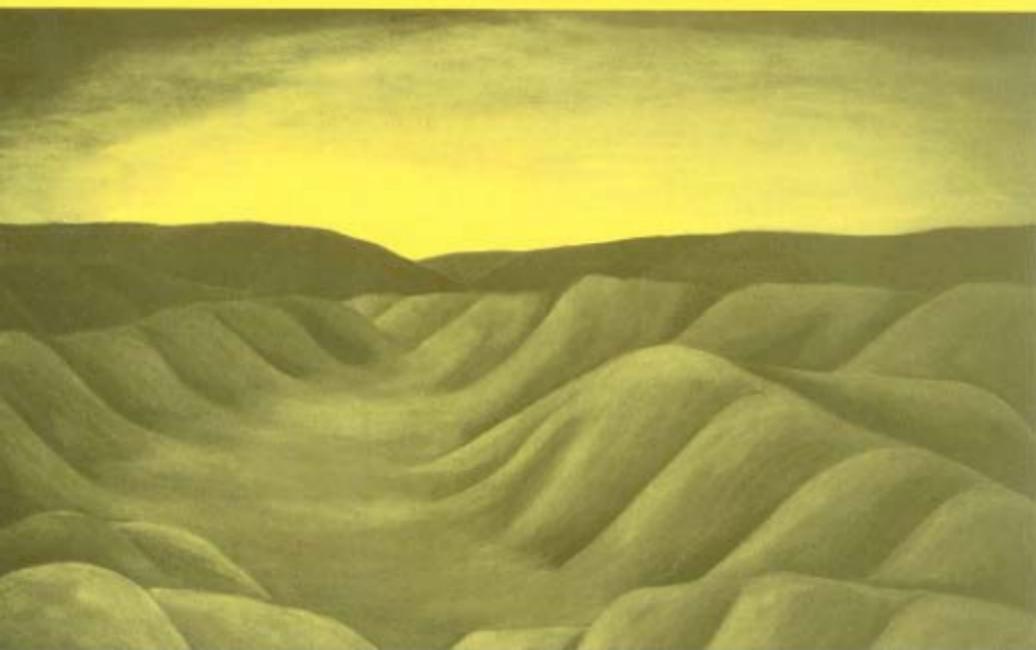


# Place and Experience

A Philosophical Topography

J. E. Malpas



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## PLACE AND EXPERIENCE

### *A Philosophical Topography*

While the 'sense of place' is a familiar theme in poetry and art, philosophers have generally given little or no attention to place and the human relation to place. In *Place and Experience*, J. E. Malpas seeks to remedy this by advancing an account of the nature and significance of place as a complex but unitary structure that encompasses self and other, space and time, subjectivity and objectivity. Drawing on a range of sources from Proust and Wordsworth to Davidson, Strawson and Heidegger, he argues that the significance of place is not to be found in our experience of place so much as in the grounding of experience in place, and that this binding to place is not a contingent feature of human existence, but derives from the very nature of human thought, experience and identity as established in and through place.

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



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*A Philosophical Topography*

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## *Introduction: the influence of place*

Is it some influence, as a vapour which exhales from the ground, or something in the gales which blow there, or in all things there brought agreeably to my spirit . . . ?

Henry David Thoreau, *Journal*, 21 July 1851<sup>1</sup>

We are all familiar with the effect of human thought and activity on the landscapes in which human beings dwell. Human beings change the land around them in a way and on a scale matched, for the most part, by no other animal. The land around us is a reflection, not only of our practical and technological capacities, but also of our culture and society – of our very needs, our hopes, our preoccupations and dreams. This fact is itself worthy of greater notice and attention than perhaps it is sometimes given (it is a theme to which I shall return), yet the human relation to the land, and to the enviroing world in general, is clearly not a relation characterised by an influence running in just one direction. There are obvious ways, of course, in which the environment determines our activities and our thoughts – we build here rather than there because of the greater suitability of the site; the presence of a river forces us to construct a bridge to carry the road across; we plant apples rather than mangoes because the climate is too cold – but there are other much less straightforward and perhaps more pervasive ways in which our relation to landscape and environment is indeed one of our own *affectivity* as much as of our ability to *effect*.

The relation of person to place is a recurrent theme in Wordsworth's poetry. One of his 'Poems on the Naming of Places' recounts the story of a shepherd, Michael, who dwelt 'Upon the Forest-side in Grasmere Vale' and to whom 'a stragglng heap of unhewn stones' stands as a

<sup>1</sup> Henry David Thoreau, *Journal Vol 3: 1848–1851, The Writings of Henry David Thoreau*, ed. Robert Sattelmeyer, Mark R. Patterson and William Rossi (Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 318.

mute memorial. Of Michael's own relation to the countryside in which he dwells Wordsworth tells us:

. . . grossly that man errs, who should suppose  
That the green Valleys, and the Streams and Rocks,  
Were things indifferent to the Shepherd's thoughts.<sup>2</sup>

The point here is not to direct attention to the shepherd's own influence on his surroundings, but rather to the effect of those surroundings on Michael himself. Wordsworth's concern is to make plain, as Seamus Heaney puts it, how 'the Westmoreland mountains were . . . much more than a picturesque backdrop for his shepherd's existence, how they were rather companionable and influential in the strict sense of the word "influential" – things flowed in from them to Michael's psychic life. This Lake District was not inanimate stone but active nature, humanized and humanizing'.<sup>3</sup> Not only is Michael's own identity bound up with the hills and valleys of the district in which he lives, and which themselves take on an almost personal character, but Heaney seems to suggest that it is the shepherd's very humanity that is bound in this way – nature is both 'humanized *and* humanizing'. As Wordsworth himself writes of Michael and his relation to the countryside in which he lived: 'these fields, these hills . . . were his living Being, even more Than his own Blood'.<sup>4</sup>

The idea that human identity is somehow tied to location is not, of course, peculiar to Wordsworth, nor even to romantic nature poetry. It is an idea that has both a long ancestry over the centuries and a wide currency across cultures. Aboriginal Australians have a conception of human life, and of all life, as inextricably bound up with the land. As

<sup>2</sup> William Wordsworth, 'Michael: A Pastoral Poem', from 'Poems on the Naming of Places', *Lyrical Ballads*, in *Wordsworth: Poetry and Prose* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1955), p. 195.

<sup>3</sup> Seamus Heaney, 'The Sense of Place', *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968–1978* (London: Faber & Faber, 1984), p. 145. Heaney's own poetry has also, of course, been strongly characterised by a 'sense of place' – a sense both topographic and historical in its sensitivities and almost 'archaeological' in its preoccupation with history as something buried in the very soil at our feet. On the sense of place in Heaney's poetry, see, for instance, some of the essays in Harold Bloom (ed.), *Seamus Heaney* (New Haven: Chelsea House, 1986), as well as Heaney's own discussions of these matters in *Preoccupations* and, of course, the treatment of such matters in his own poems, especially in volumes such as *Seeing Things* (London: Faber & Faber, 1991). On Wordsworth's 'poetry of place', see especially Jonathan Bate, *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* (London: Routledge, 1991); also Geoffrey Hartman, 'Wordsworth, Inscriptions and Romantic Nature Poetry' and 'Romantic Poetry and the Genius Loci', in *Beyond Formalism: Literary Essays 1958–1970* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970); and John Kerrigan, 'Wordsworth and the Sonnet: Building, Dwelling, Thinking', *Essays in Criticism*, 35 (1985), 45–75.

<sup>4</sup> *Wordsworth: Poetry and Prose*, p. 195.

Fred Myers writes: 'For the Pintupi [an Aboriginal people of the Western Desert region of Australia] individuals come from the country, and this relationship provides a primary basis for owning a sacred site and for living in the area.'<sup>5</sup> Tony Swain elucidates this relation between individual and land further through an explanation of Aboriginal beliefs concerning conception: 'The mother does not contribute to the ontological substance of the child, but rather "carries" a life whose essence belongs, and belongs alone, to a site. The child's core identity is determined by his or her place of derivation. The details vary; the location might be directly linked with feeling the child enter the womb or, alternatively, dreams or foodstuffs may provide clues as to the site from which the spirit derived . . . Life is annexation of place.'<sup>6</sup> A child's identity is thus derived, on this account, from a particular place and thereby also from a particular spiritual and totemic ancestry. So important is this tie of person to place that for Aboriginal peoples the land around them everywhere is filled with marks of individual and ancestral origins and is dense with story and myth. In traditional terms, then, for an Aboriginal person to be removed from that country to which he or she belongs is for them to be deprived of their very substance, and in past times such removal – particularly when it involved imprisonment – frequently led to sickness and death.

While such Aboriginal Australian views of the relation between persons and place may seem rather extreme or even peculiar to non-Aboriginal eyes, such views have clear correlates elsewhere. Across the Tasman, in New Zealand, Maori beliefs also emphasise connection to

<sup>5</sup> Fred R. Myers, *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self* (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1986), p. 51. It is significant that loss of connection with the land is one of the significant after-effects of the forced separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families (an institutionalised practice throughout Australia from the colonial period right up until the nineteen-seventies) that is noted in the report of the recent national inquiry into the 'stolen generation'. As one submission put it, 'Separation has broken or disrupted not only the links that Aboriginals have with other Aboriginals, but, importantly, the spiritual connection we should have had with our country, our land. It is vital to our healing process that these bonds be re-established or re-affirmed' (National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families [Australia], *Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families* (Sydney: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997)).

<sup>6</sup> Tony Swain, *A Place for Strangers* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 39. Swain notes that in some areas the emphasis on place-identity has been overlain by a turn to a patrilineal principle, but this, he argues, is largely a result of contact with non-Aboriginal peoples (see *A Place for Strangers*, pp. 39–43). It should also be noted that the Aboriginal view of conception in terms of the influence of place need not imply an ignorance on the part of Aboriginal peoples of the role of sexual intercourse in reproduction (although it has often been taken as such), but can be seen rather as an assertion of the even more fundamental role to be accorded to the influence of place.

place and to the land as constitutive of identity. As Te Rangi Hiroa explains, 'In the course of time the principal tribes with their subtribes came to occupy definite areas with fixed boundaries. The love of their own territory developed to an absorbing degree, for tribal history was written over its hills and vales, its rivers, streams, and lakes, and upon its cliffs and shores. The earth and caves held the bones of their illustrious dead, and dirges and laments teemed with references to the love lavished upon the natural features of their home lands.'<sup>7</sup> And, while the idea is often expressed in very different ways in different cultures and traditions, the basic notion of a tie between place and human identity is quite widespread, not only among pre-modern cultures from Australia to the Americas,<sup>8</sup> but also within contemporary culture. Within the latter context it often appears in terms of a preoccupation with genealogy, and so with the tracing of family ties back to particular locations, as well as in the sense of loss or dislocation that is so often noted as a feature of contemporary life.<sup>9</sup>

While it is not an exclusively European or Western notion, that human identity is somehow inseparably bound up with human location is nevertheless an idea that has been especially taken up in Western culture, particularly in its art and literature, over the last two to three hundred years. There is no dearth of examples here, but one especially significant literary instantiation of this preoccupation with place and locality is Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*.<sup>10</sup> One should not

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in *Countless Signs: The New Zealand Landscape in Literature*, compiled by Trudie McNaughton (Auckland: Reed Methuen, 1986), pp. 3–4. See also H.-K. Yoon, *Maori Mind, Maori Land, Essays on the Cultural Geography of the Maori People from an Outsider's Perspective* (Berne: Peter Lang, 1986). The connection with the land, and the invocation of place or locale, is an important element in much Maori writing in English over the last twenty years or so – see, for instance, the work of Witi Ihimaera in novels such as *Tangi* (Auckland: Heinemann, 1973).

<sup>8</sup> See, for instance, Mark Nuttall's discussion of such ideas as they arise within a very different cultural and physical environment in 'Place, Identity and Landscape in North-West Greenland', in Gavin D. Flood (ed.), *Mapping Invisible Worlds, Cosmos, Yearbook of the Traditional Cosmology Society* 9 (Edinburgh: University Press, 1993), pp. 75–88. Yi-Fu Tuan provides a useful overview of ideas of attachment to place and landscape across a variety of cultures in 'Geopietty: A Theme in Man's Attachment to Nature and to Place', in David Lowenthal and Martyn J. Bowden (eds.), *Geographies of the Mind: Essays in Historical Geosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), pp. 11–39.

<sup>9</sup> In his *Returning to Nothing: The Meaning of Lost Places* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), Peter Read does an excellent job of documenting the way in which place and locality are central components in the self-identity of many contemporary Australians from a variety of backgrounds.

<sup>10</sup> I refer to Proust's work using the English title under which I suspect it is best known to English readers, although the literal translation of the original French title of the work, *A la recherche du temps perdu*, is 'in search of lost time'. A more recent English translation uses the latter title – see *In Search of Lost Time*, trans. C. K. Scott Moncrieff & Terence Kilmartin, revised by D. J. Enright (London: Chatto and Windus, 1992).

allow oneself to be deceived by the apparent focus on time or on the past that is suggested by the title of the work (whether the original French – *A la recherche du temps perdu* – or the title under which it is perhaps most familiar in English). Proust's work is as much about place and space as it is about the past or about time (a point to which I shall return) and Proust treats the relation between persons and their locations in a manner that is particularly striking. In Proust's work, persons and places intermingle with one another in such a way that places take on the individuality of persons, while persons are themselves individuated and characterised by their relation to place;<sup>11</sup> persons come to be seen, to use a phrase from Lawrence Durrell, almost 'as functions of a landscape'<sup>12</sup> – in some cases, even of a particular room or setting. In fact, the narrator of Proust's novel, Marcel, grasps his own life, and the time in which it is lived, only through his recovery of the places in relation to which that life has been constituted. *Remembrance of Things Past* is thus an invocation and exploration of a multitude of places and, through those places, of the persons who appear with them. As Georges Poulet writes: 'Infallibly, then, with Proust, in reality as in dream, persons and places are united. The Proustian imagination would not know how to conceive beings otherwise than in placing them against a local background that plays for them the part of foil and mirror.'<sup>13</sup>

The idea that the self is to be discovered through an investigation of the places it inhabits is the central idea in Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* and Bachelard talks of both the love of place – 'topophilia' – and of the investigation of places – 'topoanalysis' – as essential notions in any phenomenological/psychoanalytic study of memory, self and mind.<sup>14</sup> In Bachelard, the life of the mind is given form in the places and spaces in which human beings dwell and those places themselves shape and influence human memories, feelings and thoughts. In this way, the spaces of inner and outer – of mind and world – are transformed one into the other as inner space is externalised and outer space brought within. In this respect, Merleau-Ponty seems to express

<sup>11</sup> See Georges Poulet, *Proustian Space*, trans. Elliott Coleman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), pp. 19–33.

<sup>12</sup> See 'Landscape and Character', *Spirit of Place. Mediterranean Writings* (London: Faber & Faber, 1969), p. 156.

<sup>13</sup> Georges Poulet, *Proustian Space*, p. 27.

<sup>14</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), p. 8. Elsewhere Bachelard quotes from the work of Noël Arnaud: 'Je suis l'espace où je suis' – 'I am the space where I am' (*ibid.*, p. 137).

an idea found in Bachelard, as well as in his own work, when he writes that ‘The world is wholly inside and I am wholly outside myself’<sup>15</sup> and at the same time suggests a breakdown in the very dichotomy that is invoked. The stuff of our ‘inner’ lives is thus to be found in the exterior spaces or places in which we dwell, while those same spaces and places are themselves incorporated ‘within’ us. Proust’s *Remembrance of Things Past* can be seen as a special exercise in the exploration of such places, and thus as an exercise in something like the topoanalysis described by Bachelard – although it is an analysis of place that looks, not only to the intimacy of the enclosed spaces of cupboard, room and home, but also to the larger space of the garden, the village, the city, the plain, the sea and the sky. And, like Bachelard, Proust presents such topoanalysis as an exploration of our own selves as well as an exploration of love through an exploration of place – in Proust we find topophilia writ large.

Proust is perhaps unusual in his almost explicit thematising of the relation between persons and places, but the same basic idea of human life as essentially a life of location, of self-identity as a matter of identity found in place, and of places themselves as somehow suffused with the ‘human’, is common to the work of poets and novelists from all parts of the globe and in relation to all manner of landscapes and localities: from Patrick White to Toni Morrison; from William Faulkner to Salman Rushdie. Wordsworth regarded poetry itself as having its origins in memorial inscription – in epitaphs and in the naming of places<sup>16</sup> – and the novel seems to have its beginnings in a fascination with the exploration of places and to be, in some respects, an outgrowth of the travelogue.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, in Herman Melville, whose own works can often be seen as instances of the literary preoccupation with place and locale, we find the claim that ‘nearly all literature, in one sense, is made up of guide-books.’<sup>18</sup> And thus, as Proust’s great work is an

<sup>15</sup> *The Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), p. 407.

<sup>16</sup> See Geoffrey Hartman, ‘Wordsworth, Inscriptions and Romantic Nature Poetry’. A great many, perhaps the vast majority, of Wordsworth’s own poems can be viewed as instances of just such ‘memorialisation’.

<sup>17</sup> See, for instance, Percy Adams, *Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Novel* (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1983).

<sup>18</sup> Melville, *Redburn: His First Voyage* (New York: Doubleday, 1957), p. 151. The comment appears in a chapter in which the narrator discovers the unreliability of an old, but cherished, guide to Liverpool. ‘Guide-books’, he tells us, ‘are the least reliable books in all literature; and nearly all literature, in one sense, is made up of guide-books’.

examination of the human through 'humanised and humanising' place, so also in White and Morrison, in Faulkner and Rushdie, in Heaney and Wordsworth, the exploration of character and event, of life and love, of culture and idea is one and the same with the exploration, and often the rediscovery, of landscape, countryside and place.

It might be thought that the idea of human life and identity as established in some special relation to landscape, and place is really just a sort of literary conceit – part of the creative and imaginative technique of the novelist or poet rather than having anything to do with the character of human being as such. Similarly, more generalised conceptions of human identity as tied to human locality, whether amongst Aboriginal peoples or others, might be thought to provide evidence of no more than a certain commonplace feature of human psychology – a tendency that is perhaps grounded in biology or evolutionary history, but which may be a purely contingent feature of human character varying as culture and society vary. For my own part I find such views of the contingency of the connection to place highly implausible. And this is not just because of some personal experience of my own regarding the felt power of the human attachment to place nor of the emotional impact that a particular landscape or locality may bring with it. The idea that human identity is somehow tied to locality in a quite fundamental way seems to be given support, though sometimes in an indirect fashion, by a great many purely philosophical considerations as well as by recent work in other more empirical disciplines. Some of these considerations will form the basis for the discussion in the chapters to come, but it is important for now to see the way in which such considerations provide, at the very least, a *prima facie* case for taking the sorts of ideas found, perhaps in somewhat embellished form, in writers such as Proust and Wordsworth, as well as in Aboriginal tradition and elsewhere, very seriously indeed.

Gaston Bachelard, to whom I referred above, is, of course, one important philosopher who has treated extensively of the role of place and space in the understanding of human life and mind, but he is certainly not alone in his concern with the significance of such concepts. Within the phenomenological and hermeneutic traditions, the idea of the inseparability of persons from the places they inhabit is an especially important theme in the work of Martin Heidegger. Although Heidegger's *Being and Time* provides a somewhat problematic analysis of the role of spatiality, and so also of place,<sup>19</sup> in the structure of human

existence (or properly of *Dasein*), still Heidegger's fundamental conception of human existence as 'being-in-the-world' implies the impossibility of properly understanding human being in a way that would treat it as only contingently related to its surroundings and to the concrete structures of activity in which it is engaged. Heidegger's thinking in the period after *Being and Time* provides an even stronger emphasis on concepts of place and locality – so much so that Heidegger presents the idea of place or site (Heidegger most often refers to 'topos' in the Greek or 'Ort' in the German) as the central concept in his later thinking.<sup>20</sup> Merleau-Ponty's analyses of embodiment and spatiality in *The Phenomenology of Perception*, while in some respects more inclined towards traditional phenomenology than Heidegger's work and so in some respects perhaps more Cartesian and Husserlian in spirit, nevertheless provides another important instance in which the central role of locality, especially as this arises through embodiment, is given philosophical grounding. For Merleau-Ponty, human thought and experience is essentially grounded in the corporeal and the concrete, and is therefore also intimately connected with the enviroing world in its particularity and immediacy.

In Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, it is not merely human identity that is tied to place or locality, but the very possibility of being the sort of creature that can engage *with* a world (and, more particularly, with the objects and events within it), that can think *about* that world, and that can find itself *in* the world. The idea of a close connection between human 'being-in-the-world' and spatiality, locality and embodiment, that can be discerned (though in different ways and with differing emphases) in the work of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, reappears in the work of many more recent thinkers working in a number of different fields. Sometimes that influence is to be seen in the explicit thematisation of notions of place and locality. This is especially so in relation to the Heideggerian influence on architectural theory, in the work of writers such as Karsten Harries<sup>21</sup> and Christian Norberg-

<sup>19</sup> See my *Heidegger's Topology of Being*, in preparation.

<sup>20</sup> In the Le Thor seminar, held in 1969, Heidegger characterises the final stage of his thinking as preoccupied with 'the question of the place, or of the locality of Being [*'Ortschaft des Seins'*] – whence the name *Topologie des Seins*' – Martin Heidegger, *Seminare, Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 15 (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1986), p. 344. A more detailed analysis and exploration of the concept of place in Heidegger's thought is also undertaken in my *Heidegger's Topology of Being*.

<sup>21</sup> See especially Karsten Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1997).

Schulz,<sup>22</sup> and also on geographical thinking, particularly within the framework of so-called ‘humanistic geography’,<sup>23</sup> and environmentalism.<sup>24</sup> And even aside from the influence of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, ideas of place and locality have become almost commonplace in much contemporary work in social sciences and the humanities – including work in areas such as theology.<sup>25</sup> Nor do Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty possess a monopoly on the deployment of place as the focus for philosophical inquiry. Edward Casey, in his *The Fate of Place*, recounts a story that encompasses both the relative decline in the attention given to place over much of the history of philosophy, and

<sup>22</sup> See, for instance, Christian Norberg-Schulz, *The Concept of Dwelling* (New York: Rizzoli, 1985).

<sup>23</sup> See especially the work of Anne Buttimer and David Seamon – as exemplified, for instance, in Buttimer and Seamon (eds.), *The Human Experience of Space and Place* (London: Croom Helm, 1980). Heideggerian influences aside, there is, of course, a long tradition in geographical writing that emphasises the determining effect of physical environment on human life, particularly as it affects large-scale social and historical developments. The work of Friedrich Ratzel was especially influential in the development of ideas of ‘geographical determinism’ from the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth (see his *Anthropogeographie* (Stuttgart: J. Engelhorn’s Nachf., 1921–22)). Extreme forms of geographical determinism were sometimes a feature of the race theories that gained wide currency, especially in Germany, during the 1920s and 1930s (see, for instance, Ludwig Ferdinand Clauss, *Die nordische Seele: Eine Einführung in die Rassenseelenkunde* (Munich: 1932)). Its sometime association with racist ideologies aside, geographical determinism, other than in the most anodyne form, is no longer a strong force in contemporary thought (though see Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1997) for a more recent attempt to understand the role of environment and geography in large-scale historical processes and in the differential development of cultures). An approach that has seen a renewed influence amongst some contemporary geographers, and that bases geographical inquiry in concepts of region and locality, is exemplified in the work of the French geographer Paul Vidal de la Blanche (see, for instance, Vidal de la Blanche, *Principles of Human Geography*, trans. M. T. Bingham (New York: Henry Holt, 1926) and also Vincent Berdoulay’s brief account of the Vidalian legacy in ‘Place, Meaning and Discourse in French Language Geography’, in John A. Agnew and James S. Duncan (eds.), *The Power of Place* [Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989], pp. 125–8). Vidal de la Blanche’s approach was also influential, through the work of such as Lucien Febvre, on the Annales school of French historiography (see Febvre, *A Geographical Introduction to History*, produced in collaboration with Lionel Bataillon, trans. E. G. Mountford and J. H. Paxton (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1925) – Febvre is contemptuous of Ratzel, but full of praise for Vidal de la Blanche). As John Agnew points out, however, the current emphasis given to spatial and topographic notions, in geography and social science, is much less derived from the regions-based approach of such as Vidal de la Blanche and is more part of a general turn towards spatialised conceptions of social organisation and political power – see John A. Agnew, ‘The Devaluation of Place in Social Science’, in John A. Agnew and James S. Duncan (eds.), *The Power of Place*, pp. 1–28. For an overview of geographical thought since 1945 see R. J. Johnston, *Geography and Geographers* (New York: Edward Arnold, 1991, 4<sup>th</sup> edn) and for an excellent general survey of ideas concerning the relation between culture and environment from ancient times up until the eighteenth century see Clarence J. Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967)).

<sup>24</sup> See David Seamon and Robert Mugerauer (eds.), *Dwelling, Place and Environment* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), for a cross-section of the various ways in which Heidegger’s influence has been felt in both geographical and environmentalist circles.

<sup>25</sup> See, for instance, Geoffrey R. Lilburne, *A Sense of Place: A Christian Theology of the Land* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989).

the re-emergence of place as a significant notion in the work of Bachlard, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, as well as in Derrida, Deleuze, Guattari and Irigaray.<sup>26</sup>

Of course, sometimes the concepts of place and space are taken up as 'strategic' concepts – as tools that have a particular 'political' purpose behind them – rather than as concepts to be investigated in their own right, and this seems to be true, for instance, of some of the uses to which Deleuze and Guattari have put their idea of 'nomadism' as developed in *A Thousand Plateaus*<sup>27</sup> as well as of some feminist deployments of notions of corporeality and spatiality. Yet even such strategic uses of place and space provoke the question why those notions in particular should have quite the strategic effectiveness that they seem to possess. Sometimes, of course, a concept or term is strategically important simply because of its relation to some other term or concept – deconstructive strategies, in particular, look to terms that stand in a relation of binary opposition to one another (as male to female or mind to body) and in which one of the terms is given a privileged role while the other is, in some way, 'repressed'. But, at least in the case of concepts of space and place, it seems that the strategic importance of those concepts derives, not merely from their role in any set of binary oppositions or their relation to other sets of concepts, but in large part from their indispensibility and ubiquity in human thought, experience and agency.

This is not just to say, for instance, that we usually experience ourselves, and other things, in relation to places and spaces, but that the very structure of the mind is intrinsically tied to locality and spatiality. Henri Bergson took note of this point, while in *Being and Time* Heidegger attempted to explain it as an instance of the inevitable tendency for *Dasein* towards 'fallen-ness' – the tendency always to understand in a way that is forgetful and concealing of the properly temporal character of its being.<sup>28</sup> Within English-speaking philosophy Mark Johnson has investigated the prevalence of modes of thinking that are reliant on notions of place and space as part of a more general

<sup>26</sup> Casey, *The Fate of Place* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 197–330.

<sup>27</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987). I hesitate to say that such uses of spatial and topographic notions draw on *metaphorical* rather than *literal* uses of the terms at issue since, as will be evident in the discussion below, this distinction seems to me to present some problems here. Of course, there is also much to be found in *A Thousand Plateaus* that does shed light on the concepts of space and place aside from any purely strategic use of those concepts.

<sup>28</sup> See *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), section 70 4369.