in the hermeneutic enterprise at all—and this means being open to hermeneutics as rooted in a subliminal horizon that is never fully given, that can nowhere be presumed.

Last, but not least, this leads to the point that the hermeneutics *of* place is inherently a hermeneutics of deep responsibility. This point comes out in Casey's work on the glance, which I will here condense via my point about the subliminal. In the closing part of *The World at a Glance*, Casey attends to the role of glancing in the ethical, emphasizing that what first of all orients us to and lets us encounter faces and environments is glancing: we can catch the face of an other, and this other's need, in a glance; a quick glance from the car can reveal the clear-cut scarring the mountaintop. But recall that the glance is not a mode of engagement wherein we master something outside us, rather it is a mode that wakes us to and catches us in the wake of things and places. Whereas our gaze can let us distance ourselves from the face of the other, or the environmental devastation, our glance finds us responding to it even before we catch ourselves looking. There is an ethical draw in this glance-comportment, and it inheres in the place-implacement doublet, and opens us to an orientation from which we cannot quite extricate ourselves, because our orientation is borne of something before and under us that we cannot delimit or determine. This, I think, is amplified by the point that a hermeneutics *of* place is borne out of a place that, as subliminal, escapes all claims to a priori delimitation or mastery. We and our meaning making are born of this place, and our meaning making bears responsibility to this. The important thing is waking to this, and how our responsibility is not something we can draw into the inside of subjectivity, but everywhere bears a relation to place, in the wake of which we follow.

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Jeff Malpas: From Hermeneutics to Topology

Paloma Puente-Lozano

Abstract The chapter provides an overview of Malpas' topological thinking both in its connection to hermeneutics and as a particular elaboration on the notion of place. Malpas' topological approach is presented here as an exploration of the character and structure of human placedness or situatedness. This inquiry into situatedness is argued to be integral of any attempt to lay bare the topological character of understanding and interpretation, and therefore of any project aiming at developing a topological hermeneutics. The chapter offers, firstly, a general outline of Malpas' topology as a philosophical method that is most characteristic of his sustained commitment to explore *topos* and the belonging together of time and place (along with space) as proper to human involvement in world. Secondly, the chapter moves on to explore certain core spatial and topological concepts in order to explain what is at issue in Malpas' topological elaboration of hermeneutics and how this essential connection between place and hermeneutics is construed by him. Finally, the chapter takes up explicitly the question of place and attempts to clarify in what sense Malpas' treatment of this notion might be said to be distinctive in relation to other contemporary developments.

1 *Placing Explorations of Human Situatedness*

Australian philosopher Jeff Malpas¹ is one of the most important contemporary thinkers of place and placedness, and his topological approach should be recognized as one of the most original and promising modes of thinking within the current

¹ Although completing his early university education in New Zealand, Malpas has worked for most of his academic career in Australia, first at the University of New England, in NSW, then Murdoch University in Western Australia, and then at the University of Tasmania where he has been located for the last 17 years. He has also spent time at universities in the US, principally UC Berkeley, and in Germany primarily at Heidelberg, Munich, and Freiburg. He has talked about his personal and academic background more broadly in various interviews (in Ennis 2010, 19–34; Ralon 2010; Babich 2014).

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intellectual landscape. Partly, this originality arises from the particular way in which topics and modes characteristic of both Analytic and Continental philosophy have merged and been combined very naturally within his work. Malpas' long-standing concern with place and human situatedness has lead him to recognize that the very nature of the topological demands a mode of thinking that cuts across these traditions.² His early interest on the philosophy of history,³ his elaboration on the idea of the transcendental,⁴ or his ontological exploring of the central concepts of human experience and agency (place being just the most important of them) have all come together within his idea of "topology" or "topography" as a philosophical method.⁵

Malpas' topological project relies on a deep re-elaboration of a certain strand of post-Kantian thought, one that is most oriented towards *topos* (often in an *implicit* way though⁶). Malpas has detected within the most diverse sources of post-Kantian thought how is deployed a certain sense of the inter-relatedness of the elements and concepts through which human experience and understanding are explained. In this sense, Malpas' work can be viewed as an elaboration of this claim about what he takes to be the most characteristic of post-Kantian thinking: by demonstrating the extent to which topological issues are integral to this strand of thought, he is able to give to topographical philosophy its proper genealogy.⁷

²In spite of the fact that this is not a frequently practiced dialogue, nor an easy one (as shown by the mutual misreading between the very leading figures of these traditions; see Davidson and Gadamer 1997), Malpas' continuing engagement with both hermeneutical and phenomenological thinkers and topics (Malpas 1992a, 2002b, 2005a, 2010a, 2015f; Malpas and Zabala 2010, Malpas and Gander 2015), on the one hand, and with modes and concerns characteristic of the Analytic tradition and of philosophy of mind and language (Malpas 1992b, 1998, 1999b, 2011a, b), on the other hand, has been integral to his exploration of topological motives.

³Malpas 1994a, b. This has achieved continuity in his more recent concerns with questions about memory and truth (Malpas 2005b, 2010b, 2008).

⁴See Malpas 1997, 2003, 2010a for further development of this non-metaphysical form of inquiry, which is a key feature of his topological approach.

⁵As Malpas has explained in a number of places, he has used both terms (along with the notion of "chorography"; see Malpas 2016a) in an interchangeable way. However, "topography" refers to a more geographic sense of the traditional practice of topographical surveying (Malpas 1999a, 2015a, 39–41, 195ff), whereas "topology" relates directly to Heidegger's own use of the idea of "topology of being" (as a way of self-characterizing his thinking, "Topologie des Seins", in Heidegger 2004, 41, 47).

⁶Both the question of the "implicit" character of topological issues in post-Kantian philosophy and the allegedly "metaphorical nature" of some spatial concepts or images within it, are issues that Malpas has taken up repeatedly in order to problematize the underlying assumptions attached to those takes on how topological images or figures are to be understood (Malpas 2015a, b, c, 120–22).

⁷Here, Kant is presented as having a foundational role in philosophical topography (Malpas 2015b, 115–118; Malpas and Thiel 2011, Malpas and Zöller 2011), and Malpas has construed Kant's mode of arguing as essentially attuned to an exploration of the interrelatedness of the structure at issue in knowledge and experience. Besides this, Malpas' topological reading of Nietzsche (Malpas 2014), Hegel (Malpas 2015b, 115–118), or, in a more extensive and detailed way, Heidegger

On this basis, topological thinking is thereby to be understood not only as a philosophical method or mode of thinking that is oriented toward the topological, but more importantly as an *explicit* thematization of *topos*: *topos* is a substantive topic in its own right, to be given a proper conceptual articulation and theoretical treatment. Exploring the fundamental character of *topos* takes the shape here of a transcendental inquiry exhibiting both the structure of relations that constitutes such a domain and the irreducible interconnection between its elements (Malpas 2016c).

Malpas has mapped out the very terrain in which the topological is to be explored, notably by marking out the boundaries and the relations making up this field.⁸

“Placing” means in this respect to topologically set out the frame into which human situatedness is to be explored: that is, in relation to the question of the objective and the subjective, the body and the mind, space and time, self and others, etc., as fundamentally belonging together and co-constituting each other.⁹ Only by mapping out the proper connection between these elements can the nature of the topological be grasped. Hence the topographic approach is always processual, relational and superficial, being those key features of triangulation as well (Malpas 2016a).

As we shall see in the pages that follow, the elucidation of the topological through the notion of triangulation entails a dynamic, continuous and repetitive process (one that is to remain always incomplete, unfinished and partial), operating across a single plane or surface.¹⁰ This structure of multiple and inter-related elements is the very ground out of which things emerge (it is what makes possible both gathering and disclosing), since this complex and superficial field receives its very unity from relatedness itself (structure’s elements are both constituting and constituted). There is no external or underlying ground to be found or to call upon, nor can any of the related elements be said to be founded in any other. Hence topological thinking is ontologically anti-reductionist.

(Malpas 2006, 2012a, 2016d), Gadamer (Malpas 2015e, 2016c) or Davidson (Malpas 1992b, 1999b, 2011a) have aimed at uncovering the essential *continuation* of the topological orientation of post-Kantian philosophy.

⁸The idea of “triangulation” (and Malpas’ elaboration on Davidson’s core concepts) is a key element of his mapping of the topological because the “triangulative structure” rightly captures the very relatedness of this domain (Malpas 1999c, 2011a, 2012a, 2015b, 199–223).

⁹The form of “holism” that this topological understanding entails has been discussed by Malpas in different places (Malpas 1991, 1999a, 72–91, 2002a, 2004).

¹⁰Malpas 2012b; 2015b, 108. As to how this “superficial structure” is construed by Malpas through his engagement with both Davidsonian triangulation and also Heideggerian ideas of the “Fourfold”, “*Ereignis*” or “*Lichtung*” see Malpas 2006, 147–303.

2 The Topological Nature of Hermeneutics. Understanding Situatedness

Malpas has often characterized his topological thinking as properly belonging to hermeneutics, and to be sure the elaboration on Gadamer's ideas (and the priority given by Gadamer to the exploration of the structure of understanding) is key in his articulation of a philosophical topography.¹¹ So inasmuch as hermeneutics is to be understood as concerned itself with the situated character of thinking and understanding, so attentiveness to place and the topological must be integral to hermeneutics. By couching in such terms the link between hermeneutics and *topos*, Malpas has firmly connected hermeneutical inquiry (and notably any future project of a philosophical hermeneutics, with an explicitly ontological orientation) to concerns and attentiveness to the topological nature of understanding, language and event. That is, the exploration of what is to be meant by and implied in the "spatialised and located character of hermeneutical situatedness" (Malpas 2010b, 261) has been placed in the center of hermeneutical concerns.¹²

Right from the start it should be mentioned that situatedness as topologically construed by Malpas (as the original mode of being of human being) entails removing the exclusive focus on temporality that the notion of situation has traditionally carried with it, also in both phenomenological and hermeneutic approaches.¹³ Malpas rejects the objection that this very situatedness might be reduced or explained by an underlying prior temporal structure, or mode of temporality (for example, situation as a "function of projection of possibility", as in early Heidegger (Malpas 2006, 65–146). Quite the opposite, situatedness must be understood as "a function of both temporal and spatial orientation and projection" (Malpas 2010a).

¹¹ See Malpas 2015b, 103; 2015d, 2015e, 2016c. Again, this topological exploration is not something that occurs unnaturally, because the detailed and patient elaboration on *implicit* spatial elements already at work in Gadamer's or Heidegger's thought as to fully develop them and highlight their centrality to the proper understanding of hermeneutics occurs through a very steady argumentative path, as we hope it will be shown in what follows. However, this does not mean that Malpas' elaboration on such thinkers is not controversial at all (see, for example, criticism on the part of Norris 2004; or the exchange with De Beistegui 2008, 2011; Crowell 2011, and Young 2011; and reply in Malpas 2011a, b).

¹² See for example Malpas 2016e. As Malpas has put it: "Understanding the significance of place and situation in relation to hermeneutic thinking is thus to understand something of the very essence of hermeneutics and the hermeneutical" (Malpas 2015d, 354). See Figal 2010 or Makkreel 2015 as examples of hermeneutical works alluded to by Malpas as moving in this same spatial direction and as an explicit thematization of topological concerns within hermeneutics (important differences with Malpas' topology follow from these authors' understanding of objectivity and spatiality though).

¹³ This point emerges from Malpas' long-standing engagement with Heidegger's thought and as a particular exploration of the "factual situatedness" of human being in the world such as Heidegger understands it (Heidegger 1999). This is to be understood as a topological elucidation of the nature of the "Da" of Heideggerian "Da-Sein" (see Malpas 2006, 2010a).

Subjectivity and the very constitution of self call upon a form of externalization that is in itself spatial, or implies some sort of spatialization.¹⁴ For the distinction of self and the inner from the outer (the objective) and others to be possible, some spatial frame is needed within which this distinction is realizable. It cannot be explained only on the basis of the reference alone to temporality (which is already a form of inner sense), because the formation of the self implies a spatial structure. Orientation and location are argued to entail a sense of spatial articulation that is clear in the way inner life connects with places, things and others through embodiment and involvement in world (Malpas 1999a, 1–18, 72–91, 175–193). That our relation to the world cannot be fully explained just in terms of self-affectedness does not mean that responsiveness is not a relevant feature of our being-placed, because it importantly refers to how place (and what appears within it) demands something from the subject.¹⁵

However, responsiveness already depends upon a prior orientation to the particular situation we are already involved in. Thus self-affectedness is to be construed as a movement by which “we are inevitably taken outside ourselves at the very same time as we are also brought back to ourselves” (Malpas 2010a).

There are important consequences for hermeneutics that follow from Malpas topological construal of situatedness (its explanation in terms of *both* place and time), because the rejection of the possibility of reduction to prior underlying temporal structure of what are otherwise core spatial motives in hermeneutics (notions such as “conversation”, “play”, “horizon”, “encounter” or “hermeneutical circle”¹⁶) gives rise to an important change in the very understanding of hermeneutic situatedness. Attentiveness to the essential *topos* of the hermeneutical event typically implies in Malpas’ work a twofold argumentative movement: on the one hand, the explicit thematization of spatial hermeneutic notions yields to their topological deployment, which in turn, entails a re-orienting of hermeneutics that, while laying bare that it is “essentially topological in character” (Malpas 2016b), it also implies, on the other hand, an important reworking of underlying assumptions (notably, the issue of temporal prioritization as we had already made plain).¹⁷

¹⁴ See Malpas 1999a, 109–156; 1999b for further development on this important point. The nature of the spatiality that is at issue in Malpas’ topology (notably, as this relates to his way of defining subjective, allocentric and objective space) has very important consequences to be drawn as to his treatment of place (Malpas 1999a, 44–71).

¹⁵ This is a very important point in Malpas’ argument about hermeneutic situatedness since it is closely related to the notion of truth. This relation of subject to place means that we are called to respond to the places in which we encounter things, others and ourselves (inasmuch as place allows them to appear). “Truth names the demand that is placed on us beyond our own interests, preferences and opinions -the demand that comes from the reality of our inevitable and concrete placedness in a world, as ourselves, and among others.” (Malpas 2010a).

¹⁶ *Gespräch, Spiel* (and *Spielraum*), *Horizont*, etc. See Gadamer 1980, 1989 and Malpas (2015f).

¹⁷ Although there is insufficient space here to develop it properly, it is worth bringing up the question whether this topological deployment of already implicit spatial elements in hermeneutics means just a sort of thematization that gives continuity to the proper content of hermeneutic core concepts, or rather implies a deep re-elaboration of underlying hermeneutic modes of arguing (that is part of Malpas’ wider rejection of the strong tendency within modern and contemporary philoso-

The exploration of the topological character of the hermeneutical entails the grasping of the very entanglement of spatial and temporal aspects implied in understanding and interpretation inasmuch as those are practical activities.¹⁸ In this topological reading, the “hermeneutic circle” identifies a dynamic and relational field that is the very domain in which interpretation emerges. To the extent that hermeneutic circle can be understood as entailing “certain form of spatialized movement” (Malpas 2015b, 114), one which is most evident in dialogue and conversation, this movement implied in interpretation and meaning cannot be explained without appealing to the very placed character of our engagement with things and others. Interaction is first made possible by our own situatedness, which certainly means that we are *bounded* by the place we encounter ourselves and others. This is just the way our *opening* to the world takes place, our mode of being oriented to the world.¹⁹

There is a sort of immanence at issue when addressing hermeneutics as directing its attention toward what is given: hermeneutical engagement is always focused on that which is to be understood, instead of primarily interested in looking to what is behind, beneath or beyond. The immanence that is central to topological understanding of the hermeneutical situatedness, is nevertheless essentially connected to transcendence inasmuch as both belong together within the “complex and ramified structure” of situatedness.²⁰

Finitude and partiality are also central notions here, capturing something essential of our prior involvement in world and pointing to the enabling condition of understanding (Gadamer 1989). It is our already being situated that gives rise to understanding, because “it is only in virtue of where and how we find ourselves that anything is able to present itself to us as something that calls upon understanding” (Malpas 2016c).

This sort of circularity between situation and understanding is but the most basic form of “hermeneutic circularity”: this is not only an essential feature of understanding, but also and more importantly it is something that belongs properly to the

phy that takes temporality as prior and central to the structure of subjectivity). The way Malpas sometimes draws upon Derridean notions (such as “inscription” or “difference” –differing/deferring) as to rework Gadamerian approach (Malpas 2010a) gives an important clue into this issue as to how is to be interpreted the nature of this re-orientation of hermeneutics. The same might be said as to how Davidson triangulative notions are deployed by Malpas in order to rework Gadamerian conversational model of language (Malpas 1999c).

¹⁸This practical character has been explored by Gadamer, notably through his engagement with both Plato’s dialogic structure (the dialectic questioning to be found in Platonic dialogues) and Aristotelian notion of *phronesis* or practical wisdom (particularly following Heidegger’s elaboration on this idea through his 1920s works –notably his 1923 lectures; see Heidegger, 1999), and Malpas 2005a, 2015f.

¹⁹That situatedness is not something that undermines understanding (nor reduces it to the subjective) is an idea often emphasised by Malpas 1999a, 72–91; 1999c, 2015b and entailed in the co-constituting character of objectivity and subjectivity.

²⁰“Understood in this topological fashion, the transcendental thus concerns not that which goes beyond, the metaphysically transcendent, but rather that which is already given –and so given within the bounds proper to it– and through which a form of transcendence, in Kant’s case the opening up of the world or of knowledge, is made possible.” (Malpas 2010a).

structure of being-in-place. To understand is to be involved in a dialogue, for it always has its origin in the space that is opened up between interlocutors. This “dialogic space” (Malpas 2010a) is made up out of the conversational movement between located partners, and encompasses both our own self-understanding and our understanding of the subject matter at issue, as something essentially other than oneself (that which is spoken about) and thus accessible to both conversational partners.²¹

Encountering entails a back-and-forth relatedness that is central in understanding, because dialogue is impossible without the co-relative placing of those who take part in it. The “between” that is at issue here is not a “boundless space, but one that is constituted precisely with respect to that which it both connects and separates” (Malpas 2015d, 354). The relationality of the “betweenness” implies therefore a “within” that brings with it the notion of the part-whole dependence to which typically the idea of “hermeneutic circle” alludes. Relation to totality always takes its starting point in partiality and situation, since access to a region it is only gained through being at a certain place within that very region (Malpas 2015b, 114).

It is this very relatedness (and not autonomy or separation) which gives things and places their singularity and distinctness. This essential belonging together of different parts to a same whole is thus to be understood as a topological dependence (Malpas 2015b, 104). As Malpas has put it: “What the circle suggests is that understanding is always a function of the manner and direction of approach to what is to be understood, or, as one might also put it, that understanding is always a standing somewhere, and it is this standing somewhere that underlies understanding itself.” (Malpas 2015d).

In what sense that *situating*, and the very boundedness that is implicated within it, is to be interpreted as “productive” (and *not just* as limiting) is something of the outmost importance if we are to grasp both the particularity of Malpas topological reorientation of hermeneutics and the distinctive character of his thinking about place. It is to this issue that we are now turning.

3 Place, Space and Relationality. The Productiveness of Boundary

Although much has been already said indirectly about Malpas’ idea of place when exploring some of the aspects of his topological thinking and the close connection between hermeneutics and topological understanding of the idea of “situatedness”, there are still a number of important issues to be raised relating to what might be Malpas’ distinctive contribution to contemporary thinking about place. Questions

²¹ Malpas has further elaborated on the idea of “hermeneutical space” (as put forward by Figal 2010, 121–153) by deploying his topological analysis in order to set out the project of a “topological hermeneutics” (Malpas 2015d) that is to be understood as “centered on the issue of the essential grounding of understanding in situation and place” (Malpas 2015d).

about relatedness, finitude and orientation have already arisen when outlining Malpas' explorations of the topological, so that something of the processual, superficial and relational character of place has been already exposed.

The fact that Malpas has explicitly refused to treat topological concepts as metaphorical (Malpas 2015b, 120) implies that all that has been already commented on the topological is to be assumed as referring to different features of place itself. Bound and limit, ground, relationality, surface or situation are not just some sort of spatial metaphors providing merely a way of talking about understanding, thinking or knowledge (being those last ones the very "important" things to be analyzed, and the spatial metaphors just the secondary means for achieving such an analysis, without no explicative role whatsoever to be given to space or spatiality). Quite the opposite; in Malpas' works those aforementioned notions express place's features, and thus they capture something fundamental of the character of place, because it is precisely place that allows for understanding, thinking or knowledge to be possible, and place is given a fundamental and genuine role.²²

This is most evident within the context of mainstream contemporary proliferation of spatial concepts in social and human sciences, so what might mean to talk about place in such terms as Malpas' ones is fully grasped when laying bare his own particular uncomfortable position within this intellectual landscape. To be sure Malpas' sustained attempt to elucidate what is otherwise the elusive and pervasive nature of place has to be interpreted as a sustained intervention within contemporary debates and discussions associated with the so-called spatial turn.²³

There are at least three important questions given focus in Malpas diagnosis of contemporary dominant ideas about place and common uses of spatial images and ideas.

Firstly, there is the question as to whether the notions of space or place at issue in spatial turn are actually the object of *genuine* concern.²⁴ Malpas has clearly made

²²As Malpas 1999a, 174 has put it: "The differentiated and complex unity of place reflects the complex unity of the world itself; it also reflects the complex unity, given focus through a creature's active involvement with respect to particular objects and events, that makes for the possibility of memory, of believe, of thought and of experience." See also Malpas 2012a, 55–6: "*Topos* refers us not to a *subjectum*, but rather to that domain of interrelatedness in which the very things themselves come to appearance, and which does not itself appear other than in and through such appearing." See also Malpas 2015f for important remarks about why the language of place (as, for example, displayed in Heideggerian commitment to poetic language) cannot be treated as just metaphorical/metaphysical.

²³Although there is always in Malpas' texts some sort of allusion to this debate, the question has been more explicitly taken up by Malpas 2012b, 2015a, 2016f. Geographers' treatment of spatial concepts figure prominently in Malpas' recent engagement with these debates, as geographers have persistently try to develop critical and theoretical modes of arguing (typically constructivist) about place and space. See Puente-Lozano 2015, where I have attempted at showing the relevance of Malpas' arguments in identifying some of the main pitfalls of dominant geographic views on place.

²⁴Malpas has commented not only on the work of celebrated geographers such as D. Massey, D. Harvey or E. Soja, but also on so-called "spatial thinkers" such as Deleuze & Guattari, Lefebvre, Foucault or Sloterdijk.

the case that the way the spatial is deployed in the work of such authors does not allow for any substantive treatment of place or space as such. That is so because in much of contemporary spatial turn place and space either present a secondary and derivative character (space typically depending on other more basic and fundamental phenomena, which are the real problems at issue in those discourses); or there is no real reference at all to be given to space or place. That is, in those works there is a metaphorical proliferation of the spatial, but there is actually nothing that can be said back about the character of place or space. Spatial ideas and images are just strategically deployed: they are employed because of their polemical usefulness or their political imaginative potential.

In both cases, when drawing upon spatial images, space or place do not have any significant role (explicative or ontological) to play in the formation of the social and cultural phenomena at issue. The fact that there is little or no questioning whatsoever of what the connection of these spatial ideas and images might actually mean to the character of the problems at issue is one of the central criticism made by Malpas. Topological elements “seem often to appear as little more than a kind of storehouse of imaginative and rhetorical resource, but not as having any intrinsic ontological significance.” (Malpas 2015b, 121).

Secondly, there is the central problem of the constructivist stance underlying such deployment of spatial ideas, and that is closely connected to the aforementioned problem of the derivative character of space and place in much of contemporary spatial turn, not the least within those allegedly theoretical treatments of space.²⁵ This might be viewed as part of a wider tendency for treatments of place to present forms of reductionism: place has been traditionally reduced either physically (as identified as a mere physical location, a locale, and thus equal to its pure extension) in both modern philosophy and quantitative approaches in social sciences, or subjectivistically (place conceived as merely the subject’s emotional response to environment), such as it has been the case in humanistic geography²⁶ or in certain forms of idealism present in many currents in contemporary philosophy.

Constructivism, in that sense, reduces place to a more basic social, economic or cultural phenomena, for it is just the product or the effect of such different process.

²⁵This is the case of much contemporary Anglophone geographic writing about space. Claims about the necessity for geography to provide itself with its own conceptual foundations have persistently run across the field over the last five decades, and this has typically adopted the form of a claim about the necessity for developing a theory of space. Paradoxically, the more this attempt has been pursued, the more constructivist modes of arguing have dominated the field, and thus the more any substantive treatment of place or space have been undermined and hindered by those very epistemological and ontological stances (See Puente-Lozano 2011, 2015 for further development on this).

²⁶See Malpas 1999a, 29–31. This also implies important criticism about much of what is commonly said about “sense of place” or “genius loci” (Malpas 2015g), notably in their connection to the idea of the extraordinariness (as the dominant way of understanding the singularity of place). Dominant forms of conceiving of “sense of place” move the focus away from the ordinary and the mundane (being the most basic and fundamental forms of our being-in-place), and therefore weaken our understanding of placedness and what is at issue in human situatedness.

Treated as primarily a *discursive* rather than an ontological feature, place appears in much of contemporary spatial thinking as only deserving attention because the way underlying processes display themselves within place. In such approaches, the only relevant issue to be raised when analyzing places (always plural, particular and *contingent* product of more basic processes at work), concerns those same processes *construing* places.²⁷

Thirdly, there is an enduring misconception about the allegedly parochial, nationalist or exclusionary character of place in much of contemporary thinking (both in philosophy and geography) with which Malpas has taken issue. As he has bluntly put it:

The general form of the argument that usually appears to be assumed here [when accepting the aforementioned exclusionary politics entailed by putting too much emphasis on place], although often remaining implicit, is that in asserting one's own connection to place, and thereby taking one's identity to be determined by that connection, one also excludes the other from that same place, since the other is *other* precisely through being *not* 'of that place', and more that, the other is never able to appear other than as excluded in this way, never presenting as simply a human face, but only as the *foreigner*, the *stranger*, the *enemy* –indeed, as self-identity, through being bound to place in this way, is dependent on the exclusion of other, so the other also figures as an ever-present threat to such self-identity. Inasmuch as place-oriented thinking is understood as itself necessarily exclusionary in this way, so it is therefore also understood as necessarily tied to a set of ethically and politically problematic tendencies –including the possibility of violence– and, for that reason, should be regarded with suspicion, or, perhaps, simply abandoned. (Malpas 2016f, 10. Emphasis in the original).²⁸

Not only has Malpas exposed the pitfalls of these construals of place, but more importantly he has demonstrated why the “abandonment of place is not, in fact, an option” (Malpas 2012c, 14), given that it is a necessary element of the structure of human existence. To be sure places can only appear as contingent instantiations that materialize historic, geographical and social features characteristic to each epoch, but, in spite of the radical contingency of these particular instantiations, human connection to place is not a contingent phenomenon. In this respect, as a concept and a

²⁷ See Malpas 2016f, where he has brilliantly and sharply captured the argumentative structure of dominant constructivist modes of approach. He has summarized the argumentative strategy of many constructivist treatments of place as providing a simple but effective explanation about the fundamental link existing between the negative effects that particular places bring about and the discursive formation to which certain conceptions of place belong. What is implied in such mode of arguing is that reorienting such discursive structures (away from place, or toward new spatial conceptual configurations) would be the key to avoiding certain negative political or ethical effects associated with place.

²⁸ In this respect, Levinas is presented in Malpas analysis as the paradigmatic case of a contemporary thinker committed to ethics as incompatible with any prioritization of attachment to place. Also Kristeva or Nussbaum (as representative of certain form of cosmopolitanism), along with utilitarian stances are analyzed as examples of ethical eschewing of local attachments. Against these misconstruals of place and identity Malpas has tirelessly argued as to lay bare the extent to which the character of our very human situatedness implies that identity always remain open to determination (Malpas 2012c, 2015g). Placing is as much about bounding and enclosing as it is about opening and connecting.

fundamental ontological structure, place is in need of a more integrated and philosophically attuned treatment (Malpas 1999a, 31), one such as the topological approach already outlined is able to provide because it can soundly account for the bounded, dynamic, relational and nested character of place.

Perhaps there is still a brief comment to be made on the bounded and nested character of place that adds to what has been already argued about Malpas topological treatment of place. This is worthy of mention because these features of place, such as Malpas conceives of them, are key to understanding an aspect of what marks out Malpas' thinking of place from other contemporary approaches, and notably because that also sheds light on Malpas' understanding of human spatiality.

Notwithstanding that much of contemporary spatial thinking is premised upon an explicit "relational" view of space, the notion of *boundedness* that is integral to Malpas conception of place brings with it a sense of *relatedness* and *extendedness* that is quite different from the aforementioned understanding of relationality.²⁹ In order to avoid the collapsing of place and space that this relational stance entails, Malpas has provided us with an idea of relatedness which, while acknowledging the interconnections of places that are evident in their embeddedness,³⁰ does not eschew the centrality of boundedness, since it is integral to any proper understanding of place.

To be sure the downplaying (or even crude rejection) of any notion of boundary is very characteristic of much of contemporary spatial thinking, as premised upon the aforementioned equivocal connection between attachment to place and insularity or purified forms of identity and community. However, and contrary to that sort of unlimited and indistinct relational spatiality, place entails a "dynamic and bounded openness" (Malpas 2012c, 237). Therefore if we are to grasp this very openness that is made possible in place, place itself has to be understood as essentially bounded in character, because bound (or limit) is not just restrictive or limiting (in a negative way), but instead, there is a *productive* nature to be attached to it.³¹ The kind of fini-

²⁹As one within which "space appears as a swirl of flows, networks and trajectories, as a chaotic ordering that locate and dislocates, and as an effect of social processes that is itself spatially dispersed and distributed." (Malpas 2012c, 228). This is most evident in the work of authors such as Massey, Amin, Thrift or other geographers associated with a so-called "topological turn" (one quite different from Malpas topology; see Allen 2011a, b; Paasi 2011), which has developed around recent reworkings of the idea of scale on the basis of the so-called "flat ontologies" (see Collinge, 2006; Springer, 2014), and also the prioritization of networks and flows against territories and topographical ideas of places as contained and bounded spaces. See Malpas 2015a, where he has taken up these debates. Place appears in such relational views as just a mere effect of "relational convergence" or merely "points of linear intersection" (Malpas 2012c, 229).

³⁰This is what he has couched as place's nested character or structure (Malpas 1999a, 101–6). "Places contain sets of interconnected locations that are nested within those places such that [...] I can grasp the interconnected character of a variety of locations within my current location. Places also open out to sets of other places through being nested, along with those places, within a larger spatial structure or framework of activity." (Malpas 1999a, 195).

³¹See Malpas (2015a, 206ff). Malpas has drawn upon Aristotelian idea of "topos", as a bounding surface (and limit as that which allows for the difference between inner and outer to emerge), along with Platonic sense of "chora" as a sustaining ground (Malpas 2016a) in order to elaborate on this.

tude and singularity that are entailed in human placedness, as we already have pointed out above, are not just constraining features, but relate importantly to the very enabling nature of the openness that is made possible in and through being-in-place. Boundary both connects and separates, to the same extent that it both determines place (and its identity) and opens it up to indeterminacy, since the nested character of place implies that it always unfolds within a wider horizon entailing a multiplicity of possibilities. This interplay between determination and indeterminacy is what is at issue when couching place in terms of a bounded openness.³²

4 Concluding Remarks

“We shall not cease from exploration/And the end of all our exploring/Will be to arrive where we started/And know the place for the first time”, reads one of the sequence of verses of T.S. Eliot’s *Four Quartets*.³³ Malpas himself has not ever ceased throughout his entire work from exploring *topos* and he is to be most praised for the sustained engagement with topological issues so they can be given a central status in thinking (and that means first of all to properly *place* them, to address in the genuine place where they first emerge).

His commitment to mending the contemporary lack of any substantial ontological (and anti-metaphysical) deployment of topological notions (Malpas 2015b, 102–1) has become most evident in his willingness to address certain taken-for-granted commonplaces and naïve assumptions of everyday thinking about the topological (particularly, notions such as “sense of place”, “situation”, “context”) in order to draw a much deeper philosophical truth out of them. In that sense, Malpas has proved to be an attentive explorer of the character of human situatedness. This attentiveness lies, firstly, in his acknowledgment of the “impenetrability” of the very fact that there is a world and we are always already situated in it; but secondly, and not least, in his conviction that addressing and going through and around this very “impenetrability” is very much needed, since there is still some sort of illumination that is to be achieved.³⁴

Moreover, Malpas has extensively reflected on Heidegger’s famous statement about boundary as “not that at which something stops but [...] that from which something begins its presencing” (Heidegger 1971, 154).

³²The idea of “emergence” is also central to this argument (see Malpas 2012c, 236).

³³This poem is alluded to in Malpas 2012a, v, 267, when reflecting on the *topos* of thinking. For Malpas, philosophy and any form of thinking begin out of a wonder that is not related to the extraordinary but rather emerges in the midst of the ordinary and the most mundane. Bringing to awareness this very ordinary place within which thinking occurs is the fundamental task of any explorer of the proper *topos* of thinking: “the place in which [thinking] already finds itself, which it never properly leaves, and in which there is always something further to explore.” (Malpas 2012a, 266–7).

³⁴This notion of “impenetrability” is very much tied to the concept of “opacity” (and to other related terms such as “obscurity” or “density”), as central to Malpas’ thinking on place (Malpas

This commitment to elucidation is the key to understand Malpas topological thinking, and hence his work can be viewed as a sustained inquiry into the character and structure of this “in-ness” that is proper to human involvement in world, which is essential for grasping the nature of the topological (Malpas 1999a, 109–156). This explicit and genuine attentiveness to *topos* and to human situatedness, such as it has been construed by Malpas thought’s own movement (through a ceaseless turning and returning, going further, getting nearer), has shown itself to be the essence of questionability, and to keeping human being open to it. Malpas’ topological approach is to be first and foremost understood as an elucidation of the very possibility of thought and understanding, and thus an inquiry into the structure of their situatedness, which importantly provides also evidence of their boundaries. However, such an elucidation is not to be understood as an attempting to achieve any sort of conceptual clarification beyond actual uses and deployments of the terms at issue, nor this elucidation can be argued to make any straightforward difference in terms of usage of the involved concepts. Instead, this elucidation just helps to better understand the very nature of what is at issue when using those concepts and thus “may help us to understand what are the legitimate *boundaries* of employment of certain concepts, with what concepts and in what manner certain concepts are *connected*, and what the *point* of those concepts may be” (Malpas 2002a, 406). The proximity of this form of elucidation to hermeneutics is clear right from the start, and this attentiveness to topological structure and dependence is the key to understand Malpas’ work as a philosophical topography.

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1999a, 19–43) and to his elaboration on the kind of situatedness that it has been at issue here (Malpas 2012a, 261ff; 2002a; 2015g). It is not by chance that Ed Casey has refer to Malpas’ work on place as casting “the most light into [the] darkest corners” of such an elusive, historically neglected and misunderstood concept as place (Casey 2001, 225). The “pervasive” and “fundamental” character of *topos* is what makes it such an “elusive subject” (Casey 2001 and Malpas 2001).

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Part III
Disciplinary and Interdisciplinary Spaces
of the Hermeneutics of Place and Space

Towards *Topopoetics*: Space, Place and the Poem

Tim Cresswell

Abstract This essay focuses on the theme of poetry and place – a project I have called Topopoetics. It introduces the idea of topopoetics drawing on the work of Aristotle, Heidegger and more recent philosophies of place, dwelling and poetics. The point is not to cover the familiar ground of ‘sense-of-place’ in poetry but rather to explore how the poem is a kind of place and the way in which poems create space and place through their very presence on the page, through the interactions of full space and blank space, stasis and flux, and inside and outside.

What can poetry tell us about space and place? Conversely, what can thinking about space and place tell us about poetry? These are the questions that motivate this essay. My aim is to both answer them and to reveal how spatial and platial thinking can inform forms of interpretation beyond the interpretation of space and place in the geographical world. I develop a *topopoetics* – a project that sees poems as places and spaces.

The distinction between space and place that is most often made is one in which space is seen as limitless, empty, divisible and subject to mathematical forms of understanding while place is seen as bounded, full, unique and subject to forms of interpretive understanding. Place has been most frequently described as a meaningful segment of space – as mere ‘location’ in space overlaid with things such as meaning, subjectivity, emotion and affect (Tuan 1977; Buttner and Seamon 1980; Relph 1976; Cresswell 2014). The definitions of space have become more sophisticated thanks to interventions from critical theory and philosophy which have taken space out of the realm of the abstract and absolute in an attempt to reveal the workings of space in the production of society (Soja 1989; Lefebvre 1991; Massey 2005). At the same time work on place has added layers of power on the one hand (Cresswell 1996; Massey 1997) and a deeper philosophical role in human existence on the other (Casey 1998; Malpas 1999). There is not space here to rehearse all of the twists and turns in these debates. One aspect that is worth lingering on is the question of which comes first, space or place?

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It has become commonplace to see place as arising from space. In this sense space comes ‘first’. If space is an undifferentiated field – an abstract categorical axis of existence in the Kantian sense, then place has to occur in space. Places here are spatial moments, or points in space on which experience and meaning are layered. Place comes after space. Space is a fundamental fact of the reality of the universe while place is what humans make out of it. The philosopher Jeff Malpas sees this as a relegation of place to the increasing importance of space in thought following the Renaissance: “The ‘rise’ of space is thus accompanied, one might say, by the ‘decline’ of place. Indeed, in much contemporary thought, place often appears either as subjective overlay on the reality of materialized spatiality (place is space *plus* human value of ‘meaning’ ...) or else as merely an arbitrary designated position in a spatial field” (Malpas [n.d.](#)).

This way of thinking is turned on its head by philosophers of the phenomenological tradition following Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty who see spaces being formed out of the reality of place. Place, here, becomes fundamental and primary while space is what follows once places come into existence as a kind of relation between places.

In *The Phenomenology of Perception* Maurice Merleau-Ponty locates consciousness and intentionality not in the head but in the body. How does the body relate to space? The most obvious way of articulating this is to think of the body as located (like place) in space where space is an external and continuous field in which the body exists and which the body has to navigate. This is a body in Cartesian space that exists as an object. Merleau-Ponty rejects this view and argues instead for a ‘body-subject’ that exists in lived space – space which unfolds through the existence of the body rather than providing a precondition for the body. The human body produces certain kinds of orientation such as inside and outside, up and down, front and back and left and right that continually produce space rather than simply inhabit it. As Merleau-Ponty put it:

We must therefore avoid saying that our body is *in* space, or *in* time. It *inhabits* space and time ... In so far as I have a body through which I act in the world, space and time are not, for me, a collection of adjacent points nor are they a limitless number of relations synthesized by my consciousness, and into which it draws my body. I am not in space and time, nor do I conceive space and time; I belong to them, my body combines with them and includes them (Merleau-Ponty [1962](#), 161).

Merleau-Ponty, then, insists that the bodily space is primary to external Cartesian space. Bodies are not simply in an already existing space – rather space is produced by the body.

A similar logic is at work in Heidegger’s account of the work done by building a bridge over a river.

The bridge swings over the stream “with ease and power.” It does not just connect banks that are already there. The banks emerge as banks only as the bridge crosses the stream. The bridge designedly causes them to lie across from each other. One side is set off against the other by the bridge. Nor do the banks stretch along the stream as indifferent border strips of the dry land. With the banks, the bridge brings to the stream the one and the other expanse of the landscape lying behind them. It brings stream and bank and land into each other’s

neighborhood. The bridge *gathers* the earth as landscape around the stream (Heidegger 1971, 150).

Heidegger's bridge brings a place and a surrounding landscape into being. In so doing, it also produces space. The bridge as a place does not just connect pre-existing spaces or operate within a pre-existing space – it brings space into being. In this sense, place comes before space. This is a reversal of the more frequent suggestion that places exist *in* space and that space comes before place. Heidegger is clearly making a different argument from Merleau-Ponty. Nevertheless, what unites the two passages is an insistence on the way spaces are brought into being in relation to platial bodies and structures as active agents. Place comes first.

One final preliminary point about place before moving on to a discussion of topopoetics. One of the defining qualities of place, across disciplines, has been the way in which places bring things together. They are seen as syncretic mixtures of elements of multiple domains. Different scholars use different terms to describe this fact. Philosophers following Heidegger write of places as sites of *gathering* (Casey 1996). The geographer Robert Sack uses the metaphor of a loom to describe places as products of the process of *weaving* (Sack 2003). Writers informed by the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Manuel Delanda refer to this process as *assemblage* (DeLanda 2006; Dovey 2010). Things mingle in places and places are constantly being made through gathering/weaving/ assembling and constantly being pulled apart. Among the things that are gathered in place are objects (materialities), meanings (narratives, stories, memories etc.) and practices. Philosopher Edward Casey puts this as well as anyone.

Minimally, places gather things in their midst— where ‘things’ connote various animate and inanimate entities. Places also gather experiences and histories, even languages and thoughts. Think only of what it means to go back to a place you know, finding it full of memories and expectations, old things and new things, the familiar and the strange, and much more besides. What else is capable of this massively diversified holding action? (Casey 1996, 24)

1 Towards *topopoetics*

In the remainder of this essay I mobilize some of what has preceded in relation to thinking about poetry. I argue for poems *as* places (as well as *about* places) that can be interpreted spatially. The term *topopoetics* originates from the term *topos* as developed by Malpas and Casey in their readings of Heidegger and others (Casey 1998; Malpas 2012b).

Topo comes from *topos* (τόπος), the Greek for ‘place’. This is combined with *poetics*, which comes from *poiesis* (ποίησις), the Ancient Greek term for ‘making’. *Topopoetics* is thus ‘place-making’. The particular lineage I am invoking for *topos* derives from the philosophy of Aristotle. Importantly, for our purposes, *topos* appears in both accounts of how the world comes into being and as a figure in rhetoric. In rhetoric a *topos* is a “particular argumentative form or pattern” from which

particular arguments can be derived.¹ It is very much like a form in poetry – a sonnet or a villanelle. It has a particular shape. This rhetorical view of *topos* is linked to the world through the art of memorizing long lists by locating things on a list in particular *places*. “For just as in the art of remembering, the mere mention of the places instantly makes us recall the things, so these will make us more apt at deductions through looking to these defined premises in order of enumeration.”² In Aristotle’s rhetoric it is important to choose the right kind of *topos* for the argument at hand, just as it is important to select the right form for a particular poet. It draws our attention to the importance of (among other things) the shape on the page.

The richer meaning of *topos* emerged more fully formed in the writing of Martin Heidegger and has recently been elaborated by the philosopher, Jeff Malpas (Heidegger 1971; Malpas 1999, 2012a). Here *topos* is mobilized through the idea of the *topological* to indicate the primary nature of place for *being*. To put it bluntly, to be is to be *in place* – to be *here/there*. The connection between poetry and the idea of place as the site of being is right there at the outset as Heidegger’s insistence on being as being-in-place originated from an encounter with the poetry of Hölderlin (Malpas 2006; Elden 1999).

Heidegger’s topological thought includes two key concepts – *Dasein* and *dwelling*. *Dasein* means (approximately) ‘being there’. It combines Heidegger’s career-long enquiry into the nature of *being* with a recognition that being is always placed – that existence is thoroughly intertwined with place. The way that we make a home in the world is referred to as *dwelling*.

The way in which you are and I am, the manner in which we humans *are* on the earth, is *Buan*, dwelling. To be a human being means to be on the earth as a mortal. It means to dwell (Heidegger 1971, 145).

How, exactly, people enact this dwelling (or fail to enact it) becomes a central object for philosophy in Heidegger’s later texts.³

In an important series of late essays Heidegger invokes poetry as a form of dwelling. He goes so far as to suggest that it is an ideal form of building and dwelling.

Poetic creation, which lets us dwell, is a kind of building.

Thus we confront a double demand: for one thing, we are to think of what is called man’s existence by way of the nature of dwelling; for another, we are to think of the nature of poetry as a letting-dwell, as a – perhaps even *the* – distinctive kind of building. If we search out the nature of poetry according to this viewpoint, then we arrive at the nature of dwelling (Heidegger 1971, 213).

This observation (linking poetry to its root meaning of ‘making’) gets right to the heart of the constitution of *topopoetics*. Poetry, as Heidegger observes, is a kind of

¹For a discussion of *topos*, see Rapp 2010: 7.1.

²Aristotle *Topics* 163b28.32.

³Heidegger was a member of the Nazi Party, a membership he later denounced. There is no doubt that these ideas of dwelling were easily incorporated into a Nazi ideology of proper authentic (Aryan) dwelling counterposed to an inauthentic (Jewish, gay, Romany) form of (non) dwelling. Following Malpas I do not believe that this necessarily means that his ideas are irrecoverably infected.

building and thus a particularly important kind of *dwelling*. This building-as-dwelling, however, is more than the practical stuff of constructing in the correct way – it is, in Heidegger's view, about the essential character of being-in-the-world – being in, and with, place.

An engagement with the philosophical basis of *topos* adds to our original definition of place (above) as a gathering of things, practices and meanings in a particular location. While place is all of these things this definition fails to underline the basic significance of being *placed* to being-in-the-world. A *topopoetic* account is one which recognizes the specificity of the nearness of things in place and at the same time focuses our attention on the way in which the poem is itself a form of *building* and *dwelling*. Poems of place are not simply poems *about* places, rather they are a species of place with a special relationship to what it is to be in (external) place. Included in this is a recognition that poems (as places) have a material existence as a gathering of words (literally ink) on the page which takes a particular spatial form.

Topopoetics means closing the gap between the material form of the poem (*topos* in the sense of rhetorics) and the earthly world of place (*topos* as place). It means attending to the presence of place within the poem. To do this the rest of the essay considers the role of blank space, the tension between shape/form and movement and the relationship between the inside and outside of the poem.

2 Blank Space/Full Space

Before, there was nothing, or almost nothing; afterwards, there isn't much, a few signs, but which are enough for there to be a top and a bottom, a beginning and an end, a right and a left, a recto and a verso (Perec 1997, 10).

My interest here is in the combined impact of two meanings of *topos* – as correct form and as place – on understanding poetic approaches to and renditions of place. The act of building and dwelling that is a poem starts with a blank white space. By writing poems we gather that space and give it form. True – it already has edges and texture (it is, in Perec's terms "*almost nothing*") but words (as place) bring space into existence. The space becomes margins and gaps between words – even holes within letters. This relationship between poem and place and the space that takes shape around it is one of the defining elements of poetry.

Glyn Maxwell, in *On Poetry*, ruminates on blank space and silence in poetry.

Regard the space, the ice plain, the dizzying light. That past, that future. Already it isn't nothing. At the very least it's your enemy, and that's an awful lot. Poets work with two materials, one's black and one's white. Call them sound and silence, life and death, hot and cold, love and loss....

...

Call it this and that, whatever it is this time, just don't make the mistake of thinking the white sheet is nothing. It's nothing for your novelist, your journalist, your blogger. For those folk it's a tabular rasa, a giving surface. For the poet it is half of everything. If you don't know how to use it you are writing prose. If you write poems that you might call free

and I might call unpatterned then skillful, intelligent use of the whiteness is all that you've got (Maxwell 2012, 11).

Poems are patterns made from space and which make space. Even before a word is read you can see a poem's shape – the black against the white in Maxwell's terms. This is one of the most pleasing things about poetry and it serves no function at all in a novel or most other forms of writing.

Writing a poem is a little form of place creation that configures blankness. This resonates with Wallace Stevens' 'Anecdote of the Jar':

I placed a jar in Tennessee,
And round it was, upon a hill.
It made the slovenly wilderness
Surround that hill.

The wilderness rose up to it,
And sprawled around, no longer wild.
The jar was round upon the ground
And tall and of a port in air.

It took dominion every where.
The jar was gray and bare.
It did not give of bird or bush,
Like nothing else in Tennessee.

Here the roundness of the jar (roundness is repeated throughout the poem in 'round', 'around' and 'surround') orders the "slovenly wilderness" around it – it orders and regulates a kind of blankness (the 'almost-nothing' of wilderness) in a contrived and designed way. Culture brings nature into perspective and makes it make sense in much the way the marks of the poem make the blank space make sense. Stevens' jar performs similar functions to Heidegger's bridge. The poem does the same thing – bringing space into being.

Silence is the acoustic space in which the poem makes its large echoes. If you want to test this write a single word on a blank sheet of paper and stare at it: note the superior attendance to the word the silence insists upon, and how it soon starts to draw out the word's ramifying sense-potential, its etymological story, its strange acoustic signature, its calligraphic mark; you are reading a word as poetry (Paterson 2007, 63).

Here, British poet Don Paterson suggests that the self-aware special-ness of the poem is created by its being surrounded by blankness, which he equates with silence. There is a merging of sight and sound – pure blankness and silence. The sense of sound is the only sense which has a unique word for absence. While silence is the absence of sound there is no word for the absence of smell or taste for instance (we have to resort to terms like 'tasteless'). Perhaps it is for this reason that blank space is compared to silence. It also reminds us of the origins of poetry in spoken forms. The blankness is not just something to be filled but an active component in

the creation of the poem. The blank page is the friend of the poet allowing an infinite variety of form in the simple sense of shape. When the single word appears on the blank sheet the word-as-poem and the space around it are simultaneously brought into being. In this sense, one does not precede the other.

Paterson describes the act of poetry as an emergence out of silence and space. This is not quite right. This assumes the pre-existence of a blankness and silence within which the words emerge. Perhaps, instead, the blankness is produced by the creative act. The blankness emerges with the noise.

There are similarities between the poet's relationship to blank space and the painter's relationship to the canvas. They are clearly not the same thing. In most painting the canvas is covered. The first thing many traditional painters do is cover a canvas with paint and then start to work on the detail. The canvas is obliterated. The poet, on the other hand, cannot fill up the space he or she is confronted with. The poem needs to play with the space and allow the blankness to be part of the process. Don Paterson puts it this way:

Our formal patterning most often supplies a powerful typographical advertisement. What it advertises most conspicuously is that the poem has not taken up the whole page, and considers itself somewhat important. The white space around the poem then becomes a potent symbol of the poem's significant intent (Paterson 2007, 62).

The space around the poem once written advertises the poem's importance as special words. The painter may paint blankness, applying white paint perhaps but rarely leaves the canvas untouched. But there are also similarities between the blank space of the painter and the poet. One similarity is suggested by Gilles Deleuze in his meditation on Francis Bacon. Here he suggests that the blank canvas that confronts the painter is not blank at all but invested with every painting ever done before.

In fact, it would be a mistake to think that the painter works on a white and virgin surface. The entire surface is already invested virtually with all kinds of clichés, which the painter will have to break with (Deleuze 2005, 11).

The image Deleuze gives us is of a painter confronted with the whole tradition of painting right there on the blank space which is no longer blank. This is the same for a poet who has to face the page/screen with the knowledge of all the poems that have gone before. There are all the ballads and sonnets, the free verse and the sestinas, Caedmon's Hymn, the long lines of Whitman, the dashes of Dickinson, iambic pentameter, half rhyme, sprung rhythm, spondees, syllabic experiments, language poetry and limericks – all of these pre-figure the first letter written or typed. The space is not blank but dizzyingly full. Returning to Deleuze:

It is a mistake to think that the painter works on a white surface. The figurative belief follows from this mistake. If the painter were before a white surface, he – or she – could reproduce on it an external object functioning as a model. The painter has many things in his head, or around him, or in his studio. Now everything he has in his head or around him is already in the canvas, more or less virtually, more or less actually, before he begins his work. They are all present in the canvas as so many images, actual or virtual, so that the painter does not have to cover a blank surface, but rather would have to empty it out, clear it, clean it. (Deleuze 2005, 87).

The space of the poet, like that of the artist's is a space to fill with what gets defined by the words or a seething endless presence of everything that has been written before.

Once there is a poem on the page then an act of dwelling has occurred that brings space and place into being. If we move beyond the blankness of the empty page/screen then we begin to see all the other ways in which space works for the poem. Take any poem, copy it, and apply a thick black marker to the lines of text. You end up with a black shape and a white shape. Space works as margins, as gaps, as signifiers of intent when the poet does anything other than left align the lines. Naturally this use of space is most pronounced in forms of experimental poetry in the modernist tradition: concrete poetry, Mallarmé's radical departures from the left margin, the projective verse of the Black Mountain School or the contemporary experimentation with 'erasure'. But space and place do their work too in traditional forms. The popularity of the sonnet is partly attributable to the perfect way it sits on the page, announcing itself as a poem.

3 Stasis and Flux

The *topos* of the poem results from its play of ink and the absence of ink. Something has to appear for space to emerge. Georges Perec makes this clear:

This is how space begins, with words only, signs traced on the blank page. To describe space: to name it, to trace it, like those portolano-makers who saturated the coastlines with the names of harbours, the names of capes, the names of inlets, until in the end the land was only separated from the sea by a continuous ribbon of text (Perec 1997, 13).

Perec's book, *Species of Spaces* is a catalogue of spaces and places with chapters devoted to "The Apartment", "The Street" and "The Town" for instance. The first chapter, though, is "The Page". The page is immediately equivalent to spaces we may more easily think of as the world beyond the page. The page and its markings are not removed from, and about, the world – they are of the world. In this chapter Perec outlines the nature of a topopoetics in simple terms. Writing, particularly writing poems, is the production of space and place. It is a cartographic act that combines senses of home and journey. The process of writing creates coordinates – a top and a bottom, left and right, beginning and end. In amongst the words are pauses and hesitations. There is a poetic topological correspondence between the poem and the place it is *about*.

In Peter Stockwell's account of 'cognitive poetics' a key idea is the notion of figure/ground – the notion that some things appear to be more important, more fluid, more foregrounded while others remain as background and setting (and thus seemingly less important) (Stockwell 2002). The first is figure and the second is ground. The figure is prominent and the ground is not. This occurs most obviously in the way characters are more important than the places they are in in novels. Description is often about ground and action involves figures. Figures often move across a

ground that appears relatively static. This movement, in a poem, is expressed with direction words such as “over” or “in” or “towards”. Topopoetics challenges some of the assumptions of the figure/ground equation. As place is most often equated with ground it tends to have a degree of deadness associated with it. It seems less important. Topopoetics draws our attention to the opposite – the active presence of place in the poem.

Another key term in cognitive poetics is “image schema” which refers to “locative expressions of place” (Stockwell 2002, 16). Stockwell gives the examples of “JOURNEY, CONTAINER, CONDUIT, UP/DOWN, FRONT/BACK, OVER/UNDER, INTO/OUT OF”. Terms of mobility catch our attention and urge us to continue reading – static elements are frankly boring and we quickly forget them. The difference between the moving elements and static elements produces literary and cognitive effects. But even before any particular word is written or read we have the poem – the lines that form a shape in space. As we read left to right and top to bottom against the white space a figure forms over ground. A passage is enacted. Stuff happens. Poems are made out of arrangements of type and blank space – figure and ground in a physical, pre-verbal sense. I am not sure what the cognitive content of this patterning is but it is surely important to poetry – even before the specifics of actual words and their meanings. This is the start of the geography of the poem.

There are two spatial metaphors at work in the basic language of poetry that point towards the way a poem is an act of dwelling: these are the words ‘stanza’ and ‘verse’. Stanza means ‘room’, ‘station’ or ‘stopping place’ and refers to blocks of black separated by white on the page. These are rooms we pass between surrounded by outside. Stanzas found their way into written poetry through the act of memorizing verse. Rooms, or stopping places, are memorized and filled with words that would be activated by an imagined walk through the rooms. While stanzas are clearly places to stop – they are also clearly linked by movement. Movement also occurs within the stanzas as we follow the lines of text. The word ‘verse’ comes from the practice of tilling the soil – agriculture – the root of ‘culture’. It is rooted in the Latin *versus*, meaning a ‘furrow’ or a ‘turning of the plow’. As the farmer (or farm worker) tills the soil they come to an edge, turn around, then make their way back, pacing out the day. Verse can thus be found in ‘reverse’. These two ideas – stanza – as a block of bounded space and verse as an action – a form of practice that brings those blocks alive and reminds us that they are only there because of movement – these two ideas describe something of the geography of the poem as the interplay of fixity and flux of being and becoming.

Poetry is often referred to as freezing time. In fact, many kinds of representation are said to freeze time (and thus, in some circles, representation has become deeply suspect) (Anderson and Harrison 2010). In poetry’s case, this could not be further from the truth. Poetry, to me, is a mobile form related to walking and, indeed, ploughing and reversing. This sense of mobile journeying in the poem is part of the topological understanding of the poem on the page. Perec knew this:

I write: I inhabit my sheet of paper, I invest it, I travel across it,
I incite *blanks*, *spaces* (jumps in the meaning, discontinuities, transitions, changes of key) (Perec 1997, 3).

We make our places by doing them –by beating the bounds rather than drawing a line in the sand. Beyond that place of movement is the white of silence. But even that space is being shaped, if only as the negative image of the poem.

4 Inside and Outside

One way of thinking about place is to think of it as a singular thing – specific, particular, bounded and separate. The very idea of place is bound up with uniqueness and a sense of division from what lies beyond it. But places are actually connected into networks and flows – they have an extrovert side (Massey 1997). This paradoxical sense of separation and connectedness is noted by Malpas.

One of the features of place is the way in which it establishes relations of inside and outside – relations that are directly tied to the essential connection between place and boundary or limit. To be located is to be within, to be somehow enclosed, but in a way that at the same time opens up, that makes possible. Already this indicates some of the directions in which any thinking of place must move – toward ideas of opening and closing, of concealing and revealing, or focus and horizon, of finitude and “transcendence,” of limit and possibility, of mutual relationality and coconstitution (Malpas 2012b, 2).

This feature of place is one that translates into the *topos* of the poem. Poems too open and close, conceal and reveal. Poems speak to things which lie outside the poem. Clearly the poem has a referential function – like all language. It is *about* something. But even if we include the things the poem directly names on the *inside* of the poem, there is yet another set of things that are not directly named but instead gestured towards. In this way the poem opens up to the world.

We have seen how one of the features of place is the way in which it gathers things. A place is a unique assemblage. The things that constitute a place often appear to us as specific to that place even if they have, in fact, travelled from elsewhere. Things form a particular topography of place at the same time as their journeys link the inside of a place to elsewhere. Poetry is one way in which we stop and wonder at the specificity of the way things appear to us in place. Poetry involves being attentive to things and the way in which they are gathered. Poetry is an ‘encounter with the world’.

No matter the changes in Heidegger’s philosophical vocabulary, a key point around which his thinking constantly turns is the idea that thinking arises, and can only arise, out of our original encounter with the world – an encounter that is always singular and situated, in which we encounter ourselves as well as the world, and in which what first appears is not something abstract or fragmented, but rather the things themselves, as things, in their concrete unity (Malpas 2012b, 14).

This insistence on the specificity of ‘things themselves’ is one way we can think about poetic attention. A poetic concern with place starts from a recognition of an original encounter which is “singular and situated”. The more the poem can reflect this situated singularity the more faithful it will be to the place that lies beyond it. But it would be wrong to think of the ‘concrete unity’ of place as a pure, bounded

entity with no relation to a world (even an abstract world) beyond it. Places always point to a world beyond them, and so do poems.

One way in which the place of the poem opens up to its outside is through metaphor. Metaphor is another component of poetics that has a spatial root in travel. Metaphor comes from the Greek *metaphorá* (μεταφορά) for ‘transfer’ or ‘carry over’.

In modern Athens, the vehicles of mass transportation are called *metaphorai*. To go to work or come home, one takes a “metaphor” – a bus or a train. Stories could also take this noble name: every day, they traverse and organize places; they select and link them together; they make sentences and itineraries out of them. They are spatial trajectories (de Certeau 1984, 115).

Metaphors perform two operations simultaneously – they say **a** equals **b** and, at the same time, **a** does not equal **b**. Just saying **a** is the same as **b** is not metaphorical. For a metaphor to be a metaphor **a** has to also be different from **b**. The more different they are the more powerful the metaphor. This is true as long **a** and **b** are not so different that they are not, in fact, similar in any way.

Metaphors have a spatial logic, they connect a thing which is present in the poem to something which is absent outside of it. In doing this the absent thing becomes present. The inside is connected to the outside. Using metaphor means seeing one thing as another – a form of understanding that is “fundamentally spatial in organization” (Zwicky 2003, § 3). This spatiality is one which is not bounded and singular but, instead, one which makes a connection, or, as Jan Zwicky puts it. “a linguistic short-circuit.”

Non-metaphorical ways of speaking conduct meaning, in insulated carriers, to certain ends and purposes. Metaphors shave off the insulation and meaning arcs across the gap (Zwicky 2003, § 68).

The place which is a poem has both the meanings which lie within the boundaries marked by the presence of type, *and* the meanings that this type connects to. The text of the poem is both a neat, closed entity and a set of links to what lies beyond. It is in this sense that the metaphor formulas **a=b** and **a≠b** simultaneously recognizes the inherent qualities of what lies within the poem and the connections to what lies without.

A metaphor can appear to be a gesture of healing – it pulls a stitch through the rift that our capacity for language opens between us and the world. A metaphor is an explicit refusal of the idea that the distinctness of things is their fundamental ontological characteristic.

But their distinctness is *one* of their most fundamental ontological characteristics (the other being their interpenetration and connectedness). In this sense, a metaphor heals nothing – there is nothing to be healed (Zwicky 2003, § 59).

Metaphor works on the dual capacity to recognize the concrete unity of the assemblage of things that lies before us and to insist on their connectedness to a world beyond. Things (and the assemblages of things which are places) are both distinct (in that there is no other assemblage exactly like this one) and connected (things are always interconnected). Metaphor allows us to be near to things, in the

way both a poet and a phenomenologist insist on, and to recognize a constitutive outside. This outside is also a world of things, practices and meanings that can be drawn upon to recognize the specificity of 'here'.

5 Conclusion

In this essay I have developed a basis for topopoetics – a way of reading poetry that uses spatial thinking to interpret the work a poem does. This is distinct from an analysis of poems about place – or the poetics of sense of place. While it is clear that many poets evoke place in their poetry and that geography may be one of the few constants in the history of English language poetry, it is also the case that poems are kinds of places and they enact a form of dwelling. Indeed, it was poetry that inspired much of Heidegger's thinking about place and dwelling. Topopoetics insists on the active nature of spatial thinking in the process of interpretation. Place and space are not just setting or subject but are, rather, woven into the fabric of poetic making itself. I have made a start to outlining topopoetics through reference to the role of blank space, stasis and flux and inside and outside in order to show how spatiality is implicated in the process of meaning making. This, in turn, becomes a tool in relating the poem to the places the poem is about.

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When the ‘Here and Now’ Is Nowhere

Keith Harder

Abstract A certain kind of artistic practice can be seen as engaging a hermeneutical paradigm when it pays attention to the specificities of a particular site/sight, in a quest for greater understanding. There are ways in which this approach is at odds with the generic “space as place” of the art world. Through artistic engagement a “no place” can be made to happen or become a place in a work that creates an understanding of it. An artwork can also “happen” or become art due to the particularities of the place it engages. The prairie and the bush are two places that are often considered to be nondescript and hence no place. Paying attention to such a place with a descriptive perceptual rigor, or including it in the conceptual frame, brings its being into a presence.

Within the practise of visual art the concept of place, as a field of inquiry, has divergent implications. An artist has some choices to make about where to position such an investigation.

There are, of course, places that are specific and unique in character and expression due to their location. But theoretical and virtual places are more prevalent. There are ideas about place as a generic kind of space. There is a kind of place to become an artist, there is a kind of place where artwork can become art. (Which implies that there are kinds of places where someone won’t become an artist, and where art work will not become art.) None of these kind of places are necessarily situated as a locale, though they may occasionally occur at some particular geographical point. They exist in the place that is the art world. Obviously, this is not a world as planet, but a fluid network that creates an arena of discourse where autonomy and freedom are dominant values. This matrix has a geographical existence only in as much as it needs to be tethered to a number of dominant urban art centres where ideas, personality, market, money and means of production can be concentrated and brought into play. In this way a “here” can be established where art work, and artists can possibly, if not necessarily, be credentialed. Significantly, this kind of “here” has become structurally linked to a “now,” as in the “here and now,” so that

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an element of temporal orthodoxy has become part of the art world currency and its machinations.

But if place as a concept involves the unique character of a specific location, it is not easily absorbed into such a network. If values of freedom and autonomy prevail, an art work becomes problematic when it binds its expression, or its experience, to the particularities of a place. This increases proportionately as the physical distance from urban art centres grows. Art that is far from the “here” of the art network has no “where” to be and cannot be “now,” and so is likely beyond any possibility of a “when”. Within the dominant discourse the unique situatedness of a place is only relevant inasmuch as it can fall within the gravitational pull of the generic space that eschews placeness for the sake of its autonomy as a portable feast. An artistic practice that takes on the specific character of a place as its field of investigation is mapping an entirely different set of concerns. Out of choice and exigency this is where my much of my creative practice operates.

There is a way in which the artistic discipline of paying attention is an almost literal application of a construct concerning the hermeneutical quest; the one that involves a cycle of excursion to the unknown and a return; a metaphor of understanding, particularly self-understanding. An attendant idea is that a reader/traveller is not in a one-way relationship, or even in charge of an encounter with the unknown, (whether text or place), and that in engaging the effort to understand the new, through interpretation and interrogation, the traveller should expect to be interrogated, in turn, by that encounter and to find herself re-interpreted upon returning to the familiar. In an art practice this methodology can bring a site/sight into new awareness as a particular place, for the artist at least, but, ideally, also for an art audience.

The intersection of hermeneutics and aesthetics resonates for me when I reflect on how I do what I do as an artist. There is the suggestion that all understanding comes down to self-understanding. With a similar implication, it has been said that all art can be considered a self-portrait of the artist. This is because the horizon of understanding is necessarily situated within our field of vision and its reference points. In the activity of actual seeing, that horizon can change: by moving our position on the ground, by taking on an elevated point of view, or by letting effects of time affect the view. These can all be metaphors of the hermeneutical quest. For me that quest always arises out of the dissatisfaction and suspicion of a limited, conditioned, and static point of view.

Both the familiar and that which is “other” can be invisible. The need to understand the “other” is an obvious impulse because it is unknown, strange. It has the fascination of the exotic and maybe of risk. Visiting a new place puts us on alert as we negotiate its differences, and experience our outsider status. We are acutely aware that the subtleties of life in a new place are invisible to us. This is one reason we are more likely to take snapshots on travels than we do of the places in which we live and work.

But the familiar is very resistant to inquiry as well. It has a self-evidentness that seems beyond question, just as most of our prejudices are invisible in being so obviously true for us. And the obvious is frequently overlooked. Fish will be the last

to discover water. The invisible milieu in which we each live should be a prime resource to mine for understanding. It can say more about us than anything else. The problem lies in how to see our milieu. In order for it to become visible we must step out of our habitual relationship with our surroundings, a relationship that is mostly instrumental. We manage our milieu to survive and possibly prosper. But to understand its deeper significance to us and maybe something of its own being, we must visit it as a stranger and see it as “otherwise”. In order to look beyond the obvious we must give it a different kind of attention. If we attend to it when it nudges us with its surprises, we will see it in ways that have less to do with our self-interest. We will find it to be an “otherwise” place and then the discovery can begin.

My artistic investigations into places have realized two very different transactions of understanding. An artwork can arise out of the effort to understand and interpret a site, but a site can also give rise to an understanding and an interpretation of an artwork. Instances of the former have transpired out of the drawing and painting side of my practice. An instance of the latter occurred with a land art installation.

In the southern prairie of Alberta, within view of the Rocky Mountains, there is a pasture of little consequence containing a slight knoll. This setting has garnered a particularity of place because around that knoll has been drawn, in grass and gravel, a large compass rose, or a clock face, 310 ft. in diameter (football field) (Fig. 1).

From the sky, amongst the vastness of endless square fields of grain and grass, a design of the 12 points of the compass is clearly apparent, marked out in a gravel circle with full-size grassy silhouettes of airplanes. The moldering remains of 12



Fig. 1 K. B. Harder *Gravitas*, 2009. Grass, gravel, aircraft parts, 310 ft. in diameter (Photo by Charles Logie)



Fig. 2 Detail image of *Gravitas* (Photo by K. Harder)

Anson aircraft (trainers for WW II bomber crews) sit on the silhouettes, facing the centre as if homed in on a single beacon (Fig. 2).

From the ground each of the 12 planes is a unique sculpture with its own character and personality that speaks to the variety of life experiences sealed into these artifacts. They have arrived at this place, aground on a slight rise in the prairie with the big sky and the wind as a backdrop, the sky and the earth as home. When you stand in the centre at the top of the knoll you will find them facing you, a council or an interrogation (Fig. 3).

This is a site-specific land art installation titled *Gravitas* and it is a kind of *memento mori* that reminds us that time flies even when airplanes cannot. As a design it might be located anywhere but this landscape is an essential part of the site and the experience of it. *Gravitas* sits in the country side, in a pasture with a mountain backdrop, within a rural community that has a share in the history it references. It carries with it large and small stories: of the people who built these planes; of the young men and women who worked in them; of the farmers who bought them after the war; of their children who played in them, or used them for target practice; and of the volunteers who collected them in order to preserve their meaning. It also sits in an ancient land, marked and formed by powerful events over great swaths of time. And we might bear in mind that this circle is in the company of other circular markers in this landscape, such as medicine wheels that mark much older times and very different lives.



Fig. 3 Detail image of *Gravitas* (Photo by K. Harder)

The landscape not only provides the setting for the art, it provides it with a place to be, and in doing so it puts an interpretive spin on it. What is more it provides and creates a place for viewers to be and to connect with the awareness of that being in their own here and now. Upon returning from an actual excursion to this site a viewer, even the artist, will have a new understanding and a shifted horizon of insight into many of the threads of meaning this touches on, not the least of which is the site/sight in its unique placement.

When I launch into such excursions using drawing or painting as a means visual investigation my working approach is one of descriptive painting and drawing. The entry point is often something indeterminate at the outset – some stimuli that tweaks a second glance. Such an impetus can grow into significance in the course of focused attention or alternatively might be a sudden epiphany.

The heightened awareness and sense of recognition generated in such moments has its own value, but is often connected to other, more specific meanings that include allusions and associations connected to things that matter. This is the stuff of the human condition, and no matter how socially constructed they might be, it is these connections that indicate vital nodes of significance for us.

The provisional nature of perception and the subjective nature of the response leave me undaunted. In fact, I find that they open onto vast possibilities. Whatever conditioning we are subject to, we are still uniquely hot and cold in wonderful variations, which itself speaks to our humanity. An informed and articulate expression of that humanity is the crossroad where I try to situate my work. A finished work is as much a surprise as the originating impulse, and it has its own independent being. Even after the fact, I find that it is open to multiple readings of my own as well as those of others.

My artistic approach to the challenge of understanding such places involves taking a long view by using the kind of descriptive methodology that produces high-resolution images. Drawings, as well as certain paintings, are created from direct observation and the discipline of sustained attention develops meaning in a very different way than that of referencing photographs, though photographs are essential resources in certain situations.

In each case the stage is set by an investigative agenda and a subject is recruited to be the vehicle that carries the endeavour along. My process of painting, or drawing, proceeds in a layered fashion that begins with a rough beginning and then builds to a level of resolution that I deem sufficient for the purpose. By using descriptive pictorial conventions that are broadly understood, a play of difference can be revealed and the deviations from expectations are noticeable even when they are subtle, which is frequent. It is the subtle things that carry the cues for significance and they are often overlooked, so it is critical to offer a platform for them. The development of a work requires me to make a myriad of decisions about how to create a colour or a form towards certain effects as well as what to include and what to leave out. These decisions relate to the contemplation that goes with examining the minutiae of the world at the level of its existence. Inch by inch I am forced to reflect on and wonder about the patterns of life and the effects of time that contributed to my intuitive visual response. I also have time to recall the legacy of the discipline and art history in the various tactics that I employ. Implications of the past and theories of the present are ever ringing in my consciousness as I work. So, the thinking of an individual, a society and an era are embedded in those decisions whose traces exist only in the concerted marks on the panel. In the end, it is the combined effect of those accumulated marks that is so much greater than their sum. This is what rewards the attentive viewer. Ultimately the greatest impact lies in what the touch does to the visual material. It is not **what** is represented but **how** it is represented that matters.

There is a photo of a guy sitting in the bush in front of an easel with an enormous piece of paper on it (Fig. 4). This is not “the woods” and it is not even “the forest.” Those are titles for places that imply a particular character. The bush does not have character. By definition, it is nondescript. The thing about bush is that it is “the middle of nowhere,” which is where he is working on a drawing. Everyone knows there is nothing in the middle of nowhere and therefore he is drawing something that is nothing.

This guy is therefore in nowhere squared. Firstly, his work is far from the concerns of the urban art centres and consequently this particular “there” has no “here” and no “when” for his drawing. Secondly he is in the bush. And he has been sitting intently looking at nothing and recording it in as truthful and attentive a way as his nervous system, media, and legacy of skills allows. He has been there for hours and days. The mosquitos are endemic. He smells strongly of DEET. Rain falls in the afternoon most days because the climate produces thunderstorms. The drawing is covered in plastic for those periods and also through the night because it is much too cumbersome to take in each day. He has to trust it to the creatures whose lives he intrudes on.



Fig. 4 The artist drawing in the northern bush (Photo by M. Harder)

This part of the bush, like most other parts, has no distinctive features. If you were to blunder through it on some hike to elsewhere it would only offer silence and stillness. But this guy is not passing through. Like the bush, he is also still and silent as he sorts through the plethora of nothing that fills his view as far as his vision can penetrate the trunks and branches that extend north for hundreds of miles, broken only by rivers, lakes and the occasional cutline until it dwindles to tundra.

He is not distracting his displacement with the noisy comfort and familiarity of his music play-list. His attention is paid for by his displacement, discomfort, time, stillness, and with the skills of observation and description that he has learned and honed from a time when such things were still taught. And by paying attention he is realizing a place.

This place reveals that silence is not its habit, and its apparent stillness is in fact filled with activity. The Canada Jays will perch on the easel. The nuthatches and chickadees, amongst other little brown birds, make a daily round, as do the ravens. An adult owl attends two owlets who vocalize their presence. Rabbits, mice, a fox, and deer make cameo appearances. The light shifts as it penetrates the canopy at different angles. The clouds gather. It rains. It clears. The late afternoons brings a dimness to the scene. The undergrowth skitters with sounds as evening approaches.



Fig. 5 Keith Harder, *As Far as the Eye Can See* , 1995, charcoal on rag paper, 38 × 58 in

On the large sheet of paper the nearer trees come into focus and become personalities (Fig. 5). A grid of branches reach across the scene even as the distance becomes divided into increasingly smaller trunks that grow the darkness and obscure all traces of the horizon. In the foreground the minuscule details of undergrowth, life and decay, are realized into their particularities and become landmarks for the composition. Space again comes into play as the resolution of those particulars disappears with distance. The light shifts. Decisions about luminance crystallize a moment of time as shadows are frozen in their place. As the drawing comes to a finale, the anonymity of that patch of bush is brought into visibility. This geographical point lives in a drawing that posits it as a place and stands as a metonym for the actual presence of “the middle of nowhere”, and a pause for reflection on all that is dismissed for not being in that other exclusive “here” of the “now”.

Regardless of whatever hi-resolution artwork you are looking at, whether work that trades in photos, or (much more so) in working from direct observation, the imagery gets adjusted and selectively depicted. This is not always or even frequently deliberate but occurs in the accumulation of decisions that form the descriptive agenda. In painting sensibilities and skill in colour management, brushwork, and observation affect these decisions in unpredictable, and highly idiosyncratic ways. Even in highly descriptive painting there is a style that is unique to each artist. It is the inevitable microstructure of a touch that remains when all the deliberate affectations of paint handling are rigorously expunged by the discipline of observing and recording. The appearances created by such a process comprise the artist’s interpretation, and in that are the possibilities for meanings. **How** the appearance of a subject is affected is what must be discerned when looking at descriptive art.

Much of that appearance has to do with the physicality of paint. For something that has been referred to as coloured mud, paint is a magical substance that can perform many visual feats and come in countless appearances, each with a particular capacity to suggest a direction for reading. The aforementioned sensibility and skill involved in managing painting depends on choices related to material usage so it is never the same in the hands of different artists even when we account for the differences found in different mediums such as acrylic or oil. An artist can handle paint with a wide variety of tools and can affect the flow and viscosity of paint with many sorts of solutions. Paint is not a neutral entity and with different approaches it will take on different personalities. These personalities are part of the "look" that we see in a painting and to which I must take into account in order to winkle out the spin that the work puts on a subject.

In the way paint is touched onto a surface, a physical presence gets built into the work that I can only experience and assess by looking at a painting in person. This key experience is missing when looking at reproductions. When that is missing, interpretation defaults to the limitations of merely interpreting what the subject might suggest.

The materiality of the paint tracks the thoughts of the artist and constitutes the voice or presence of that other individual. It reminds me that this is a mediated image and it has something uniquely personal to offer. This physicality transcends the generic nature of picturing and is what keeps a viewer in her own present moment when looking at a painting. The peril of reducing painting to imagery alone is to flatten its effect and to lose the link to the artist's effort of conveying what otherwise remains invisible and intangible. Materiality of paint is the voice of painting. It is easily missed in realistic work as it is a very, very quiet voice compared to the impact of the imagery. It takes deliberate attention to notice this materiality and to consider what suggestions and cadence it is adding to interpretation. These can be many and varied, depending on what we bring to the experience.

Imagery is not irrelevant, though, and the choices of subject and content are something artists grapple with regardless of whether they are tipping their hat to a tradition or cutting across its grain. In either case the legacy of art history stands behind whatever an artist chooses and, inevitably, meanings swirl around choices. Descriptive artists watch their world for subjects that might corral or distill an imaginative response, or an awakening to the meaning of a situation that is tuned to the particularities of here and now. But the here and now is tied to, and formed by, a history, as is all art. Viewers must bring visual references to the interpretation of art work. In poetry it is the knowledge of language itself and the history of language within poetry that offers traction for understanding and insight, and for the appreciation of the means and structure of illuminating that understanding. It is important to grasp what a painting or a poem is playing against or what they are playing with, in order to get to an understanding of them. It is other art that largely contextualizes the work we look at. Therefore the limited or extensive library of art we can bring to a work will provide the scope for the inference of references and allusions that an artwork trades on. The meanings inherent in stylistic handling, the treatment of subject, and compositional devices of previous art impinge on, and attach to, later



Fig. 6 Keith Harder, *March*, 2003, oil on birch panel, 10 × 24 in

work. An artist plays with, or against, such intimations of meaning. To improvise on Northrop Frye: it is the “visually” educated imagination that is needed for good looking.

I engaged this approach as a hermeneutical excursion with a cycle of landscapes that considered the contemporary situation of rural life (Fig. 6). I have lived, worked and traveled in several different prairie landscapes and most of that time it has more or less been just space between agendas. Over time I have gained an inkling of the weight that underwrites the place. This is not to say that I had not seen or appreciated the views that the prairie offers. Those experiences, however, were too obviously conditioned by the venerable tradition of the sublime to be something that might be indicative of a different way of being.

In using a descriptive methodology to re-enter the prairie landscape what started to penetrate my awareness was the way the land was possessed by its history, its politics, its climate, and by its communities with their collective memories. The prairie’s open appearance belies the fact that it lies under the claim of often conflicted interests and is beholden to forces that shape its look, and the lives of those who presume to inhabit it.

Coming out on the other end of that excursion involving over twenty paintings of highly individual places, I had a deeper sense of what richness of significance such places have. The cliché about the prairie is that its wide open spaces and its far horizon seem to make it an open book, a quick study, a place that is easy to access, simple to understand because it looks so apparent, if not transparent. The prairie experience seems to cater to a big picture sensibility, but what you see is not always what you get. “Getting” the prairies means striving for the detail that comprises the generalities. The portals to those insights exact a cost.

From a tourist’s eye the prairies have often been characterized as not only endless, but featureless, without significant variation. The people whose lives churn out their measure in such places are similarly characterized, and so passed over. Place and populace become invisible in such a characterization which prefers to find the only redeeming value in the “emptiness” of such a landscape, as a respite from

places crowded with faces, legacies, and familiarity. For such individuals it may be considered a worthwhile, if somewhat bland, experience and, like any tourist attraction, is best taken in small doses and drastically edited.

On the other hand, there is the romantic view of the traveller who, with a discriminating eye, sees the monumentality of the plains and the sky, and who finds pleasure in the subtlety and surprise of variations of the landscape. This view recognizes that unique societies and customs have matured in the crucible of the environment. These are taken as "interesting" in a folkloric sense that sees, with idealism, the hardiness, warmth and resourcefulness of a people beset with hardship and tragedy. Such places may be savoured, in a self-congratulatory way, for their difference and perhaps exoticism. In this view it is preferable that they remain quaint, distant, and uncomplicated in memory.

The vast openness of the horizon is excessively deceiving. We are accustomed to the liberating, unconstrained feeling of expansive and unobstructed views. Such views are highly commodified in ordinary real estate for the sense of dominion and open potential. But such longings are smoke in the wind. The land in view is not a *tabula rasa* ready to receive the stamp of anyone's will. Those who reside in it would find such sentiment reckless. All those romantic-looking abandoned homesteads are testaments to such presumptions that went unfulfilled. Like the ocean, the prairie is bigger than it looks. Like the ocean it can be spectacular and chancy and like the ocean it shapes the ways of people whose lives are enmeshed with it. It is, however, anything but uncomplicated and its society is anything but simple or singular.

This open prairie is in fact saturated with claims and crowded with implications. It has been spoken for many times in many ways and every hectare is conflicted. And for all the room it presents, it can be inordinately confining.

Living in it means being confined to the potentialities of the land you work. How much land is needed to live on? It depends what you can get out of it. What portion is compromised by the accidents of glaciation; the unworkable hills and hollows; the alkaline deposits; the sand, clay or stony content of the soil? What kind of precipitation patterns exist in the local micro-climate and how many frost-free days does the area average? What kind of water access is there? There are further constraints in what resources a given land-holder can bring to bear on the land. The margins between investment and the production it might yield are maddeningly constricting.

There are also intrusions into the land over which those living on it have little control, but for which they have to give way. From hydro-electric infrastructure, to resource exploration and extraction, from pipelines to roadways and construction in the service of larger scale industries—each jostles the lives dependent on the rural landscape. But perhaps more constraining than any of these are the almost invisible complications of society and history.

A neighbourhood in the country might sprawl over vast tracts of real estate but it consists of a diminishing number of individuals. The character of these communities can vary wildly from malevolent to beneficent. The boundaries between such clusters are not well defined as the nature of each arises from a mix of individual

relationships. What is constant is that there is always a hierarchy in a community and it is managed by involved patterns of honour and shame that establish an individual's value and claims on decision-making.

These are communities of surveillance where roads are watched and the comings and goings of any and each are inflected with meaning. Much of living is vulnerable to the view and judgment of the passerby, and opportunities for privacy are closely guarded. It can thus be a suspicious place, and at times hostile to the grasping gaze. At the same time it is difficult to maintain a fortress mentality as a certain interdependence is a necessity, not only for the needs of human contact and culture but for pragmatic reasons as well. Economies in such localities are easily conquered by division and so mutual support is a survival strategy, though it may be offered grudgingly, or with a certain parsimony.

The land is held with a vengeance because it is the source and means of standing. That standing is established through a history. The chronicle of success and failure is overlaid onto the pathways, vistas and corners of any given parcel of land. Not only is it traced in the topography of the land but also in its times of the year; as found in the changeable light of its skies, in the sounds of its creatures, the scents of its flora, and the work that accompanies these. For those who live there, a walk through that landscape can indeed be a walk down memory lane, but one with narratives that are all too often fraught with conflict and disappointment. Setbacks are balanced with future hopes that have everything to do with the cycle of seasons. The rural prairies are not called "next-year-country" for nothing.

Every quarter-section has its secret stories of joy and heartbreak but they are mostly closed off to the stranger who is confined to the narrowness of the road allowance, who has little to go on but an aesthetic sense of landscape, and who might, at most, wonder if anything of import might have transpired beyond the crest of a coulee or along the margin of a slough. For the residents, on the other hand, a property may be altogether too confining as the reminders of the past relentlessly bracket the imagination and cloud the future.

At the end of this series of paintings I could say that whatever else it might be, the rural prairie is not empty. On the contrary it is full of the complexity that arises when life makes the monumental effort to be full and meaningful within constrained circumstances. And while it may not be self-evident or easily apprehended, the rich variations of that living will become apparent to those who take the time to pay attention to its details; but that usually means staying long enough to make an emotional investment, establish ties to people, and a daily rhythm.

If the paintings can carry something of that sense to a viewer, even in an inchoate way, then that too is a portal to understanding.

Whatever ends up in a painting gets changed by it and given a significance that it does not have in other forms of representation. Somewhere amongst the materiality, the process, and the legacy, something alchemical occurs. A thing or scene that might not get a second glance in our everyday life becomes an object of contemplation and mystery. In descriptive painting this happens because of a most unexpected counter-intuitive characteristic.

The most typical reaction to high-resolution painting is to note how real it looks or, even worse, how photographic it looks. However, the most important thing about such work is in the ways it **does not** look like either reality or photography. It is in the subtle deviations from the source material that hi-resolution painting potentiates its unique revelatory experience. Somehow in the painter's process of concentrating on description, something unexpected and revealing occurs. Appearances of things change subtly. Some effects are missed. Others get an extra emphasis. In these changes, which are sometimes made deliberately, but more often intuitively and unconsciously, a subtle point of view is brought into focus. It is particular to the sensibility of an individual, an era, and a social milieu.

We tend to assume we know what pictures are about because we think we know what our everyday visual experience is about. But, again, our everyday visual experience rarely gets beyond instrumental recognition. We believe what we see, but we rarely reflect on the way we interpret what we see, or the way meaning seeps into our visual life. Since we conflate instrumental seeing with picturing we trivialize both the complexity of meaning in our visual world and also those images that are created as a reflection on that meaning. If we can get past the reflex of recognition it is worth asking what other reasons there might be to keep on looking.

It takes considerable effort to get past the picture and into an interpretation because we have been conditioned to interpret just the pictures while the rest of the work tends to stay invisible. This is not only a hazard for the viewer but can be a pitfall for practitioners and can compromise their best efforts with shallowness.

There is a conundrum that can be expressed in the following way:

When is a picture not simply a picture? – The answer: **when it is a painting.**

And conversely:

When is a painting not a painting? – The answer: **when it is just a picture.**

The implication is that a painting, on its way to art, has great potential for a hermeneutical excursion; to be a vehicle of interpretation, understanding and meaning; but if it only reiterates a view it can fail at its calling and its becoming.

There are subjects that make fine pictures – even great pictures. Those might be the subjects of photography. They do not need to be paintings and maybe should not be paintings. On the other hand there are indifferent photographs that would gain much by being painted.

Some of my work begins with a photograph, often not a particularly good photograph. Through the transmutation of paint such an image acquires more substance than it had in the photo or even in actuality. One of the essential mysteries of using paint as a medium is that it heightens the imperative to find meaning. We don't experience the paint when looking at a photo of the painting but in front of the actual work the paint has a value-added quality that invites a response.

My tag line could be 'Paying Attention' because that is what I do in my art. It is also what my art does. And it is what I hope viewers will do with my art. My focus in making art is on the importance of the visual experience, its meanings and its interpretations – it is to offer reasons for looking. It is a hermeneutical focus that I think is very relevant.

As an artist to practice in this kind of discipline is to necessarily step out of a theoretical framework into another one where choices are active and have other coordinates. Some of those choices are physical and others interpretational. The mysteries of the mind and of the body are ever at play in the process, and the humanity of that play is embedded in the paint. It will be there regardless of what theoretical constructs frame our humanity.

The places that “happen” in the course of my work certainly happen to me but, in the best circumstances, such work can also become its own place, open to the encounter of a viewer. It is always a specific moment and situation and not the generic space of free association. And, most often, it is not in any way the rarified meta- “here and now” of art world currency, but is rather is within the microcosm of a life lived. Its scale is personal, individual and momentary, though its effects may linger.

We can come to art, or to a place, with questions, but if we are paying attention, a work of art, or a place, will ask its own questions. The first one is always “What are you looking at?” Upon formulating our first response we will know its insufficiency and it will lead to additions and qualifications that are revealing about ourselves and gradually we may experience a feeling that it is not the painting or place that is under scrutiny but rather it is us. Does not every text expose something about its interpreter? But using art as means of paying attention can make us a collaborator with a place, moving us towards a heightened awareness of being and mutuality.

Hermeneutics and Architecture: Buildings-in-Themselves and Interpretive Trustworthiness

David Seamon

Abstract This chapter delineates some key issues that a hermeneutics of architecture must address. Jones' *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture* (2000) is used as a heuristic context for explicating two central research concerns: first, the contentious question of whether buildings-in-themselves, as opposed to the personal, social, and cultural experiences and meanings of buildings, can be examined hermeneutically; and, second, the complex matter of interpretive trustworthiness—i.e., how is one to evaluate the relative accuracy and validity of competing interpretations? To illustrate a hermeneutic perspective that might circumvent these two interpretive concerns, the chapter draws on two important efforts to generate what might be called a hermeneutics of the language of architecture: first, philosopher Karsten Harries' language of natural symbols; and, second, architect Thomas Thiis-Evensen's language of architectural archetypes. The chapter evaluates the relative interpretive power of these two hermeneutic languages to describe accurately and non-arbitrarily the lived experience of “buildings-in-themselves.”

“What does it mean to understand?” is a central hermeneutic question (Palmer 1969; Porter and Robinson 2011; van Manen 2014). Why is it, for example, that different individuals, groups, and historical eras may understand the same book, painting, musical composition, or architectural work differently? Can one facilitate various conceptual and heuristic means whereby one might move toward a more comprehensive understanding of the particular things or situations that he or she wishes to know? Hermeneutically, these particular things or situations are most commonly referred to as “texts,” a term that identifies any more or less coherent entity, experience, or event that evokes human meaning. A text most often refers to human creations—for example, a novel, sculpture, photograph, film, song, dance, ritual, furnishing, or building (Davey 1999; Jones 2000; Mugerauer 1994, 2014). Significantly for architectural and environmental concerns, texts can also involve elements and qualities of nature and the natural world—for example, a

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hermeneutics of landscapes, geographical regions, or plant and animal forms (Bortoft 1996; Norberg-Schulz 1980; Seamon and Zajonc 1998; Tilley 2012). Whatever the particular text that one seeks to understand, the key hermeneutic concern is how and in what ways that text might be interpreted, and how and in what ways interpreters of the text might clarify their interpretation and broaden their understanding. From a hermeneutical perspective, the meanings and interpretations of any text are said to be inexhaustible in the sense that how the text is examined and understood can be somewhat or greatly different from what the original creator intended. In addition, these meanings and interpretations can vary because of differences among interpreters or because of historical shifts in psychological, social, and cultural concerns or sensibilities (Gadamer 1989; Palmer 1969).¹

In this chapter, I consider the significance of hermeneutics for architecture.² I begin by locating some key concerns that a hermeneutics of buildings and other architectural works entails. As a heuristic context for discussing these concerns, I draw on comparative-religion scholar Lindsay Jones' *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture*, a two-volume work that is perhaps the most exhaustive recent effort to identify the diverse, multi-dimensioned ways in which an "architectural hermeneutics" might proceed (Jones 2000). I identify two major research dilemmas toward which Jones' work points: first, the contentious question of whether *buildings-in-themselves*, as opposed to the personal, social, and cultural experiences and meanings of those buildings, can be examined hermeneutically; and, second, the difficult matter of *interpretive trustworthiness*. If, in other words, one assumes that buildings evoke divergent meanings for different experiencers and interpreters, how is he or she to evaluate the relative accuracy and validity of competing interpretations? As evidence of a hermeneutic approach that might circumvent these two interpretive concerns, I discuss two significant efforts to generate what might be called a *hermeneutics of the language of architecture*: first, philosopher Karsten Harries' language of *natural symbols*; and, second, architect Thomas Thiis-Evensen's language of *architectural archetypes*. I consider the relative interpretive power of these two hermeneutical languages to describe accurately and non-arbitrarily the lived experience of "buildings-in-themselves."

1 Architectural Hermeneutics and "Buildings-in-Themselves"

Although its focus is almost entirely on sacred structures such as churches, mosques, temples, shrines, tombs, and so forth, Jones' *Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture* is important for architectural hermeneutics because he explores the richly variegated

¹ Introductions to hermeneutics include Bortoft 2012; Palmer 1969; Porter and Robinson 2011; Thiselton 2009; van Manen 2014.

² Discussions of hermeneutics and architecture include Hale 2000; Jones 2000; Mugerauer 1994, 2014; Seamon 2017; Snodgrass and Coyne 1997.

ways in which buildings and other architectural works sustain a diversified range of environmental meanings, experiences, and events. Jones' central organizing assumption is that an architectural hermeneutics should *minimize interpretive attention to buildings-in-themselves*: he repeatedly emphasizes that buildings have no "inherent, stable meanings" intrinsic to architectural form, building materiality, or tectonic structure (Jones 2000, vol. 1, xxviii). Instead, architectural meaning is multi-vocal, superabundant, fluid, and best understood via the varied individual and group experiences, situations, and activities associated with the particular sacred building or architectural work. Jones (2000, vol. 1, 41) contends that the most helpful hermeneutic focus is what he calls the "ritual-architectural event":

From [my] hermeneutical frame, it is not buildings but the human experience or apprehension of buildings that holds our attention.... [F]rom this perspective, the locus of meaning resides neither in the building itself (a physical object) nor in the mind of the beholder (a human subject) but rather in the negotiation or the interactive relation that subsumes both building and beholder—in the *ritual-architectural event* in which buildings and human participants alike are involved. Meaning is not a condition or quality of the building, of the thing itself; meaning arises from situations (Jones 2000, vol. 1, 41).

Drawing on real-world examples from many different cultures, places, historical eras, and sacred traditions, Jones devotes the first volume of his study to the wide-ranging spectrum of ways in which sacred architecture, via ritual-architectural events, can contribute to human experience and human meaning. To provide a comprehensive heuristic of ritual-architectural events, he develops, in his second volume, an eleven-part outline that works as "a wide catalog of hermeneutical questions and possibilities... which can enhance subsequent, more particularistic, and tightly contextualized interpretations of specific ritual-architectural circumstances" (Jones 2000, vol. 1, xxx). These eleven interpretive categories cover three broad themes that often overlap in particular real-world situations: first "architecture as orientation" (architectural and environmental qualities that draw would-be participants into committed involvement); second, "architecture as commemoration" (experiences and meanings unfolding once specific ritual-architectural events are underway); and, third, "architecture as ritual context" (ways that environmental and architectural qualities contribute to the presentation and choreography of the specific ritual-architectural events) (Jones 2000, vol. 2, 3).

Because his research interest is comparative sacred and religious experiences, one cannot criticize Jones for focusing on participants' multivalent experiences and understandings of sacred architecture and associated lived events. For a comprehensive architecture hermeneutics, however, what must be called into question is Jones' insistence that architecture-in-itself can hold no intrinsic meaning and, therefore, does not deserve extensive hermeneutic explication: "buildings do not have once-and-for-all meanings (irrespective of the common, usually implicit presupposition that they do)" (Jones 2000, vol. 2, xiii). The awkwardness here is a conflation of the range of potential architectural encounter, which Jones reduces to "people's sociological backgrounds and personalistic experiences" (Jones 2000, vol. 1, 34). In other words, Jones' research focus is almost entirely on the personal and communal dimensions of architectural and environmental meaning—what architect Thomas

Thiis-Evensen (1989, 25) identifies as the two distinct domains of *private* and *social* experience. In relation to architecture, Thiis-Evensen associates the private mode of experience with personal taste and preferences in relation to a particular building or architectural style, whereas he associates the social mode with the shared interpersonal and cultural meanings and sensibilities in relation to the building or style. In contrast to Jones, however, Thiis-Evensen *as an architect* emphasizes that there is also always a third mode of *universally shared* architectural experience and meaning. He calls this mode the *archetypal* dimension, which he explains is difficult to recognize or articulate explicitly because it relates to “our spontaneous and unconscious reactions... to the inherent structure of architectural forms, independent of their [personal or social] associations” (Thiis-Evensen 1989, 25).³

It is this third mode of archetypal architectural experience and meaning that Jones loses sight of when he claims that “buildings have no autonomous, stable being (or existence) outside of their interactions with human users” (Jones 2000, vol. 1, 95). Shortly, I consider how the hermeneutical languages of Harries and Thiis-Evensen offer two different but complementary ways for penetrating and articulating this third, normally unselfconsciously encountered, dimension of architectural experience and meaning. First, however, I draw on Jones’ study to spotlight another important hermeneutic matter: the complicated question of how the hermeneutic researcher might avoid accusations of inaccurate, partial, or arbitrary interpretation.

2 Architectural Hermeneutics and Interpretive Trustworthiness

A second critical concern brought forward by Jones’ work is interpretive validity and trustworthiness. Jones claims that all experiential accounts of a sacred building are equally legitimate hermeneutically and should be given equivalent interpretive weight in locating the full range of lived encounters and engagements with sacred architecture. In overviewing, for example, what a hermeneutic study of Arkansas architect Faye Jones’ award-winning, 1980 Thorncrown Chapel might entail, Jones is not primarily concerned with the building’s unique formalistic and contextual qualities or with the architect’s and architectural critics’ understandings of the chapel’s aesthetic and sacred appeal. In defining the chapel as a place of “ritual-architectural events,” Jones focuses interpretive attention on the experiences and meanings associated with the building’s everyday users—regular worshippers, wedding participants, funeral goers, travelers and tourists, and so forth. His concern is for “an appreciation of the always divergent and diverse, on-the-ground priorities

³In an endnote, Jones (2000, vol. 1, p. 274, n. 28) makes passing reference to Thiis-Evensen’s work but misrepresents it as a kind of architectural determinism. Jones appears unaware of Thiis-Evensen’s invaluable distinction among private, social, and archetypal aspects of architectural meaning and experience.

espoused by the various architectural users...” (Jones 2000, 20). The potential hermeneutic problem with Jones’ acceptance of all user situations and encounters is that, for example, the experiential accounts of one-time visitors to Thorncrown Chapel are assumed to express as much experiential engagement and descriptive accuracy as those accounts of long-time worshippers, thoughtful architectural critics, or the architect himself. One faces the dilemma of interpretive arbitrariness: If all lived accounts of architectural experience and meaning are assumed to be of equal descriptive and interpretive merit, how can the researcher establish which descriptions should be given more or less interpretive weight in deciphering the actual architectural situation? How, in other words, can hermeneutic researchers be sure that their interpretive accounts are comprehensive, accurate, and balanced rather than partial, arbitrary, and prejudicial?

Fair-minded, trustworthy interpretation is a confounding hermeneutic matter, since meaning and understanding are always already underway, varying among interpreters, among different historical periods—even shifting for the same interpreter as his or her understanding of the text may reformulate itself over time. Nowhere in his two-volume study does Jones discuss the matter of interpretive accuracy. Instead, his primary aim is to offer his eleven-part outline as hermeneutic guidance for locating particular ritual-architectural events and placing them contextually in relation to comparative architectural experiences and events. As he explains, his central interest is the “multivalence and invariably unpredicted (and unpredictable) superabundance of sacred architecture” (Jones 2000, vol. 1, 3).

Because, however, accounts of architectural experience and meaning can be uneven and unequal in their descriptive and interpretive significance, one can ask if there might be identified some set of criteria for evaluating the relative accuracy of these accounts. “How,” asks philosopher G. B. Madison, “is one to decide which of two or more conflicting interpretations is the better, and to do so impartially, non-arbitrarily, if there are no general, recognized criteria one can appeal to?” (Madison 1988, 27). Brice R. Wachterhauser (1996, 234) broaches the same question when he asks how hermeneutic researchers might establish “a set of practical guidelines that guide the pursuit of truth in the human sciences.” In working through one potential solution to this perplexing hermeneutical concern, Wachterhauser develops four interpretive guidelines, which I draw on here because they are readily applicable to architectural situations and interpretations.⁴ He emphasizes that these four guidelines should not be thought of as “criteria or rules in the sense of either necessary or sufficient conditions” but as “heuristic ideals that guide us in many situations of inquiry but do not bind us universally” (Wachterhauser 1996, 234). These four guidelines can be summarized as follows:

1. *Comprehensiveness*, whereby the interpretive account is complete in that it addresses essential aspects of the text or situation; without comprehensiveness,

⁴Other efforts to establish evaluative guidelines for hermeneutic interpretation include Madison 1988; Packer and Addison 1989; and Polkinghorne 1983.

- “any realm of experience will be one-sided, and as such its truth will be threatened by distortion” (Wachterhauser 1996, 234).
2. *Semantic depth*, whereby the interpretation evokes a thickness of interpretive understanding that incorporates past, present, and future experiences; the interpretation “should be able to ‘prove itself’ over time by extending the reader’s present experience as it arises” (Wachterhauser 1996, 235).
 3. *Inclusivity*, whereby the interpretive text offers an encompassing frame of reference that incorporates and shelters less inclusive interpretive texts; the interpretation offers a thoroughness “that demonstrates its superior truth over other texts in that it can give a more comprehensive interpretation of some phenomenon that is suggestive of both the strengths and weaknesses of other accounts” (Wachterhauser 1996, 235).
 4. *Architectonic structure*, whereby the interpretation provides a fitting place for all the interpretive parts; the interpretation works architectonically and teleologically “in that it orders and structures our experience into an intelligible pattern” (Wachterhauser 1996, 235).

Keeping sight of Wachterhauser’s four guidelines as a means of interpretive sturdiness, I next describe two possibilities for a hermeneutics of the language of architecture, drawing on the work of Harries and Thiis-Evensen. I first explore how, in contrasting but complementary ways, these two architectural thinkers delineate possibilities for a hermeneutics of buildings-in-themselves. I then consider these two thinkers’ hermeneutic languages in terms of Wachterhauser’s four interpretive criteria. I conclude that, especially in terms of comprehensiveness and architectonic structure, Harries’ and Thiis-Evensen’s interpretive languages offer a valuable addition to the architectural hermeneutics laid out by Jones.

3 Karsten Harries and Natural Symbols

Karsten Harries contends that a primary value of architecture is “interpreting the world as a meaningful order in which the individual can find his [or her] place in the midst of nature and in the midst of a community” (Harries 1993, 51). Harries claims that, too often, buildings do not respond to human need because they are made arbitrarily in that they do not arise from the real-world requirements and aspirations of particular people and places. As an interpretation and actualization of human life, a non-arbitrary architecture involves design that both listens to and sustains nature and culture. As one means whereby architects might better envision non-arbitrary designs, Harries proposes the hermeneutic explication of what he calls a “natural language of space” (Harries 1997, 125). He grounds this language in the phenomenological fact “that we exist in the world, not as disembodied spirits, nor as beings who just happen to have bodies, but as essentially embodied selves, who by their bodies are inevitably assigned their place in the world—on the earth and beneath the giant hemisphere of the sky” (Harries 1997, 125).

In specifying what this language might be more precisely, Harries draws on *natural symbols*, by which he means the underlying patterns of experience marking essential qualities of human nature and life—for example, lived qualities of direction, of weight, of materiality, of temperature, of light, of privacy, of sociability, and so forth. “By natural symbols,” he writes, “I understand symbols that can be derived simply from an analysis of [human] being in the world. They are not tied to a particular culture or region, although, inevitably, different cultures will appropriate them differently” (Harries 1993, 53). Harries suggests that the phenomenological structure of any natural symbol incorporates some form of *lived polarity*—for example, experiences of moving or resting, standing up or lying down, recognizing darkness or light, encountering openness or closure, sensing gravity or levity, feeling inside or outside, or being present alone or communally.

In his writings, Harries explores such natural symbols as vertical and horizontal, light and darkness, up and down, and inside and outside. For example, he considers how the lived polarity between vertical and horizontal arises from the corporeal relationship between the vertical axis of the upright human body and the horizontal plane of the earth surrounding that body in all directions (Harries 1988, 40–45, 1997, 180–92). There is the horizon’s lure of open spaces and mobility as it exists in tension with the vertical’s anchoring power of rootedness and dwelling. There is the vertical’s skyward movement toward sacredness and spiritual transformation, which counters the horizon’s expression of physical expansion and worldly success. Different cultures, historical periods, and architectural forms and styles express the vertical-horizontal tension in different ways but, whatever the particular manifestation, it “presupposes an understanding of the meaning of verticals and horizontals inseparable from our being in the world” (Harries 1988, 45).

Harries (1988, 46–47, 1997, 192–97) also gives attention to the natural symbol of inside and outside, which is “bound up with the awareness of our own bodies, with their openings so much like the windows and doors of buildings” (1997, 192). The creation of an inside automatically marks an outside, which then reciprocates with inside in a dialectic relationship. On the one hand, inside establishes physical and psychological security and safety and thus can facilitate a sense of identity for the person or group (Relph 1976; Thiis-Evensen 1989). On the other hand, inside can involve “a suffocating darkness that our imagination peoples with images that both fascinate and terrify” (Harries 1997, 195). These lived oppositions of inside and outside point toward an important quality of natural symbols: their *ambiguous nature*. On the one hand, verticality can reflect spirituality and religious humility. On the other hand, it can symbolize human pride and assertiveness. In relation to the ambiguity of inside and outside, one of Harries’ examples is windows, which provide a sense of interpenetration and exchange between inside and outside but also shut insiders in or allow the inside to be overrun by the outside (Harries 1997, 192–98; Thiis-Evensen 1989, 251–82). How, asks Harries, might such seeming oppositions be reconciled? One possibility is a lived flexibility between secure enclosure and openness to the outside—“sheltering walls *and* doors and windows through which light and air [and the world] can enter” (Harries 1997, 196).

4 The Hermeneutic Value of Harries' Natural Symbols

For a hermeneutics of the language of architecture, Harries' work is significant because it provides one interpretive means to bypass the relativist approach to architectural meaning assumed by Jones in his architectural hermeneutics. Because Harries' notion of natural symbols offers a hermeneutical means to locate broad lived qualities of architectural meaning expressed dialectically, one is provided one heuristic structure for locating the experience of buildings-in-themselves—the unique shadings of architectural presence and ambience evoked by particular combinations of specific natural symbols. Harries' language provides one interpretive possibility for bypassing experiential accounts as they are grounded in the pre-reflective, unthematized attention of user lifeworlds and natural attitudes that Jones emphasizes in his accounts of ritual-architectural events. Harries offers an interpretation of architecture whereby the text—architecture-as-experienced-and-understood-via-expression-of-particular-natural-symbols—can more precisely and completely reveal itself. In relation to Wachterhauser's four guidelines for trustworthy interpretation, one can make the following claims for Harries' language of natural symbols:

1. Harries' language is *comprehensive* in that it offers, via lived polarities, an interpretive directive whereby the hermeneutic researcher can locate a series of architectural qualities and features that are multi-dimensional yet interrelated and reflective of architectural experiences and meanings that are typically taken-for-granted and unnoticed.
2. Harries' language incorporates *semantic depth* in that it relates to historical aspects of past or current architecture and can be applied to future architectural forms, structures, and styles.
3. Harries' language is *inclusive* in that it offers a broad, coherent perspective for understanding how a building-in-itself contributes to the personal and cultural dimensions of architectural experience and meaning; in this sense, Harries' language clarifies the archetypal dimension of architecture and thereby moves beyond the private and social aspects of architectural encounter and meaning emphasized by Jones.
4. Harries' language sustains *architectonic structure* in that a particular constellation of lived polarities grounds the lived qualities of the architectural work and points toward an integrated pattern relating to the building itself rather than to the shifting, varied experiences and meanings associated with building users; this interpretation offers a grounded, reliable understanding as to the lived power and resonance of a particular architectural work (Assefa and Seamon 2007).

5 Thiis-Evensen's Architectural Archetypes

Norwegian architect Thomas Thiis-Evensen's *Archetypes in Architecture* provides a hermeneutic language of architecture readily relatable to Harries' natural symbols but more sophisticated and complex (Thiis-Evensen 1989). Assuming a phenomenological

definition of architecture as the making of an inside in the midst of an outside, Thiis-Evensen aims to understand “the universality of architectural expression” (Thiis-Evensen 1989, 8). His interpretive means is what he calls *architectural archetypes*—“the most basic elements of architecture,” which he identifies as *floor*, *wall*, and *roof* (Thiis-Evensen 1989, 8). Thiis-Evensen proposes that the lived dimensions of a building can be clarified hermeneutically through what he calls the three existential expressions of architecture: *motion*, *weight*, and *substance* (Thiis-Evensen 1989, 21). By *motion*, he means the architectural element’s expression of dynamism or inertia—whether the element seems to expand, to contract, or to rest in balance. In turn, *weight* refers to the element’s expression of heaviness or lightness, and *substance* involves the element’s material expression—whether it seems soft or hard, coarse or fine, warm or cold, bright or dark, and so forth. How, asks Thiis-Evensen, do a building’s floor, wall, and roof express insideness and outsideness through motion, weight, and substance?⁵

Here, to provide one exemplary context in which to evaluate his architectural language hermeneutically, I overview Thiis-Evensen’s understanding of the floor. Drawing on an interpretation grounded in specific architectural examples from a wide range of historical, geographical, and cultural sources, he contends that the floor serves experientially in three ways: first, it can *direct* people from place to place; second, it can *delimit* a space from its surroundings; third, it can *support* by providing a firm footing. In this sense, support is the floor’s most important taken-for-granted aspect because “firmness is a precondition for our existence on earth, imbedded within us as a fundamental background for our entire feeling of security” (Thiis-Evensen 1989, 37).

One kind of floor that Thiis-Evensen discusses in detail is the *stair*, which, in expressing both support and direction, provides a spatial transition between different physical levels. In relation to the experience of being outside a building and proceeding to enter, Thiis-Evensen interprets the stair as “as an intermediary between inside and outside, between the building and its environment” (Thiis-Evensen 1989, 89). The major question that Thiis-Evensen asks is, “How, just by being what it is, does a particular stair prepare the user to ascend and to enter?” To answer this question, Thiis-Evensen demonstrates that the stair experience primarily relates to a sense of motion, which, in turn, relates, first, to the human impulse to climb; and, second, to particular architectural qualities of the stair itself—for example, whether it is wide or narrow, or gentle or steep (Thiis-Evensen 1989, 89–103).

In considering stair breadth, for example, Thiis-Evensen illustrates how a narrow stair typically relates to privacy and provokes the user to ascend more quickly than a wide stair, which he associates with publicness and ceremonial expression. Similarly, a steep stair may be associated with struggle, since gravity becomes an adversary and its downward force intimates that the goal at the top is important. In

⁵Thiis-Evensen’s architectural language applies only to the experience of *being outside a building and approaching it to enter*; he says little about interior architectural experiences or the situation of being in a building and exiting. He infers that interior architectural experience points to a complementary hermeneutical project that might be inspired by his work on exterior architectural experience (Thiis-Evensen 1989, 17–18).

the history of architecture, the steep stair has often been used to convey strength, quest, sacrifice and survival—experienced qualities that frequently lead to steep stairs’ use as a sacred symbol, as in Rome’s *Scala Sancta* or Mayan temples. In contrast, movement up a gentle stair is relatively easy and typically evokes a calm, comfortable, easy pace. The gentle stair allows for a slow, gliding, ceremonial air; one may linger on each step and be aware of the setting. To illustrate how slope and breadth play a role in stair experience, Thiis-Evensen contrasts the two major stairways leading up to Rome’s Capitoline Hill—the steep, wide stair ascending to the sacred Christian site of the Church of Santa Maria in Ara Coeli; and, just a short distance away, the slightly narrower, much more gentle stair ascending ramp-like to Michelangelo’s secular Piazza del Campidoglio (Thiis-Evensen 1989, 99–103).

6 The Hermeneutic Value of Thiis-Evensen’s Architectural Archetypes

My overview here of Thiis-Evensen’s architectural language is incomplete, and its intricate interdependence can be fully understood only through careful study and practical application to specific buildings, architects, and architectural styles (e.g., Lin and Seamon 1994; Seamon 2017). Thiis-Evensen’s language provides a sophisticated but novel guide for clarifying pre-reflective, difficult-to-articulate dimensions of architectural experiences and meanings. His interpretive structure powerfully illustrates a major aim of hermeneutic explication: making “something that is unfamiliar, distant, and obscure in meaning into something that is real, near, and intelligible” (Palmer 1969, 14). As I did with Harries’ natural symbols, I evaluate Thiis-Evensen’s archetypes in terms of Wachterhauser’s four interpretive guidelines:

1. Thiis-Evensen’s language is *comprehensive* in that it gives direct attention to the way that buildings and experiencers’ lived experiences of those buildings are intertwined existentially through floor, wall, and roof; motion, weight, and substance; and insideness-outsideness. *Archetypes*’ interpretive structure offers a refined, integrated framework for identifying how a building’s specific architectural elements evoke a particular architectural, experience, engagement, and ambience mostly happening at a pre-reflective level of awareness usually out of sight from direct conscious attention.
2. Thiis-Evensen’s language offers *semantic depth* in that it applies to past and present architectural experience and styles as well to future architectural possibilities. Because it involves archetypal, essential dimensions of architecture grounded in lived corporeality, the language provides one interpretive means for understanding buildings-in-themselves via their material sensuousness and visceral presence.
3. Thiis-Evensen’s language is *inclusive* in the sense that it provides intriguing perspectives on more limited cultural, social, or historical interpretations. For example, the language provides innovative angles on the lived components of architectural styles or particular social or cultural groups’ mode of designing and

building. Thiis-Evensen's language is "timeless" in the sense that it identifies and clarifies an aspect of architecture typically beyond the ken of natural attitude, habitual cerebral awareness, and world views.

4. Thiis-Evensen's language is *architectonically structured* in that it provides a thorough, interrelated means for identifying how all architectural parts of a building contribute to its particular modes of environmental engagement and experience. Though not all buildings can be interpreted via all portions of Thiis-Evensen's language (e.g., windows have typically become window-walls in modernist buildings), all buildings evoke some aspects of Thiis-Evensen's language. The language has practical design value in that it provides a heuristic means whereby architects can think about the kind of "fit" they envision between building and user experiences.

More generally, one can argue that Thiis-Evensen's hermeneutic language of archetypes is a helpful complement to Harries' natural symbols because Thiis-Evensen's focus on lived architectural qualities like insideness/outsideness and motion/weight/substance allows for a more precise identification of the multivalent resonance between architectural and experiential qualities, including the lived expression of natural symbols. For example, Harries broadly articulates the ways that windows evoke the natural symbol of insideness and outsideness, and Thiis-Evensen provides an interpretive means to understand the window's evocation more precisely. He explicates, for instance, how particular window features—the window's specific shape, the placement of its face, and elements of its frame—contribute to a particular wall experience that may fully connect a building's inside and outside or keep them dramatically apart. In the lifeworld and natural attitude, we are not reflectively aware of these architectural qualities; Harries and Thiis-Evensen's architectural languages bring them to our intellectual attention.

7 A Participatory Understanding

There are other significant works that illustrate a hermeneutic approach to architecture—for example, architect Christopher Alexander's efforts to delineate a holistic language of architecture (Alexander 2002–05), or architects Alban Janson and Florian Tigges' efforts to delineate a hermeneutical phenomenology of key architectural situations and experiences arranged topically (Janson and Tigges 2014). In this chapter, I have highlighted the work of Jones, Harries, and Thiis-Evensen because each thinker offers fresh, unusual insights that help others to see and understand architecture in new, surprising ways. In the last part of this chapter, I describe three progressively-intensive modes of understanding identified by philosopher Henri Bortoft (2012)—what he calls *appropriation*, *assimilation*, and *participatory understanding*. I draw on these three contrasting modes of understanding to suggest why some interpretations seem more discerning, robust, and in sync with a text than others (Seamon 2014). I end by evaluating the architectural interpretations of Jones, Harries, and Thiis-Evensen via these three modes of understanding.

How does Bortoft describe these three modes? In an *assimilation* mode, one encounters an unfamiliar text (e.g., a building one would like to better understand) and interprets it in terms familiar to the interpreter. The text is understood only in terms of what we already assume it to be. There is little possibility for a fresh, unexpected, or unusual “sighting” of the text, which is more or less what we thought it was before we began our interpretive effort. The interpretive opposite of assimilation is what Bortoft calls *participatory understanding*, whereby we accept that we may not know what the text is about, but we make an effort to be open and allow its potential meanings to work on us. We seek to be receptive to unsuspected sightings and recognitions. We no longer impose our meaning on the text; instead, it offers its meaning to us. “This is no longer a subject-centred experience,” Bortoft (2012, 106) explains, “but one in which the subject is transformed by the encounter with meaning instead of using it for her own purposes.” For Bortoft, participatory understanding is the mode of hermeneutic encounter founding perceptive, trustworthy interpretation and evoking a lived interpretive reciprocity between text and interpreter.

Bortoft’s third mode of encountering the text is what he calls *appropriation*, which refers to a way of interpreting whereby the interpreter recognizes the freshness or unusualness of the text but limits that uniqueness through a mode of understanding that only arises from and serves his or her own personal concerns. These concerns may or may not appropriately relate to the author’s original aims or to the potential meanings of the text. “In appropriation,” Bortoft writes (2012, 106), “the subject makes the meaning her own, without reducing it to what she already understands (which would be assimilation), but she does so only in a way that expands rather than transforms her understanding.” In this sense, the interpreter controls how the text’s meaning is to be used and thereby “understanding is under the control of the subject” (Bortoft 2012, 106).

Ultimately, the aim of a phenomenological hermeneutics is finding ways whereby the text can be given space to be as fully present as possible. This mode of encountering and understanding the text is Bortoft’s participatory understanding, which requires an interpretive reversal in which, rather than our participating in and appropriating the text’s meaning, that meaning participates in and appropriates us. Making reference to both Gadamer and Heidegger, Bortoft calls such moments of deepening textual encounter the “hermeneutic reversal” and writes:

Understanding that participates in meaning clearly goes beyond both assimilation and appropriation.... We do not understand in a vacuum. We always already understand, and it is this already-understanding that is “pulled up short” by the text and found to be inadequate.... In the event of understanding... it is not so much we who appropriate the meaning, but we ourselves who are appropriated by the meaning of the work. So we are participated by the meaning that we participate in—this is the hermeneutic reversal (Bortoft 2012, 106–07).

Bortoft emphasizes that these three modes of textual encounter always presuppose a lived continuum—that none of the three are “pure” but, hermeneutically, interpenetrate and shift as interpreters practice and hone their interpretive skills and sensibilities. In addition, different interpreters will discover different meanings that are “the work’s own possibilities of being that emerge as the work explicates itself, as it

were, in the variety of its aspects” (Gadamer 1989, 118; quoted in Bortoft 2012, 109). In this sense, there is no one legitimate interpretation but many, and this range of accurate understandings can be seen in the different but complementary architectural languages of Jones, Harries, and Thiis-Evensen. Jones’ approach to architectural meaning is much more related to appropriation in that he delimits his eleven-part heuristic outline as one way to envision and categorize a comprehensive hermeneutic of ritual-architectural events. As a scholar of comparative religion, Jones is primarily interested in an interpretive means for identifying and ordering the extraordinary range of sacred-architectural encounters, whether intended or accidental, supportive or skeptical. In contrast, the aim of Harries and Thiis-Evensen is to penetrate beneath the taken-for-granted sacred-architectural experiences and meanings that are Jones’ primary research interest. They work to locate a less visible architectural presence evoked by the buildings themselves. Both languages are revelatory in that they help us to break free from a formalist, historical, or critical approach for interpreting buildings and to discover visceral, sensuous architectural aspects to which we were oblivious before. In its heuristic complexity and interconnectedness, Thiis-Evensen’s archetypal language is the most perspicacious, offering a vibrant, innovative language for realizing in uncommon ways why particular architectural experiences and ambiances are as they are.

Ultimately, the architectural languages of Jones, Harries, and Thiis-Evensen are all provocative hermeneutical explications. They demonstrate the prolific interpretive possibilities that a text—in this case, architecture—offers. They demonstrate that, as with any hermeneutical project, the understanding of any text is multivalent, always underway, and never complete. The work of these three architectural thinkers is inspiring and motivates researchers to forge other innovative hermeneutic renditions of architectural expression, experience, and meaning.

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The Mental Life of the Metropolis

Alan Blum

Abstract In this paper I set out to socialize hermeneutics by viewing the social life of the city and of any collective as a struggle for control of the means of interpretation and I philosophize sociology by showing its ground as an interpretive art that must confound any algorithmic phantasy. Between the inevitable origin of inquiry in a hermeneutic gesture and its irresolute conclusion that must deny hermeneutic finality, social life offers for view and analysis an unending series of intended solutions to the problem of resolving ambiguity as an effort to dispose of the ‘remains’ or the connotative surplus that takes shape in many and varied adjustments. I begin with Louis Wirth’s question that asked “what is the urban way of life?” by echoing Max Weber’s answer that the city is essentially a marketplace. I then create a conversation on what is and what is not a marketplace by formulating a notion of market value as the grounds of such a world, organized around a disjunction between quantitative determination and the quality that remains inexpressible quantitatively (the ‘what’ and ‘who’ of those such as Arendt). I next argue that this disjunction creates inevitable anxiety that takes shape in the problem of self-worth at every level, in the form of what Lacan calls ‘sicknesses’ or adjustments to such problems. I imply further that the theatricality of the city in part is an exhibition of this spectacle of subjects attempting to perform self-transcendence in relation to the constraint of market value, by varied attempts to demonstrate quality in many and diverse ways. I then suggest Simmel’s blasé attitude as a necessary shape of socialization in such a quantitative regime, in ways organized around the project of socializing the blasé attitude by bringing subjects together.

In this paper I continue developing a sociological conception of urban life grounded in an interpretive and dialectical orientation to theorizing and its method by taking the Weberian cliché of the city as a marketplace as the point of departure for an

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analysis of the spirit of the city. I use Louis Wirth's query into the status of the urban way of life to open a conversation designed to grasp the urban imaginary as a discourse on inner isolation and ways and means of engaging it typically in affects such as resignation, longing, depression, resentment and anger. Continuing a line of inquiry developed over the years, I try to advance a narrative around the tension between privatization and the dream of sociable connection in the scene that is recurrently epitomized in the conception of the blasé attitude as an ambiguous locus of positive and negative affects. I show how this image of the city as a marketplace is amenable to Lacan's notion of the imaginary, symbolic and real registers of our relationships and I use this framework to explore the connection of the city to the problem of self-worth as a continuous problem-solving situation.

1 The City as a Marketplace

The sociological study of the city has three conceptual landmarks that I will use in this chapter to thread together an approach to theorizing the city. If this approach might be framed by the question that Louis Wirth posed that asked after urbanism as a way of life – just what is it and how might we make it observable? – Max Weber appeared (before this) to have introduced the apt response in his declaration that the city is fundamentally a marketplace. But this only defers the question by inviting us to ask what kind of life does a marketplace suggest? Georg Simmel seemed to have advanced this question by proposing that the way of life of the marketplace requires in some sense a conception of institutionalized impersonality or indifference that he named the blasé attitude. So, though these sociologists did not confront one another historically in a proper 'factual' chronological sequence, I will take the liberty of reconstructing their concerns as opening moves in a conversation on the city as a way of life, asking for the kind of work such questions can be seen to do in engaging the problem of the city as a spiritual association and a system of desire. Taking such liberties also allows me to dramatize the kind of methodological approach my colleagues and I have developed over time to study and research social phenomenon.

If we take our bearings from Max Weber's canonical pronouncement that the city is fundamentally a marketplace (1966), though endorsed frequently, the identification of the city as a site of consumption embodied in the paradigmatic notion of a transaction always remains to be developed. At its best as an interpretive art, sociology always asks, to what kind of typical social relationship does such a conception (or signifier) make reference, that is, what is the system of desire in which this kind of relationship is embodied, how can we develop an analysis of the imaginary of the market in relation to its spiritual objectives? In this sense, the sociologist Louis Wirth raised the question of how we might rethink the urban as a social relationship rather than as a site described by external characterizations that simply lists variables? The idea of the city as a marketplace could only give an external sense of urban life as if embodied in congeries of interactions as transactions, of emphases on buying and selling, on producing and consuming, on having and losing, until we

translate these contacts into courses of action. What could this mean? What we know as a start is that the fundamental emphasis on people and things in the marketplace focuses upon their value as quantities and that this requires a framework that can comprehend all relationships quantitatively. We also note that such an emphasis on quantities seems to demand a calculative attitude toward these persons and things in order to “size them up” in the idiom of Kenneth Burke, an attitude that identifies rationality with capacities for calculating quantities. We ask – what kind of life does one, conceived as an ideal speaker, inhabit under these conditions, what is it like to live and work through such associations? This is only a beginning.

2 Sociological Translation

The rudimentary lesson of the great sociological classics of Marx, Weber, Durkheim, and Simmel, was that concepts (universals) are courses of action oriented to an order (Weber 1947, 87–125) and so, embodied in practices, typically specified first perhaps as variables (or in the idiom of a simple signifier) and their external relationships and always needing to be translated into specific grammatical moves (relations to norms, a normative order) that is the surface or symptom of a problem-solving situation (See Hallward 2000 for an alternative but interesting version of these ‘levels’ of analysis from Foucault’s perspective). Thus, for example, population size is normative, specifying not just a quantity but a condition of relating to the numerical aspects of things that typifies the way as a means or method of investing practices with value, but value that is quantitative. On the one hand, population size is a relationship that can be meant in many ways (hence an assemblage of orientations and applications, a many) and on the other hand, population size must be bound together as a façade of the problem that its name evokes (the problem of relating to the quantitative element in any situation). This sociological conception suggests that every concept needs to be seen as an oriented course of action, both ideal (part of a grammar of action, in this case the hypothesized meaning of orienting to quantity, and material (embodied in practices, the many ways and means of doing this).

It is within such a context that in his classic essay (Wirth 1938) proposed identifying a quality of city life that he felt to be inadequately grasped by external representations of the city such as population size, GNP, congestion and the like, not for the reason that these conditions were unimportant, but because inflating their importance tended to gloss what he thought to be the essential dimension of the urban experience, an experience viewed in the first instance as the meaningful connection of a subject to an interpretive background (See especially Bonner 1990). That is, the quality of life must always make reference to a relationship. If population size is the paradigmatic index of the city, we would need to engage the question of what seems a sociological relationship to quantity?

Wirth wanted to translate such a characteristic rather than leave it as self-evident. Sociologically, a variable is the façade of a relationship to whatever it names, such as size, in ways that make the name an indicator and nothing more. Population size

just as the marketplace, are simply words that need to be invested with meaning to bring them to life, signifiers needing to be imagined as embodied in practices that reveal their character as oriented to value and idealization.

The condition such as size then is made to hypothesize the meaning of a relationship between subject and condition, as for example the size of a population in which a subject is immersed is seen as an orientation to quantity expressed in relationships such as the experience of magnitude in Kant's example of the sublime, or in practices that debate the formula of needs v. resources in privileging scarcity in administration, or in a propensity to honor the need for impersonality in bureaucracy, or problems of equity, equality, fairness in partitioning shares, and most important, inclinations to idealize the electoral imaginary or contest or poll, all cases of relating to oneself, other or the environment as quantities. Underlying these various ways of externalizing quantity is the question of what it means to treat oneself, the other and the environment in terms of quantities? Of course the best and obvious example of orienting to the world quantitatively besides the vote or popularity poll would be the market. In the market quality or particularity is standardized so as to make possible the comparison of unlike things, further enabling a method of evaluation and ranking. In making evaluation quantitative, the method enables assigning ranks and creating hierarchies that rest only on its criteria of conversion. Price is the criterion that enables such a conversion and pricing is based on a number of interpretations that are meant to create a hierarchy of worth. We could say that the relation to persons in such a world is fundamentally an actuarial one and we might confirm this by looking at profiles, biographies, obituaries, encomiums, and other kinds of testimonials. Productivity itself is basically an actuarial notion.

Translating quality into quantity affects the ways in which we engage our relationships and participate not only in groups of various size but in thinking of ways and means of comprehending our environment in terms of influences upon how we imagine our existence and its possibilities in relation to conflict, opportunity, probability, likelihood, equality and such. Simmel has shown this vividly in his discussions of the quantitative element of social life in analyses of division, partitioning, dyads, triads, and the numerical registers of collectives as part of what he calls 'The Quantitative Aspects of the Group' (Simmel 1950, 87–174). In Durkheim's sense, population size would be external and coercive and needing to be theorized as influential in various ways, affectively, effectively, imaginatively. This is what I want to take up, the possibility that the urban way of life is the regime of the quantitative and that this itself conceals a system of desire worth exploring, in fact the system glossed in Weber's cliché of the city as a marketplace.

3 The Imaginary of Market Value: Consuming, Producing and the Actuarial Dream

If we begin to formulate the city as a marketplace in terms of a Lacanian vernacular, we see that it imagines the value of productivity as grounded in quantitative criteria for determining and evaluating positions as ranks in such an order.

In this regime, acquisitions marking stages in life's way ('milestones' as they are called) are given value by being thought as goods. Any object of desire besides typical articles of consumption is a good, for example, friends, reputation, recognition, esteem, job, peace of mind. Any consideration of the quality of the city must contend with its embeddedness within a system of desire that is driven by the Ought whether appreciated or not and even "produces" the compelling sign of need that is essential to consumption as an anthropological phenomenon and to what we speak of as its language and to a conception of lack that such desire always requires as its background expectancy (see also Bonner 1998 on the "production paradigm").

Thus, if wanting and needing (goods) is itself produced by expectations, these expectations in turn produce systemic senses of lack and lacking that invariably lack mediation. In Lacan's sense of the lack lacking (Lacan 1981, ix), what is lacking is the mediation of reflection and a reflective relationship to the implicit code that authorizes an expectation that is lacking.

We shall come back to the differences between these various types of 'language': they have to do essentially with the mode of production of the values exchanged and the type of division of labor attaching to them... (Baudrillard 1998 (1970), 79)

That is, if the language of consumption is grounded in part in a vision of need and its replenishment, how are the values organizing such a mode of production sanctioned? Baudrillard wants to resist the notion that "needs" produce consumption rather than vice versa (as if the need for goods is a natural and spontaneous instance of desire instead of socially constructed and mimetic), because the production of needs is part of the language of consumption.

Thus, Baudrillard provides an important antidote even to those economists who identify cities as sites of intensified and innovative distribution, because, in distinction to their tendency to attribute innovation to technical increments in efficiency and the reconfiguration of methods (especially chapter 3), Baudrillard shows how the rhetorical power of any initiative always takes precedence in creating representations seen as up-to-date and superior to past ways, making it appear needed and imperative. This links to the historical conception of entrepreneurial activity and the effects of its 'revolutionary' rhetoric upon the system of desire because what is most revolutionary in such enterprise is its redefinition of need that invariably leads to the colonization of the psyche. Thus, there is an essential difference between the apparent object that is typified as productivity and the enigmatic 'productivity' of the symbolic order that makes possible and enforceable any intelligible sense of expectation. Acquisitions become seen as goods of value when they are treated as necessities. As an apparatus market value makes incidentals seem needed and so, objects

of value. This of course is related to a discussion Braudel initiated long ago on how necessities are re imagined as luxuries and how the luxurious (whether incidental or not) is made into a luxury (Braudel) as the “I must have this!” phenomenon designating the imperative need.

In this way we must begin to appreciate the ground of market value, the decisive character of which is typically located in the multitude of preferences and the dilemmas of choice they release on three levels: first, the choice “within” consumers between what they acquire and what the acquisition excludes (the case of two different items on a menu, two different majors from which to select in university); secondly, the choice constrained by scarcity typified by the assignment of different priorities in a budget (not really different than the menu); and finally the competition released by the preceding two conditions when different actors with the same preferences who choose to acquire the same good are limited by its scarcity to a zero-sum adversarial situation. The constant in the face of such emphases is the notion of the value (not of the good but) of preference itself and the need and desire that licenses its good (rather than the good of any particular good). After Hegel’s discussion of the “system of needs” (Hegel 1971) Baudrillard makes it possible for us to interrogate the imperativeness of need and desire as a condition of market value, that is, the value of the appliance is not simply given by the aggregate of preferences (purchases) it attracts, but by the standard saying that the value of something is equivalent to whatever the many decide (in whatever ways) to be valuable. Market value rests upon a numerical notion of value because the market notion of value determines itself as a legitimate order. This is what Heidegger means by the ‘they’, that is, the way the generalized other is embodied in the psyche of Dasein (Heidegger 1962, 163ff).

The focus of market value on conflicts between choice and scarcity, or between any one’s choice and the choice of the other, always masks the actor’s desire to maximize satisfaction through the choice in a way which must both presuppose and exclude a critique of satisfaction. In this way, market value depends upon the indispensability of what it excludes (what deconstruction calls “reversal”), that is, the assumption that the good is Good. Further, the status of a critique of satisfaction itself depends upon the ambiguity of the distinction between true and false satisfaction, always participating in a reflection upon the truth or spuriousness of what is needed and desired (what deconstruction calls “displacement”), that is, that choosing according to need is *eo ipso* Good.

4 The Symbolic Order: Criteria of Social Selection

All typical struggles and modes of competition which take place on a large scale will lead, in the long run, despite the decisive importance in many individual cases of accidental factors and luck, to a selection of those who in a higher degree, on the average, possessed the personal qualities important to success. What qualities are important depends on the conditions in which the conflict or competition takes place. It may be a matter of physical strength or of unscrupulous cunning, of the level of mental ability or mere lung power and skill in the technique of demagoguery, of loyalty to superiors or of ability to flatter the masses, or

creative originality, or of adaptability, of qualities which are unusual, or of those which are possessed by the mediocre majority (Weber 1947, 133).

Implicitly the qualities that are approved and the determination of those who possess them not only depend upon the conditions of competition and conflict, but as Weber makes clear, such conditions express conflicts of interpretation that themselves depend upon conceptions of what is important, what is essential to success or indeed, what is constitutive of success. Deeply, such conditions depend upon interpretations of what is admirable and what is worth valuing, in a way that makes evaluation essential to the social order. What is most important for our purpose is that the results of social selection are in no way correlative with quality but are determined in ways that make them essentially incidental, that the rank order designed to produce differences in quality can only produce collisions over the question of significance itself and so a permanent instability aroused by the question of the relation of self-worth to incidentals. This impasse materializes as the class system.

In this remarkable passage, Weber joins philosophy and sociology, socializes philosophy and philosophizes sociology, by showing social life not only to be a struggle for existence but a struggle for meaning, for interpretive control over the means of determining the meaning of life. Further, that this statement occurs in the section on competition suggests not only that the struggle for interpretive control can be regulated by procedures such as competition, but that such procedures themselves are impregnated with value since social selection itself, no matter how procedurally just, must beg the question of the desirability of that which it is evaluating in a way that always leaves a space for us to question its problematic character in that sense.

Though not usually read in this way, Weber's fragment exposes the problem of market value endemic to normative order and thus, the intrinsically evaluative character of social organization. If any and every system rests on interpretation (compare physical strength vs. intelligence), it also rests upon a basic equality which is interrupted by the rule of interpretation. Without reference to Weber, Jacques Rancière develops the opportunity for dialogue in this space. In the idiom of Rancière, we could say that market value stands for the rule and its limit, that is, the normative order. The normative order that produces stratification, has to conceal through the force of its normativity, the "ultimate equality on which any social order rests" (Rancière 2009) by glossing the ways in which equal beings must be assumed as orienting to the "order and (to) be governed thereby in its course (Weber 1947)." Because the caprice by which a system is grounded (even if systematic and rationalized as a legitimate order in some doctrine or "code") must "produce" a division between those ranked differently, that is, must wrong those whose lack of value is sanctioned by its ruling interpretation, its "interruption" of this equality makes reference to the fundamental contingency of social life. Prior to interpretation, we are equal! Yet inequality is only possible first, because of the "ultimate" equality of speaking beings who can be assumed to relate to one another, and secondly, because such equality must be suspended or deferred to submit to the inequality sanctioned

by the rule of the normative order. The inequality of any social order (which is fundamental and invariable) rests on the equality of oriented actors (ultimate and inescapable) which, though interrupted by the rule of interpretation, “gnaws away” or haunts the social order as the ghost (trace) of ultimate contingency: “The wrong by which politics occurs is not some flaw calling for reparation. It is the introduction of an incommensurable at the heart of the distribution of speaking bodies” (Rancière 2009, 19). If any and every social order “produces” the unranked and outvoted (produces stratification), this cannot be a judgment on the wickedness of social order but rather, a recognition of the basic indeterminacy which lies at the heart of social life. This basic indeterminacy or “ultimate contingency” that takes shape in the tension between equality and inequality, is the sign of the incommensurable as it is registered in the ongoing struggle over the means of interpretation in collective life. Market value permits us to begin to appreciate the economy of the city as a normative order and the relation of culture to commerce as posing the problem of justice. For our interest, this problem appears in a number of guises when the incommensurability at the heart of social life creates interpretive conflicts with respect to different courses of action in relation to deciding the sovereignty of collective purpose. Incommensurability makes reference to the uncounted part or the division in the human actor, revealing any action as essentially unfinished business, always leaving a remainder. This is what Lacan seeks to capture in the figure of the “hole” in the symbolic order.

The normative order of social life (including the market value that it sanctions) ‘produces’ mysteries (in the idiom of Kenneth Burke) that can only be resolved in a ritual structure that assigns hierarchic value to distinctions as if emblems of sovereignty and property that determine and exclude by virtue of the ranking it authorizes. The market ‘produces’ the problem of justice as the irresolute unfinished business of any social order by ‘producing’ qualification and its lack in any and every particular case, an excess that its promise must leave unrealized as a feature interior to the ambiguity of any action.

Market value is then a figure of speech for any notion resting upon ungrounded authority, that is, for any and every conception of normative order. It is not that a specific citation of market value is wrong in the sense that what it assigns value to is incorrect in some empirical sense (the washing machine or automobile does have value as authorized by the standard), but rather, that market value perpetuates a “wrong” through its intimation that the authority of any system is natural or grounded in a way that is closed to question. Because social order is an interpretive order, it invariably must rank and evaluate in ways that are both hierarchic and self-confirming, that is, it must always dispossess those without “its” qualities (those who lack the relevant quality essentially lack the good). The symbolic order (any symbolic order) insofar as it is essentially normative and evaluative, guarantees that there will be an inevitable disjunction between its determination of value and the quality of value which it must reduce. This collision between quantity and quality makes the Real an ongoing landscape of interpretive conflicts and the site of a diverse array of demonstrations of quality.

5 The Real: Effects of Market Value

If we have succeeded in being somewhat convincing that an actuarial imaginary emphasis on productivity captures the subject of urban life in ways that require articulation in terms of criteria of social selection that are, in Durkheim's sense, external and coercive as a rule governed apparatus, we also must recognize that the 'hole' in this machine must make possible continuous and contentions ethical collisions that mark its Real life effects. That is, the problematic nature of the conventions of market value as determinations necessarily show their oriented character as conventions that could be otherwise by virtue of being oriented objects. Thus, if the actuarial imaginary equates productivity with self-worth, the fundamental ambiguity of criteria of social selection can and do make every rank, outcome and achievement (and reputation) open to question if taken up. If Real life is nothing other than the recurrent, necessary and inevitable collision over such questions, such a persistent impasse comes to view most dramatically in the city around the problem of self-worth. This problem does not only come to view in the relationship of urban togetherness to apartness between persons as bodies and souls in the city, but dramatically 'within' the person as Baudelaire and Simmel suggest, as the disconnected imaginary struggles to put itself together. And yet again, the same struggle is recognized in the tension between success and failure endemic to market value and the anxieties circulating around this judgment.

Durkheim's conception of anomie is a sociological translation of the Oedipal vision of a relentless emphasis on productivity that is designed to solve the problem of acquisition by achievements that create new strivings and unfulfilled desire that can only leave remains by stimulating anew endless aspirations. There is no limit to productivity for it is measured only by a compensatory incentive. Here, Weber's conception of the withdrawal of the reassurance of Salvation inaugurated by ascetic Protestantism resonates with the idea of the absence of the (so-called) transcendental in Girard's sacrificial crisis and Nietzsche's notion of the groundlessness of Being. Weber tells us that in the absence of such support, when as Lacan says Other does not answer, we drive ourselves to become absorbed in worldly preoccupations such as the frenetic activities of business.

Max Weber's classic statement of this rule of social selection still frames market value as a social phenomenon, that is, as the problem of class (by "making" those who are nothing by virtue of being unranked or outvoted), and more than this, by creating the problem of self-worth for those at the top or bottom of the social order. If those at the bottom always have less, those at the top always need more: everyone is united by the disjunction between quantitative determination and the quality that exceeds this and remains invisible except to the beholder. Urban life then becomes an arena for the constant demonstration of quality in performances that constitute an immense and varied spectacle of eccentricities. The reputed magnitude, scale, and vastness of urban life can be understood as the way the aura of quantity forces itself upon the subject who comes to treat oneself as small or an incidental in relation to the immensity and significance of what is inexhaustible (the seemingly infinite

capacity for qualification). Quantitatively, life's continuation and promise to be inexhaustible can be uplifting and/or force upon its subject a sense of being an exhausted and finite incidental in relation to the eternal march of time.

Here, the question is posed as dramatically raised in the city of how we establish a good relationship to goods or how (in the idiom of Plato) we develop a relation to goods and their distracting temptation that is fair and Good? If the city dramatizes this ethical collision, it also gives us pause and incentive to reflect upon this relationship. How do we develop a Good relationship to the anomic frenzy of the city and the governance of incidentals that materializes as the Real of market value in the figure of self-worth and its fundamental inequality in way that are moderate and not extremist? How do we deal with the city and its incidentals in ways that neither embrace nor repudiate the rule of market value but put it in its place by relaying its grounds? Is escape to the country our only path open or can we administer jouissance healthfully in the city?

6 The Blasé Attitude as Defense Against Quantification

In this sense, the paradigmatic urban relationship might range from the kind of contact theorized in Simmel's blasé attitude (Simmel 1971, 324–340) to a number of other affective modes. Typically, it appeared that the blasé attitude was identified as a way of surviving an environment in which the quantitative rule of the transaction as a model of social contact was privileged as an ideal that demanded a degree of impersonality in order to manage the fluctuations in mood and affect produced by its methodology and criteria of social selection and evaluation.

Yet to accept Simmel's solution, though an advance over the mere specification of variables, risks treating depersonalization as the *sine qua non* of urban life. Further, any interpretation such as this, even as an 'advance' over the untheorized inventory of variables, has to formulate the specific relation it identifies as a solution to a problem that it can imagine and as one expression of a discourse. So for example, the conception of the blasé attitude as paradigmatic still leaves a remainder, inviting us to ask after the work it does (the blasé attitude) in handling a problem of social life. Simmel seems to say: it is the density and anonymity of urban life and the pace that it produces among heterogeneous folk who are likely to be different and unknown to one another that makes the orientation he calls blasé adequate armour in such a situation. This might be Simmel's formulation of the problem. In other words, the blasé attitude is a defense against the frustration, aggression, resentment and longing aroused by living in an irrational environment and having to suffer inner isolation as an experience of its topsy-turvy affects (See my detailed discussion of the blasé attitude as a mechanism of socialization in the city in connection with his conception of the adventure and Goffman's notion of action and character in Blum 2003, 262–294).

Given this vision, the 'real' problem of the city might demand the continuous probe of the question of how to convert such a population into a mutually oriented

association of social actors bound together in some common jurisdiction and facing certain tasks to which they each and all must attend, and more fundamentally, how to compose oneself under such conditions?

The formulation then causes us to imagine how the blasé attitude might be worked through in life as the struggle of an ideal speaker. As an interpretation then, the conception of the blasé attitude or of any quintessential urban social relationship is something like a heuristic (not algorithmic) provocation that invites us to inquire further into the discursive terrain. In this way, we are invited to treat the blasé attitude as an opener for asking after its possibility in an effort to relay its grounds.

There has been limited effort to counteract the idea of the blasé attitude as the paradigm of urban disaffection. In her research (2010), Elke Grenzer resisted the conventions of equating the blasé attitude with a privative notion of alienation by seeing the method in its practice as oriented action from Simmel's description

One must meet the difficulty of asserting his own personality within the dimensions of modern life. Where the quantitative increase in importance and the expense of energy reach its limits, one seizes upon qualitative differentiation in order to somehow attract the attention of the social circle by playing upon its sensitivity to differences...man is tempted to adopt the most tendentious peculiarities, that is the specifically metropolitan extravagances of mannerism, caprice and preciousness. Now the meaning of these extravagances does not at all lie in the contents of such behavior, but rather in its form of "being different", of standing out in a striking manner and thereby attracting attention (Wolff, 420–421)

In other words, the medium (differentiation) is the method and not the content (wearing something outlandish) and Baudrillard has developed this approach in his work on consumption and the marketplace (Baudrillard 1998). Simmel proposes of this attitude its character "as a drive to introduce quality into quantity (because)... the city dweller must renew herself in a way that differentiates him/her from the forces which threaten to reduce him/her to the more general influences of production and commercialization" (Grenzer, 131). She suggests that the dissociation typically attributed to the blasé attitude as deficiency is actually in Simmel's terms a mode of socialization that empowers the person's negotiation of particularity. Rather than showing an immunity to expressiveness, the blasé attitude is a mask of subjectivity that drives to express itself, often in ways seeming peculiar or eccentric, but as a manner and methodology of self-presentation within a context in which quantification has threatened to diminish singularity.

The ambiguity of the blasé attitude is exposed as an impasse that occupies an important place in social life and in the environment of the city, pointing as it does to the possibility of being aesthetic in relation to the rule of the quantitative, but artful in ways that are more than compensatory. The stakes are important here for the ethical collision invariably becomes an occasion that can follow different paths. The suggestion that the reflective component of the blasé attitude is performative at its core in its desire to suspend itself from what conditions it (Grenzer, 133) poses the question of how the art of self-expression can be anything strong in an environment ruled by quantity and how this might occur in action that performs as-if it is other than determined by conditions? Such performance must aim in Walter Benjamin's sense to show itself as other than a 'scarecrow of determinism' (Benjamin 1996).

7 The Impasse: The Problem of Self-Worth

In working through the notion of the marketplace and its imaginary, symbolic and Real registers, we must confront the necessity of engaging the impasse of self-worth that is generated by the rule of market value and its imposition of quantitative determination and related demands upon a subject who must always experience a diminution of quality as invariable, inevitable, and irresolute. Here, the experience of inequality marks all as subject to suffering the question of self-worth. This question prevails because of the quantitative regime that cannot give a conclusive answer to the question of whether one is Good by virtue of acquiring goods, and how one *is* (really) over and above externals (see Lear's complaint in Blum 2012).

In other words, life is a problem-solving endeavor and self-transcendence as the problem, is both necessary and desirable, but can cause us happiness and sorrow (Blum 2014a). The task of administering excess or *jouissance* is essential and the problem is that this occurs in the space of the evacuation of the security of Other (who does not answer) and so in the absence of any quantifiable criteria that can resolve ambiguity in ways incorrigible and indubitable. But the need for this simply shows how the imaginary is ruled by the spell of quantity, confirming the need for resistance to this as a basis of desire. The most fundamental experience of loss and the need for its acquisition are the figures of Oedipus (acquisition, dispossession) and Anomie (lack of finality), but both seem to presuppose a longing for exact determination that is experienced as lost as if a quantitative solution to the quality of life is both a lack and a possibility. This 'lack' could derive from the aspiration of subjectivity for a calculative and determinate end to ambiguity which is what Freud might have meant by Nirvana as the end of qualitative ambiguity, and his reason for proposing the experience of such a 'lack' as itself lacking in relation to a beyond to the pleasure principle that needs to rekindle eros and its vitality by stirring up the pot through self-transcendence that is bound to be unruly.

8 Imagination as Self-Transcendence

I want to show how Simmel develops a particular notion of imagination as one creative path towards reflectively engaging the quantitative regime of urban life (Simmel 2012, 15) by starting with Benjamin's quote from Baudelaire.

Imagination is not fantasy...imagination is an almost divine faculty which perceives....the intimate and secret relations of things, the correspondences and the analogies (Benjamin 1999, Arcades, 285).

If thinking is in some such sense an adventure and not preordained as if the application of a rule, but more like musical improvisation, we might appreciate its connection to chance, and by virtue of this, to constraint, commonplaces, finite conditions and to an adventurousness that tries to create surprises and unsettling reconnections among distinctions that have been settled and deposited as secure. Real thinking

begins to mark human desire as in part the aspiration to wrestle free of banality. But in this desire, thinking always risks treading a line between creativity and madness. In this way, imagination is part of life in Simmel's sense and at the same time a move to make life more, to move beyond as more than life, to amplify and embellish life and so to exceed life from within life. This two-sided character of imagination, its ordinary roots and extra-ordinary inclination, is the mark of desire and its ambiguity.

What Baudelaire here calls imagination is what Simmel says marks, in part, the self-transcending character of human desire, rooted in life as it must be and aspiring to reach beyond for what he calls 'more than life'. Simmel treats this 'dualism' as he calls it as automated to a degree, not simply in the way conformity is reputed to be, but as excess itself. That is, the desire in life for more than life is a kind of habituated human propensity making excess itself and its management part of normal life, what Durkheim might call a normal social fact. This is important because excess is not an aberration or infraction but an expression of life as a function of self-transcendence (5) in that "having boundaries is unconditional but their permeability is also unconditional." Vivian Gornick is apt here.

I stare into the faces of the people I see daily on the street and address them silently

"Hey you people...did you hear..? The city is doomed, the middle class has deserted New York, the corporations are in Texas, Jersey, Taiwan. ..its all over. How come you're still on the street?"

New York isn't jobs, they reply, its temperament. Most people are in New York because they need evidence---in large quantities---of human expressiveness; and they need it not now and then, but every day. That is what they *need*. Those who go off to the manageable cities can do without; those who come to New York cannot (Gornick 2015, 173).

Excess as the mark of a subject whose desire to objectify is fixed, invests self-transcendence with an aura of both externality (its objectifications) and internality (its relationships) because the subject is driven to objectify as an aspect of this movement of spirit. This relationship between form and life in Simmel parallels Lacan's conception of the relation of metaphor to metonym and more exactly, of the movement of spirit as basically topological. Though the automation of self-transcendence seems different than the automatism of the body and what Simmel calls 'purposiveness' that must be 'broken through' to achieve freedom, it still seems to have a recurrence and regularity as the desire for objectification (51). In these ways self-transcendence as an almost habituated movement of spirit can include besides art and eros which are his favorite examples, and theorizing, any and all sort of adaptations or attempts to animate constraints, conditions, and mundane commonplaces. Thus, Baudelaire's construal of imagination can provide for Simmel's link of self-transcendence to excess in the idiom of Durkheim, as a normal social fact that enables us to begin to conceive of the administration of *jouissance* as a fundamental problem for the human being because the problem of administering *jouissance* is in part the problem of coming-to-terms with self-transcendence (aka imagination) and its excess (turbulence).

At his point, the distinction between life and more than life comes to view in the relation of the city to poetry, of the relation of the crowd of bodies in the city to the

crowd of words in language. If in this sense, the crowd stands for life and poetry for more than life, we can make sense of Baudelaire's desire to create a poetic prose that could imitate in its way the rhythm and movement of mental life under the spell of the crowd (of shocks of consciousness, dreaming, and the undercurrents), a prose that could reproduce such movement in its own distinctive way.

9 The Scene as the Adventure of Place in the City

In this chapter I have constructed a story on the sociological relationship to the city that has gone through several stages that identify the blasé attitude formulated by Simmel as a primary mode of adaptation to the irrational rule of quantity in the city. I now need to show how the city also functions as a work site for engaging such a pervasive form of adjustment. An example from Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* is pertinent here.

Virginia Woolf who in some places criticizes the focus of market value on incidentals rather than essentials herself provides an example, starting with a most 'incidental' aspect of urban life, the desire to host a party. In this way, she seems to rebuild the relationship to incidentals demanded of market value. As her character Mrs. Dalloway muses in comparing her apparently innocuous desire for party-giving to grand themes such as love, against accusations that she imagines from two male friends who say that her dedication to giving parties was simply childish or shallow. Here the character tries to invest the greatest of incidentals with a degree of life.

Well, how was she going to defend herself?...They thought...that she enjoyed imposing herself; liked to have famous people about her; great names; was simply a snob in short.... And both were quite wrong. What she liked was simply life. "That's what I do it for," she said, speaking aloud, to life.... "But suppose Peter said to her," Yes, yes, but your parties—what's the sense of your parties?" all she could say (and nobody could be expected to understand): They're an offering; which sounded horribly vague. But who was Peter to make out that life was always plain sailing?... But could any man understand what she meant either? about life?... She could not imagine Peter...taking the trouble to give a party for no reason whatsoever. But to go deeper.... what did it mean to her, this thing she called life? Oh it was very queer. Here was So-and-so in South Kensington; someone up in Bayeswater; and someone else, say in Mayfair. And she felt continuously a sense of their existence; and she felt what a waste; and she felt what a pity; and she felt if only they could be brought together; so she did it; And it was an offering; to combine, to create; but to whom? An offering for the sake of offering, perhaps. Anyhow, it was her gift (Mrs. Dalloway, Harcourt Brace, 118–119).

The imaginary of such party-giving: at first, seeming an offering or gift designed to bring together differences, now leads us to appreciate a discourse around the relation of anonymity to intimacy (Blum 2014c, 2015, 2016) a typical gesture of urban life revealing the desire to overcome the blasé attitude by gathering those who live separately as a way of showing us the elementary force of the scene or social formation that must haunt the city as an imaginary promise and possibility (Janz 2009). Note

that the party that the hostess wants to give can be grasped as analogous to any scene or project initiated in urban life, standing in this way for the desire towards communalization under such conditions.

Thus, if the problem of the city is the continuous need to challenge separation (in space, time) of individuals by overcoming their indifference and privatization, the desire to give a party, to break through the blasé attitude with a spirit of hospitality to differences, marks the city as a site of this dialectic, around the un-lived life, the missed opportunity, the possibility just around the corner, the adventure in Simmel's sense (Simmel 1971, 187–1999; also Blum 2003, 174–175 for a formulation; Janz 2009).

As a gift, the hostess makes an offering to break through the cycle of exchange between contractually isolated individuals. Woolf (1925) shows how the gift for overcoming the alien condition of language itself requires in turn the gift of an art, of a degree of inspiration, of a capacity for telling a story that might break through the externalization of the variable and the normative order of the social script, not by rebuttal but by exposing the ambiguity that resides at its core. The party is a provocation, an attempt to create an adventure. Thus, if the urban way of life is a lost object for Wirth and for all of us because of its impossible essentialistic aura, we see that this loss is present in the city too as a continuous imagined object of desire that actually gives life to our actions in their most innocuous and routinized signs. If the city seems ruled in this way by an Oedipal anomic imaginary governed by the fear of loss and the hope of acquisition, it can still always make possible the imaginary of the scene as the quintessential urban social bond and the work of creating and maintaining it as the adventure par excellence.

This leads us to see affect itself as energy that needs to be supplemented by a sense of enhancement or as adding value. Thus the potential for *jouissance* is part of the commitment to the quality of things concealed in the distribution of the sensible (in the way I suggested that spices add value to what needs such enhancement or elaboration). Here, we make reference to the drive of party-giving for Mrs. Dalloway not as superficial but as the embellishment that can add value. The party is her conception of the aesthetic relation to things and their quality, where this kind of sociability seems to her an incipient opportunity for community building, making reference to the irresistible drive in the aesthetics of sociation to modify or reinvent the mundanity of urban life, to elaborate its value as more than a graveyard inhabited by those who might only see themselves as incidentals. In this way we account for the promise of the scene as an adventure of city life and the place that always can seem to bring the many together through creation of a common bond. It is in the city that we see the encouragement of disengagement in a way that is not simply alienated but also aesthetic, where the so-called blasé attitude becomes a resource for solitude and creativity. That is, the blasé attitude is as much a staple of aesthetic disengagement and pleasure as it is a source of inner isolation and self-destruction (See Grenzer 2010, 129–134 for an analysis).

The spectacle of the fluctuating movement of incidentals that fascinates the public, the coming and going of trends and tendencies as if unprecedented, does not diminish the desire for form and its persistence and necessity, for example, the

interest in the form of a relationship to this movement per se. The idea of form, not intransigent toward incidentals, also resists indifference towards reflecting upon essentials, occupying the middle or in-between position that requires dialectically exploring their mixture and co-relation. In this chapter I have asked after the relationship to incidentals as one way of grasping the form of the social relationship in the city as a conversation piqued by the tension imagined between anonymity and intimacy and the ways and means of rescuing the social from extreme configurations of this exchange (Blum 2014c, 2015). I have implicitly laid ground for an elementary version of urban form as an incipient formulation of place and the scene as material images of the adventure of city life, as a creative way of engaging the anonymity of the city as fertile rather than inescapably moribund.

The street keeps moving, and you've got to love the movement. You've got to find the composition of the rhythm, lift the story from the motion, understand and not regret that the power of narrative drive is fragile, though infinite. Civilization is breaking up? The city is deranged? The century surreal? Move faster. Find the story line more quickly. (Gornick 2015, 93)

10 Imagination as a Grey Zone: Mental Health in the Metropolis

The consequences of this approach for rethinking problems connected to the mental health (so-called) of the city are worth considering from a hermeneutic perspective, that invites the kind of interpretive framework we are developing here rather than alienated rankings of 'big data' based on psychiatric readings of symptoms from survey responses. Let me offer some paths to explore (for more on this, see Blum 2011).

Lacan says of the human that he/she: "hasn't come to terms with death but invents marvelous gimmicks in the form of sicknesses he himself fabricates" (275). To translate: death refers to a recognition of one's limits which are foreclosed or disavowed in a quantitative regime that absorbs us in the present imaginary trajectory that envisions acquisition and fortification against loss as primary demands. Death then suggests that sensitivity to our limits enables us to see the essential irresolute and unfulfillable character of these desires and the need to live with this ambiguity. The 'gimmicks' become ways of looking away from such limitation and adapting and acting out otherwise.

The sicknesses are the results of various adaptations to the actuarial imaginary and the systemic disjunction between quantity and quality that produces conundrums over the question of self-worth and fantasies of lack and needs for constant demonstrations of quality that produce the clamorous spectacle of urban eccentricity and its aspirations and resentments. It is not that finitude is a fallen state as if it is a loss of infinity (as in tragedy) because what is meant is that excess in relation to finitude is a normal social fact (see Simmel) and a parameter of the human condition. It is this contradiction, the desire to exceed what we are, that produces postures, adaptations (neurosis, perversion, psychosis, as well as anomie and its shapes) that are 'gimmicks' and sicknesses, becoming symptoms to manage. The

administration of *jouissance* comes from the limits of the *jouissance* of administration insofar as what must be managed or administered is this tendency to overstep boundaries, to jump over our shadow, to exceed in relation to our conditions. This tendency is what is automated rather than conformist regulation by rules, the tendency to try to exceed in-itself. The contradiction here is not between same and other, original and images, etc. but is integral to *phronesis* itself as a tendency to exceed (Bonner 2001).

Note in contrast to conventional ideas, the Good here is not moderation per se as if excess is bad, but a moderate relationship to excess and to self-transcendence. That is, excess is a normal social fact and we search for a mean that can balance temptations towards neurosis (addictive, bourgeoisie) and perversion and psychosis. Desire is an inclination towards excess that can be reflected in moderate activity that is healthy or in abstraction, even knowledge, and various other adaptations. The deathlessness of the human confirms the continuity of such desire that everlastingly seeks to make over and exceed what is in place, disclosing the lure of excess as a kind of illness or that can lead to illness. Although constant this desire is inflicted upon the human in the form of the impact of the unconscious, making the resulting stigma particular and (in masking its continuity) also universal. The model of addiction says that this automated relation in Simmelian is to life and more than life and that this drive has to be relieved through displacement in the symptom. It is the symptom that is the comic mask of the human as being everlastingly ill.

Social life then seems a carnivalesque array of symptomatic adjustments to the enigmatic and perplexing character of mortality, the sicknesses residing in the necessity of their function as equipment for living and their common need to hallucinate the present as if eternal and their moment as if memorable in diverse ways (Blum 2014b). Social life as a tapestry of diverse adaptations that tries to deal with the problem of mortality offers a great spectacle of problem-solving in which humans work to develop inventive and improvisational relations to a machine that seems to provide no avenue of escape from automation. This is how Lacan can tie together *jouissance* and fantasy since commitment to the present can only occur through an addictive belief in its consequentiality that must lie about mortality in order to 'be real'. It is this belief and its normal necessity that marks self-transcendence as important equipment for living and also as an antidote (dangerous supplement in Derrida) that can be poisonous. It is from this position that I would like to reengage the problem of mental health in the metropolis.

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The Hermeneutics of the Urban Spatial Sociologies of Simmel, Benjamin and Lefebvre

Andy Zieleniec

Abstract Sociology as a discipline has a long history of hermeneutic approaches to understanding the complexity of interpreting meanings and actions. However, there is less emphasis on the contribution of sociologists to theories of space and spatial theories. Social life takes place and is shaped and moulded not only by actions but the meanings and values that are attached through everyday life and practice in, through and to space. This chapter will provide a discursive introduction to the works of three seminal sociologists whose theories and analysis explicitly address the spatial dimensions of social interaction, of socio-spatial formations, of the impact and influence of the social production of space. That is, the works of Georg Simmel (the first ‘sociologist of space’), of Walter Benjamin (social and cultural critic of the city of modernity) and of Henri Lefebvre (the major influence in the spatial turn of the social sciences). Whilst I do not claim that any or all of these theorists would have identified themselves with an explicitly hermeneutic approach, philosophy or method a hermeneutic analysis can be applied to their works to elucidate the practical application of their insights and perspectives. Why taking space seriously is not only important for the social and human sciences but also why understanding space is an essential element of hermeneutic practice. Each of these theorists has an explicit focus on the city and the urban which can be treated hermeneutically as a text-analogue. That is, from the social, cultural and historical context in which we are situated we can seek to interpret and understand these theorists of space and spatial theories to analyse and explain the similarities and differences, the continuities and contrasts with our own urban times, experiences, spaces and places.

There is a long history of hermeneutic approaches and perspectives within sociology. For example, Max Weber is associated with the application of ‘meaningful understanding’ (*Verstehen*) as a means to distinguish between observed actions and the meanings and values that underpin subjective behaviour, to interpret the intentionality and context of actions. He sought to establish sociology as “a science which attempts the interpretive understanding of social action in order thereby to

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arrive at a causal explanation of its course and effects” (Weber 1947, 88). This hermeneutic tradition was further explored and expanded by amongst others Alfred Schutz (1967), Peter Winch (1958) and Zygmunt Bauman (1978), the latter famously claiming that sociologists should be interpreters and not legislators.

However, for the purposes of this chapter I will refer to some foundational theorists, concepts, definitions and arguments in hermeneutic theory to illuminate how and in what ways Georg Simmel, Walter Benjamin and Henri Lefebvre can be said to embed hermeneutics within their theories of space. That is, it will be demonstrated that for each theorist, space needs to be understood by interpretation of its impacts, effects and consequences on subjective experience within the social, political economic and historical context of the city and the urban space. It is not for me here to provide a critical review of hermeneutic theory (see Ramberg et al. 2014; Vollmer and Droysen 1998) Nor do I wish to engage with the various arguments surrounding the disagreements associated with each (see for example Mendelson 1979; Ricoeur 1981; Harrington 2000; Negru 2007; Roberge 2011) My intention is to highlight how the various definitions, concepts and uses of hermeneutics can be applied to Simmel, Benjamin and Lefebvre as a means to introduce, discuss and elaborate on the inherent, implicit if not explicit, hermeneutical elements in their spatial sociology.

The original meaning, focus and use of hermeneutics was in its application for the translation, interpretation, understanding and contextualisation of ancient, historical, particularly biblical texts which were often fragmentary, incomplete and confusing due to age and/or their origins as historical documents from societies and cultures very different from those who seek to understand them. However, hermeneutics has been expanded to become a “broader endeavour: that of discovering or uncovering the meanings of all human artefacts and actions” (Anderson et al. 1986, 65) Thus anything that is the product of human creativity whether it is an organisation, a culture, or in this case the city, the urban, and space. Similarly, if hermeneutics can be described as the science and art of interpretation then as Taylor states: “Interpretation, in the sense relevant to hermeneutics, is an attempt to make clear, to make sense of an object of study. This object must, therefore, be a text, or a text-analogue, which in some way is confused, incomplete, cloudy, seemingly contradictory – in one way or another, unclear. The interpretation aims to bring to light an underlying coherence or sense’. (1976, 153) For sociology, the focus for investigation of human creativity, the practice and effects of social interaction at various scales, levels and scope is particularly wide: “Sociological hermeneutics recognises that the world as an object of investigation is in fact a globality made up of countless numbers of worlds, cultures and communities which as a result of the historical processes to date appear to each other as at once familiar but also fascinatingly ‘other’.” (Stones 2007, 372)

However, as a foundation for the hermeneutic analysis that follows a brief excursus is required. Dilthey (1989, 1996, 2002) sought to distance the human sciences from the methods of the natural sciences and viewed historical studies and the social sciences as rooted in the attempt to understand events within their specific contexts. That is, to interpret how actors’ subjective meanings affect social action within the

historical conditions in which they occurred and how this impacts on social development. Hermeneutics was for Dilthey fundamental for understanding how the creative nature of human life invests meaning in social institutions, practices and artefacts. The role of the interpreter was to try and identify with the author/creator of the text to attempt to understand the original intended meaning within the context in which it was produced. Thus hermeneutics is a means to provide understanding in everyday life in which the taken for granted familiarity of our experience and our lived world is contrasted with the potential for comprehending the strange, the different and the other as they appear to us in 'texts'.

Gadamer (1976, 1989) however was more concerned with establishing hermeneutics as a tool of understanding in general, as part and parcel of human experience rather than the institution of a philosophical method. For Gadamer, who we are, how we think and speak and view the world is a product of history. Our community, language, culture, habits and practices, our historical location is not something we can discard. We are shaped by the past and we cannot distance ourselves from it. But it is this very 'historicity' that enables us to engage in attempts at interpretation and understanding. "It is because of our historical and cultural location that we can engage with interpretive understanding. It is our present understandings, our conceptions of life that opens up the past to us so that we can have knowledge of it" (Anderson et al. 1986, 72).

Therefore, Gadamer insists that the past can only be reconstructed through mediation with the present. As the past shapes our attempts at interpretation by providing horizons of understanding as 'an active force' therefore 'texts' take on new meanings as we shift horizons and there is need for a dialogue between the interpreter's prejudgements, 'prejudices' or assumptions as we review and revise our understanding from shifting viewpoints. Thus the use of the 'hermeneutic circle' to provide interpretative understanding of the whole from its parts and the parts in the context of the whole is a dynamic, synchronous relationship. Hermeneutics for Gadamer then is a process of interpretation and understanding in which we cannot escape from the role that history, culture, traditions and language have shaped our present perspectives of being in the world. That is: "Understanding the world is not merely a one-way process – our very preconceptions are reconstructed in the encounter with the world." (Baert and Carreira de Silva 2010, 223)

Habermas (1988) viewed Gadamer's position as being politically naïve, downplaying the ideological processes involved in the making of history and of the present. Tradition and authority are not 'value-free'. They have the potential to 'distort' social reality as well as the interpretative process. Habermas, emphasises the need to address ideological processes of power through history that not only imbue some text with more value, veracity and 'authenticity' through the accentuation and prioritisation of specific and delineated meanings but also shape the intellectual, cultural, economic and social structural frame within which interpretation is achieved. For Habermas, this is not a neutral playing field: hermeneutics must be married to praxis as not only a means for understanding how and why texts were made, by whom and when but also how our present 'being in the world' is a product of history. Therefore, the need to produce understanding also must have the possibility of

not only re-interpreting the past but to write new futures from knowledge of the present.

This brief introduction provides a conceptual foundational framework for addressing the following as seminal spatial, social and urban theorists there is also a sense in which they appear to us now in the twenty first century as ‘historical’ texts in which the contexts in which they were written presents us with the need for hermeneutic understanding in itself. That is, from the historical context we are situated in we can seek to interpret and understand their spatial theories and what they can tell us about the similarities and differences, the continuities and contrasts with our own times, spaces and places. However, my main aim is to unpick and unpack the ways in which their theories can be interpreted from a hermeneutic perspective and how they can be said to be invested with an inherently hermeneutic approach. Specifically, I will seek to address the ‘text-analogue’ that was the focus for their spatial theorising and thinking: the city as spatial form, a ‘text’ to be read, interpreted and understood. However, this as Frisby contends is not necessarily a straightforward task:

The notion of the city, its streets, its architecture, its populace, as a text is to be found in various forms ... In particular the conception of the city as text rests upon a number of presuppositions. Amongst these is that the city possesses features of textuality – at the basic level, a potentially decipherable constellation of signs and symbols. In its most basic form, a language is presupposed, a system of hieroglyphics. The city as text presupposes a reader or readers (2002, 15)

1 The Hermeneutics of Simmel’s Formal Sociology of Space

Georg Simmel’s body of work is almost entirely based within the city and particularly Berlin which provided him with a range of examples for developing his ‘formal’ sociology. For Simmel the object of sociology should be: “...the investigation of the forces, forms and development of sociation, of the co-operation, association and co-existence of individuals” (Simmel in Frisby 1992, 12). That is, Simmel conceived of society as the investigation of apparently mundane, everyday social interactions and the subjective experience of them. Simmel’s approach was in contrast to functional and positivistic sociology, less interested in the observation of ‘social facts’ or of institutions, structures and organisations and instead as Frisby contends, “[p]robably unique among his sociological contemporaries, Simmel explored time and time again the world of everyday social interactions and their cultural manifestations.” (Frisby in Frisby and Featherstone 1997, 8–9). Simmel’s ontological basis was to interpret and understand everyday social interactions as the foundation for his conception of society as a ‘*web of interactions*’. The similarities with hermeneutic thought are clear in that since “[m]eaning does not exist independently of subjects who use it, attribute and respond to it. Nor does it exist separate from other meanings. It is caught up with them and interconnected to them. The phrases that

occur again and again are ‘a web of meaning’ and a field of meaning” (Anderson et al. 1986, 66).

Simmel’s ‘regulative principle’ is that everything interacts with everything else. Therefore, there exists no privileged starting point for sociological analysis and therefore no particular vantage point from which to study society. Simmel understood modern society as a complex matrix in which the “[t]he social relationships that constitute society not only exist in space as a web, labyrinth or network ... [but also] ... in time as fleeting relationships, as permanent relationships, as a constellation of relationships in flux.” (Frisby 2000, 101) In various works his focus on the minutiae of everyday life has a clear spatial (and temporal) element. For example, he discusses sociability, conversation, social gatherings, mealtimes, games, flirtation, the family, the rendezvous, the secret society etc. as all taking place within particular spatial frames and fields. He also addresses specific spatial features which impact on social interaction – ‘Bridge and Door’ relate the connectivity of the former whilst the latter can open and close off possibilities. In ‘The Adventure’ and ‘The Alpine Journey’ he discusses the beginnings of travel as leisure and the need to escape from the everyday space and time of city and in ‘The Berlin Trade Exhibition’ the effects of the display of commodified culture within specifically designed spaces.¹ Thus forms of *sociation* (social interaction) are analysed, interpreted and understood as mediated within and through a spatial framework that shapes, moulds, facilitates, inhibits, and/or delineates etc. Simmel implies a spatial or environmental determinism in how we interpret and understand social interactions and relationships and make ‘sense’ of them only from within the spaces (and times) in which they occur. Simmel’s sociology as a whole can thus be said to have a clear spatial orientation.

However, it is the city as a spatial framework that Simmel’s explorations and interpretations of everyday interactions and the consequences of them that is perhaps his best known contributions to the sociology of city and of space.² In various analyses and texts he emphasises experience in terms of the speed, variety, quantity and quality of sensory and social experiences and interactions associated with modern urban life. For Simmel, the city means being in close physical/spatial proximity to hundreds or thousands of individuals yet also being at a social distance from those same individuals. He describes the consequences of the overstimulation of the senses and the effect of money in modern culture as a need to preserve individual identity from the onslaught of modern metropolitan life leading to the creation of a psychological defence mechanism that shields and filters the outside world. What develops, Simmel argues, is not only an increasing individualism but also a more rational way of being. We learn to think with our heads instead of reacting with our hearts and emotions. We increasingly have to interpret the ‘danger’ signs inherent in urban space, to avoid contact, to negotiate a path through the complex of signs, symbols and stimulations that surround us. We become inured to much of the world around us, perceive only what is deemed as important and view the world through

¹ These essays appear in Frisby and Featherstone 1997 and Wolff 1950.

² See chapter 3 ‘Simmel and the City Interpreted’ in Frisby 2001.

cynical and blasé lenses. We thus act with a knowledge gleaned by interpretation of the signs and symbols around us that are assigned meaning, importance and value in which we calculate and make judgements about things, about people and about spaces and places in which to be.

A further example of the effect of the city and a hermeneutic perspective in Simmel's work is *The Philosophy of Fashion* (in Frisby and Featherstone 1997). Fashion is an urban phenomenon and represents Simmel's concept of reciprocal effect whereby the need to express individuality whilst simultaneously signifying belonging to a group. However, fashion only works if one has the capacity and means to interpret it. What styles, labels, accessories, trends in cut, length and cloth, as well as what hairstyles and body art 'mean', not only to those who wear them but to those who see them. To be able to distinguish, to know and understand the associations attached to fashion involves an ability to differentiate and distinguish the codes, signs and symbols that 'speak'. Fashion therefore is a language with its own semiotics and grammar. It is a text-analogue associated with urban living and part of the landscape that we negotiate in our everyday lives as active interpreters of the social, spatial and cultural world of the urban.

Simmel as 'the first sociologist of space' sought to identify and define key 'aspects of space' (see Simmel in Frisby and Featherstone 1997; Frisby 1986, 1992, 2000, 2001; Zieleniec 1997) as crucial dimensions in which everyday interactions take place and constitute the 'web' from which society is spun. Characteristically emphasising the reciprocal interaction between space and social forms and the consequences this has for subjective experience Simmel "... emphasises that in principle space is one of the most 'concrete' features of social life, one that helps to make social life 'real' in terms of human experience" (Lechner 1991, 200). Simmel's 'key' aspects of space are: *exclusivity* (no two objects can occupy the same space simultaneously), *the boundary* (the ability to 'fragment' and delineate space), *fixity* (localising social interactions in space) *proximity and distance* (impacts in number, variety and quality of social interactions), and *mobility* (movement to and from sites, locations etc.) Simmel argues these aspects impact on how, when, where and in what form social interactions occur. We must interpret and make use of our understanding and knowledge of them to function, make sense of and negotiate our everyday lives.

Simmel contrasts the open spaces of parks, plazas and squares with more restricted spaces such as art galleries, museums, exhibitions, theatres, etc. to an analysis of how space frames and 'determines' social interactions. We interpret how we should or should not behave according to signs, symbols, cues, spatial formations and designs etc. that vary in open or closed space. Similarly, our interactions with others are affected by how near or far we are from others. We interpret proximity and distance and how it impacts on communication with others in different ways. From face to face interactions, to the use of technology such as telephones, letters, telegrams, etc. (and now in our digital age of texting, blogging, mobile technologies of text, image and video we interact now as if space and time are no longer obstacles.) Whether some artefact, building or service (a monument, hospital, school, university, place of worship, etc.) is fixed and acts as a fulcrum for activities is

influenced by mobility, whether one can or cannot move easily to where and when such social interactions occur. In this, space can have a determining effect on social interactions and we make calculations and judgements based on interpretations of the appropriateness, of the forms that space take, of their open and closed nature, of their nearness and farness, of their and our abilities to move. As Frisby argues: “Taken together with his explicit, detailed examination of significant dimensions of social space ... [there is] ... a focus upon spatial configurations of social life in general and the metropolis in particular.” (Frisby 2001, 24) One in which the need to interpret the city, its spatial form, as a means to not only ‘know’ how to be in the city but perhaps also how to survive in it.

2 Benjamin and the City as Text

Walter Benjamin was a social and cultural theorist and critic, and his various writings on the city offers a complex and somewhat disaggregated view of the urban. For Benjamin, urban modernity, most famously in Paris (Benjamin 1999) but also the Berlin of his childhood, his travels and writing of Naples (1904), Moscow (1927) and Marseille (1928)³ provided the means by which to explore and explain the changes and impacts of spatial forms, configurations, settings, places, as well as social types (the *flâneur*, the stranger, the rag-picker and prostitute, the crowd, etc.).

Benjamin sought to make sense of the ‘city of modernity’ by being immersed in its experience and documenting its varied features, aspects, impressions, spaces and people. He combined Baudelaire’s description of urban modernity with his knowledge of Simmel’s micro-sociology of everyday interactions which reflect a hermeneutic act of critical interpretation of configurations of urban spaces and how historicity is a moveable feast. As Savage states, for Benjamin “the urban as ‘object’ shifted incessantly – from being the general properties of the built environment, to specific buildings, the nature of urban ‘experience’, accounts of particular cities and their histories, and the ability of certain forms of representation such as photography to ‘picture’ cities.” (Savage in Crang and Thrift 2000, 36).

For Benjamin, as for Simmel, the city as *the* site of modernity was to be exposed as both the site of bourgeois domination and as providing distraction, intoxication and excitement. He sought to explore a number of fundamental relationships: “public and private spheres, sacred and profane, ritual and improvisation, individual and collectivity” (Gilloch 1996, 24). To investigate ‘the invisible threads’ of social reality as ‘diverse momentary’ images or ‘snapshots’ of ‘the fleeting, the fragmentary and the transitory’ (Baudelaire 1995) experience of modernity, to make legible, the history, impacts, effects, consequences of urban life. In his ‘excavations’, the city as ‘text’ is positioned as a means to read, to understand and to interpret modern urban life.

³ All are in Benjamin 1997.

His fragmented analysis and writing presents a hermeneutic problem for current interpreters, as does the many metaphors he uses: hieroglyphics, the semiotics of the city, the labyrinth, etc. Benjamin's analysis of Paris, as the capital of the nineteenth century (Benjamin 1999) is an attempt to resurrect the past as remnants, transformed and swept aside by Haussmann's reconfiguration of its spatial form (see Harvey 2005). This illustrates aspects of various hermeneutic approaches, such as Dilthey's assertion that hermeneutics must not separate the material world, the world of things and objects from human experience to ensure that understanding of the visible world is a reflection of individual's internal world of intent and motivation, social action and interaction with others. Similarly, Gadamer's emphasis on the importance of history and traditions and their impact on our experience of the world offers a means to interpret, know and understand Benjamin's urban writings, particularly in the *Arcades Project*.

Benjamin's approach to the city was complex and involves at least three approaches: the city as myth, as phantasmagoria and as text. In all, Benjamin attempts to recapture the strangeness and newness of the city which is threatening and alluring, dangerous and exciting, as well as offering a variety of experiences, opportunities and attractions that are associated with large, modern cities. He sought to investigate how experience could be transformed by the phantasmagoric spectacle of the city, the mythological landscape expressed through the architecture of its 'dream-houses'. As Gilloch states "... the buildings, spaces, monuments and objects that compose the urban environment are both a response to, and reflexively structure, patterns of human social activity. Architecture and action shape each other; they interpenetrate" (Gilloch 1996, 3).

Benjamin (1999) in his archaeological critique of Paris is in search of what Frisby calls 'the prehistory of modernity' (1986; see also Gilloch 1996, 2002; Harvey 2005). He seeks to uncover "The most hidden aspects of the great cities" (Benjamin 1999, 1007) The *Passagenarbeit* or *Arcades Project* (Buse et al. 2005; Missac 1995) is concerned with the city as the site of myth, the commodity and consumption, architecture and social activity, the relationship between public and private realms, and the interaction between the urban masses and marginal figures in the metropolitan landscape. As Frisby states: "The city is the crucial showplace of modernity and is crucial to Benjamin's *Arcades Project* ... [in which Benjamin]... sought to read the hieroglyphics of the spatial and social configurations of the city's landscape in order to discover its past" (1986, 224–5).

However, it is clear Benjamin felt something had been lost in Haussmann's planned, designed regeneration of the city. The intimate places and spaces, the opportunity for a lived experience in and of a human scale was replaced by the monumentalism of its boulevards, grand architecture and the ever-new appearance of commodities as sensational and our shock like perception of them serving only to dull the senses. The *Enlightenment* and the rationalisation of every sphere of existence were supposed to replace and render myth obsolete but, for Benjamin, capitalism created and perpetuated its own myths in the urban. We are subject in the modern fetishized urban world to a process of 'collective forgetting.' Benjamin goes further and identifies particular architectural structures as what he calls 'dream-houses

of modernity'. The new railway stations, camera obscura, museums and art galleries, monuments to glass (the Crystal Palace, greenhouses, conservatories) and iron (the Eiffel Tower, bridges), underground railways, department stores, exhibitions and above all most famously, the arcades. All are examples of what Benjamin identified as the phantasmagoria of the modern city. He states that: "all collective architecture of the nineteenth century provides the home of the dreaming collectivity" (Benjamin in Gilloch 1996, 123).

Thus, his focus on the phantasmagoria, of architecture and of the life of the street is aimed at travelling beneath the everyday, the blasé, and the cynical, to provide a means to wake us from the lulling sleep that takes for granted the everyday city of consumption and fetishized commodities. In this, as with his Frankfurt School colleagues, he was perhaps applying what Habermas calls for: a deep hermeneutics that links praxis with hermeneutics through a critical theory to identify and challenge the ideological and structural constraints of capitalist processes and history.

Benjamin also returns to the streets and communal spaces of the city to investigate its contingent and fleeting character. In his use of the *flâneur* and other 'urban types' (the prostitute, the rag picker, the idler, the gambler, the prostitute, etc.) he reflects and 'reads' the 'runes' of the crowd and attempts to discover its reality. The *flâneur* seeks immersion in the sensations of the city, to 'bathe in the crowd', to wander without destination, becoming lost, as flotsam and jetsam on the tides of the life of the street. The *flâneur* is someone who goes: 'Botanising the Asphalt' perambulating the streets, the spaces and places of the city in search of new sensations, impressions and experiences. "On the one hand, the *flâneur* is an idler, waster, on the other the *flâneur* is an observer, a detective, a suspicious person always looking, noting and classifying" (Featherstone 1998, 913.) This swing between involvement and detachment exhibits a reflexivity and attuned awareness of the life of the city: its people, spatial forms and activities. Indeed the *flâneur* may be an early example of an ethnographer at work observing seemingly fragmented and unconnected phenomena in a search for signs of significance and meaning.

Benjamin's other related focus on the streets is linked to inside and outside spaces, how the enclosed and the open reveal an analysis of different configurations of space. "More than in any other location, the street indicated itself as the furnished, lived out *interieur* of the masses' ... an eternally moving entity that lives, experiences, recognises and feels between the walls of houses just as much as individuals in the security of four walls" (Benjamin 1999, 535) He sees the potential for understanding the life and vitality of the streets as a theatre of display and interaction: "Streets are the dwelling place of the collective ... an eternally unquiet, eternally agitated being that – in the space between the building fronts – experiences, learns, understands, and invents as much as individuals do within the privacy of their own four walls" (Benjamin 1999, 423).

The new spaces of the city offered opportunities for social interaction but the masses could also constitute the 'dark side of modernity' as a revolutionary movement. They could as consumers, constitute a mass concerned with the circulation, display and exchange of commodities. His description of World Exhibitions as: "places of pilgrimage to the commodity fetish". (Benjamin 1999, 7) posits the

contrast between the illusory promises of commodity consumption, presented and represented by design in phantasmagoric space as well as the commodity's ever-new face revealed in fashion and advertising versus the chaotic vitality of street life, the masses, as crowds, with revolutionary potential.

Benjamin's writings consider a wide range of topics and themes that are in part deliberately fragmented and difficult to decipher. Like the original meaning of hermeneutics, we have to approach his work as a series of incomplete pieces, glean-ing the meaning and interpreting intent to understand, in his own context from the perspective of our own, what his theory of modernity, of the city, of modern culture was. In all Benjamin approaches the city experienced, as fragmented and frenetic, is one which can nevertheless be interpreted and understood as a text to be read through signs and symbols and by observation, critical analysis and by immersion in its everyday life. The city is identified, analysed and represented to describe and explain the psychological and social impacts of modern urbanism that have become important themes in film, art, music and literature as well as in contemporary analyses of the urban. Thus the city according to Benjamin must be interpreted and understood as a mythic space, as phantasmagorical, as Heaven and Hell, as the site for the circulation, consumption and worship of commodities, as possessing opportunity for anonymity, for pleasure/vice, danger and excitement. In all of this a text to be read, deciphered from the fragments of experience, the contingent and fleeting encounters and sensations of the (post)modern urban world, its people and architecture.

3 Lefebvre and the Production of (Urban) Space

Lefebvre's seminal work *The Production of Space* (1991) has been highly influential in reprioritising space in interdisciplinary social scientific analyses. In various works on the city, space, and everyday life (Lefebvre 1950, 1971, 1977, 1991, 1995, 1996, 2003, 2004, 2009, 2014) he repeatedly asserts the need to have knowledge of space not only as an abstract principle, or a means for ideological and material control but also as the contested terrain in which everyday life and practices create meanings, values, signs and symbols. Influenced by his humanist Marxist critique and analysis of capitalism (see Shields 1999; Elden 2001, 2004; Elden et al. 2003; Merrifield 2006; Zieleniec 1997) Lefebvre prioritises the need to consider the historical, social, political and economic context in which the complex of elements in the production of space are essential. It is this assertion of the importance of 'true knowledge of space' that will be examined from a hermeneutical perspective.

In brief, Lefebvre's position can be laid out as follows. Space is not merely natural, a material 'thing', a void waiting to be filled with contents. It is also simultaneously, socially produced. The product of a complex of factors and elements that prioritises how certain forms and structures of space can be linked to functions, how dominant meanings of spatial forms are represented to us and finally how this impacts on the use of space in everyday life. Every society in every epoch produces

its own space to meet its needs and priorities and to ensure societal cohesion, functional competence, and to assert and maintain ideological and political power and control. Under capitalism urban space has come to be the dominant form by which and through which production, consumption, reproduction and circulation are organised and structured, ultimately to meet the requirements of capital.

Space therefore is a material product and the means by and through which capitalism survives. But space is also simultaneously a process involving social relations between people and between people and things in space. Space is subject to the actions and operation of power in which the control, ownership and regulation of space permits some actions to occur whilst limiting or prescribing others. But this is not a one-way process. Space is subject to conflict over ownership, over meanings, values, uses, etc. and thus one area/arena (for Lefebvre, a crucial battleground) in which social justice and equality are contested: "Space has been shaped and moulded from historical and natural elements, but this has been a political process. Space is political and ideological." (Lefebvre, in Peet 1977, 341) Who owns, controls and regulates space, to what end, for what purposes and how this is achieved is crucial for understanding how modern urban conditions are created, how they change and how this impacts on the everyday lived experience of their populations.

Lefebvre is well aware that current spatial forms and configurations in the modern urban are not spontaneous or come into being without a history. Space, as a habitat and which we inhabit in our everyday lives, is the product of history: "itself the outcome of past actions, social space is what permits fresh actions to occur, some serve production others consumption ... Social space implies a great diversity of knowledge" (Lefebvre 1991, 72). However, Lefebvre argues that space, and particularly the space of the modern city has become rationalised, functionalised and above all ideologically planned and designed. Thus architecture, urban design, planning etc. those spatial sciences that mould and shape and deliver forms of space are replete with the imposition of dominant values, ideals and priorities: "Space is political and ideological. It is a product literally filled with ideologies. There is an ideology of space." (Lefebvre 1991, 341)

The interlinked elements of his triadic analysis, (spatial practices, representations of space and use of space), provide a structure for the analysis of modern, increasingly urban capitalism. One, he argues, that is essential for understanding how the diverse factors salient to the experience of contemporary urban society (social structure, social action and social interactions) are not only framed in space but shaped, moulded, delimited and delineated by it. Lefebvre thus provides a means to deconstruct not only how dominant values and ideological parameters are impressed on, in and through space but also how we can make sense of the spaces that are made for us and that we use in everyday life. However, what is crucial is knowledge of how space is produced, by whom, for whom, for what functions, purposes, and to what ends etc. He argued that such knowledge of space provides the possibility of using and making space in more humane and just ways. We can therefore 'make' space to suit the needs and priorities, the values and meanings of not only capital but also the urban population at large.

City life was, as many urban theorists have commented (see Simmel and Benjamin above) one of chance encounter and interaction, of diversity and difference, of possibilities of seeing, learning, being open to new sensations and experiences. It is in the streets and other public spaces that the life of the city was first observed and analysed as signifier and site of modernity and where urban experience was distinguished from the traditional world view of the rural and the feudal. For Lefebvre, urban life and the city was once a living creative process, a work of art, and should contain again such possibilities of imaginative being:

The city is itself 'oeuvre', a feature that contrasts with the irreversible tendency towards money and commerce, towards exchange and products ... [it] ... not only contains monuments and institutional headquarters, but also spaces appropriated for entertainments, parades, promenades, festivities. (Lefebvre 1996, 73)

The city like every other aspect of life involves the consumption of signs. We all need to 'read' and understand the semiotics of the city as a means to interpret and make sense of information that comes in the myriad meanings and messages that confront us in our everyday experience. This is how we manage to function and survive in modern complex urban environments that have become increasingly ordered and regulated for directional or prescriptive purposes and primarily associated with commodification and the conditions of the market. The city, Lefebvre suggests, is subject to the dominating power of representation rather than the possibility of free creative expression:

One consumes signs as well as objects: signs of happiness, of satisfaction, of power, of wealth, of science, of technology, etc. ... As a place of encounters, focus of communication and information, the urban becomes what it always was: a place of desire, permanent disequilibrium, seat of the dissolution of normalities and constraints, the moment of play and of the unpredictable. (Lefebvre 1996, 115, 129)

Lefebvre's analysis of the interlinked elements of the production of urban space offers a way to see, read and understand the city to create an immersed and embodied praxis associated not only with living, with the experience of the city, not just inhabiting a created environment but also being actively involved in its creation, and with the possibility of changing it. For Lefebvre "the long history of space, even though space is neither a 'subject' nor an 'object' but rather a social reality ... and must account for both representational spaces and representations of space, but above all for their inter-relationships and their links with social practice." (Lefebvre 1991, 116) In Lefebvre's triad of necessary elements he reveals a hermeneutic approach, albeit rooted in Marxist dialectics. To understand the whole, it is necessary to understand the parts. Space is produced in a dynamic relationship between all three parts. The whole can be deconstructed to its constituent parts to reveal the influence of each to the whole, and vice versa. There is thus a reciprocal relationship between the elements involved in its production.

Authentic knowledge of space must address the question of its production ... and therefore must account for both representational spaces and representations of space, but above all for their interrelationships and links with social practice. (Lefebvre 1991, 111, 116)

Lefebvre's corpus of work on the production of space as well as his numerous writings on the city view the urban as *the* dominant spatial form of modern capitalism. For Lefebvre the *Urban Revolution* (Lefebvre 2003) has created a second human nature that is based in and off and created by the city. 'True knowledge' of space, requires understanding of its constituent parts. Thus, after Gadamer, the parts and the whole are interlinked. For Lefebvre, after Habermas, to know space was to provide a means to change it, to have the 'right' to space and the 'right to the city', to make claims on space for inhabitation for colonisation, for 'useful play'. Lefebvre's trialectic suggests a means by which we can understand space and challenge the ideologies that are inherent in how space is represented to us (through designs, maps, plans, signage, etc.) that seek to embed dominant discourses of appropriate and permitted use.

In our everyday lives through our imaginative use of space we invest meanings and create values attached to spaces and places that challenge and contest not only spatial formations and practices that are indicative of the production of space under capitalism but also open up possibilities for reading, and being in the city that reflects more humane, shared and communal values. Thus Lefebvre's aim is to uncover, by dissecting and analysing its parts, to illuminate the hidden truths of how dominant representations, signs and 'accepted' codes embedded within space can be understood and contested. Not knowledge for knowledge sake but praxis to make the city more for people and less for profit.

4 Conclusion

In the above I have attempted to provide an 'interpretation' of three spatial sociologies. In all there is an inherent emphasis on reading and understanding urban space, its configurations, forms, the semiotics of signs, symbols as manifestations of meaning and practice, action and power. They all sought discover how social relations, social interactions and social reproduction not only take place in space but are also influenced, moulded, shaped and determined by space. It is not enough perhaps to be able to read space, to read the text-analogue of the city. There is also a need to be active in interpreting it and perhaps to be engaged and involved in writing its future.

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Toward an Anthropological Understanding of Space and Place

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Abstract Anthropological studies of space and place recognize that landscape, space and the body represent important sites for cultural meaning, social and political memory, and public discourse. Space can be used to carry social meanings that are culturally and historically constructed as well as contested. The hermeneutic study of space explores space as a symbolic medium and recognizes that space and space language convey a culture's meanings about the immediate world, while place carries with it sentiments of attachment and identity that emerge out of lived experience. At the macro or cosmic level, geo-symbolic systems can order the world cosmologically and serves as one element of political organization.

Several decades ago, Clifford Geertz remarked on the absence of place as a field of inquiry in socio-cultural anthropology, noting that it had been all but invisible: a taken-for-granted dimension, a given, a ubiquitous part of everyday existence for which there was little theory (1996, 259).¹ Since that time, however, culture, place, and space has emerged as a central field of research in anthropology, yielding rich ethnographic studies of the significance of landscape, architecture, spatial order, place, and displacement to people and cultural systems. The relationships between cultures and the spaces they are associated with vary in important ways, each requiring a different theory set and approach to research. Localized cultures whose interactions with particular spaces have remained constant over time have been studied in situ through long term fieldwork, leading to important understandings of knowledge in place and the politics of spatial order. More recently, anthropologists have come to account for societies where movement is the norm and culture is recognized in “traveling and intermingling repertoires” (Lambek 2011, 3), mediated by technologies of translocality – computers, cellphones, satellites; and in a spatially

¹ Geertz's claim neglected several important and insightful studies of place that had been carried out before this time; for example, Cunningham 1964; Kuper 1972; Bourdieu 1973; Ardener 1993; Johnson 1989; and Munn 1986.

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fluid, increasingly global world, analysed through multi-sited ethnography (Marcus 1998). Our current global scene finds anthropologists carrying out ‘mobile field-work’ (Khosravi 2010) as they grapple to understand the lived experiences and stigma of both indigenous confinement (Aurylaite 2015) and refugee displacement (Campkin 2013), surveillance, border fetishism, and the illegality of presence itself.

Drawing insights from ritual studies, geography, political theory, art history, and philosophy, the emergence of place and space studies in anthropology has brought with it a new vocabulary as well, with terms such as deep geometry (Geertz 1980), architectonics (Fernandez 2003), heterotopia (Relph 1992; Foucault 1984b), spatialized history (Gordillo 2004), taskscape (Ingold 1993), ethnoscaples and moving sovereignties (Appadurai 1991, 1995), movement as spatial transgression (Aucoin 2002), and dislocation and border regimes (Hall 2012; Khosravi 2010). These terms enable us to better understand the importance of what had previously been regarded simply as locale (Rodman 1992). Their use speaks to the increasing breadth of a field that now encompasses such topics as gated communities and the politics of public space (Low 2004), the imaginary of nature and wilderness (Hastrup 2013; Cronon 1995), landscape and power in Viennese gardens (Rotenberg 1995), the analytics of movement in post-combat zones (Wool 2013), symbolic design in Zen Buddhist Japanese landscapes (Johnson 2003), discourses on trans-border trade in electronic waste (Kirby and Lora-Wainwright 2015), Earth and extra-terrestrial scale (Battaglia et al. 2015), and the political economy of spatial illegality (Andersson 2014).² These terms point to the development of theory as well, with an extension of the study of place-making “beyond culture” (Feld and Basso 1996) as it strives to critically account for power and spatial transitions, shifting boundaries, cultural displacement, and spaces for new sociality and meaning in a globalized world (see Gupta 2003; Gupta and Ferguson 1997).

Space is considered by anthropologists to be a central element of social life, one of the three dimensions of space-time-culture within which human life is immersed, and that are at once universal and yet variously conceived and experienced by different cultures. Engaged with and experienced both as a physical and ambient dimension, as distance, location, or topography, space is recognized as an important cultural medium, an idiom through which individuals can think and that can be culturally organized to produce spatial practices that are social, aesthetic, political, religious or economic. Once embedded with significance, spatial constituents can be made to carry meaning as part of a geo-symbolic order. Place is a “framed space that is meaningful to a person or group over time” (Thornton 2008, 10); a presence that comes into being through human experience, dreaming, perception, imaginings, and sensation, and within which a sense of being in the world can develop. It involves culturally meaningful sites whose significance rests in lived experience: with naming, local events and conflicts, the attachment of stories, experiences of

²See Rodman [Critchlow] (1992), Hirsch (1997), Low and Zúñiga (2003), and Kokot (2006) for overviews of the main themes of space and place studies that have been addressed from an anthropological perspective.

affect, and the affixation of meanings and memory to locations, landscapes,³ built environments, and places of the body. Those cultural activities in which people engage in order to render spaces meaningful, whether these spaces are built, worked over, lived in, or part of a space imaginary, are place-making practices. As sites take on cultural meaning, they come to be distinguished from generalized space as places.⁴

While philosophers seek to understand in what ways life can be meaningful for humans, anthropologists view humans as ‘meaning making’ beings, and so seek to understand how humans ‘bestow’ meaning (White 1940) on any or all facets of life and the external world, including space. Their quest then, is to understand what cultural worlds exist and how meanings are created and attached to these worlds, how they change, and to what purpose they may be put. Equally important is the existence of non-places, those areas which have no personal or cultural meaning, but that we frequent, pass through, or spend long periods of time in as part of modern existence – airports, line-ups, or refugee camps (Augé 1995).

Anthropological analysis aims to account for the dynamics of meaning construction, the lived experience of place and the practices of space within particular cultures. Analysis requires recognition that while space is situated in culture, its meaning is not fixed and may be contested and changed over time through a dialectical, sometimes political process that reveals the praxis of space. As Hugh Raffles so eloquently explains (2002, 185), places and space are always “in that flow of becoming ... [t]here is no point of stasis: people are in motion, the tide turns, the banks crumble. Shifting historical sedimentations form the unreliable ground on which lives are made.”

Place is multilocal and multivocal: multilocal in the sense that it “shapes and expresses polysemic meanings of place in different users” (Rodman 1992, 647), and multivocal in that many voices can be encompassed within a single place. An ability to hear these voices requires that one is aware of and attuned to the narratives that are expressed through various sensorial modes – sentiment, movement, sound, tactility, and sight (649). Place-making may bring with it sentiments of attachment, or what Raymond Williams (1977) calls structures of feeling. Accounting for those voices that have been silenced, in Edwin Ardener’s terms (1981) muted, is equally important for these also form an integral though obscured part of any social landscape.

The task set out for anthropologists studying space in the context of socio-cultural life is to observe, elicit through interview, and record by means of participatory research all features, symbols, meanings, beliefs, activities and experiences relating to space and place in a particular society, that is, “to look at things obsessively up-close” (Geertz 1996, 260); and following from this, to create an ethnographic account written from the perspective of those who live it as a culturally meaningful experience. A record of space examines how it is culturally organized

³Tomforde (2006) documents the enduring significance of landscape and memory to identity for diaspora cultures.

⁴See also Clammer for a discussion of philosophy and anthropology’s intersection (2013).

and experienced – similarly or differently – by social groups (cultures, sub-cultures, genders, classes, age, race or ethnic groups, castes), while a study of place records how spatialized culture is lived: learned, experienced, conceived, contested, resisted, transgressed, remembered, or longed for.

The goal of anthropology, however, is not merely to collect quantitative data or provide a description of one's observations, which Charles Taylor refers to critically as our "brute data" (1987, 38). It aims to make a society's experiences in and conceptualizations of the world intelligible to those who have not previously encountered it, enabling them to grasp – or in Weber's terms understand (*verstehen*) – this world as an insider does, and to appreciate "the self-understandings of actors engaged in particular actions" (Schwandt 2003, 299) as these relate to space and place. In anthropology, this process of analysis has been described by Clifford Geertz as a hermeneutic one; its goal is philosophical insofar as its aim is to understand what is involved in the process of understanding itself (Madison 1991).

In his classic work *The Interpretation of Cultures*, Geertz sets out a definition of culture and a method of analysis that, while sparking criticism in its day from positivists,⁵ underpins most studies in socio-cultural anthropology today. So great has his influence been that what is known as the interpretive turn in the social sciences, has been described in anthropology as the "Geertzian revolution" (Ortner 1999, 2).⁶ And though writing in the 1970s, Geertz's work continues to inform many areas of the sociology of culture, cultural studies, and cultural geography (see Alexander et al. 2012).⁷ Influenced by Weber's view on interpretive social science, Geertz argued (like Weber) that "man is suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun" (1973, 5); culture is taken to be those webs and its analysis is, therefore, "not an experimental science in search of laws but an interpretive one in search of meaning" (1973, 5).

In his introduction to interpretive methods, Geertz draws on Paul Ricoeur's theory of hermeneutics when he states that culture is "an ensemble of texts, themselves ensembles, which the anthropologist strains to read over the shoulders of those to whom they properly belong" (1973, 452). Consisting of all aspects of material culture, ideas, and human behaviour – in his words "arguments, melodies, formulas, maps, and pictures ... rituals, palaces, technologies and social formations," cultural worlds do not in Geertz's view consist of "idealities to be stared at" (1980, 135), but rather texts to be interpreted that can best be approached through the study of

⁵Kämpf (2013) provides an overview of the positivist/interpretive debate with a discussion of the importance of meaning to both philosophy and anthropology.

⁶Sherry Ortner discusses critiques of interpretive anthropology in relation to feminist, post-colonial, reflexive, and post-modern theories that have called for recognition of the situatedness of hermeneutic understandings. Armin Geertz (2003) advocates ethnohermeneutics as an approach to studying non Western cultures and religions that will draw on interpretations and theories developed by Indigenous scholars as a response to post-colonial critiques of hegemonic Western discourse.

⁷See Lila Abu-Lughod (2005) for an anthropological exploration of space and culture in the context of popular television in Egypt, both in terms of new spaces created for consuming this media, and the depiction of national, memorialized, gendered and domestic spaces through its programs.

symbolic processes, language, and meaning. Although interpretation seems an ambiguous method, understandings are nonetheless held to be “open to correction, and comparable to other cases” (Rabinow and Williams 1987, 19).

Interpretation in any cross-cultural study of space and place is a dialogical process, requiring that the observation, recording and accumulation of information is acquired through a “continuous dialectical tacking between the most local of the local detail and the most global of global structure ... back and forth between the whole conceived through the parts that actualize it and the parts conceived through the whole which motivated them” (Geertz 1983, 69), this whole/part method (modelled after Dilthey) comprising the hermeneutic circle. The acquiring of knowledge concerning space and place proceeds until the whole of a culture’s experience and sense of the world is understood; so that both its topophilia or “affective bond between people and place” (Tuan 1974, 4), as well as its topophobia or “ties that are distasteful in some way, or induce anxiety and depression” (Seaman 1982, 132), can be appreciated. The dimensions of topophobic place are clearly portrayed by Gastón Gordillo for the Chaco region of Argentina where space for the indigenous Toba constitutes an historical landscape that retains memories of massacres, labour extraction and disease. This is a place where the memory of colonial horrors is embodied in terrifying devils that inhabit this region, and are believed to bring disease and hardship to its inhabitants (2004, 125).

This quest for understanding also takes into account ontological difference; as, for example, in Eduardo Kohn’s (2013) exploration of the sentience of forests for the Runa who inhabit a region of Amazonian rainforest in Ecuador. Here exists a forest whose trees are sentient; they think and hear the world around them. For the Athapaskan and Tlingit cultures of northern Canada, understandings of geographic features also embrace sentient features of space, including glaciers that “listen, pay attention, and respond to human behaviour – especially to indiscretion” (Cruikshank 2005, 25). Tools that are used to acquire these understandings are drawn from hermeneutics, linguistics and semiotic analysis, making an anthropologist both decoder and translator, experiencer and interpreter (Feld 1990, 15). In Setha Low’s words (2000, 49), these tools are applied toward “reading the landscape as a text, decoding the built environment through analogy and metaphor, and the phenomenological experience of place.”

The hermeneutic interpretation of space and place as a process involves anthropologists not only in a dialectical tacking between and within the whole and parts of an unknown culture, that is within the text itself. It also sees movement between the realm of an unfamiliar culture or social group and the anthropologist’s own set of language and symbols through which meaning in his or her world is conceptualized and expressed. This process is dialogic and polyvocal in Bakhtin’s sense (1981) insofar as it requires intercultural and interpersonal conversations that will elicit, describe, compare, explain, contrast, and allow for correction as ideas and meanings move back and forth across a cultural interstice, a liminal space where as-yet not understood aspects of culture are drawn together with the anthropologist’s familiar linguistic and ideational world, that is, her or his own text, as she tries to make sense of an unfamiliar cultural world. This process engages us in discussion, analysis,

compilation and adjustment in order that meanings can be discerned as we strive for intelligibility: as we match sign with sense. This work of ethnography has been likened by Vincent Crapanzano to the work of Hermes, the ancient god of transitions, movement, translation and transformation who delivers messages across borders and mediates communication between worlds; it is Hermes who “clarifies the opaque, renders the foreign familiar.... decodes the message... interprets” (1986, 51; see also Palmer 1980). According to Lisette Josephides (2015, 14), the job required of anthropologists as they begin to explore meaning and explain symbols as part of any interpretation of space is that they search for equivalent terms to express the meaning of a culture’s symbols, by asking “what idea in one culture is equivalent to (substitutable with) another idea in another culture. Thus the ethnographer must remain a ‘two-way traveller,’ thinking one society through another.”

Something of this analytical process is captured by Peter Worsley in his account of the elicitation of space lexicon in the indigenous language of the Australians of Groote Eyland, as he identifies Groote Eylander terms for space, direction, positioning, and orientation, while scrabbling for equivalents in English and teasing out distinctions for space understandings in these languages. Orientation terms for right, left, front, and back are used in relation to the body but, Worsley explains, whereas in English we can have an impersonal, absolute right as when giving instructions to drive to the right on a road – “to ‘turn right’, on Groote ‘right’ always means ‘to your right.’ Direction is embedded.” A Groote Eyland term for which there is no equivalent in English is the directional term used when climbing a palm tree, where a derivative of the word for ‘groin’ exists and refers to using the “front of the body (and hands and feet) to climb a tree” (1997, 104). He notes a commonly used term for space that can “describe a strait between two islands or the space between objects” where there is no obstruction. However, there is no term for ‘line’: “‘horizontal’, ‘vertical’ and ‘oblique’ are expressed through terms for ‘lying’, ‘standing upright’, and ‘leaning’” while the word for corner is derived from the word ‘crooked,’ as in the bend in a river (104). The compilation and translation of spatial and orientation terms does not simply provide a dictionary or set of equivalents in the language of the anthropologist, however. They provide a key to the culturally constructed meanings and experiences of space that, as more of an unfamiliar culture’s system of meaning is taken into account, allows for an articulation of spatial with other meaning systems – gender, political, identity, religious – until the whole of a culture’s space-knowledge system has been mapped out, and we can see how spatial worlds are conceptualized.

As an interpretive process, Elizabeth Kinsella (2006) argues that hermeneutics constitutes a critical approach that carries transformative possibilities as the circling process brings together foreign and familiar, text and interpreter in such a way as to allow, in Gadamer’s words (1996, 306), a fusion of horizons out of which deeper understandings can emerge. The question that arises then, is how to bring this fusion about so as to enable mutual understanding and cross-cultural appreciation, a particularly salient challenge for anthropology which, since its earliest days, has been tasked with ‘making the strange familiar, and the familiar strange.’ This is an especially important goal for reflexive anthropology; as Ricoeur explains (1974, 51), “it

is the function of hermeneutics to make the understanding of the other – and of his signs in various cultures – coincide with the understanding of self and of being.” Mutual understanding is compounded, however, by anthropology’s longstanding epistemological distinction between two competing logics of inquiry, emics and etics or understanding and explanation. Applying an emic approach, culture, space and place will be understood according to its participants’ self-understandings; whereas etics privileges explanations of other cultures that are formulated by the anthropologist as outsider. As Robert Ulin (1992, 263) explains, as separate logics each of these denies cross-cultural dialogue as well as self-reflexivity, and by analysing culture as a closed system, denies historical process which, Ulin warns, may lead to its reification. To resolve this, he points to Ricoeur’s method of depth hermeneutics which can draw emic and etic understandings into a dialectical relationship. This method, he explains, “offers the possibility of grasping meaningful action objectively” (Ulin 1992, 254). Setting emic and etic understandings within a dialectical relationship can address issues of human action and meaning.⁸ Critical hermeneutics allows for mediation as part of an open discussion of causality through reflection and critical argument, taking into account not only the meaning that space carries, but also how the ambiguity of meaning can allow for the “distortion and domination” (Roberge 2011, 5) that are at play in the formation of ideologies.⁹ In the context of an appreciation of historical process, Ulin notes (1992, 263), “whether written, oral or action, a text does not have a pure interiority or pure exteriority. Significations owe their generation to human practical activity, and, hence, belong fully to historical processes that must be considered if critical interpretation is to be applied.”

The goal of depth hermeneutics,¹⁰ as realized with this fusion and the application of multiple perspectives towards understanding, is not merely to identify causality however, for it is through this fusion that cultures can understand and then come to appreciate one another; to reach mutual cross-cultural understandings (*verständigt-seins*). Where boundaries are fixed and borders cannot be breached, singular truths may emerge with rigid, ethnocentric social values that create spaces where prejudice and racism can take hold. Taylor speaks to the importance of an appreciation of cultural difference in our complex and conflict ridden world,¹¹ and for the acceptance of other cultures as having a worth that is equal to one’s own. This acceptance, however, requires that our own self-understanding change: “There can be no understanding of “the other” without a changed understanding of the self...the path to acknowledging their existence and value can be painful. The crucial moment occurs

⁸ Insights from hermeneutic interpretation and whole/part relations that can be applied toward research design are detailed by Michael Agar (1980).

⁹ See Aucoin (2002) on the politics of meaning for both domination and resistance discourses.

¹⁰ The critique of Habermas’s fusion of horizons as (p. 183, n. 85) as holding to a false consensualism is discussed in Euben (1999).

¹¹ Werbner’s (1996 S55) semiotic analysis of the novel *The Satanic Verses* explores hermeneutic and conflicting understandings of this work, where interpretations “have piled upon interpretations in an infinite hermeneutical spiral.”

when the “other’s” differences can be perceived not as error...but as the challenge posed by a viable human alternative” (2002). This appreciation, he argues, is founded on the presupposition that every society has “something important to say to all human beings” (1992, 66), a presupposition that lays a foundation for the recognition and acceptance of value for all cultures. On the importance and relevance of this approach to anthropology, Lambek goes further in arguing that conversations with and an understanding of others is a form of “ethical work,” and that “encounters between traditions can be ethical only when they are approached hermeneutically” (2015); that is, where conversations are held and we “learn to listen and to speak to others.”

1 Ethnographic Understandings

Accounting for space as a physical setting within which a society makes its living has been an essential though primarily descriptive rather than interpretive component of ethnography for well over a century.¹² Later studies of the ways in which the constituents of space, particularly spatial orientations, have been recognized culturally and given meaning, and then made use of in a society’s formulation of cosmic order, emerged as interest in symbolic anthropology arose with the work of Victor Turner.¹³ With this interest came an appreciation and greater awareness of the multifarious symbolic dimensions of space and place and its potential to carry meaning.¹⁴ As a symbolic medium, space, landscape and place can be seen as communicative; “an expression of culturally shared mental structures and embodied processes” (Low 2000, 49). Hermeneutic studies of space as symbolic have been carried out at both the micro level, by examining how space and language convey meanings about the immediate world; as well as a macro or cosmic level by examining geo-symbolic systems. Geertz’s (1996, 259) study *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth Century Bali*, did much to advance hermeneutic understandings of the significance of geo-symbolic order both as a cultural practice, and as a dimension within which and through which some people live, experience, and may even rule the world.

The publication of Steven Feld and Keith Basso’s volume *Senses of Place* (1996) marks an important moment in the anthropology of space and place because it

¹²E.E. Evans-Pritchard’s classic study *The Nuer* (1940), for example, records in detail the culture-environment relations among Nuer pastoralists in East Africa, providing a rich account of physical setting, resource base, and seasonal climatic changes. With this account, an appreciation can be gained of the acuity of Nuer decisions regarding resource availability and mobility as they manoeuvred herds of cattle across a vast territory of which they have an extensive and intimate knowledge; however, little was conveyed of the cultural meaning of this Nuer landscape.

¹³For an interpretive analysis of the symbolism of space and time and religious ritual, see Gossen 1979.

¹⁴Feuchtwang’s (2014) analysis of cosmology, space, ritual and traditional medicine in China illustrates the articulation of various meaning systems, including space.

explicitly applied hermeneutics as epistemology toward its understanding of space in order to explore what the knowing, sensing, and experiencing of place might represent cross-culturally. Their ethnographies provide exceptionally rich studies of space and meaning that draw on years of research in their respective research communities. In his study of sound, sentiment and space among the Kaluli of Papua New Guinea, Steven Feld (1996) aims at understanding how space and the sensation of sound intersect in such a way that they create a place for the Kaluli that is at once sensorial, evocative, and mnemonic. The Kaluli rainforest is a culturally meaningful place, and the experience of sound within that place plays a significant role in the creation of that meaning. The Kaluli sense of place embodies both knowledge and acoustic or sound sensation, and these in turn contribute to emplacement, or the Kaluli sense of the meaningfulness of their place in the world. Awareness of the sounds that surround them, of water falling and flowing over the land, natural sounds such as bird songs, whistles, or cooing, as well as the performance of songs and use of place names by the Kaluli, recalls the belief that these sounds are connected to the flow of the voice through the body, thereby connecting people to a larger soundscape. Songs and the poetic recitation of place names are mnemonic in that they recall mythological sites, people and by-gone events, and their experience elicits for the Kaluli an emotional response as they weep with the recollection of events or people of the past. Feld goes so far as to describe this as a “sound world” because of the belief in the importance of connection through sound, place, sentiment and memory.

Keith Basso’s ethnography, *Wisdom Sits in Places*, explores the tendency for places to “trigger acts of self-reflection,” and asks what this self-reflection would entail among the Apache of the American southwest. Drawing on Martin Heidegger’s concept of dwelling, which points to the importance of people’s “lived relationships” with space, Basso (1996, 107) notes that place-making among the Apache does not require special skills: stories of events that occurred at a place are remembered and retold, defining physical features of a site are made note of, reference is made to ancestors who travelled this way in the past, and once a place takes on a name, the mention of that place-name will serve as a “vehicle” for recalling certain knowledge that triggers a memory of the associations that this site holds. The significance of these place-names is that when problems arise, if an individual experiences hardship or conflict emerges, the knowledge that has been invested in this place will be drawn on in subtle ways during their counsel by kin or elders. Of particular note are cautionary narratives that tell of a sequence of events that ended poorly for the individuals involved due to bad judgement or failure to prepare for a task or activity, and so provide examples of behaviour to avoid. The intent of these place references is not to tell someone what to do, but to cause them to think about a site and the meaning it holds through a metaphor or brief reference to one of its distinguishing features. This reference will be enough to prompt those involved to recall the knowledge that that place embraces, and to reflect on the circumstances of their own lives. Speaking these names evokes wisdom that may point to a solution to an individual’s problems, may encourage them by referring to a conflict or an event that was resolved successfully, or simply reassure them so that they will have

the fortitude to keep going. As Basso explains (1996, 107), the use of place-names “animates thought;” by reflecting on the meaning of places, this thinking may “produce expanded awareness, feelings of relief, and fortitude,” all of which may contribute to a focusing of mind that may also, eventually, contribute to problem solving.

2 Geo-symbolic Order

The organization of space into geo-symbolic schemes constitutes a society’s systematic symbolic and metaphorical ordering of the world, an ordering that not only reflects but also encodes its worldly or cosmological structure. By instituting categorization, influencing perception, and placing persons and objects in the world, geo-cosmological structures carry both a “deep symbolic and pragmatic force” which, as Keesing (1982, 58) illustrates in his analysis of spatial separation, ideas of pollution and gender hierarchy among the Kwaio of the Solomon Islands, serves to preserve gender distinctions through spatial segregation, which in turn upholds principles of male dominance.¹⁵ Spatial order is part of what Geertz (1980, 109) refers to as a society’s “deep geometry.” As an ordering process, it establishes and metaphorically expresses social, familial or political relationships between things or persons on the basis of designated place or relative placement, making use of any of those dimensions of space – left-right, high-low, interior-exterior, centre-periphery, or cardinal directions – that a particular society deems significant.¹⁶ The encoding of social relations in spatial terms proceeds through the use of geometrics, that is by using space as a means of delineating and expressing the properties and relationships of objects or persons to each other. Thus, spatial distinctions are used to divide the unmarked natural world into marked, culturally significant areas by setting out visible or invisible boundaries that divide the spatial dimension into spaces that carry a social meaning. By creating an association between certain spatial dimensions and particular social categories (such as status groups, gender, or age categories), by differentiating and delineating boundaries between particular areas, space can then be made to take on symbolic meaning as well as political and cultural significance.

In their discussion of metaphorical systems, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980, 14) define the organization of a whole set of concepts with respect to one another as an orientation metaphor when these attach a spatial orientation to such a set of concepts.¹⁷ In some cases, spatial order and ascribed place may be organized

¹⁵ Brettell (2015) and Spain (1992) provide ethnographic examples as well as reviews of theories of gender, space and power.

¹⁶ Robert Hertz (1973 [1909]) provides us with one of the earliest and most insightful reflections on spatial distinction and meaning.

¹⁷ In English, for example, moods are given the orientational expression up/down, and social classes are separated as lower/middle/upper.

in such a manner as to replicate cosmological space, the microcosmic arrangement of the human world then duplicating the macrocosmic model of the universe. This replication serves to both concretize and metonymically express this order: the structural order of cosmic space being actualized in the minute details of worldly spatial design. As a forum for the expression of social relationships, spatial organization represents a “signifying practice” (de Certeau 1984, 107). The use and attachment of meaning to space and geography transforms space and spatial dimensions (such as left-right, or high-low) into signifiers, and in so doing establishes space as a medium through which a society’s understanding of the world may be conveyed. The use of space as a medium for the communication of a society’s classification system and values is clearly shown by Clark Cunningham (1964) for the Atoni of Indonesia, where spatial divisions within the interior space of the house reflect culturally important social divisions, particularly with respect to gender and status, and important principles of unity and division.¹⁸

By creating a concrete world that is consonant with a proposed reality, spatial orders not only display and convey society’s underlying social theory, but also help to legitimize this organization by implicitly arguing that “worldly status has a cosmic base” (Geertz 1980, 102). In this, spatial order may be integral to a society’s political theory for the enactment of spatial organization, carried out with the actual placing of people and things in their assigned positions, may be part of political practice. The production and reproduction of these schemes in a multiplicity of different forums contributes to the continual assertion and imposition of a society’s classifying principles and hierarchies and serves to create, in Pierre Bourdieu’s terms (1977, 89), “a world in which each speaks metaphorically of all the others.”

In the ethnographic case of Western Fiji, the social organization of gendered space constitutes one of several symbolic practices of power (Foucault 1984a) that enact gender stratification, a practice that is met, significantly, by spatial inversion as a form of resistance (Aucoin 2000; 2002). The order of space in Fiji prescribes the appropriateness – according to hierarchical principles of social rank and gender – of village architectural arrangements, body positioning, movements and even gestures. Practices of gendering space reflect “a process of symbolic encoding and decoding that produces a series of homologies between the spatial, symbolic and social order” (Blunt and Rose 1994, 3); and where those homologies differentiate social value, they can be said to institute hierarchy.

For Western Fiji, hierarchical distinctions are drawn between those of chiefly rank and commoners, senior versus junior members of patrilineal clans, and between men and women. The spatial order that symbolizes and enacts social distinctions is founded upon a “spatial axis” (Toren 1987) of high or above versus low or below. This order aligns spatial, religious, gender and political distinctions such that above is symbolically associated with the sacred, supernatural, immortal, more powerful and masculine realm of supernatural beings or ancestor spirits, the chief, patrilineal elders, and men, while below is linked to the profane, junior ranked, mortal, less

¹⁸ Cunningham analyses in great detail spatial divisions as they relate to status and kin relationships as well. See also Waterson (2009).

powerful and feminine domain of women, commoners and those of junior status. According to this geo-symbolic plan, the dominant status of men, and the chief as the most senior and sacred man among men, is writ large in the symbolic order of space within this society, where the hamlet of the chiefly clan is situated on the highest piece of land within the village, above all other clan sites; the chief's house is positioned highest, above all other houses of the village; in each hamlet, the clan's men's house is above all other buildings; and domestic houses are positioned around the men's house according to rank, with those of junior rank being furthest away and therefore symbolically "below." The internal space of domestic houses is symbolically ordered by this high/low axis as well, higher or more sacred areas being associated with men while symbolically "lower," profane areas are allocated to women and children.

This spatial-symbolic ordering of high/low is also imposed upon the body, with the head being considered above and sacred; it is taboo or forbidden to touch another person's head, especially that of a chief. The reverence in which this part of the chief's body is held is illustrated during his installation ceremony when, during this ritual, the chief's head is ceremoniously enwrapped with white bark cloth. This is a symbolic gesture that draws a spatial parallel between the chief as a sanctified leader under whose rule all members of the district live, and the surrounding mist-enshrouded mountain peaks (referred to as the 'head' of the mountain), from which each political district draws its name. This parallel is expressed in the proverb "When the peak of the mountain/head of the chief is enshrouded with cloud/wrapped with bark cloth, the rains will surely come," an allusion to the belief that it is the supernaturally empowered chief whose power or mana ensures the return of the rains every year, and with them abundant crops and prosperity. The parallel drawn between this symbolic order and geography serves to concretize and metonymically express this spatial organization. In Geertz's words (1980, 114), the confluence of spatial order and ritual enactment carry much "truth-imaging mimetic force."

The ordering principles of this system are reflected by and embedded in numerous prescriptions concerning bodily positioning, movements, gestures and everyday acts as well: those of senior rank sit above and are served before those of junior rank and women; men bathe upstream from those downstream areas allocated to women and children which are symbolically below; and one should never stand or walk above or reach over another adult without first asking permission.

The spatial order and constant enacting of spatial prescriptions regarding rank and gender is in sharp contrast to a type of dance performed by women as part of a wedding ceremony, which women attend separately from men. During this festive and sometimes rowdy gathering, women will drum, sing, joke, exchange news with female kin and friends, and mix and drink kava. Over the course of the evening, however, the women's drumming becomes louder and certain older women will begin to perform highly comical dances, to the great amusement of the others. Older women enter with faces whitened with talc, wearing sun glasses (as men do), but with their clothes put on backwards in a comical fashion and wearing pants, which women are forbidden from wearing. They walk stooped over while pretending to carry a heavy sack high on their shoulders in the manner that men do, and leaning

on a walking stick as if bowed under the weight of such a heavy load. As this woman proceeds around the room, she will move to the front, across or behind her audience, rising up and then stooping over. But then her demeanor will change as she begins to lurch about, gripping her cane as it wobbles wildly, pretending to stumble, her stick slipping out from under her, her sack slipping off her shoulders. On several occasions, I have seen women mimic in a ludicrous and highly comical way the formal and ritualized manner in which men mix and serve kava to the chief, a sanctified drink that establishes the ritual connection between men and the spiritual world – pretending to splash it across the room. Several of the elements of these performances contradict the stringent rules of body movement appropriate to this society's order of space. But it is these women's irreverent parodies of men's ritual practices, that makes of these events a critical commentary. In performance, the potentially subversive role of humour is well recognized: as Mary Douglas has explained, the joke "affords opportunity for realizing that an accepted pattern has no necessity. Its excitement lies in the suggestion that any particular ordering of experience may be arbitrary...[in this] it is potentially subversive" (1975, 297).... Essentially a joke is an anti-rite" (301–302).

And it is the humour of the clown's dance movements, her fumbling, backwards dressing, defiance of strict rules of movement across and above space, and irreverent parodies of men, which allows this subversion to proceed. Through such dissidence, women deny men their dominance, and contravene their rules of space and propriety assigned to women within this "male aesthetic economy" (Foster 1996, 23), thereby engaging through an embodied corporeal discourse in a politics of movement. By such contradictions, women resist an hegemony of space that attempts to inflict upon them and their bodies a subordinate social meaning and correspondingly confines them to symbolically less valued spaces. Given the prevalence and consistency of this design, spatial inversion represents a potentially potent means of political commentary.

3 Conclusion

The anthropological study of space and place recognizes that landscape, space and place represent important sites for cultural meaning, social and political memory, and public discourse. Space can be used to carry social meanings that are culturally and historically constructed as well as contested, while a sense of place develops out of human relationships, feeling, and imagination. As Walter (1988, 9) explains, places grow out of "the drama of dwelling together. They [are] intimately connected with the local, imagination, with the spirit of the place." A hermeneutic approach is well suited to the study of culture, space and place as it explores space as a symbolic medium whose meanings can be read as a text. As well, hermeneutics recognizes that space and space language convey a culture's meanings about the immediate world, while place carries with it sentiments of attachment and identity that emerge out of lived experience.

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Place, Life-World and the *Leib*: A Reconstructive Perspective on Spatial Experiences for Human Geography

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Abstract This chapter tries to scope the influence of phenomenology and hermeneutics for place-based methodologies and concepts in Geography. As this metatheoretical concept is seen as paradigmatic to cope with the understanding of places and (social) spaces, it is astonishing that its significance seems to be still underdeveloped or overlooked. The importance and productivity of hermeneutics and phenomenology to contribute to place-related phenomena like globality or transnationality is evident, but not the most popular strand in contemporary Human Geography. As well, it is challenged by ‘post’- and by ‘anti’-hermeneutic approaches like post-phenomenology or deconstruction, which misconceive its potential to raise their argument against the ‘limitations’ of classic phenomenology; it is argued that this perspective is based on a self-contradicting conceptualizing of the social, which cannot tap the potential of hermeneutics to reconstruct life-world experiences like places, architectures, other beings, or atmospheres. Here we trace the arrival as well as the significance and the prospects of hermeneutic approaches in Geography in the light of such discussions.

The following chapter tries to scope the importance of phenomenology and hermeneutics for place-based methodologies and concepts in Human Geography. Despite the fact that this meta-theoretical approach is paradigmatic for the understanding of places and (social) spaces, it is nevertheless astonishing that its significance seems to be still underdeveloped. Moreover, it is neglected in postmodernism or rejected in post-structuralism, deconstruction or similar paradigms of the contemporary discourse. Although the influence and productivity of hermeneutics and phenomenology to contribute to place-related phenomena like a “progressive” sense of place (Massey 1991, 24) or transnationalities are evident, it is still not a popular

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strand in contemporary Human Geography. It is challenged by ‘post’- as well as ‘anti’-hermeneutic approaches such as post-phenomenology, deconstruction or non-representational theory, which all raise their voice against the ‘limitations’ of classic phenomenology and hermeneutics as well as against the alleged boundaries of meaning and understanding (Lea 2009; Thrift 2007; Anderson and Harrison 2010; Ash and Simpson 2014).

We argue here that such critique of phenomenology is helpful on the one hand, as it creates the necessity to clarify some older ‘blind spots’ about hermeneutics; but on the other and it’s main presumptions as wrong, mainly because it lacks an adequate empirical conception which is able to tap the dimension hermeneutics provide to reconstruct life-world *experiences* like places, other beings, or atmospheres.

Particularly an analysis of place-related phenomena *as life-world experiences* implies a phenomenological approach to a living or somatic body/“*Leib*”.¹ In contrast to that most of the critiques on hermeneutics rely on an abstract or ‘technical’ conception of the body, understood as a ‘mantle’ reacting to ‘inputs’ from outside (visual, sensorial etc.) and not as a somatic entity which is able to perceive via a ‘corporeal phenomenology’. As “awareness of the body is not a thought” (Buttimer 1976, 283), it is decisive for analysis to grasp *how* we experience places and spaces *as a corporeal practice*, which by far supersedes mere cognitive, visual etc. inputs being ‘processed’ by a ‘body interface’. The body, understood as *Leib* in the “natural attitude to the world” (“*natürliche Welteinstellung*”), is able to perceive autonomously and different to the eye-brain-complex or to sensual data inputs on the skin. Especially atmospheres are a phenomenon which exceed such ‘technical’ inputs to the subject, because they are ‘felt’ via the body in a far more complex way (Löw 2008, 45). As places and spaces are dimensional arrangements of the life-world, they are also characterized by atmospheres, of which the subject – and only the subject! – can give evidence (the ‘width’ or ‘narrowness’ of spaces, ‘pleasant’ or ‘uncomfortable’ places etc.; see Hasse 2014). It is therefore central to stick to a conception of the body as a somatic body/*Leib* than to an abstract one, according to which atmospheres are ‘inscribed’ to or inputs sent to and ‘computed’ by it beneath the thresholds of consciousness.

So to get aware of place(es) as significant aspect(s) of socially produced space you need a sensorium to cover these experiences, which can only be the *Leib* with its capacity to visual, acoustic, olfactory, haptic and even physical synthesis. It is founded on conscious and unconscious ‘corporal cognition’ as well as first and foremost on sensual data (feelings, odors). This in turn implicates a *subject-oriented approach* and not its rejection like in ‘post-structuralism’ or similar contemporary paradigms, because it is only a *Leib*, the living body/belly, that enables *subjective* knowledge of the *objective* (spatial) world (see Cresswell 1996; Malpas 1999; Schütz 1967 [1932]). This chapter will therefore focus on the

¹There is no English or French equivalent to the German term “*Leib*”, which is at the center of phenomenology. Body/belly might accomplish with *corpes/ventre* in French, but can’t cover fully the meaning of “*Leib*”: the reason why Merleau-Ponty (1962) used this term.

relevance of phenomenology and hermeneutics to understand and explain phenomena of place and space, which paradoxically seem to get even more important in a globalized, ‘place-less’ world of all-time (capitalistic) disposability and (digital) availability. The article integrates fundamental thoughts of the German philosopher and sociologist Alfred Schütz’s “*The phenomenology of the social world*” (1967) and “*Life forms and meaning structure*” (1982) and provides theoretical ideas of Otto Friedrich Bollnow’s (1961) “man and space” to offer a conceptual view and framework to address spatialities towards a new phenomenology of place.

1 Beyond Deconstructivism and Constructivism in Geography: The Social Reconstruction of (Spatial) Meaning

Hermeneutics and phenomenology experience a widened interest and application over the last two decades, as “geography is fostering an efflorescence in the prevalence and sophistication of qualitative research” (De Lyser et al. 2014, 1). As hermeneutics and particularly the phenomenological tradition are the common ground of all qualitative methodologies, their influence also grew rapidly (Simonsen 2004, 2013; Thrift 1996). Human geography takes part in the “quiet methodological revolution across the social and policy sciences as well the humanities” (Denzin and Lincoln 2005: IX). It achieved to incorporate a considerable amount and diversity of hermeneutic-based (qualitative) methods into its research.

But some late developments in human geography like the arrival of “post-phenomenology” or “non-representational theory” try to overcome a classic hermeneutic or phenomenological perspective and its methodological implications (‘subject-centrism’) and focus on social meaning. They regard them as limited for certain contemporary problems of social philosophy to cover with actual achievements of neuro-sciences for instance (Ihde 2009; Thrift 2007). In contrast to this, we argue that in the face of such developments it becomes even more necessary to discover the hitherto unrealized importance of subjectivity to understand *social* phenomena, in particular place- or space-related ones like home/-lessness, local/regional identities, experienced migration or likewise. This requires to exemplify the potential of *social (and emic) reconstructivism* and its decade-long methodological development in contrast to mere *constructivism* or speculative *deconstructivism*. This is a consequence of the problem that most prominent approaches rejecting a ‘genuine’ experience of space and place can’t answer how they evaluate and generalize their advance to ‘new experiences’ of the social beyond subjectivity, reason or meaning. Some count on measuring ‘experiences’ beyond signification like brain-data (Ihde 2009) or on the polymorph meaning of signs and signifiers which shall ‘blur’. It is not only because these experiences or ‘meanings beyond-subjectivity’ have to be signified to be understood (by a subject taking part in discussion for instance), communicated or reconstructed and reserved with meaning

(for scientific research e.g.), why these approaches seem to be inconsistent and self-contradictory. It is also because they delegitimize the subject to make its own experiences and to report about them autonomously, which is a ‘hegemonic’ stance to the objects/subjects of research (in the sense of Bourdieu).² We therefore like to emphasize the analytical stringency of hermeneutics to uncover significance and meaning of the social world, even of trans- or non-human experiences (which in the strict sense do not exist at all). Compared to such speculative approaches, hermeneutics as a founding epistemology provide quite successful and comprehensible methodologies and a well-founded theory.

2 The Trace of Hermeneutics and Phenomenology in Geography

The influence of hermeneutics and phenomenology (and its critique) is the consequence of a debate that first came up in the 1970s, when attempts to widen the discipline’s approaches and general foundations to overcome ‘positivist’ geographies became visible (most influential Tuan 1977; Buttimer 1976; Relph 1976; De Lyser et al. 2014, 2 f.; Ash and Simpson 2014, 3). The intention was not only to reject the quantitative bias of spatial analysis being predominant till then, but also to rely on a more corporeal (“*leiblich*”) experience of the life-world in a Husserlian, Schützian or Merleau-Pontyan sense. Secondly, authors of the debate also tried to develop tools for a different kind of fieldwork and a different style of data generation (oral, textual, visual) ‘containing’ corporeal experiences as ‘senseful’ (“*sinnhafte*”) expressions of social practice.

The **first phase** might be characterized as an ‘euphoric’ phase when the coming of age of the qualitative paradigm offers a new variety of methods which draw from diverse and completely new backgrounds and their specific research traditions: ethnomethodology, sociology, ethnology/human anthropology, social psychology and others were influential disciplines which spread their ideas and critiques on quantitative/positivist methodologies also into geography. This discussion lasted from the first attempts to establish a “phenomenological geography” in the late 1970s (Relph 1976; Buttimer 1976; Tuan 1977; Pickles 1985) until the late 1980s. It was the period when humanistic geography emerged as one of the first geographical strands in phenomenology (Buttimer and Seamon 1980) and hermeneutics as an unacknowledged common ground of any ‘qualitative’ approach dealing with signs, symbols or discourses.

²Even the most ‘decentering’ approach to human subjectivity, Jacques Lacan’s psychoanalysis, had to bend back the unconscious talk of the analyzed to the subject of analysis, let alone that he explicitly declared that the analyst knows nothing about the analyzed. There is no social knowledge without a subject, a fact that the ‘postmodern’ interpretation of Lacan’s writings never realized.

A **second phase** can be located between the late 1980s and the mid-1990s, when a ‘qualitative’ approach to landscape, social roles or norms and ethnic groups became influential. It challenged the classic and prevalent Sauerian one and called itself “New Cultural Geography.” Establishing a new perspective on socio-spatial relations, it provided the discipline with a distinct, “anti-positivist” perspective, which was inspired mainly by neo-Marxism (Mitchell 2000), cultural sciences (Cosgrove 1984), deconstruction (Duncan 1990) and similar approaches emanating from the 1970s linguistic and cultural turn. It connected human geography to the decisive discussions happening throughout the humanities. Moreover, it can be said that the first phase of ‘existential’ reshaping and recovering from the influence of a ‘wrong’ quantitative paradigm was now fostering a variety of approaches waiting to be applied to the geographic context. This led to an explosion of the possibilities in the way geographic research could be performed.

A **third phase**, which might be characterized as the “critical stage,” emerged around the new millennium when Thrift (1996, 2000, 2007) and others like Dewsbury (2003) or McCormack (2003) intended to deliver a “non-representational” theory as the ‘representational’ character of hermeneutic and phenomenological methods (reconstruction etc.) became controversial. Today “more-than-representational”-approaches and other developments clearly deny the fundamental and constitutive aspect every hermeneutics and understanding of place must stick to, when Lorimer (2005, 84) claims that it tries to “escape from the established academic habit of striving to uncover meanings and values that apparently await our discovery, interpretation, judgment and ultimate representation”.³ More severely and completely incommensurable with hermeneutics and phenomenology, current streams of non-representational theory – although emanated out of its wider context – gave up subject-based analysis as the foremost piece of evidence of *being-in-the-world*: non-representational theory claims to be “(...) pre-individual. It trades in modes of perception which are not subject-based” (Thrift 2007, 7; see Anderson and Harrison 2010) and lately sparked a discussion of the epistemological consequences this implicates, as it clearly shows congruencies to discussions in biochemistry, brain research and others (Korf 2012). What can be said at this point is, that phenomenology can no longer provide these approaches with methodologies, as it doesn’t make sense to give up subject-orientation for analyzing meaning; consequently, they must rely on other methods providing evidence that symptomatically stem from other sources of human-(non)-human interactions (like Actor Network Theory, brain research etc.), but it can’t be seen as a part of the hermeneutic tradition any longer.

As a consequence of this development we have on the one hand an intensified aspiration by some protagonists to overcome ‘classic’ geographical/social thinking and theorizing and even literally to try to overcome its boundaries (“more-than...”-approaches, ‘critical’ Geography), but mostly fail to provide a concise philosophical

³What is disturbing about a ‘post’- or ‘anti’-phenomenological critique on hermeneutics - drawing on constructivism and/or deconstruction – is, that it doesn’t provide any precise method or a general methodology in the light of their popular claims (comp. Ash and Simpson 2014; Lea 2009; Lorimer 2005).

foundation of their approaches.⁴ On the other hand many others turn away from this positioning as the empirical and practical earnings of the so-called ‘new’ geographies still remain sparse, let alone the yet mentioned inconsistencies in epistemology. To overcome this supposed schism, we suggest a ‘way out’ by recalling that hermeneutics and life-world-analysis are in comparison to that a reliable, adequately theorized but yet unfolded potential for place-related research.

3 Towards a Place-Related Pragmatic Social Theory: The Relevance of Schütz’s Life-World Approach and Bollnow’s “Man and Space”

Some phenomenologists realized quite early that space and place are constitutive and existential for the ‘human condition’. One influential protagonist was Otto Friedrich Bollnow (1961, 1963) who stated that the subject is existentially defined in an experienced relation to the “object of experience” (“*Sinnesgegenstand*”), of which space and its manifestations are part of.⁵ He acknowledged the importance of spatiality for the human existence: “it is a question of the relationship between the human being and his space, and thus also of the structure of human existence itself, insofar as this is determined by his relationship with space. It is in this sense that we speak of the spatiality of human existence. This term does not imply that life – or human existence [*Dasein*] – is itself something spatially extended, but that it is what it is only with reference to a space, that it needs space in order to develop within it.” (Bollnow 1963, 22 ff.) Therefore space and place are not prerequisites like in a classic (euclidian) understanding of space as some ‘postmodern’ interprets of Bollnow misleadingly assumed. Through human perception, which is closely related to culture and society and its habitats (settlements, housing, roads, places), human space expands through time and (bodily) experiences. Bollnow thus (1961, 1963) argues that space – understood as the social practice of dealing with the dialectics of space and place⁶ starting from the experiencing body – is not a ‘linguistic’ or a ‘discursive’ problem (how we construct place and space via language), but a corporeal one. It is, how we de- and re-territorialize in contestation with the material dimensions of the real world,⁷ let them be ‘cultural’ (signs on the road), let them be ‘natural’

⁴For instance, Lea (2009, 377 f.) who is self-critical on this.

⁵Bollnow is particularly interesting, because he explicitly refers to physical space (dimensions) as well as social space (built environment, other beings) as constitutive for (spatial) experiences, the first often being neglected in contemporary discourse or even ‘accursed’ in the sense of Bataille.

⁶But he did not have a conception for what is now called ‘place’ in the *sense-of-place* or *place-and-space* debate. He called it “lived space”, being very near to what H. Lefebvre developed and what is now at the heart of the discussions.

⁷There might occur some possible connections to Deleuze’ ideas here, but he stresses more (or solely) the aspects of power incorporated in this volatile process. But one might see congruencies of the phenomenological concept of the *Leib* and the corporeal practices Psychogeography and others point out; alone, we don’t have the possibility to discuss this here.

(climate conditions, landscape), let them be ‘social’ (other life-worlds)⁸ – building a home, commuting to work, experience cities and landscapes.

In contrast to these thoughts on the corporeal relatedness of the subject and its place/space, it has become fashionable in poststructuralist/postmodern and post-hermeneutic approaches to claim that such subject-orientation focusing on the *Leib* and its relation to the lived space is ‘essentialist’, because some philosophers in the wake of the ‘anti-metaphysic’ impulse of the 1960s and 1970s have proclaimed the “end of the subject” (Barthes, Derrida) or the “end of man” (Foucault) as an experiencing subject. It was their aim to ‘overcome’ humanism and its focus on individual, subjective worlds, which they regarded as unable to answer the pushing philosophical questions of that time: where does order derive from, where logos or rationality?

Although this impulse produced one of the most compelling innovations in the humanities of the twentieth century, soon the blind spots became evident and part of the discussion: if language is a “symbolic order” (Saussure, Lacan, later Derrida etc.) where does this order stems from? How is it established or developed in the history of man, what is its ontology, etc.

Others – up to today – have confirmed over and over again the importance of the ‘constructive’ character of language, and how it is able ‘to build worlds’ and stand above the ‘rational will’ of the subject as an actor to generate its own, autonomous relation to the social. This also affected the debate we portrayed here, as these ‘post-modern’ or ‘poststructuralist’ approaches deny a ‘free will’ or other forms of subjective autonomy. As they conceptualize the subject as derived from the influence of discourses, language performativity and others, they also deny a genuine experience of space and place. By giving up subjectivity as a discrete sphere of experience and thereby essentializing subjective ‘inner’ feelings and encounters as ‘metaphysical’ or ‘ontological’,⁹ they fail to grasp not only the spatial dimensions of existence and everyday life – as Bollnow (1963), Bachelard (1969), Relph (1976) and Buttimer (1976) have conceptualized them – but also its individual incorporation to become a competent actor (Piaget and Inhelder 1967). More than that, they drop behind what early phenomenological geographers as well as Henri Lefebvre or contemporary spatial sociology (such as Löw 2008 or Schroer 2006) have pointed out against formal conceptions of space like plans or maps: “space too must be explored in terms of how people experience it” (Seamon and Sowers 2008, 44), otherwise you stick to mere abstractions like ‘discursive meaning’.

⁸This separation only makes sense for analytical reasons. In fact, every practice seems to be a dialectics between both as there is nothing purely natural (mountains) nor purely social (a path), but – to reject any postmodern relativism – incorporates always a material/physical aspect (dimension, surface etc.), which is not ‘constructed’, but constitutive.

⁹That emotions are seen as ‘inner’ feeling is moreover a historical effect of the modern, see Löw (2008, 44) in accordance with Schmitz.

Recent approaches moreover stress the possibility to make ‘experiences’ beyond subjective, rational, and/or ‘willingly’ personal intentions (Lea 2009; Ihde 2012; Thrift 2007), which seems to make it impossible to combine hermeneutics with post-hermeneutic approaches, explicitly when it comes to place-related phenomena. Although this is an interesting discussion to cope with the insights neuro-sciences and others have provided considering subjectivity, the discussions about place-making/placelessness or the expropriations going along with capitalisms’ de/reterritorializing practices, as well as the recent discussion about ambiances and ‘good places’ provided by architecture or the ‘right-to-city’-movement show the opposite and prove most of phenomenology’s basic insights: space and place are elementary aspects of the life-world *experiences* of every human being (Malpas 1999). Experiences, although made autonomously by the living body, which need to be signified in acts of reflections to become *typified*.

Against a critique that claims that phenomenology or a hermeneutics of meaning ‘sets’ something as ontological given (“*Wesen*”, a ‘being’) or a certain sense as salient and unique, it has to be recalled that every subjective intentionality has to be built on experiences and ‘typification’ that *had already been* a part of the interpretative process to order space and world. “It is misleading to say that experiences have meaning. Meaning does not lie in the experience. Rather, those experiences are meaningful which are grasped reflectively” (Schütz 1967, 69). Meaning, also post-constructed meaning of experience ‘beyond the reflective body/mind’ in non-human approaches, is something which doesn’t lie ‘in the things’ but has to be constructed after experience: ironically exactly the way these critiques do by giving sense to the data of their research not accessible to language. The art of social science is thus to uncover this meaning in the most accurate way possible, and not to blur it by claiming that it ‘disseminates’.

What is important to keep in mind is that *only* the corporeal organization of the subject is the basis for experiences being able to be signified and typified. The *Leib* can make and does unique and autonomous experiences of the world, but we select what is of relevance for us by selection and reflection afterwards. Hermeneutics, understood as the method to grasp these reflections of the subject, can show that there is no knowledge of the world beyond the interplay between body/‘Leib’ and language. A language, thus, which supersedes the langue/parole dichotomy of linguistics and stems from life-world experience because we *have* a ‘Leib’/belly and do not *become* a body by signification, discourse etc.

Schütz’s basic insights into the phenomenal organization of the social world are therefore essential to understand how people make sense of their environment, which is also rooted in spatial arrangements. By this we also reaffirm and produce such arrangement by ourselves, the founding argument of “symbolic interactionism” (Schütz 1945; Blumer 1973). Schütz’ characterization contains six elementary aspects how we experience the life-world: (1) by a tension of consciousness, (2) by an *epoché*/neglecting doubts (3) by a spontaneity, which is rooted in a ‘plan’ (*Entwurf*) and motifs to act upon, by (4) self-awareness/-experience as acting subject (you experience that you *can* do things), by (5) a sociality based on intersubjectivity/communication/acting and (6) by the prevailing of the social/standard time

(*durée*¹⁰). With the *live form* of the ‘acting I’ the reference to the spatiotemporal world is produced, in which the I presents itself, because we are experiencing our own body in the *durée* in a double sense. On the one hand we perceive acoustic, optical etc. experiences, on the other hand we perceive sensations of movements – kinesthetic experiences and other human beings, too: “In this, experiences are being fixed in the spatial and temporal world of expanded things; the distinction between ‘the I’ and its environment offers the possibility to project the experiences that are ongoing through symbolizations” (Schütz 1967, 43/45; own translation).

Our argument is that it is the subjective and bodily (“*leibliche*”) organization of every human being, which only makes place and space a relevant aspect of social analysis – otherwise we would know nothing about it, if not via the communicated and symbolized experiences. It is alone the corporeal constitution which opens out in the symbolization even of the spatial aspects of life, which make place and space highly relevant aspect of. It is not ‘just there’, it is not metaphysical nor an ‘essence’, but part of the physical world which influences necessarily our ‘being’ – if we want or not, if we philosophize or work. It is this which urges us to arrange with the resistive physics of life and of the social world to built our own cultural ones, and which also contains strong aspects of materiality: no (social, personal) atmosphere without a certain physical/material surrounding, no genuine experience of each other without the lived body of alter ego and its presence.¹¹ Place, as the signification and ‘making’ of space as a meaningful environment, is the active and necessary enactment with this world, which makes it obsolete to give up this subjective and corporeal “eccentric positionality” of the human species and its life-worlds (Plessner 1970), as most of the critiques of phenomenology and hermeneutics do.¹² Without knowing how we cope with the world as a baby and infant, getting a child and then a grown-up (becoming a competent actor in regard to the distinct life-world we grow up), we can not take into account the important role place and space play in this process, neither for the species (phylogenesis) nor for the individual (ontogenesis): “The acceptance of the thesis that the experiences have to be set in the *durée* in a space-time objectified form for the other leads Schütz to the conclusion that the temporal and spatial order – in which the symbolization is framed – is essential for the acquisition of the set meaning/sense (own translation)” (Srubar 1981, 59). A last example should show the fundamental consequence of these insights.

¹⁰ Schütz had appropriated the notion of flowing consciousness, or *duration*, from Henri Bergson (see Srubar 1981, 25 ff.).

¹¹ That is the reason why virtual social contacts (Facebook etc.) are felt as ‘abstract’ and don’t have the same social consequences real world relations have. Some even avoid them for that reason and ‘escape’ to virtuality, trying to substitute them. Both aspects show the distinct and basic influence the living body/Leib may have on social ties.

¹² Place, of course, is also ‘produced’ by these bodily subjects (see Cresswell in this volume), and not to be understood as a passive container.

4 Refugees Camps in Germany as Created “Non-places”

The world exists, previous to any analysis; every attempt to form it through a range of synthesis will always remain artificial, as feelings and appearances themselves are products of the analysis and not realizable before that/the analysis. (Merleau-Ponty 1962, 6, own translation)

This part of the chapter focuses on the recent migration dynamics to central Europe, especially Germany, Austria and some Scandinavian countries and its consequences for the spatialities of refugee camps. We draw attention to migrant groups from alleged “secure” countries like Ghana, Macedonia or others (who do not have any chance to get accepted as asylum seekers) who are therefore centralized in “return camps”. We assume with our arguments to this point that the human existence is related to spatial experience and our subjectivity constituted in a “*being-to*” the (spatial) world (Merleau-Ponty 1962). Relph (1976) thus sees space and place as dialectically structured in human environmental experience, since our understanding of space is related to the places we inhabit – Merleau-Ponty (1962) would use the term “*Einwohnen*” (“living-in”) – which in turn derives meaning and belonging to their situated spatial contexts and environments. This assumption – that experiencing place through time creates identity and ‘secureness/safety’ – is thwarted by the German government by creating “transit places/zones” for migrants, who do not have a legal status as refugees and therefore have no legal right to stay in Germany. Bavaria – a region which was heavily affected by refugees coming via the “Balkan route” – established recently in Bamberg such a “return camp” on a former US-Army base, which is a territoriality separated with fences and organized as a detainment camp. It is accessible only through one gate from the adherent city. Even though the migrants are allowed to leave it, it is clear that they are implicitly denied to establish a meaningful and intersubjectively shared and secured “sense of place” in the city of Bamberg through daily-life practices and social exchange with the local population and urban life-world. The structuring order of that “gated territory” can be described as a “non-place” where social experiences have to be minimized, because establishing a place of belonging creates local identity and therefore may produce resistance towards a right to stay. From the vantage point of the authorities this has to be prevented. Cynically one could state that this politics – in fear of constantly high numbers of migrants – understood that the production of “lived space” (Bollnow 1961) in terms of meaning and bodily “place making” – is a human condition and has to be subverted and blocked. The social grammar of that spatial production of place is to prevent creating home(land) (“*Heimat*”) for strangers.

5 Concluding Remarks

Geography as a discipline became multi-faceted and multi-paradigmatic, so that “ontology (the beliefs about the world) and epistemology (the ways of knowing the world) are linked to the methods we choose to use for research” (Winchester and Rofo 2010, 2 f.). To state one’s methodological position is to reflect the own view of the ‘nature of reality’. Place-phenomenology demands that we seek to discover the world as it is experienced by those who are involved and situated in it. It is about the human experience of spatial dimensions and aspects of the world, its symbolization and the meaning which people attach to their socio-spatial experiences. Scientific procedures which separate subjects and objects, thought and action, people and environments are inadequate to investigate these life-world-experiences. Neither seem anti-subjective or object/thing-related approaches proper to cope with the problem as they reject what is in the center of the research we suggested: A post-ontological consideration of space and place. By that we refer to the necessarily incorporated, but yet ontological character of spatial aspects of the life-world, which alone makes it possible to *reconstruct* them *as* first-grade-constructions (like any other life-world-constructions; Schütz 1967 [1932], chap. 43 ff.).

The phenomenological approach ideally should allow life-world experiences to reveal itself in its own terms. The social world is one of intersubjectively constructed meanings with an emphasis on understanding the person’s experience of the life-world – which is a permanent source of evidence and meaning – and his or her situatedness in time and space. There are a useful and proven sets of qualitative methods to reconstruct the constructions and “typologies” (Schütz 1982) of subjects to handle their daily-life existence.¹³ For our mentioned example above, the researcher has to confront him/herself with the experienced spatiality of the migrant camp and in search of a hermeneutic understanding and reconstruction of the refugees relevant constructions, meanings and sense of their ‘home place’/ alienation as political created and state governed micro-territories. This is a strong argument to overcome postmodern cynicism that every ‘essential’ feeling of place-relatedness is obsolete or racist. Without the construction of ‘good’ places no human existence is possible, and to give up subjectivism hinders to grasp these senses of place: the subject/subjectivity is the only source to encounter socially relevant spatial knowledge.

¹³ A very helpful qualitative approach to structure and objectify the constructions of the researched subjects and their spatialities of the life-world in a reconstructive process was developed by Rolf Bohnsack (2000). Unfortunately we cannot discuss the implications for methods here. See also Winchester and Rofo (2010).

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Hermeneutics, Place, and the Environment

Janet Donohoe

Abstract Environmental Philosophy frequently speaks of The Environment and does so in terms that indicate a unified and singular object that is in crisis. But, what is the environment really, and what is its relationship to the places of our lives? By portraying the environment, nature, or the world as being independent of human culture, the natural sciences have a tendency to reify nature and separate it from its cultural and historical dimensions. Such a separation affects the ways in which we consider responding to any kind of environmental concerns and frequently undermines local positions that might be worth preserving or at least seriously engaging. By drawing upon the work of Edmund Husserl and Hans-Georg Gadamer, I will explore what we mean by environment with an eye to suggesting an approach that does not view the environment as a unified and singular object, but that recognizes the role of the subject in the environment, the role of the environment in the subject, and the relationship between the two that calls for hermeneutics.

Environmental Philosophy frequently speaks of *The Environment* and does so in terms that indicate a unified and singular object that is in crisis. But, what is the environment really, and what is its relationship to the places of our lives? By portraying the environment, nature, or the world as being independent of human culture, the natural sciences have a tendency to reify nature and separate it from its cultural and historical dimensions. Such a separation affects the ways in which we consider responding to any kind of environmental concern and frequently undermines local positions that might be worth preserving or at least seriously engaging.

In the following I will explore what we mean by environment with an eye to suggesting an approach that does not view the environment as a unified and singular object, but that recognizes the role of the subject in the environment, the role of the environment in the subject, and the relationship between the two that calls for hermeneutics. I will begin with a brief explanation of how a view of the world as objective and universal is problematic. I will follow this explanation with a

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description of phenomenologist Edmund Husserl's notions of homeworld, alien-world, and their relationship to a common lifeworld. I will focus on how these notions make possible a hermeneutic approach to place and environment that allows for what Hans-Georg Gadamer describes as the openness of the question and the recognition of valuation within experience. Finally, I will explore how this phenomenological and hermeneutical approach to the world puts us in a positive position to disavow the instrumental approach to the environment and to recognize our position as earthlings.

1 On the Singular Environment and World

We are used to hearing the terms “The Environment” and “The World” that lead us to think of environment and world as singular entities that can be known and perhaps even mastered. This kind of thinking increasingly arises from talk of “globalization” that is so common. We hear about the evils of globalization as taking away diversity of local cultures and robbing us of particular cultural worlds due to economic or culturally dominant forces such as American music and movies, or Chinese financial investment. Time-space compression as achieved through faster airplane travel and the vast system of satellite communications make our globe seem conquerable, as if there is no place we cannot go, no place we cannot reach, no place that cannot be infiltrated by the English language, American tourists, and American culture. The globe or planet that we can now understand as an isolated orb of the cosmos is becoming on some accounts more and more homogenous, more and more unified. We speak of the loss of biodiversity at the same time as we see loss of cultural diversity.

Yet is it really the case that we are all becoming alike? Other accounts remind us that there is a growing gap, an increasing distance between the rich and the poor on this globe. While we may all be drinking Coca-Cola, we are doing so from vastly different economic perspectives. So, what does that mean for our globalized world? Is it an object in space that can be measured and mastered? It is certainly never *experienced* as merely an object in space. From any human perspective, in fact, it *cannot* be experienced as an orb in space. We humans cannot see our world, our globe in its wholeness. We can only ever experience it from our respective positions upon that globe, just as the ant cannot experience the whole of the orange across which it walks from any particular point upon the orange. Even the very few astronauts who have seen the globe from space cannot see the whole of that globe, but only ever see an aspect of it at a time. On the other hand, does this mean that we must take the perspective that we are each in our own soap bubble as Uexküll would have it?¹ Is there no world in common except for the occasional overlap of our bubbles with those of some other species? Is it possible to account for the very particular experience of any part of the world and yet still speak of The Environment,

¹ See Buchanan (2008).

The World? Approaching this question hermeneutically allows us to take up a critical position. It provides a way to think through the relationship between parts and wholes, but also allows for the recognition that shaking the foundations of a unified, objective world does not mean that we must reconcile ourselves to each being in our own bubble of a world. It rather ushers in a richer and more complex way of considering our relationship to our worlds and our environments such that we value places and beings in their interconnection and recognize a role for all in living those interconnections well.

2 Husserl's Parts and Wholes Idea of Place and Environment

Edmund Husserl introduces the notions of homeworld/alienworld and lifeworld in response to what he deems a crisis of understanding that has limited our concept of world to a geometrized object of scientific investigation.² For Husserl, the issue is that the sciences, in their focus upon establishing what the world is in fact and in only accepting as true that which is objectively established, fail to truthfully consider the meaning of the world and human existence. Such investigations leave out all matters of valuation and exclude precisely the questions which humans find most compelling. To overcome this crisis, then, Husserl focuses his energies on the traditions and histories that compose our experiences of our world. He asserts that homeworld and alienworld are parts to lifeworld's whole, but as in his more general discussion of parts and wholes, the relationship here is not such that the sum of the parts composes the whole. Instead, there is a rather circular relationship in that one can only understand the parts due to the whole and one can only understand the whole due to the parts. In other words, we can only grasp lifeworld through homeworld, but homeworld is only possible because of lifeworld. Lifeworld is ground and horizon of homeworld. It is the pre-given to homeworld's givenness.

Let's think through an example. As I sit at my computer, I move in relation to the computer and the room around me in a quite familiar way that is the result of traditions in which I have been raised as well as more personal habits of interaction that are bodily sedimented. It is bodily easy for me to manipulate the keys on the computer since I have done so innumerable times. I needn't even think about where the keys are. My fingers simply type words as I compose an essay. The temperature in the room is appropriate for me. The sounds of cars driving by outside and of birds and cicadas are normal sounds in my homeworld. If we were to transport ourselves to a distant and different land, things might seem quite alien. If I imagine being in Verkhoyansk, for instance, I would be in an alienworld to the degree that as the coldest inhabited place on earth, the lives of Verkhoyansk inhabitants are quite different from my own semi-tropical life in the southern United States. Different

²For more on this see Husserl (1973) and Husserl (1970).

traditions have shaped ways of constituting that community and different bodily habits arise in response to the surrounding world that shape those traditions and ways of being. The sounds would be abnormal for me, the feel of the air would be abnormal, the activities in which I could engage and my bodily interaction with my surroundings would be different. Perhaps rather than being habituated to a computer, I would be bodily habituated to moose hunting and an ice pick. This does not mean, however, that the inhabitants of Verkhoyansk are utterly and completely alien to me. We have levels of similarity that have to do with our position historically, but also have to do with our position as earthlings and the ways in which the lifeworld acts upon us. Such similarities allow me to recognize their alienworld as a world of its own. Verkhoyansk is culturally different, physically different, different in climate, different in feel, but still part of a lifeworld that makes both it and my homeworld possible. That lifeworld is not an objective, unified, unchanging world although it provides a foundation for each homeworld and is only understandable through our encounter with each homeworld or alienworld. The lifeworld is pre-given in the sense that it functions essentially in the background of any experience or encounter with homeworld or alienworld.

For Husserl, my homeworld is the world of my experience that entails my own sedimented experiences as well as those of prior generations that have been passed along to me through the world itself. I learn certain ways of organizing my world and my experiences from the moment that I begin to have experiences. Some of the ways of organizing my world are carried along by the world that I encounter and are not of my own doing, but as I grow up in that world I take them on as the way things are. Cities have parks and wide busy streets, for instance. Silverware goes in the top drawer nearest the dishwasher. Some of these experiences are more clearly relative to my culture or even my family or home life situation than others. When I then experience a place that is not familiar to me, that place is experienced as an alienworld. It can be more or less alien depending on the level of coincidence with my homeworld. If I have grown up in a world that requires me to be careful when crossing the road for fear of getting hit by a car, it becomes automatic for me to look for automobiles when I come to a crossing. We can imagine places, however, where this concern about automobiles is completely nonsensical and where my immediate and automatic swivel of my head to look first left and then right for a car would be a totally unnecessary bodily movement. It would not occur to me to view this automatic response as a culturally peculiar act had I not encountered an alienworld where such an act is unnecessary. In some places this is even implicitly acknowledged in the painted reminders to tourists on the street indicating which way to look before crossing the street. London is a prime example. Thus the alienworld reveals to me things about my homeworld that I had taken for granted as simply being the way things are. I was unaware of its role as a homeworld trait.

What also becomes revealed in this kind of encounter, though, is the way in which homeworld and alienworld are both made possible because of the more fundamental lifeworld. In order for me to recognize an alienworld trait as alien, it must be within parameters that make sense. Otherwise, I would not even be able to

experience the thing at all. Beneath alienworld and homeworld is lifeworld as ground and horizon making each possible. This lifeworld *a priori* is that which makes us earthlings as opposed to Martians. It is so deeply intertwined with who we are that even if we escaped earth (as Hannah Arendt might say) we would still be earthlings in our manner of constitution and our own way of understanding our place or being in the cosmos. It is important to recognize that being an earthling does not necessarily mean being human, either. We share our lifeworld with other beings who certainly have their own homeworlds which overlap with my homeworld, but would also be quite alien to us.

Of course, never having experienced any place other than this world, we have a hard time identifying how constitution would be any different if we were Martians. This reveals our own presence in the concept of lifeworld and the level to which we are intertwined with world. We constitute homeworld in the way we do because we are of the lifeworld and the lifeworld is of us. The pre-given lifeworld provides horizons of possibility for constituting homeworld including other subjects, other beings, and other worlds, alienworlds. Those horizons are not static, but are open to historical flux since that which is presupposed in any constitution of a homeworld is in part historically conditioned.³

With this analysis, we take the first step towards understanding the role of hermeneutics vis-à-vis the environment and place. If lifeworld is historical and yet common and homeworld and alienworld are cultural and historical, then our interrelation with world requires a hermeneutic process of understanding. That process draws upon the relationship between parts and wholes in undermining any kind of singular, unified world theory by helping us to see that we always have the peculiar perspective of a place with its own traditions, and historical and cultural horizons out of which we cannot completely break.

3 Gadamer's Hermeneutics and Lifeworld

Hans-Georg Gadamer is well aware of these themes in Husserl's work and deliberately takes up the issue of the lifeworld as one that provides the foundation for analysis of world that is irreducible to scientific, objective world separable from the constitutive act of a subject.

Gadamer's analysis of Husserl's worlds underscores the importance of the *a priori* common world to the culturally relative homeworlds and alienworlds. As he writes, "Certainly the subjective relativity of the life-worlds may be analyzed in its universal structure and the *a priori* of a life-world, a universal *a priori*, can be disclosed as one that by no means is the objective *a priori* of the traditional metaphysics of the sciences but that grounds all the sciences because as *Bodengeltung*, as basic validity, it precedes every science, including logic" (Gadamer 1977, 189–90). Gadamer likewise underscores this *a priori* as a limit or a horizon of homeworld/

³For more on this and the way in which world connects us to other species, see Donohoe (2016).

alienworld. Again, he writes, “the immediate living in ‘the’ world, however, in one world that claims to be essentially singular, proves to be ambiguous since it encompasses a variable wealth of modes of givenness. The world is never self-given; it is only the pole of objectivity, that is, it remains functional as a polar direction in the ever-continuing advance and disclosure of life-world experience” (Gadamer 1977, 191). As a limit or horizon, the universal, common world is what makes possible any given world at all. He reiterates that the lifeworld is only partly accessible through the peeling away of the layers of cultural, historical worlds. Gadamer explains what he understands Husserl to mean by lifeworld. “It is the world itself that is concretized in such intersubjective experiences: it, and not an ‘objective’ world mathematically describable *a priori*, is *the* world” (Gadamer 1977, 191). And again, “It is certainly the case that penetration into these life-world horizons cannot avoid beginning by uncovering the style of the present life-world and in the end thinking the world ‘in its concrete and infinite historicity’” (Gadamer 1977, 193).

Gadamer has stressed here the historicity of the lifeworld in suggesting that there is a present style of lifeworld that changes historically. Other cultures and other historical periods have their own horizons of understanding. Husserlian phenomenology as adopted by Gadamer allows us to acknowledge, however, a third kind of horizon which is the horizon of the lifeworld *a priori*. The lifeworld *a priori* is not, however, a universal, singular, unchanging structure of world. It is still historically bounded in the sense that what provides the basis of knowledge for more specific worlds is historical. In the ancient world, there were overlapping phases of understanding between the Romans and the Goths and the Byzantines even though they each had their own cultural understandings. Nonetheless, there was not an understanding of computers or automobiles. Such things were not of the historical horizon of the lifeworld *a priori* of the ancient world, but they are of the historical horizon of the life-world *a priori* of the contemporary world in ways that elements of the ancient world are no longer.

If we take on the phenomenological idea of the lifeworld, we are led to a hermeneutic understanding of our own world that allows us to challenge the status quo and the role of scientific thinking in addressing our environment. We come to understand that we are interpreters of our world. We interpret not from a position outside that world that allows us to see the world as a whole, and as an object, but from a position within the world. Moreover, we interpret not from a position within a singular and unified world, but from a very specific world of a particular culture and a particular time. If we are inattentive to the specificity of our view, we will begin to think that our own view is universal and can account for all. We will begin to think that we have the ultimate answers to any kind of environmental issue that might arise. We function from a position of hubris. Instead, hermeneutics allows us to recognize that our own peculiar perspective provides a pre-understanding that serves as a horizon of possible meanings.

A hermeneutics of place makes possible the understanding of the homeworld of specific, subjective-relative, cultural places. These are embedded deeply into our bodily ways of being in the world and are inseparable from our memories that are embedded in the places of our experience. They forever will be. Deeper beyond and

providing the ground and horizon for those homeworld places is the lifeworld that is the condition for the possibility of homeworld at all. A hermeneutics of environment, then, involves a recognition of our pre-understanding and a fusion of horizons that is open to questioning. This questioning allows the world to reveal itself as it is with as little imposition upon it as possible. We know, however, that it is impossible to experience lifeworld as it is in itself because its in itself always involves its interrelation with us.

4 Place and Hermeneutics

We might question at this point what all of this has to do with a hermeneutics of place and environment. Gadamer's recognition of this relationship between lifeworld and subject as well as homeworld and lifeworld points to two important hermeneutic themes. One is the idea of horizons and how the fusion of horizons is revelatory of meaning. The other is the parts/whole relationship that leads to the non-vicious circularity of hermeneutics.

In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer rehearses for his reader the mistakes of the Enlightenment and its responding Romanticism with respect to our pre-understanding. He frames his discussion in terms of the relationship to history and tradition. The Enlightenment, he argues, ends up with a prejudice against prejudice in its attempt to conquer mythos with logos. By making and thinking of all things rationally, one can overcome all prejudices of tradition and hedge against the infusions of one's thinking with mythological thinking from the past. Romanticism in response to the Enlightenment retrieves mythos at the expense of logos in that the Romantics celebrate the past and tradition and recognize the authority of traditions. Gadamer sees this view as equally problematic as it is a simple reversal of the position of the Enlightenment. The position that Gadamer attempts to carve out instead is one that maintains mythos and logos in tension with a full acknowledgement of prejudices and an attempt to bring those to the forefront so that they can be dealt with, but also with full acknowledgement that we can never take up a position outside of tradition such that all of our prejudices can be brought to light. We have all kinds of pre-understandings that are not always available for our rational analysis. So, while we must be aware that we have them, we also must be aware that we cannot *not* have them.

What I find interesting is a similar kind of development vis-à-vis the environment. We can speak of the Christian mythos of creation as being one that predominated during the common era until the time of the Renaissance and Enlightenment. That position has been gradually replaced, at least to some extent, by the scientific logos-infused view that dominates today. In both cases, the tension between mythos and logos is reduced to one pole or the other. At the same time, both positions essentially view the environment as something over which we humans have mastery and which is there for our use either as a creation that has been given to us by God, or as the object of scientific investigation and manipulation. What hermeneutics stresses

instead is the utter immateriality of the environment to which we are exposed. This position is made possible for Gadamer through the Husserlian notion of the relationship between homeworld and lifeworld *a priori*.

Environmentally, we might align these two positions with the position of science and technology that believes we can use technology to solve our current environmental crisis as opposed to a romanticized view that harkens back to a more primitive or innocent way of life. This latter kind of position entails what Michael Zimmerman describes as “not only nostalgia for an allegedly innocent era in which humans dwelt harmoniously with nature, but also an inadequate understanding of the complex contours of modern thought” (Zimmerman 2004, 211). Hermeneutically we would say that the desire to return to some kind of more primitive way of life is equivalent to believing that we can retrieve the originary audience’s understanding of a text. Gadamer is quite clear that such a concept of retrieval misunderstands the historical horizon that is our own. We cannot simply leap over generations of history in order to reconstruct some past historical moment. We cannot step into some moment of the past out of the layers of sedimented history that compose our own horizon and ways of constituting the world. But to place all our hope in technological solutions is simply to perpetuate an instrumental form of thought that is in large part responsible for the delicate situation in which we currently find ourselves. One valorizes the past while the other ignores the past and both view the lifeworld as static. To recognize the dynamic historicity of the lifeworld is at the same time to recognize the need for the openness of the question and constant reinterpretation.

It is not hard to understand that throughout history humans have conceived of nature or the environment differently. From pre-historic peoples to fiefdoms to Viking explorers to Modernity, the environment was not one thing nor was it conceived in a singular way or even similar ways. What is meant by wilderness, nature, environment, world, earth has changed conceptually throughout the epochs. So, hermeneutics is a natural approach to understanding the temporally and platially bound meanings of these terms.

Zimmerman reinforces this notion in claiming that the world appears in accordance with human practices, or we might say in accordance with the practices of living beings. Furthermore, he claims that “those who attempt to justify a given practice or institution by calling it ‘natural’ fail to understand that humanity is free to devise practices and institutions that do not accord with so-called natural practices or principles of organization” (Zimmerman 2004, 213). In other words, there really is no practice, situation, or way of being that can be appealed to as natural. The lifeworld and homeworld and alienworld are all within some horizon of activity by some meaning-revealing being.

There are at least three advantages to this understanding. Initially, it helps us recognize the limitations of scientific discourse of a singular and unified planet earth. Richard Palmer stresses that it points out the impossibility of transcending tradition, that such “objective knowledge would depend on a standpoint above history from which history itself can be looked upon” and such a position is unavailable to humans in their finitude (Palmer 1969, 178). This is part of our coming to grasp the inability to see the world as a singular, unified, static whole.

On a very practical level, it is important to understand the relationship between hermeneutics, place and environment if we want to effect change in attitudes towards the environment. Humans live and think locally in places, homeworlds, which have peculiar climates and vegetation, particular kinds of buildings and cultural expectations. To attempt to engender concern for the environment as a monolithic singular thing is an alienating prospect. It is difficult to comprehend our mutual environment as something we should care for if we do not understand the reliance of our homeworld upon a shared lifeworld. If our globe is simply an object of scientific inquiry, it is more difficult to concern ourselves with it. We leave that to the scientists who will no doubt come up with some kind of new technology, new mastery that will save us all. Homeworld is something different. To maintain the tension between the parts and the wholes, my world and a shared, common world requires a much more complex understanding and entails the need for a hermeneutics of the environment.

The second advantage is that Gadamer's focus on horizons helps us to grasp the ways in which our understanding can be both historical and true. Gadamer helps us to recognize that the context continually changes so that nothing ever has a fixed or simple meaning without interpretation. There are always other and new contexts within which we must and can understand. The recognition of horizons also helps bring to light our hidden assumptions about the environment that often support our actions vis-à-vis the environment. Once such hidden assumptions are made apparent, we can no longer rely on them as self-evident or given ways of interpreting our world. We can no longer appeal to them as natural, but can only view them as arising from traditions that are grounded ultimately in a historically bounded lifeworld.

The third advantage arises from a combination of the idea of horizons with the parts/wholes concept that Gadamer addresses specifically with respect to text and that I am applying here to places and environment. For Gadamer belonging to a tradition is a condition of hermeneutics that limits our ability to view the whole. We must understand the whole, the world environment, in terms of the parts, that is the details of any place. As Gadamer explains, "The movement of understanding is constantly from the whole to the part and back to the whole. Our task is to expand the unity of the understood meaning centrifugally. The harmony of all the details with the whole is the criterion of correct understanding. The failure to achieve this harmony means that understanding has failed" (Gadamer 1992, 291).

These three advantages make possible what I take to be the most important contributions that hermeneutics can make. Those contributions are a focus upon the openness of the question and the recognition that constitution involves valuation.

Any phenomenological sense-making is always wrapped up with a process of valuation. This means that exactly what we perceive of the world, of nature, is already imbued with value. In the very fact that it is perceived and interpreted, it is valued. So, the question of whether nature is valuable is a non-starter. Of course nature, insofar as it is experienced, is valued and valuable. Does nature have value in itself, intrinsic value? This is a different question and one that does not really make sense phenomenologically or hermeneutically. For nature can only be valuable insofar as something or someone experiences it as such. Hermeneutics also

makes possible the understanding that the valuation of the world changes throughout history and from world to world.

So why does this make any difference in terms of how we treat our environment? Because hermeneutics is willing to acknowledge the relativity of homeworld/alien-world and lifeworld, we realize that nothing about our world is natural, nothing written in stone. We must respond to the meaning of that world with scientific humility, an openness to the world, and an attention to the fusion of our own pre-given horizons with the horizons of the world. This leads to what Gadamer calls the openness of the question. When Gadamer speaks of the openness of the question, he is speaking of a kind of response to our world that does not impose upon that world any kind of instrumental rationality, but instead approaches the world from a position of humility in wanting to learn from it. This means having a kind of attentiveness to allow the world to speak to us rather than to speak for it. But when we listen to the world, what do we hear? We hear global warming, we hear the dying off of species, we hear the stress. Does that mean that the world is in crisis? It may. We should certainly be prepared to respond without stopping our listening. So, we try the things that we think might help the world not be in stress. We limit our fossil fuels, we limit our carbon production, we cultivate an approach to listening that is open to hearing. But, we don't do this from an instrumental standpoint, we do this from a thoughtful standpoint all the while recognizing that we may be hearing what we want to hear or not hearing what we need to hear, so we must listen again, we must be prepared to critique the pre-understanding by thinking anew again and again.

The emphasis that Gadamer places on the openness of the question allows us to proceed with humility and unknowing when approaching questions of what to do about the environment. This does not make us any less inclined to take some kind of action, but hopefully will make us less arrogant in the action that we take and more open to critiquing any position we do take.

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Psychology and Lived Space: Woodland Paths and the Pathic Dimension of Place Experience

Eva-Maria Simms

*.... what is a house but a bigger skin, and a neighborhood map
but the world's skin ever expanding?*

(Annie Dillard, *An American Childhood*, 1987)

*I found myself within a forest dark,
For the straightforward pathway had been lost.
Ah me! how hard a thing it is to say
What was this forest savage, rough, and stern,
Which in the very thought renews the fear.*

(Dante, *Inferno*, H.W. Longfellow translation, 1867)

Abstract The following inquiry maps out a region of concepts that can support a qualitative, human science psychology of place. We will think through the concept of experience and broaden it beyond ‘subject’, ‘interiority’, and ‘inner representations’ and develop a trans-personal model of the psyche based on the phenomenology of perception. The investigation of the experience of lived space leads to the latent, *pathic* communication between the body and its spatial situation and the effects it has on consciousness. The idea of the pathic dimension of spatial experience will be developed in dialogue with a phenomenological description of losing one’s path in the woods. A hermeneutic of the pathic quality of place experience reveals the intentionality of places *eo ipso*, and how they impact human perception, consciousness, and embodiment. Embodied consciousness has a *semiotic*, species-specific relationship with its places and *Umwelts*: the lived body is not bounded by the skin, but moves through its spatial field as an extension of its gestures. The pathic dimension of place experience can be accessed through a study of the affective, *attuned* quality of places, the ‘*action-space*’ invitations they issue, in the impersonal transcendence of *spatial characteristics* that conceal and reveal their profiles in a changing perceptual tableau, and in the basic spatial *organization* of life. A psychology that leaves the Cartesian interior and its representations behind

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becomes attuned to the deep, chiasmic entanglement of body and consciousness within the web of spatial things. It respects the trans-personal, transcendent presence of anonymous being around and within it.

1 Consciousness and Spatial Metaphors

The traditional Western model of the soul or psyche uses the metaphor of “interiority” or “inner space” to describe the location where the activities of consciousness take place. In the Christian tradition, Paul valorized the “inner man”, who follows a different spiritual law than “the members of my body” (*Romans* 7:22–23). Augustine wrote: “...there is someone inside who can see through the eyes,” and he speaks “of the soul as the inner man and the body as the outer man” (*Sermo* 126.2.3 and *De civitate dei* 13.24.2 as cited in Matthews 1967, 166 and 167). For Descartes the soul was located in the pineal gland, one of the deep areas above the brain stem because it was the only location in the brain that was singular and not doubled (Lokhorst 2015). The metaphor of the inner space has been a key element in the Cartesian dichotomy between the “subjective”, inner world or *res cogitans* and the “objective” outer world of *res extensa*.

In the history of psychology, Freud took pride in placing his psychoanalytic work in line with Copernicus and Darwin in the threefold displacement of the human from the center of the universe, from the pinnacle of creation, and finally from being “master in his own house” via introduction of the unconscious. “We psychoanalysts were neither the first nor the only ones to propose to mankind that they should look inward; but it appears to be our lot to advocate it most insistently and to support it by empirical evidence which touches every man closely” (Freud 1924/53, 296). Behaviorists like Watson and Skinner, in turn, advocated for abandoning the study of the ‘black box’ of consciousness and inner mental processes in favor of studying outer environmental conditioning. Cognitive science reacted by re-populating the inner subject with inner representations and most of contemporary cognitive neuroscience is engaged in localizing psychological functions in the different areas of the brain. Between the ‘inner self’ and the ‘outer world’ there commences the miraculous transfer of ‘representations’ from the outside to the inside. The underlying ideology of representationalism is hardly ever questioned and examined and ghosts around in most of the reports on psychological research. The investigation of spatial experience and its hermeneutic have been systematically and intentionally excluded from scientific psychology as ‘subjective’ and introspective. Psychology, as Dudchenko summarizes, “could not languish in the subjective assessment of the contents of experience that introspection provided” (!) (Dudchenko 2010, 10). Psychological life has been consistently identified with the interiority of the body, the subjectivity of the subject, the materiality of the brain, and the invisibility and inaccessibility of the psyche. Spatial metaphors abound: traditional psychology is haunted by the specter of interiority.

2 Redefining Place Experience

With respect to place, there has been an alternative movement in *human science psychology* (Giorgi 1988) dedicated to researching the qualitative dimension of human existence and spatial experience. There are a number of qualitative research strategies in this tradition that are helpful in developing a psychological hermeneutics of place. One strategy is to interpret the findings from contemporary psychological lab research by applying an existential anthropology as Merleau-Ponty did for the psychology of his time with respect to the reflex (1983), perception (2012), and child development (2010). Another strategy is to gather the writings about place experience from the psychological tradition that existed outside of psychology as a lab science in psychiatry (Minkowski 1970; Straus 1956; Boss 1979; Fanon 2008; Jager 1971), pedagogy (Bollnow 1961; Buytendijk 1933; Langeveld 1960; Van Manen and Levering 1996) and human geography (Relph 1976; Seamon 1989); here we find a wealth of psychiatric/psychological case studies, observational descriptions, and excellent phenomenological studies of spatial experience. A third strategy is to gather empirical data on the experiences of place through qualitative research methods and apply hermeneutic strategies in systematically analyzing and interpreting them (Benswanger 1975, 1979; Fullilove 2004; Simms 2008; Arndt 2013; Hook and Vrdoljak 2002).

In the following I will work with auto-ethnographic vignettes about place experience that I wrote a number of years ago for the literary blog *Coal Hill Review*. My method here follows a blend of the third and second research strategies, bringing together an interpretation of auto-ethnographic published data with concepts developed by human science psychologists and continental philosophers. The first-hand descriptions allow me to organize and explore some key psychological approaches to place experience. I wrote the blog-essays in order to capture as closely as possible the experience of losing one's way in the woods and to understand how a hiking path altered the experience of the landscape. Below is an excerpt (Simms 2012a).

3 The Path

My neighbors and I had been involved in planning and constructing a new system of urban hiking trails that would be accessible through a short walk down our neighborhood streets. The trail under construction was planned to run through the wooded landscape behind the local ball field. One Saturday morning I decided to check on the progress of the trail crew and see what the new portion of the trail looked like. I walked up to the point where the graded and benched surface ended. Ahead the would-be path was marked with the small orange flags in the landscape where the trail crew would continue their work on Monday. It had been a great walk so far: dappled sunlight, sweet birdsong, easy walking, blackberries that were reddish green and still unripe, but which would be ready in the coming weeks. I was amazed how the trail had transformed the landscape, and how sweet this little grove was.

I could see a few flags ahead, like the crumbs of Hansel and Gretel's bread, and decided to follow them. I knew this landscape, and had been in this area before, so I was sure I could find my way. Somewhere close by must be the little cliff with the open area below, which my students and I had cleared of trash and debris, and from there led a deer path to a fallen tree where I hid a geocache 4 years ago. How difficult could it be to find my way?

At first the flags meandered along the hillside, but soon I found myself in overgrown territory. I bushwhacked through knotweed that was taller than my head. Thorny brambles caught my shirt, and I had to stop frequently to untangle myself. I deliberated if I should turn around, but my feet carried me further and further. How far could it be? I was in the middle of an American city, after all. I pushed forward. The next flag was up the hill and behind arm-thick hanging vines. I pulled myself up by holding on to small trees and shoving the kudzu out of the way. The terrain was suddenly very steep and the valley to my right fell down into a ravine. Where was I? Somewhere in front of me must be the ball field at but how far away was it? My view ahead was blocked by a tangle of fallen trees, and the deer path seemed to snake alongside it. I suddenly realized that there were no more flags, neither ahead nor behind. When and where did I lose the flags?

Twenty yards in front of me lay the huge, silvery trunk of a fallen tree across my path. Wasn't this the place where I had hidden the geocache when the giant dead tree stood as a sentinel in the landscape, and hid it again later after its fall? I tried to climb over the dead trunk, but it was more than four feet in diameter and on the slope, and I could not push myself up on its slippery wood. Pulling myself along its side, I slid over the roots and a very unfriendly poison ivy patch and down the other side. There was no geocache box anywhere, and now I really had no idea where I was. Looking back over the trunk, I could no longer tell where I had come from and was not sure I could find my way back to the trail. This was not a sweet hiker-friendly tamed landscape. The brambles and the poison ivy were doing their own thing, the robins were eying me suspiciously, and big trees came down without anybody witnessing their death. As a human I had no part in this. The thorns scratched my arms bloody without care; the poison ivy had probably left its insidious, toxic molecules on my naked skin for a later painful warning. I panicked slightly, but thought that going on would eventually get me back to civilization. Pushing forward I slipped in the mud and my foot sank into a runnel that suddenly seemed to spring up from the ground. My leg was covered in cold, dark brown slime up to the knee. Why didn't I bring my cell phone? What if I wandered around the folds of this forest forever and could not find my way home? Who would come looking for me here? What if I got injured? How many hours before dark?

Then I remembered that all hillsides in Emerald View Park have a top with houses built right up to the edge. If I went up the hill, and not forward, I should find a street eventually. And sure enough: climbing up the slope and pushing myself through the thicket I glimpsed the neon yellow of a caution tape, which the trail crew had strung around an abandoned foundation. Above it was the paper street I had crossed before. I was so surprised to come out in this location: space seems to

follow a different geometry in the woods, and time bends itself around winding runnels and fallen trees when there is no clear path. Dirty, scratched up, tired, and chastened, I left the forest behind.

There are many ways this story can be interpreted, but I want to focus on the structural element of the experience of having and not having a path that guides us through the landscape. I want to begin the analysis of this particular place experience by asking: ‘what, actually, constitutes an experience of place?’ and in the process unpack the notion of experience itself. Taking Stoller’s (2009) critical review of the concept of experience in phenomenology into account and following her suggestions for developing a “strong concept of experience” (707), some clarifications and modifications about the process of experience in psychology suggest themselves for human science psychology.

4 The Primacy of Experience

Psychology takes the experience of place as a subject of phenomenological and hermeneutic analysis and makes its structures visible through description and rigorous analysis; qualitative research methods are the preferred access modes for the experiential, qualitative dimensions of place. Qualitative studies of “the experience of...” begin often with a first person account, but their goal is not primarily the narration of a personal experience, but the illumination of structural features of a particular kind of experience.

The concept of experience in psychology is often naively assumed to be the activity of the “subject” and of human consciousness, and therefore transparent to the experiencer, who can give a coherent report of what and how, and when something was experienced. The landscape of experience, however, is much more complicated: even though I wrote down the account of my experience as a coherent narrative with a beginning, middle, and end, this was actually a *post facto* reconstruction, made possible by means of the sustained effort of writing. As the experience was happening, I lived it as a bodily and affective, *pathic* event and only now, with some distance, has it become a cognitive, *gnostic* reflection (Straus 1966/1980). Most of my experience was a barely thought about (pre-thetic) and unarticulated (pre-predicative) communication with the perceived world that was not explicitly conscious.

5 The Pathic Dimension of Experience

Intentionality in phenomenology refers not to the contents of subjective consciousness and its intentions, but to the *relational structure* between consciousness and world, i.e. the entwining of the material place world and psychological life. Places

act on people: stairs invite climbing, hallways make us rush forward, walls bar movement, open doors invite passage. The intentional dimension of places is often not transparent to reflection, but nevertheless can have a powerful and coercive effect – good and bad – on individuals, like the walls of a prison cell which restrict the perceptual field and encourage bodily inactivity and personal reflection, or well-designed educational spaces that facilitate the attention, creativity, and conviviality of children. Many aspects of place experience are pre-predicative, i.e. they are lived but have not been named and raised into language and awareness, which calls for a rigorous hermeneutic phenomenological study of the “latent” (Merleau-Ponty 1982/83) dimension of lived space. With respect to place, the most central contribution that a human science psychology can bring into the interdisciplinary discussion around place is the exploration of the unspoken, pathic dimension of spatial experience.

The word *pathic* is derived from the Greek word ‘*pathos*’, which means suffering, bearing, or, as Waldenfels (2002) emphasizes, *Widerfahrnisse*, i.e. rupturing events that happen to us and into which we are entangled – if we wish it or not. It designates the dimension of experience that is not under conscious control. Erwin Straus (1966/1980) defines the pathic moment of perceptual experience as the immediate communication we have with things on the basis of their changing mode of sensory givenness. The pathic refers to the “immediately present, sensually vivid, still pre-conceptual communication we have with appearances” (p. 12), and is opposed to the *gnostic* aspect of perception, which filters what we encounter through our thought processes. “The gnostic develops the *what* of the given in its object character, the pathic the *how* of its being as given” (p.12). The pathic is a ‘being touched’ by a thing; the gnostic is a ‘touching’ of it.

Buytendijk (1933) who identified the pathic relationship between player and toy as one of the key structure of play, found that the predominance of the pathic relationship with things is a character of the young not merely in the human, but also in other animal species. Young dogs drag objects around that are bigger than they are; young chimpanzees chase each other across tree branches; foals buck and jump around each other in pure exuberance. In the young the sensory call and appeal of things is strong and direct. In play the pathic structure of the physical world becomes especially apparent: a ball issues an invitation to both hands to rise in the gesture of catching, while an escaping balloon on a string makes us reach after it with only one hand. *The ball plays with us*, as Buytendijk shows, and the body follows. The excitement of play lies in this feature of the intentionality of things, which is not completely congruent with our own. The ball keeps surprising us, and it becomes even more surprising when other players step up to pitch it back to us.

6 The Semiotic or Meaning Field of Body Experience

The “subject” of psychology, i.e. experiencing consciousness, is an embodied consciousness, and as such it is anchored in an anonymous perceptual body field. Moreover, consciousness itself has an anonymous core and a lacunary quality that

is irreducible (Merleau-Ponty 2012). The existential structures of body, space, other, and time have an impersonal dimension that is ultimately opaque and inaccessible to reflection. On the one hand, the psyche as a bodily-perceptual event is tied deeply into structures of nature that are anonymous and transcend our individual identities; on the other it is embedded in anonymous, impersonal, socio-cultural and historical structures that are part of the long cultural history of our species. The experienced human body, as the vehicle of perception, action, affect, and thinking, is not the body that anatomists speak about. It is deeply entangled with its natural and social milieu. The paths that we walk have a species history: they were made because someone found the easiest way to move human bodies through the landscape (not bird bodies), and other human bodies have followed and widened the path or built it into a well-travelled road.

A path has to fit into a landscape; but it also has to fit human anatomy, motility, and intentionality in order to be useful and maintained (Simms 2012b). Understanding the path begins with understanding the human body as it is situated in its places. Bodies, be they human or animal, have a particular relationship to their environment that is unique to their species. Places provide specific affordances (Gibson 1977) or meanings (Uexküll 2010) depending on the bodily and perceptual environment of organism. A particular psychological life (animal or human) can be identified as a specific style of meaningful engagement with its perceptual things and cultural horizon. Uexküll taught us that the same landscape has a different meaning for a human being or a dog or a tick. He called this semiotic field the animal's *Umwelt*. The dog lives in a complex scentscape which tells it who has been in this place and which way they went. Its grasp of scented layered events within one place is completely alien and only partly imaginable to humans. The dogscape has different locations of meaning that differ from the significant events the tick waits for, as it sits on its leaf above the trail. The tick perceives only the chemical signature of warm skin passing under its bush so that it can drop down and feed. That is all the pleasure it needs, and birdsong, the color of wildflowers, the blue vista of mountains in the background do not exist: they have no meaning in the tick's world, and the tick lacks organs of perception for them.

As soon as we give up the belief in "states of consciousness that are rigorously closed in on themselves" (Merleau-Ponty 1964, 116), the psychological life of another person shows itself as a particular "style" or "conduct" in the world. Conduct places the body into a place and a situation that has an intentional arc and is in some form meaningful for the actor and the observer (even though the meaning might not be congruent). Psychological life – of others and our own – is always emplaced and embodied, and body and place are entwined as a gestural, semiotic field. Rapprochement to the latent, experiential dimension of the psyche can be achieved more fully through description and interpretation of this gestural field.

There is a sphere of generality and structural semblance in the perceiving body that all humans share. Straus (1952) has shown beautifully how the upright posture structures the perceptual and social relationships of humans.¹ Human bodies

¹For a deeper, critical discussion of Straus' essay "The upright posture", please see Iris Young 2005, Frantz Fanon 2008, and Diane Chisholm 2008.

perceive and use the landscape in species-specific ways. Most of our perceptual organs, like eyes, nose, and mouth, are arranged at the front of our head and point in one direction. Our shoulders and pelvis emphasize this directionality and provide a framework for our arms and legs to be perfectly positioned to reach forward. Our senses attend to what's ahead, and our limbs carry us towards it. Only our ears, on the sides and in stereo, are attuned to the sound that surrounds us. But walking we walk forward, seeing we look ahead. The body determines the basic grammar of our spatial prepositions: before (ahead/in front) is the open perceptual field which calls and beckons our hands and feet; behind (back) is what we do not see, the perceptual field that is only vaguely attended and mysterious; above (up) is the sky with its shifting light-shows and weather patterns, and below (down, under) is the ground upon which we move. With our ears we can swivel around and change the perceptual field to the horizon that surrounds us, but as soon as we move we give up the round and commit ourselves to the ahead. We walk backwards only when we avoid something that threatens from in front. Our legs are not made to walk that way, and we can flee only by choosing a new forward direction away from the threat. It is startling to realize that movement is mostly movement "a-head", and that the space in front of the body has a different significance than the space behind the body. Ahead is a different semiotic space than behind. Ahead are the perceptions and projects we are looking for, the experiences not yet here but maybe already announcing themselves; behind is the space already traversed but left behind and only there as a memory – it is known but also soon forgotten because it falls out of the beam of attention. Ahead is the future: what is possible. Behind is the past: what is remembered. Future and past are intricately tied to the motility of the human body.

On a very fundamental level the path is an expression of the semiotic field of the body. Bodies, animal and human, are always situated and mobile. To be situated means that we are tied to a specific time and place; to be mobile means that when we move we move through a particular space at this time and not through others. The deer path snaking along the hillside is a testimony to the deer's body-space: elegant, narrow, sinuous, surprising at times in its trajectory. It is also a trace of the animal's history with this land. Once chosen, the deer path becomes an easy and favorite route through the landscape and it beckons the deer to follow it because it has been shaped by the deer's gestures and conforms to the deer's needs. It is not so very different from human built paths. Why move through the brush when the path is free of vegetation? Why find a new path when this one already leads to the water or the favorite berry patch? The history of deer-life is inscribed into the paths crossing the landscape. Deer paths are a trace of non-human beings and their history with the landscape. The path, deer or human, shows the commitment that living beings have made to a landscape: here have we walked, here has been the best place for our bodies to move through this place, here have we traversed again and again. The path is an inscription of intentionality and history – deer or human – in the visible and tangible landscape that houses our bodies.

7 The Surplus of Experience

The phenomenology of perception has taught us that perceptual experience encounters the perceived not as a string of discrete conceptual entities, but as moving figures on a shifting ground. The path intensifies the spatial dimension of the perceptual field: if space, as Merleau-Ponty (2012) said, is the connective tissue between things and gives them their place, the path makes the connections between things in the landscape visible and tangible. It guides the eyes and the feet from ‘here’ to ‘there’, and with every path we assume that there is an invisible but coming ‘there’ ahead. When we encounter a path in a landscape we might only see its line leading up to the next bend, but the hidden, concealed profiles are present as constituting absences as well. The path continues into the copse, its pathic line leads somewhere. It hugs the ground; it snakes between trees and along runnels. Without these relational profiles the path would not be a path: even the ground upon which it sits is an essential element of its structure, and it determines its trajectory. Situated in space, the path exists in a web of relationships with other things that are close or distant. Things have dimensions or *profiles* that we do not perceive directly, but that come into play in establishing their reality or being (Husserl 2001). Husserl spoke of the “fullness”, or the *plenium* of things, which is active in the pathic dimension of our experience and which reveals itself in a phenomenological analysis. As soon as a thing appears as a figure before the larger background of other related things, places, and events – its *horizon* – we can no longer think of it as a discrete, closed-off entity. Since even its physical outlines are never completely present, a thing is always more than what meets the eye. It is not a Cartesian object in Euclidean space: It reveals some of its aspects and conceals others, and its existence as a physical object is tied into a larger, more or less perceptually present web of meaning. In the fullness of this web, the path traverses a not yet perceivable, purely imaginary landscape that is assumed to be ahead and real. An experienced thing like our path is not a concept in need of internal representation, but a marker in a full web of spatial relationships that issues a call to the perceiving body. Experience refers to the surplus of meaning that transcends the “data” of perception. This becomes apparent when we contemplate how a path alters the experienced landscape.

A trail changes the natural landscape (Simms 2012c). The path creates the kind of forest that is accessible and friendly to humans. Someone prepared this landscape by choosing the easiest passage and by clearing and widening the walkable surfaces. No tangled roots or fallen trees impede our progress. The runnels and mud-flats can be crossed via stones or smoothed out logs and our feet stay clean and dry. The forest has been tamed and is impressive and sweet to our senses: the web of leaves above, the blue ridges in the distance, the scent of mushrooms nearby, the rustle of a towhee in the leaf mold. Nature along the path conforms itself to our bodies perceptual abilities and mobile needs and reinforces a romantic vision of what nature ought to be: ordered, predictable, confined in its niches, grand, sublime, beautiful and almost safe. The peaceable kingdom.

But the trail has its limitations. It is only a few feet wide, and next to it the wilderness starts again. By its very nature the trail cannot tame the whole landscape and it “civilizes” only a small part of it. The nature we *see* is surrounded by the nature we *do not see*: the landscape that folds itself into the next ravine, the forest that does its own thing just beyond the horizon of our experiential field. Most of the woods are not traversed by trails. They are still virgin territory. In virgin territory, however, nature is impassable, convoluted, confusing, confounding, muddy, wet, prickly, full of obstacles and indifferent and dangerous to us – as I found out when I got lost in the woods.

This does not mean that we should not build trails. Trails lead into an altered, humanly arranged, tamed nature, and if we can accept that, trails are wonderful. They allow us to get a glimpse of a world which is not completely ordered, conceptualized, and controlled by humans, and they lead past things and beings not human-made. The tamed quality of the nature trail, however, is always dialectically related to the untamed quality of the virgin territory around it. The forest’s sweetness has faint undertones of bitterness and danger. Experience encounters the world not only in its ordered structures, but also through the ruptures of the “more” and the “other” or “alien”, which creates *Bruchlinien*, i.e. the broken lines in our experience (Waldenfels 2002, 2008). The gentle woods can flip into the “forest savage, rough, and stern” as soon as the path is lost, as Dante found out. I panicked when the flags were lost behind me, and ahead a fallen tree barred the way. Beyond the trail’s line of influence on the landscape, virgin nature still stretches out in all directions. It is not confined to the line, as our path is. It is everywhere. The path is the figure, but the virgin territory is the ground. It is below our feet in the layers of fungi who live as one symbiotic organism throughout the whole forest’s roots; it is in the shale, coal, sandstone, and redbeds hundreds of feet under our city; it is in the wind that blows through the leaf canopy and stirs the flag a mile away; it is in the sunlight which shines on everything and in the shades where things hide from the light and heat; it pushes up the wing feathers of the peregrine as it palpates the invisible air currents above the river valley; it is in the breath I draw into my lungs, and in the sweet raspberry that I found in the brambles, swallowed and took into myself; it is in my blood and my bones because they, too are virgin territory, and 1 day they will give out and nature will kill me. Our paths can tame it only so far.

8 The Body in the Soul

To conclude this chapter, I want to do a thought experiment: what happens if we let go of the notion of the interior subject concealed inside the body with its inner representations about an exterior world? What happens if we take the notion of the chiasm (Merleau-Ponty 1968) seriously and imagine the reversibility between the body and the things and places around it? For those of us who find Heidegger’s (1962) language of “*Dasein*” and “being-in-the-world” a bit cumbersome and

abstract, I want to suggest taking up the old familiar metaphor of the soul in the body and reverse it. What would happen if we conceptualize our existence not as “soul in the body”, but as “*body in the soul*”?

I am a body in the soul. Consciousness bursts the barriers of the skin and dematerializes the way we conceive of the body. I walk not only through a material world, but also a world already meaningful because it is the world of soul, and I am of it. This is perhaps what the “Invisible” and “Being” refer to Merleau-Ponty’s (1968) late work. The soul in which the body lives has no boundary, even though it has an ever-shifting horizon. I walk past the stand of trees in the grove, hear the birds sing in the thicket and the squirrels rummaging around in the leaves on the ground. I sense the swirling of their being as it intertwines with my eyes and ears and my skin and feel the starkness of the winter trees with their life-forces still asleep in the ground. Each tree is a gesture, shaped by forces in the ground and in the air, responsive to soil, water, wind, and light. When I pay attention, the gesture reveals some of its significance to me – but always only partly and incompletely, for how could we completely understand another being? I recognize in the majestic, twisted limbs the oak tree’s century old communication with its environment, its desire for the light; its struggle with wind and rain; its coexistence with other trees. In the soul world, the tree is alive and has intentionality and relates to a host of other beings. Animals live in this shifting tableau of signification and walk through it as if in a waking dream... We humans, on the other hand, have to work hard to develop enough mindfulness to actually notice what we perceive all around us.

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Being on the Edge: Body, Place, Climate

Edward Casey

Climate, wind, season, hour are not of another nature than the things, animals, or people that populate them, follow them, sleep and awaken within them.

—Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 263.

Man may surmount climate.

—Watsuji Tetsuro, *Climate: A Philosophical Study*, p. 39.

Abstract Life is always on edge – on the edge of things in open space, on the edge of the place we now occupy, at the edge of our body, in intersecting edges with others, and in psychologically uneasy states when we are “on edge.” In view of this basically edged character of life and existence, I explore how climate, along with body and place, have to be seen as edge phenomena. Their edges are for the most part fragile and precarious, and in concert with each other they can all too easily eventuate in full-scale climate crisis of the very sort we face today.

1 Edges Everywhere

My thesis is that we are continually on the edge of things, and most notably: on the edge of our own bodies, on the edge of place, and on the edge of climate and climate crisis. In discussing these three topics, I hope to illuminate not only body, place, and climate in somewhat unusual ways but also the character of edge itself, with which I have been preoccupied for a considerable period of time now.

Edges I take to be not merely the literal ends of things but the point or phase where things (including events) diminish in their being or substance: where they diminish and run out. Despite their inherent diminution, edges are far from weak-lings; they are often the very feature that is most characteristic of something, as

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when an edge gives a distinctive profile by which we recognize a fellow human being at a considerable distance; or else they are an integral part of the efficacy of that same something, as with a knife blade. (And not only a given knife edge, like that with which I cut into fruit; Northwest Coastal Indians used to say: “the world is as sharp as the edge of a knife.” Snyder 1990, 18) More generally, edges provide the exoskeletons (or less often the endoskeletons) of things and events; they are the articulations of their distinctive armature, providing their signature structure as it were. This holds true in time as well as in space: the talk you are now listening to will have its own edges, temporal as well verbal; and my body, in delivering it, will present itself as edged in its own peculiar ways as you listen to me and observe my arms, hands, and body trunk in motion.

I have just referred to the edges of my body. Whereas I see this same body, my body, as very familiar, as my very vehicle of being-in-the-world, clumsy in certain ways and adept in others, very much thanks to the activity of its edges, you are perceiving it as relatively unfamiliar – as, say, the body of a no-longer-so-young professor who has a certain academic stoop and an increasing paunch. Second, my bodily edges are at once those that define the outer limits of my body, its fleshly silhouette; but also those that configure the internal mass of this same body as it realizes itself in limbs, lower body core, mass of the torso, etc.

A primary fact is not just that, as Merleau-Ponty said axiomatically, “I am my body,” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 151) but that I am it by means of its edges. Put succinctly: *I exist at (and as) the edges of my body*. I find myself, my bodily self, at its edges – where my flesh gives out. Far from this being a negative matter (as “gives out” seems to imply), such delineation by the edges of my flesh gives me to myself: it *gives me me*. Without being able to discern such edges, I wouldn’t be, or have, my body; and so, in terms of Merleau-Ponty’s axiom, I would not be me but some indistinct hulk of flesh as anonymous as it is impersonal. I couldn’t identify myself as myself. The body self is a self etched in edges.

Not only do I exist and identify myself at and in the edges of my body, but this same familiar mass of edges that I call “my body” is in turn *at the edge of the place where it is located*. Not only do I look into my place from the perspective of my body; its edges and my edges are contiguous; they are closely intercalated with each other. So much is this so that I have come to propound my own axiom, which I take to be complementary to Merleau-Ponty’s foundational axiom: “no body without place, no place without body.” (Casey 2009, 70) If this is the case, I must now add, it is very much due to the intimate insinuation of the edges of one into those of the other. This works both ways: my bodily edges fit into the place I am at (to the point that I cannot always tell where one begins and the other ends), and the edges of this place penetrate my felt body, helping me to feel that I am “a creature of place” – for instance, in the way that my hometown of Topeka, Kansas, remains part of me and continues to influence me even now. Otherwise put: I come into place from and with my body; and the places I inhabit come into me by a kind of reverse osmosis. My place and my body are super-saturated with each other, thanks to the highly porous edges of each: those of my breathing skin and those of a place with its own permeable boundaries: Topeka did not end at its city limit on Gage Blvd. but stretched out into the countryside just beyond.

Equipped thus with bodily and placial edges – and their close commixture – I also find myself situated at the edge of the climate in which I am located. I take this climate in from the place I'm at, and with the body that I am; and again, with both together. I feel the local and regional climate in my body and as it suffuses the place I inhabit at the time. I sense it supporting me, obstructing me, and sometimes (as on a very wet day) literally entering into me – experienced as a wet body-in-a-wet-world ... I feel it not just at the edges of my skin but in the amorphous in-lines of my viscera; I feel my local climate “in my bones,” as we say revealingly. When in Santa Barbara, I feel myself in the midst of a climate that is at once arid and bright: so arid that I am not surprised to learn that I am in the midst of a severe drought, and so bright that I am sometimes literally dazzled by the insistently searching presence of the sun, reminding me of Goethe's remark from his *Italian Journeys*: “nothing is harder to bear than a succession of perfectly bright days.”

Watsuji Tetsuro, in his treatise *Climate: A Philosophical Study*, adds two important points to the account I have just given. First, climate is primarily experienced by *us*, not just by *me*: “It is not ‘I’ alone but ‘we’, strictly speaking, ‘I’ as ‘we’ and ‘we’ as ‘I’ that are outside in the cold ... Thus it is primarily ‘we’ in this ‘mutual relationship’ that discover our selves in the cold.” (Watsuji 1961, 4) Second, climate is never itself an isolated phenomenon but exists only in relation to two other factors: other climates (say, ‘cold’ in relation to ‘warm’ climates) and always “in relation to the soil, the topographic and scenic features and so on of a given land.” (5) Both of these points of Watsuji's have the same purport: to open up climate to its radically plural dimension: we vs. me; other climates vs. this climate.

Both stable climates and mutating climates are apprehended from and by the edges of my body-in-place in league with others' bodies-in-their-places. But climate change can be so subtle that I and others miss it, tempting some to deny it outright. For those attuned to the larger fact of climate change, however, the signs are there: this January was the hottest month in recorded history, even if I did not directly experience this in Santa Barbara (which was in fact uncharacteristically cool). Just because the signs are subtle and diverse and sometimes seemingly self-contradictory – and despite the fact that the local effects of climate change do not always follow a consistent or predictable pattern—does not mean that it is not present: and present in radical ways that threaten all life on earth, including our own existence on this planet.

Indeed, it is the very imperceptibility of climate change, especially in its early stages, that misleads us. If I can trust that my body is indeed mine, and that I am located at a given identifiable place, I cannot count on my experience of my local climate to be definitive with regard to the overall facticity of climate change. Nor can I trust my fellow subjects who are in the same climatic region: we may all have missed, and missed together, the more subtle signs of climate change. Just because we experience climate together – Watsuji's's point – does not render us infallible when it comes to picking up these signs. Only very recently have we become better at this – and then largely because those of us concerned with the oncoming crisis have learned from climate scientists to be more alert to changing patterns of weather.

And we know too from these same scientists that just as climate is more than atmosphere (as Watsuji said), there is more to climate change than daily weather indicates.

2 Body, Place, Climate

It remains undeniable that we experience our local climate as it impinges on us in a particular place, and we feel it with our singular bodies. Sometimes I am clueless with regard to the larger dimensions of a changing climate, but sometimes I do feel climate change acutely in a local place. If I am in Beijing, I experience a polluted atmosphere by which it impinges on my eyes and face and skin: their very epidermal edges. This difficult situation, affecting millions who reside in Beijing, involves three sets of edges – those belonging to the bodies of the inhabitants, those accruing to the heavy air, and those that bound the city that contain air and human bodies and brings them together. At work here is a triadic structure in a closed circuit wherein an intensely polluted climate bears down upon innumerable bodies-in-place.

Moreover, the current circumstance in Beijing is all too indicative of what is to come in many other places – not necessarily air pollution as such but other forms of disrupted climate, ranging from intense heat to rising oceans. Far from being exceptional, the Beijing situation is a forewarning of trouble to come in *any* place, and most likely *every* place on earth, in the decades ahead. Watsuji was sensitive to “disasters such as storms and floods,” and he spoke of the “tyranny of nature,” but he did not suspect that the tyranny of climate change itself was on its way when he wrote the first draft of his book in 1928 in Germany. (Watsuji 1961, 6)

In and through the vicissitudes of local climates and the oncoming fate of massive climate change, the role of place is special: it *brings body together with climate*. It is a holding action; it will not hold climate off; but it does hold and register whatever changes, major or miniscule, have now come and will be coming. In this respect, it is akin to the Receptacle as discussed in Plato’s *Timaeus*: a vast container that embraces sensible particulars regarded as mixtures of material elements with ingressive Forms endowing these elements with shape. Here too there is a triple structure, with sensible particulars being in the place of bodies, indeed *being* bodies, and the characteristics of its primal regions (i.e., of water, air, earth) being the ancient equivalent of climate regions (identified by Watsuji as monsoon, desert, and meadow areas): as superintended by Forms all this being held by the Receptacle.

Ancient analogues apart, I am here regarding place as what exists between bodies and climate, combining the uniqueness of the former (*my* lived body is uniquely configured even as it joins forces with yours in the apperception of climate), with the diffuseness of the latter (a given climate is quite literally *all over* a given place: the raging monsoon is received throughout southern India, the Saharan desert extends vastly over north-central Africa). Place or region operates by a unique *subtending* operation that acts *from below* (as is already suggested by the *hypo-* prefix

of *hypodoché*, the Greek word that is standardly translated as Receptacle: *hypo-* signifies ‘below’, ‘under’).¹

Moreover, climate change itself emerges and is registered *in and by edges*: those of Katrina, say, as it bore down upon New Orleans from above, then by the rising edges of the waters that broke the levees (a humanly constructed set of edges) and destroyed houses in the Ninth Ward, edge by fragile edge. Rising ocean waters – very recently estimated to be six feet or more by the end of the century – will submerge islands like the Maldives by overflowing its edges entirely: to the point where no edges of land are left. In this format and many others, climate change will be delivered at the edges of the medium by which it is conveyed, whether ice or earth, water or air. And it will bear upon the myriad edges of given localities upon which it is unleashed. Think here of the way that the full force of Hurricane Sandy consisted not just in the literal storm coming up from the Atlantic to the south of New York City but in the way the countless surfaces and edges of buildings, subways, sidewalks, and streets upon which it was released were drenched. The places of lower Manhattan and Brooklyn that received the brunt of the damage consisted in a highly vulnerable empire of edges: just how vulnerable they were was not known until the fury of the hurricane left its myriad marks in large swaths of the city. Urban edges are at once resistant to ordinary weather as well as to the force of gravity, yet they are at the same time highly permeable to the effects of savage storms and massive flooding – all this being compounded by density of population.

Indeed, the extensive outreach of edges characterizes all three members of the triad of Body/Place/Climate. Quite disparate phenomenologically and ontologically, these factors come together in a virtual Indra’s net of edges. However loosely confederated they may be, they belong together as an assemblage, a *Versammlung* in Heidegger’s telling term that means, literally, a “gathering through.” As the main vehicle of this assembling action, place is that which holds body and climate together in creating entire edge-worlds. Bodies feel climate in particular places, and they do so by the concatenation of their fleshly edges with the edges of climate – all within the bounds, the edges, of a given place.

3 Three Edge Avatars

When we are considering climate change as it is taken in by bodies and absorbed by places, we find that other edge dimensions are at play. Let me single out just three of them.

1. Edges as the last limit, the *non plus ultra*: this phrase was inscribed on the Pillars of Hercules at the Strait of Gibraltar to warn sailors: “don’t go further; danger

¹ Here I would question Timothy Morton’s use of the term “hyperobject” (Morton 2010: 130ff) to designate climate change: if anything, the situation is just the opposite: climate is no object, much less a super-object.

lurks beyond.” The idea is that a limit of safe passage has been reached and that to move beyond is to incur the unanticipated, the extreme, and the disastrous. Take, for example, this report by the American Association for the Advancement of Science published in 2014:

... the geological record for the climate reflects instances where a relatively small change in one element of climate led to abrupt changes in the system as a whole. In other words, pushing global temperatures past certain thresholds could trigger abrupt, unpredictable and potentially irreversible changes that have massively disruptive and large-scale impacts. At that point ... potentially unstoppable processes are set in motion. (Klein 2014, 1)

This model departs radically from the more reassuring situation in which changes come about gradually and by sheer accumulation: such that “a given amount of emission will lead to a given amount of smooth incremental sea level rise.” (1)

Instead, climate change calls for a very different model, one that embodies a special sort of edge-effect: that of a change that is not only sudden but irreversible and potentially catastrophic in its consequences because of an inbuilt multiplier factor. In this situation, it is one thing to stop short of a given edge – to stay on the safe side of that edge – but quite another to go *over the edge*, releasing all the climatological demons. Such an edge functions much like a *critical limit*, a *turning point*, a *moment of kairos*. Each of these expressions reflects the circumstance of *non plus ultra* in which to go beyond a certain precarious point is to court disaster.

2. *Edge-to-edge* situations: climate disaster is not only a matter of the precipitation of a single devastating event. In fact, this is exceptional. The more likely scenario is one in which one event triggers another – and another, and another ... in a chain of interlocked consequences.

Like the 2013 historic floods in Calgary that forced the head offices of the oil companies mining the Alberta tar sands to go dark and send their employees home, while a train carrying flammable petroleum products teetered on the edge of a disintegrating rail bridge. (Klein 2014, 2)

Here in Naomi Klein’s graphic description, we have a chain of edges wherein one acutely edged circumstance leads directly to circumstances whose edges precipitate still other problematic situations. In this case, there is a succession of to floods, electricity outage, a train tottering on a weakened bridge, and the risk of the inflammation of oil being transported by the same train. There is not just one edge at stake here, that of “a disintegrating rail bridge.” Rather, we witness a closely knit fabric of closely intercalated edges: a “densely woven fabric” in Merleau-Ponty’s phrase for “the real.” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, lxxiv) Climate change, we can say, is real to the second power, raising the destructive stakes of what being materially real entails. The edges of a world under the cloud of pervasive climate change form their own network, in which they are contiguous with each other in a veritable edge-to-edge pattern. Far from being exceptional, this pattern is much more likely to obtain for an earth besieged by climate change. It is due to the proximity and concatenation of so many densely packed edges that climate change can so quickly descend into climate crisis.

3. Edge as *point-of-no-return*. I have in mind here the critical figure of 4.0 Celsius, which played a major role in the Paris climate talks. Climate scientists are largely in agreement that if the earth's average temperature rises above this, it will be a very bleak matter indeed. Naomi Klein once again:

We don't know exactly what a 4 degrees Celsius world would look like, But even the best-case scenario is likely to be calamitous. Four degrees of [planetary] warming could raise global sea levels by 1 or possibly even 2 degrees by 2100 [this figure now looks too modest]... This would ... inundate many coastal areas from Ecuador and Brazil to the Netherlands to much of California and the northeastern United States, as well as huge swaths of South and Southeast Asia... Meanwhile, brutal heat waves that can kill tens of thousands of people, even in wealthy countries, would become entirely unremarkable summer events... When you add ruinous hurricanes, raging wildfires, fisheries collapses, widespread disruptions to water supplies, extinctions, and globe-trotting diseases [as now with Sika] to the mix, it indeed becomes difficult to imagine that a peaceful, ordered society could be sustained. (Klein 2014, 13–14)

We are talking about a climatic edge, exceeding which leads to consequences that will be immensely destructive – in some ways that are fully predictable and still others quite unpredictable. If we go past this edge, we cannot come back. Teetering on that edge, we are in an unprecedented “existential crisis for the human species.” (Klein 2014, 15) As a direct consequence, how could we not feel a collective form of climate *angst* – a word that means in its origin ‘narrow passage’, thus a situation of edges closing in: as when we find ourselves choking – as is increasingly likely in a climate crisis.

In these three special ways – as that beyond which disaster will emerge, as part of an edge-to-edge network, and as point of no-return – edges show themselves to be integral components of climate crisis. They are integral to it not just as elucidative concepts that help us to understand this crisis more clearly; *they are integral parts of the crisis itself*, literal components of it. This is why they are not limits, strictly speaking; limits are formal extremities that are posits of pre-existing systems: e.g., as the limit in differential calculus, or as borders that are a function of international treaties. Edges, like the boundaries that I distinguish from borders, exist *on the ground* (and in the air and in the water). They are constituent parts of concrete circumstances on planet earth.

As we can see with the edges of bodies, places, and climate themselves! Each of these is materially ingredient in their respective bearers. The edges of my body not only fit around my body as a perimeter that can be perceived as my out-line; they belong to this body as immanent features of it, as we can see with the edges of my wrist, my knee, my nose. The same is true of placial edges; these are emblematic boundaries, and they accrue so closely to places that they serve as definitive traits of them: they are indispensable to the places they profile and present to perception and action: think of the way that New York City is bounded by the Hudson and the East Rivers and the way that its familiar profile of skyscrapers identifies the city as seen from far away in New Jersey or Long Island. This is not even to mention all the in-lines that make up Central Park and the street grid of Manhattan. As for the climate, it too possesses endemic edges. The fact that some of these are very subtle – where

exactly is the edge of air pollution? – does not disqualify them. Tangible proof of their existence is found in the inhaling of air laden with carbon molecules that irritate our eyes and flesh. This carboniferous air is transmitted from the outer edges of the atmosphere we breathe to the inner edges of our afflicted throats and lungs, as has been happening for decades in the coal country of Appalachia. Every material element – fire, air, earth, water – has its characteristic edges, and these belong integrally to these elements and to the many composite things to which the same elements (as foreseen by the *Timaeus*) contribute their formative and energizing presence.

Furthermore, all three sets of edges are in the end co-ingredient in life as we know it. They co-inhere in the biosphere that is the home of all animal and plant bodies, microbial beings deep in the earth, lived places on its surface, and the many varieties of climate presence that saturate this same surface. (E. O. Wilson's *Half-Earth* (Wilson 2016) explores the biosphere with regard to its vulnerability to climate change) The biosphere is inseparable from any adequate analysis of climate crisis, and is the animating basis of the three special avatars of edge I have just been discussing: that of the *non plus ultra*, the point of unanticipatable release, and the edge-to-edge transmission of the consequences of climate change.

This is not even to mention the role of *the earth* in all this. Without the underlying presence of earth as the ultimate edge-bearer from below, none of the various fates of climate crisis, each with its own edge-complex, could occur. The earth, like Plato's Receptacle, is the capacious container of environmental edges. *It holds them in place. It gives them place. Yet, in the event of climate disaster, it cannot prevent the loss of the coherence of place and the well-being of the bodies ensconced within it and, in better times, animating it.*

4 Four Ways the Earth is at High Risk

Here I want to take up several dark dimensions of contemporary climate change that call for our attention in the context of the basic triadic structure I have been discussing so far. I shall do so under four headings: our place vs. their place; what we are doing to our own places; interplacality; and interventions.

1. Our Place vs. Their Place. Here "theirs" means other human beings elsewhere, conveniently out of sight and often belonging to the Global South; other animals now quietly and unceremoniously going extinct; whole phyla of plants and trees disappearing in this obscene Anthropocene epoch of the Sixth Extinction. They all share a common *displacement* not just from our privileged place here and now in Santa Barbara or in Seattle, but from their own traditional places. Rob Nixon has argued that the "vernacular place" of history and tradition is being replaced by place as conceived and constructed by corporations in league with mega-banks and nation states, pooling their shared interests with an aim of

increased power and profitability, all the while riding roughshod over people who live in traditional cultures and economies:

In the global resource wars... an official landscape is forcibly imposed on a vernacular one. A vernacular landscape is shaped by the affective, historically textured maps that communities have developed over generations, [while] an official landscape—whether governmental, NGO, corporate, or some combination of those—is typically oblivious to such earlier maps; instead, it writes the land in a bureaucratic, externalizing, and extraction-driven manner that is often pitilessly instrumental... (Nixon 2011, 17)²

In effect, this is a new and quite insidious form of environmental colonialism: still more insidious than the cultural colonialism that consisted in the importation of so-called high cultures and languages into “undeveloped” lands (e.g., French language and Belgian culture into the Congo): not only is land usurped in the kind of “land grabs” that are occurring in large swaths of the Global South, but the land itself is subject to environmental degradation, as has happened in Nigeria, where Shell oil has devastated the local landscape. As Ken Saro Wi-Wa, the martyred environmental activist, has written:

The Ogoni country [in the delta region of Nigeria] has been completely destroyed by the search for oil... Oil blow-outs, spillages, oil slick and general pollution accompany the search for oil... Oil companies have flared gas in Nigeria for the past thirty-three years causing acid rain ... What used to be the bread basket of the delta has now become totally infertile. All one sees and feels around is death. Environmental degradation has been a lethal weapon in the war against the indigenous Ogoni people. (cited by Nixon 2011, 110–111)

Nixon calls this degradation “slow violence,” since it so often operates by a process of long-term environmental destruction that wreaks its havoc over whole generations of indigenous peoples through the mutagenic effects of petroleum ingested in polluted local waters and inhaled from air.

2. What We Are Doing to Our Own Places. To address the long arm of environmental colonialism, we need first to take a fresh look at our own place and ask ourselves: *what are we doing to our own places?* Here Michael Moore’s film “Where to Invade Next” underlines our lack of universal health care, free college education, and failing public infra-structure as integral aspects of our own environmental neglect and destruction. (on the failing infra-structure in the United States, see Drew 2016) Vigilance starts at home, in close scrutiny of our own *displacement in place* – in our own drifting and empty home-places, a homelessness that is not limited to those who choose to live on the street. Many are living out a literal version of Heidegger’s notion of *Unheimlichkeit*, ‘not-at-home-ness’. Above all, we must closely examine our wasteful consumerist

²He continues: “In much of what follows, I address the resistance mounted by impoverished communities who have been involuntarily moved out of their knowledge; ... with social movements that seek to stave off one of two ruinous prospects: either the threatened community capitulates and is scattered (across refugee camps, placeless ‘relocation’ sites, desperate favelas, and unwelcoming foreign lands), or the community refuses to move but, as its world is undetermined, effectively becomes a community of refugees in place ... displacement without moving.” (18–19).

practices, our living largely from what Marcuse calls “manufactured needs.” This has reached a point where Nicolas Kristoff has proposed that most American citizens are living-moving “toxic waste disposal sites.” (see Kristof 2016) This means that our places – the places where we live and work – have become not only unsustainable but lethal to the air we breathe and the water we drink (as was brought home in the Flint Michigan scandal). The truth is that we have to stop doing slow violence to ourselves before we can stop doing it to others; or rather, realize that both modes of violence go together.

3. Interplacality. Most basically, we have to recognize the truth of a third axiom: *all places on earth are linked in one interplacial nexus*; this is what we learn from climate change itself: the rapid melting of the Greenland and Antarctica ice sheets will alter the fates of every country on earth that has coastal exposures, in some instances forcing major migrations to other countries (in the case of the Maldive Islands alone at least half a million people will be displaced and forced to move to whatever mainland is willing to accept them). Climate change is happening everywhere even if its specific effects are more dramatically evident in some places rather than other.
4. Interventions. With this and other comparably severe prospects in which vast interplacial nexes are threatened, climate crisis will put large parts of the earth on edge – on the edge of survival and with this the edge of a collective anxiety that is already producing a rash of environmentally induced symptoms, including a new syndrome of depression for which novel therapies have been created. (for more on these therapies, see Buzzell-Saltzman n.d.) The result of this in turn is a certain paralysis when it comes to taking effective action against climate change. Here the issue becomes: how to move from the paralyzing edges of environmentally focused anxiety and fear into efficacious interventions in the climate crisis itself?

The operative premise here is that these interventions can make a difference in the force with which climate crisis afflicts us, moderating it if not preventing it. Already Watsuji spelled out the basis for such intervention when he pointed out that, although climate conditions how we live in particular places, we can “work on and transform climate.” (Watsuji 1961, 8)³ We can do so because of the basic fact that “‘we stand outside’ in climate and understand ourselves from it.”⁴ Because we “discover ourselves in climate,”⁵ we can change climate by changing our practices in its midst. The question is just how this should happen at this critical historical juncture. Here I refer to Naomi Klein’s timely accounts of contemporary efforts to undo, or at least moderate, the most destructive edges of climate change: such as the Northern Cheyenne people’s efforts to build their own solar heating mechanisms to endure

³Entailed here is the interaction between climate and human history. For Watsuji, there is no history apart from climate, and vice versa: see 8 and 11, and especially 10: “History is climate history and climate is historical climate.”

⁴This is Watsuji’s version of Heidegger’s notion that we stand out in time through temporal ecstasies.

⁵Similarly, “man apprehends himself in climate” (p. 8).

the bitterly cold winters of southeastern Montana. (For an account of the Northern Cheyenne initiative, see Klein 2014, 388–93). Notice that addressing the interplacality of climate change requires intercorporeality in the form of the concerted cooperation of bodies who form such resistance groups, rather than the isolated actions of singular bodies. Individual resolve to take effective action remains important at the level of motivation. But until human actors join forces by putting their bodies together in collective actions, little will change. Once again, then, we witness the interlinked fate of bodies and places – now at the level that Deleuze and Guattari call “multiplicities.” (see Deleuze and Guattari 1987, introduction and chapter ten) *Just as places subtend climate, so the bodies that are the natural subjects of place can link up in creating eco-communities that are potentially effective counter-forces to climate crisis.*

The larger point here is that just as climate encompasses many places and many bodies, so these bodies and places are not merely substances or sites but “beings of the between” (in Buber’s phrase). Would it not be ironic if climate change, otherwise something we tend to regard as either a problem to be solved or (in a more despairing mood) as an unavoidable fate, could teach a lesson of serious philosophical import? This is not just a lesson about our “common humanity” as we tend to say all too glibly, but a lesson about the sharing of bodies and places – of bodies-in-places. And this sharing will happen through the reciprocal interaction of the edges of both in constructing an ecological commons of closely co-ordinated actions.

Conversely, we can also learn something essential about climate change from our very bodily implacement. Not just about the more dramatic effects of such change but from its subtle and insidious presence. The very fact that we often cannot detect the seriousness of a changing climate from our own bodily immersion in our local circumstance is not merely nugatory but teaches us that climate change, especially in its early stages, proceeds by *tatônnements*, “little cat steps.”

Although this very fact may hearten climate change deniers, it should alert us to the deep peril of climate change itself: that it is all the more dangerous for being so stealthy, so difficult to detect from day to day, place to place, bodily experience to bodily experience, edge to edge. Unlike the usual objects of ordinary perception, and unlike the body itself regarded as a determinate mass of flesh (the “objective body” in Merleau-Ponty’s phrase), climate and its changes, including its most destructive changes, often cannot be detected by individual bodies in individual places. Its very invisibility is endemic to its danger – just as the operations of corporate capitalism also often proceed under the radar screen of everyday economic realities. A double invisibility that spells a redoubled danger which we must try to understand if we are to resist its most maleficent effects.

* * *

What is to be done? Watsuji Tetsuro, such an extraordinary guide when it comes to climate, declares optimistically that with “an awareness of climate ... man may surmount climate.” (Watsuji 1961: 39) But he was talking about overcoming the cultural and historical limitations of living in a given climate. We, however, are now

facing a situation of a climate crisis that will affect *all* local and regional climates. Not even Naomi Klein can offer a single program or paradigm for dealing effectively with climate change. But she insists that climate crises themselves will act to precipitate new forms of creative response: of “effervescent rebellion” (I modify the phrase “effervescence of rebellion” as cited by Klein from the Mexican journalist Luis Hernandez Navarro; see Klein 2014, 465) against the stranglehold of transnational capitalism in its criminal collusions with national governments. She speculates that the next such moment of opportunity is likely to arise in the immediate wake of a forthcoming ecocidal disaster:

The next time one arises, it must be harnessed not only to denounce the world as it is, and build fleeting pockets of liberated space. It must be the catalyst to actually build the world that will keep us all safe. The stakes are simply too high, and time too short, to settle for anything less. (Klein 2014, p. 466)⁶

To this I would add only that, the new world envisioned by Klein will be a world of places – a “place-world,” as I like to call it – that is in intimate touch with lived bodies (not only ours but those of any and all living species) in the shared milieu of a radically altering climate, a changing *fudo* in Watsuji’s chosen term. In that sense, climate is not only a natural phenomenon but an occasion for human action and interaction: “a place for collective or social intentionality and character”⁷ to manifest themselves in effective ways.

The first part of this chapter stressed the importance of the triune structure of body/place/climate. The latter part emphasized the pressing need for taking action at this historical moment in order to mitigate, if not to prevent, the most baneful effects of climate change. This action needs to be collective or social and to emerge from the concerted activity on the part of eco-activists (and this means *all of us*) to address the crisis now closing in on us. Climate, in its very indeterminacy and diffusion, is the atmospheric-oceanic-earthly equivalent of such eco-activism, which needs to be at once interplacial and intercorporeal.

Any such shared praxis also needs to be edge-sensitive – alert to the variety of edges in play in the full climate matrix, and ready to act on the basis of this perception. For there is no denying that our world has become a world on edge. Such a world is composed of edges of every description, and it calls out to the antennae of our sensuous perception to be equal to its subtlety. And it also asks us to transform the paralyzing edges of anxiety on which many of us are now so precariously positioned into the edges of effective action taken in the company of others who understand the necessity of finding paths to a future that will bristle with hostile and even horrific edges – yet a future that can be made more amenable and livable in limited but essential ways that are still to be discovered.

⁶These words form the conclusion of *This Changes Everything*.

⁷Janz 2011: 178. Note also Janz’s statement that “climate affords ways of being” (174). These are, in my preferred terms, ways of being bodily in the place-world.

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Digital Virtual Places: Utopias, Atopias, Heterotopias

Golfo Maggini

Abstract In my paper, I will approach virtual places neither in terms of non-places or atopias, nor in terms of utopias, but in terms of heterotopias. In order to do so I will deal with some major phenomenological commentaries of place in Heidegger before focusing on a series of placial or place-related topics in his 1936–1938 *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowing)*. In light of the *Contributions* I will first thematize virtual places indirectly by opening up the triad of calculation/digits, representation/screens, and communication/information bits. Then, I will attempt to relate the treatment of *Contributions* to a second triad of topics which are directly placial: worldliness and involvement, situatedness and affective attunement, familiarity and homelessness. I will conclude by insisting on the unique heterotopic dwelling that digital places as places of alterity offer us beyond the all too easy *topos-atopia* and *topos-utopia* dilemmas.

1 From Modern Places to “Super-Modern” Non-Places

In his ground-breaking *Non-Places. Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* Mark Augé offers an incisive analysis of the way in which late modernity has profoundly altered our sense of place, thereby leading to a gradual transition from places to non-places. Instead of adopting the much-discussed opposition between space and place Augé contrasts the symbolized space of place to the non-symbolized space of non-place insisting on the textual and, more precisely, informational nature of non-places. Messages and signs, networks and screens, anonymous communication and fading identities for the sake of similitudes circumscribe the experience of non-places. Such experience is identified by a character of excess, an overabundance of events, an individualism of references, last but not least, by an overabundance of space which yields priority to an accelerated yet simultaneous time as “the inexhaustible stock of an unending history in the present” (Augé 1995, 104–5).

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Although not explicitly mentioned by Augé himself, this diagnosis of the chasm between modernity and “supermodernity” in terms of an opposition between the universal, on the one hand, and the discovery of territoriality, on the other, lies in close proximity to our current experience of place within the emerging digitally-constituted informational environments. In what follows I will focus on a phenomenological treatment of digital virtual places taking Martin Heidegger’s hermeneutic phenomenology as a leading interpretative thread. Heideggerian hermeneutics of place has been thoroughly discussed by space theorists and phenomenologists who have thematized existential spatiality, but the intertwining of real and virtual places has rarely been treated with an eye to phenomenology, no doubt with a few exceptions (Coyne 1994; Coyne 1995). My main concern will, therefore, be to relate the middle Heidegger’s thought of place to the phenomenology of digital experience and its diversified perception of place, in particular with regard to the real/virtual dichotomy. Having accepted the phenomenological distinction between place and space¹ as well as the primacy of place over space², the question to ask is the following: Is indeed the “invasion of space by text” (Augé 1995, 99) a sign of the rapid transformation of modern places to “supermodern” non-places? Furthermore, is the textual-informational nature of this transformation, which leads inevitably to the virtualization of real places (Shields 2003, 79) and also to the creation of virtual places as alternatives to the real,³ the proof that digital virtual places are indeed non-places qualified by the denial of placial singularity and the drive towards delocalization and homogenization?

In what follows I will approach virtual places neither in terms of non-places or atopias, nor in terms of utopias, but in terms of heterotopias, a term borrowed from Foucault’s well-known 1967 “*Des espaces autres*”, and I will propose the displacement of heterotopias from their Foucauldian context and their placement within a phenomenological framework (Waldenfels 2009, 124). In order to do so I will deal with some major phenomenological commentaries of place in Heidegger before focusing on a series of placial or place-related topics in his 1936–1938 *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowing)*. In light of the *Contributions*, I will first thematize virtual places indirectly by introducing the triad of calculation/digits, representation/screens, and communication/information bits. Then, I will attempt to relate the treatment of the *Contributions* to a second triad of topics which are directly placial, such as worldliness and involvement, situatedness and attunement, familiarity and homelessness. I will conclude by insisting on the unique “heterotopic dwelling” that digital places as places of alterity offer us more than the all too easy *topos-atopia* and *topos-utopia* dilemmas.

¹ See, for instance, Casey 1993, 16; Malpas 1999, 21–24.

² See, for instance, Casey 1993, 288; Morris 2004, 181.

³ This is usually viewed as the utopian approach to virtual space (Rheingold 2012). For the proponents of the utopian approach, virtual space is a space on its own due to its non-reliance upon physical space (Rushkoff, 2002, xx). See also: Dodge and Kitchin 2001, 52–64.

2 The Ambiguity of Digital Virtual Places: Homogeneous Spatiality, Eventful Placiality, and Non-Placiality

Phenomenological philosophy has often been praised for taking into account the experiential parameters related to spatiality as well as temporality. It is in virtue of its emphasis on the experiential background that phenomenology in E. Husserl, M. Heidegger, M. Merleau-Ponty, H. Dreyfus, D. Ihde, A. Borgmann has been called upon to overcome the one-dimensionality of theoretical approaches which focus exclusively on the cognitive aspects of information technologies. Instead, phenomenological approaches tend to raise questions of worldliness, situatedness, orientedness, and embodiment with regard to ICT's recent immersive and interactive versions. By focusing on the role and function of experiential involvement with a non-physical space such as a digital virtual space phenomenology discloses new possibilities of being-in-the-world. Hence, in order to account for the way in which phenomenology in Heidegger sheds light on the placiality or non-placiality of virtual space, several distinct threads of his questioning have to be brought together, primarily his questioning of space and place and also his confrontation with modernity and technology in the middle period of his work. To this aim I will, first, make some suggestions concerning the thought of place and placiality in the 1936–1938 *Contributions to Philosophy* which could be of value for our treatment of digital placiality and then I will proceed to raise the issues of calculation, representation, and communication as the three components of a post-Heideggerian understanding of digital virtual places.

Space and place in Heidegger have been a favorite topic among phenomenologists. In this light, many aspects of his topological analyses have been critically examined and thought upon, such as the difficult balance between embodiment and spatiality, the diversified emphasis on placial phenomenology in his early writings in comparison to his later work, last but not least, his re-evaluation of place with regard to his ontological investigation into time and Being. All these questions re-emerge within the framework of the discussion on digital virtual places, even though little attention has been paid to it by these leading phenomenologists, except for a few critical remarks.

On the one hand, Edward Casey argues that “this virtual implacement can occur in image or word, or in both. The comparative coziness and discreteness of such compresence – in sense of having boundaries if not definite limits – makes it a genuine, if still not fully understood, phenomenon of place.” (Casey 1998, xiv).⁴ Nevertheless, he does not elaborate on this issue, while his unique emphasis on the

⁴ Casey further notes that new electronic technologies are caught in the odd, age-old dialectics of space and place as they structurally belong to geometric, abstract space, but their “dromocentrism” endows them with a placial significance (Casey 1998, 343). In his review of Casey's *The Fate of Place* Jeff Malpas criticizes him for not paying enough attention to Heidegger's treatment of the technological in relation to the topological and also to virtual reality's tendency to forget place. Casey tends to give more importance to the reappearance of place in late modern thinkers and not to some problematic aspects of the odd dialectic with the spatial and the virtual (Malpas 2002, 97).

role of embodiment in place-making renders his analysis of placiality entirely body-dependent: “Much as we might like to think that we could do otherwise (and much as we may be drawn to theories of placelessness in an age of spatial and temporal nihilism), we are *bound by body to be in place*.” (Casey 1993, 104; his emphasis).

On the other hand, Jeff Malpas points out that for Heidegger modern technology leads inevitably to the spatialization of the world: “place “shows up” within technological modernity as nothing other than spatial “position” (which means that “place” as such does not appear at all, while things appear as nothing more than nodes within a uniform and extended spatial array.” (Malpas 2006, 293) As Heidegger views the essence of modern technology solely in terms of positioning (*Gestell*), through its provocative action technology ultimately turns singular and heterogeneous places into homogeneous spaces. This shift is by no means contingent, since information technologies exacerbate this trend inherent in modern technology, as Malpas comments on the occasion of the later Heidegger’s example of a highway bridge (Heidegger 1976, 153–154): to build networks, such as virtual communication highways, means to induce a certain disruption in our sense of place, as nearness and distance are re-organized following new spatial and placial configurations ordered by specific technological imperatives. In light of these changes what becomes evident is that virtual technological spaces are not independent from physical spaces and they do possess a place-making ability. It is at this point that Malpas detects a profound tension: “The more the technological covers over its own character as a mode of revealing, and so as itself constitutive of a certain place and placing, the more it misunderstands and misrepresents its own character and the more it opens up the possibility of its own breakdown.” (Malpas 2006, 302) Hence, the ambiguity of modern technology, of which digital communications are but the ultimate manifestation, is its co-belonging to homogeneous spatiality and to genuine, eventful placiality, to the appropriating event (*Ereignis*) as a “happening of place” (Malpas 2012, 219).

Malpas unfolds his questioning of technology and placiality in the later Heidegger by elaborating on a series of critical placial concepts such as ground, gathering, boundary (πέρας), and clearing. At the heart of his treatment lies the re-evaluation of Heidegger’s middle period marked by the hermeneutic shift from meaning to place made possible through the gradual understanding of presencing in terms of placing. From the late 30s onwards, the residues of the physicalist conception of space in *Being and Time*’s existential analytics gives its place to a more thoughtful topological questioning. In doing so Malpas takes his distance from the criticism of Heidegger’s questioning of place by Casey, who opts for the priority of embodiment over place. For Malpas, Casey is wrong in making placiality dependent on embodiment, as it is in light of placiality that the body is to be viewed. Moreover, Malpas’ hermeneutic reversal shifts the attention to other important aspects of Heidegger’s phenomenology of place with regard to modern and late modern technology: “Heidegger’s own critique of the technological character of modernity can itself be viewed as directing attention to the way in which the technological involves a fundamental concealment of place and placedness.” (Malpas 2002, 97).

The Malpas-Casey exchange on placiality and embodiment in Heidegger brings us back to our questioning of virtual space, for the latter is frequently linked to questions of embodied – or disembodied – self (Ihde 2002). But is the primacy of the body over place and of embodiment over placiality justified? I agree with Malpas' claim that this is not so. Contrary to Casey who insists on the later Heidegger's re-evaluation of place in relation to modern technology only from the 1949 Bremen and Freiburg lectures on, Malpas pays attention to several critical insights from his middle period, in writings such as the 1936–1938 *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowing)*, even though he recognizes their inadequacy (Malpas 2012, 106). Following this hermeneutic thread, instead of an exclusive focus on the early or the later Heidegger on place, I will concentrate on *Contributions to Philosophy*, where a multitude of placial themes are introduced in connection with his critique of metaphysics and modern technology. The texts from Heidegger's middle period which most commentators choose to focus on is no doubt *The Origin of the Work of Art* and the Hölderlin lectures, whereas *Contributions to Philosophy* are often simply mentioned but never discussed in detail. My aim is not to unfold the entire placial horizon of *Contributions*, but to shed light on the themes of affective attunements (*Stimmungen*), time-space (*Zeit-Raum*) and momentary site (*Augenblicksstätte*), as they could offer us critical insights into the nature and function of digital virtual environments.

3 The Middle Heidegger's Phenomenology of Place and Space: The case of *Contributions to Philosophy*

Toward the middle of the 30s and in the 40s Heidegger seems to have put aside his sole preoccupation with temporality, thus paving the way for a renewed understanding of spatiality. Phenomenologists of place and Heidegger scholars have most of the times thematized the essay on *The origin of the work of art*, *Introduction to Metaphysics* and the Hölderlin lecture courses in order to document Heidegger's topological shift.⁵ Although the importance of the cryptic 1936–1938 *Contributions to Philosophy* has not been neglected,⁶ no thorough examination of its essentially topological questioning has appeared, even though it is clear that the triad of time-space, un-ground and momentary site allow for a transformed understanding of *Da-sein's* placedness (*Räumlichkeit*) as to its essential site: "Measured against their ordinary representations, time and space are here more originary; and ultimately, they are time-space, which is not a coupling of time and space but what is more originary in their belonging together." (Heidegger 1999, 132). What already underlies this unique conceptual triad is the historicizing and therefore spatializing power of the guiding attunements that qualify the appropriation event of *Da-sein's* relation

⁵ See Casey 1997, 258–269; Elden 2002, 64–70; Malpas 2006, 147–155.

⁶ See Escoubas 2008, 85; Dastur 2008, 148–51; Russon and Jacobson 2013, 347–50.

to Being.⁷ In the *Contributions*' preliminary part, Heidegger specifies two grounding attunements corresponding to the first and the other beginning of thought, deep wonder and deep foreboding, the second one manifested as startled dismay, reservedness and deep awe – which open up history as “*thrusts* of time which spatialize be-ing's opening of its self-sheltering.” (Heidegger 1999, 13; his emphasis). Moreover, the theme of the momentary site is explicitly discussed in sections 238 to 242 of the fourth joining of *Contributions* (“Grounding”). Here the project of existential analytics is reiterated in a totally new perspective taking as a starting point time-space, as the issue is to define the domain of the truth of Being. Reiterating the first beginning of thought is meant to take the form of a instantaneous turning, whereas truth as the truth of Being receives the topological determination of a “between” (*Zwischen*). Correspondingly, man's relation to Being as an appropriating event which manifests itself through the grounding attunement of reservedness is understood topologically as a momentary site (Heidegger 1999, 261). Hence, the time-space, as well as the time-play-space (*Zeit-Spiel-Raum*), bear witness to a radically new understanding of the temporal mode of making-present. What, thus, becomes apparent is that the unfolding of time-space out of the momentary site is not a process of subjectivization but, on the contrary, its decisive overcoming.

These subtle phenomenological analyses pave the way to wrestle with the question of time-space's abysmal nature. From Aristotle to Leibniz and from him to Kant and even to Bergson, τόπος and χρόνος are metaphysical representations of place and time that are to be overcome. But this overcoming is only possible through the enactment of *Da-sein*'s momentary site as the gathering of the re-movals-onto (*Entrückungen*) is a displaced, dynamic form of jointure (Farrell Krell 1991, 60). Thus, on the one hand, the structure of “jointure” is that of adversity – the counter-way of time and space – qualified as an *Ab-grund*, which is nevertheless attuned. On the other hand, language is the privileged place for setting forth this complex topological scheme. *Wink* – the gesture that gives a signal – makes up the essence of language, whereas the spatializing of temporality takes place in the mode of language understood as “hesitating refusal” (Heidegger 1999, 268–9).

In his illuminating commentary on *Contributions* Alejandro Vallega sets up the stage for Heidegger's intense questioning of place in light of all these themes by introducing “the exilic” at the heart of it. Spatiality, which is not to be identified to mathematical space, exceeds the order of presence by appearing with beings and yet withdrawing from them: spatiality “remains a stranger to the main discourse of *Being and Time*” by “slipping away from Heidegger's articulation.” (Vallega 2003, 128). As language and thought are the domains where this “slipping away” or this alterity occurs, these are the themes that the enacting or performative character of the thinking of *Contributions* invites. The elaboration of a set of topological themes – the in-between, time-space, going over, ungrounding last but not least, the attunement of thinking – go in the direction of demonstrating the heterotopic or

⁷ John Sallis refers to the spatial effect of the guiding attunement of distress (*Not*) in the first beginning of thought as what “breaks up beings so as to ground a possible standpoint for man within this space.” (Sallis 2001, 183).

“ektopic”, from the Greek ἐκτοπος, non-representational character of thought. Hence, Vallega’s “exilic” is a rich placial concept that seeks to grasp the way in which existential spatiality, in contrast to physical or abstract space, is intrinsically heterotopic, because it implicates alterity, withdrawal, and uncanniness at the very heart of the finite thought of being: “...*Contributions* thinks out of alterity and in the enactment of a transformative openness in ephemeral passage.” (Vallega 2003, 171).

4 Heidegger’s Critique of Modern Technology and its Aftermath: Digital Calculability, Representationalism, and Informational Space

Three important issues are worth raising with regard to the middle Heidegger’s critique of modernity and technology before attempting to approach it in light of the phenomenology of virtual places. First, calculation as the pervasive character of the beingness of beings in modernity: “Everything must be adapted to the existing state of calculation. From here on the priority of *organization*, renunciation from the ground up of a freely growing transformation.” (Heidegger 1999, 84).⁸ Second, the persistence of representationalism in late modernity: “The planning-calculating makes a being always more re-presentable, accessible in every possible explanatory respect, to such an extent that for their part these controllables [...] broaden a being into what is seemingly boundless – but only seemingly.” (Heidegger 1999, 348). Last but not least, the informational transmutation of language is the ultimate manifestation of the logical domination of language in Western metaphysics which as such conceals the “enigma” of language: “How does what is ownmost to language arise in the essential swaying of be-ing?...” (Heidegger 1999, 352).

Let us now find some relevance between these three themes and our questioning on digital virtual places. First, concerning the calculative essence of virtual reality digital ontologist Michael Eldred argues that digital space is the ultimate stage within the mathematico-Cartesian framework of modernity. The mathematical-calculative dimension is the very core of digital ontology which has to be perceived not instrumentally, but as a mode of being. It is the middle Heidegger who thematized more adequately the onto-arithmological constitution of virtual space in a way that brings forth its controlling character (κυβερνητική). Hence, what is of crucial importance about virtual places is not the real/virtual dichotomy, but their digital

⁸Stuart Elden points out the significance of calculation in Heidegger’s *Contributions to Philosophy*. He also makes an insightful comment about the theme of the gigantic (*das Riesenhafte*) in the same text in its relation to calculation. Heidegger relates modern calculation to the securing of space and time which is proper to modernity. Though he explicitly refers to machine technology, Elden establishes a hermeneutic link between “the gigantic”, and also “total mobilization”, to late modern globalization and its intertwining with information technologies moving between real and virtual space. See: Elden 2006, 142–150 and Jeff Malpas’ commentary on Elden’s account of the placelessness of number (Malpas 2012, 294).

nature-numerical nature which possesses a totalizing, autopoietic, and controlling character (Eldred 2009, 91). Contrary to what is often said to be the case, the problem with virtual space is not ubiquity or placelessness but control through the digital-cybernetic network. Even before *Being and Time* Heidegger had dealt with the issue of ἀριθμός in Plato and, especially, in Aristotle. But it is only the middle Heidegger who fully revealed not only the metaphysical but also the historical consequences of numerical representation and calculation. The mathematical-cybernetic representation of beings in digital networks completes, therefore, the consummation of Western metaphysics, as the placelessness of Greek *logos* attains its peak in digital arithmology. Hence, there is no point in making real entities compete with digital entities or real places compete with virtual places. For Eldred, virtual places are not *simulacra* or *duplicata* of real places, but exist as places in their own right parallel to real places.

Eldred's claim about the arbitrariness of digital virtual space is a typical example of a dominating trend among Heidegger-inspired digital ontologists who succumb to ontological parallelism, for they defend the "split thesis" about virtual space being constructed according to laws other than those which dominate physical space.⁹ For Michael Heim, Plato and Leibniz are the two heroes of the late modern cyberspace project: "although Platonism provides the psychic makeup for cyberspace entities, only modern philosophy shows the structure of cyberspace itself." (Heim 1993, 91). Eldred extends further the arguments put forth by Heim in his classical "Heidegger and Computers", where he goes against those who, like Hubert Dreyfus, take Heidegger's positioning (*Gestell*) to be the "Computer Opponent" (Heim 1994). Therefore, he brings Heidegger close to Marshall MacLuhan who sees in computers much more than their cognitive exploits in terms of AI by stressing Heidegger's pioneering insights into the role and importance of the language machine (*Sprachmaschine*). Heim emphasizes the ubiquitous, flexible, interactive, and destabilizing character of computers producing universal hypertexts. Nevertheless, he does not elaborate further this holistic view of computerized interaction, as he insists on its digital-informational character and ends up subscribing unquestionably to the Heidegger-inspired information/ meaning dichotomy.

Digital ontologists such as Heim and Eldred have put emphasis on the digital, numerical constitution of virtual space and its calculative and controlling character. A second aspect of virtual reality and virtual space that also stems from the middle Heidegger's critique of metaphysics is its representationalism. Here the phenome-

⁹For a concise account of the dualist, parallelist and phenomenological approaches to digital virtual reality and virtual space: Qvortrup 2002. A significant modification of digital ontological parallelism has been attempted by Rafael Capurro. Capurro's digital hermeneutics or "angeletics" (*Angeletik*) presents a weaker version of parallelism by stressing the hybridization of digital space and the hermeneutic nature of digital networks taking Heidegger's phenomenology of worldliness as a starting point (Capurro 2010, 35–42). Based on this new hermeneutic emphasis Capurro designates, after Gianni Vattimo, virtual technologies as "weak" (*schwache Technologie*), thus stressing the need to recover the long forgotten by digital ontologists need to recover "the local" in digital virtual space against the atopic and utopian perspectives adopted by digital divide theorists (Capurro 2003).

nological research on computer screens and digital screenhood serves to shed light on the way digital representations operate by relating the use of screens to Heidegger's phenomenological account of everydayness. The informational material shown on the screen is but one factor of our involvement with it, as digital virtual space is always opened up by a screen. As we already dwell within an informational space, we are surrounded by digital screens and our sense of place is shaped by them. Even though screens appear to be representational surfaces, they are also places in the full sense of the term, for, as we face screens and continue to attend to them, we relate not only or primarily to context or information. What is pregiven in this involvement is a certain "agreement on the way we are" which is an agreement about the possibilities of truth. Finally, the holistic aspects of digital virtual space do not weaken, but on the contrary, complement its representational character: "Screens are not mirrors in that they do not reflect whatever they face. They are rather surfaces that present what is already relevant within the flow of our purposeful action." (Introna and Ilharco 2006, 68).

But apart from digital calculability and representationalism in terms of screenhood a third trait is particular to virtual space, its informational nature. Here information is not understood uniquely as the content of virtual space, but as its mode of being in terms of networked communication. This is what Rafael Capurro designates as second-order cybernetics (Capurro 2010). Drawing from different paradigms within the recent phenomenology of technics Capurro opposes the linguistic idealism of Albert Borgmann's view of informational virtual space (Capurro 1999). Borgmann seems to be a proponent of the classical dualist approach to virtual space, which declares its secondary and even parasitic nature in comparison to reality. Drawing on the later Heidegger's questioning of things and thinghood, Borgmann denounces virtual ambiguity: "it is characteristic of virtual reality that as resolution and engagement grow, so does ambiguity. That detachment from reality and ambiguity of information must rise together is clear from the technical sense of ambiguity in information theory." (Borgmann 1999, 185–6). Capurro, on the contrary, opts for a phenomenologically sound treatment of informational space based on the key theme of givenness (Capurro 2009).

5 A Case for Virtuality: Digital Technologies as Place-Making Technologies

In his 2010 *Sociable Spaces and Pervasive Digital Media* Richard Coyne provides us with an exhaustive phenomenology-driven account of digital pervasiveness in terms of spatiality and placedness. While elaborating a series of placial configurations within three thematic units – "Temperament", "Everyday" and "Commonplace" – which roughly correspond to the dimensions of tuning, time, and place – he introduces the complex dynamics of integration and disruption, which he borrows from architectural urbanism, in the study of digital technologies of place.

The Heideggerian echoes of Coyne's analyses are more than apparent: the "tuning of place" lies within the hermeneutic network of affective attunements re-elaborated in view of their historicizing and spatializing in the 1936–1938 *Contributions*. "Tuning" is Coyne's term for rejecting both digital virtual naturalism and idealism by maintaining the "agonistic" nature of man-place and, correspondingly, man-computer relationship: "Spatiality embeds the capacity for quick cognitive responses. Such models have greater resonances with ideas about disruptions, breaks, glitches, and opportunistic hacks than do well-ordered plans, the pursuit of a seamless melding of tools and bodies, or the assertion that differences between organism and machine are somehow dissolved by digital technologies." (Coyne 2010, 14).

In doing so Coyne, against the majority of phenomenology-inspired virtual reality theorists, chooses to focus not on the average everyday use of pervasive digital technologies or their user-friendliness, but on the latter being "technologies of the gap". By evoking their multiple regularizing but also disruptive functions he identifies virtual digital devices as place-making, since their tuning is primarily a spatial tuning. But the agonistic coexistence of continuity and discontinuity does not turn pervasive digital places into non-places (Coyne 2007). Digital virtual places do not attest to a negative experience of *atopia*. What really shows the intensity of our existential involvement with them challenge the fine line between familiarity and unfamiliarity. This is what Coyne qualifies as a threshold (Coyne 2010, 184). Hence, the "tuning of place" through digital devices not only allows but in some sense requires the coping with boundedness as a key experiential feature.

Coyne's analysis of thresholds and boundaries evokes Vallega's "exilic" in *Contributions to Philosophy*. Moreover, if we bring it close to major commentaries on the role and function of place in the middle Heidegger, some critical observations are inevitable. First, with regard to the agonistic nature of place and placedness in texts such as *The Origin of the Work of Art* (Casey 1990). Then, with regard to the increasing importance of placial themes, especially that of boundary (πέρας) and its absence.¹⁰ Last but not least, with regard to the haunting presence of the unfamiliar or the uncanny (δεινόν) as an originary experience of homelessness.

6 Digital Virtual Places Beyond Utopias and "Atopias"

In the era of ubiquitous computing, informational spaces are "everywhere and nowhere" (Hillis 1999; Gunkel 2007). We are, thus, led to the easy conclusion that they are non-places, placeless places, or atopias carrying an indubitable metaphysical weight (Forget 2008). The other side of the coin would be to consider them as utopias.¹¹ From what I argued so far, it becomes clear that they are neither. Virtual informational

¹⁰In *Contributions* Heidegger denounces the "unboundedness of machinations" (Heidegger 1999, 84).

¹¹On digital utopianism: Turner 2006; Heinrich et al. 2012.

spaces are places of a special kind: they are heterotopic places, places of radical alterity in the way Alejandro Vallega understands the strong bond between spatiality and the “exilic” in *Contributions to Philosophy*. In light of this reading it is crucial to insist on the multiples figures of alterity with regard to virtual placiality, the most primordial being that of the unfamiliar and homelessness. The experience of digital virtuality could, therefore, be designated as a heterotopic dwelling (Joyce 1999), a place of radical alterity and uncanniness.¹² Moreover, phenomenologists of place have provided us with insightful analyses of placial activities, such as building, wandering, navigating, which could be reconceptualized with regard to digital spatiality. Topological themes which emerge within Heidegger’s middle and later thinking of place, such as betweenness, threshold and boundary, could serve to study digital virtual reality as what enables authentic placial experiences, though of a specific type.

The classical in phenomenology emphasis on VR representationalism and disembodiment does not usually take into account most of the times the proper character of worldliness and is often oriented towards a “place-as-pragmatics” approach (Casey 1998, 254). The existential features of situatedness and attunement, inadequately explored by Heidegger in *Being and Time*, put forth a more differentiated approach of placiality. If “places are felt” (Casey 1993, 219), then, we should start by thematizing affective attunements such as “information anxiety”, with regard to virtual placiality (Capurro 2004).¹³ For the middle Heidegger, affective attunements, which have been proven intrinsically placial and historical, manifest the complex relation of man to place, even though modern technology has shut down several possibilities of this eventful relation (Malpas 2012, 109).

To conclude, late modern virtual places open new possibilities for territoriality without necessarily succumbing to the false dilemma of digital utopia (Poster 1995) or dystopia (Borgmann 2004). Hence, fully immersive digital environments are to be experienced both as an everyday lived experience and as a challenge to it. By moving at the boundaries between the real and the non-real virtual places constitute thresholds which remind us of Heidegger’s “agonistic” hermeneutics of place in *Contributions*. It is in this sense that virtual placiality is closer to a work of art as a dynamic *topos* than to an everyday tool or device. Digital virtual places are heterotopias in the sense of Char Davies’ “changing spaces” that are at once like and unlike real ones, therefore allowing for transformational processes to take place (Davies 2004). By being the subject and also the outcome of place-making they defy the metaphysical positioning in terms of nihilistic *Machenschaft* or *Gestell*, thus opening up a world through difference.¹⁴

¹² On the “uncanniness” of place see: Malpas 2012: 151–2.

¹³ It is worth noting that, already in *Being and Time*, anxiety is place-related: “The fact that what is threatening is *nowhere* characterizes what *Angst* is about.” (Heidegger 1996, 186; his emphasis). Understood in this sense, virtual places could be seen as a unique chance to challenge the primacy of the rational self in the Cartesian vision of modernity by multiplying the possibilities of attunement with our selves and fostering the respect of affective reason (Seidler 1998).

¹⁴ See, for instance, Malpas 2012, 111; Coyne 2005, 194.

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A Woman's Place: Place-Based Theory, Hermeneutics, and Feminism

Janet C. Wesselius

Abstract Women are all too familiar with discussions about their “proper place.” Often, and certainly historically, there has been no place for women to even participate in these discussions. But what is curious is that it also seems to be the case that there is no place for women—or, at least, a consideration of gender—in most place theories. Such an oversight in place theories is curious given all the attention feminist philosophy (epistemology in particular) has focused on “situatedness” as an important aspect of human life. In the first part of this paper, I shall explicate feminist analyses of “situatedness”; moreover, I shall argue that feminist philosophy already theorizes place in its thorough analysis of situatedness and thus cannot only correct the “gender blindness” of many place theories but can also extend the analyses of place theories. In this second part, I shall explore reasons why feminist philosophers have concentrated on “place” (or “situatedness”). In other words, what are the reasons for a similar focus in feminist philosophy and place theory, despite their mutual lack of engagement? I shall turn to hermeneutics as a theory that is taken up in both place theories and feminist philosophy. In the final section, I shall turn to the notion of “contingency” as a resource for both feminist theorizing and place-based theory.

Doreen Massey begins her 1994 discussion of place and gender by recounting her experience as a little girl in 1950s Manchester looking at “the huge stretch of the Mersey flood plain” that was divided up into football pitches and realizing that these places—“acres of Manchester”—were for boys only.¹ I have my own analogous experience of sitting down in my first class in graduate school and realizing that I

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1 “And I remember, too, it striking me very clearly - even then as a puzzled, slightly thoughtful little girl - that all this huge stretch of the Mersey flood plain had been entirely given over to boys” (Massey 1994, 185).

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am the only woman in the room; this experience is 40 years after Massey's recognition of football pitches as gendered places. Ten years after my graduate school experience of gendered place, I enter a classroom as a newly minted Assistant Professor of Philosophy to teach my first Honours Seminar for fourth year undergraduates ... and once again, I am the only woman in the room (although at least this time, I thought, I was the expert authority in that place). These places are not just physical spaces; as Massey (1994, 186) says, intentional or not, they have "the effect of, firmly letting me know my conventional subordination" as female in this society. My point in recounting these experiences is twofold. First, women are often made aware of "their place" by the place itself, often simply by the reality that there are no women in some places or that one is the only woman or one of a few. Sometimes these are negative experiences—where women are made to feel like trespassers, such as football pitches—and sometimes they are positive experiences—where women are congratulated on having "made it" into a previously all-male enclave, such as the ranks of philosophy professors. It is telling that so little has changed in the span of 50 years between Massey's experience and my own. But I am more interested in how these experiences of place illuminate the relations between "place," broadly construed, and gender.

Women are all too familiar with discussions about their "proper place"; often, and certainly historically, there has been no place for women to even participate in these discussions. But what is curious is that it also seems to be the case that there is no place for women—or, at least, a consideration of gender—in most place theories (Massey's fine contributions notwithstanding). Such an oversight in place theories is curious given all the attention feminist philosophy (epistemology in particular) has focused on "situatedness" as an important aspect of human life. In the first part of this paper, I shall explicate feminist analyses of "situatedness"; moreover, I shall argue that feminist philosophy already theorizes place in its thorough analysis of situatedness and thus cannot only correct the "gender blindness" of many place theories but can also extend the analyses of place theories. In this second part, I shall explore reasons why feminist philosophers have concentrated on "place" (or "situatedness"). In other words, what are the reasons for a similar focus in feminist philosophy and place theory, despite their mutual lack of attention? In the final section, I shall turn to the notion of "contingency" as a resource for both feminist theorizing and place-based theory.

1 Situatedness and Place

In 1987, scientist-turned-historian/philosopher Donna Haraway published a review of Sandra Harding's *The Science Question in Feminism*. One phrase in this book review had remarkable uptake: "feminist objectivity means quite simply *situated knowledges*" (Haraway 1988). This review had such enormous effect because it consolidated a number of concerns widely shared by feminist theorists into a simple, pithy statement. The concerns revolved around the (alleged) characteristics of valid knowledge such as "objective" and "universal" and the charge that feminist (and sometimes even just simply women's) knowledge claims were "subjective"

and “particular” and hence did not meet the standards of “real” knowledge. Since this publication, many feminist theorists have taken “situatedness” as a starting point for their own arguments.

What did Haraway mean by “situated knowledges”? To understand this phrase, we need to remember that she was responding to a book by Harding. This book was a relatively early, but influential, development of feminist standpoint theory. Feminist standpoint theory can be traced to Hegel's account of the master-slave relation through Marx's idea of and Lukacs' further development of the standpoint of the proletariat.² Sandra Harding developed feminist standpoint theory (along with Patricia Hill Collins, Nancy Hartsock, Hilary Rose, and Dorothy Smith). Quite simply, feminist standpoint theory argues that, particularly when dealing with issues of gender, a feminist standpoint gives one the best—and widest—place from which to understand reality. (It is noteworthy that most liberatory social movements develop some form of standpoint theory.³ I think that this is evidence that place is most important for people in marginalized positions: the people most aware of ‘their place’ are the people who are most often reminded of ‘their place’ by the mainstream; those in dominant social positions have the luxury of not being reminded of their proper place and hence are unable to see that place is even relevant).⁴ The point is that just as the slave has a ‘wider’ view of reality than the master, those in socially marginalized positions have a ‘wider’ and hence more accurate view of reality than those in socially dominant positions, at least when dealing with the aspect of reality having to do with their marginalization.

What was, and continues, to be the most contentious in feminist standpoint theory is the claim that some standpoints, or places, are epistemically privileged with regards to a particular part of reality: that, for example, a feminist standpoint is a place that enables a more accurate perspective from which to understand gender and gender relations.⁵ However, in her review, Haraway was pointing out that regardless of whether or not some standpoints—places—were epistemically privileged, *all* knowledge grows out of the specific situations of the knowers. Hence, her claim “feminist objectivity means situated knowledges” is now an aphorism in feminist theory and is commonly taken to mean that since all knowledge is situated, that is, located, enabled and constrained by a specific place, the best—the most “objective”—knowledge takes that situatedness into account.⁶ It is this point—the ubiquity and inevitability of standpoints or situatedness—that has been so influential in feminist theory. Shortly after Haraway's review was published, Lorraine Code was

² See Niiniluoto et al. eds., 2004: 1017, and Jameson 1988.

³ See Harding 2004, 3: “...standpoint themes—“the logic of a standpoint”—also appeared in the thinking of a wide array of other prodemocratic social movements, which did not overtly claim the Marxian legacy, standpoint terminology, or, often, feminism. Race, ethnicity-based, anti-imperial, and Queer social justice movements routinely produce standpoint themes”.

⁴ See Wesselius, 2010.

⁵ As well, feminist standpoint theorists are very clear to distinguish between a *feminist* standpoint and a *woman's* or *women's* standpoint; it is the feminist standpoint that enables a more accurate view of gender and gender relations.

⁶ In Haraway's case, and many other feminist philosophers, the term “objective” is taken to be an epistemic honorific. See Wesselius 2001.

able to claim in a 1992 entry in an encyclopedia of philosophy that one of the characteristic effects of feminist epistemology “is to move the question ‘Whose knowledge are we talking about?’ to a central analytic position” (378). As an epistemically relevant question, ‘who knows?’ is virtually equivalent to asking about the locational particularities of the knower as some of the relevant conditions that make knowledge possible. And for feminists, this continues to be an epistemically relevant question. In one of the most recent anthologies of feminist epistemology and philosophy of science, Heidi Grasswick (2011, xvi) writes “*situated knowing* is the single most influential concept to come out of feminist epistemology. According to those who stress the idea of ‘situated knowing’, one’s social location (gender being one such dimension) both shapes and limits one’s knowing.” I would add that one’s location also makes knowledge possible; the epistemically enabling aspect of location is a function of the fact of our embodiment. I shall return to this point in the final section.

I have written elsewhere about the epistemic consequences of this focus, but here I want to focus on what ‘situatedness’ means and how it relates to place (Wesseliuss 2010). If we look at how ‘situatedness’ has been worked out in those feminist theorists who have taken it up, we can see diverse but related epistemologies. The philosopher of science Helen Longino (1990, 2002) developed “critical contextual empiricism” which emphasizes the importance of context—both the place of the knower and the place of a knowledge claim within a particular knowledge program—in the production and evaluation of scientific knowledge. Sandra Harding (2015, 2008, 1998, 1991) has continued to develop feminist standpoint theory, explicitly highlighting and investigating the difference made to knowledge by social identities in addition to gender, such as race, class, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. Lorraine Code (2006, 1991) wrote one of the earliest book-length studies in feminist epistemology and while she continues to focus on gender, she now includes other locational specificities as salient factors in the production of knowledge; her most recent book is entitled *Ecological Thinking: The Politics of Epistemic Location*. When looking at three of the most influential feminist philosophies of the past 30 years, it should not be surprising that I see resonances between these feminist philosophers and place theory. Even the names of their theories include synonyms for place: critical *contextual* empiricism, feminist *standpoint* theory, and the politics of epistemic *location*. My contention that ‘situatedness’ is another way of talking about ‘place’—one that happened to have appeared in feminist philosophy—is reasonable. However, is there more to be said about the connection between feminist theory and place theory?

Place theory has long been associated with hermeneutics and while feminists have not paid much attention to it (as place theorists have not paid much attention to feminist theory), they have taken up hermeneutics.⁷ As further evidence for my

⁷ While feminists have paid more attention to hermeneutics than to place theories, according to Code (2002, 2), they have not been as attracted to Gadamer’s work as one might expect largely because of his interest in tradition and the “conservativism” that is revealed in “his respect for” tradition.

contention that there are significant resonances between feminist theory, place theories, and hermeneutics, I note that it was Code who edited one of the most important books on feminism and hermeneutics in 2002: *Feminist Re-Interpretations of Gadamer*. Indeed, Code (2002, 4, 10) argues that “Gadamerian hermeneutics—in which knowing is engaged, situated, dialogic, and historically conscious—has much to offer to feminists” “for feminist inquiry, virtually by definition, is *situated*. It eschews quests for detached, dislocated, putatively ‘timeless’ knowledge, to insist instead that knowledge, understanding, interpretation, and knowers are always, as Susan Bordo puts it, ‘somewhere, and limited’ (Bordo 1990, 145).” In other words, Code claims that both Gadamerian hermeneutics and feminist inquiry are theories that understand knowing in terms of situatedness or, as I have been arguing, in terms of specific places. Code refers to Bordo’s early work on feminism and postmodernism; Veronica Vasterling also sees these connections in Gadamer’s hermeneutics. She argues that Gadamer’s “emphasis on the situatedness of understanding” and his “emphatic conclusion that understanding means understanding differently appears to anticipate the radical contextualism associated with postmodern philosophy” (Code 2002, 150, 156). Similarly, Susan-Judith Hoffmann claims that “...hermeneutics fulfills two important conditions for feminist theorising: namely, a sensitivity to the historical and cultural situatedness of knowledge seekers, and the critical power to challenge reductive universalizing tendencies in traditional canons of thought” (Code 2002, 82). Once again, we see the twining of ‘feminism,’ ‘hermeneutics’ and cognates of ‘place’ such as ‘situatedness’ and ‘contexts’.

I think that ‘situatedness’ can (and should) reasonably be taken to be analogous to ‘place.’ Gender may not look like a place but as we saw earlier, for theorists like Massey, gender can be understood as a place insofar as it is a social place. It is probably true that we think of ‘place’ primarily as a physical or geographical space. However, as Massey’s analysis of the football fields of 1950s Liverpool show, physical spaces are often gendered. Likewise, my body is also a physical space. And my body is gendered (as well as sexed). In the case of football pitches, the physical space becomes a football pitch through the social relations of a society in whose culture football plays an important role. And football is formed, in part, by the social relations and performances of gender. It is important to note that there is no simple and precise demarcation between the physical and the social: gender may be primarily social but it is intimately—although not invariably—related to physical sex. A football pitch may be primarily a physical piece of land but a piece of land becomes a playing field for a human game through the social activities and intentions, including gender relations.

The connection between gender, hermeneutics and place-based theories is not immediately obvious, probably because hermeneutics is widely understood to be concerned with the exegesis and interpretation of *texts*—indeed, “hermeneutics” and “exegesis” are often used interchangeably. I am not claiming here that hermeneutics only applies to texts—it applies to non-linguistic things as well—but I am claiming that it is easy to overlook the hermeneutical aspect of non-linguistic entities. This ‘overlooking’ is germane to the relation of place-based theories to gender. Of course, feminist philosophers have argued that women (and the concerns specific

to women) are often overlooked, but while I agree with those charges, I am making another point. My point is that while linguistic activities and artefacts require interpretation, the fact that the linguistic *does* require interpretation blinds us to the need of the non-linguistic for interpretation. Hence, the fact that gender and place also stand in need of hermeneutical attention but often we do not recognize this need. Writing and texts are more abstract than the immediate experience of gender and place and consequently, it is easier to see how a text needs to be interpreted (or is interpreted differently by different people) but is it not nearly so easy to see how one's gender and place(s) need to be interpreted. Moreover, both gender and place are inevitable and ubiquitous: they are consequences of embodiment; writing and texts are not inevitable or ubiquitous even though we often treat them as such.

2 The Femininity of Place

I have been arguing that feminist theory, with its emphasis on situatedness, already theorises place, particularly if we understand gender as a place. However, I think that even if we choose not to understand gender as a place we still see this twining of feminism (with its focus on gender), hermeneutics, and cognates of 'place' such as 'situatedness' and 'contexts.' To be more specific, I think 'place' (as well as 'situatedness' and its homologue) and hermeneutics are entwined with femininity in particular. And what appears to us now as an entwinement is rooted in the ancient Pythagorean table of opposites: limit/unlimited, odd/even, unity/plurality, right/left, male/female, rest/motion, straight/crooked, light/darkness, good/bad, square/oblong (Huffman 2014).

Of course, given that 'female' is explicitly listed in this table, feminist philosophers have an interest in the effects of this table and in contesting these associated pairs. In a now classic work, Genevieve Lloyd (1984) shows how the Pythagorean table of opposites structured philosophy—the origin of western theorizing—at its very inception and she traces the historical development of western ideals of reason as peculiarly masculine.⁸ She argues that our view of reason has been constructed through its opposition to the feminine: “the pursuit of rational knowledge has been a major strand in western culture's definitions of itself as opposed to Nature. It is for us in many ways equitable with Culture's transforming or transcending of Nature. Rational knowledge has been construed as a transcending, transformation or control of natural forces; and the feminine has been associated with what rational knowledge transcends, dominates, or simply leaves behind” (Lloyd 1984, 2). As Lloyd goes on to show, “our ideals of reason have historically incorporated an exclusion of the feminine” as part of a series of related dichotomies, such as western concepts of

⁸Of course, 'female' refers to sex and 'femininity' refers to gender; however, as Lloyd (1993) argues in the preface to the second edition, given the metaphorical nature of this table, gender (masculinity and femininity) is implicated in the inclusion of sex (male and female) on this table.

culture (and nature), reason (and emotion), knowledge (and belief or intuition), and mind (and body), based in the Pythagorean table of opposites (Lloyd 1984, x).

Moreover, these pairs are not merely opposites; they are hierarchically ordered. As Lloyd (1984, 104) puts it:

What is valued—whether it be odd as against even numbers, ‘aggressive’ as against ‘nurturing’ skills and capacities, or Reason as against emotion—has been readily identified with maleness. Within the context of this association of maleness with preferred traits, it is not just incidental to the feminine that female traits have been construed as inferior—or, more subtly, ‘complementary’—to male norms of human excellence. Rationality has been conceived as transcendence of the feminine; and the feminine itself has been partly constituted by its occurrence within this structure.

Her point here is that it does not really matter what appears on this table; what matters is on which side it appears (and likewise, for anything associated with the things on a particular side of the table). Anything on the left side, or associated with the left side, is valued; anything on the right side is denigrated. For example, reason does not appear on Pythagoras's original table but, as Lloyd shows, by the time of Plato, reason is associated with the left side.

So, we have binary opposites (or dichotomies) that are hierarchically ordered. The symbols and concepts formed by dichotomies rooted in the Pythagorean table of opposites, writes Lloyd, “did not here function as straightforwardly descriptive classifications. ‘Male,’ like the other terms on its side of the table, was construed as superior to its opposite; and the basis for this superiority was its association with the primary Pythagorean contrast between form and formlessness” (Lloyd 1984, 3). Similarly, Judith Genova (1994, 43) argues that “for Plato and Pythagoras before him, the first pair of opposites, that between the Limited and the Unlimited, named the fundamental principle of *all* things” [emphasis mine]. What is noteworthy here is that these binary pairs are formed through dichotomous distinctions: *A* and *not-A*. Dichotomies are all-encompassing (this is the principle of the excluded middle) and the distinction is absolute, where *A* and *not-A* have nothing in common. This dichotomous logic explains the constitutive function of the Pythagorean table. The meaning of the positive side *A* derives from the negative side *not-A* which is its lack or absence. The positive characteristics of the left side are formed by being opposed to or contrasted with their negatives. But what is often overlooked is that the valued principles are formed not only by their positive characteristics, but also by what they exclude.

We also need to look at *all* the associations—metaphorical and analogical—derived from this table. Lloyd's point is that reason and its close associations, such as knowledge, are formed by this table which means that reason, far from being an impartial ideal, is gendered masculine. Obviously, this is a problem for any female would-be knower. But, not so obviously, this is a problem for anything associated with the right side and opposed to the things on the left. And this is where ‘place’ comes in. The left side has to do with, among other things, the universal, the eternal, the immutable (Genova 1994). Not only does the right side have to do with femaleness; it has to do with the opposite of universality (that is, particularity), the opposite of eternity (that is, the transitory), the opposite of immutability (that is,

changeableness), the opposite of unity (that is, plurality). We might think this table with its dichotomous oppositions and associations no longer had any influence after Pythagoras, but as Genova points out, we scholars do not recognize our “failure to understand how Platonic dialectics affect later ontologies, most notably, Hegel’s understanding of the self-other dialectic”; indeed, the right side is associated with the “the world of Becoming instead of the world of Being” (Genova 1994, 42, 43). So, associated with the femininity—and construed as an absence as femininity is—are the characteristics of place theories, namely, particularity, temporality, change, pluralism. Both feminist theory and place theory can be understood as responses to the lacunae, the gaps, in traditional philosophy with its pretensions to universality, objectivity, neutrality or what Haraway (1988) calls “a god’s eye point of view.” Not surprisingly, since gender and place have been ignored in traditional philosophy, feminist theory and place theory are focused on those very gaps.

When we turn to hermeneutics in particular, it is even easier to see its ‘place’ on the right side with femininity. For example, Julie Ellison (1990, 20) argues that Gadamerian hermeneutics “desires an ethics of the feminine” and as Kathleen Roberts Wright (2002, 43) writes “such an ethics privileges receptivity over agency, community over the isolation of individualism, and consensus over neutrality.” Notably, however, Wright argues that Ellison is wrong to understand Gadamer as having “an unacknowledged desire” for an ethics of the feminine. Nevertheless, regardless of whether we agree with Ellison or with Wright, hermeneutics is often seen as stereotypically feminine.

If Lloyd and the feminist scholars she has influenced are right, we have inherited from the Greeks ideals that are formed by this table of opposites. The table of opposites and its dichotomous logic extends to how we understand things that do not explicitly appear on the table. In other words, along with femininity, all the things associated with “the world of Becoming” are on the right side of the table as the lack or absence of those things on the left: things such as particularity, place (location, situation, context), and interpretation. *Prima facie*, this claim is not obvious because these associations involve metaphorical and analogical ways of thinking. Indeed, although Genova (1994, 50) prefers Derrida’s deconstruction as a way to deal with this inheritance, she also specifically acknowledges hermeneutics as another way to confront this dichotomous logic.⁹ Regardless of how we think we can engage with this heritage, my point is much more modest: I simply want to point out that femininity, place, and hermeneutics are entwined; and that this entwinement includes a whole thicket of associations such as feminism (with its focus on gender), interpretation, situatedness, context, particularity and so on. To put the point another way, I think that femininity, place, and interpretation are related categories; I think the categories of femininity, place, and interpretations occupy similar logical places. Hence, when a place theorist like Edward Relph (2015, 188), for example, argues that “places continue to be experienced first and foremost in their particularity” in a subsection that he titles “Place is another word for particularity,” we can see the

⁹ See Derrida 1981.

continuing traces of metaphorical associations with place and particularity, including femininity and interpretation.

3 The Place of Contingency

I have argued that, given its strong focus on situatedness, feminist philosophy can make an important contribution to place theory. I have also argued that both place & interpretation are metaphorically aligned with female & femininity. Moreover, this is not a positive state of affairs for they are on the 'wrong side'; that is, they are all negative, they are devalued. As I have noted, Genova suggest that deconstruction is the most promising way to deal with this state of affairs. However, she also says that

an unasked question that has been lurking in the background now asserts itself: Why does the male become associated with the limit and the good and the female with the unlimited and the bad in the first place? To answer that question, one would have to go back to another beginning. By the time of the Pythagorean table (sixth century B. C. [sic]), these connections were already solidified. The answer lies deep in myth, legend and cultural idiosyncrasies. One might try to make some sense of it by noting such things as that the female gives birth and is the symbol for plentitude [sic] and fullness. ... She is many. ... On the whole, however, the answers are not philosophically interesting. Nothing about this ontology has seemed very rational anyway, despite its abstract, mathematical quality. Arbitrary, mythical decisions seem to guide fates. One can start only with the table and see how it has determined a history. For the philosopher, Derrida, this amounts to discovering how Platonic philosophy transforms mythos into logos ... Witness the history of philosophy and the monotonous repetition of this dualism in Descartes, Hegel, and every thinker until the present (Genova 1994, 48–9).

However, I suggest that there *is* something philosophically interesting here: “nothing about this ontology has seemed very rational anyway.” That is true (although perhaps ontologies do not need to be rational). What *is* interesting is that this table, which valorizes limit, reason, order, logos, and so on, is not itself rational; this table which was thought to have reflected the structure of the entire cosmos and influenced the history of western philosophy through Descartes and Hegel is itself ... contingent.

Elsewhere I have argued that it is not uncommon to deal with denigration by revaluing that which has been denigrated (Wesselius 2001). So I am not suggesting that the right side should be revalued. However, if we look at the table, we can see that while a principle like necessity would fall on the left side, a principle like contingency would fall on the right side with place and femininity. What I notice, and what I submit is philosophically interesting, is that the table itself and the history that follows it is contingent. Although contingency seems to fit on the right side, contingency seems to encompass the entire table, Genova says that “arbitrary, mythical decisions seem to guide fates,” but I disagree. When I say this table (and its valuation) is contingent, I do not mean that it is arbitrary or uncaused or random; I simply mean that this particular table, with its particular dichotomies—or even the choice to use dichotomous distinctions rather than other kinds of distinctions—was

not, and is not, necessary. To illustrate this point: when we examine the original ten pairs on the table, we notice how strange they are . . . to us. With the exception of good/bad and light/dark, it is not obvious to us what is valuable or worthless about the other pairs, even though we are the inheritors of this table. This strangeness indicates that the table is an artefact and as such, it is a reflection of the “place” of its creators rather than a reflection of the structure of the cosmos, a place that is not ours, although we are the cultural descendants of those creators, a place that is contingent.

Contingency is another metaphorical association with femininity, place, and interpretation. But it also seems to be a characteristic of the entire table. Contingency also has a negative currency as “not necessary” or “dependent” as does place (and it is not much of a stretch to acknowledge that traditionally femininity is associated with “dependent” as well). However, I now return to my point in the first section that the epistemically enabling aspect of place is a function of the fact of our embodiment; that one’s location makes knowledge possible. It is not the case, as the Western tradition would have it, that we need to transcend our embodiment in order to know. Rather, our embodiment is a resource for knowing. A way to understand this point is through an understanding of contingency. To be contingent is to be in touch with, or in relation to, reality, although perhaps this is not the most common way we currently use this word. To touch, to be in contact, is the etymological meaning of ‘contingency’ (Oxford English Dictionary 2016). And it is bodies that touch, that can be in contact with each other or with things. Even the ‘negative’ meanings are related to the etymological meaning: that which is touching or in contact with anything at all is often seen as not-independent and therefore, as dependent. Contingency is the state of being in contact with the world, that is, the contingency of knowledge is a matter of interrelations between knowers and knowns. To be embodied, to be sexed and gendered, to be in a place and part of a place that is amenable to variable interpretation—this is part of what it means to be contingent in the sense of being in touch. Our Cartesian heritage blinds us to the ineluctable connections between thinking, knowing, feeling, doing, interacting, responding . . . these are things that our specific embodiment enables.

How are we to understand our fundamental contingency? Understanding is the focus of hermeneutics. Robin Pappas and William Cowling (2002, 219), for example, argue that both hermeneutics and feminist theory recognize the importance of embodiment: “many of the material, embodied aspects of a critical hermeneutics are also at work in Donna Haraway’s essay ‘Situated Knowledges.’” Moreover, hermeneutics focuses on understanding in context; as Vasterling (2002, 156) says, Gadamer’s “explication of the situatedness of understanding not only acknowledges the plurality of contexts—the different cultural and historical worlds, the different concrete situations—but also the context-dependency and, hence, plurality of meaning.” More tellingly, Vasterling (2002, 150) connects understanding to what I have been calling ‘contingency’; she writes “...understanding comprises the many different ways in which human beings relate to, and are in touch with, the world; for instance, the practical way of handling things—objects and situations—and social

interactions, and the more theoretical way of research and abstract thought.” In other words, simply being in the world means that we are contingent in many different ways from the practical to the social to the intellectual.

Hermeneutics, however, is not the only way to work through our contingency. Place-based theories also are focused on being in touch with our specific locales. I have already noted Relph's assertion that “place is another word for particularity.” But many place theorists recognize that, as Eve Tuck and Marcia McKenzie (2014, 21) assert, “place matters and place is always specific.” Unsurprisingly, much place theory also incorporates thinking about the environment. In one recent work, Ian Billick and Mary V. Price (2010, 25) explain that they use the term “ecology of place” for their research approach “because that approach pursues general understanding through the sort of detailed understanding of a particular place—the ‘sense of place’—that has come to be associated with ecologist and conservationist Aldo Leopold.” This same direction can be seen in recent feminist philosophy. “Ecological thinking” is the name Code (2006, 20), for example, uses to describe her recent work: “ecological thinking works with a conception of materially constituted and situated subjectivity for which place, embodied locatedness, and discursive interdependence are conditions for the very possibility of knowledge and action.” In other words, ecological thinking is not only thinking about ecology or the environment; rather, it is thinking *like* an ecosystem where there are multiple and complex relations between living creatures and inanimate things (Code 2006, 24). This sort of thinking is much the way I have described contingency: it is recognizing all the ways in which we are in contact with our environment. Like Billick and Price, in her analysis of ecological thinking, Code (2006, 28) pays attention to *habitus* (in Pierre Bourdieu's sense); *habitus* “has to do with having a sense of one's place, with the cumulative totality of sedimented cultural and personal experiences a human being carries as he or she moves about in a social space and in relation to the power structures that shape such places.” Here we can see a fully fleshed out philosophy that began with the “simple” recognition of the importance of situatedness 30 years ago.

Jeff Malpas (2015, 9) writes “it must surely be with the intelligence of place that any genuine engagement with the world, with others, or with our own selves, must begin.” What place theory and feminist theory have in common is that they do not deny or try to transcend particularity or situatedness. In their own ways and in their own places, these two kinds of theorizing embrace the contingency of knowing, that is, an engagement with the world rooted in being in touch with our own place. So what is a woman's place? I have shown that we cannot answer this question without knowing or asking about the particularities of the woman. But we also have to know or ask about the gender relations in a specific society and at a particular time. Moreover, to know any of these things—to even know what questions to ask—requires interpretation. Now we have come full circle: interpretation is situated, it depends on the context, on how it is placed, it requires ecological thinking. Such thinking enables a more detailed, nuanced, richer knowledge of particulars. Such thinking is contingent—in touch with—its place in the world.

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Race as a Historico-Spatial Construct: The Hermeneutical Challenge to Institutional Racism

Robert Bernasconi

Abstract Although lip service is widely given to institutional racism, it tends to be marginalized with more attention being given to individual racist acts. Furthermore, institutional racism is reduced to a knowledge of the rates of death, disease, poverty, and so on, among racial minorities as compared with Whites, and this knowledge is often divorced from any kind of real understanding on the part of Whites of the lives of those reflected in the statistics. To combat this lack of understanding, which is in large part a product of the distance that separates the races, one must break free of analytic reasoning. The problem begins with the way racial categories are often interpreted as the products of a false biology, whereas they were initially thought of as geographical. When, as a result of migration and race mixing, these spatial divisions no longer held in their original form, attempts were made to recreate them through segregation. Learning to read the way racism reproduces itself within a given society is a hermeneutical task. By understanding race as a border concept, a particular kind of historico-spatial construct, institutional racism becomes more legible.

1 Race as a Border Concept

The tendency today is to think of race as a concept belonging to biology and, because biologists no longer have any use for the term, it is frequently said that there are no races and that there never were. However, the strictly biological concept of race that is targeted in this way came into its own only in the aftermath of the Second World War when the UNESCO Statement on Race of 1950 advised non-scientists not to use the word “race” (UNESCO 1969, 31). One consequence of the UNESCO strategy is that it promotes the belief that racism is not so much a moral failing or a political tool of oppression as an epistemological error that can be overcome by education. The importance of undercutting biological racism is not to be downplayed, especially among the educated classes who trust what

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scientists tell them, but understanding race as a historico-spatial construct speaks more directly to the way racial divisions are perpetuated without reference to biological science.

Race understood as a biological concept tends toward essentialism, but race as a historico-spatial construct is fundamentally about drawing and redrawing the boundaries of each race. It is, in other words, a border concept where the focus lay on policing the borders, with a special focus on race mixing not least because sex across the races transgresses the borders and threatens the categories that define them (Bernasconi 2012a). In the Americas, the borders identifying what percentage of Black ancestry assigned a person to the Black race were defined and re-defined by laws that dealt in small fractions, even though the genealogical knowledge necessary to apply these laws was often lacking. Similarly, Jews, Italians, and Irish were sometimes considered White but at other times were not. Around such artificial decisions the system of White supremacy was constructed and on this tenuous basis laws were often formulated to confine members of an oppressed race within a given location with the aim of keeping them in their place, that is to say, reinforcing their place at the bottom of the racial hierarchy.

What it means to call race a historico-spatial construct will be here presented in two main parts. In the next section I will show how first François Bernier introduced the modern idea of race on the basis of a perceived correlation between physical appearance and geographical location and then how Immanuel Kant successfully modified the idea of race, even after it was found that that correlation, which had been disturbed by migrations and by race mixing, failed to hold. In the second main section I will investigate how, through ghettoization and segregation, artificial spatial divisions were created on the ground in an attempt to maintain those original differences and the hierarchical relationships that had been attached to them. In other words, as various forms of displacement broke down the geographical barriers that maintained relatively isolated populations and the genetic variations that constituted them, attempts were made to sustain those divisions by creating legal barriers that were intended to keep the races separate. To be sure, it made a difference to the framers of these laws how they thought of race. That is to say, they thought of what they were doing differently depending on the degree to which they thought of the different races as permanent or still subject to environmental factors. Nevertheless, however misconceived some ideas about race have been, throughout much of the modern period it was given a spatial reality with the aim of restricting the social mixing that might lead to racial mixing. To think of race as a historico-spatial construct rather than simply a social construction acknowledges more directly its material reality rendering it obvious that the racism of past generations cannot be undone at the level of ideas, as the UNESCO Statement seemed to imagine it could, but rather only through a restructuring of society, its national, economic, and global divisions. In a brief final section I will set out the role of hermeneutics in developing the expanded view of racism that follows from seeing race as a historico-spatial construct.

2 Racial Geographies

The first text to use of the word “race” in its dominant modern sense, where race is understood to refer to a relatively small number of types of humanity based largely on differences in appearance that were distributed geographically, quite explicitly presented it as a spatial concept. The birth of this geographical sense of the term “race” can be dated quite precisely. On 24 April 1684 François Bernier published anonymously an essay entitled: “A new division of the earth, according to the different species or races of men who inhabit it, sent by a famous traveler to Mons. * * * * *, nearly in these terms” (Bernier 2000). Bernier’s idea was that whereas previously geographers had divided the earth according to the natural boundaries that separated regions, one could also conveniently divide it into four or five different parts according to the distribution of people across the earth based on the way they looked, although he did also make passing reference to linguistic differences. Bernier, who had travelled extensively himself, recognized that travelers could often read someone’s place of origin from their physical characteristics, especially the skull, body-shape, and hair texture. Skin color was less important to Bernier than it would become to subsequent generations, because he recognized that the climate could impact it.

By contrast, from reading the growing number of travelers’ reports Kant came to believe that skin color was more permanent than observers of Bernier’s generation judged it to be and he recognized that that represented a challenge to monogenesis. Beginning with his 1775 essay “On the Different Races of Mankind,” which was written as an announcement for his lectures on Physical Geography, he set out to reconcile monogenesis with the idea that the divisions between the four main races reflected permanent heritable differences. On his account the original human beings carried the seeds of all four of the races he identified, but their racial characteristics became fixed only after the initial migrations. Racial difference was initially a result of interaction with the climate, diet, and other environmental factors a group encountered in the location in which they first found themselves and if they moved again before those characteristics were fully formed, but after the period of initial migration only race mixing could bring about permanent changes (Kant 2013, 46–50). Because Kant also recognized that the environment could still impact someone’s skin color he stipulated that it took a highly artificial perspective—which he called “natural history”—to see “race” as he understood the term. What one observes, in the sense of what is accessible to what Kant called “natural description,” are only human varieties, people grouped according to certain visible characteristics. By contrast, race was about permanent inheritable characteristics. Indeed, Kant was so insistent on this point that he believed that in order to see someone’s race one not only had to discount the transient impact of the environment, one also had to know something about how that person’s parents and children looked. Only those characteristics that were shared equally by any offspring in cases of race mixing were strictly racial characteristics, and for him skin color was the privileged example. As a result, Kant seems to have believed that one cannot *see* race in the

tropics or at the poles, because the impact of the environment was too strong in such places (Bernasconi 2012b). The focus on race mixing as the best indicator of race gave rise to the paradox that the imperative against race mixing, which Kant endorsed, had to be transgressed in order to know for sure if a transgression had occurred (Bernasconi 2002: 156–158). To identify the divisions between the races, to map the racial borders, the borders had to be crossed. Race from its first rigorous conceptualization was about transgression, especially sexual transgression. It was about the policing and crossing of boundaries.

Few subsequent scholars adopted every aspect of Kant's account and by the middle of the nineteenth century polygenesis was the dominant scientific position. Nevertheless, because the polygenists defined race, as Kant had, in terms of permanent heritable characteristics, aspects of his account survived, as did the task of policing race mixing to maintain racial purity, although new medical arguments had been introduced to buttress Kant's appeal to nature (Bernasconi 2010). Indeed, because conquests, colonial migrations and above all the forced displacements of the slave trade, the occasions for race mixing had multiplied exponentially. The idea of the relative uniformity of types in a given location, upon which Bernier's proposal relied, had lost all force, but, for the dominant race, their privileges depended on the maintenance of some version of the alleged initial divisions and they appealed to divine, medical, biopolitical, and later even evolutionary considerations to find an ideological rationale for doing so. Indeed, after Darwin it was possible to argue, as Sir Arthur Keith did over a period of almost 40 years, that tribal isolation or segregation was ultimately not so much a result of geographical barriers as it was an evolutionary mechanism that had become implanted in people's minds in the form of prejudice (Keith 1931, 33–35 and 1950, 394–399).

3 Enforcing Racial Divisions Spatially

The divisions between the races were not merely to be observed, they were to be enforced legally in an effort to control race mixing. Otherwise said, because race mixing expanded the racial borderlands to the point where the historical boundaries based on geography could no longer be drawn with confidence, the racial boundaries had to be legislated. Nevertheless, the constant drawing and redrawing of the racial lines by legislators further enlarged the zone of indeterminacy around the racial borderlands. Although race was for much of the period from Kant to UNESCO understood in terms of permanent inheritable characteristics, there was nothing permanent about the way the lines were drawn or even the terms used to name them. In an effort to maintain the broad divisions within this classifications system they were recreated spatially.

The racial barriers that migration succeeded in partially breaking down were reconstituted locally through the spatial restrictions placed on racialized groups by segregation and in the United States after 1890 the main motivation for doing so was to prohibit sex across the color line (Finkelman 1993, 2081–2087). But there were

clear precedents for segregating populations where other concerns took precedence. One can illustrate this by following the history of the ghetto. Today a ghetto can be any area of a city or town in which the living quarters of an oppressed ethnic minority are concentrated, but this usage derives from the Venetian word for iron foundry. In 1516 the Venetian Senate ordered all Jews to move to the *ghetto nuovo* and be confined there at night. It should not be forgotten that it was not unusual for foreign groups, including Jews, to want their own gated areas for protection. Prior to the institution of the ghetto the Jews were allowed only temporary residence (Ravid 1975, 154–5). The ghetto was a privilege as well as a trap in which the Jews were caught. It was a place where Jewish learning flourished, but its existence also made it easy to punish Jews as a group for crimes committed by only one of their members (Cohen 1988, 143–146). Tragically, the preservation of the ghettos, especially in Eastern Europe into the twentieth century, enabled the Nazis to set up their own Jewish quarters from which Jews were deported to the death camps. What had begun in the eleventh century as a place of refuge as well as of containment had been turned into transit points to the death camps and sites of execution.

The Venetians did not introduce the practice of ghettoization, only the word. Already in 1086 Rüdiger, the Bishop of Speyer, set aside for the Jews an enclosed space “outside of the community habitation of the other citizens, that they might not readily be disturbed by the insolence of the populace” (Philipson 1894: 36). In Venice the Jews were viewed with a suspicion that bordered on hatred, as reflected in the preamble to the Senate decree of 1516: “No godfearing subject would have wished them [the Jews], after their arrival, to disperse throughout the city, sharing houses with Christians and going wherever they choose by day and night, perpetuating all those misdemeanors and detestable and abominable acts which are generally known and shameful to describe, with grave offence to the Majesty of God and uncommon notoriety on the part of this well-ordered Republic” (Senate Decree 1992, 338). The ghetto was a way for the Venetians to exclude Jews from their midst while still making use of them for loans and for trade. The Jews were neither expelled, nor integrated. They were neither inside the city, nor outside of it either. This is the logic of the ghetto and the racialized minorities that inhabit them: their presence is not wanted, but is needed. Furthermore, the ghetto became for its inhabitants a place where a thriving culture and also a sense of place developed. The dominant race could not live with them, but it was also unable to live without them.

As early as the second decade of the twentieth century the term “ghetto” was being used to describe not only the “colonies” of East European Jews in the northeastern cities of the United States, but also districts where other racialized immigrant groups congregated, especially when forced to do so. The primary use of the word in the United States, however, was reserved for the areas in which African Americans were concentrated, largely as a result of their migration from rural areas to the cities in an effort to escape from the intolerable exploitative system that had replaced slavery in the Southern cities. The project of ghettoization in this context was again to contain populations seen as foreign or alien and render them largely invisible while maintaining their usefulness. It was again at best a temporary solution, and *de jure* segregation contributed to hardening racialization because it made

assimilation almost impossible. *De facto* segregation continues to do so for many poor African Americans and Hispanics.

Successive instruments were found to segregate African Americans. In 1910 Baltimore City Council passed the first municipal ordinance declaring certain blocks of streets all-White and others all-Black. Among the aims as stated by its proponents were a reduction of crime as it impacted the White community, the protection of White property values, and a reduction of the spread of diseases from the Black slums, but even Mayor James H. Preston, a strong proponent of segregation, recognized that the services African Americans performed in White households rendered this last objective a likely failure (Power 1983, 308). The White middle class were dependent on the presence of African Americans in their homes to maintain their life-styles at the same time that they wanted to remove them from their streets. Other cities quickly followed suit until in 1917 a Louisville ordinance was overturned by the Supreme Court in *Buchanan v. Warley* (Rice 1968). Many southern cities sought to circumvent this decision by incorporating references to race into their land-use classification schemes. In Richmond residential use of buildings was tied to Virginia's Act to Preserve Racial Integrity of 1924, which had established the one-drop rule in law and had thereby expanded the definition of "Negro" to the absolute limit (Silver 1984, 112). However, such ordinances were not always vigorously enforced and the tendency in the interwar period was for the racial segregation of residential property to be a private rather than a governmental function imposed by appeal to restrictive covenants.

Restrictive covenants proved highly effective for a while. Already in 1908 when African Americans sought to move into the Hyde Park area of Chicago they were confronted by the Hyde Park Improvement Protective Club, just as members of the Younger family were met by Karl Lindner of the Clybourne Park Improvement Association in Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* (Hansberry 1995, 97–103). In Chicago in the 1920s there were 27 "foreign districts" occupied by various ethnic groups, but these tended to be ethnically mixed. By contrast, by 1930 almost two-thirds of African Americans lived in concentrations of more than 90 percent. Twenty years earlier there was no area of Chicago in which more than sixty-one percent of the population were African Americans (Spear 1967, 11 and 15). By 1940 it was estimated that eighty percent of the city was covered by restrictive covenants (Myrdal 1944, 624) and those remained in force until the Supreme Court finally intervened in 1948. At that point local governments stepped into the breach and using the new powers given to them, such as the expanded power of eminent domain introduced by Title I of the Housing Act of 1949, residential segregation was imposed with unprecedented vigor during the years 1945–1960. In Chicago it led to the creation of what is known as the "second ghetto" where the effect of government policies was reinforced by unprecedented levels of White flight (Hirsch 1983, 28, 254–255, 259–275). This new phase in the history of segregation is reflected in B. B. King's "Why I Sing the Blues." He sang: "I stood in line down at the County Hall. I heard a man say, 'We're gonna build some new apartments for y'all.' And everybody wanna know, yes, they wanna know why I'm singing the blues." B. B. King is one of the blues singers who succeeded in becoming mainstream. Countless White people have

applauded the song, but not many heard the irony of the words, an irony repeated every time the song is played. Many White people still do not understand the extent to which what was called “urban renewal” very often deserved the names “Negro removal” (Catlin 1997, 136) and “spatial deconcentration” (Ward n.d.) because of the callous way in which African Americans were displaced from their homes.

White ignorance was already targeted in 1968 in the Kerner Commission’s report on Civil Disorders: “What White Americans have never fully understood – but what the Negro can never forget – is that White society is deeply implicated in the ghetto, White institutions created it, White institutions maintain it, and White society condones it” (National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders 1968, 2). *De facto* residential segregation is an inherited institution in our time as slavery was two to three hundred years ago and, like slavery, it is more often accepted as a fact of life rather than something for which White people are responsible, something to be challenged and dismantled.

In sum, the source of the resilience of the U.S. racial code lies in its fluidity across time, even though at various moments in time it was enforced with uncompromising rigidity and stringency. If I emphasize the U. S. racial code it is because it has become dominant even in parts of the world with radically different histories, albeit to do so, even for critical purposes, risks maintaining its dominance.

One remarkable example of a country that in large measure adopted the U. S. racial code, in spite of its very different history, is South Africa, albeit it eventually converted it into another form of racism, apartheid (Dubow 1989). In what would become the Union of South Africa the specific policy of using territorial separation to maintain and reinforce racial privilege only began in 1903 with the South African Native Affairs Commission, which recommended laws restricting the purchase of lands by Natives as a response to the “repugnance” felt by Europeans toward “the invasion of their neighbourhood by Natives for residential purposes” (South African Native Affairs Commission 1905, 25–26). That process led to the Native Lands Act of 1913 that was incomprehensible to many so-called natives in the context of the new Union of South Africa. Jeremiah Mtaka expressed it as follows: “Through my failure to understand this law I came to the conclusion that the Government intends to introduce an era of misunderstanding between ourselves” (Natal Natives Land Committee 1918, 27). This comment neatly captures the crucial point that segregation is not simply the result of misunderstandings, for example about the status of racial divisions, but that it is the cause of new misunderstandings, the mental distances, that arise from spatial and thus cultural distance.

But who is more isolated, the oppressors or the oppressed? In many contexts an oppressed group has to negotiate the dominant culture as well as its own. As a result, mental myopia is more pronounced among the oppressors. White people are often unaware of what the racial minorities are saying in their churches, beauty shops, and communities more generally and this makes it easier for them to favor integration in principle while have little understanding of the obstacles facing members of racial minorities living in poverty. The corollary of the ghetto is the suburb as a place where rich and middle class Whites can avoid confronting

directly the existence of a black underclass and maintains their ignorance about them. In the United States White flight in the wake of *Brown versus Board of Education* and other products of renewed attention to the Civil Rights of African Americans meant that racialized suburbanism severely compromised efforts to undo past racisms. It is highly encouraging, as a recent report from the Brookings Institute observed, that segregation is continuing to decline in the United States in part because the United States is becoming more multi-racial (Frey 2015a, 167–189). Nevertheless, when the author of the report conceded that “more than half of blacks would need to move to achieve complete integration,” the problem was still being presented from a position of ignorance and misunderstanding, as if this was simply a Black problem that it was up to Blacks to address (Frey 2015b). Especially in societies that favor a philosophy of possessive individualism, like the United States, the persistence of residential segregation has become the mechanism by which the accumulated evil of the country’s racist history has been concentrated in pockets that are invisible to those who live in the suburbs. The same pattern is repeated globally in the form of immigration controls where, since the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, national boundaries have been used to restrict mobility and exclude from material prosperity those who are racialized as alien, whereas capital is for the most part allowed to flow freely.

One could say that anti-Semitism, racism, and ethnocentrism created residential segregation, which, in a feedback mechanism, contributed to the persistence of these racisms by perpetuating stereotyping and general ignorance. But rather than seeing segregation as the inscription of racism in space, it might be better to think of racism primarily in material terms with the racist ideologies and racial slurs, which tend to be given most attention more of a byproduct, albeit one that does causally impact the subsequent development of the system. This in broad terms is the perspective developed by Jean-Paul Sartre in *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (1976) as well as by Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* (2004) in 1960 and 1961 respectively in their accounts of racism as a material system (Bernasconi 2012c). Similar ideas were subsequently applied directly to residential segregation and its effects. So, in 1968, only one year after Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton coined the phrase “institutional racism” (Carmichael and Hamilton 1967, 4–5), Harold M. Baron deployed the phrase “urban racism” to describe how “racism is institutionalized in the urban environment through the existence of well defined and subordinated Negro subsectors of such major institutional areas as the labor market, the educational system, the housing market and the political structure” (Baron 1968, 9). Few people are ignorant of the existence of urban racism so defined and yet it rarely if ever creates the same level of outrage as racial slurs do. The suspicion is that this is because speech is more easily isolated, more readily deflected onto a few individuals and away from being seen as the responsibility of society as a whole. From a Sartrean perspective the problem could be traced back to the dominance of analytic reason over dialectical reason (Sartre 1963, 3–9). Even if one does not follow him all the way on this point, hermeneutics can still offer a corrective to analytic reason,

4 The Role of Hermeneutics in Combating a Spatially Constructed Racism

Today when people look to identify someone's race, they most often locate it on the bodies of individuals, so that one reads someone's race from a complex combination of factors: skin color, hair texture, body type, gestures, clothing, and language. This is much as Bernier would have done it, but the different races have each now acquired additional layers of meaning, albeit with some continuity. So even though some White Americans are now more conscious of the fact that the way the police see African Americans means that the latter are from the outset seen as inherently suspicious and as inherently threatening, and thus legitimate targets of police investigation and of police violence, there is still a general reluctance to admit the full extent to which the racialization of Blacks is inseparable from their criminalization, even though it has been going on for centuries. Recall that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the main justification for enslaving Africans and bringing them to the Americas was that they had broken the law of nature by engaging in unjust wars. It was this same conviction that their tormentors employed to justify treating them in inhumane ways, long before the science of race tried to provide *post factum* justifications for doing so. White Americans can readily ignore that history because one feature of the liberal individualism they tend to espouse is that one is only responsible for what one intentionally did oneself and that one has no responsibility to change the conditions one inherited and from which one benefited, even if they are unjust. But this ignorance is only possible to the extent that White people remain among their own kind.

The argument made above that, because racial isolation as produced by racial segregation is more acute for Whites than for racial minorities, insofar as the racial minorities are constantly exposed to the dominant culture, might suggest education as a path for change. The kind of education that might lead to a transformation of the situation is not now, and never was, education in the science of race, but the education that comes from a knowledge of history, a direct knowledge of circumstances, and above all from listening. This is at the heart of the argument about diversity in scholars and colleges, one of the few places where such interaction happens in parts of the United States even today. To be sure, affirmative action which has largely benefited White women and the Black middle class rather than poor Blacks can only go a small way to this end but it seems likely that the hostility toward promoting it is connected with the threat it offers to the status quo. The increasing tendency to use place in the form of postal codes instead of race as a factor in college admissions, which arises from White hostility to race-based affirmative action, has both advantages and disadvantages (Cashin 2014), but it acknowledges that one's prospects in life can with a fair degree of accuracy be read from one's postal code and if it shifts attention to the impact of structural disadvantage on so many people's lives than society will have finally adopted a richer understanding of racism. Indeed, much of the evidence that is used today to counter claims about a post-racial America rely on the results of data that include significant spatial measures.

Racial divisions are artificial, but that is not to say that they are entirely arbitrary. They are the product of material forces and reciprocal antagonisms that have taken on a material form in the way a society distributes its goods. The capacity to see racial divisions in this way, that is, to *see* institutional or systemic racism, is a hermeneutic skill, especially in those cases where race and class are widely interwoven. The supposition of many theorists today is that for the sake of clarity one needs to be able to differentiate race and class: race is biological, whereas class is economic. But if one follows the history of the term “race,” it was rarely confined to a strictly biological meaning before the advent of the twentieth century. Intersectionality offers a more integrated approach than that promoted by analytic reason, but it still often falls short. So intersectionality within sociology often relies too heavily on statistics at the expense of meanings. Hence the appeal of hermeneutic and dialectical approaches.

It is not enough to acknowledge institutional racism at the theoretical level. The way that, for example, racism is inscribed in space as segregation has been widely studied in sociology, but there is widespread resistance to maintaining a strong sense of institutional racism on the grounds that it leads to an unacceptable paradox “since it implies that the whole of the dominant group is totally innocent and totally guilty” because every member of that group derives benefit from the system and participates in it (Wieviorka 1995, 65). Apart from the fact that this seems to ignore the fact that not everyone benefits or participate equally, so that this is, as stated, a false problem, it is also a perspective that is dominated by concern for the moral standing of individuals within the dominant class at the expense of those who are truly suffering.

Thinking of race as an historico-spatial construct breaks through the self-evidence of our everyday racial assignments as simply given and recognizes them as historically and spatially produced and frequently in flux. This shift of perspective shows that a hermeneutics of racialization is always in process and need to be pursued reflectively, not only in the form of an examination of the connotations of the constantly shifting artificial categories used to determine racial identity in any given context, but, more importantly, in terms of the way those categories arise from the racial divisions produced within material reality through the activity of others or what Sartre calls the *practico-inert* (Sartre 1976, 556). Just as a textual hermeneutics can uncover hidden meanings, so a hermeneutics of material reality can render more visible the concealed way in which societal racism operates. Those who live under segregation and oppression can almost always be credited with more insight into the real cost of the system than those who sustain it by their studied neglect of the casualties produced by its operation. Within an advanced economy racial minorities are often isolated from the material benefits of that society, while the dominant class lacks understanding of the obstacles they face. If there is to be any hope at all of meaningful material change occurring peacefully, it must start with the reduction of the distances that sustain the ignorance on which White supremacy has been built. For that to happen race needs to be approached not as a biological fallacy, but as a spatial division that, when threatened by displacement and race mixing, was sustained by segregation.

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Inattentiveness to Place: The Case of South African Philosophy

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Abstract Jeff Malpas has been successfully developing a ‘topological’ conception of philosophy and, more generally, life (a conception inspired chiefly by the latter Heidegger). Malpas is mainly concerned with the problem of place. The idea here, it must be stressed, is not merely geographical, not merely a problem of space. One fundamental idea informing Malpas’ philosophy of place is the well-known Heideggerian and, more broadly, phenomenological, view that we are thrown into the world, that we are always and already in the world, that knowledge of self and of that which exists beyond self—other and world—presuppose each other, leaving no wiggle room for genuine commitment to global skepticism. We are, as Malpas puts it, ‘given over’ to the world. That we are given over in this way means that who we are, indeed how we grasp the world, cannot be disentangled from where we are, from our place. So inattentiveness to place can only emerge if we are not properly cognizant of how thought is grounded in place, which is to say that it can only emerge if we do not properly to understand the knowledge project. My aim in this chapter is to make use of Malpas’ philosophy of place to develop an account of the place of South African philosophy or, perhaps better put, philosophy from South Africa.

One might add, furthermore, that thinking always arises, can only arise, out of the place in which we already find ourselves – so not only does thinking *have a place*, but in many respects it can be understood as a response *to our place*. (Malpas [forthcoming](#))

Jeff Malpas was a superb supervisor of my doctoral dissertation, allowing me to pursue my own interests while at the same time providing me with the necessary friction required for moving forward. And now, over a decade and a half since completing my thesis—which eventually became my first book—I return to Malpas’ thinking.

Malpas has been successfully developing a ‘topological’ conception of philosophy and, more generally, life (a conception inspired chiefly by the latter Heidegger).

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Malpas is mainly concerned with the problem of place. The idea here, it must be stressed, is not merely geographical, not merely a problem of space. One fundamental idea informing Malpas' philosophy of place is the well-known Heideggerian and, more broadly, phenomenological, view that we are thrown into the world, that we are always and already in the world, that knowledge of self and of that which exists beyond self—other and world—presuppose each other, leaving no wiggle room for genuine commitment to global skepticism. We are, as Malpas puts it, 'given over' to the world (this is a central theme in Malpas 2012). That we are given over in this way means that who we are, indeed how we grasp the world, cannot be disentangled from where we are, from our place. So inattentiveness to place can only emerge if we are not properly cognizant of how thought is grounded in place, which is to say that it can only emerge if we do not properly to understand the knowledge project.

My aim in the following pages is to make use of Malpas' philosophy of place to develop an account of the place of South African philosophy or, perhaps better put, philosophy from South Africa. I agree with Malpas, at least in broad outline:

In fact, no matter what else we say about the relation between thinking and place, it seems clear that thinking has to take place somewhere, and that where it takes place is not accidental to thinking – that the place of thinking is essential in grounding, sustaining and giving rise to thinking. Whether we look to Heidegger or Nietzsche or Wittgenstein or Thoreau – or even to Quine or Rawls (to cite representatives of a very different tradition) – we find thinkers whose thought bears the marks, even if *unconsciously* presented, of the places in which it originates. [my italics] (Malpas forthcoming)

One of the problems with mainstream South African philosophy, as I see it, is that it is, in important ways, incidentally South African. It certainly 'bears the marks' of its place, but it is unconscious of this, unconscious of the fact that thinking must always explicitly locate itself in place and that it 'bears the marks' of place. The 'must' here is not merely ethical. It is also epistemic and ontological. To be unconscious of the work of place on thinking is to be unconscious of the meaning of one's thinking and, relatedly, to be unconscious of its grounding in, to borrow from Husserl, the lifeworld or the world of experience.

In these pages I will seek Malpas' assistance in addressing the question of the relationship between philosophy and place, and this will help me come to terms with the place in which I find myself—working at Rhodes University in South Africa—which has, for better or for worse, become my academic home. Indeed, one could say that in this Chapter I take on the following invitation, focusing specifically on my situation as a philosopher working in South Africa:

I have tried to fill what seem to me a quite particular gap in the philosophical treatment of ... place, and to provide a more adequate philosophical foundation for the ideas concerning the centrality of topographical ... notions that are so prevalent across ... a wide range of disciplines and in so many different areas of human thought and activity. Consequently, the project pursued here need not to be viewed as in any way incompatible with other projects that attempt to fill out more particular, especially socio-cultural, features of our relation to place, although it may well be viewed as providing a framework within which some of those basic projects can be more readily defined and oriented. (Malpas 1999, 197)

In the contemporary South African context, where philosophy departments are for the most part doing philosophy that primarily speaks—although they are largely unaware that they are doing so—to students and academics who are, as is the case with many students and academics who are not on the losing end of economic injustice, blind to the political workings of place. Minds are formed in place, in relation to one's specific location in a domain of meaning inscribed in the landscape.

It is important to stress that by and large philosophy *unconsciously* aids and informs. We must pause for a moment to briefly reflect on the idea of the unconscious. First, if philosophy unconsciously aids, then there is work that philosophy is doing—indeed, intellectual work—that the authors of these works are for the most part unaware of. They are the caretaker of a tradition, an ethos, a way of philosophical being, which they fail properly to understand, a largely subconscious way of being, which can only be made conscious by turning one's attention to the unavoidable grounding of philosophy in place. And, when accused of aiding the status quo, they typically allude in their defense, in one way or another, to subjective preferences and to a self-serving rendition of the idea of intellectual pluralism that ignores the ontological relationship between place and mind (incidentally, I am an advocate of intellectual pluralism, but not of the sort that impairs rather than facilitates thinking). These rationalizations, importantly, strike a strident chord in the ears of many if not most philosophers who form part of threatened groups, who are far more aware than those in the mainstream of the pitfalls of ideology-blindness or blindness to what Marxists call structural conditions. They are far more aware because the world hits them in ways that cannot be ignored.¹ It hits them with things such as:

My body was given back to me sprawled out, distorted, recolored, clad in mourning in that white winter day. The Negro is an animal, the Negro is bad, the Negro is mean, the Negro is ugly; look, a nigger, it's cold, the nigger is shivering, the nigger is shivering because he is cold, the little boy is trembling because he is afraid of the nigger, the nigger is shivering with cold, that cold that goes through your bones, the handsome little boy is trembling because he thinks that the nigger is quivering with rage, the little white boy throws himself into his mother's arms: Mama, the nigger's going to eat me up. (Fanon 2008, 86)

Note that to talk of ideology and structural conditions is to talk of the intimate relationship between place and person. Persons are always in place, a place that is both formed by and forming of a person's total orientation towards the world. In other

¹When giving an earlier version of this paper at the University of Witwatersrand, a black post-graduate student asked me if I thought he was white, since he enjoyed his experience at his almost entirely white philosophy department. I obviously replied negatively, but understood his important point. Not every black student feels alienated in white places, but the reason why this is so, I surmise, relates to his own place in the South African lifeworld. The same is true of anyone, black or white, male or female. We all come from different places in the place that is South Africa, and this makes it so that we will experience things differently, from different perspectives. As body and mind sets limits to the possible lines of flight a human being can take, so too does place. But, we must bear in mind that, as it is easy to overstate similarities between groups, so too is it easy to overstate differences. Patterns are clearly discernable and these are what principally interest me here. The black student who feels welcome in white spaces is not a lone voice, but he does not typify the black experience.

words, forming of mental life. Pluralism-talk—used regularly in defense of the mainstream establishment—often serves to entrench indefensible preferences, such as the resistance to challenge certain research agendas that unquestioningly reproduce what happens in the global north. And let me stress that my concern here is not to suggest that philosophers should stop engaging with so-called Western authors, not at all. I am no fan of identity politics (or, perhaps more specifically, what could be characterized as self-absorbed nationalism), and this includes my concerns with the academic instantiation of identity politics, emphatically expressed in the words of an angry black student—‘Fuck Beckett!’²—at a conference on curriculum transformation recently held at Rhodes University, a student who at the time was—I surmise—consumed by what could, following Nietzsche, be described as *ressentiment*.³ The subtext of this utterance could be expressed as follows: ‘Whites are vermin, and hence let us only read black authors’ (most of whom, incidentally and ironically, are deeply influenced by a confluence of traditions, Western and non-Western).⁴ Philosophy in South Africa would be significantly impoverished if it ceased altogether to engage with so-called Western texts, and there would be very little to read if in this group we also included Western-inspired texts. But I should not fail to stress at this point that one of the main problems with mainstream South African philosophy today is that it too is unwittingly supportive of a kind of identity politics, where almost all philosophical engagements are with white male authors, and where the so-called West is grasped as the place where thinking originates, as if the Western world were not the product of rich geographically and temporally expansive encounters predating the period in which talk of Western civilization took hold of the global imaginary.⁵ That said, and to repeat, the central issue here is not so much with what is read, but with how what is read—more generally, what is researched and taught—stands in relation to place, and how it can be made to relate to place in ways that are not impervious to the workings of place, to the total orientation towards the world that place works to entrench. I should add that it is likely that, if mainstream philosophy in South Africa became attentive to place, the bias that undoubtedly exists in favor of white male authors would eventually disappear. And it would disappear in a way that would not replace Europhilia with Afrocentric—largely reactive and hence expressive of an ongoing dependency complex—identity politics.

²A similar incident happened at the 2015 Ruth First Memorial Lecture at the University of Witwatersrand, where a student shouted ‘Fuck off white people!’. *Ressentiment* breeds the Manichean order required for sustaining identity politics. See McKaiser 2015.

³Unfortunately, radical injustice in South Africa, fuelled by centuries of caustic colonialism, including apartheid, has created ideal conditions for identity politics to flourish and today we see it in all spheres of life, from President Zuma’s Zulu nationalism and the murder of expats from other African countries in townships to the laager mentality of white nationalists (fanned by fear, suspicion and a deeply ingrained sense of self importance).

⁴The work of Franz Fanon is a good example here. His main sources of influence are Western thinkers such as Sartre, Freud, Marx and Hegel, but he put their thinking to work in a way that speaks directly to the Algeria of his time.

⁵I should thank Fredrick Douglass and Motsamai Molefe for pressing me to stress this point.

The relationship between philosophy and place, it should be stressed, is not predominantly a matter of geographical location (although there is surely much to be said about the manner in which South African urban geography informs the unfolding of the South Africa's philosophical spirit—imagine if most philosophy was conducted in the shacklands. It is, more broadly, topological, as Malpas would put it.

More generally, for the question does not merely apply to South Africa, although the extreme urgency with which the question must be answered is representative of South African intellectual life, what sort of relationship should philosophy establish with its place of belonging? I will be bold here and suggest that mainstream global contemporary philosophy—most philosophy done in South Africa—is fundamentally aloof, standoffish, indeed inattentive, something along the lines of what Charles Mills argues in “‘Ideal Theory’ as Ideology” (2005, 165–184),⁶ where he takes issue with ethical and political philosophy in the mainstream Western, predominantly analytic, canon (Rawls is one of his main targets).

Following Onara O’Neil, Mills argues against what he calls “ideal theory,” theory largely produced by white middle class men who have never experienced oppression (who have in fact benefited from it). These theories transact in generalities unconcerned with the actual and, hence, Mills argues, play an ideological role in preserving rather than challenging current regimes of injustice. Here is Mill’s characterization of the ideal/non-ideal distinction:

What distinguishes ideal theory is the reliance on idealization to the exclusion, or at least marginalization, of the actual. As O’Neill emphasizes, this is not a necessary corollary of the operation of abstraction itself, since one can have abstractions ... that abstract without idealizing. (Mills 2005, 168)

The human beings that ideal theorists describe are abstract—ungrounded, I should add—idealizations and their methodologies are expressive of the view that in order to understand the particularities of gendered, classed and racialized human beings, one must first understand the generic, the human being without specific differentiating qualities, the human being as such. Mills, I think, is quite right to point out that this is not the way to understand people properly. People are essentially placed, located within a field of meaning, of relations, of hierarchies of power, inscribed in

⁶One can also find points in common in Said 2003:

No one has ever devised a method for detaching the scholar from the circumstances of life, for the fact of his involvement (conscious or unconscious) with a class, a set of belief, a social position, or from the mere activity of being a member of a society. (p. 10)

Said approvingly quotes Antonio Gramsci:

The starting-point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and is ‘knowing thyself’ as a product of the historical process to date, which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory. (Said 2003: p. 25)

For a brief discussion of Kwame Nkrumah’s related views, see More, 2004:

Kwame Nkrumah argued that philosophy does not occur in a vacuum but that it arises from a social milieu: “The social milieu affects the content of philosophy,”....(149)

the landscapes that they inhabit. To be sure, there are general features of the landscape and generalities that one can say about humans, but systematic avoidance of the specific, the placed, ‘incurs a needless impoverishment’, as Miranda Fricker puts it (2009, 4).⁷

One must wonder why it is that, among proponents of ideal theory, one rarely finds people from ‘subordinated groups’. Or, as Mills puts it:

It is no accident that historically subordinated groups have always been deeply skeptical of ideal theory, generally see its glittering ideas as *remote and unhelpful* [my italics], and are attracted to nonideal theory.... (2005, 170)

And:

An idealized social ontology of the modern type (as against, say, a Platonic or Aristotelian type) will typically assume the abstract and undifferentiated equal atomic individual of classical liberalism. Thus it will abstract away from relations of structural domination. (2005, 168)

In other words, ideal theory does not have the resources to address one of the central problems affecting real people rather than fictitious ideal people living in make-believe worlds where subordination does not exist, placed nowhere in particular (perhaps behind Rawls’ veil of ignorance). This is what makes it ‘remote and unhelpful’ and why ‘subordinate groups have always been deeply sceptical’. What is it about ideal theory that does not attract people who are on the losing side of oppressive dispensations? And, analogously, why are privileged whites by and large attracted to this mode of theorizing? One could speculate, in support of ideal theorizing, that intellectuals who are accosted by problems will tend to want to address them directly in a way that cannot be impervious to the workings of place, whereas those who are not accosted—not victims of hostile places—have the freedom to try to understand the human as such. But this would only be true were it not the case that such modes of knowing are, as Mills puts it, fundamentally obfuscatory. They touch upon issues in ways that are “remote and unhelpful”, and hence they are, intellectually speaking, impoverished. They are “remote and unhelpful” because the human as such cannot properly be understood in isolation from the workings of place. Humans, to repeat, are placed beings.

⁷Let me quote Fricker more fully here (I should thank Laura de Lange for pointing this passage out to me):

A socially situated account of a human practice is an account such that the participants are conceived not in abstraction from relations of social power (as they are in traditional epistemology, including most social epistemology) but as operating as social types who stand in relations of power to one another. This socially situated conception makes questions of power and its sometimes rational, sometimes counter-rational rhythms arise naturally as we try to account for the epistemic practice itself. Many philosophical questions may be best served by the traditional, maximally abstracted conception of the human subject, but confining oneself to that conception restricts the sorts of philosophical questions and insights one can come up with, so that the philosophical repertoire incurs a needless impoverishment (Fricker 2009, 3–4).

I need to stave off an objection at this point, given the fact that my focus, unlike Mills', is on philosophy in general practiced in South Africa rather than only ethics and political theory. Much the same problems that Mills detects in ethics and political philosophy can be attributed to communities of philosophers. The mainstream South African philosophical community is 'remote and unhelpful' because the community as a whole is inattentive to 'relations of structural domination, exploitation, coercion and oppression' (Mills 2005, 168) that shape and distort human lives—including the intellectual lives of philosophers—or, more generally, because almost nobody in the community is attentive to the workings of place in shaping intellectual production.

So we can judge communities of philosophers as being inattentive to place if all or most of them engage for the most part either in ideal ethical and political theory or in abstract disciplines removed from everyday horrors, ignorant of the 'relations of structural domination' that inform preferences. We have grounds for wondering why it is that this is so, especially if we contrast their interests with the great majority of black and female philosophers working today. The reason why black and female philosophers tend to deal with race or gender has to do with their overall orientation towards reality. They are struck by a reality that they cannot ignore. One is tempted even to say that they are struck by reality precisely because reality tends to strike them down, to crush them were it not for their ability to rebuke. But, of course, merely being thus struck does not mean that black or female philosophers will necessarily become race or gender theorists. It merely makes it likely, indeed very likely. And it also makes it extremely likely that they will engage with these issues in the hope that they can contribute with their work to actual change.

And one needs to wonder why a community of philosophers that is largely white and male is not struck in the relevant ways. White feminists are struck by racism less often than black feminists. So why expect that a community of white male philosophers to be struck by racism or sexism (or, more broadly, actual rather than abstract injustice) in a way that motivates them to dedicate their working days to dealing with these issues? But we can indeed critique race-blind white feminism, as many have, for ignoring the realities of being black and female, for ignoring the phenomenon of intersectionality. We can accuse them of not having a proper grasp of the reality that they purport properly to understand. Indeed we can accuse them of insufficient attentiveness to place, to the realities of gender injustice, and to the working of place that makes it so that white feminism is typically inattentive to the realities of structural domination affecting black women. And, much the same can be said of white philosophers working under apartheid. They seem to have missed the point, that is, to be grasping reality in a way that does not take seriously what demands to be taken so, the demands of place. Place makes demands on us, irrespective of whether we are attentive to them or not. And how we relate to those demands will determine the meaning of intellectual production.

Thinking happens in a given place and is a distinctive response to this place, a place that is our dwelling place, our home. It is our home because we inhabit it, we are given over to it, and our lives—including our intellectual lives—are informed, indeed shaped, by the topological features of our places of belonging.

I should also mention that the borders, however vague, of what counts as my place, the place in which I belong, are determined by the sphere of relations that makes it so that I am who I am. This is the place I am given over to. So, it may be slightly misleading to assume that the place of South African philosophy coincides with national borders. I think it doesn't. Its place also contains the Western canon, its past and present. But this is also a crude attempt at drawing borders where borders are always and necessarily indeterminate. It is also the case that South African philosophy's place is both broader and narrower than the geographical borders of South Africa. It is firmly grounded in the white world, the middle class world, the world whose history is that of conquest and exploitation. But this is also an imprecise way of putting things for South Africa's white spaces are inseparable from the shacklands (and for the global patterns of force that make such aberrations possible). Place, one could say, is a rich and indeterminate sphere of intersecting planes of meaning and it never admits of an exhaustive characterization.

What is central to understanding the problem of place is the work of place. The work here is complex and what aspect of place one focuses on will be concern relative. I am here concerned with South African philosophy and so I am concerned to highlight those aspects of place that have helped make it so that mainstream South African philosophy is inattentive to place.

According to Malpas, as we already know, the character and direction of philosophy should be overtly responsive to place. He acknowledges this point in general terms in the following passage from *Place and Experience*:

Merleau-Ponty notes the necessity of stepping outside of our normal 'involvement' with the world in order to be able to make that involvement the subject of philosophical inquiry. Yet, though we step back from that place 'here, in the midst of things' in which philosophy has its origin and its ground, still philosophy cannot afford ever to lose sight of that place. And, as the starting-point for philosophical reflection is not a world of empty space or inhuman objects nor a realm of purely subjective sensation or 'sense-data', but a world given in relation to activity, an objective world grasped from a subjective viewpoint, a world of other persons as well as a world in which we find ourselves, so it is to *this* world and the place in which it unfolds, that our philosophical explorations must always be addressed and to which they must always return.... In the contemporary climate, in which philosophy can easily be seen as one of those disciplines most removed from those spaces in which the real business of the world takes place, it is all the more important that philosophy be able to address itself, not only to its own place within contemporary culture, but also to the concrete location of contemporary life. (Malpas 1999, 196–197)

Malpas ends his book with an invitation for us to think about social and political issues in relationship to the understanding of place that he presents us with, which is what I am doing here. It seems to me, though, that Malpas is insufficiently attentive, to take one example we are by now familiar with, to 'relations of structural domination, exploitation, coercion and oppression' which inform Malpas' own work. In my view one important feature of a philosophy of place is that it should be explicitly placed, rather than merely limiting itself to providing a framework—a meta-theory of place, or an ideal theory of place, one is tempted to say. To be sure, Malpas does apply his 'meta-theory' to his own locatedness in Tasmania, to take

one example, but he does not do so emphatically. What is perhaps missing from Malpas' own work is a more explicit account of how his own philosophy is a function of his place. How, we could ask, should Malpas' philosophy 'address itself ... to its place'? This is perhaps an unfair concern as he is quite deliberately providing us with the foundations for a philosophy of place, but I wonder if the idea of a philosophy of place as conceived by Malpas is consistent with what could be characterized as an idealized account of place. Perhaps these concerns also apply to Heidegger's own approach to place, which is romantic, individualistic, and lacking the edginess of a philosophy of place informed by concerns voiced by, say, feminists (particularly, for our purposes, third wave feminists) and critical race theorists. These theorists show us the extent to which place is also a field of power that sets limits on human flourishing. To be fair to Malpas, he explicitly argues that his concerns are limited and that he is leaving it to others to make use of his philosophy of place to provide more grounded accounts of the workings of place. Perhaps this division of labour is necessary, but I am not entirely convinced that it is and I am concerned that such specialism may fall prey to Mills' concerns and, more generally, the concerns of those thinkers concerned with domination or, more specifically, the effects of power on the life of the mind. Perhaps a philosophy of place need not only be an ontology of place, but it must also be a psychology and a politics of place. Or, put differently, an ontology of place must also be a psychology and politics of place.

To reckon with the problem of place is to understand one's philosophy as having a place, as belonging somewhere, as inevitably given over to place. The problem with mainstream philosophy, as Malpas points out, is that it largely ignores the fact that it is located somewhere, responding to needs and circumstances which originate in the interplay between lifeworld and person. Philosophy always does this, whether the author is aware of this or not. But the problem—one of them at any rate—with not explicitly reckoning is that one's place may determine the content and style of philosophy from without, making it the case that, in a crucial sense, the philosopher is ignorant about what he or she is doing, not fully *responsible* for what she does. The philosopher can become the mouthpiece of the specific topological features of his surroundings, what we could call a slave of place—over-determined by it, as Sartre would put it (cf. Sartre 1995). So, a basic condition for genuine philosophy is that it must take responsibility for itself, and to do this is largely a matter of actively responding to the place that is its birthplace. Although my concerns are ethical here, they are not merely this. To be responsible for our discipline is to be responsible for the project of understanding this or that feature of reality. And, since understanding, indeed how we see the world or fail to see the world, is always and already a function of place, then not to reckon with the problem of place, not to understand how place forms minds, is to fail properly to understand, is to radically limit ourselves as intellectuals.

Mainstream white apartheid era philosophy is a case in point. For the most part philosophy was operating in the mode of denial (flowing from false consciousness), and it was operating in this way largely because it failed properly to grasp the work-

ings of place in the formation of intellectual production (cf. More 2004). It is likely, I should add, that distorted understandings of place yield distorted philosophies, so the concerns here cannot be reduced to blanket obliviousness to the workings of place. Consider the case of some Afrikaner philosophers whose thinking was strongly grounded in a distorted understanding of place, say, romantically attached to the beauty of the landscape and oblivious to ‘relations of structural domination, exploitation, coercion and oppression’.⁸

Mainstream apartheid era philosophy—as opposed to philosophers such as Rick Turner and Johan Degenaar, who are not representative of the mainstream—was, we could say, a philosophical tradition unable properly to face up to the facts, unable, it seems, to take in reality beyond a certain point. The inability, one could speculate, comes about as a consequence of a subconscious Faustian pact, where solace—peace of mind with regard in the fact of radical injustice favoring the white racial minority—is purchased at the price of a proper grasp of reality. When such pacts are made—and I should add that these pacts must always be made behind the veils of consciousness—the resultant attitude to place can conceal the real workings of place on the formation of one’s total orientation towards reality. Indeed, the fact that such pacts are possible should be seen as evidence for the importance of being attentive to the workings of place on the life of the mind.

To recapitulate, here we are primarily concerned with exploring the relationship between philosophy in South Africa and its place, a problematic relationship flowing in part from the fact that global mainstream contemporary philosophy—global philosophical culture—has become largely aloof, is largely uninterested in the actual, even when dealing with ethical and political matters, preferring, as it does, to remain in the register of the detached, committed to a kind of universalism that shuns contingency, that fails to take place seriously. As Kwame Anthony Appiah has argued, this is a feature peculiar to mainstream philosophy produced in the last few decades but arguably not typical of philosophy as it has been practiced for most of its history (the Pre-Socratics, Socratics, Platonists, Aristotelians, Stoics, Epicureans, Daoists and Confucians, African philosophers, feminists, Marxists and existential-

⁸ It is arguably the case that Heidegger himself succumbed to a kind of nostalgic romanticism that allowed him to develop his philosophy of place while at the same time embrace, or at least not strongly reject, Nazi ideology.

Indeed, we could say that apartheid itself was informed by a distorted philosophy of place, although I shouldn’t fail to mention that I am using ‘philosophy’ in a colloquial sense here, a sense that contrasts with philosophy understood as a professional discipline (direct defenses of apartheid by professional philosophers are very rare indeed). In a nutshell, advocates of apartheid philosophy of place maintain that everyone should know their place. Racial and cultural separation (geographical and spiritual), they maintain, is a requirement for sustaining an ideal of cultural and racial purity. Apartheid, one could say, was a philosophy of place informed by a purity/disgust dynamic, where disgust is the function of allegedly unnatural interracial mixing and an improper understanding of what apartheid ideologues thought was a natural hierarchy of being, blacks being at the bottom and whites at the top. This, in turn, is informed by a romantic nationalist mood, not entirely dissimilar to Heidegger’s, expressed in Afrikaner monuments such as the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria, which, on white marble reliefs, celebrates the struggles for survival of the God chosen Afrikaner in the hands of child-murdering Zulus.

ists, to take some prominent examples of a very long list) (Appiah 2008). Charles Mills gives this fact an ideological spin, arguing, as discussed above, against ideal theory in ethics and political philosophy in particular (2005, 165–184). Ideal theory disregards the actual, the concrete conditions of life. And by this denial it blinds itself to the potentially caustic incursions of the actual into philosophical thought.

If one thinks of the sort of philosophy systematically practiced in South Africa during apartheid, it is hard to see to what extent mainstream apartheid era philosophy, whether practical or otherwise, could be characterized as anything but ideologically informed escapism, blindly wedded to its place in the South African landscape of injustice. Apartheid era South African philosophy was lost to the world, more preoccupied with solving puzzles than genuinely immersing itself into its reality, a reality that presented itself with a force that can only be ignored at the price of subterfuge. It is for this reason that mainstream apartheid philosophy can be characterized as escapist, something I take to be antithetical to the spirit of philosophy.

South African philosophy—and not just apartheid era philosophy—is rooted in South Africa. This much is unavoidable, but the manner in which it is rooted is not, despite the recalcitrant legacy, which, as just mentioned, permeates all spheres of life, including the domain of philosophy. One may quite legitimately wonder what the manner of the permeation is. How is it possible that a legacy, as any legacy, is so constituted? What is the nature of this permeation? Permeation helps account for the fact that worldviews—or, better, total orientations towards the world—tend to stick around, and they never shift by the work of a single subject. It is for reasons of this sort that modes of apprehending, which characterize, to put the matter in Heideggerian terms, our modes of being in the world, cannot simply be wished away and, I surmise, this is one reason why racism in South Africa, and other forms of discrimination as well, should be understood as expressive of a worldview, a way of being that is woven into the very fabric of South African life, such that its extirpation will require, not merely a change of mindset here or there—or the marginalization of ‘bad apples’—but a shift in the character of the nation.

Using a metaphor borrowed from Freudian psychoanalysis, prejudice, or blindness, is a compulsion to repeat, something that is woven into the psyche of the nation, affecting black and white alike, but in different ways (anti-black racism, misogyny, homophobia, nationalism and xenophobia, and systematic blindness, to take a few prominent examples) (cf. Lear 2000, 61–105). And, continuing with the psychoanalytic theme, cure cannot be reduced to an act of will. Something needs to become unsettled under the bonnet, something that is, at least initially, largely hidden from the grasp of the patient’s conscious mind.

What these problems point to is something deep about our grasp of world, indeed about the nature of understanding itself. A purely volitional model of understanding will not do, for this cannot account for permeation, indeed, for the fact that epochs, one could say, are defined by worldviews, by modes of apprehending reality, that are authored by no one in particular, that are our abode, our point of departure for all possible lines of flight, helping explain that fact that history is not a random set of occurrences (although randomness cannot be discarded altogether). Indeed, once

one understands that philosophy is always and already in place, the volitional model of intellectual life must fall away. Similarly, these modes of apprehending cannot be shifted purely by deliberate fiat. So the picture of the lonely agent looking upon the world and doubting whether it could be there is founded on a misapprehension of the very phenomena of understanding. The 'I' always drags a 'we' along with it and, with this 'we', a world. This, I take it, is a fundamental feature of Malpas' understanding of world and permeates his entire corpus, as we have seen. And one could say that one central problem with South African philosophy—a problem it shares with the global mainstream—is that it is informed by the picture of the lonely inquirer, a picture consistent with the intellectualism—the picture of the intellect inquiring from a distance, untainted by place—I am here problematizing.

Another way of putting things, a way that speaks directly to our concerns with South Africa, is that colonial mindsets—to use a standard, and in my view deeply crude, way of describing these mindsets—are perspectives through which South Africans grasp themselves. But it would be misleading to think of perspectives here as when one thinks of perspectives taken by detached observers. These perspectives not only permeate the inner world of South Africans, but they also find expression in physical spaces, which are expressive of mindsets: sprawling shacks standing side-by-side gated complexes and extreme opulence, images of beauty in the media and in public spaces, exclusive private schools and terrible public schools for the poor, architectural styles, monuments and sculptures which allude to the alleged greatness of Europe and the sterile boxes known as RDP houses for the poor, iconography of the amusing savage in upmarket resorts, the ways in which urban landscapes, including public transport systems, constrain and facilitates the movement of peoples from different classes and races in different ways—helping to keep them apart, blindly perpetuating apartheid themes—and countless other instances where the a worldview is inscribed in physical reality. And these physical features of the South African landscape are not merely expressions of worldviews. To be sure, they are that, but they also help constitute the worldviews as well. Such geographical patterns help form minds, allow the world to appear in determinate ways, from particular perspectives as Malpas would say, organizes a wide domain of meaning—a clearing, to use the Heideggerian expression—which South Africans inhabit. And it is in such a world that philosophical thinking in South Africa happens.

And no one, local philosophers included, are exempt from the influence of the great South African subconscious, that grand landscape that facilitates the perpetuation of patterns of being, good and bad, but far too often bad. To claim that it facilitates is not quite the same as claiming that it determines. Similarly, the conception of the subconscious that I have in mind is not determinative. If it were, it couldn't be resisted. The point is that, if one does not resist the work of place when such resisting is required, one can become a slave of place. Malpas himself, it should be noted, does not emphatically frame his concerns in psychoanalytic terms—although, as evidenced from a passage already quoted above, he does

acknowledge that the workings of place can be subconscious⁹—it seems to me that his concerns are well described in this manner, particularly if, following Freud, one understands that the aim—or, perhaps better put, a central aim—of psychoanalysis is to make the unconscious conscious. All thinking, Malpas thinks, ‘bears the mark’ of place. This much is unavoidable. But what is avoidable is the mode of relating to place. One way of understanding what I have been doing in these pages is psychoanalyzing mainstream South African philosophy, contemporary and past, showing how forces—which are difficult to identify and resist are always at work in giving shape to thinking, and it is our task as philosophers, properly speaking, to know when such forces need to be resisted because they distort our ability to understand. Expressions of the South African subconscious are everywhere to be found. And it is from here—to be sure, not merely from here, given that it is also the product of global trends—from this place of thinking that South African philosophy springs forth.

To conclude, given what has been said above, it is imperative that South African philosophy takes responsibility for itself. To take responsibility in the sense that is relevant here is, at least to a significant extent, to be in control of the modes of its springing forth. For this to be possible, philosophy must actively cultivate awareness of its place, which is to say that it must reckon with its place. Without this reckoning, it is merely place’s mouthpiece, unthinking, merely mirroring. But to say that philosophy is unthinking is to say something extremely paradoxical for, if nothing else, philosophy is a modality of thinking. So philosophy must reckon philosophically with its place. It must have a conversation with it rather than merely being another expression of the South African subconscious geography. It must understand the dangers that loom large in the specific locals in which philosophy is produced. It must, for instance, be wary of nostalgic fantasies of a return or merely to serve as a kind of consolation for ‘centuries of incomprehension’, as Franz Fanon would put it (2008, 5). But, more centrally, for my focus here has been on mainstream South African philosophy and its own inability to take responsibility for itself, that is, its inability to understand its place and to inform its trajectory explicitly with an understanding of the deep epistemic, ontological and ethical interrelationship between place and thought. To understand this, as suggested above, is to change register, to understand the intellectual project of a single soul as always and already enmeshed in a sphere of meaning—a clearing—that is safeguarded by peoples and their institutions.

⁹Let me quote a passage quoted above again:

Whether we look to Heidegger or Nietzsche or Wittgenstein or Thoreau – or even to Quine or Rawls (to cite representatives of a very different tradition) – we find thinkers whose thought bears the marks, even if *unconsciously* presented, of the places in which it originates. [my italics] (Malpas [forthcoming](#))

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Thinking Across Cultures: Western Hermeneutics and Chinese Exegesis

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Abstract All the rich and insightful hermeneutic theories we have had in our possession so far are attempts to apply some local knowledge stemming from some native culture to circumstances and situations everywhere, as theories, with their universalist pretensions and aspirations, are wont to do. But to date, insofar as the “local” is mainly the West, the Euro-American world, it begs the question of how empirically tenable is a locally incubated theory when it is applied to extra-local conditions. In fact, even within the local, as it were, differences and tensions abound. And if we introduce into this welter another local world, say, the Chinese one, the picture gets, needless to say, messier. But then we have no choice but to muddle up the picture, if we are already inescapable denizens of a global city, a cosmopolis which is our current multicultural, intertwined world. Consequently, place and space, that is, varied and varying locality, must intervene in any effort of theory-building in the realm of hermeneutics that purports to explain some general modes of operation in the process of reading and understanding. To more effectively shed light on the other worlds of reading and understanding requires some re-situation of place and space, such that new and broad perspectives may be developed. By redirecting the theoretical gaze from the Euro-American site to the Chinese (specifically, the Confucian) locale, I argue that we should grant the self-explanation and self-identity of thinking agents other than those in the Western world their rightful place in theoretical inquiries into what I call the hermeneutic dictum of human existence, namely, that human living inevitably involves thinking that is interpretation, which is relative to contingent culture-historical dynamics molding the interpreter’s preunderstanding. In other words, if the imperative of interpretation and understanding is what ultimately constitutes human authenticity in the sense of apprehending the meanings of life, how the Confucians read may serve as inspiration, option, and even in some cases, alternative for a more general, more nimble, and interculturally more sensitive inquiry into the ways we read and conceive the self and the world. In short, to take seriously place and space in any hermeneutic project is to argue on behalf of intercultural hermeneutics, of which comparative thinking is integrally a part.

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The thinker thinks and writes; the thoughts articulated are read and understood—would that the world be so tidy, orderly, accessible, and hence, understandable! Just as human living/flourishing is a complex philosophical problem, so interpretation/understanding, being an integral part of existence, is a messy affair. All the rich and insightful hermeneutic theories we have had in our possession so far are attempts to apply some local knowledge stemming from some native culture to circumstances and situations everywhere, as theories, with their universalist pretensions and aspirations, are wont to do. But to date, insofar as the “local” is mainly the West, the Euro-American world, it begs the question of how empirically tenable is a locally incubated theory when it is applied to extra-local conditions. It behooves us to bear in mind Charles Taylor’s note of caution that human sciences, unlike the natural sciences, reveal no natural laws of cause-and-effect; they can only represent the general values and norms of social agents that explain their ideas and practices in particular conditions. (Taylor 1985a, 92–94)

In fact, even within the local, as it were, differences and tensions abound. Just witness the two apparent contending and established bodies of contemporary Western thought. On the one hand, there are the French postmodernists and deconstructionists, casting doubt on the Enlightenment espousals of universality, truth, rationality, and progress. On the other hand, there are the German claims that defend and promote these very ideals with theories of “communicative rationality” and “philosophical hermeneutics.” Theorists like Foucault and Derrida locate the human subject forever in a precarious and liminal situation of discursive indeterminacy and historical contingency, while Gadamer and Habermas mount rigorous defenses of rationality based on a view of the individual as a moral-ethical agent in a functional community with a sober respect for tradition and history as the stable context of understanding. Deconstructionist theory repudiates the assumption that texts have intentional, retrievable meanings, whereas upholders of the Enlightenment tradition maintain the recuperability of authorial intentions and textual meanings. (cf. Scott 1987; Dallmayr 1987)

And if we introduce into this welter another local world, say, the Chinese one, the picture gets, needless to say, messier. But then we have no choice but to muddle up the picture, if we are already inescapable denizens of a global city, a cosmopolis which is our current multicultural, intertwined world. Consequently, place and space, that is, varied and varying locality, must intervene in any effort of theory-building in the realm of hermeneutics that purports to explain some general modes of operation in the process of reading and understanding. Any hermeneutic theory is not some freestanding object/reality but an aggregate and distillation of some form of self-understanding on the part of the social and cultural actors who formulate it. It therefore has its intrinsic limits. It cannot adequately explain many of the ways of thinking that are culturally bound and existentially embedded in different linguistic and philosophical worlds. Informed and governed by a particular worldview, it can only explicate and understand the others in part. To more effectively shed light on the other worlds of reading and understanding requires some re-situation of place and space, such that new and broad perspectives may be developed (MacIntyre 1971; Taylor 1985b, 124; Hoeber Rudolph 2005). By redirecting the theoretical

gaze from the Euro-American site to the Chinese (specifically, the Confucian) locale, I argue that we should grant the self-explanation and self-identity of thinking agents other than those in the Western world their rightful place in theoretical inquiries into what I call the hermeneutic dictum of human existence, namely, that human living inevitably involves thinking that is interpretation, which is relative to contingent culture historical dynamics molding the interpreter's preunderstanding (cf. Wachterhauser 1994, 1). In other words, if the imperative of interpretation and understanding is what ultimately constitutes human authenticity in the sense of apprehending the meanings of life, how the Confucians read may serve as inspiration, option, and even in some cases, alternative for a more general, more nimble, and interculturally more sensitive inquiry into the ways we read and conceive the self and the world. In short, to take seriously place and space in any hermeneutic project is to argue on behalf of intercultural hermeneutics, of which comparative thinking is integrally a part.

It must be said that inherent in the hermeneutic thoughts of Gadamer and Derrida is an implicit place and space for such intercultural hermeneutics. Gadamer urges us to bravely explore foreign life-worlds, but it is not clear how in this endeavor, the alien and the strange are not in the end domesticated and acculturated by the interpreting Western mind. Derrida, in emphasizing rupture by deconstructing the familiar, appreciates the radical other by interrogating one's self-identity, but the stress on incommensurability and instability ultimately vitiates the effort and ability to learn from and comprehend other cultural experiences (Dallmayr 1987, 157). Thus what this essay offers is precisely an explicit account of just one such alien and other world of reading and understanding—the Chinese Confucian one.

Interestingly and significantly enough, this account of the Confucian enterprise of textual exegesis, cultural interpretation, and finally philosophical understanding is already an exemplification and realization of a sort of intercultural hermeneutics, for it could not have been written without the intervention of western hermeneutic theories. That is to say, as I seek to represent in the most "authentic" way possible the contents and meanings of the Chinese act of reading and the corresponding conception of understanding, I do so in accordance with philosophical allegiances and criteria of intelligibility that are unmistakably (and I may also say legitimately and unavoidably) grounded in and propelled by some Eurotropic, but not Eurocentric, conceptual schemes and categories. Even as I am keenly aware of the perils and problems of using Western analytic apparatuses to construct an account of Confucian exegesis, I claim that it is the very epistemological condition under which I must do so. Writing in English and thinking in Western terms, although using Chinese data in which I am entirely versed, I cannot possibly retrieve some objective reality that is *the* primal, unadulterated version of Chinese hermeneutics. I can only get at it through comparison. In a word, to study Chinese classics today, in the West or in China, is to be engaged in some sort of intercultural, comparative exercise. Simultaneously Eurotropic and Sinocentric, as a cultural and hermeneutic transaction, my account of the Chinese act of interpretation deconstructs old assumptions with a view to freeing them from the shackles of Western biases, but at the same time, Western conceptual tools are employed. In other words, I hope to describe a

Chinese, Confucian theory of reading that is theoretically autonomous by freeing it from Euro-American theoretical constraints so that this *Chinese* theory may have purchase for understanding hermeneutics in a general sense. Yet, this effort is continuous with the Eurotropic intellectual contexts of its production, given the Western philosophic place in which I have been reared and the Western intellectual space in which I work and write.¹ Accordingly, while writing about and arguing on behalf of a Chinese hermeneutics, or a Chinese *quanshi xue*, I at once assert its own specific cultural history and acknowledge the ancestral versions that are found in the Western philosophical traditions. In so doing, I am exploring in comparative terms Chinese exegesis and Western hermeneutics. Such an exercise throws into relief the import and purport of the act of reading in varying cultural contexts, while bringing to light the imperative of reading-cum-understanding as global human project, especially the quest for and the apprehension of the lessons and truths that seem to inhere in the oldest of our cultural capital: the classics.

In the Western context, the sort of general hermeneutics that transcended scriptural exegesis began with Schleiermacher, who established a science of interpretation that would apply to all texts. By going beyond the bounds of the Scripture, he in effect desacralized the Bible, rendering it into one of the myriad texts to be dissected and interrogated. Moreover, in this expanded hermeneutics, the focus was no longer simply on interpretation but also increasingly on understanding itself, whose relation with the readers' psychology as the subjective component of comprehension was intimate, if not inextricable. Dilthey extended hermeneutics along this line by building a philosophy of understanding premised on *Erlebnis* (experience). Further elaborated by Heidegger and Gadamer, such hermeneutics became a philosophical mainstream. (Here I am deliberately bypassing the French deconstructionist strand of hermeneutics alluded to earlier, which rejects cause-effect relations, historical factors, determinate meanings, and authorial intent, while concentrating on decentering, regressive linguistics effects.) What Gadamer says about understanding as a philosophical act has come to represent what hermeneutics is.² Gadamerian hermeneutics dismantles the scientistic conception of reality that grew out of the Cartesian philosophical project, which was buttressed by Kant's universalizable moral imperative based on transcendental pure reason, and as a result modes of knowledge outside the domain of the scientific method have come to play second fiddle.³ For Gadamer, such knowledge, being disembodied, implemental, and mechanistic, elides the fundamental problems of humanity by rendering them into objects. Gadamer instead sees historical tradition as the basis of ontological structures of understanding, viewing askance at some free-standing objectivity.

¹ I have elsewhere begun to ponder the inescapable epistemological condition under which all of us who study Chinese thought and philosophy in the West labor, a condition that I call "Eurotropicism," as opposed to Eurocentrism. See Ng 2012.

² For a concise description of Gadamer's thinking, see How 1995.

³ On the Cartesian project, see Ng 2003. See also Toulmin 1990, 175–6; ix–xii for his arguments about the long-term consequences of the early modern redefinition of knowledge in terms of rationality.

New understanding appeals to history and tradition; it is, to borrow in Paul Ricoeur's words, a kind of "hermeneutics of faith." (Ricoeur 1974, 1981)

Gadamer's concept of the historical-situatedness of understanding, premised on the importance of prejudice, pre-understanding, authority, and tradition, runs counter to the modern conception of knowledge. But Gadamer defends prejudice, regarding it not as unreliable and partisan subjectivity but as reflection of our consensual affirmation of tradition as the beginnings of our knowledge (1976, 9). The authority of tradition acts not as an intellectual tyranny but rather a form of rational adjudication between right and wrong. Therefore, the classics are important in that they claim "timelessness" that is nonetheless embedded in history (Gadamer 1994, 277–290). Our historically mediated experience with and understanding of tradition makes possible the fusion of horizons. Thus, the ontological mutuality of tradition and historical particularity is the very condition of our understanding (Ibid., 306). Furthermore, understanding is morally practical, applicable to our own historical conditions through appraisal. Praxis stems not from an objectively construed nature; human actions are our selection, valuation, and determination of common goals that constitute "norms of conduct in the sense of right and wrong." (Ibid., 309; Gadamer 1982, 74–75) We are then able to understanding others sympathetically, based on knowledge that is at once embedded in tradition and attuned to historical situations. Such knowledge rejects instrumental conceptions of things and others that rend asunder the means and ends (Gadamer 1994, 312–341). "I" am related to "Thou," the living tradition, and this "I-Thou" intrication is not merely epistemological in nature, in the sense that the subject discursively apprehends an object. It is our ontological identification with tradition, which is forged and reinforced by language in that reality is tied to the language describing it (Ibid., 358–362).

Juxtaposing this Western Gadamerian hermeneutic philosophy with the Confucian one, we may be struck by their concordance. Both respect tradition and the classics as its textual encasement. Both evince a keen sense of the continuity between history and culture. Both reject objectifying nature in favor of the integration of human understanding as an integral part of reality. Both take the integrity of language as adequate representation of reality for granted. But such similarities belie divergences. Most crucially, while Gadamer's ontological condition of understanding is in the final analysis epistemological in nature, Confucian hermeneutics presumes homo-cosmic continuity and unity.⁴ Let us interrogate Gadamerian hermeneutics vis-à-vis the Chinese assumptions about reading and understanding.

For Gadamer, knowledge is engendered by the dialogic interpenetration of the past and present, the "fusion of horizons" in which understanding is not passively produced by the objective reader who gains dominion over disembodied data through the practice of methods. As with the reader, texts and cultural data belong to history and so they cannot be reduced to objects of discursive inquiry (Weinsheimer 1985, 155). This very sense of the radical historicity of reality and understanding is

⁴In many of my previous writings, I have stressed the similarities of Confucian exegesis and Gadamerian hermeneutics. I am now more aware of the problems inherent in any interpretation of the Confucian act of reading in Gadamerian terms. See Ng 2000a, 165–193; 2000b, 37–67.

at odds with the Confucian onto-cosmological conception that heaven, or the cosmos, is embedded *in* the human world (Liu 2001, 141–142). The Gadamerian historicalness of reality renders tradition and culture unstable grounds of rationality, and to resolve this instability, Gadamer suggests that tradition, in the end, transcends history: “Tradition has a justification that lies beyond rational grounding” (1994, 280–281). If we look at the *Yijing* (Classic of Changes), for instance, we do not see such ambivalence and inconsistency. What is in view is a world that is an integrated universe of vitality, creativity and harmony through the sixty-four hexagrams that represent the germinal circumstances of human living in concert with the cosmos at large. The hexagram of *guan* is “comprehensive observation” by virtue of the human ability of understanding, which, however, is not the dissection of reality as the object, as *guan* involves feeling for and response to (*ganying*) heaven, earth, and humanity. The hexagram *qian* is at once the beginning of reality and the knowledge of that beginning. In realizing oneself, one cannot simply pursue knowledge for knowledge’s sake; one must also observe and understand the cosmos, such that onto-cosmological *being* is understood as epistemological and experiential *becoming*.⁵ This ontology of oneness is the Confucian *dao* (Way) exemplified by the classics. The *dao* is the realization of the moral and ritual order established by the ancient sages. It is the aggregate of names (*ming*) and the sages’ teachings that must be rectified by realizing our very selves and our relationships with others and society. Insofar as *dao* is the ground of norms and values, apprehending the *dao* cannot simply be an epistemological endeavor; it must be the experiential effort of applying the correct means in particular circumstances to reach the ontological goal of being one with the Way where fact and value are one. Confucian knowledge is a metapraxis where virtue and reason conflate and converge (Hansen 1985, 184–188; Hansen 1995; Chen 2000, 106).

Accordingly, the Confucian conception of reading, understanding, and ultimately truth, is ontologically predicated on the universality and sacrality of the *dao*-in-classics, manifested in tradition and culture. Self-cultivation, including learning and understanding, is based on the belief in the continuity of the self, the reader, with the sages, the authors of the classics.⁶ By contrast, Gadamer amplifies tradition as the voice of cultural and individual conscience so as to dislodge the metaphysics of eternal Being, to the extent that every reading or critique stems from tradition. But he does not quite secure tradition as the rational basis of truth. Therefore, the Scripture, like any other texts, is subject to scholarly and scientific investigation. Gadamer aims at formulating a general theory of *truth* by revealing a *method* of understanding. He is guided by the epistemological question of how understanding is enabled and possible in the first place. So we may say that Gadamer’s hermeneutics is a meta-method of reading, quite different from the Chinese hermeneutic goal of realizing the Way by apprehending the values of the classics via moral

⁵ See (Ng 2007). In large part, Cheng’s systematic hermeneutic theory is an explication of the onto-generative perspectives of the Confucian act of reading and understanding.

⁶ On the Neo-Confucian belief in the oneness of all minds and its epistemological implications, see (Gardner 1991).

self-cultivation. Since knowing in the abstract and in theory has no meaning and purpose apart from praxis, Chinese hermeneutics is philosophical in the ontological sense and thus can be seen as a sort of onto-cosmic hermeneutics (Ng 2007).

I would further argue that this cosmo-ontological Chinese hermeneutics represents some sort of religious quest for universal and timeless truths. To be sure, the Confucian world of exegesis comprises richly heterogeneous commentarial traditions as every classical text is indeed the site of interpretive contestations. On the one hand, there are readings that seek unity and coherence of texts, striving to retrieve the original meanings as intended by the authors. On the other, there are interpretations that focus on the openness of the text and the readers' imperatives. The Chinese world of reading seems to be a wide-open hermeneutic space of pluralistic interpretations (Gu 2005). But we should not ignore the crucial fact that these readings are done within a communal interpretive context in which the classics are regarded as vessels of truths. The word *jing*, etymologically derived from the idea of the warp, as opposed to the weft, of the fabric, connotes the underpinning sense of continuity and regularity, so much so the *jing* may be defined as rule, law and norm (Karlgrén 1964, 222). The classics are regarded as texts with normative perspectives, pre-determined meanings, and sagely communicative intents. The sages who comprehend and personify heaven are the authors of the *jing* and the culturo-literary tradition, or *wen*. As authoritative testimonials to the teachings and examples of the sages, the classics are alive and enlivening, supplying the means to communicate with the sage-rulers. The *jing* constitute a textual tradition that encapsulates a civilization (Taylor 1990, 23–32). Thus, one may say that the Chinese *jing* carry far greater cultural authority than what are called the classics in the West. In a sense, they are closer to the Scripture in terms of their power to elicit normative assent, but we must note one fundamental difference: the *jing* are not the Word of a transcendent, other God; they are authored by sages of this world. In any event, in the West, the classics qua classics, perforce serve as paradigmatic schemes according to which we construct our world. As Hayden White avers, “The classic text seems to command our attention not because it not only contains ideas and insights about the ‘human condition’ in general but provides an interpretive model by which to carry further our interpretations in our own times, or indeed, anytime” (White 1990, 211). Italo Calvino, in his *Why Read the Classics*, which is by now a classic unto itself, points to the signature traits of a classic. A classic represents a complete universe with talismanic power, and as such it continues to have relevant things to say to us. Forever fresh, it invites us to read and reread it, discovering in it, and through it, new things and new ways of looking at things, even when we are in opposition to it. It remains a distinct voice in the midst of the din of the present sounds that may no longer be consonant with it (Calvino 2001). But the Chinese *jing* form the universal norm, the fount of all wisdom. Consequently, the Chinese hermeneutic encounter with the classics is a sort of religious quest. It is religious to the extent that it is inspired and driven by the universal and timeless, hence transcendent, truths bequeathed by the sages. These are truths that remain relevant as the roots of a community's moral life. In short, hermeneutic ultimacy, which aims to

reveal the truthfulness of the sages' words and texts, is the bedrock of the Chinese reading of the classics.

Let us take the hermeneutics of Zhu Xi as further illustration of the Confucian way of reading, Zhu being the grand synthesizer of the so-called Neo-Confucian traditions, the Aquinas of China, whose commentaries were the mainstay of the imperial civil service examinations from the fourteenth through the early nineteenth century. Zhu's reading of the classics is inspired by the quest for the ultimate, that is, the understanding, apprehension and realization of principle, *li*. Zhu forges a new scriptural tradition of the Four Books precisely because these texts hold the key that unlocks the cosmologico-ontological truth of *li*. He contends that the reader can access the mind of the classics' authors through self-cultivation (*xiushen*) and investigation of things (*gewu*), reaching the understanding of the ultimate principle of *li* (Ibid., 32–36).⁷ The interpretive latitude that one apparently sees in Zhu's exegesis owes much to his insistence on the priority of understanding and realizing *li*. If he seems to take great liberty in his handling of textual and philological matters, it is because philologico-textual exercise can never be an end in itself, as it is inadequate for the ultimate task of grasping the truth of principle. In Zhu's hermeneutics, the relationship between the *texts* of the classics and the exegetical extraction of their *truths*—principle (*li*), the Way (*dao*), heaven (*tian*)—is a religious one. Since truth inheres in the classical texts, Zhu's philosophical conception of truth remains textually based and mediated. The tenets and teachings of the Four Books inform his conception of the ideal self and society, and through exegesis, their authority is understood and revealed. Moreover, through exegesis, the reality of *li* finds textual corroboration in the classics. Thus, Zhu's reading is dictated by his conviction of the universality of the *jing*. This religious reverence for the ancient texts of the sages is the hermeneutic animus of Zhu's exegesis.

It should be noted that Zhu Xi does not consider his exegetical interpretation to be the final say. Not infrequently, he bemoans the elusive meanings of the classics and even hints at the insufficiency of words as means to apprehend the sages' truths. But he asserts that we must rely on the texts and their verses and sentences (*zhangju*), as the classics are the repositories of truths, even though interpreting them can be a tentative exercise. While Zhu takes the religious certitude regarding the ultimacy of the classics for granted, he acknowledges the complexities of the hermeneutic process. Indeed, the rich and diverse commentarial traditions of the Confucian classics are the result of the relentless pursuits on the part of readers such as Zhu Xi, who were engaged in the religious act of shaping the classics into a unity of coherent and assent-eliciting meanings. Just as the classics are sacral and inspired, so too is the hermeneutic process of their redaction and recuperation, regardless of how heterogeneous it is.

The point to hammer home here is that Zhu Xi and other readers of the classics do not cast doubt on the finality and ultimacy of these texts of trans-historical significance, despite vast interpretive differences. Therefore, the classics can neither be

⁷The following essays by Daniel K. Gardner are especially instructive: 1991, 1983, Gardner 1998. See also Herman 2001.

freely deconstructed nor historically reconstructed. Hermeneutics is more than the imaginative surmounting of the temporal distance between antiquity and the present by recreating a dead past. Exegesis revivifies the classics so that they live in the midst of our present life. Accordingly, in Chinese hermeneutics, there is a dual-vision. First is the religious one that ascertains the timelessness of the classics, whose truths are still alive, as the present is the continuation of the past. Second is the historical vision that presumes the passing of the past but reconstructs it by promoting the values in the classics. It calls for our indwelling of the past but accepts the past as a confected reality. Religious hermeneutics resurrects and relives the past's contemporaneity; historical hermeneutics recalls and manufactures its quasi-contemporaneity.

In short, I argue that to the Chinese exegetes and readers, the classics offered religious inspiration. They are convinced that the classics are always situated in the present-tense of their making. They see themselves as the texts' addressees who represent the intended readers. Above and beyond diverse exegetical differences, there are the stable and determinate meanings of the classics, whose retrieval depends not on readerly belief in hermeneutic contingency but in the conviction of hermeneutic ultimacy.

Thus far, led by our agendum of viewing Western hermeneutics and Chinese exegesis in terms of each other, I have been engaged in comparison. But comparison in itself does not necessarily provide insights into the nature of the things compared. In fact, comparisons are often intellectual gymnastics, but done right, they function like metaphors. The analogical imaginings of comparisons may yield perspectives of conceiving things anew. Exploring Chinese exegesis vis-à-vis Western hermeneutics may create possibilities for their mutual integration, leading to a new form of hermeneutics that may contribute to global philosophy. Nonetheless, it is a delicate balancing act. Claiming the presence of hermeneutics in Chinese thought in a sweeping manner, in the name of analytical coherence, unduly ignores particular historical and cultural moorings, tendentiously imposing on China western normative and prescriptive manner of reading. The investigation of Chinese philosophy in terms of hermeneutics requires a sensitive understanding of the nature and histories of the two morphologies of reading, enabling their use as metaphors for each other. Their commensurability stems not from the tenuous appeal to the generic human need to read, interpret and understand. Meaningful congress involves a re-conception of hermeneutics, whose integration into Chinese philosophy acts not only as a new constituent but also an agent of its transformation. We need to construct not only a Chinese hermeneutics that is historically and culturally authentic, but also a general and comparative hermeneutics that is philosophically useful and viable today.

Still, the task of comparison is immensely difficult. Today, even with our sharpened epistemological viewpoint, critical ideological self-awareness, and heightened cultural sensitivity, our engagement with "other cultures" is still beset with uncertainty and insecurity. We rightly express our distress over the problem of overcoming the distance between what we study and our preconceived notions. In our effort to understand the cultural other, we may believe that we are thinking about things as

they are, when in fact we are thinking about things as they appear to us. Therefore, we have to bear in mind that presentist values, if not ideological biases, do influence our readings of the Chinese classics. The central question is: Just how should Western hermeneutic methodologies and perspectives be brought to bear on the study of the Chinese classics, since reading the Chinese classics today is an exercise in comparative thought?

While globalization no doubts means a shrunk and shrinking world in which peoples and cultural groups have become closer, such that various traditions of thought, the so-called non-Western ones, for lack of a better description, instead of always serving as objects of observation and study by the hegemonic West, have increasingly come to be seen as systems of intellection that are genuine and efficacious ways and means of conceiving reality and the life-world. But to date, this critical and ideologically self-aware approach to cross-cultural/global congress is still much governed by theoretical perspectives and nomenclatures emanating from the Anglo-European world. Vociferous critiques of Eurocentrism, such as postcolonialism, still all too often proceed within the framework of Western discourses, as evidenced by the admirable and much-cited work done by Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000, cf. Goody 2006, Prakash 1994). Some other interrogations of the limits of the Euro-American worldview, such as that by Fred Dallmayr, tend to end up stressing the importance of due attention to the equivalences and differences across cultures (2004). Still other critical inquires, including those by Lydia Liu and Naoki Sakai, argues on behalf of what Liu calls the “translingual practice” of cross-cultural encounters, in which the meanings of the Western theoretical construal come to be reinvented, rather than being transported wholesale without change. It is the translation of the ancestral Western theories, as opposed to the examination of their stable substance, which really counts. Focusing on the inevitable translation of the original theories means rejection of the assumption of any authentic meanings inherent in any theory, thereby delivering China and other subalterns from the trammels of Euro-American categories and vocabularies (Liu 1995; Sakai 2002). Margaret Hillenbrand (2010) sums up the situation well, “It is the ‘old masters’ of Western theory who continue to describe the broad contours and grand features of the intellectual landscape, and whose influence is writ large all over the canvas. Indeed, many of the basic terms of reckoning and address which frame the study of contemporary East Asian culture—keywords like power, metropolis, postmodernism, nation—are routinely glossed via reference, and thus deference, to their Euro-American ‘originals.’”

But is this really a dispiriting, despairing, and hopeless condition of the global pattern of production of knowledge, in which Chinese thought cannot ultimately serve to inspire and define social and political theory of broad, universal application? Does it mean Chinese theoretical voices invariably sing back-up vocals? I think not. There is no reason that Chinese thought, as local knowledge, cannot become global knowledge. Indeed, students of Chinese thought are concerned with how the particular experiences of China should legitimately be invested with general and global significance. Therefore, to say that the study of the Chinese classics is a comparative exercise is not to succumb to Eurocentrism’s presumptive

universalizing theories, such as Cartesian Rationality, Hegelian Reason, Scientific certitude or monotheistic truth, such that multifarious human experiences and actions either merely become their indexical expressions or are dismissed as exotic aberrations. Rather, comparisons explore how reading and understanding as universal acts have been differently syndicated in China and the West, that is, being keenly aware of the importance and intervention of place and space. Our reading of Confucian and Western hermeneutics furthermore makes sense of the acts of interpretation and understanding philosophically. As we strive to globalize the Confucian classics by reaching an authentic and empathetic understanding of it, we embark on comparative instincts and approaches that are legitimately grounded in some Eurotropic, as opposed to Eurocentric, conceptual schemes and categories, we pursue comparison, regarding Chinese classics in terms of Western hermeneutics as comparative thought. Simultaneously Eurotropic and Sinocentric, as a cultural and hermeneutic transaction, our reading of the Chinese classics deconstructs old assumptions by freeing them from the shackles of Western biases, even though Western tools are pressed into service. In so doing, we may generate a Chinese or Confucian theory of reading that is theoretically autonomous by breaking free from the theoretical constraints of the past, which have been Euro-American dictated, such that this *Chinese* theory may have purchase for the understanding of Western hermeneutics. While such a theory expands the old interpretive terrain of Chinese thought, it is continuous with the Eurotropic intellectual contexts of its production. Needless to say, the explanatory power of such a Chinese theory cannot be taken for granted; its cogency can only be vouchsafed by the comparative adjudications that I mentioned above. Such a theory (or theories) is of crucial importance to the continuation of the Chinese classics, if they are to remain relevant in a global world. Any vital tradition is an evolving one and its canon must be reinterpreted. The alternative is irrelevance and oblivion. To the extent that the Classics constitute our cultural capital in a durable tradition, they are the mystic chord that lends to their readers a sense of harmony and communal belonging. This is the fundamental presumption of the hermeneutic enterprise. The comparative project of intercultural hermeneutics sheds light on the commerce between different places and spaces, revealing the ontological condition of cross-cultural understanding, namely, the polytropic nature of such encounter.

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