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How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time

Phenomenological Prolegomena

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All existing things are either in place or not without place.
—*Archytas, as cited by Simplicius*

The power of place will be remarkable.
—*Aristotle,* Physics, *Book IV*

Space is a society of named places.
—*Claude Lévi-Strauss,* The Savage Mind

Nothing could extinguish the fact and claim of estate.
—*W. E. H. Stanner, "Aboriginal Territorial Organization"*

It is sensible, perhaps even irresistible, to assume that human experience begins with space and time and then proceeds to place. Are not space and time universal in scope, and place merely particular? Can place do anything but specify what is already the case in space and time? Or might it be that place is something special, with its own essential structures and modes of experience, even something universal in its own way?

These are questions I shall address in this chapter, and I will do so by way of phenomenology. The insistently descriptive character of the phenomenological enterprise in philosophy rejoins the emphasis in anthropology on precise description in the field (which has never prevented considerable speculation in the chair!). There is much more that could be said about the convergence of anthropology and phenomenology, but in the limitations of this essay I shall attempt only to show how phenomenology as I practice it treats the question of place; anthropological implications will be adumbrated but nowhere fully pursued.

Phenomenology began as a critique of what Husserl called the "natural attitude," that is, what is taken for granted in a culture that has been influenced predominantly by modern science—or, more precisely, by scientism and its many offshoots in materialism, naturalism, psychologism, and so forth. (And anthropologism: in the Prolegomena to his *Logical Investigations* [1970], Husserl addresses "transcendental anthropologism.")

One belief endemic to the natural attitude concerns the way places relate to what is commonly called "space." Once it is assumed (after Newton and Kant) that space is absolute and infinite as well as empty and a priori in status, places become the mere apportionings of space, its compartmentalizations.

Indeed, that places are the determinations of an already existing monolith of Space has become an article of scientific faith, so much so that two recent books in anthropology that bear expressly on place—both quite valuable works in many regards—espouse the view that place is something *posterior to space,* even *made from space.* By "space" is meant a neutral, pre-given medium, a tabula rasa onto which the particularities of culture and history come to be inscribed, with place as the presumed result. We find this view, for example, in James F. Weiner's richly suggestive ethnography of the Foi of Papua New Guinea, *The Empty Place:* "A society's place names schematically image a people's intentional transformation of their habitat from a sheer physical terrain into a pattern of historically experienced and constituted space and time. . . . The bestowing of place names constitutes Foi existential space out of a blank environment" (Weiner 1991:32).

The idea of transformation from a "sheer physical terrain" and the making of "existential space"—which is to say, place—out of a "blank environment" entails that to begin with there is some empty and innocent spatial spread, waiting, as it were, for cultural configurations to render it placeful. But when does this "to begin with" exist? And where is it located? Answers to both questions will generate a vicious regress of the kind at stake in Kant's first antinomy: to search for a first moment in either time or space is to incur shipwreck on the shoals of Pure Reason.[1]

Or consider the following claim from Fred R. Myers's otherwise remarkable ethnography of desert aboriginal people of Central Australia, *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self:* "The process by which space becomes 'country,' by which a story gets attached to an object, is part of the Pintupi habit of mind that looks behind objects to events and sees in objects a sign of something else" (Myers 1991:67). Here we are led to ask, What are these "objects" behind which events lurk and to which stories get attached? The neutrality of the term *object* suggests that the first-order items in the universe are denuded things—denuded of the very "secondary qualities" (in the demeaning term of Galilean-Cartesian-Lockian discourse) that would make them fit subjects of events and stories. We wonder, further, what is this "process by which space becomes 'country,'" by which space is "culturalized," and by which "impersonal geography" becomes "a home, a *ngurra*" (Myers 1991:54).[2]

Myers intimates that all such transformations are a matter of the "projection"—or, alternatively, of the "reproduction"—of determinate social actions and structures. "Country" is the system of significant places as specified by the Dreaming, which represents "a projection into symbolic space of various social processes" (Myers 1991:47). And the structure of the Dreaming in turn—a structure isomorphic with the landscape of the country—is "a product of the way Pintupi society reproduces itself in space and time" (Myers 1991:48). The phrase "in space and time" is telling: the reproduction is in some preexisting medium. Having no inherent configurations of its own, this presumptively empty medium must be populated after the fact (but the fact of what? what fact?) by processes that impute to empty space the particularities that belong to the Dreaming. Generality, albeit empty, belongs to space; particularity, albeit mythic, belongs to place; and the twain meet only by an appeal to a procedure of superimposition that is invoked ex post facto.

But the Pintupi themselves think otherwise, as Myers himself avers: "To the Pintupi, then, a place itself with its multiple features is logically prior or central" (Myers 1991:59). Whom are we to believe? The theorizing anthropologist, the arsenal of his natural attitude bristling with explanatory projectiles that go off into space? Or the aborigine on the ground who finds this ground itself to be a coherent collocation of pre-given places—pre-given at once in his experience and in the Dreaming that sanctions this experience? For the anthropologist, Space comes first; for the native, Place; and the difference is by no means trivial.

It is not, of course, simply a matter of choosing between the anthropologist's vantage point and that of the natives—as if the Pintupi had chosen to participate in a debate on the comparative primacy of space versus place. Nor is any such primacy Myers's own express concern. As an anthropologist in the field, his task is not to argue for space over against place but to set forth as accurately as possible what being-in-place means to the Pintupi. Just there, however, is the rub: even when treating a culture for which place is manifestly paramount, the anthropologist leans on a concept that obscures what is peculiar to place and that (by an implicit cultural fiat) even implies its secondariness. The anthropologist's theoretical discourse—in which the priority of space over place is virtually axiomatic—runs athwart his descriptive commitment.

The question is not so much *whom* we are to believe—both anthropologist and natives are trustworthy enough—but *what* we are to believe. Are we to believe that human experience starts from a mute and blank "space" to which placial modifiers such as "near," "over there," "along that way," and "just here" are added, sooner or later: presumably sooner in perception and later in culture? Or are we to believe that the world comes configured in odd protuberances, in runs, rills, and flats, in *fele*

and *do:m,* as the Kaluli might put it (Feld, this volume)—all of which are traits of places? (Ironically, in this view flatness and, more generally, "featurelessness" belong to place to begin with.)

I take the second view as just stated to be both more accurate as a description and more valuable as a heuristic in the understanding of place. In doing so, I join not only the Pintupi and the Kaluli but also certain early and late figures in Western thought. Both Archytas and Aristotle proclaimed that place is prior to space, and, more recently, Bachelard and Heidegger have reembraced the conviction. All four thinkers subscribe to what could be called the Archytian Axiom: "Place is the first of all things."[3] In between the ancients and the postmoderns there was a period of preoccupation with space—as well as with time, conceived of as space's cosmic partner. But how may we retrieve a sense of the priority of place by means other than arguing from authority (as I have just done in citing certain congenial Western thinkers) or arguing against authority (as occurs when modern science is pilloried, which Husserl does in attacking the natural attitude)?

My suggestion is that we can retrieve such a sense by considering what a phenomenological approach to place might tell us. Even if such an approach is not without its own prejudicial commitments and ethnocentric stances, it is an approach that, in its devotion to concrete description, has the advantage of honoring the actual experience of those who practice it. In this regard it rejoins not only the anthropologist in the field but the native on the land: both have no choice but to begin with experience. As Kant insisted, "there can be no doubt that all our knowledge begins with experience" (1950 [1787]: B1).

For Kant, *to begin with* means *to be instigated by.* Thus he must add the qualification that "though all our knowledge begins with experience, it does not follow that it all arises out of experience" (Kant 1950 [1787]: B1). Knowledge of any rigorous sort does not *derive from* experience. Kant makes this perfectly clear in his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View,* arguably the first theoretical treatise on anthropology in the West: "General knowledge must always precede local knowledge . . . [because] without [general knowledge], all acquired knowledge can only be a fragmentary experiment and not a science."[4] This paradigmatic Enlightenment statement sets the stage—indeed, still holds the stage in many ways—for the idea that space precedes place. Space, being the most pervasive of cosmic media, is considered that about which we must have general knowledge, whereas we possess merely local knowledge about place.

But what if things are the other way around? What if the very idea of space is posterior to that of place, perhaps even derived from it? What if local knowledge—which, in Geertz's appropriately pleonastic locution, "presents locally to locals a local turn of mind" (1983:12)—precedes knowledge of space? Could place be general and "space" particular? Phenomenology not only moves us to ask these impertinent anti-Enlightenment questions but also provides reasons for believing that the answers to them are affirmative.

In a phenomenological account, the crux in matters of place is the role of perception. Is it the case, as Kant believes (along with most modern epistemologists), that perception provides those bare starting-points called variously "sensations," "sense data," "impressions," and so forth? Or is something else at work in perception that conveys more about place than mere sensory signals can ever effect? It is certainly true—and this is what Kant emphasizes in the idea of "beginning with"—that sensory inputs are the *occasions* of the perception (eventually the knowledge) of concrete places. These impingements—as connoted in the term *Empfindungen,* Kant's word for "sensations"—alert us to the fact that we are perceiving, and they convey certain of the very qualities (including the secondary qualities) of the surfaces of what we perceive. But their pointillistic character ill equips them for supplying anything like the sense of *being in a place.* Yet we do always find ourselves in places. We find ourselves in them, however different the places themselves may be and however differently we construe and exploit them. But how do we grasp this *in* of being in a particular place: this preposition which is literally a "pre-position" inasmuch as we are always already in a place, never not emplaced in one way or another?[5]

If perception is "primary" (as both Husserl and Merleau-Ponty insist), then a significant part of its primariness must be its ability to give to us more than bits of information about the phenomenal and epiphenomenal surfaces of things—and more, too, than a conviction that we are merely in the presence of these surfaces. Beyond what Husserl calls the "hyletic" factor, and Merleau-Ponty, "sensing," there must be, as an ingredient in perception from the start, a conveyance of what being in places is all about. Merleau-Ponty considers this conveyance to be *depth*—a "primordial depth" that, far from being imputed to sensations (as Berkeley [1934], for example, had held), already situates them in a scene of which we ourselves form part. Husserl's way of putting it is that "every experience has its own horizon" and that we continually find ourselves in the midst of perceptual horizons, both the "internal" horizons of particular things (i.e., their immediate circumambience) and the "external" horizons that encompass a given scene as a whole.[6]

But precisely as surrounded by depths and horizons, the perceiver finds herself in the midst of an entire teeming place-world rather than in a confusing kaleidoscope of free-floating sensory data. The coherence of

perception at the primary level is supplied by the depth and horizons of the *very place* we occupy as sentient subjects. That is why we can trust this coherence with what Santayana (1955) called "animal faith," and Husserl (1982: section 103), "primal belief (*protodoxa*)." We come to the world—we come into it and keep returning to it—as already placed there. Places are not added to sensations any more than they are imposed on spaces. Both sensations and spaces are themselves emplaced from the very first moment, and at every subsequent moment as well.

There is no knowing or sensing a place except by being in that place, and to be in a place is to be in a position to perceive it. Knowledge of place is not, then, subsequent to perception—as Kant dogmatically assumed—but is ingredient in perception itself. Such knowledge, genuinely local knowledge, is itself experiential in the manner of *Erlebnis*, "lived experience," rather than of *Erfahrung*, the already elapsed experience that is the object of analytical or abstract knowledge. (Kant, significantly, speaks only of *Erfahrung*.) Local knowledge is at one with lived experience if it is indeed true that this knowledge is of the localities in which the knowing subject lives. To live is to live locally, and to know is first of all to know the places one is in.

I am not proposing a merely mute level of experience that passively receives simple and senseless data of place. Perception at the primary level is synesthetic—an affair of the whole body sensing and moving. Thanks to its inherent complexity, bodily perceiving is directed at (and is adequate to) things and places that come configured, often in highly complicated ways. Moreover, the configuration and complication are already meaningful and not something internally registered as sensory givens that lack any sense of their own: the sensory is senseful. Nor does the inherent meaningfulness of what we perceive require the infusion of determinate concepts located higher up the epistemic ladder. The perceived possesses a core of immanent sense, a "noematic nucleus" in Husserl's technical term (1982: section 91). Because this senseful core is actively grasped, it follows that perception is never entirely a matter of what Kant calls "receptivity," as if the perceiving subject were merely passive. Not only is primary perception inseparable from myriad modes of concrete action, but it is itself "a kind of *passivity in activity*" (Husserl 1973:108; his italics). To perceive synesthetically is to be actively passive; it is to be absorptive yet constitutive, both at once.

It is also to be *constituted:* constituted by cultural and social structures that sediment themselves into the deepest level of perception. The primacy of perception does not mean that human sensing and moving are precultural or presocial. No more than perception is built up from atomic sensations is it constructed from brute givens unaffected by cultural practices and social institutions. On the contrary: these practices and institutions pervade every level of perception, from the quite implicit (e.g., tacitly grasped outer horizons) to the extremely explicit (e.g., the thematic thing perceived). The permeation occurs even—indeed, especially—when a given perception is preconceptual and prediscursive. To be not yet articulated in concept or word is not to be nonculturally constituted, much less free from social constraints. Hence, the primacy of perception does not entail the priority of perception to the givens of culture or society, as if the latter were separable contents of our being and experience: these givens become infusions into the infrastructures of perception itself. The primacy of perception is ultimately a primacy of the lived body—a body that, as we shall see in more detail later, is a creature of habitual cultural and social processes.

But perception remains as *constitutive* as it is constituted. This is especially evident when we perceive places: our immersion in them is not subjection to them, since we may modify their influence even as we submit to it. This influence is as meaningful as it is sensuous. Not only is the sensuous senseful, it is also placeful. As Feld (this volume) puts it, "as place is sensed, senses are placed; as places make sense, senses make place." The dialectic of perception and place (and of both with meaning) is as intricate as it is profound, and it is never-ending.

Given that we are never without perception, the existence of this dialectic means that we are never without emplaced experiences. It signifies as well that we are not only *in* places but *of* them. Human beings—along with other entities on earth—are ineluctably place-bound. More even than earthlings, we are placelings, and our very perceptual apparatus, our sensing body, reflects the kinds of places we inhabit. The ongoing reliability and general veracity of perception (a reliability and veracity that countenance considerable experiential vicissitudes) entail a continual attunement to place (also experienced in open-ended variation). But if this is true, it suggests that place, rather than being a mere product or portion of space, is as primary as the perception that gives access to it. Also suggested is the heretical—and quite ancient—thought that place, far from being something simply singular, is something general, perhaps even universal: a thought to which we shall return.

> Nature makes itself specific.
> —*Kant*, The Critique of Judgment

It is characteristic of the modern Western mind to conceive of space in terms of its formal essence—hence the insistent search for mathematical expressions of pure spatial relations. For Newton, More, Gassendi,

Descartes, and Galileo, space was homogeneous, isotropic, isometric, and infinitely (or, at least, indefinitely) extended. Within the supremely indifferent and formal scene of space, local differences did not matter. Place itself did not matter. It was not for nothing that Descartes proposed in his *Principles of Philosophy* that matter and space were the same thing—which meant that space had no qualities not present in matter, whose own primary property was a metrically determinable pure extension. Place was simply a creature of such extension, either its mere subdivision ("internal place" or volume) or a relationally specified location in it ("position").[7] In his *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy,* Newton still recognized "absolute" and "relative" places, but both kinds of places were only "portions" of absolute space, which was where all the action (e.g., gravitational action) was to be found. On the basis of absolute space, places were apportioned and mapped out: just there is the conceptual root of the paralogism I detect in certain recent anthropological treatments of place and space.

In this early modern paradigm shift, there was little space for place as a valid concept in its own right. As a result, place was disempowered: all the power now resided in space—and in time, the second colossal concern of modern thought. Although time was held to have direction, it was as essentially devoid of content as was space. A century after Newton described space and time as "God's infinite sensoria," Kant considered them to be "pure forms of intuition" located within the finite human subject. By this act of internalization, Kant sealed the fate of place even more drastically: at most, the human subject had "position" in the space and time of its own making. But place was of almost no concern in the *Critique of Pure Reason.*[8]

One way to avoid the high road of modernism as it stretches from the abstract physics of Newton to the critical philosophy of Kant and beyond is to reoccupy the low land of place. For place can be considered either premodern or postmodern; it serves to connect these two far sides of modernity. To reinstate place in the wake of its demise in modern Western thought—where space and time have held such triumphant and exclusive sway—one can equally well go to the premodern moments described in ethnographic accounts of traditional societies or to the postmodern moment of the increasingly nontraditional present, where place has been returning as a reinvigorated *revenant* in the writings of ecologists and landscape theorists, geographers and historians, sociologists and political thinkers—and now, in this volume, anthropologists.

> Do we not sense from the outset a certain difference, by virtue of which *locality belongs to me somewhat more essentially* [than, for example, size and weight]? . . . Men and animals are *spatially localized;* and even what is psychic about them, at least in virtue of its essential foundedness in what is bodily, partakes of the spatial order.
>
> —*Husserl,* Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, *Second Book; his italics*

How, then, do we get back into place? In the very way by which we are always already there—by *our own lived body.* Ironically, Kant was the first Western thinker to point to the importance of bodily structure for emplacement. In his remarkable precritical essay of 1768, "On the First Ground of the Distinction of Material Regions in Space," he argued that the two-sidedness—especially the two-handedness—of the human body was essential for orientation in "cosmic regions" of surrounding sky or earth:

> Even our judgments about the cosmic regions are subordinated to the concept we have of regions in general, insofar as they are determined in relation to the sides of the body. . . . However well I know the order of the cardinal points, I can determine regions according to that order only insofar as I know towards which hand this order proceeds. . . . Similarly, our geographical knowledge, and even our commonest knowledge of the position of places, would be of no aid to us if we could not, by reference to the sides of our bodies, assign to regions the things so ordered and the whole system of mutually relative positions. (Kant 1928 [1768]: 22–23)[9]

The bilateral body is singled out, then, just when it is a question of orientation in *regions* (*Gegenden*), where places are concatenated in formations that resist the ascription of pinpointed location. Could it be that the body is *essentially,* and not just contingently, involved in matters of emplacement?

Kant's prescient observations about the body in its basic bilaterality anticipated and complemented Robert Hertz's brilliant speculations on the cultural significance of right- versus left-handedness (Hertz 1973 [1909]: 3–31) Both Kant and Hertz subscribed, tacitly if not explicitly, to a more general principle: that the human body's brachiated and multiply articulated structure renders it a uniquely valuable vehicle in the establishment of place. Precisely by allowing us to make a diverse entry into a given place—through hands and feet, knees and hips, elbows and shoulders—the body insinuates itself subtly and multiply into encompassing regions. If the body were an inert and intact thing with no moving parts, a fleshly monolith, it could be grasped as something sheerly physical that is punctually located at a given position in space and does not reach out farther. This is how Galileo construed *all* bodies: as inert, non-self-moving entities submitting to the laws of gravitation and motion.

But once a *Körper* (body as physical object) has become a *Leib* (body as lived)—once there is resurrection in the body, as it were—more than merely punctiform positioning in empty space (and at an equally stigmatic moment in time) is at stake. This is what Kant discovered—and then quickly forgot. It is also what Husserl and Hertz rediscovered a century and a half later.

The several members of a lived body move not randomly but by what Merleau-Ponty calls "corporeal intentionality." Thanks to this intentionality, the lived body integrates itself with its immediate environment, that is to say, its concrete place. The integration is effected by various "intentional threads" that bind body and place in a common complex of relations.[10] But none of this pervasive integumentation between body and place would be possible without the freely moving members of the body as it situates itself in a particular place, remembers itself in that place, and so forth. The lived body—the body living (in) a place—is thus "the natural subject of perception" (Merleau-Ponty 1962:208). The experience of perceiving that I discussed earlier requires a corporeal subject who lives *in* a place *through* perception. It also requires a place that is amenable to this body-subject and that extends its own influence back onto this subject. A place, we might even say, has its own "operative intentionality" that elicits and responds to the corporeal intentionality of the perceiving subject. Thus place integrates with body as much as body with place. It is a matter of what Basso calls "interanimation."[11]

Other aspects of the lived body are at stake in being-in-place, each of them specifying further what first caught Kant's keen eye. First, various kinesthesias and synesthesias—as well as sonesthesias, as Feld insists in this volume—allow bodily self-motion to be registered and enriched, ultimately constituting what Husserl terms the "aesthesiological body." This body itself serves as a "field of localization" for the manifold sensuous presentations (including sonorous ones) that stem from a particular place but are registered by (or with) a lived body that finds itself in that place.[12] Second, immanent bodily dimensionalities of up/down, front/back, right/left—explicitly recognized by Kant, who was inclined, however, to reduce them to the three Cartesian coordinates—help to connect body with the placial settings of these same three dyads.[13]

Third, the concreteness of a lived body, its density and mass, answers to the thick concreteness of a given place, but the difference between the two concretions is just as critical because it sets up a "coefficient of adversity" (Sartre 1965:590) that makes ordinary perception itself possible. Fourth, a given lived body and a given experienced place tend to present themselves as particular: as just this body in just this place. Each thus actively partakes in the "this-here"—which does not, however, exclude significant variations, ranging from bi-gendered to bi-located bodies.[14] And fifth, the porosity of the skin of an organic body rejoins, even as it mimics, the openness of the boundaries of places; there is a fleshlike, pneumatic structure shared in a common "flesh of the world."[15] Were the body a windowless monad, it could neither negotiate the varieties nor grasp the valences of the places in which it found itself. And these same places have to have their own windows if the body is to enter them in turn.

In addition to these five factors, we need to recognize the crucial interaction between body, place, and *motion*. A given place may certainly be perduring and consistent, but this does not mean that it is simply something inactive and at rest—as is all too often assumed. Part of the power of place, its very dynamism, is found in its encouragement of motion in its midst, its "e-motive" (and often explicitly emotional) thrust. Indeed, we may distinguish among three kinds of bodily motion pertinent to place. The first and most limited case is *staying in place.* Here the body remains in place, in one single place. Yet such a body in such a situation is never entirely stationary except in extreme circumstances of paralysis or rigor mortis. Even when staying in place, the body changes the position of some of its parts, however modestly: moving its limbs, rotating its head, twiddling its thumbs. The body twitches in place. Moreover, an unmoving body may still move if it is transported by another moving body: the driver of a car, the rider on horseback. Toynbee remarks that Bedouins riding on horses "move by not moving."[16] We might say that the body of the Bedouin stays in one position, yet the locus of this position—where "locus" signifies a position in its capacity to change places in space—itself changes as the mount moves between different places.[17]

The second case, *moving within a place,* is the circumstance in which I move my whole body about a given place while still remaining in it. Insofar as I am typing this manuscript, I am in one position; but when I get up to pace, I move around in the room I am in. I move within a circumscribed "space" defined by the walls of the room. The whole body moves in the whole room. Similarly, much ceremonial action is taken by bodies moving in set ways within entire prescribed places: kivas, plazas, longhouses, temples.

Finally, *moving between places* denotes the circumstance in which bodies travel between different places. No longer is movement circumscribed by the restrictions of a single position or one place; now it ranges among a number of places. In this case, the motion is a genuine transition and not just a transportation.[18] The most salient instance is the journey, and cases in point are emigrations, pilgrimages, voyages of exchange, and nomadic circulations. In all of these, the bodies of the journeyers follow more or

less preordained routes between particular places: for example, the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela as it connects various interim places throughout western Europe. The body's active role is most evident in the literal legwork of circumambulations and other forms of peregrination, but it is no less present in the building of homesteads in the land of emigration or in the setting up of temporary nomadic encampments. Just as staying in place corresponds to *position,* and moving the whole body within one locus answers to *place* proper, so moving between places corresponds to an entire *region,* that is, an area concatenated by peregrinations between the places it connects.

There is much more to be said about the role of the body in place, especially about how places actively solicit bodily motions. At the very least, we can agree that the living-moving body is essential to the process of emplacement: *lived bodies belong to places* and help to constitute them. Even if such bodies may be displaced in certain respects, they are never placeless; they are never *only* at discrete positions in world time or space, though they may *also* be at such positions. By the same token, however, *places belong to lived bodies* and depend on them. If it is true that "the body is our general medium for having a world" (Merleau-Ponty 1962:146), it ensues that the body is the specific medium for experiencing a place-world. The lived body is the material condition of possibility for the place-world while being itself a member of that same world. It is basic to place and part of place. Just as there are no places without the bodies that sustain and vivify them, so there are no lived bodies without the places they inhabit and traverse. (Even imaginary places bring with them virtual bodies—"subtle bodies" in an earlier nomenclature.) Bodies and places are connatural terms. They interanimate each other.

> We may suggest that the day will come when we will not shun the question whether the opening, the free open, may not be that within which alone pure space and ecstatic time and everything present and absent in them have the place which gathers and protects everything.
> —*Heidegger, "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking"*

Places gather: this I take to be a second essential trait (i.e., beyond the role of the lived body) revealed by a phenomenological topoanalysis. Minimally, places gather things in their midst—where "things" connote various animate and inanimate entities. Places also gather experiences and histories, even languages and thoughts. Think only of what it means to go back to a place you know, finding it full of memories and expectations, old things and new things, the familiar and the strange, and much more besides. What else is capable of this massively diversified holding action? Certainly not individual human subjects construed as sources of

"projection" or "reproduction"—not even these subjects as they draw upon their bodily and perceptual powers. The power belongs to place itself, and it is a power of gathering.

By "gathering" I do not mean merely amassing. To gather placewise is to have a peculiar hold on what is presented (as well as represented) in a given place. Not just the contents but the very mode of containment is held by a place. "The hold is held."[19] The hold of place, its gathering action, is held in quite special ways. First, it is a holding *together* in a particular configuration: hence our sense of an ordered arrangement of things in a place even when those things are radically disparate and quite conflictual. The arrangement allows for certain things—people, ideas, and so forth—to overlap with, and sometimes to occlude, others as they recede or come forward together. Second, the hold is a holding *in* and a holding *out.* It retains the occupants of a place within its boundaries: if they were utterly to vanish and the place to be permanently empty, it would be no place at all but a void. But, equally, a place holds out, beckoning to its inhabitants and, assembling them, making them manifest (though not necessarily manifest to each other, or to the same degree). It can move place-holders toward the margins of its own presentation while, nevertheless, holding them within its own ambiance.

Third, the holding at issue in the gathering of a place reflects the layout of the local landscape, its continuous contour, even as the outlines and inlines of the things held in that place are respected. The result is not confusion of container with contained but a literal *con*figuration in which the form of the place—for example, "mountain," "mesa," "gulley"—joins up with the shapes of the things in it. Being in a place is being in a configurative complex of things. Fourth, intrinsic to the holding operation of place is *keeping.* What is kept in place primarily are experiencing bodies regarded as privileged residents rather than as orchestrating forces (much less as mere registrants). My body-in-place is less the *metteur en scène* than itself *mise en scène*—or rather, it is both at once, "passivity in activity" (Husserl 1973).

And last, places also keep such unbodylike entities as thoughts and memories. When I revisit my hometown of Topeka, Kansas, I find this place more or less securely holding memories for me. In my presence, it releases these memories, which belong as much to the place as to my brain or body. This kind of keeping is especially pertinent to an intensely gathered landscape such as that of aboriginal Australia—a landscape that holds ancestral memories of the Dreaming. Yet even when I recall people and things and circumstances in an ordinary place, I have the sense that these various recollecta have been kept securely in place, harbored there, as it were.[20]

Gathering gives to place its peculiar perduringness, allowing us to return to it again and again as *the same place* and not just as the same position or site.[21] For a place, in its dynamism, does not age in a systematically changing way, that is, in accordance with a preestablished schedule of growth and decline; only its tenants and visitors, enactors and witnesses (including myself and others in these various roles) age and grow old in this way. A place is generative and regenerative on its own schedule. From it experiences are born and to it human beings (and other organisms) return for empowerment, much like Antaeus touching the earth for renewed strength. Place is the generatrix for the collection, as well as the recollection, of all that occurs in the lives of sentient beings, and even for the trajectories of inanimate things. Its power consists in gathering these lives and things, each with its own space and time, into one arena of common engagement.

> Husserl's essences are destined to bring back all the living relationships of experience, as the fisherman's net draws up from the depths of the ocean quivering fish and seaweed.
> —*Merleau-Ponty,* Phenomenology of Perception

It should be clear by now that I do not take place to be something simply physical. A place is not a mere patch of ground, a bare stretch of earth, a sedentary set of stones. What kind of thing is it then? The "what is" locution—Aristotle's *ti esti* question—combined with "kind of" suggests that there is some single sort of thing that place is, some archetype of Place. But whatever place is, it is not the kind of thing that can be subsumed under already given universal notions—for example, of space and time, substance or causality. A given place may not permit, indeed it often defies, subsumption under given categories. Instead, a place is something for which we continually have to discover or invent new forms of understanding, new concepts in the literal sense of ways of "grasping-together."

A place is more an *event* than a *thing* to be assimilated to known categories. As an event, it is unique, idiolocal. Its peculiarity calls not for assumption into the already known—that way lies site, which lends itself to predefined predications, uses, and interpretations—but for the imaginative constitution of terms respecting its idiolocality (these range from placenames to whole discourses). The "kind" at stake in "kind of" is neither a genus nor a species, that is, a determinate concept that rules *over* its instances, but something operating *across* margins, laterally, by means of homology or similitude. Yet place qua kind remains something specific inasmuch as it alters in keeping with its own changing constituents. The kind in question, the answer pertinent to the "what is" question, is more a *type* or a *style* than a pure concept or formal universal. While such a concept or universal is fixed in definition (if not always in application), a type or style connotes an open manifoldness, a unity-in-diversity, and not a self-identical unity. Further, a type or style admits of degrees—so sensitively that a change of a few degrees may bring with it a change in identity, as when analytical Cubism gave way imperceptibly but suddenly to synthetic Cubism.

In the case of place, then, the kind is itself *kind of something,* rather than a definite sort of something. This is why we speak of places in phrases like "a clean well-lit place," "a place for recovering one's sanity," "a Southwestern landscape," or "a Southern plantation." The indefinite article employed in these locutions bespeaks the indefiniteness of the kind of thing a place or region is. Such indefiniteness—not to be confused with indeterminacy, much less with chaos—is in no way incompatible with the ostensive definiteness of demonstrative pronouns and adverbial locatives, that is, those "essentially occasional expressions" that are so frequently used to refer to particular places or regions: "just here," "in this place," and so forth. I would even say that the open-endedness of place, its typological status as morphologically vague, its *de*-finition, creates the semantic space within which definite demonstrations and exact localizations can arise.[22]

Rather than being one definite sort of thing—for example, physical, spiritual, cultural, social—a given place takes on the qualities of its occupants, reflecting these qualities in its own constitution and description and expressing them in its occurrence as an event: places not only *are,* they *happen.* (And it is because they happen that they lend themselves so well to narration, whether as history or as story.) Just as a particular place is at least several kinds of things, so there are many sorts of places and not one basic kind only—one supposedly supreme genus. Sorts of places depend on the kinds of things, as well as the actual things, that make them up. A biochore or biotope directly reflects the character of its constituents, that is, its soils and flora and fauna; an agora is qualified by the people who pass through it or linger there; a dwelling is characterized less by its architecture than by the quality of the life that is sustained in it. If, as Wallace Stevens put it, "a mythology reflects its region", then a region reflects both what is held together there (its "contents," its co-tenants) and how it is so held.

A place or region is metaphysically neutral inasmuch as it does not possess some given substrate, a "ground" that would be metaphysically definite enough to determine the place or region as just one kind of entity. And if there is no such preexisting ground, then the model of adding successive strata of meaning (added by cultures or minds, actions

or words) is of dubious application.[23] Even to call such a putative ground "the earth" is already to regionalize, or rather to geologize, at the most basic level. The fact is that there is not any "most basic level" to be presumed as simply there, "*einfach da,*" as Husserl says of objects that are posited by the positivism of the natural attitude (Husserl 1982: section 27). Stripping away cultural or linguistic accretions, we shall never find a pure place lying underneath—and still less an even purer Space or Time. What we will find are continuous and changing qualifications of particular places: places qualified by their own contents, and qualified as well by the various ways these contents are articulated (denoted, described, discussed, narrated, and so forth) in a given culture. We designate particular places by the place terms of the culture to which we as place designators and place dwellers belong, but the places we designate are not bare substrates to which these terms are attached as if to an unadorned bedrock. They are named or nameable parts of the landscape of a region, its condensed and lived physiognomy.[24]

The power of place consists in its nontendentious ability to reflect the most diverse items that constitute its "midst." In many regards, a place *is* its midst, being in the midst of its own detailed contents; it is what lies most deeply amid its own constituents, gathering them together in the expressive landscape of that place. No mind could effect such gathering, and the body, though necessary to its attainment, requires the holding and keeping actions native to the place it is in.[25]

> Truths involve universals, and all knowledge of truths involves acquaintance with universals.
> —*Bertrand Russell,* The Problems of Philosophy

Thus we are led back to a question that was posed at the beginning of this essay: Is place a universal? Here we are inclined to ask in a skeptical vein, How can the epitome of the local be a matter of the general? What kind of generality can place possess? What sort of universal might it be? Indeed, how could it be a universal at all in face of the enormous diversity of places which anthropology, more than any other discipline, brings to our attention? Does not all this diversity make the search for sameness a futile and misguided effort?

In *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax,* Chomsky (1965) distinguishes between "formal" and "substantive" universals. Substantive universals are fixed in character and delimited in number: for example, Jakobson's list of the distinctive features whose various combinations determine the phonological component of given natural languages, or the Port-Royal syntactic categories of Noun, Verb, and so forth. Formal universals, in

contrast, specify the abstract conditions of possibility for the pervasive structures of any and every natural language: for example, the condition that proper names must designate objects that are spatiotemporally contiguous or that color words have to divide up the color spectrum into continuous parts with no gaps (see Chomsky 1965:27–30).

The choice here proffered by Chomsky is pertinent to place, but only by dint of calling the choice itself into question. On the one hand, place is something like a formal universal in that it functions like a general feature, even a condition of possibility, of all human (and doubtless all animal and plant) experience—however expansive the term "experience" is taken to be. On the other hand, place is also a quite distinctive feature of such experience. Place is not a purely formal operator empty of content but is always contentful, always specifiable as this particular place or that one. And if *both* things are true of place, if it is both formally true of every experience and true to each particular experience, then any rigid distinction between formal and substantive universals will dissolve before our very eyes. The deconstruction of this distinction will already be effected by the character of place itself, by its inherent generative force. For in the end, place is neither formal (place is not a condition *of* but a force *for*) nor substantive (there is not a fixed number of places in the universe, or of particular features or kinds of places).

This allows us to ask: Is the *only* choice that between "bloodless universals" and "substantive identities" (Geertz 1973:43–44)? Is not the aim, in anthropology as in any philosophy that is sensitive to the differences different cultures make, to discover genuine concrete universals, that is, structures that are at once elastic enough to be exemplified in disparate cultures yet also taut enough to be discernibly different from each other in content or definition? An example would be funeral practices, which are observed by all known cultures yet which differ dramatically from culture to culture. The marking of death and the remarking of the life that preceded it is concretely universal, though the modes of marking and remarking are tangibly diverse. A concrete universal of this sort is neither so adamantine as to be indifferent to its instantiations nor so purely reflective as to be the indifferent mirroring of any and every cultural difference: neither form of indifference does justice to the actual difference which the embodiment of a concrete universal introduces. As Hegel insisted, a concrete universal is operative in contingent circumstances and has no life apart from those circumstances. Let us say that it is endoskeletal to what happens in a given time and place and yet sufficiently generic to be immanent to occurrences in other times and places (not just by homology but by actual ingredience).

Does this mean that the kind of universal at stake in place is nothing

but an "empirical commonality," that which just happens to be the case in several or even many times and places?[26] No: the empirically common comes down to statistical frequency or contingent overlap and fails to capture what is shared by members of a class of things that all possess some genuinely generic trait (whether this be an action, a quality, a relation, or some other characteristic). While manifested in the "special world" (*idios kosmos,* as the ancient Greeks would say) of a particular place and time, the shared trait nevertheless belongs to the "common world" (*koinos kosmos*) of authentic concrete universals. Such a bivalent universal, belonging both to special worlds and to a common world, serves to relate items that would otherwise be a mere congeries of terms that, at most, resemble each other. It is thus a *relational* universal that consists in its very capacity to assemble things as well as kinds of things.

Thus we might well agree with Bertrand Russell (1912:152) that a relational universal is "neither in space nor in time, neither material nor mental," yet "it is [still] something." But what kind of something is it? If it manages not to be in space or time, can it nevertheless be in place? I would hazard that the kind of universal most relevant to a philosophically informed anthropology of place is at once concrete and relational—concrete *as* relational (and vice versa)—and serves to connect disparate data across cultures, yet not emptily and in name only. Such a universal proceeds *laterally,* by assimilating phenomena of the same level of abstraction, rather than vertically (by subsuming concrete phenomena under more abstract terms).[27] Lateral universals are especially pertinent to the anthropology and phenomenology of place. For in their very concreteness, particular places do not form hierarchies of increasing abstraction. Instead, they fall into various groupings of comparably concrete terms: home places, workplaces, way stations, and so forth. The constitution of such places is at once concrete-relational and lateral in scope and is effected *by places themselves* (much more so than by times, which serve to separate more than to connect). Minds may note the sameness shared by different places, but they do not make this sameness. The sameness is the work of places in interaction with bodies that find themselves engaged in them.

But what does sameness of place signify? Certainly not identity of *position*—a much more delimited concept. Places are significantly the same when they are members of the same material *region.* Places concatenate with each other to form regions of things. A region, as Husserl conceives it, holds together things that share the same "material essence" (*sachhaltiges Wesen*), which—unlike a formal essence—has its own positive content. This content affiliates things in such a way that we may consider them as belonging to the same overall region. Thus physical things qua physical belong to the region of Nature. Psychological phenomena—for example, memories and thoughts—belong to Soul, regarded as a distinctively different region (yet one that is commensurate with that of things).[28] Similarly, placial phenomena such as location and situation belong to the region Place. Within Place as a generic region, particular kinds of places abound: wild places and built places at one level, kitchens and bedrooms at another, and so on.

A given place, like anything else characterized by material essences, is inseparable from the concrete region in which it is found and instantiates qualities and relations found in that region. This is true not just of physical places but of other sorts of places as well: just as, say, the Grand Canyon is qualified by properties that are regional in a geological sense (e.g., the presence of arroyos, colored sandstone rock layering, certain effects of seasonal weather), so the place of the Grand Canyon in my *memory* of it occupies a region of my psyche (roughly, that of "memories-of-traveling-in-the-American-Southwest"). From this simple example it is evident, once again, that place is not one kind of thing: it can be psychical as well as physical, and doubtless also cultural and historical and social. But as a coherent region in Husserl's sense of the term, it holds these kinds—and much else besides—together.[29]

If place is indeed regional in any such sense as this, it cannot be universal in traditional Western acceptations of this term. In particular, it cannot be a substantive or a formal universal. The universality of place is too complex—or too loose—to be captured by these classical forms of universality, one of which reduces to sameness of content and the other to identity of form. Place is more complicated than this, and its universality is at once concrete, relational, lateral, and regional. Of these traits, "regional" is the most comprehensive and can be regarded as containing *in nuce* the other traits. For as a regional universal, place is defined by a material essence or set of such essences, each of which is concrete and relational and each of which also operates by lateral inclusion. In its regionality, a place cannot superintend objects *in general* (i.e., abstract objects such as numbers) in the manner of a formal domain. A given place such as the Grand Canyon bears only on its own actual occupants, which are structured by the same material essences by which the place itself is to be construed. The things and localities, the people and animals in the canyon, are held together not just by their literal location in the same piece of geography but, more significantly, by the fact that they are *part of the same place*—a place exhibiting various material-essential features possessed or reflected by everything in that place (aridity, verticality, rough textures, etc.).

As a regional universal, place cannot be tucked away in cross-cultural area files as just another "common-denominator of culture" (Murdock

1957), that is, something possessing only empirical commonality. The commonality of the regional is determined by material essentialities and not by empirical congruencies. But it would be equally mistaken to assume that place, not being built on such mere congruencies, is too idiosyncratic to be discussed intelligibly, that is, too singular to be the subject of any investigation sensitive to the possibility of essential structure. Place is again in the middle, situated between the Charybdis of sheer singularity and the Scylla of contingent commonality. It occupies an intermediate area in what Collingwood calls the "scale of forms" that defines human knowledge (see Collingwood 1932:passim). Neither the most abstract member of this scale (a leading candidate for which is doubtless "object in general") nor the most concrete (this is the utter "individual," Aristotle's *tode ti,* the bare "this-here"), place is nevertheless sufficiently general to be coherently discussed as a guiding or regulative notion—for instance, in this very essay—and yet sufficiently particular not to be fully subsumable under formal essences. In Husserl's oxymoronic language, place is an "eidetic singularity," singular enough to be unique to a given occasion and yet wide-ranging enough to exceed what is peculiar to it alone on that same occasion.[30]

Even if place does not function as a formally or substantively universal concept, it is nonetheless a concrete and relational general term that contributes to the constitution of an entire region. The many ways in which place figures into the discourse and life of native (as well as contemporary Western) peoples—in fact, never does *not* figure in some significant manner—point to its status as genuinely general, that is, pervasive in its very particularity. Construed in this light, indeed, the local is the general. Particular places tell us how a region *is*—how it disposes itself. They are that region's condensed content and are indispensable for conceiving what is regionally the same in the very face of the manifold descriptive and explanatory, gestural and linguistic, historical and social, ethical and political differences that distinguish the life-worlds of diverse peoples.

Precisely in their comparative sameness, places prove to be universal: they are the necessary basis for regional specification. Without places, regions would be vacuous and thus all too easy to collapse into each other—ultimately, into abstract space. As it is the essence of a place to be regional, so it is equally essential to a region to be anchored in particular places. If this were not the case, if place were after all merely contingent or common—merely empirical—and if it did not involve something of the order of essence, it would not possess the "power" ascribed to it by Aristotle over two millennia ago.

> Just as nature finds its way to the core of my personal life and becomes inextricably linked with it, so behavior patterns settle into that nature, being deposited in the form of a cultural world.
> —*Merleau-Ponty,* Phenomenology of Perception

Now we must, finally, *put culture back in place.* This is not, of course, to locate it anywhere other than where it already is. Yet the abiding emplacement of cultural practices has often gone unacknowledged. All too frequently, late modern Eurocentric thinking has located culture in two extremes—either in overt behavioral patterns (in "positivisms" of many sorts, sedimented in the *natürliche Einstellung* that so disturbed Husserl) or in symbol systems (e.g., in structuralist accounts of verbal language and transverbal symbols). Culture is situated either in something strictly observable or in something sheerly diaphanous: the perceived and recorded action or the evanescing sign.

These radical measures, taken respectively by psychology and semiology, may have been justified at the time they were proposed, and all the more so as a reaction to the unremitting mentalism and historicism so prevalent in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century thought. If Culture is not located in Mind—mind as representational (Locke) or mind as Objective Spirit (Hegel)—it is also not positioned in History (least of all in a teleologically ordered model of history considered as a series of progressively superior stages). Although behaviorism took us altogether out of our minds and synchronically based semiologies lured us out of diachronic history, each enterprise flung itself into an extreme epicenter of overreaction. More recently, counter-counter measures have set in: cognitive psychology has brought behaviorism back to a more subtle look at mind, and hermeneutical theories of meaning have drawn the theory of symbols into a richer sense of the dense interpretive matrix from which language and other sign systems spring.

Yet within this largely salutary return to the specificities of mind and sign, the inherent emplacement of culture has been missed. Braudel (1972) pointed toward this emplacement in his monumental study of the geographical basis of history in the age of Phillip II, but this bold direction has not been taken up in other disciplines. In fact, no systematic effort has been made to account for the indispensability of place in the evolution and presentation of cultural institutions, beginning with the fact that the very *cultivation* at stake in *culture* has to occur *somewhere.* "Everyone supposes," remarks Aristotle nonchalantly, "that things that are are somewhere, because what is not is nowhere" (1983:208 a 29–30). Given that culture manifestly exists, it must exist somewhere, and it exists more concretely and completely in places than in minds or signs. The very word *culture* meant "place tilled" in Middle English, and the

same word goes back to Latin *colere,* "to inhabit, care for, till, worship." To be cultural, to have a culture, is to inhabit a place sufficiently intensely to cultivate it—to be responsible for it, to respond to it, to attend to it caringly. Where else but in particular places can culture take root? Certainly not in the thin air above these places, much less in the even thinner air of pure speculation about them.

To be located, culture also has to be *embodied.* Culture is carried into places by bodies. To be encultured is to be embodied to begin with. This is the common lesson of Merleau-Ponty and of Bourdieu, both of whom insist on the capital importance of the "customary body"—the body that has incorporated cultural patterns into its basic actions. These actions depend on *habitus,* "history turned into nature," a second nature that brings culture to bear in its very movements (Bourdieu 1977:78). Moreover, just as the body is basic to enculturation, so the body is itself always already enculturated. No more than space is prior to place is the body prior to culture. Rather than being a passive recipient or mere vehicle of cultural enactments, the body is itself enactive of cultural practices by virtue of its considerable powers of incorporation, habituation, and expression. And as a creature of habitus, the same body necessarily *inhabits* places that are themselves culturally informed. (It also inhabits places by rising to the challenge of the novel circumstance.) Far from being dumb or diffuse, the lived body is as intelligent about the cultural specificities of a place as it is aesthesiologically sensitive to the perceptual particularities of that same place. Such a body is at once encultured and emplaced *and* enculturating and emplacing—while being massively sentient all the while.

Basic to local knowledge, therefore, is knowledge of place by means of the body: such knowledge is "knowledge by acquaintance" in Russell's memorable phrase (1912: ch. 5). Bodies not only perceive but *know* places. Perceiving bodies are *knowing bodies,* and inseparable from what they know is culture as it imbues and shapes particular places. It is by bodies that places become cultural in character. It is all too easy to suppose that what is cultural represents an articulated separate stratum laid down on a mute perceptual ground. In fact, even the most primordial level of perceiving is inlaid with cultural categories in the form of differential patterns of recognition, ways of organizing the perceptual field and acting in it, and manners of designating and naming items in this field. Thus culture pervades the way that places are perceived and the fact that they are perceived, as well as how we act in their midst. As Merleau-Ponty puts it, "the distinction between the two planes (natural and cultural) is abstract: everything is cultural in us (our *Lebenswelt* is "subjective") (our perception is cultural-historical) and everything is natural in us (even the cultural rests on the polymorphism of wild Being)" (Merleau-Ponty 1968:253).[31]

In other words, the endemic status of culture—pervading bodies and places and bodies-in-places—is matched by the equally endemic insinuation of "wild Being" into the body/place matrix. Even the most culturally saturated place retains a factor of wildness, that is, of the radically amorphous and unaccounted for, something that is not so much immune to culture as alien to it in its very midst, disparate from it from within. We sense this wildness explicitly in moments of absurdity—and of "surdity," sheer "thisness." But it is immanent in every perceptual experience and thus in every bodily insertion into the perceived places anchoring each such experience. This ontological wildness—not to be confused with literal wilderness, much less with mere lack of cultivation—ensures that cultural analysis never exhausts a given place. Just as we should not fall into a perceptualism that leaves no room for expressivity and language, so we ought not to espouse a culturalism that accords no autochthonous being to places, no alterity. In the very heart of the most sophisticated circumstance is a wildness that no culture can contain or explain, much less reduce. The wildness exceeds the scope of the most subtle set of signifiers, despite the efforts of painters to capture it in images and of storytellers to depict it in words.[32]

Precisely because of the ubiquity of such wildness in body, place, and culture, the temptation to espouse the idea of a primary "precultural" level of experience is difficult to overcome. Perhaps no serious Western thinker, including Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, has altogether resisted the charisma of the precultural—especially when it accompanies a preoccupation with uncovering the foundations of experience and knowledge. But the passion for epistemic (and other) origins is itself culturally specific and stems from an epistemophilic proclivity that is not ingrained or instinctual, Aristotle's and Freud's claims notwithstanding. All human beings may desire to know, but they do not always desire to know in the foundationalist manner that is an obsessive concern of European civilization. Moreover, whatever people may wish to know, they are already *doing* at the bilateral level of knowing bodies and known places. As knowing and known, bodies and places are not precultural—even if they are prediscursive as directly experienced. Their very wildness contains culture in their midst, but culture itself is wild in its intensity and force.

This is a lesson to be taken back into place. Despite the inherent wildness of all places (including urban places), there are no first-order places, no First Places that altogether withstand cultural pervasion and specification. But we can continue to endorse the Archytian Axiom of place's primacy—to be is still to be in place—provided only that we recognize that places are at once cultural and perceptual as well as tame and wild. And provided, too, that we realize that the place-world defies division

into two distinct domains of Nature and Culture. If it is equally true that "everything is natural in us" and that "everything is cultural in us," this is so primarily within the concrete and complex arena of place, where the coadunation of the natural and the cultural arises in every experience and every event—and in every expression thereof.

> I can only say, there we have been: but I cannot say where. And I cannot say, how long, for that is to place it in time.
> —*T. S. Eliot, "Burnt Norton"*

Place is not only coadunative but also (as I have already hinted) deconstructive—deconstructive of oppositions that it brings and holds together within its own ambience. These oppositions include binary pairs of terms that have enjoyed hegemonic power in Western epistemology and metaphysics. I am thinking of such dichotomies as subject and object, self and other, formal and substantive, mind and body, inner and outer, perception and imagination (or memory), and nature and culture themselves. It is always from a particular place that a person, considered as a knowing "subject," seizes upon a world of things presumed to be "objects." The reduction of persons to subjects—and, still more extremely, to minds—and of things to objects could not occur anywhere other than in place. Yet to be fully in a place is to know—to *know* by direct acquaintance as well as by cultural habitus—that such a double reduction delivers only the shadowy simulacrum of the experiences we have in that place. (It is also to know that the mere representation of objects by minds, or of places by maps, is a further reduction.) Similarly, to be emplaced is to know the hollowness of any strict distinction between what is inside one's mind or body and what is outside, or between what is perceived and what is remembered or imagined, or between what is natural and what is cultural. When viewed from the stance of place, these various divisions enter into a deconstructive meltdown—or more exactly, they are seen to have been nondiscontinuous to begin with: at-one, "esemplastic" in Coleridge's word.

One very important dichotomy subject to the deconstructive power of place is that of space and time, which we have seen to be twin preoccupations of modern thinking in the West. But the phenomenological fact of the matter is that *space and time come together in place.* Indeed, they arise from the experience of place itself. Rather than being separate but equal cosmic parameters—as we believe when we say (with Leibniz) that space is "the order of co-existence" and time "the order of succession" (Leibniz 1956:1066)—space and time are themselves coordinated and co-specified in the common matrix provided by place. We realize the essential posteriority of space and time whenever we catch ourselves apprehending

spatial relations or temporal occurrences *in a particular place.* Now I am in a room in Atlanta, and it is here that I am composing this essay. Not only the punctiform here and now, but also relations and occurrences of much more considerable scope collect around and in a single place. My quarters are an integral part of a house in a certain neighborhood and city, themselves set within an entire region called "the South," all of which have their own dense historicities as well as geographies. Even these extensive geo-histories I grasp from within my delimited room-place.[33]

Space and time, then, are found precisely in place—the very place that was declared by Newton to be merely "a part of space which a body takes up" (Newton 1687: Scholium to the Definitions, III). As we have seen, Newton considered space to be "absolute." But in a self-undermining aside, Newton himself wrote that "times and spaces are, as it were, the *places of themselves* as of all other things" (Newton 1687: section IV; my italics).[34] Not only do imperial space and time require recourse to lowly places in their very definition (rather than conversely), but also the status of space and time as equal but opposite terms is put into question by their common emplacement. The binarist dogma stretching from Newton and Leibniz to Kant and Schopenhauer is undone by the basic perception that we experience space and time *together* in place—in the locus of a continuous "space-time" that is proclaimed alike in twentieth-century physics, philosophy, and anthropology.

To speak of space-time is to speak once more of *event.* For an event is at once spatial and temporal, indeed indissolubly both: its spatial qualities and relations happen at a particular time. But the happening itself occurs in a place that is equally particular. Thus "event" can be considered the spatiotemporalization of a place, and the way it happens as spatiotemporally specified. It is revealing that we speak of an event as having "a date and a place," replacing "space" by "place." This is in keeping with Heidegger's observation that "spaces receive their essential being from particular localities and not from 'space' itself" (Heidegger 1971:154). Even if we cannot replace "date" by "place," we can observe that there is no such thing as a pure date, a sheer occurrence that occurs nowhere. Every date is an emplaced happening. And since every date, every *time,* is indissociably linked with space, it is ultimately, or rather first of all, situated in a "particular locality."

When we say that something "happens in space and time," this way of putting it not only reinforces the putative primacy (as well as the equally putative equiprimordiality) of space and time but also fosters the impression that for something to happen it must occur at a precise point or moment. Punctiformity is the very basis of specification by calendars, clocks, and maps and is thus a matter of "simple location," in Whitehead's term for isolated punctate positions in space and time. (For

Whitehead's treatment of simple location, see Whitehead 1925:50ff.)[35] The poet, along with the ordinary person, knows better: to say "*there* we have been" is not the same thing as to say precisely where we have been in geographical space, and if we are to express the duration of an event we "cannot say, how long, for that is to place it in time." In the modern Western era, to place in time or in space is ultimately to situate in site, that is, on a planiform surface of point-moments. A site is an exsanguinated place—precisely the sort of scene in which space and time seem to triumph over place. But what if matters are the other way around? What if time, space, and their projections and reductions as sites are non-simply located *in places?* Then place would no longer be the mere occasion for happenings positioned in an infinitely capacious space and time. Place itself would be the happening, and space and time what *it* occasions, what *it* specifies in determinate and measurable sites.

The "eventmental" character of places, their capacity for co-locating space and time (even as they deconstruct this very dyad), can be considered a final form of gathering. This form is not the gathering-out of particular persons and things in a configured place or region, or the in-gathering effected by the body as the crux of nature and culture, but a still more general and pervasive gathering-with that occurs by virtue of the very power of emplacement to bring space and time together in the event. Such comprehensive gathering is the turning point of space and time, the pivot where space and time conjoin in place. Just as this most inclusive and momentous gathering is the undermining of space and time construed as independent and preexisting dimensions, it is also the basis for any theory of space and time taken as absolute or relative, simultaneous or successive, intuitive or conceptual. The deconstruction of space and time by place clears the way for their conjoint reconstruction. But the two dimensions remain, first and last, dimensions of place, and they are experienced and expressed *in place by the event of place.*[36]

> As native concepts and beliefs find external purchase on specific features of the local topography, the entire landscape seems to acquire a crisp new dimension that moves it more surely into view. . . . In native discourse, the local landscape falls neatly and repeatedly into places.
> —*Keith Basso, "'Speaking with Names': Language and Landscape among the Western Apache"*

The gathering power of place works in many ways and at many levels. At the mundane level of everyday life, we are continually confronted with circumstances in which places provide the scene for action and thought, feeling and expression. Think only of where you are as you read these words: the place you are in right now actively supports (or at least allows for) the act of reading this text. Just as I write these words in my Atlanta room, you read them in yours—somewhere. Of course, I could write in a different place and you could read in another place. But the loci you and I are in nevertheless influence, sometimes quite considerably, overt actions such as reading and writing, and they influence still more what Malinowski (1922:18) calls "the imponderabilia of actual life," such things as emotional tonality, degree of impatience, the understanding of a text, relations with consociates, and so forth.

If this is true of our immediate locus—of what Husserl called the "near sphere"—it is just as true of more generous placial units such as the house we inhabit or the building in which we work.[37] Both Bachelard and Heidegger insist that it is in dwellings that we are most acutely sensitive to the effects of places upon our lives. Their "intimate immensity" allows them to condense the duration and historicity of inhabitation in one architecturally structured place.[38] What happens in such "domestic space" is an event in the sense discussed in the last section. Equally eventful, however, are the journeys we take between the dwellings in which we reside, for we also dwell in the intermediate places, the *interplaces,* of travel—places which, even when briefly visited or merely traversed, are never uneventful, never not full of spatiotemporal specificities that reflect particular modes and moods of emplacement. Even on the hoof, we remain in place. We are never anywhere, anywhen, but in place.

Midway between staying at home and making a journey is the arena of *ceremonial action.* When ceremonial action concerns rites of passage (a term redolent with the idea of "the passing of time"), however, it is all too tempting to consider this action a matter of sheer diachronic development—"stages on life's way," in Kierkegaard's timely phrase. Thus it is all the more striking that van Gennep, whose *Rites of Passage* was first published in 1909 (the same year in which Hertz's "The Pre-Eminence of the Right Hand" appeared), refused this temptation and insisted on describing the three-fold process of separation, transition, and incorporation in resolutely spatial, or, more exactly, *placial,* terms. Van Gennep insisted, for example, that "territorial passage" provides the proper framework for an understanding of ritualized passage in the social sphere:

> The passage from one social position to another is identified with a *territorial passage,* such as the entrance into a village or a house, the movement from one room to another, or the crossing of streets and squares. This identification explains why the passage from one group to another is so often ritually expressed by passage under a portal, or by an 'opening of the doors'. (van Gennep 1960:192; his italics)

Under the heading of territorial passage itself, van Gennep discusses such notions as frontiers, borders, crossroads, and landmarks. Most important of all, however, is the concept of *threshold,* in which movement

from one place to another is effected. A threshold is the concrete interplace of an important transition. Van Gennep emphasizes the particularity of the threshold; only as *this* place can it serve as the support for a rite of passage:

> The door is the boundary between the foreign and domestic worlds in the case of an ordinary dwelling, between the profane and sacred worlds in the case of a temple. Therefore to cross the threshold is to unite oneself with a new world. It is thus an important act in marriage, adoption, ordination, and funeral ceremonies. (van Gennep 1960:20)[39]

The very "transition" effected by passing through a threshold is inextricably place-bound, and its description requires an entire paraphernalia of place predicates (e.g., "boundary" and "zone").

But precisely at this critical juncture, van Gennep disappoints us. Ignoring the manifest place-situatedness of his own descriptions, he asserts that "the symbolic and *spatial area of transition* may be found in more or less pronounced form in all the ceremonies which accompany the passage from one social and magico-religious position to another," concluding that "the *spatial separation* of distinct groups is an aspect of social organization" (van Gennep 1960:18, 192; my italics). Here van Gennep, like Durkheim, relies on the language of space and spatiality as if it were the only alternative to talk of time and temporality. Van Gennep recognizes what Bourdieu calls a "theoretical space"—and this is a significant move beyond the temporocentrism implicit in the very idea of passage—but missing is an explicit acknowledgment of the concrete place-specific character of his own examples and primary terms of description. In company with so many other modern thinkers, van Gennep suffers from what Freud calls "the blindness of the seeing eye."[40] Place is there to be seen if only we have the vision to behold it.

A decisive step beyond van Gennep's is taken by Nancy Munn in her discerning analysis of *kula* exchange, a highly ritualistic action that, like a rite of passage, is subject to misconstrual from the start. In this case, however, the primary misprision has to do with space rather than with time: if "passage" leads us to think primarily of time, kula "exchange," especially in its inter-island form, tempts us to think mainly in terms of transactions across geographical space. As Munn demonstrates, nothing could be farther from the truth.

Although Munn's *The Fame of Gawa* opens with a cartographically accurate map of the Massim region of Papua New Guinea, her discussion of kula exchange soon posits a realm of intersubjective "spacetime" that is much closer to landscape than to geography. She shows that kula participants are indissolubly linked to local and extralocal places and to the pathways between them. Gawan acts of hospitality, for instance,

"constitute a mode of spacetime formed through the dynamics of action (notably giving and traveling) *connecting persons and places*" (Munn 1986:9; my italics).[41] Gifts of food (as well as other items of hospitality) occur in particular places of exchange, either on one's home island or on an island to which one has traveled by canoe. These gifts precede kula exchange proper and are the "dynamic base" of such exchange by virtue of ushering in the event of exchange itself, which takes place in an extensive area all too easily conceived in terms of objective space. But Munn rightly refuses this temptation:

> Although kula shell transactions also entail dyadic exchange units [i.e., as in hospitality relations] . . . these transactions are not restricted exchanges or closed spacetimes. The shells that the two men transact travel beyond them. . . . The travels of kula shells create an emergent spacetime of their own that transcends that of specific, immediate transactions. This spacetime may be thought of as that of circulation. (Munn 1986:57–58)

Implicit here is a distinction between what I have called "place proper"—instanced in the concrete transactions of hospitality and shell exchange—and "region" (i.e., a collocation of internally related places), in which the defining unit is that of the kula shell in its circulatory journey. At every stage of this journey, the shell requires new transactions to relay it. Each such transaction can be said to constitute a spacetime and not merely to fit into an already existing framework of space and time. The framework is created and recreated with each successive transaction.[42]

Perhaps the most persuasive instance of such a constitution of spacetime is the construction and launching of the canoes that are requisite to kula exchange while also being objects of a special exchange themselves. To build canoes is both to engage in a specific spatiotemporal event of making—a bodily action calling for a particular place of construction—and to facilitate the reaching of other islands by a specific pathway (*keda*) between them. No wonder the launching of such canoes is a major event: "The canoe is finally launched," writes Malinowski (1922:147), "after the long series of mingled work and ceremony, technical effort and magical rite." This series of events is itself a rite of passage in which (as Munn observes) "transition takes place across spatiotemporal zones" as wood is located and bespelled above the beach, then made into finished vessels that are launched into the sea (Munn 1977:41.) The beach is a threshold and as such has many "medial qualities" (Munn 1977:41), above all its location as if between island and ocean.

Canoes thus connect one set of liminal rituals, intra-island (i.e., what happens *in* a place), with another set, specifically inter-island (kula and canoe exchange proper, i.e., what happens *between* places in a region).

In the end, both sorts of rituals are bound to place, whether to one and the same place or to different places connected by a sea route. In all these places, space and time combine forces. The sea voyage itself, adds Malinowski, "is not done on the spur of the moment, but happens periodically, at dates settled in advance, and it is carried on along definite trade routes, which must lead to fixed trysting places" (Malinowski 1922:85). Here space (in the form of "definite trade routes") and time (in terms of "periodical" journeys) *come together in place*—in places of exchange connected by regional pathways—just as space and time combine in the initial making of canoes. Place and region gather space and time in emergent events of construction and exchange.

For this gathering to happen, the place and region in which it occurs must possess a property alluded to earlier in this essay: *porosity of boundaries.* An important aspect of being in a place or region is that one is not limited altogether by determinate borders (i.e., legal limits) or perimeters (i.e., those established by geography). For a place or region to be an event, for it to involve the change and movement that are so characteristic of kula exchange, there must be permeable margins of transition. The permeability occurs in numerous forms. A beach, at the edge of the sea and subject to tidal encroachments, is certainly exemplary of a porous boundary, but even in a land-locked situation such as that of the Western Desert of Australia, places and regions can retain a remarkable permeability. As W. E. H. Stanner notes:

> The known facts of inter-group relations [in aboriginal Australia] simply do not sort with the idea of precise, rigid boundaries jealously upheld in all circumstances. And the idea that a region was cut up, as it were without remainder, into exclusive but contiguous descent-group estates, could not have sufficed for the dynamic aboriginal life we know to have existed. . . . The conception which most nearly accommodates the facts . . . is that of *spaced estates* with *overlapping ranges,* and, thus, *partially interpenetrative domains and life-spaces.* (Stanner 1965:11–12; his italics)

Distinct and impenetrable borders may belong to sites as legally and geographically controlled entities, and hence ultimately to "space," but they need not (and often do not) play a significant role in the experience and knowledge of places and regions—of "estates" and "ranges" in Stanner's nomenclature.[43]

Whether in the waters of the Massim region of Papua New Guinea or on the dry land of the Western Desert in Australia—or anywhere else place and region, rather than position and site, are of determinative import—we find that porousness of boundaries is essential to place. A place could not gather bodies in the diverse spatiotemporal ways it does without the permeability of its own limits. The sievelike character of places

might well be regarded as another essential structure of place, one that could be called "elasticity." But I prefer to regard it as a corollary property of that perceptual structure earlier identified as "external horizon." For the very nature of such a horizon is to *open out* even as it encloses. It is intrinsic to perceptual fields to possess bleeding boundaries; the lack of such boundaries converts these fields to delimited and closed-off sites such as prison cells or jury boxes.

By returning to horizons we have come full circle, and we need only add that the horizons which form the perceptual basis of boundaries are themselves spatiotemporal in status. To be in a perceptual field is to be encompassed by edges that are neither strictly spatial—we cannot map a horizon (even if we can draw it)—nor strictly temporal: just when does a horizon happen? A given horizon is at once spatial and temporal, and it belongs to a field that is the perceptual scene of the place whose horizon it is. Once again, but now coming in from the margins, we discover that place includes space and time as part of its own generative power. Rather than being the minion of an absolute space and time, place is the master of their shared matrix.

> The old meaning of the word "end" means the same as place: "from one end to the other" means: from one place to the other. The end of philosophy is the place, that place in which the whole of philosophy's history is gathered in its most extreme possibility.
> —*Heidegger, "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking"*

I started with an uneasiness occasioned by recent anthropological treatments of place as something supposedly made up from space—something factitious carved out of space or superimposed on space (in the end, it doesn't matter which, given the unquestioned premise of space's primacy). From there, a consideration of the perceptual basis of being-in-place revealed that human beings are emplaced *ab origine,* thanks to the presence of depths and horizons in the perceptual field and thanks also to the cores of sense that anchor this same field. The world comes bedecked in places; it is a place-world to begin with.

It was precisely the resonance of "to begin with" that led me later in this essay to reflect on the kind of universality possessed by place. Rejecting the standard choice between formal and substantive universals—as well as the related and equally standard choice between a priori and empirical universals—I explored the idea of a specifically regional universal that is concrete-cum-relational and that operates laterally, across cases and not above or under them. Such a universal, which could also be called a "general," is metaphysically neutral in that its instantiation is directly reflective of the particular entities in a given place and their

mode of configuration. The instantiation itself occurs by means of essential structures that pervade places as we know them. I singled out two structures of special pertinence: the lived body's active ingredience in emplacement (i.e., getting into, staying in, and moving between places) and the gathering power of place itself. Gathering is an event, and an exploration of place-as-event allowed us to see how places, far from being inert and static sites, are themselves continually changing in accordance with their own proper dynamism. Places are at once elastic—for example, in regard to their outer edges and internal paths—and yet sufficiently coherent to be considered as the *same* (hence to be remembered, returned to, etc.) as well as to be classified as places of certain *types* (e.g., home-place, workplace, visiting place).

Moreover, the eventful potency of places includes their cultural specificity. Time and history, the diachronic media of culture, are so deeply inscribed in places as to be inseparable from them—as inseparable as the bodies that sustain these same places and carry the culture located in them. But inseparability and inscription are not tantamount to exhaustion; a factor of brute being, concealed within the locative phrase "this-here," always accrues to a given place, rendering it wild in its very idiolocality, and wild as well in its most highly cultured manifestations.

On this basis I was able to draw the heretical inference that space and time are contained in places rather than places in them. Whether we are concerned with dwelling places or places on a journey, with places in a landscape or in a story (or in a story itself indissociable from a landscape), we witness a concrete topo-logic, an experiential topology, in which time and space are operative *in places* and are not autonomous presences or spheres of their own. Proceeding in this direction, we arrive at the opposite side of the mountain of Western modernity, which had assumed (and often still assumes, at the level of "common sense") that time and space, in their impassive absoluteness, are prior to place. Instead, as Archytas had foretold, place is prior to all things—even if the very idea of *priority* needs to be bracketed along with the binary logic so effectively deconstructed by place itself.

Something else to be garnered from our considerations is that if we are to take the idea of local knowledge seriously, we have to rethink both "locality" and "knowledge." "Locality" must be rethought in terms of, first, the triple distinction between position, place, and region; second, the idea of porous boundaries; and third, the role of the lived body as the mediatrix between enculturation and emplacement—their localizing agent, as it were. Above all, what is local must be allowed to take the lead, in keeping with the Archytian Axiom: *place is in first place* with regard to its configurative arrangements, its landscape logic, its perceptual peculiarities, its regional universality, and its metaphysical neutrality. By the same token, "knowledge" needs to be reconstrued as specifically placial, as a matter of acquaintance with places, knowing them by means of our knowing bodies. Such knowledge—neither propositional nor systematic, and not classifiable as simply subjective or objective, natural or cultural—is knowledge appropriate to the particularities of places in keeping with their felt properties and cultural specificities. It entails an understanding of places, where "understanding" is taken literally as standing under the ample aegis of place (and pointedly not under the protective precision of concepts).

Merleau-Ponty (1964b:120) suggests that the anthropologist has "a new organ of understanding at his disposal." Is this organ not an understanding of *place?* After all, the ethnographer stands in the field and takes note of the places he or she is in, getting into what is going on in their midst. The ensuing understanding reflects the reciprocity of body and place—and of both with culture—that is as descriptive of the experience of the anthropologist as of the native. It also reflects both parties' grasp of a concrete universality, a generality immanent in place thanks to the lateral homologies and sidewise resemblances between things and peoples in places. The understanding of place activates universals that are as impure as they are singular.

Local knowledge, then, comes down to an intimate understanding of what is generally true in the locally obvious; it concerns what is true about place in general as manifested *in this place.* Standing in this place thanks to the absolute here of my body, I understand what is true of other places over *there* precisely because of what I comprehend to be the case for this place under and around me. This does not mean that I understand what is true of *all* places, but my grasp of one place does allow me to grasp what holds, for the most part, in other places of the same region. My ongoing understanding of surrounding and like places is characterized by essential structures manifested in my own local place and illuminating other places as well. That anything like this induction of place is possible exhibits place's special power to embrace and support even as it bounds and locates.

To insist thus on the considerable outreach of local knowledge in this manner is necessarily to argue against what might be called, modifying a celebrated phrase of Whitehead's, the Fallacy of Misplaced Abstractness. By this is meant the tendency to posit a plane of abstract perfection and purity onto which complexities and dirty details come crowding. The fallacy consists in believing the plane to be a priori and settled, the complications a posteriori and changing. The abstractness of this plane is misplaced in that its status as prior is the reverse of what actually obtains:

the plane is itself an abstraction from what is concrete, that is, from that which is supposedly only secondary and epiphenomenal and yet is in fact phenomenally given as primary.

A conspicuous instance of this fallacy is the presumption that space furnishes just such a perfected plane, in relation to which mere places are nothing but parts or constructs, decoration, or projection. Here the misplacement is of place itself, which is shoved into a minority position (or, which comes to the same thing, reduced to position per se). Time also exemplifies the fallacy, especially when it is conceived (as it was by Locke) as "the length of one straight line, extended *in infinitum*" (Locke 1690: Book Two, chapter 15). In both cases, it is a matter of showing that the true concreteness belongs to place—plain old place, the place under our feet and around our eyes and in our ears.

It is undeniable that the concreteness of place has its own mode of abstractness: that is, in its relationality (there is never a *single* place existing in utter isolation) and in its inherent regionality (whereby a plurality of places are grouped together). We can admit such relating and regioning and still avert the danger of a misplaced abstractness proper to place itself. This danger consists in making place, or its components, into a new plane of perfection, a new tabula rasa, onto which all that matters in human experience comes to be written. Spatiocentrism and temporocentrism would then give way to an equally spurious topocentrism!

In order to prevent this mere reversal of priority, I have maintained that place is no empty substratum to which cultural predicates come to be attached; it is an already plenary presence permeated with culturally constituted institutions and practices. As the basis of collective as well as individual habitus, these institutions and practices pervade the bodies of sensing subjects in a given place as well as the gathering power of the place itself: even when prediscursively given (and prereflectively experienced), neither body nor place is precultural. Just as place invades space from the bottom up, so culture penetrates place from the top down as it were. But only *as it were,* for the very directionalities of "up" and "down" are legacies of bodily orientation in places (as Kant reminds us) and are elicited by powers inherent in places themselves (as Aristotle affirms). It would be more accurate to say simply, and in conclusion, that as places gather bodies in their midst in deeply enculturated ways, so cultures conjoin bodies in concrete circumstances of emplacement.

NOTES

1. See Kant (1950 [1787]: A 426 B 454ff.). In an antinomy one has compelling reasons to assert the truth of both the thesis and the antithesis of a given proposition; here, the thesis is that "the world has a beginning in time, and is also limited as regards space."

2. We might as well say, whereby Nature becomes Culture, since the dominant assumption in Western thought of the last three centuries is that Nature presents itself primarily as Space. *Ngurra* itself is said, significantly, to be "the place where one belongs . . . and to which one returns" (Myers 1991:55). The idea of "geography" as plain starting-point is especially odd, since geography is itself a second- or even third-order accretion to the experience of place and, more particularly, of landscape. Even a geographer as sensitive as Yi-Fu Tuan embraces it: "All people undertake to change amorphous space into articulated geography" (Tuan 1977:83).

3. The full statement is: "Perhaps [place] is the first of all things, since all existing things are either in place or not without place" (cited from Simplicius, *Commentary on Aristotle's Categories,* and translated by S. Sambursky in Sambursky 1982:37n). The power of the Archytian Axiom pervades the ancient Greek world. Plato cryptically quotes it in the *Timaeus* when he writes that "anything that is must needs be in some place and occupy some room, and . . . what is not somewhere in earth or heaven is nothing" (*Timaeus* 52 B, in Cornford 1957). Aristotle similarly inscribes the axiom at the opening of his treatment of place in his *Physics,* Book IV, when, referring to Hesiod, he says that "he thinks as most people do that everything is somewhere and in place" (*Physics* 208 b 32–33).

4. Immanuel Kant, preface to *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1974 [1797]); my translation. In this lecture course, Kant distinguishes between "physiological" and "pragmatic" forms of anthropology, strikingly anticipating much later distinctions between "physical" and "cultural" anthropology. In physiological anthropology, one studies "what nature makes of man," while in pragmatic anthropology the aim is to grasp "what man, as possessing free activity, can or does or must make of himself." He also discusses the need for fieldwork, which he labels "voyages," and for avoiding an anthropological enterprise based on racial differences as such.

5. Aristotle discusses eight senses of "in" in his treatment of place, concluding that the most pertinent sense is "as a thing is in a vessel" (*Physics* 210 a 24).

6. The sentence cited is from Husserl (1973:32; in italics in text). Internal and external horizons are discussed in Husserl (1973: section 8, "The Horizon-Structure of Experience"). Merleau-Ponty discusses "primordial depth" in his *Phenomenology of Perception* (1962:254–67). The affinity of the notions of "horizon" and "depth" is close: just as every perceived thing is perceived in its *own* depth—that is, within the horizons provided by its own sides—so a collection of things in a given perceptual field has a depth as a whole that is limited only by the external horizon of this same field. The affinity of horizon-cum-depth to the phenomenon of "lift-up-over sounding" in Feld's descriptive term for the Kaluli experience of immersion in places of the Papua New Guinea rainforest calls for further exploration (see Feld, this volume).

7. See Descartes (1985 [1644]: Part Two, sections 10–20). In section 10, Descartes says that "there is no real distinction between space, or internal place, and the corporeal substance contained in it; the only difference lies in the way in which we are accustomed to conceive of them" (1985 [1644]:227). As equivalent to "space," "internal place" is tantamount to three-dimensional volumetric extendedness. "External place" refers to the surface surrounding a given body in a place. For a more complete treatment of Descartes—and of other early modern thinkers—see part three of my book *The Fate of Place* (1996).

8. "Almost," I say, since Kant did note in passing that motion is "alteration of

place" (1950 [1787]: A 32 B 48). On "position" (*Stelle*), see Kant (1950 [1787]: A 263 B 319ff.).

9. It is not widely known that before 1772 (often taken as the moment of the "critical turn"), Kant designated his philosophical project as that of "general phenomenology." The term "phenomenology" itself was borrowed from Lambert's physics, which Kant had read in the early 1760s. Similarly, though to much different effect, Wittgenstein sometimes described his philosophical work of the 1920s as "phenomenology," but under the influence of the early Vienna Circle he came to abjure the term.

10. On corporeal intentionality and intentional threads, see Merleau-Ponty (1962: Introduction, Part One). Merleau-Ponty rarely speaks of place as such, but on my reading it is entailed in everything he says about the lived body and its "setting" (*milieu*), "landscape" (*paysage*), or "world" (*monde*). Husserl had already singled out the voluntariness of bodily movement as a noncontingent character: "In virtue of its faculty of free mobility, the subject can now induce the flow of the system of its appearances. . . . With regard to all other things, I have the freedom to change at will my position in relation to them" (1958: Second Book, 166–67).

11. See Basso, this volume: "As places animate the ideas and feelings of persons who attend to them, these same ideas and feelings animate the places on which attention has been bestowed."

12. On the aesthesiological body, see Husserl (1989:297), along with p. 163 on the body as a "physical-aesthesiological unity." On sonesthesia, see Feld, this volume. Concerning the body as a "field of localization," see Husserl (1989: section 38, esp. p. 159). The term "operative intentionality," employed in the previous paragraph, is also Husserl's and is described by Merleau-Ponty as "that which produces the natural and antepredicative unity of the world and of our life, being apparent in our desires, our evaluations and *in the landscape we see,* more clearly than in objective knowledge" (Merleau-Ponty 1962:xviii; my italics).

13. See Kant (1928 [1768]:21–22). Aristotle had already recognized the relativity of the three dimensional dyads to bodily position: "Relatively to us, they—above, below, right, left [etc.]—are not always the same, but come to be in relation to our position [*thesis*], according as we turn ourselves about" (*Physics* 208 b 14–16). But this relativity to the body is for Aristotle a contingent fact, since in his view "in nature [*en te phusei*] each [dimension] is distinct and separate" (*Physics* 208 b 18). Husserl argues, on the contrary, that such bodily based dimensionality is a *necessary* structure: "All spatial being necessarily appears in such a way that it appears either nearer or farther, above or below, right or left. . . . The body (*Leib*) then has, for its particular ego, the unique distinction of bearing in itself the zero point of all these orientations" (Husserl 1989:166; he italicizes "zero point").

14. On the bi-gendered body, see Strathern (1988). Concerning bi-location, see Lévy-Bruhl (1978:5–17). In a striking instance of bi-location, a Chambri informant pointed to a rock in his back yard to which ancestors were believed to have moored a boat and said, "Here I am! There I am!" (Frederick Errington and Deborah Gewertz, personal communication, 1993).

15. On the flesh of the world, see Merleau-Ponty (1968:123, 267).

16. "Toynbee is profoundly right to suggest that the nomad is . . . *he who does not move.* . . . Of course, the nomad moves, but while seated, and he is only seated while moving (the Bedouin galloping, knees on the saddle, sitting on the soles of his upturned feet, 'a feat of balance')" (Deleuze and Guattari 1986:51, their italics, with reference to Toynbee 1947:164–86).

17. On a different but related sense of locus, see Husserl (1989:35); on changing place in space, see Husserl (1989:213): "I, the person, am in space at this place. Others are over there, where their bodies are. They go for a walk, they pay a visit, and so forth, whereby indeed their spirits, along with their bodies, change their place in space." The difficulty with this formulation, however, is that it subordinates place to space, conceived of as "the space of the one objective surrounding world" (Husserl 1989:213), and thus fails to acknowledge the priority of place.

18. In transportation, I am passively carried by an animal or machine whose purposes are independent of my own; in transition, I move in order to pursue my own purposes, purposes that can be attained only in the new place to which I move. Of course, I may choose to effect a transition *by means of transportation,* but then I bend the animal or mechanical purposes to suit the realization of my own aims. The difference, starkly put, is between letting the horse roam where it wants to go and steering it to my own destination. For further discussion of moving between places, see Casey (1993: ch. 9).

19. So say both Heidegger (1972:17) and Merleau-Ponty (1968:266), neither knowing the other had so spoken.

20. On the special aptitude of places for holding memories, see Casey (1987: ch. 9).

21. Such sameness of place contrasts strikingly with that posited by Leibniz in his Fifth Letter to Clarke (1716). For Leibniz, to be in the same place signifies merely to be in a *position* or "site" (*situs*) that can in principle be occupied by any other object and that stays unchanged by the fact of occupation. See Leibniz (1956:1145–48).

22. On "morphological concepts of vague configurational types," see Husserl (1982: section 74). Concerning "essentially occasional expressions," see Husserl (1970: section 36). In an essentially occasional expression, "it is essential to orient actual meaning to the occasion, the speaker and the situation" (1970:315). Husserl gives the example of "here," which "designates the speaker's vaguely bounded spatial environment. . . . The genuine meaning of the word is first constituted in the variable presentation of this place" (1970:317). For contemporary treatments of these same matters in analytical philosophy, see Matthews (1982), especially chapter 6, "Demonstrative Identification," which includes a discerning assessment of "here" (see pp. 151–69), and Kripke (1980), especially his brief discussion of demonstratives as "rigid designators" on pages 10n and 49n. Notice that the use of the definite article to refer to a place, though perfectly permissible in English, is often uninformative as to *location:* "the garage," "the grocery store," "the lake." In such cases, the location is presumed to be known in advance, as when we say, "Meet me at the library."

23. For a convincing critique of "stratigraphic" theories of meaning, see Geertz (1973:37–51).

24. I take landscape to be distinct from geography, which is a second-order representation of a physical place or region. Except for the two-handedness that is a condition of orientation in reading a map, in geography no body need be present; indeed, disembodiment is a geographical ideal. But we are in a landscape only by grace of being bodily there. On the distinction between landscape and geography, see Straus (1963:308).

25. It will be noticed that I have been attempting to speak of place—including landscape, construed as the face of place, its expressive facies or sensuous surface—without making any reference to *mind.* Even if it is true that "the mind is its own place" (Milton, *Paradise Lost*) or that "the mind is the place of forms" (Aristotle, *De Anima*), such statements do not establish that the mind, even the savage mind, is

essential to place. My emphasis on body is meant to dispute a mentalistic (if not overtly idealist) tendency that begins in Kant, continues with Cassirer, and is still present in contemporary speculation.

26. I borrow the term "empirical commonality" from Geertz (1973), who appears to employ it as equivalent to "substantive identity." Cultural anthropology, he writes, should seek "a definition of man stressing not so much the empirical commonalities in his behavior, from place to place and time to time, but rather the mechanisms by whose agency the breadth and indeterminateness of his inherent capacities are reduced to the narrowness and specificity of his actual accomplishments" (Geertz 1973:45). In the idea of shared "mechanisms," Geertz suggests something close to what Jerome Bruner has labeled "process universals," in contrast to "product universals." Speaking of the way in which languages distinguish between marked and unmarked features, Bruner observes that this is "a way in which *all* languages deal with the task of alerting the attention of the recipients of messages to what needs special processing. *That* is a process universal" (Bruner 1981:256; his italics). In contrast, a product universal is found in the fact that "*most* languages mark the plural form and not the singular" (Bruner 1981:257; his italics).

27. Merleau-Ponty (1964b:120) writes that in anthropology what is at issue is "no longer the overarching universal of a strictly objective method, but a sort of lateral universal which we acquire through ethnological experience and its incessant testing of the self through the other person and the other person through the self." I wish to thank Irene Klaver for drawing my attention to the importance of this passage.

28. Concerning regional ontology, see Husserl (1982: sections 9, 10, 16). Formal ontology is "the eidetic science of any object whatever" (1982: section 10). Notice that "material" in Husserl's usage signifies concrete content, *not* anything necessarily physical. On Nature versus Soul, see especially Husserl (1989: section 2, "The Constitution of Animal Nature").

29. For Husserl, "region is nothing other than the *total highest generic unity belonging to a concretum*" (1982: section 16, p. 31; his italics). The relation between a region and its concreta—whether entities or events—is not just relational but *reciprocally* relational. To its concreta (i.e., its inhabitants) a region lends "generic unity" in the form of an "essentially unitary nexus," but the concreta give to this unified nexus specific positions that are indicated by deictic markers, including both toponyms and choronyms: I remember myself as having been on the "north rim" of the Grand Canyon. (Husserl's phrases are from 1982: section 16, p. 31.) I resort to "choronym" as designating the name of a region proper (*chōrar*) in distinction to a toponym of a place (*topos*).

30. On eidetic singularities, which are tantamount to the lowest specific differences, see Husserl (1982: section 12, "Genus and Species"). The "object in general" is the proper content of formal ontology, while "this-here" is defined by Husserl as "a pure, syntactically formless, individual single particular" (1982: section 12, p. 29). To interpret place as an intermediate term as I have just done is to rejoin Lévi-Strauss's opening gambit in *The Savage Mind:* just as traditional peoples do not lack abstract categories ("concepts" such as "tree" or "animal"), so they are also not precluded from employing the most intensely concrete terms (on the contrary: they are remarkably adept in just this regard, for example, in the identification and naming of botanical or animal species). But even the most concrete terms are already abstract to some degree, already climbing the scale of forms: "Words like 'oak', 'beech', 'birch', etc., are no less entitled to be considered as abstract words than the word 'tree'; and a language possessing only the word 'tree' would be, from this point of view, less rich in concepts than one which lacked this term but contained dozens or hundreds for the individual species and varieties" (Lévi-Strauss 1966:2).

31. See also his statement that "there is an informing of perception by culture which enables us to say that culture is perceived—there is a dilatation of perception" (Merleau-Ponty 1968:212).

32. Curiously but significantly, the wildness at stake here is precisely what makes cultural anthropology possible, in Merleau-Ponty's assessment. Once having lived in another culture, the anthropologist "has regained possession of that untamed region of himself, unincorporated in his own culture, through which he communicates with other cultures" (Merleau-Ponty 1964:120). The wildness within is the condition of possibility for grasping the wildness without. For further discussion of the relation of culture and nature in the context of wild places, see Casey (1993:229–40).

33. German *Raum,* "space," is the etymon of English *room*. Compare Merleau-Ponty's working note of June 1, 1960: "In fact it is a question of grasping the *nexus*—neither 'historical' nor 'geographic' of history and transcendental geology, this very time that is space, this very space that is time . . . the simultaneous *Urstiftung* of time and space which makes there be a historical landscape and a quasi-geographical inscription of history" (Merleau-Ponty 1968:259).

34. Newton adds: "All things are *placed in time* as to order of succession; and in space as to order of situation. It is from their essence or nature that they are places; and that the primary places of things should be movable, is absurd" (Newton 1687: section IV; my italics). Leibniz similarly claimed that "every change, spiritual as well as material, has its own place (*sedes*), so to speak, in the order of time, as well as its own location in the order of coexistents, or in space" (letter to De Volder of June 20, 1703, in *Philosophical Papers and Letters,* II, p. 865).

35. To be simply located is to be "*here* in space and *here* in time, or here in space-time, in a perfectly definite sense which does not require for its explanation any reference to other regions of space-time" (Whitehead 1925:50; his italics).

36. This is not to say that the status of space and time, once given a basis in place, becomes simply secure, or that their common reconstruction entails a creative, or even a productive, outcome. On many occasions, notably on many modern occasions, a thin temporality and a sheer spatiality derive from a placial matrix. Hospitals and penitentiaries of the sort analyzed by Foucault or shopping malls of the kind on which most Americans have come to depend are cases of deficient, or at the very least unaesthetic, modes of emplacement. They are architectural and institutional events whose spatiotemporality is literally superficial, a matter of surfaces rather than of depths. Yet even in these inauspicious instances space and time come paired in place, which continues to hold them together, however inauthentic or detrimental such holding may turn out to be. When emplacement enriches rather than deprives, as in imaginatively place-specific architecture, the space and time that result become the very basis of expansively expressive experiences.

37. On the near sphere (*Nähsphäre*), see Husserl (1981:249ff.) The idea is taken up by Patrick Heelan in the first chapter of his *Space-Time and the Philosophy of Science* (1979), where the specifically hyperbolic geometry of the near sphere is developed—with interesting implications for a mathematically precise study of place.

38. On "intimate immensity," see Bachelard (1964: ch. 8). The specifically social metaphoricity of the house is asserted by van Gennep (1960:26): "A society is similar to a house divided into rooms and corridors."

39. Concerning the particularity of the threshold, van Gennep says: "The neutral zone shrinks progressively till it ceases to exist except as a simple stone, a beam,

or a threshold" (1960:17). Concerning the complexities of the threshold in one particular culture, see Frake (1980:214–32).

40. Breuer and Freud (1955: ch. 4). Concerning "theoretical space," see Bourdieu's remark that "as long as mythic-ritual space is seen as an *opus operatum,* that is, as a timeless order of things coexisting, it is never more than a theoretical space" (1977:117). Durkheim's treatment of the collective basis of space (and time) is found in Durkheim (1915:23ff.).

41. Munn's definition of "intersubjective spacetime" is "a multidimensional, symbolic order and process—a spacetime of self-other relations constituted in terms of and by means of specific types of practice" (1986:10). The term "place" is rarely used by Munn. Exceptions include the following statements: a kula gift "will not disappear but will be retained as a potentiality within the ongoing present and at some later time (and place)" (1986:65); "each household and house is a relatively autonomous locus" (1986:69); gardens in Gawa "constitute an interior spacetime whose ancestral stones must be maintained in place" (1986:10). Munn also employs the locution "spatiotemporal locus" (1986:10).

42. Munn remarks that "sociocultural practices" of many sorts "do not simply go on *in* or *through* time and space, but [they also] . . . constitute (create) the spacetime . . . in which they 'go on'" (Munn 1986:11). She adds that kula transactors are "concretely producing their own spacetime" (1986:11). This, in my view, applies more appropriately to place.

43. Indeed, the distinction between *estate,* that is, the "country," as the locus of ritual ownership for patrilineal descent-groups, and *range,* that is, the circuit over which a given group hunts and forages, is by no means crisp. Sometimes quite distinct—for example, in times of drought—and sometimes coincident, as in times of good precipitation, their relationship is continually changing, which means that their common boundaries are always shifting. Hence Stanner proposes that the two notions, in their covariant vicissitudes, be considered a "domain": "estate and range together may be said to have constituted a *domain,* which was an ecological life-space" (1965:2; his italics). On the indefiniteness of aboriginal boundaries, see also Myers (1991:93): the "inseparability of people and place makes territorial boundaries highly flexible if not insignificant." Here Myers insists on a property of places that does *not* belong to "impersonal geography," that is, to sheer space regarded as preexisting the constitution of particular places. For an illuminating discussion of boundaries in general, see Lefebvre (1991:192–94). On *tok* as "path" in Kaluli culture, see Steven Feld's remark that "the concept . . . grounds the boundedness of places in the figure of their connectedness" (Feld, this volume).

2

Wisdom Sits in Places

Notes on a Western Apache Landscape

Keith H. Basso

Place is the first of all beings, since everything that exists is in a place and cannot exist without a place.
—*Archytas,* Commentary on Aristotle's Categories

In this unsettled age, when large portions of the earth's surface are being ravaged by industrialism, when on several continents indigenous peoples are being forcibly uprooted by wanton encroachments upon their homelands, when American Indian tribes are mounting major legal efforts to secure permanent protection for sacred sites now controlled by federal agencies, when philosophers and poets (and even the odd sociologist or two) are asserting that attachments to geographical localities contribute fundamentally to the formation of personal and social identities, when new forms of "environmental awareness" are being more radically charted and urgently advocated than ever in the past—in these disordered times, when contrasting ways of living on the planet are attracting unprecedented attention worldwide, it is unfortunate that cultural anthropologists seldom study what people make of places.[1]

Sensitive to the fact that human existence is irrevocably situated in time and space, and keenly aware that social life is everywhere accomplished through an exchange of symbolic forms, anthropologists might be expected to report routinely on the varieties of meaning conferred by men and women on features of their natural surroundings. Yet ethnographic inquiry into cultural constructions of geographical realities is at best weakly developed. Willing enough to investigate the material and organizational means by which whole communities fashion workable adaptations to the physical environment, ethnographers have been notably less inclined to examine the elaborate arrays of conceptual and