

Can Place Prehend Philosophy?

Spatialisation, Mythic Place and Virtual Time

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What is place to philosophy, what is place to thought? The linkage of philosophy and place suggests the question: “Is this a matter of the philosophy of place or the place of philosophy?” Place, even in an unexamined sense of the term, is both an object of thought and theoretical attention and the putative ground of thought, a milieu in which problematic events and entities come together in presence for the philosopher – place is a problematic ready to hand, to adopt the Heideggerian phrase. Furthermore, the specificity of places as time-space contexts is inevitably sedimented in concepts and theorems, so that even mathematical axioms hark back to the conditions that allowed the neutral and often three-dimensional space of logical diagrams and propositions to exist. Philosophers scratch away at this context to retrieve these a priori conditions, puzzle at the lack of fit with current contexts or search for neglected aspects of the originary scene that have been overlooked.

In *The Symbolism of Evil* Ricoeur suggests that theoretical thinking is always specific, historically located, cultural, and socially-grounded.¹ I would like to argue that place grounds thinking and founds philosophy in a constitutive manner. This will take the form of a consideration of place as a prehistory and prehension of philosophical reason. Place is sedimented in theoretical discourse even if it appears only in the mannered phrase that thought ‘takes place’. This ‘taking place’ is littered across the philosophical literature to such a great extent, so often, so repetitiously, that one must wonder about its role. ‘Taking place’ is an unexamined action that animates the discourse of philosophy. Why construct the

¹ Ricoeur, Paul: *The Symbolism of Evil*, New York 1969, p. 23.

process of thought in the linguistic terms of an event ‘taking place’ where process is reified and immobilized? What service is place giving in this ‘taking’? What ritual anointing of events, objects, bodies, occurrences, categories and logical elements lies behind these words? Like a mouse running across a room, ‘taking place’ is a flicker that catches our eye and once we focus in on it, it upstages all of the other activities that were going on.

1. THE PLACE OF THOUGHT

Place appears in multiple guises in modernist and contemporary philosophy.² Martin Heidegger is one of the best known philosophers to write of place in relation to questions of being, truth and presence.³ Even critics of his philosophy such as Badiou, for example, draw on Heidegger's exploration of Being as an event of “being-there” for which a site or place is integral.⁴ There is a range of readings of his work, which also exhibits different emphases on place, time and space. He wrote regularly of place – the place where being occurs, the place of equipment – but the spatiality of this place is assumed. Space is often referenced but is relatively undeveloped alongside time in some examinations of his work.⁵

In capsule form, a first phase culminates in *Being and Time* and includes relatively short comments on space within the context of a discussion of time and being. In a second phase through the 1930s, place or site emerges as the ‘there’ of being, analysed as an event. In a third phase in the 1960s, place emerges more strongly in essays such as *Being Dwelling Thinking*.⁶

² For a wide-ranging survey, see Paquot, Thierry/Younès, Chris (Eds.): *Le Territoire des philosophes: Lieu et espace dans la pensée au XXe siècle*, Paris 2009.

³ Chrétien Jean, Louis: *De l'espace au lieu dans la pensée de Heidegger*, *Revue de l'enseignement philosophique*, 32:3 (1982), pp. 3-21; Franck, Didier: *Heidegger et le problème de l'espace*. Minuit, Paris 1986; Villela-Petit, Maria: *L'Espace chez Heidegger: quelques repères*. *Les Etudes Philosophiques*, 2 (1981), pp. 189-210; Arisaka, Yoko: *On Heidegger's Theory of Space: A Critique of Dreyfus*, *Inquiry*, 38:4 (1995), pp. 455-467.

⁴ Badiou, Alain: *Polemics*, London 2007; MacCannell, Juliet Flower: *Eternity or Infinity? Badiou's Point*, *Environment and Planning D*, 27 (2009), pp. 823-839.

⁵ Schatzki, Theodore: *The Site of the Social*. Pennsylvania, 2002; Id.: *Martin Heidegger Theorist of Space*, Stuttgart 2007.

⁶ Heidegger, Martin: *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*, in: Id., *Gesamtausgabe Vol. 65 (1936-1938)*, Frankfurt am Main; Heidegger, Martin: *Being and Time*, New

De Beistegui suggests that one of Heidegger's virtues is that he distinguishes place as ontological locality from simply being a site or being an aspect of space.⁷ Others such as Malpas argue that Heidegger should be read as ultimately formulating the philosophical question of the truth of being as a question of place and the way in which being becomes present and actual.⁸ In this strong version of an 'emplaced' reading, Heidegger's *Dasein* is above all '*Da-sein*' 'being-there', an event in place as well as in time.⁹ We must remember that this is not Heidegger's innovation: he draws on a tradition within modernity running from Machiavelli to Spinoza, Nietzsche, Benjamin, (and after Heidegger) Deleuze and Negri which has understood being as "the power of Being-there", the realization of a dimension, an ethical faculty, will or the actualization of creativity.¹⁰

No contradiction between Heidegger's approaches to Being, which develop over time, is admitted: the "there of being" (*Dasein*) is the eventfulness of being (*Ereignis*) because place holds together time and space in mutual dependence. The site of the moment (*die Augenblickstätte*) articulates time and space. Place arises as (spatial) expanse and (temporal) division.¹¹ Other spatial elements in Heidegger include the "totality of places" (*Platzganzheit*) and regions or "whereabouts" (*Gegend*).¹² He laments that,

"Places — and indeed the whole circumspectively oriented totality of places belonging to equipment ready-to-hand — sink to a multiplicity of positions for arbitrary things. The spatiality of what is ready-to-hand within the world loses its involvement-character [...] The world loses its specific aroundness; the world-around becomes the world of nature.

York 1962; Heidegger, Martin: *Building Dwelling Thinking*, in: Id., *Poetry, Language, Thought*, New York 1951.

⁷ de Beistegui, Miguel: *The Place of Place in Heidegger's Topology*. *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 19:2 (2011), pp. 277-283.

⁸ Malpas, Jeff: *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World*, Cambridge Mass 2006.

⁹ M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p 136.

¹⁰ Negri, Antonio: *On Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus*. *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal*, 18:2 (1995), online version.

¹¹ See Heidegger's postscript on Hegel in *Heidegger: Being and Time*; also see Derrida, Jacques: *Ousia and Gramme: A Note to a Note in Being and Time*, in: Id., *Margins of Philosophy* University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1982, pp. 29-68.

¹² Both terms as in *Heidegger: Being and Time*, pp. 136, 147.

The ‘world’ as totality of equipment ready-to-hand becomes spatialized to a context of extended things which are just present-at-hand and no more”.¹³

Place in this view is a metaphysical gathering opposed to space as dispersion and presumably to time as well as to inauthentic technological framings (*Ge-stell*) as Heidegger famously argues. Place and “taking place” is opposed to space and spacing. The relationship between places thus seems to be a challenge, for while they form a totality, the sense of a whole landscape of places-for-this and places-for-that which stand in contrast and even in relations of negation to each other seems difficult to read off of Heidegger’s work. Christian Norberg-Schulz naturalizes topography and history as the “*genus loci*” or spirit of places that then lend their identity to entire regions and to cities.¹⁴ Thus, the nature of Rome is essentialized in the anchoring of its seven hills that structure the topography, the circulation and ultimately the accessibility and livability of the centre of the city in relation to the Tiber river. The way this place-identity enters into a broader formation of places that are essential to our everyday geographies – and to a resident of Rome – and to a sense of the world as a spatialisation of places, a space of distance and difference, is unclear. Malpas¹⁵ notes that, “Place cannot be other than what is given in the multiplicity of places – to suppose otherwise would be to envisage the possibility of place, *topos*, as itself atopic”. However, this leaves the world of places un-named and implicit within individual places.

We arrive at the problem of how to dwell in a larger world than is possible in the primitive localism that is inevitably implied by Heidegger. Even if place were not actual, the ideal terms that are set up do not reflect of everyday life that always included trade and resources beyond the horizons of local life, even in Europe before the Roman occupation, throughout the Middle Ages and certainly since the Renaissance. Place, this is to say, is always in a relationship with other places just as the now of a site encodes the past and affords selected futures. Place is always leaky and without closure.

While he criticized the assumption that time and space were historically universal, Heidegger linked this sensibility to the onset of modern technology. Technology is itself a means of unveiling aspects of our world – universally – but distracts us from the authentic condition of being and the nature of place,

¹³ M. Heidegger: *Being and Time*, p. 112, cited in T. Schatzki: *The Site of the Social*, p. 47 (translation modified).

¹⁴ Norberg-Schulz, Christian: *Genius loci: towards a phenomenology of architecture*, London 1980.

¹⁵ J. Malpas: *Heidegger’s Topology*, p. 300.

which is ‘spatialised’, thus confounding anything but a negative encounter with wider spaces. He linked this universalism to a particular historical developmental trajectory and condition:

“[T]he being at home of a historical humanity involves a certain sort of space, more precisely, a certain sort of timespace. This time-space is the time-space in which the people dwell. This time-space is also at once the time-space that constitutes the open of the clearing into which this people stands. To explicate this timespace, Heidegger conceptualized place (*Ort*) as the here of human dwelling and abode (*Ortschaft*) as the way a place is a here”.¹⁶

Heidegger is generally understood to have placed time at the centre of understanding of being and the universalism of claims on behalf of “a historical humanity” and the ways in which spatiality is an unchallenged and unproblematic three-dimensional and passive element illustrate Heidegger's tendency to generalize his Eurocentric metaphysics in a temporalizing manner based on historical stages. Because he is interested in lived space rather than an objective, Cartesian space or a subjective sense of space, a three-dimensional space is generally presumed in Heidegger when he characterizes the being of equipment as readiness-to-hand (*Zuhandenheit*), evoking nearness (*zu Hand*) even if not objectively present-to-hand. Place is part of equipment as well as location, where equipment is placed (*platziert*) together with other elements relevant to action in much the same way that Marx understands space as one example of capital. Further, as well as being placed in the sense of objective location, “equipment compose, are, places namely, places where something can be done, places where specific activities can be performed: a workbench is a place to build and fix things”.¹⁷

“When equipment for something or other has its place, this place defines itself as the place of this equipment – as one place out of a whole totality of places directionally lined up with each other and belonging to the context of equipment that is environmentally ready-to-hand. Such a place and such a multiplicity of places are not to be interpreted as the ‘where’ of some random Being-present-at-hand of Things. In each case the place is the definite ‘there’ or ‘yonder’ [*Dort* und *Da*] of an item of equipment which belongs somewhere [...]the ‘whither’ to which the totality of places for a context of equipment gets allotted, is the underlying condition which makes possible the belonging-somewhere of an

¹⁶ T. Schatzki: *The Site of the Social*, p. 57.

¹⁷ T. Schatzki: *Martin Heidegger*, p. 40.

equipmental totality as something that can be placed. This ‘whither’ [...] we call the ‘region’ (*Gegend*).”¹⁸

This groups equipment and place together as a set; that is, readiness-to-hand is a virtuality that has an ontological status quite different from any given element in the set. This virtuality or ‘intangibility’ is an ‘ideal-but-real’ quality and is central to definitions of place itself:

“Place is an opaque and evanescent concept, resistant to standard forms of philosophical analysis, often seeming to dissipate like smoke at the first breath of inquiry, leaving us to turn to what may appear to be the more substantial and substantive notions of space and time.”¹⁹

This is not a matter of abstract representation as in an idea, fiction or any “possible ideal” concept but of something existing but not tangible, such as a memory, trust or indeed the past.²⁰

Thought that ‘takes place’ is embedded in a spatial and also temporal framework that is denied or confounded in contemporary feelings of placelessness and lack of rootedness in places as richly social as well as ecological matrixes of self-actualisation and self-confirmation.²¹ However, it is not just that thought might have a context in the way that Plato’s symposia are presented as parties where the guests argue and debate philosophical principles. Place as ‘taking place’ is necessarily a reference to a broader spatial and temporal framework that is epistemological and pragmatic as well as geographical or architectural – to social spatialisations that go beyond any particular instance of place and of taking place. “Something like a region must first be discovered if there is to be any possibility of allotting or coming across places for a totality of equipment that is circumspectively at one’s disposal.”²²

Heidegger’s *Gegend* is perhaps a more accurate correspondence to spatialisation. He links *Gegend* as a totality of places to meaning broadly and as a precondition for spatial encounters with equipment and with specific places as what I

¹⁸ M. Heidegger: *Being and Time*, p. 136, ss. 103.

¹⁹ J. Malpas: *The Place of Topology*, p. 295

²⁰ Shields, Rob: *Knowing Space. Theory, Culture & Society*, 23:2-3 (2006), pp. 147-149.

²¹ M. de Beistegui: *The Place of Place in Heidegger’s Topology*, p. 280.

²² M. Heidegger: *Being and Time*, p. 136, ss. 103.

have called “places for this and places for that”. Schatzki translates Heidegger as follows:

“[A]s its own unity [...] through the world-ish totality of involvements [...] [t]he ‘world-around’ does not arrange itself in a space that has been given in advance, rather its specific worldhood articulates in its significance the context of involvements of any current totality of circumspectively allotted places. In each case the world discovers the spatiality of the space that belongs to it.”²³

Such frameworks are not only cultural frames for action and understanding but they are social productions that deserve sociological and anthropological interrogation as such.²⁴ They are the points of reference in relation to anomic senses of placeless-ness. They embed instruments, activities and more importantly affect and power in places and in the relations between places, neighbourhoods, cities and states.

Assimilating spatialisation to *Gegend* makes clear that this is not a spatialisation that negates place as a local site of encounters but the matrix within which any given place is embedded. Spatialisation is a virtuality that is entangled with place and presence. It can only be known through a process of envisaging spatialisations through abstraction and representation.²⁵

My further contention would be that the assumption of a Euclidean three dimensional space is neither natural nor objective but part and parcel of this cultural formation of spatialisation. As Schatzki suggests, this makes of Heidegger an important but not critical spatial thinker; he is not a critic of temporality nor of spatialisation itself even as he advocates a return to dwelling, to attachment that integrates time and space in the process of living.

²³ M. Heidegger: *Being and Time*, p. 139, cited in Schatzki: *Martin Heidegger, Theorist of Space*, p. 40 (translation modified).

²⁴ Shields, Rob: *Places on the Margin: Alternative geographies of modernity*, London 1991.

²⁵ This process is one of making present, as Heidegger insists, moving “*envisaging*” as *Vergegenwärtigung* to “making present” as *Gegenwärtigen*, see M. Heidegger: *Being and Time*, p. 410. This process is indicative of a dualism of presence and absence that Derrida and Lyotard critique. See Derrida: *Ousia and Gramme: A Note to a Note in Being and Time* and Jean-François Lyotard, Willem van Rijen and Dick Veerman. An Interview with Jean-François Lyotard. *Theory, Culture and Society*, 5:2 (1988), pp. 277-309. The ironic embedding of *Gegen(d)*, as region in these terms also deserves more thought.

De Beistegui also argues that Heidegger's position shifts over time, as later in his work he switches from spatiality to place, i.e. to that where matters of interest occur. Place appears as frames such as art, architecture, the polis, or poetry, all distinguished as the constitution of open times-spaces or opportunities for the emergent sense of totality the perception and prehension of the virtual, understood as what befalls us/what is befalling. His mature approach to time-space is "time spatializes" and "space temporalizes" to produce a unity of what we might call the 'event-place'.²⁶

"The 'there' of being unfolds between, and differently according to the various epochs of history, clearing and concealing, world and earth, rapture and captivation. The Event (*Ereignis*), or what Heidegger calls History, is precisely the play of time and space thus understood, the 'where' and 'when' of being. Time-space, as an event, always refers to a site – the site of a specific and concrete strife (*Streit*) between world and earth and encounter (*Ent-gegnung*) between men and gods, the site of a singular historical configuration."²⁷

However the universals at work and the assumed qualities of Heideggerian "place" as three-dimensional space and historical time seem to be themselves a highly modernist characterisation of the site of encounter "between men and gods" (sic). Simplifying greatly Earth and Sky represent the folding of boundless potential into the limits of a particular place; Gods and Men represent the folding of eternal temporality into history. This "place" is a form that arises as a solution rather than a pretext or an aporia in advance of thought. How is it inhabited? How place is actualised in series, that is, in spaces made up of multiple, lived places remains an open question.

2. SPATIALISATION

Social spatialisation is intended to precisely capture the sense in which places are 'cast' as 'places-for-this' or 'places-for-that'. 'Spatialisation' in French and English popular usage has meant 'making spatial'. However it further redefines 'space' as a problematic term by locating its partiality and identifying the cultural role that it plays by constructing a crucible and arena for the play of capital,

²⁶ M. Heidegger: *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, p. 65 cited in M. de Beistegui: *The Place of Place in Heidegger's Topology*, p. 282.

²⁷ M. de Beistegui: *The Place of Place in Heidegger's Topology*, p. 282.

art and technology and for the constitution of places as identified and fixed locales within a wider space of other places – a space of distance and difference. Spatialisation seeks to not only translate but move beyond Lefebvre's Marxist-Hegelian analysis of the *Production of Space* by stressing its Leibnizean, Nietzschean qualities and drawing on Foucault's and Deleuze and Guattari's equally Nietzschean engagements with cultural and psychological structures of power. 'Space' is a peculiarly modernist construction and in English tightly lashed to the mathematical and technical notion of a neutral void or extension. The Cartesian *Extensio*, separated from place and from lived space, undermines the use of 'space' as an analytical term which is trapped in a language which ignores its subtleties.

For example, working in French, by contrast to the English 'space', Lefebvre's "*l'espace*" is all embracing of place, area and site. It seeks what could be influenced by spatialisations in different historical epochs rather than simply defining and delimiting the spatialisation of one particular time or place. I suggest this is at root a social spatialisation, which includes (1) a set of spatial relations (i.e. space proper) between and on which core elements of the mode of production (and consumption) depend; (2) the arrangements of architecture and the landscape; (3) understandings and representations of that logic; and (4) cultural forms of social space that include the body and its gestures and compartment. The translation of "*l'espace*" as spatialisation has stuck,²⁸ but it is worth noting Lefebvre's own use of "*spatialisation*". For example, in *La Production de l'espace* Lefebvre does not separate spatialisation completely from place as localisation in the way that Castells later attempts to do with his vision of a dynamic "space of flows" in which place is dominated as a mere static, parochial node of localisation.²⁹

Lefebvre's "*l'espace*", is analytical and methodological in nature. Lefebvre identifies three dialectical moments or theses of "*l'espace*", embedding his analysis within an enlarged and unorthodox, but still recognisably Hegelian and Marxist assessment of domination and resistance:

1. "Practices of Space" involve producing and enacting spatial order in every action, challenging the constructions we engage in. Elsewhere he refers to these as "*l'espace perçu*" of commonsensical action and "perceived space."

²⁸ Zieleniec, Andrzej: *Space and Social Theory*, London 2007, p. 76, also see the usage in Hubbard, Phil; Kitchen, Rob and Valentine, Gill: *Key Thinkers on space and place*, London 2004.

²⁹ Lefebvre, Henri: *La Production de l'Espace*. Anthropos, Paris 1974; Castells, Manuel: *The Rise of the Network Society*, Oxford 1996.

2. “Representations of Space” (or “Discourses on Space”) are found in narratives, such as the idea that space is an a-political neutral void, or theories of the planning professions or cartographic conventions that assume that the landscape can be rationally planned and subdivided – especially into planning zones for different uses. These discourses require argument and refutation. He also refers to this as “*l’espace conçu*” or “conceived space”.

3. “Spaces of Representation” (or “Discourses of Space”) frame our understandings of what is possible and how our senses and bodies are embedded in space. These more insidious habits of understanding are the special purview of radical artists who challenge the ways we see the world and ourselves. Elsewhere he refers to the potential of this most intangible of aspects of spatiality to become “*l’espace vécu*” or “lived space”: a kind of Nietzschean, fully engaged and unalienated identification of the actor, their actions and activities, with the environment itself.

All three influence and tug at each other as productive contradictions, producing “*l’espace*” as a dialectical (trialectical) synthesis at any given historical mode of production. Marx’s modes of production become modes of production of space. If anything is a mark of Lefebvre’s analysis, it is the combination of totalisation and periodisation.

3. MYTHIC PLACE

Outside of this historical frame of modes of production of space, what of places that precede Lefebvre's assumption of a historical teleology of modes of production of space? Michel Serres directs us to the *Aeneid* of Virgil arguing that each myth, each tale in this combinatorial of oral tradition comes from a specific place.³⁰ Myth recalls, presents and mobilizes a space before history. It is precisely in the narrative sites of mythology, that people are shown encountering the relation Heidegger interrogated between Gods and Men (sic), Being and being-there; places where the historical world is articulated with the divine. Even though they are representations, they are introduced as definite sites in which the audience is granted the privilege of looking on in participation as witnesses to action together with the protagonists in the mythic time (as in Heidegger's *Ereignis*). Serres focuses on examples from Virgil such as the following tale where a half mortal, Cacus, dares to steal from a God, but is discovered and

³⁰ Serres, Michel: Rome: The book of foundations, Stanford 1991.

killed, becoming himself venerated like a god, marking the beginning of historical time and the foundation of Roman society by such remembrance.

XXVII. But time, in answer to our prayers, one day
 Brought aid, a God to help us in our need.
 Flushed with the death of Geryon, came this way
 Alcides, glorying in the victor's meed,
 And hither drove his mighty bulls to feed.
 These, pasturing in the valley, from his lair
 Fierce Cacus saw, and, scorning in his greed
 To leave undone what crime or craft could dare,
 Four beauteous heifers stole, four oxen sleek and fair.

XXVIII. Then, lest their footprints should the track declare,
 Back by their tails he dragged the captured kine,
 With hoofs reversed, and shut them in his lair,
 And whoso sought the cavern found no sign.
 But when at last Amphitryon's son divine,
 His feasted herds, preparing to remove,
 Called from their pastures, and in long-drawn line,
 With plaintive lowing, the departing drove
 Trooped from the echoing hills, and clamours filled the grove.³¹

Before historical thought with its linear logic, there is place and before that the timeless space of the Gods. Time is the time of chance events, space is the milieu of manoeuvres, itineraries from one pasture to another. Place is a scene of encounter in a timely, mythic present of interacting bodies. Serres argues that philosophy has neglected these places and the spatiality that informs them. This spatiality is undomesticated, ungoverned by logic and thus an overall understanding has to be collaged together from fragments – the opposite of Descartes endless and totalising *extensio* of three-dimensional coordinate space. Instead, order is localised in narrative sites that do not necessarily conform to everyday spatiality or to an overall spatial order. Even where place has qualities – it is “a garden, a cave or a valley” - Serres comments that time - historical time - “has not yet begun; it has not yet been conceived. There are places, only places. To go back to

³¹ Virgil: The Aeneid of Virgil, London 1907.

the origin is to leave one site for another”.³² The montage logic is characterized by the centrality of place and events that “take place”.

The Roman historian Livy is said to have commented that barbarian thought was not only prehistorical, but that, in this mode of understanding, the linear time of history was inconceivable.³³ Instead the prehistorical offered Livy a montage of images, of myths of gods and battles and above all places. What of these mythic places of thought? In contrast to ‘myth’ as a narrative texts that may be more or less fictional, “*the mythic*” is a virtual reality encoded in these representations. It is the chronotope (see below), the space of representations at the heart of the tale.

What of the mythic spatialisation that persists in contemporary spatial metaphors? What is the spatialisation of classic foundation narratives in which each story, each parable, “takes place” more or less in mobile contiguity to any other parable? To examine this, a fusion of temporal and spatial analysis is required that is more correctly a “cultural topology” than a spatialisation.³⁴ That is, we need an approach that embraces multiple spatial and temporal formations in contradiction without assuming any overall order. The time-space of myth intersects without conforming to the times and spaces of historical places.

For example, in these mythic narratives, an ordering space beyond an epic scene need not be assumed. There is not even a matrix or plenum in which a *clinamen*³⁵ as event disturbs a time-less flow. The contiguous or even co-located quality of the scenes is the essence of the spatialisation that precedes logical divisions of geographical-historical space into places-of-this and places-of-that. In this understanding that does not presume space or time as *extensio* and *historia*, place precedes the kind of thought that we understand as logico-philosophical reason, and also its causal time and space in which events and all things are later understood to be spaced and unfold. This is in strong contrast to a Euclidean and later Cartesian framework: it offers a remnant of the divine in that it provides and immersive logic in which all can be understood in the order of a universal and eternally knowable space and time of an event-place.³⁶

³² M. Serres: Rome, p. 40.

³³ Livy: Roman History, 1904.

³⁴ R. Shields, Spatial Questions: Social Spatialisations and Cultural Topologies, London 2013.

³⁵ Lucretius referred to *clinamen* as “an unpredictable swerve of atoms”. Lucretius: De Rerum Natura, Welt aus Atomen, Stuttgart 1986.

³⁶ M. Serres: Rome, p. 185, p. 191.

The bodies of the protagonists unite the elements of the narrative, creating a time-space identical with the site as an isolated island in time. This event-place fusion is a lived time and space that is both mundane and epic in a transposability that is characteristic of the mythic³⁷ as virtual. At work in this proto-time and virtual space, characters are identical with their own presence and extend a gestural milieu mediated by their bodies in much the same way that the ant, the spider in its web or a woodland tick extends a space as an *Umwelt* with specific temporal and spatial conditions that derive from a limited repertoire of capacities to perceive and act, that is, to enter into relationships with other bodies that have a duration and dimension.³⁸ In this case, time and space pertain to the interaction of bodies in a mythical moment. Even though they are often identified by kinship and filiation, the characters and action is in and of the event-place, almost as if they have forgotten themselves in the moment. This allows humans to imagine their own vicarious presence inside the lived time-space of myth and its narrative unfolding of events.

It is not that there is “no time”; place is not atemporal, but that there is a focus on the present as the site of pathos and experience. Fate is played out; however, the sense of an unfolding plot is subordinate to the framing of the entire narrative in the mode of the present. Ricoeur notes that philosophers including Hegel, Heidegger and Gadamer have considered the way in which experience (*Erfahrung*) “designates the style of historicity of all knowledge”.³⁹

Thought without time is unthinkable in modern thought; historicity is its precondition. Husserl argues that space is founded in human corporeality.⁴⁰ But it is possible to project how, in the prehistorical form of mythic relation⁴¹ place might come to the fore as simply a “taking place”. As in all projections, this is a reduction of dimensions or degrees of freedom, such as a projection that maps a curved surface onto a flat plane. In this case, the reduction of a multidimensional time-space is to one definite point: that of the event - the “taking place”. This point form of action has no need of distinguishing between space and time, nor

³⁷ By mythic I am referring specifically to this defining quality of myths as *mythos*, not to a specific myth or narrative, nor in any way to the ‘mythical’ as often used to refer to an erroneous tale or a fiction.

³⁸ von Uexküll, Jakob: *A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans. with A Theory of Meaning*, Minneapolis 2011.

³⁹ P. Ricoeur: *The Symbolism of Evil*, p. 105.

⁴⁰ Husserl, Edmund: *L'Origine de La Geometrie*, Paris 1962; Derrida, Jacques: *Introduction to Husserl's: “The Origins of Geometry”*, Oxford 1975.

⁴¹ M. Serres: *Rome*, p. 90.

of space as extension and time as progression. Can we speculate that there is a time of pure event or mythical happening, a collage or montage where the Gods overlap; the parables are in the same event space? The event-place or event-space has no need of empirical presence given that absence is not an ontological possibility in such a schema.

“Place is event, the emergent unthought empirical knotted from the formless material of form as a *systrophe*, an elementary aggregate, a knot, a mass, a vortex, a manifestation of energy and action, a circumstance [...] crossed by diverse movements and by the complex, chaotic work of transformations. It is always more or less centred, in an empty space or with an absent seat, a full presence”.⁴²

Later, extended stories of epic travel over distances – Ulysses – begin the narration of the world as a space of mobilities and distance. In this topology where there are only places or points, time and space are virtualities. That is to say, they exist only to the extent that the event exists “*as if*” but not actually because there is a broader space in which ideas and narratives touch each other. Diverse temporal logics and spatial figures proliferate, bringing the far away and foreign local and in close communication. *As-if* extension and volume and *as-if* succession and duration: the *as if* is the discursive marker of virtualities, known only through their effects, their *as-if*-presence.⁴³ Discussions of historicity also represent engagements with the past as virtuality, for it is real but not actually. Perhaps this is comparable to the space and time of a daydream, of conscious dreaming where there is relation in space and succession in time but only *as if* the actions happened and which elicit a gratuitous pleasure or frisson of repulsion. The *systrophe* is an *event-space* that is topological even if it is a kind of black hole in which everything is co-located in a primordial combinatory. It exhibits a ‘spatialisation’⁴⁴ even if it is a point-form co-location without distribution that is not even necessarily as commodious as a three-dimensional space of the event-place Malpas references in Heidegger's work. Myths reside contiguously with each other in mythic time. Thus the actions of the protagonists in myth have impact that stretch out time into the course of days and seasons or that place events in relation to landmarks, mountains, caves, rivers and regions to which they lend their *genius* or spirit.

⁴² Ibid., pp. 95-96.

⁴³ Shields, Rob: *The Virtual*, London 2003; Shields, Rob: *Virtualities*. *Theory Culture & Society*, 23:2-3, pp. 284-286.

⁴⁴ R. Shields: *Knowing Space*, p. 147.

This temporality and spatiality lend the mythic a distinctive time-space quality or ‘topology’ even if it was to be zero-dimensional.⁴⁵ Myth presents an origin point, a foundation to the unfolding of events whose succession is the ethnological prototype of temporality and history. There is ‘and then’ before ‘next’. Logical success is only prehended in the consequentiality of affect in myth. The vicissitudes of desire, hatred and fickleness trump the logical unfolding of causes and effects. True to the virtual, myths are known and knowable through their effect, a basic spatialising and temporalising that is already a symbolic mediation of the real.

According to Mikhail Bakhtin, the “chronotope” as a time-space nexus, or what I have referred to as an element of cultural topology, provides “the ground essential for the “representability of events” functioning as the primary means of materializing time in space”.⁴⁶ This topology frames the detail of places and actions.⁴⁷ In these works he analyses chronotopes that prefigure the action that occurs in texts, much as historicity frames events. Chronotopes are the basis on which Bakhtin theorizes the specificity of literary genres. However he also uses the term more broadly: Goethe's Rome is discussed as a chronotope, because the sense of a particular locality is made inseparable from an awareness of history.⁴⁸ Bakhtin notes that Greek myths tend to present adventures played out beyond any time of human experience, without effect, experience, aging or rational cause and effect impacting the characters. Time leaves no traces in mythical stories. Instead a vast stage of action is dominated by abstract chance and serendipity.⁴⁹ The inherent analytical risk of the chronotope is that it rests on a hypostatizing movement to freeze an ideal-typical time-space characterizing a genre. Rather than functioning as a fecund virtuality that is an ideal-real that permits particular “knots of narrative” to be “tied and untied”, chronotopes can become reified abstractions: ideal-types that are themselves impermeable to change and becoming, set beyond the reach of human creativity.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Shields, Rob: R. Shields, *Spatial Questions: Social Spatialisations and Cultural Topologies*.

⁴⁶ R. Shields: *Spatial Questions*; Bakhtin, Mikhail: *The Dialogical Imagination*, Austin, 1981, p. 250.

⁴⁷ M. Bakhtin: *The Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 84-258.

⁴⁸ Bakhtin, Mikhail: *The Bildungsroman and Its Significance in the History of Realism*, in Michael Holquist (Ed.): *Speech Genres & Other Late Essays*, Austin 1986; Cox, Ailsa: *Time and Subjectivity in Contemporary Short Fiction*, Loughborough 1999.

⁴⁹ M. Bakhtin: *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 87.

⁵⁰ M. Bakhtin: *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 250.

For Whitehead, place is an event or locality where things are co-occurring at the same time and should not be understood as a simple location or concrete entity. He argues that the point has no experiential reality but is an abstraction representing an idea derived theoretically. Instead, time and space are subcategories of extension. Similarly, objects are temporary. They are idealized and reified abstractions that are given a stable identity. Like Lyotard, Deleuze understands the event in material terms by advancing a reading of Whitehead's event as having four conditions that parallels Heidegger's description of the event of Being. The four conditions are *extension* of the event out of chaos (cf. Leibniz), a “disjunctive diversity” of “abstract potentialities”, and *intension* and *prehension* and *ingression*.⁵¹

It is worth a brief detour through Whitehead to detail these elements because these four conditions are often compared to Heidegger's fourfold of the Earth, Sky, Man and Gods [sic] and to Deleuze's discussion of ‘folding’.⁵² In summary:

1. There is a fold of Extension and Intension:

1A *Extension (as in extensity, extensio)* in Whitehead is ‘something’ rather than ‘nothing’ or indistinguishable chaos. It evokes the idea of an infinite field, pattern or series that holds the potential for division into regions, values or qualities.⁵³ It is a virtuality that is primarily multiplicity, but ‘a’ multiplicity; that is, not pure chaos and is thus similar to Heidegger's “Earth”⁵⁴ and harkens back to Descartes undifferentiated space as *extensio*.

1B *Intension (as in intensity or intensio)* makes a ‘this’ in contrast to ‘that’, ‘the’ rather than any ‘a’. It coincides with Leibniz and Deleuze in that it is actually concrete matter with distinguishing characteristics, intensities or properties that are marked by difference and thus individuation.

⁵¹ Whitehead, Alfred North: *Process and Reality: An Essay on Cosmology*, New York 1978, pp. 21-40.

⁵² Deleuze follows Leibniz’ conception of folding as a differentiation that does not involve division or cutting up a totality, as in the pleating of cloth or folding of paper to make separate leaves in a book.

⁵³ Whitehead, Alfred North: *The Concept of Nature*, New York 2004, p. 34.

⁵⁴ Robinson, Keith: *Towards a Political Ontology of the Fold: Deleuze, Heidegger, Whitehead and the ‘Fourfold’ Event*, in Sjoerd van Tuinen & Niamh McDonnell (Eds.): *Deleuze and the Fold*, London 2010, pp. 184-202.

2. There is a second set of foldings, Prehension and Ingression:

2A *Prehension* (as in the French verb *prendre*, Latin *prehendere*) grasps, takes account of, or impresses the world of concreated, individual things and site on the subject as affect. It moves from public to private, in a continual series, completing the actualization of the elements of the real.

2B *Ingression* (Latin *ingredi*, the same root as 'ingredient'): Each actual occasion comes to ingress or 'take in' objects.

"in large part by the ways in which it prehends its past. Each actual occasion has some measure of freedom in the way that it interprets and responds to that past, and the objects which an actual occasion exhibits for other emerging occasions is a function of its own prehensive functioning".⁵⁵

Ingression is the *inclusion of prehensions* to maintain an identity or to develop it.⁵⁶ This is the key difference between Whitehead and Heidegger: ingression allows for creativity, differentiation and change. Leibniz' and Heidegger's folding repeats intention (1B) to maintain the closure of a pre-established harmony for the former, and a differentiated but fixed relation between things and the world, being and Being for the Heidegger.⁵⁷

Following Whitehead, thought depends on prehension as "concretely grasping" an object or situation as a given, factual reality.⁵⁸ Possessing or intuiting a datum is akin to our positioning with respect to any antecedent or given affordances. They are one-way dependencies on whatever is prehended and this asymmetry gives an evolutionary character to prehension. But any occasion also prehends the rest of reality as it takes the form of an identity. Whitehead refers to the achieved result as a superject that condenses its necessary and sufficient pre-conditions to 'concreate' or cohere as an apparently independent entity that

⁵⁵ Weiss, Eric: *Front-Matter: Doctrine of the Subtle Worlds: Sri Aurobindo's Cosmology, Modern Science, and the Metaphysics of Alfred North Whitehead*, Californian Institute of Integral Studies, PhD Thesis, San Francisco 2003, published online 2009.

⁵⁶ See Deleuze, Gilles: *The Fold*. Minnesota University Press, Minneapolis 1993, p. 78, and A.N. Whitehead: *The Concept of Nature*, p. 144.

⁵⁷ G. Deleuze: *The Fold*, pp. 79ff; Deleuze, Gilles: *Difference and Repetition*, New York 1994.

⁵⁸ Hartsthorpe, Charles: *Insights and Oversights of Great Thinkers. An Evaluation of Western Philosophy*, Albany 1983.

nonetheless is completely internalized and caught up in the dynamics of its own relations. It is not only path-dependent on prior events but contextual and changing.

Place is thus a prehension of a configuration or situation in time and space – Serres' *systrophe*. This approach suppresses the power of place given to it by Heidegger as a foundational identity that anchors other identities. Whitehead's approach favours the sense of place as event demonstrated in Serres. It also jettisons the centrality of presence⁵⁹ in favour of becoming and rejects the Cartesian and Lockean conception of identity that is determined by locatedness in time and space – whereby for entities to matter, for something to count, they must have a time-space location. In the logic of rational cause and effect, this location must be a place and event, as Serres recognizes. Thought prehends place, and event. At one point Serres comments:

“[E]very representation presupposes that someone is placed in the place of someone else. The struggle over place is therefore purely and simply a representation struggle. The struggle and the fight, all of polemics, all of dialectics, all relation between forces have as their initial presupposition, as their result, this trading of place”.⁶⁰

However, while thought prehends events in Whitehead's terminology, these occasions prehend in their own characteristic ways previous events. Objects and places thus also depend for their “taking place” as occurrences on a structure of prehension. Prehension is neither necessarily human nor cognitive. This allows places and objects to preserve their character as an identifiably continuing milieu such as a place within a spatialisation. In this sense, place prehends existing spatialisation and thus thought itself by drawing memory, representations and discourses into its character. Cycles of understanding and action include and draw in place-images and myths. This strengthens the implication of Serres' analysis: there is a necessary entanglement between place and rational causal forms of thought which once broken apart support a very different logical process that is not structured by linear temporal cause and effect. “Place gathers things, thoughts and memories in particular configurations”,⁶¹ but more strongly, place prehends thought.

⁵⁹ J. Derrida: *Ousia and Gramme*, 1982.

⁶⁰ Serres, Michel: *Genesis*, Ann Arbor, 1995, p. 77.

⁶¹ Escobar, Arturo: *Culture sits in places: Reflections on globalism and subaltern strategies of localisation*. *Political Geography*, 20:2 (2001), pp. 139-174

A reason for preferring the strong thesis that gives power to place in this dialectic is the mediating role of the body in knowing space through tactile and kinetic involvement in “place-ballets”.⁶² This structures the prehension of place by thought, not only through the sensorium but through the contingency of partial encounters which are never with the totality of place – parts of any such totality always remain conjecture; in this simple way, faith is central to everyday life.⁶³ Corporeal prehension is not merely a mediator, an interface for the thinking machine, but an affective as well as functional engagement with the affordances of place and situation.

Strohmayr makes an insightful claim about the spatiality of the event that renders the “linearity of time and space as absent ground [*Abgrund*]...or as play”.⁶⁴ He refers to the virtual qualities of place as dematerialization. However, this often implies an abstraction that brings the ideally possible of places as imaginary sites, *topoi* of metaphor, place-images and representations that are socially constructed but often not actualized or practiced. That place is not dematerialized in this process, but I stress that it is over-dimensioned as virtual. It is equally at home in daydream, myth or in lived experience. It need not necessarily be actualized as a concrete place. It could be a more ideal sort of site. That is, place that is not necessarily experienced in bodily terms,⁶⁵ but can equally be ex-

⁶² Hetherington, Kevin: *The Unsightly: Touching the Parthenon Frieze*. *Theory Culture Society*, 19:5-6 (2002), pp. 187-205.

⁶³ Casey, Edward: *Between geography and philosophy: What does it mean to be in the place-world?*, 91:4 (2001), pp. 683-693; Merleau-Ponty, Maurice: *Cezanne’s Doubt Sense and Non-sense*, Evanston, 1964, pp. 9-24; Rosen, Steven: *Topologies of the flesh: a multidimensional exploration of the lifeworld*, Athens 2006.

⁶⁴ Strohmayr, Ulf: *The event of space: geographic allusions in the phenomenological tradition*. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 16:2 (1988), p. 118

⁶⁵ Merleau-Ponty produced a strong argument against any sort of *a priori* space. In his *Phenomenology of Perception* he asserts that space is created by the pre-reflective activity of the subject. In visual terms, prior to having a spatial field, one has access to a “pre-spatial field” of colour and lighting, which is then structured into a lived spatial field by the interaction of the body with objects and the interrelation of things. Before the first perception of space, one is “already at work in a world” and spatiality is “already required”. In a similar manner, social space is permeated by otherness and requires the mediation of the body in order to be constituted as a spatial field which unites the body and the world of objects (cf. “I am now identical with my presence in the world.” Merleau-Ponty, Maurice: *Phenomenology of Perception*. Blackwell, 1962, p. 293, p. 340. In “Origins of Geometry”, Husserl argues that conceptions of space

perienced through narrative and affect as an imagined, non-space place.⁶⁶ A contemporary example might be internet Wi-Fi ‘hotspots’ as logical, non-concrete places.

Mythic place can be understood as standing in a nested topological relation to the spatialisations and temporalities of everyday life. Serres proposes a “sack logic” (*logique de valise*) to understand how one time-space might nest culturally inside another. This is similar to the relationship between successive apprehensions that are creatively taken up and internalized as ingredients in the next apprehension. In this vision, history arises as the timing of repetitive ritual and collective violations of taboo that cannot be conceived except as in place, as emplaced. These are struggles over place and over its representation.⁶⁷ This is to say, struggles over place as the resource for subsequent social action, subsequent apprehensions, and for social orders including those of time and space.

I read “play” in Strohmeier’s comment as that of affect that overturns the conventional logic of causal succession and extension. It is a play that is a *pathos*, experience, but also indicates a *situs*: an inhabiting, like the scatter of cutlery and serving dishes at the end of a good meal, or as Lyotard says, “the bed after love”.⁶⁸ Lucan originally introduces this idea of a “fatal order” of the end of the meal: “the objects are all in relation one with the others; they have all been used, handled by one or another of the convivial group; the distances that separate them [the objects] are the measure of life.”⁶⁹ This *situs* is the sum of traces of an inhabiting, a *habitus*, a routine and rule where love becomes the law, a domestic pathos, not metaphysics, hygiene or good housekeeping. This is a scandalous place before logic. It is monstrous, formless topology that presents an *aesthesis*, a shared experiential assemblage that elides rational critical judgement. Mythical scenes are an everyday life, a mapping of mundane but unsanctioned and creative liaisons, much as, Lyotard tells us, the mythical scene of the conception of Eros by Penia who, from the doorway, sights drunken Poros in the garden. *Situs* is thus also a topography, a *topos* and even a *topoi* which has ef-

are founded in human corporeality. E. Husserl: *Origins of Geometry*; J. Derrida: *Introduction to Husserl’s: “Origin of Geometry”*.

⁶⁶ Augé, Marc: *Non Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, London 1995.

⁶⁷ Serres, Michel: *The Natural Contract*, Ann Arbor, 1995, p. 77.

⁶⁸ Lyotard, Jean-François: *The Confession of Augustine*, Stanford 2000.

⁶⁹ Lucan, *Tout à commencé la Le Corbusier, une encyclopédie*. Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris 1987, cited in J.-F. Lyotard: *The Confessions of Augustine*, p. 202.

fects. Topology, *analysis situs*⁷⁰ thus demands a relational, aesthetic judgement as well as a pragmatics and kinesthetics.

Place forces us out of the ordered topologies of reason and in so doing allows us to reflect back on them, on the relations of cause and effect that operate in, for example, three dimensional spaces and linear one-dimensional time. Place as aporetic, as a halting point, lies beyond philosophy. It appears as a mask on the dynamism that we know operates beneath such identities. It shares the semiotics of artifice with the masquerade,⁷¹ where the identity presented by the mask is playfully accepted as an idealized identity, even though we may well know the actual identity of the wearer.⁷² It is easy to be affected by it as a *topos* but it elicits thought, as Serres' argues:

“It is easy to think about places where there is already thought. It is simple to turn over a soil that is rich and light. Nothing is more convenient than to practice philosophy on subjects or in languages in which philosophy has long been cultivated. [...] In the places where there has not yet been thought, it is hard to think. The rough coast of sterile rock. On subjects or in languages that philosophy has not yet come to. Philosophy must be practiced. It must be, out of duty, by research or by quest.”⁷³

In Serres' work, not only literary texts but thought itself is embedded in a wider milieu that includes place and historical context. Its response to place is to weave it into a wider spatialisation, a landscape of meaning, a chronotope, a cultural topology of places, events and relations that make up a characteristic time-space. Extending Harris' analysis of fictional discourse, thought establishes links across places, events, scales and domains. It is not only semio- or psycho-logical but eco-logical as well: it expresses the logic of *oikos*, at home thought “negotiates a

⁷⁰ Poincaré, Henri: *Papers on Topology: Analysis Situs and its Five Supplements*. American Mathematical Society, Vol. 37 (2010).

⁷¹ Cambre, Maria Carolina: *The Politics of the Face: Manifestations of Che Guevara's image and its collage of renderings and agency*. University of Alberta, PhD Thesis Edmonton AB 2011; Rykwert, Joseph: *The necessity of artifice: ideas in architecture*, New York 1982.

⁷² Preziosi, Donald: *Brain of the Earth's Body: Art, Museums and the Phantasms of Modernity*, Minneapolis 2003.

⁷³ M. Serres: Rome, pp. 63-64.

place and passage in the world”⁷⁴, “that connects a network, that traces a graph upon space”.⁷⁵

Oikos signals what is at stake in this discussion. Place not only echoes back thought and does not simply come to rest as an identity in a wider spatialisation, but by assembling multiple thinkers and thinking together it multiplies the effect of thought. When it comes to any place, philosophy is thus faced with the continual process of sorting through prehensions, representations and embedded metaphors. Place embeds the traces of active thought in its configuration and architectonics. But further, place constitutes thinking as co-located, as grouped into sets of thinkers, as social. That is, place places thought in an ethos which includes both concord and struggle over representations, affects, faith in place and embodied commitments to place. Together these “*virtues*” of place, allow sustainability, the sustaining of thinking beings and cultures.

The dialectic of “what is place to doctrine?” and “what is philosophy to place?” is a knot of relations and interdependencies. Place grounds thinking and founds philosophy on multiple registers: as much through affect and embodied engagement as through logical prehension. Heidegger’s sustained engagement with place and region lays the basis for both processual understandings of the actualization of metaphysics as ‘Being-there’ and as equipment but demands critical examination of the time-space relationships between such places. The appearance of ‘place’ in multiple guises in philosophy includes the reality that place is a play on unstable, passing formations – a disguise – that depends for its representation and interpretation on wider spatialisations. Place as ‘taking place’ refers to a wider topological framework. Serres deploys place as an elementary aggregate, a *systrophe* independent of historical and logical thought that nonetheless has historical and political effects. This mythic form of place exhibits a specific pre-historical spatialisation of point-form co-location without distribution. If Lefebvre reminds us that myth, as representation of space, is also a virtual reality or “space of representation” that frames everyday spatial routines and practices dialectically, we can see in Serres’ sack logic how the mythic can be curled up within everyday life and our faith in the identity of places – even when we know that our knowledge of them is doomed to be partial and brief. This haunted quality embeds the mythic in the everyday, in turn allowing the mythic

⁷⁴ Harris, Paul: The itinerant theorist: Nature and knowledge ecology and topology in Michel Serres: *Sub-Stance*, 83 (1997), p. 37-58.

⁷⁵ See Serres’ remarks on “Language and Space” in *Oedipus and the Odyssey*: “[T]his is a discourse that weaves a complex [...], that connects a network, that traces a graph upon space”, M. Serres: Rome, p. 47.

to emerge as a chronotope within narratives rationalizing everyday events and situations.

Whitehead and Serres unmask place as a temporary mask of stability over an underlying dynamic of change and fluid fields of actually real processes. This radically empirical approach offers a model of the relationship between thinking and place, but also suggests a stronger role for place as a time-space *situs*. While thought prehends place and events, place prehends thought and more importantly thinking in its many modes, embodiments and collective forms. Embodied, fleshy, kinesthetic place-ballets intervene as integral to prehension, while place aggregates thinkers into sets and groups that themselves come to be figures of place. This includes a struggle over representation, but the stronger form of the thesis sketched here sees place as placing thought into a social collective, into an ethos which itself is the object of struggle for it ultimately concerns the sustainability of certain forms of thought at the expense of others and forecloses possible prehensions, of ideas as much as of physical elements, in favour of sustaining others.