

PLACE AND EXPERIENCE

A Philosophical Topography

While the 'sense of place' is a familiar theme in poetry and art, philosophers have generally given little or no attention to place and the human relation to place. In *Place and Experience*, J. E. Malpas seeks to remedy this by advancing an account of the nature and significance of place as a complex but unitary structure that encompasses self and other, space and time, subjectivity and objectivity. Drawing on a range of sources from Proust and Wordsworth to Davidson, Strawson and Heidegger, he argues that 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 that 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.

J. E. Malpas is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Tasmania. His publications include *Donald Davidson and the Mirror of Meaning* (Cambridge University Press, 1992), *Death and Philosophy* (edited with R. C. Solomon, Routledge, 1999), and articles in scholarly journals.

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J. E. MALPAS

University of Tasmania



PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK <http://www.cup.com.ac.uk>
4 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA <http://www.cup.org>
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

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First published 1999

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

Typeset in Baskerville 11/12.5 pt [vN]

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Malpas, J. E.
Place and experience: a philosophical topography / J. E. Malpas.
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0 521 64217 5
1. Place (Philosophy) I. Title.
B105.P53M35 1999
128'.4 dc 21 98-39069 CP

ISBN 0 521 64217 5 hardback

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Acknowledgments

There are a number of people to whom I am greatly indebted, in various ways, in the writing of this book. First and foremost, I owe a special debt to Julian Young with whom I have enjoyed, particularly over recent times, an especially fruitful philosophical dialogue, and whose friendship I have valued over many years. I am also extremely grateful to Sue Ashford, who has been an invaluable source of critical comment, advice and support throughout the writing of this book. In addition, thanks are due to Dougal Blyth, Peta Bowden, Andrew Brennan, Marcia Cavell, Donald Davidson, Hubert Dreyfus, Robyn Ferrell, Felicity Haynes, Onora O'Neill, Charles Spinosa and Reinhard Steiner, who have all contributed in a variety of ways to the work that appears here. A crucial factor in making this book possible was the award, by the Australian Research Council, of a large research grant for the years 1996 and 1997 – an award which not only freed me from some of my teaching for this period, but also allowed me to escape, if only temporarily, from some of the destructive madness (only slightly disguised by talk of quality, efficiency and accountability) that has gripped the Australian academic scene over the last few years. The final revision and preparation of the typescript was undertaken during the first few months of a period as a Humboldt Research Fellow at the University of Heidelberg. Although developed here in a rather different form, the material included in this book draws on a number of my previous publications, and I would like to thank the editors of the journals in which that work appeared (particularly Dermot Moran and Andrew Light) for the opportunity to publish, in preliminary form, some of the ideas developed at greater length here. Last, but certainly not least, I would like to thank my family – my wife Margaret, and our two sons, Jonathan and Nicholas – for providing me with the place in which this book could be written. I dedicate the book to that place, and to the circle of both family and friends, only some of whom I have been able to name above, who are there brought together.

CHAPTER I

The obscurity of place

If two different authors use the words ‘red’, ‘hard’, or ‘disappointed’, no one doubts that they mean approximately the same thing . . . But in the case of words such as ‘place’ or ‘space’, whose relationship with psychological experience is less direct, there exists a far-reaching uncertainty of interpretation.

Albert Einstein, Foreword to *Concepts of Space*¹

It is something of a truism to say that that which is closest and most familiar to us is often that which is most easily overlooked and forgotten. Nevertheless, the material that was surveyed in the preceding introduction provides good evidence of the way in which place, familiar and ubiquitous though it may be, is seldom entirely neglected. And, while there are relatively few philosophical treatments of place that take up the concept as philosophically significant in its own right, this is indicative, not merely of a certain marginalisation or forgetting of place within philosophy, but of the very opacity of the notion itself.

Certainly, many of the discussions of place in the existing literature suggest that the notion is not at all clearly defined. Concepts of place are often not distinguished at all from notions of simple physical location, while sometimes discussions that seem implicitly to call upon notions of place refer explicitly only to a narrower concept of space. Is Bachelard’s *Poetics of Space*, for example, really about place or space? It surely cannot be about the same space as that of which Newton or Einstein speak – or can it? Michel Foucault claims that ‘The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space’, but he explicates this remark in a way that seems to combine a number of different notions: ‘We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. We are at a moment, I believe, when our experience of the world is less that of a long life

¹ Foreword to Max Jammer, *Concepts of Space: the History of Theories of Space in Physics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970, 2nd edn), p. xii.

developing through time than that of a network that connects points and that intersects with its own skein.² Here we have references both to the concept of space as a system of locations ('a network that connects points') as well as to spatial notions that involve concepts of locality and position ('the near and far . . . the side-by-side') that might suggest connections with broader notions of place.

While some writers are concerned to emphasise a need to distinguish place from space – thus Elizabeth Grosz talks of certain consequences that must follow 'unless space (as territory which is mappable, explorable) gives way to place (occupation, dwelling, being lived in)³ and Edward Casey also stresses the distinction of space from place⁴ – very little has been done in the way of any detailed analysis of the concept of place itself, of the relations between place and concepts of space, or, indeed, of the relations among various spatial concepts themselves.⁵ In this respect, Doreen Massey's complaints about the lack of clarity that often attaches to uses of space and of spatial images and ideas in general applies as much to the deployment of the concept of 'place'. As she writes, 'Many authors rely heavily on the terms "space"/"spatial", and

² Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', *Diacritics*, 16 (1986), 22.

³ Elizabeth Grosz, *Space, Time and Perversion* (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 123.

⁴ See *The Fate of Place*, passim, and esp. pp. 133ff. Sometimes Casey seems to assume rather than explicate this distinction and, in *The Fate of Place*, the interconnection of space and place is not something to which he devotes any especially detailed analysis. In a very recent paper Casey does address the issue of the relation between place and space in a direct and intriguing manner that has some parallels with my own treatment – at least inasmuch as it emphasises the necessary connection of place with space – see 'Smooth Spaces and Rough-edged Places: the Hidden History of Place', *Review of Metaphysics*, 51 (1997), 267–96; see also Casey's, *Getting Back into Place* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993). Casey's own background is strongly phenomenological and it is perhaps within the phenomenological framework that the most extensive explorations of concepts of space and place (though the emphasis is often more on space as such) have been undertaken – see especially Elizabeth Ströker, *Investigations in Philosophy of Space*, trans. Algis Mickunas (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1987), and also, of course, Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*.

⁵ The French philosopher and social theorist Henri Lefebvre is another, rather like Foucault, who has been especially influential in the development of spatiality as a notion applicable in sociological and socio-geographical analyses. However, Lefebvre's analyses arise, in part, precisely out of dissatisfaction with what he sees as the indiscriminate employment of spatial concepts – see *The Production of Space* (trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991)) and Lefebvre singles out Foucault as a notable offender in this regard – see *The Production of Space*, pp. 3–4. Lefebvre's approach is an important influence on the work of Rob Shields – see *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity* (London: Routledge, 1991). In a way that bears comparison with aspects of my own approach, Shields emphasises both the role of spatialisation in the structuring of social practices as well as the complex determination of spatialisation itself. Amongst social theorists who have given attention to the concept of spatiality the work of Pitirim Sorokin should also be noted – see Sorokin, *Sociocultural Causality, Space, Time* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1964), esp. pp. 97–157. Neither Sorokin, nor Shields or Lefebvre, however, attempt the sort of philosophical analysis of space and place, or the relations between them, attempted here.

each assumes that their meaning is clear and uncontested. Yet in fact the meaning which different authors assume (and therefore – in the case of metaphorical usage – the import of the metaphor) varies greatly. Buried in these unacknowledged disagreements is a debate which never surfaces; and it never surfaces because everyone assumes we already know what these terms mean.⁶ That even the meaning of the terms ‘space’/‘spatial’ may be contested is an important suggestion to keep in mind. Certainly, in respect of ‘place’, the term may well be thought so commonplace and so much a part of our everyday discourse that its transfer to more theoretical contexts is likely to present an immediate problem.⁷ Moreover, it is not just our everyday familiarity with the concept that can give rise to difficulties, but also a complexity and breadth of meaning that seems to attach to the term itself.

The English ‘place’ carries a variety of senses and stands in close relation to a number of terms that cover a very broad range of concepts. In fact, the *Oxford English Dictionary* says of the noun ‘place’ that ‘the senses are therefore very numerous and difficult to arrange’⁸ and the entry for the word extends over some five pages. In broad terms, however, one can treat the noun form of ‘place’ as having five main senses: (i) a definite but open space, particularly a bounded, open space within a city or town; (ii) a more generalised sense of space, extension, dimensionality or ‘room’ (and, understood as identical with a certain conception of space, place may, in this sense, be opposed to time); (iii) location or position within some order (whether it be a spatial or some

⁶ Doreen Massey, ‘Politics and Space/Time’, in Keith and Pile (eds.), *Place and the Politics of Identity*, pp. 141–2; see also Neil Smith and Cindi Katz, ‘Grounding Metaphor: Towards a spatialized politics’, in *ibid.*, pp. 67–83. While Massey’s comments are echoed by other writers, part of her own concern over this matter derives from the view that the indiscriminate use of notions of space and spatiality threatens to deprive these notions of any political content, and this she views as problematic. It is notable that, while Massey argues for clarification of the notion of space as it appears in political and sociological contexts, she also argues for the abandonment of the concept of place – or of a particular concept of place. In regard to the suspicion of place in contemporary geography and cultural theory, see also David Harvey, ‘From Space to Place and Back Again: Reflections on the Condition of Postmodernity’, in Jon Bird, Barry Curtis, Tim Putnam, George Robertson and Lisa Tickner (eds.), *Mapping the Futures* (London: Routledge, 1993). Both Harvey and Massey seem often to employ a somewhat simplistic view of place, even while they appear to be reacting against some of the oversimplifications in the work of many humanistic geographers.

⁷ In this respect, it is interesting to note that, while many English-speaking geographers, in particular, have adopted ‘place’ as a theoretical term, the closest corresponding term in French, *lieu*, is used by French-speaking geographers, as Vincent Berdoulay points out, ‘in an informal sense. As such it is generally not used as a research-inducing concept’ (Berdoulay, ‘Place, Meaning and Discourse in French Language Geography’, in Agnew and Duncan (eds.), *The Power of Place*, p. 124).

⁸ *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edn, prepared by J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), xi, p. 937.

other kind of ordering, hierarchical or not); (iv) a particular locale or environment that has a character of its own; and (v) an abode or that within which something exists or within which it dwells.⁹

Clearly this summary, while it captures many, does not capture all the shades of meaning that 'place' can carry. Equally clear is the fact that these five broad senses are by no means completely independent of one another, but overlap and interconnect in various ways. Yet, while some of the notions associated with 'place' are closely connected, others stand in sharp contrast to one another. There is, in particular, a quite definite opposition between the idea of place as merely a location, a point that may be specified using, for instance, a grid reference on a map, and the idea of place as a particular locale or as that 'within which' someone or something resides – one cannot, after all, reside within a grid reference. Place understood in terms of locale or abode requires a certain openness, a certain dimensionality, a certain space. One of the points to be noted from the brief summary above is the way in which place is not a concept that can be severed from notions of extension and spatiality. This is evident in the etymology of the term: 'place' (along with related terms in other European languages such as the German, 'Platz', French, 'place', and Italian, 'piazza') derives from the classical Latin *platea* meaning a 'broad way' or 'open space' and from the Greek *plateia*, also meaning 'broad way'.¹⁰ A central feature of the idea of place (even though it may not carry across to all the senses of the term) would seem to be that of a certain open, if bounded, space or region. Yet while the concept of place brings with it notions of openness and spatiality, it would seem not to be exhausted by such notions. A place in which one can dwell is a place that provides a space in which dwelling can occur – it 'gives space' to the possibility of dwelling – and yet a place to dwell must be more than just a 'space' alone.

What, then, is to be said about space itself? If the English 'place' is an awkward term to clarify, 'space' might be thought, Massey's concerns notwithstanding, to be rather more straightforward. And certain-

⁹ All of these senses are included in the entry under 'place' in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (pp. 937–42), although twenty-seven separate senses are actually listed there. The summary given here is an attempt to capture the most important and most basic meanings of the term.

¹⁰ See *The Oxford English Dictionary*, p. 937. It should be noted that, for the most part, those European terms (*place*, *piazza* etc.) that have a similar etymology to the English 'place' nevertheless lack the breadth of meaning associated with the English term (see David E. Sopher, 'The Structuring of Space in Place Names and Words for Place', in David Ley and Marwyn S. Samuels (eds.), *Humanistic Geography: Prospects and Problems* (London: Croom Helm, 1978), pp. 262–3).

ly this seems correct – there is a much narrower range of meanings associated with the term ‘space’ than with ‘place’. Indeed, often ‘space’ seems to be taken to designate just the realm of atemporal physical extension – the realm within which we make sense of the notions of volume, size and shape, of length, breadth and height, of distance and position, as those notions apply to physical objects. In a broader sense – and perhaps this is also the more basic sense inasmuch as it appears to underlie and unify a variety of different uses of the term – ‘space’ can be taken to mean simply ‘room’ or extension, whether physical or non-physical. In this respect, ‘space’ seems to be tied, first and foremost, to a quite general notion of dimensionality and so ‘space’ has a range of quite commonplace uses not restricted to purely physical extension or location (as a glance at any good-sized dictionary will indicate). The origin of the English ‘space’ (along with the French *l’espace*) can be traced back to the Latin *spatium* and before that to the Greek *stadion*.¹¹ The Greek term designated a standard of length¹² and the Latin *spatium* was sometimes used to translate, not only *stadion*, but also the Greek term *distema* which is most literally translated as ‘distance’ (or else as ‘magnitude’ or ‘interval’). Since ‘space’ can be taken to mean just interval or dimension, the term can be used to refer to temporal duration as well as to atemporal physical extension. One can thus talk of a ‘space of time’ or a ‘space’ in one’s schedule to mean simply an interval of time – German simply combines the term for space with that for time – *Raum* with *Zeit* – to arrive at a single term for such a ‘time-space’ – *Zeitraum*.¹³

Although the English ‘space’ is traceable to the Greek term *stadion*, while ‘place’ is connected with the Greek term, *plateia*, discussions of place and space in Greek sources do not employ any terms etymologically connected with the English ‘place’ or ‘space’. The most directly relevant Greek terms here are *topos* and *chora*. Indeed, contemporary discussions of place and related notions sometimes draw quite heavily upon these Greek terms and the ideas associated with them. *Chora*, for instance, has become a central term in some contemporary feminist

¹¹ See *The Oxford English Dictionary*, xvi, p. 87 and also *A Latin Dictionary* (founded on Andrew’s edn of Freund’s Latin Dictionary), rev. Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879), p. 1735.

¹² The term was also used to refer to a race-course, an area set aside for some purpose – as for dancing – or a walk or way – in, for instance, a garden – see *A Greek–English Lexicon*, compiled by Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968, rev. edn), p. 1631.

¹³ Heidegger uses ‘Zeitraum’ to refer to the idea of time and space as a single conjoined structure. See *What is a Thing?* trans. W. B. Barton Jr. and Vera Deutsch (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1967), p. 16.

discussions – discussions that advance quite particular readings of the ways, not only in which *chora* is deployed within Greek philosophy, specifically in Plato's *Timaeus*, but of the way in which notions of place and location have themselves been deployed within Western society in relation to issues of gender and sexual politics.¹⁴ Yet, although the Greek terms often enter into contemporary discussions of place and space, still it is important to take heed of the differences between these Greek terms and the English 'place' and 'space'. As they appear in the work of Plato and Aristotle, for instance, both *topos* and *chora* carry important connotations of dimensionality or extendedness (though they cannot be reduced to such notions), while at the same time neither *topos* nor *chora* is used other than in relation to particular things – for Aristotle, *topos* is always the *topos* of some body¹⁵ (and so there must be both a body that is contained and also a body that contains), while even for Plato the idea of *chora* (that which provides 'a situation for all things that come into being'¹⁶) is always understood in relation to the particulars that appear or are received within it. Perhaps one might treat both these Greek terms as standing in a closer relation to the English 'place' than to 'space',¹⁷ but certainly there is no warrant for the frequent assumption that *topos* and *chora* can be simply correlated with 'place'

¹⁴ See, for instance, Elizabeth Grosz's discussion, which draws on the work of Luce Irigaray in particular (Irigaray has taken up notions of both *chora* and *topos* at various places in her work), in *Space, Time and Perversion*, pp. 111–24.

¹⁵ In the *Physics*, Aristotle defines *topos* as 'the first unchangeable limit of that which surrounds' (Aristotle, *Physics*, IV, 5, 212a20, translation as given in *Aristotle's Physics Books III and IV*, trans. Edward Hussey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983)). For a more detailed discussion of Aristotle on *topos* see Keimpe Algra, *Concepts of Space in Greek Thought* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), pp. 121–91. Casey also has an extensive discussion of Aristotle, as well as Plato, in *The Fate of Place*, chapters two and three, pp. 23–71.

¹⁶ *Timaeus*, 52b (trans. from F. M. Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1937)). The Platonic idea of the 'chora' (often translated as the 'Receptacle') arises in the course of Plato's consideration of the way in which a thing comes into being or in which one thing can change into something else. Such a process of becoming requires, according to Plato, three elements: that which becomes, that which is the model for becoming, and that which is the seat or place for such becoming (see *Timaeus*, 50c). The third element here is the *chora* – it is the place in which the qualities of the thing that comes into being appear. Since the *chora* is precisely that which allows qualities to appear, but which does not contribute any qualities of its own to such appearing, so Plato claims that the *chora* must itself be completely indeterminate (*Timaeus*, 51a–51b).

¹⁷ Salomon Bochner claims that the Greeks understood space only in terms of place as *topos* – see Bochner, 'Space', *Dictionary of the History of Ideas* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), pp. 295–307. Heidegger also claims that 'The Greeks had no word for "space".' This is no accident; for they experienced the spatial on the basis not of extension but of place (*topos*); they experienced it as *chōra*, which signifies neither place nor space but that which is occupied by what stands there' (*An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), p. 66).

and 'space' respectively.¹⁸ Nor does recourse to the Greek terms provide any shortcut to understanding the concept of place or its relation to space.

It is obviously important to achieve some clarification of the various concepts at issue here, but, equally, any such clarification must respect the necessary interconnection between those notions. Consideration of the vocabulary of place and space alone is indicative of the way these are part of a network in which each term is inextricably embedded. Thus, although there is a strong temptation, particularly if one's focus is on the concepts of place or locale, to try to develop a set of clearly differentiated and independent concepts, and, in particular, to try to develop a notion of place that is clearly separated off from any concept of space (something that often motivates authors to look to the Greek terms rather than the English), this temptation is one that ought to be resisted. As I noted above, place is inextricably bound up with notions of both dimensionality or extension and of locale or enviroing situation. The exploration of the concept of place, and its elaboration as a philosophically significant concept, must do justice to, and take cognisance of, the complexities of

¹⁸ Some commentators on Aristotle, for instance, treat him as occasionally using the terms in this way, and it is often assumed that *chora* names something close to space understood as 'extension' while *topos* names something more like 'location'. In general, however, as Keimpe Algra notes 'The Greek language did not have a terminological distinction matching the conceptual distinction between place and space' (Keimpe Algra, *Concepts of Space in Greek Thought*, p. 32, see the discussion pp. 32–8). Of the two Greek terms at issue here, '*chora*' is probably the older and certainly the more concrete term, meaning, variously: space or room 'in which a thing is', place, spot, field, country, land, territory, estate, proper position (within, for instance, a social or military hierarchy) (see Liddell and Scott, *A Greek–English Lexicon*, p. 2015). *Chora* may also be connected with the term *choris*, which in its adverbial form means 'separately' and in its noun form means 'a widow or one bereaved', and this may be taken to suggest a connection with the idea of a separated piece of land or allotment such as a piece of land that may be inherited. *Topos* seems to be originally the more abstract term (though this is clearly a matter of degree – *topos* retains a certain concreteness absent from some contemporary, though otherwise similar, terms). Like *chora*, however, *topos* has a variety of senses including: place or position (and in this sense it can be used to designate place or position in a document or a passage in an author's work, as well as physical location), region, geographical position, site, burial-place, or an element in rhetoric (see Liddell and Scott, *A Greek–English Lexicon*, p. 1806). The connection of *topos* with a more abstract notion of *location* and of *chora* with a sense of particular locale is evident in early geographical writing and in Ptolemy (see F. Lukermann, 'The Concept of Location in Classical Geography', *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, 51 (1961), esp. pp. 195–6). E. V. Walter, who also refers to the Ptolemaic use of the terms *chora* and *topos*, emphasises the use of *topos* to signify objective location or position and of *chora* as a more 'subjective' term appearing 'in emotional statements about places' (Walter, *Placeways* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1988), p. 120 – Walter notes that Plato's use of *topos* in the *Phaedrus* represents an exception to this). Walter also points out that, in general, 'writers were inclined to call a sacred place a *chora* instead of a *topos*' (*Placeways*, p. 120), although later, in Hellenistic Greek, *topos* came to be employed as the term for a holy place, while *chora* 'carried technical and administrative meanings'.

the notion and its necessary implication of concepts of both dimensionality and locale. Consequently, as will be evident from the discussion in the chapters that follow, the investigation of place cannot be pursued but in conjunction with an investigation of the notion of space.

The connection of place with space, while central to any attempt to understand place, nevertheless presents a problem for the attempt to arrive at such an understanding. For the philosophical history of the concept of space in Western thought is a history in which space has been increasingly understood in the narrower terms that tie it to physical extension. This can be seen, in fact, to be reflected in the way in which the Greek notions of *topos* and *chora* have gradually been eclipsed in the history of philosophy, so far as thinking of space and place is concerned, by the concept of *kenon* or void. It is this latter notion, the history of which can be traced from its Greek origins¹⁹ through Medieval and Renaissance thinking²⁰ and so into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, that plays the more significant role in the development of modern concepts of space. The concept of void brings with it the idea of a homogenous and undifferentiated realm of pure extension – the idea of a pure realm of ‘containment’ of the sort that is arrived at, for instance, when one abstracts the thing from its enclosing surroundings so that what is left is nothing but an empty but open ‘space’²¹ – and it is precisely this idea that lies at the heart of thinking about space in the work of Descartes and Newton. Thus, with Newton, we arrive at an understanding of space as a single, homogenous and isotropic ‘container’ in which all things are located, and even though modern cosmological physics no longer understands space in the terms developed in Cartesian and Newtonian thinking,²² still the idea of spatiality as primarily a matter of physical extendedness remains.

¹⁹ See Keimpe Algra, *Concepts of Space in Greek Thought*, pp. 38–70 and 263ff.

²⁰ See Edward Grant, *Much Ado About Nothing: Theories of Space and Vacuum from the Middle Ages to the Scientific Revolution* (Cambridge University Press, 1981).

²¹ See Einstein’s use of a similar analogy in his Foreword to Max Jammer, *Concepts of Space*, p. xiii). Of course, for many thinkers, both in the modern era and earlier, such a realm of pure spatial extension, while perhaps *thinkable* in abstraction from concepts of body, could nevertheless not exist apart from body. Descartes’ treatment of space and bodily extension as one and the same, and his consequent rejection of the possibility of any actual void or vacuum, is one of the important points of difference between his view of space and that of Newton.

²² See Einstein’s brief comments on this in the Foreword to Jammer, *Concepts of Space*, p. xv and also his discussion in ‘The Problem of Space, Ether and the Field in Physics’, in Albert Einstein, *Ideas and Opinions*, trans. Sonja Borgmann (New York: Crown, 1956), pp. 276–85. In fact, the idea of containment probably contains remnants of what is essentially a richer place-based mode of thinking about space, but which, for precisely this reason, was certain to be superseded within physical theory by a more purely ‘physicalist’ conception.

Parallel with the development of this more refined, and even technical, notion of space is a tendency, in much philosophical thinking, to make space an increasingly important focus of attention. As Max Jammer notes, ‘Space is the subject, especially in modern philosophy, of an extensive metaphysical and epistemological literature. From Descartes to Alexander and Whitehead almost every philosopher has made his theory of space one of the cornerstones of his system.’²³ In contrast, the concept of place as distinct from space (even if not independent of it) has a much more ambiguous position within the history of philosophy – particularly within post-Cartesian thought.²⁴ Indeed, Edward Casey claims that:

In the past three centuries in the West – the period of modernity – place has come to be not only neglected but actively suppressed. Owing to the triumph of the natural and social sciences in this same period, any serious talk of place has been regarded as regressive or trivial. A discourse has emerged whose exclusive foci are Time and Space. When the two were combined by twentieth century physicists into the amalgam ‘space-time’, the overlooking of place was only continued by other means. For an entire epoch, place has been regarded as an impoverished second cousin of Time and Space, those two colossal cosmic partners that tower over modernity.²⁵

This neglect of place is reflected, not only in the relative absence of place as a significant concept in philosophical discussion,²⁶ but in a tendency for place to be viewed as secondary to and derivative of spatiality. Just as space has come to be associated with a narrow concept of physical extension, so too has place come to be viewed as a matter of simple

²³ Jammer, *Concepts of Space*, p. 1.

²⁴ It is interesting to note that the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (ed. Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan, 1967)) contains a five-page entry on ‘Space’ (written by J. J. C. Smart) that focuses on a similar history of the concept to that dealt with in more detailed form by, for instance, Max Jammer, but contains no entry at all on ‘place’.

²⁵ Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, p. xiv.

²⁶ Although, as was already suggested in some of the brief discussion of ancient concepts of *chora* and *topos* (both of which can be viewed as giving a much stronger emphasis to notions more usually associated with ‘place’ than with the extended, physical space of modernity), one can certainly take pre-modern discussions as giving a more significant role to something like a concept of place and as having a richer conception of what might be involved in spatiality. On this, see especially Casey’s discussion in *The Fate of Place*, pp. ix–xi, 3–132. The neglect of place is not merely a feature of philosophical theory – Heidegger, for instance, views it as directly related to the rise of a certain ‘technological’ attitude towards the world (see ‘The Question Concerning Technology’, in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, 1977)). There is an important question to address concerning the nature and structure of place in the face of modern technological and social changes – unfortunately, it is too important and too large a question for me to be able to take up in the space available here and one that I must therefore postpone to another occasion.

location within a larger spatial structure. Place, after all, is not separable from some notion of spatiality. Consequently, within a framework in which space is not only given a privileged role, but is also understood within the narrower frame of physical extension alone, there will also be a tendency towards a similarly narrow and ‘spatialised’ understanding of place.

This narrowing in the understanding of both space *and* place is clearly evident in Descartes. In the *Principles of Philosophy*, place and space are explicitly presented as closely related notions neither of which is to be understood independently of the concept of body. ‘The terms “place” [*loci*] and “space” [*spatium*]’ writes Descartes, ‘do not signify anything different from the body which is said to be in a place; they merely refer to its size, shape and position relative to other bodies The difference between the terms ‘place’ and ‘space’ is that the former designates more explicitly the position, as opposed to the size or shape, while it is the size or shape that we are concentrating on when we talk of space.’²⁷ Although concerned to distinguish his position from that of Descartes, among others, Newton also views place as closely tied to space – so closely tied, in fact, that, for Newton, place appears as derivative of space. ‘Place is’, writes Newton, ‘a part of space which a body takes up. I say a part of space; not the situation, nor the external surface of a body.’²⁸ Moreover, while it is seldom explicitly taken up in such a context (though there are some exceptions), the same understanding of place as a matter of spatial position or location that is evident in Newton is also a feature of contemporary philosophical discussion. Thus Richard Swinburne writes that ‘A place in the literal sense is wherever a material object is or, it is logically possible, could be . . . a place is identified by describing its spatial relations to material objects forming a frame of reference.’²⁹ Space is, it seems, the more general and more basic concept.³⁰ Place is to be understood simply in terms of a particular region of physical space or a location within it – it designates a region or location that, in its more precise usage, can be

²⁷ René Descartes, *Principia Philosophiae*, II: 13 and 14; *Oeuvres de Descartes*, ed. Charles Adams and Paul Tannery (Paris: Librairie Philosophique, J. Vrin, 1982), VIII-1, pp. 47–8; translation from *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. 1, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff and Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge University Press, 1985), 228 and 229.

²⁸ Newton, Scholium to the Definitions, *Sir Isaac Newton’s Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy and His System of the World*, vol. 1, trans. Andrew Motte, rev. Florian Cajori (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1934), p. 6.

²⁹ Richard Swinburne, *Space and Time* (London: Macmillan, 1968), pp. 12 and 13.

³⁰ As Algra makes explicit in *Concepts of Space in Greek Thought*, p. 20.

specified within a relativised spatial framework by means of a set of spatial co-ordinates.

The concept of place evident throughout so much of the history of philosophy clearly stands in stark contrast to that which is implicit in Heaney's talk of the 'humanized and humanizing' place that appears in Wordsworth's poetry (it can also be seen to contrast with certain pre-modern views of place³¹). But it is not just that the narrow understanding of place that treats it as either a matter of spatial location or of subjective affectivity seems too impoverished to do justice to the sense of place evident in Wordsworth – or in such as Heidegger or Merleau-Ponty. The very understanding of spatiality as paradigmatically a concept of physical theory, and so as primarily tied to physical extension, must represent a fundamental obstacle to any attempt to arrive at a view of place as a philosophically significant concept. If place is to be explicated in a way that does not simply reduce it, or treat it as secondary, to some notion of position or location within physical space, then, since place and space are nevertheless closely related notions (a place must 'give' space – it must, as I noted above, have a certain 'openness' or dimensionality), so the analysis of place must encompass a broader analysis of space that does not restrict space merely to the sense associated with notions of physical extension and position. Arriving at an adequate account of place, then, requires a rethinking of space also.

It is often the case, however, that where place is treated as something more than a matter of simple spatial location, this is arrived at, not through any reconsideration of spatiality, but simply through the treatment of place as an essentially subjective or psychological phenomenon. While he does not talk of place as such in this connection, Max Jammer nevertheless treats of the 'primitive' concept of space in just this manner. 'To the primitive mind', writes Jammer, "'space" was merely an accidental set of concrete orientations, a more or less ordered multitude of local directions, each associated with certain emotional reminiscences. This primitive "space", as experienced and unconsciously formed by the individual, may have been coordinated with a "space" common to the group, the family or the tribe.'³² It seems that the 'primitive' concept of space is thus a matter of the human appropriation of or orientation to the world, and just such a view is also commonly found in discussions of place – all the more so in discussions outside of physical theory.

³¹ Once again, see Casey's discussion in *The Fate of Place*, pp. ix–xi and pp. 3–132.

³² Jammer, *Concepts of Space*, pp. 7–8.

In the work of a great many writers who aim to rehabilitate place as a central theoretical concept, place is thus distinguished from mere location through being understood as a matter of the *human response* to physical surroundings or locations, and, in this respect, such writers tend towards an account of place in psychological terms that is not far removed from Jammer's account of the 'primitive' concept of space.³³ The difficulty with such an approach, however, is that it provides no real explication of the concept of place as such, since it merely conjoins the idea of a part of objective physical space with the notion of some subjective emotional or affective quality or set of qualities and so treats place as derivative of these more basic ideas. Moreover, on such an approach, the connection between any particular space and certain emotional qualities associated with that space could turn out to be completely contingent – there is no reason to suppose that it is the experience of specifically topographic or even spatial qualities that are actually at issue in such an experience of place.³⁴ The association of some set of felt qualities with a particular space may be no more than a product of the triggering of particular responses – perhaps in a completely accidental fashion – by some combination of physical, and, for this reason alone, spatially located surroundings. Consequently, it is not place as such that is important here, but just the idea of emotional responsiveness – a responsiveness that need not itself be grounded in any concept of place or locality at all.

³³ This is particularly true of many 'humanistic' approaches to the issue of place. Thus Yi-Fu Tuan, an important and pioneering figure within environmentalist discussions of place who is otherwise remarkably sensitive to many of the issues at stake, often tends to treat place in a way that is suggestive of the concept as a purely psychological or experiential 'construct'. Much of Tuan's work is explicitly written from 'The perspective of experience', as the subtitle of his *Space and Place* has it, and experience is characterised by Tuan as 'a cover-all term for the various modes through which a person knows or constructs a reality' (*Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), p. 8). There is a certain equivocation in Tuan's work, common in much writing on place, between place or space as *that which gives rise to experience*, on the one hand, and space or place as *experiential construct*, on the other, nevertheless, his work still largely operates within a view of place as essentially a psychological or affective notion. In another of his writings, Tuan characterises his work in terms of the study of 'environmental perception, attitudes, and values' (Tuan, *Topophilia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), p. 245), and there Tuan is quite explicit about the nature of his work as an essay in environment psychology. He also makes clear that he is well aware of the disparity in the materials and themes with which he is concerned and acknowledges that there is no 'single all-embracing concept' that guides his work (see *Topophilia*, pp. 2–3).

³⁴ See, for instance, Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia*, p. 113 – 'The fact that images are taken from the environment does not, of course, mean that the environment has "determined" them; nor . . . need we believe that certain environments have the irresistible power to excite topophilic feelings. Environment may not be the direct cause of topophilia but environment provides the sensory stimuli, which as perceived images lend shape to our joys and ideals.'

Of course, since human responses to the environment are many and varied, and since the environment has a role to play in almost all of experience, so, too, is the account of place similarly dispersed. The proliferation of material in relation to place leads J. Nicholas Entrikin to refer to the 'sometimes competing, and occasionally confusing, claims that have been made and continue to be made about the study of place and region', and he adds, 'One of the reasons for this confusion may be that it is beyond our intellectual reach to attain a theoretical understanding of place and region that covers the range of phenomena to which these concepts refer.'³⁵ The dispersed character of so many accounts of place across so many disciplines, so many different writers and with respect to such a variety of material and theme, provides both an impetus towards the attempt to develop some more integrated approach to place and also, as Entrikin's warning makes clear, an obvious problem for any such attempt. But it should also be clear that if place is indeed to be taken up as a concept in its own right, rather than as a convenient catch-all for what otherwise appears to be only a loosely connected set of ideas and problems, then the development of some more integrated account is essential. Only within the framework of such an account would it be possible to give any content to the idea that the set of problems and ideas to be found in discussions of place are indeed significantly related.

The appearance of place as a central if problematic concept is clearest in discussions that touch on aspects of human existence and experience – physical theory alone seems to have no need for a concept of place beyond the notion of simple location (this might, in fact, be viewed as one reason for being suspicious of any purely physicalist approach to human existence and experience). In this respect, the emphasis on place as experiential or as tied to the human response to environment, while it actually curtails the possibility of giving an adequate account of place as such, is nevertheless instructive. The crucial point about the connection between place and experience is not, however, that place is properly

³⁵ J. Nicholas Entrikin, *The Betweenness of Place* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), p. 14. Entrikin immediately goes on to suggest that 'A more modest, but not insignificant, goal is a better understanding of the narrative-like qualities that give structure to our attempts to capture the peculiar connections between people and places.' It is noteworthy that Entrikin explicitly takes up some of the issues relating to the conception of place as a purely mental or subjective construct and is explicitly concerned to encompass both 'objective' and 'subjective' aspects of place in his account (see *The Betweenness of Place*, pp. 6–26), but he attempts to do this by an appeal to the concept of narrative that he takes to somehow occupy a position 'between' subjective and objective (see *The Betweenness of Place*, pp. 132–4). In fact, Entrikin appears to retain a view of place as an essentially 'subjective' structure.

something only encountered ‘in’ experience, but rather that place is *integral to the very structure and possibility of experience*. Such a way of thinking about place appears, although – as Edward Casey suggests³⁶ – in a somewhat ‘indirect’ fashion, in the work of Martin Heidegger.

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger treats human beings, or more properly *Dasein*, as essentially characterised in terms of their ‘being-in’ the world. This leads Heidegger to distinguish the sense of ‘being-in’ that is proper to human being from the ‘being-in’ that is associated with the sense of physical containment that is part of the modern conception of space identified by Einstein and Jammer and which Heidegger himself characterises as ‘Cartesian’.³⁷ Failure to make such a distinction would, it seems, commit Heidegger to understanding the relation between the world and *Dasein* as essentially no different from the relation between, for instance, a box and, say, the apples ‘physically contained’ within it; it would also seem to entail a view of *Dasein* as existing in a way essentially no different from the way in which the box, the apples or any other physical objects exist.³⁸ Such a view Heidegger rejects as inadequate to any proper understanding of *Dasein* as such – it is inadequate, in Heidegger’s view, because it makes problematic the very possibility of a relation between *Dasein* and the world or the things within that world and that this is so is clearly evident, according to Heidegger, in the rise of relativistic and sceptical modes of thought.

In this respect, the ‘objectivism’ Heidegger associates with the Cartesian view of spatiality is seen as necessarily tied to ‘subjectivism’³⁹ and this would seem to mirror the connection already noted between the view of space as primarily a feature of the physical universe, and of place, or ‘meaningful space’, as a human, and, in this respect, a subjective, construct. In distinguishing the spatiality of *Dasein* from the spatiality of objects Heidegger thus asserts the impossibility of any purely ‘objective’ treatment of *Dasein* that would treat *Dasein* as no more than an object among other objects while also rejecting any ‘subjectivist’ understanding of *Dasein* in its relation to the world. Indeed, as *Dasein* is

³⁶ In *The Fate of Place*, Casey titles the chapter that deals with the Heideggerian appropriation of place ‘Proceeding to Place by Indirection’ – see *The Fate of Place*, p. 284 and more generally, pp. 243–84.

³⁷ See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, H54; also *Heidegger’s Topology of Being*, chapter 3.

³⁸ Although, as we shall see later, the notion of containment is more complex than just that associated with physical containment – a point that Heidegger seems, in *Being and Time* at least, not properly to have appreciated.

³⁹ See Charles Guignon, *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing, 1983) for a detailed analysis of Heidegger’s position in relation to the traditional problems of epistemology.

properly understood as already inclusive of the world, so one can see how Heidegger could later comment that: ‘*Dasein* names that which should first be experienced, and then properly thought of, as Place [*Ort*].’⁴⁰

Heidegger provides an important example of the way in which the concept of place may be seen as having a central significance in the understanding of human being and so of human thought and experience. Indeed, something like the Heideggerian thinking of *Dasein* as place is what motivates the inquiry in this book. Of course, one need not, as I indicated in the introduction, look only to Heidegger to find evidence of the way in which place might figure as a central focus for questions concerning human existence – externalist theories of mental content, for instance, provide an obvious example of one way in which environment and location can be understood to be directly implicated in the determination of the very contents of the mind, and I will draw on such ideas in the discussion in later chapters. For the moment, however, I simply want to establish the idea of place in such a way that it can begin to be seen, neither in terms merely of some narrow sense of spatio-temporal location, nor as some sort of subjective construct, but rather as that wherein the sort of being that is characteristically human has its ground. So far as the idea of experience is concerned (an idea that also appears in the work of many of those writers who advance the sort of ‘subjectivist’ or ‘psychological’ approach to place criticised above), I shall argue that understanding the structure and possibility of experience – experience being understood in the quite general and non-empiricist fashion indicated in the introduction – is inseparable from an understanding and appreciation of the concept of place. Of course, the exact nature of the concept of place that is at stake here remains to be clarified. And, while providing such clarification will be the main task of succeeding chapters (it will, moreover, be a task that involves clarification of the concept of space as well as of place), still the discussion so far has indicated some crucial features that attach to the concept at issue.

Fundamental to the idea of place would seem to be the idea of an open and yet bounded realm within which the things of the world can appear and within which events can ‘take place’. Such a notion of place is, of course, broader than just the idea of place as a narrowly defined point of location, but this latter idea of place as merely a ‘point’ would seem to be a very limited and perhaps even derivative use of the

⁴⁰ Heidegger, ‘Einleitung Zu: “Was ist Metaphysik?”’ (202), in *Wegmarken, Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 9 (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1976), p. 373.

concept. Even when we think of a place in very basic terms as just a particular position – the position in which I am now located, here on this spot – that idea typically carries with it some idea of the place, the spot, as nevertheless possessed of enough breadth and space so as to allow us to conceive of ourselves, our very bodies, as located in that place, and as permitting us to view the world from it and so, within it, to move ourselves in order to obtain such views. We can, of course, grasp places (even from within the very place so grasped) as having a character and identity of their own. And this is so not only in virtue of the way a particular place allows things to appear within it, but also in terms of the way in which any such place is always itself positioned in relation to other places and provides a certain ‘view’ of such places. Places are thus internally differentiated and interconnected in terms of the elements that appear within them, while they also interconnect with other places – thus places are juxtaposed and intersect with one another; places also contain places so that one can move inwards to find other places nested within a place as well as move outwards to a more encompassing locale. Some of these features of place and places will become quite important ideas in the ensuing discussion. The ‘nesting’ of places, for instance, is a significant point of connection between place and memory.

Just as Heidegger resists the idea that the ‘being-in’ of *Dasein* cannot be reduced to the physical containment of *Dasein* ‘within’ space, so the idea of place cannot be reduced to the concept merely of location within physical space nor can place be viewed simply in relation to a system of interchangeable locations associated with objects. This is not to sever place entirely from physical space – in some sense place must ‘supervene’ upon physical space, and upon the physical world in general, such that the structure of a particular place will reflect, in part, the structure of the physical region in relation to which that place emerges. The relation between place and physical space will, however, be no less complicated, and no more amenable to a reductive analysis, than is the relation between the realm of our everyday talk about our world and physical theory.⁴¹ Moreover, if place is not to be viewed as a purely ‘objective’ concept in this sense – a concept to be explicated by reference

⁴¹ The rejection of reductive accounts – whether of ordinary language into some ‘purer’ language of physics, of the richness of place into the mere ordering of spatial location, or of the realm of mental life into the terms of neuropsychology – is a central feature of my account here. Various arguments in favour of the rejection of such reductionism are, in fact, developed in the course of the analysis over the following chapters, although, for the most part, the central focus is on the development of the positive account of place, rather than taking issue, in any detailed fashion, with the full range of alternative accounts.

to objects existing in a purely physical space – neither should it be viewed as purely ‘subjective’. That place is treated as a largely subjective concept is, as I noted earlier, common to many discussions of place – both those that seek to rehabilitate the concept and those that, even if only implicitly, dismiss it. Yet, although it is certainly the case that place is not constituted independently of subjectivity – just as it is not constituted independently of the physical world – neither is it dependent on the existence of an independent subject or subjects. Place is instead that within and with respect to which subjectivity is itself established – place is not founded *on* subjectivity, but is rather that *on which* subjectivity is founded. Thus one does not first have a subject that apprehends certain features of the world in terms of the idea of place; instead, the structure of subjectivity is given in and through the structure of place. The connection of subjectivity with place indicates, as shall be more clearly evident in succeeding chapters, the need to view subjectivity as tied to agency and embodied spatiality, and therefore as constituted in relation to a structure that extends beyond the subject to encompass a world of objects, events and persons. This structure is determinative, in various ways, of the nature of the subject; it is only within such a place that subjectivity – or, more generally, the structure in which subject and object both appear – is possible. There is no ‘appearance’ at all within the space of pure extension, but only within the differentiated and unitary structure of place.

This latter point applies no less to concepts of the social, or the intersubjective, than to the notions of subjectivity or objectivity – place is the frame within which all three must be located. There is, of course, a common tendency to talk of place, and of space and time, as ‘social constructs’ (a tendency that derives from the more general use of the idea of ‘social construction’ within social and cultural theory),⁴² and, while such talk often remains obscure whether or not it is place that is at issue, in the present context it is particularly inappropriate. The idea of place encompasses both the idea of the social activities and institutions that are expressed in and through the structure of a particular place (and which can be seen as partially determinative of that place) and the idea of the physical objects and events in the world (along with the associated causal processes) that constrain, and are sometimes constrained by, those social activities and institutions. There is no doubt that the ordering of a particular place – and the specific way in which a society

⁴² See, for instance, David Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1996), p. 324.

orders space and time – is not independent of social ordering (inasmuch as it encompasses the social, so place is partially elaborated by means of the social, just as place is also elaborated in relation to orderings deriving from individual subjects and from underlying physical structures). However this does not legitimate the claim that place, space or time are *merely* social constructions. Indeed, the social does not exist prior to place nor is it given expression except in and through place – and through spatialised, temporalised ordering – and so it cannot be that out of which, or solely by means of which, place is ‘constructed’.⁴³ It is within the structure of place that the very possibility of the social arises.

In grasping the structure of place that is at issue here what is grasped is an open and interconnected region within which other persons, things, spaces and abstract locations, and even one’s self, can appear, be recognised, identified and interacted with.⁴⁴ But in ‘grasping’ such a region, it is not a matter of the subject grasping something of which the acting, experiencing creature is independent – such a region or place does not simply stand ready for the gaze of some observing subject. Rather, as I have emphasised already, the structure at issue encompasses the experiencing creature itself and so the structure of subjectivity is given in and through the structure of place. Something similar might be said of the idea of objectivity also – at least inasmuch as the idea of objectivity is understood as referring to that which can be present to a subject, rather than to mere physical existence.⁴⁵ In this respect, the idea of the object is itself something established only within a place and thereby in relation to a subject, although, in saying this it must be

⁴³ In this respect, neither can the ‘social’ be seen as having any clear priority over the ‘individual’ – both arise within the same encompassing structure.

⁴⁴ There are obvious affinities between this idea and the idea of ‘the world’ that Merleau-Ponty articulates in the *Phenomenology of Perception* (see especially pp. 405–7) and of which he writes at one point that ‘the world is the *field* of our experience, and . . . we are nothing but a view of the world’ (ibid., p. 406) – the very idea of the world as Merleau-Ponty employs it is, in fact, the idea of just such a topographical structure (a field or region) as that which I have set out here. This should also indicate the extent to which the task undertaken here has a certain ‘transcendental’ character – it is a matter of undertaking an analysis of the structure in which the very possibility of subjectivity and of objectivity, of experience and self, are grounded.

⁴⁵ Objectivity and subjectivity are, on this account, correlative concepts. And while, generally speaking, one can characterise the ‘subjective’ as that which derives from the subject or is dependent on features of the subject’s position in or experience of the world, and the ‘objective’ as that which derives from the object alone, this need not imply that either of these terms has a sense that is completely independent of the other. What counts as pertaining to the object and what to the subject is, in fact, dependent on the frame within which a particular inquiry or practice is established. We can thus speak of the ‘objective’ features of social, or mental life, as well as of the ‘objective’ features of the physical world. ‘Objective’ should not, in this respect, be taken to designate exclusively those features of the world as given within a purely physicalist analysis.

remembered that *both* subject and object are thereby 'placed' within the same structure, rather than one or the other being the underlying ground for that structure. Of course, the existence of some particular place – of some set of objects or of some subject – will be *causally* dependent on a set of physical processes and structures, but this does not mean that place can be simply reduced to such processes or structures. The language of place, of self and other, of subject and object, describes the world in a way that is tied to the possibility of agency and attitude, and not in terms of physical process alone. And, while the existence of a place may be causally dependent on the existence of certain physical processes, the capacity to describe, experience and understand those processes – for those processes to be grasped through notions of objectivity and regularity and even through ideas of process as such – is, in turn, possible only within the framework of place.

One might, nevertheless, claim that the account of space and place given within physical theory is more 'objective' than other accounts, and in this respect preferable, in the sense that it treats space and place as existing independently of any subject, whereas on other accounts, including the account already presaged here, in the absence of subjects there can be neither place nor perhaps, in a certain sense, space. Yet the use of 'objective' here is itself one that is already oriented towards a certain priority being accorded to physical accounts over others, whereas whether this is the primary or most important use of 'objective' is, at the very least, contestable. There is, moreover, a significant difference between an account such as mine that insists on an interdependence between subjectivity and place (inasmuch as the establishment and articulation of place is tied, as will be evident in later chapters, to agency and activity) and accounts that treat place as simply a product of the subjective apprehension of location (and according to which place is essentially a feature of the mental life of subjects). The relation between place and the existence of the subject in my account is analogous to that which obtains between truth and the existence of speakers. One can say that only if there are speakers can there be such a thing as truth and yet this is not because truth is somehow a 'subjective' notion nor does this demand that we seek a more 'objective' analysis that would do away with this dependence. The dependence of truth on speakers is simply a consequence of the way in which the possibility of truth depends on the existence of language, and, since language and speaking arise together, so there is language only where there are speakers.

These considerations notwithstanding, one might, however, accept the idea that experience and thought are to be understood as dependent upon the sort of complex structure that I have addressed in terms of the idea of place, and yet query the appropriateness of such talk of 'place' (or of any related terms) on the grounds that such talk is really nothing more than analogy or metaphor and, as such, is just a stylistic affectation that obscures rather than illuminates. Of course, whether metaphor and analogy are to be treated as mere 'affectations' or whatever, rather than contributing additional content of their own, is a moot point and one that has been much argued in the philosophical literature. There is, moreover, a tendency to assume a clearer distinction between metaphor or analogy and 'literal' uses of language than is actually warranted, especially, as I noted earlier, where spatial and topographical terms are concerned. Yet, this aside, to assume that space and place are used literally *only* when employed in relation to the 'objective' language of physics is, once again, already to assume the priority of certain quite particular ways of understanding these terms (including, as I noted above, the notion of objectivity) – whereas not only is such priority questionable, but it can also serve to obscure the conceptual complexity of the terms themselves. The claim that 'place' can remain only a metaphor in this context is simply a reassertion of a particular and fairly narrow view of the nature of place – a reassertion that seems to ill-accord with the complex character of the concept.

The insistence on the idea of separating off a metaphorical from literal usage here, and giving priority to the literal over the metaphoric, is also indicative, moreover, of a particular style of philosophical approach – one that sees philosophical inquiry as a search that is generally engaged in reducing complex structures to concatenations of more simple components and in which understanding is primarily a matter of understanding such elementary components in separation from one another rather than from the point of view of the larger structure of which they are part. On this approach, one is right to be suspicious of possible metaphorical usages, since such usages may conceal complex structures better analysed in terms of their simpler and more basic components. Now I have already noted that it seems to me questionable whether the concept of place as I have deployed it here is to be viewed as involving a literal or metaphorical usage – that seems, in fact, to be a fairly fruitless question to pursue. But it does seem that the concept of place that I have begun to set out is one that is already predisposed towards a mode of analysis (if that is the right word) that insists on

exploring structures in their interconnection rather than by reduction or simplification. Indeed, a characteristic feature of any 'place' of the sort described here is that the elements within it are both evident only within the structure of the place, while that place is itself dependent upon the interconnectedness of the elements within it – as it is also dependent on its interconnection with other places – and, consequently, the idea of place is itself the idea of a structure that must resist any analysis that reduces it to a set of autonomous components.

In the introduction, I referred to Marcia Cavell's insistence that the only place in which philosophy can begin is 'here, in the midst of things'.⁴⁶ And, as place itself provides the starting-point for the present inquiry, so the approach adopted is one that looks neither to a subject abstracted from its world nor to a world abstracted from the subject as the 'place' from which to begin, but rather to that place or locale in which we already find ourselves. This place is one in which both subject and object, both self and world, are presented together. Moreover, this place of departure remains determinative of the entire inquiry, since the investigation pursued in these pages is one that aims, not to move us away from this place – as is so often the case in philosophical inquiry – but rather to explore it and delineate its structure. As I noted earlier, not only does the idea of place provide an important focus for the inquiry into experience, but the idea of place also provides a model for both the style of approach adopted here and the structure of the account that is advanced.

Just as the various elements within a place, taken together, give that place its character and identity, and as each of those elements is dependent for its own identity on the structure of the place as such, so the structural elements on which the possibility of experience rests cannot be given any account of independently of the overall structure of which they are a part. The way of approach to the question of the structure and possibility of experience is thus one that cannot seek to reduce the structure to a single underlying element or principle. What must be done is to exhibit the structure as a whole that is constituted through the interplay of a number of elements. The structure that is at issue here is exemplified – in a form that is especially appropriate given the focus on place – in the relation between topographical features in a landscape or as delineated on a topographical survey map. Indeed, the practice of topographical surveying thus provides a neat analogy and model for the inquiry undertaken in these pages.

⁴⁶ Marcia Cavell, *The Psychoanalytic Mind*, p. 41.

Topographical surveying is, according to an old British Government textbook on the subject, ‘the science, artfully executed, of measuring the physical features of the earth and the art, scientifically controlled, of delineating them’.⁴⁷ While the advent of aerial surveying and, more recently, satellite mapping techniques, have wrought great changes in the actual practice of surveying, not only over the last one hundred years, but even over the last forty, the basic principles for the surveyor on the ground have nevertheless remained much the same. In the centuries prior to the twentieth, surveyors relied principally on theodolite and chain, on a good eye and hand, and a strong pair of legs. For the surveyor equipped only with such basic equipment, then or now, and faced with a hitherto unmapped region, the task is to map out that region from within the region itself. Only by measurement of distance and angle, by repeated triangulation and traverse, can a picture of the topography of the region be built up. For such a surveyor, there is nowhere outside of the region itself from which an accurate topographical picture can be obtained. It is thus precisely through the surveyor’s active involvement with the landscape that an accurate mapping is made. A purely topographical understanding of a landscape does not, furthermore, look to some deeper topography that underlies the topography made evident through our active engagement within it. There is no such ‘deeper’ topography to be found. The lie of the land is given – almost literally – *on* its surface rather than being hidden *beneath* it. If we take this topographical metaphor seriously as a guide to our analysis here, then we will similarly look to understand the various elements at issue, not in terms of an underlying structure to which they can be reduced, but rather in terms of their own interrelation. (Here it is important to recognise that the metaphor is one whose significance is primarily methodological in that it establishes a framework within which analysis can proceed, rather than alone providing any substantive analysis of place as such – for this reason it cannot be construed as prejudicing us towards, for instance, an account of place as just that which is mappable.) When it comes to understanding the structure by which thought, experience, and knowledge are possible, the implication of such a ‘topographic’ mode of analysis is that the concepts at issue must be understood through their interconnection rather than their reduction, through their interdependence rather than their simplification. In this respect, Wittgenstein’s comments in his lectures on the

⁴⁷ *Textbook of Topographical Surveying* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1965, 4th edn), p. 1.

philosophy of mathematics have a special resonance with my project here: 'I am trying to conduct you on tours in a certain country. I will try to show that the philosophical difficulties . . . arise because we find ourselves in a strange town and do not know our way about. So we must learn the topography by going from one place in the town to another, and from there to another, and so on. And one must do this so often that one knows one's way, either immediately or pretty soon after looking around a bit, wherever one may be set down.'⁴⁸ The conception of philosophy that is suggested here, and that is given more explicit formulation in my own use of the idea of topography, is something to which I shall return briefly in the concluding section of this book.

The complexity of place is mirrored in the complex process of triangulation and traverse by which the topographical surveyor builds up her map of the region being surveyed. No single sighting is sufficient to gain a view of the entire region; multiple sightings are required, and every sighting overlaps, to some extent, with some other sighting. Thus the process of topographical surveying is one in which the complex structure of the region is arrived at through crossing and recrossing the surface of the land and through sighting and resighting from one landmark to another. In that process, it may seem as if the region itself is lost sight of – as if it is forgotten in the emphasis on particular views and measurements. In fact, it is only at the end of the process that the view of the region as a whole can emerge in the form of the survey map itself. Both the complexity of process and the apparent disappearance of the region as such in the focus on specific sightings and measurements have their analogues in the project undertaken here. The delineation of place can only be undertaken by a process that encompasses a variety of sightings from a number of conceptual 'landmarks' and that also undertakes a wide-ranging, criss-crossing set of journeys over the landscape at issue – it is only through such journeying, sighting and resighting that place can be understood.

In taking place as the crucial notion here – as a structure that encompasses both subjective and objective – it should not be thought

⁴⁸ Wittgenstein, *Wittgenstein's Lectures on the Philosophy of Mathematics: Cambridge 1939*, ed. Cora Diamond (Hassocks: Harvester, 1976), p. 44. In *Analysis and Metaphysics* (Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 2–3. P. F. Strawson also refers to the idea, which he attributes to Ryle, of philosophy as a form of 'conceptual geography or conceptual mapping or charting'. The idea is not given much development, however, and while Strawson acknowledges that the picture 'has merits', he nevertheless finds it to be 'uncomfortably metaphorical'. Perhaps I am less worried by the threat of metaphor than Strawson, but certainly I think the topographical conception of philosophy I outline here is significant and methodologically instructive.

that the concept of *space* is thereby neglected or abandoned. In the Heideggerian analysis that appears in *Being and Time*, Heidegger's own refusal to countenance the necessary role of spatiality in the structure of *Dasein* gives rise to insuperable problems in his account. Heidegger's insistence on the separation of the spatiality proper to *Dasein* from the spatiality of objects is part of what leads Heidegger, in *Being and Time* at least, to treat spatiality as always secondary to, and derivative of, temporality. Even the 'existential spatiality' that is proper to *Dasein* is held to be derivative in this way – so much so that, in *Being and Time*, Heidegger seems almost to reduce existential spatiality to a form of temporality.⁴⁹ Yet, if 'objective' spatiality alone is inadequate to the understanding of human being-in-the-world so too must any purely temporal conception fall short;⁵⁰ and, indeed, the difficulties to which the Heideggerian analysis of spatiality gives rise undoubtedly contribute to the unfinished character of *Being and Time* itself.

In fact, as has already been made clear, the concept of place cannot be divorced from space, just as space cannot be divorced from time.⁵¹ Of course, this does not mean that the concept of space can simply be assumed either: unless the re-evaluation and recognition of the significance of place encompasses a recognition of the connection between space and place, and so includes a re-evaluation of the concept of space itself, all that will result is the replacement of one set of problems with another. A closer analysis of the concept of space, as well as of the concepts of subjectivity and objectivity, is a central focus for the next chapter. Rather than being treated as a simple concept analysable only in terms of some notion of objective physical extension or location, spatiality is shown to be a complex notion involving both subjective and objective aspects. Indeed, the relation between space and place in

⁴⁹ See *Being and Time*, section 70, H367–H369; see also *Heidegger's Topology of Being*. The attempt to treat spatiality as secondary in this way is something that Heidegger later rejects (as he makes clear in 'Time and Being', *On Time and Being*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), p. 23) – in fact, as early as 1935 he already seems to have modified his position (see *What is a Thing?*, p. 16; see also Stuart Elden's discussion of the shift in Heidegger's thinking about space and place in the early Hölderlin in 'Heidegger's Hölderlin and the Importance of Place', *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, forthcoming).

⁵⁰ For criticisms of Heidegger's prioritising of temporality, see *Heidegger's Topology of Being* and also Maria Vilella-Petit, 'Heidegger's Conception of Space', in Christopher Macann (ed.), *Critical Heidegger* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 134–57.

⁵¹ In fact, as will be evident in the ensuing discussion, although much of my focus will be on place and spatiality, place itself must be understood as encompassing time and space. On this point see Don Parkes and Nigel Thrift, 'Putting Time in its Place', in Tommy Carlstein, Don Parkes and Nigel Thrift, *Timing Space and Spacing Time*, vol. 1, *Making Sense of Time* (London: Edward Arnold, 1978), p. 119–29.

standard treatments of these notions – according to which place, understood as a matter of simple location, is seen as based on space as physical extension – will, to some extent, turn out to be reversed when these notions are understood in any richer sense. If we are to take account of the complexity of spatiality as it arises in relation to a creature's involvement in the world, then we must look to a way of thinking about spatiality that sees it as embedded within the larger structure, not of a single space, but of a unitary and encompassing place. Moreover, the exploration of that larger structure will require an elaboration, not merely of spatiality, but of the interconnection between notions of subjectivity, objectivity and intersubjectivity, as well as of notions of agency and causality.