

# Is there an Ethics of Place?

Jeff Malpas – University of Tasmania

Abstract: Although place is an increasingly important notion in much contemporary theorizing across the humanities, social sciences, and the arts, there is also a persistent tendency to think place in ways that see it as inevitably given over to a problematic ethics and a regressive politics. Such a way of thinking place nevertheless misconstrues the nature and the necessity of place, as well as the nature of the ethical and the political. This essay suggests some reasons why this may be so, and briefly sketches the direction in which a genuine ethics of place may be found.

Keywords: Attachment, Ethics, Exclusion, Identity, Place, Plurality

## *1. Introduction: The Centrality of Place and the Question of Ethics*

One of the characteristic features of thinking within the humanities and social sciences over the last ten to fifteen years has been the rise of the idea of place as a central concept in description and analysis. Although, a focus on place has often been associated with the adoption of a broadly ‘phenomenological’ perspective within geography and architecture, the notion has increasingly been deployed in conjunction with many different theoretical approaches, and with respect to a variety of disciplines. My own work has participated in, and contributed to, this increasing focus on place. Along with Ed Casey in particular (see esp. Casey 1996), I have tried to develop an account of place as a philosophically significant concept in its own right, and to provide an account of its nature and philosophical underpinnings. In my work, as well as in Casey’s, place appears as a largely positive notion. Moreover, although neither Casey nor I has explicitly articulated an ethics or politics of place (a point that John Cameron has raised explicitly in relation to my work (see Cameron, 2004; see also Malpas, 2004),<sup>1</sup> it seems clear that the centrality that we give to place, and that can be discerned in much contemporary research that also takes place as a key concept, carries with it a set of important evaluative commitments.

Yet the idea that place is indeed a positive notion is not at all unproblematic. We need only look to the sites of much contemporary conflict – to sites such as Palestine and Kosovo, and perhaps even the Korean peninsula – to see how ideas of place, and of belonging to place, can be associated with, and even to foster, an ethics and politics of violence and exclusion. Within the history of twentieth-century Europe, it might seem that there is no better or clearer example of this than the

Germany of the 1930s and 1940s – the Germany of Hitler, Nazi race politics, and the Holocaust. On this basis, one might argue that the historical evidence suggests that if there is an ‘ethics’ of place, then it is an ‘ethics’ of a thoroughly dubious kind – an ‘ethics’ that disposes us to violence, oppression, and exclusion. The question whether there might be an ethics of place, then, is not merely a question as to whether a positive ethics can be generated on the basis of the concept of place, but also requires that we address the negative tendencies with which place seems often to be associated. Indeed, it is precisely because of the negative associations that are apparently connected to place, all the more problematic in the light of claims for its centrality, that the question as to whether there is an ethics of place (whether there is a properly *topographic* ethics – see Malpas, 1999) takes on such significance. A large part of what is at stake here concerns, not just a question of ethics apart from place, but the nature of place as such so that addressing the issue of an ethics of place is likely also to have implications for the very deployment of place as a concept in theoretical inquiry and practical engagement.

## 2. *Place as Ethically Problematic*

Twentieth-century German history has been an important touchstone for those who are suspicious of the concept of place and place-oriented thinking, and the reasons for this lie in the way in which German culture has itself appeared to give a central role to place and a variety of associated notions. Thus Peter Blicke, in his study of the German concept of 'Homeland' (*Heimat*) argues that the pervasiveness of this notion within German-speaking cultures reflects a more general emphasis on place and space within German thought and culture (Blicke, 2004), but he also presents the "idealisation of a home ground in *Heimat*" as leading "again and again to borders of exclusion" (Blicke, 2004: 188). Other writers have argued for a link between place-oriented modes of thought and an exclusionary politics that is taken to be given a particularly clear exemplification in German history, especially the history of the 1930s and 1940s, and that is supposed to be evident, in a quite specific way, in the work of the philosopher Martin Heidegger (see eg. Bambach, 2003; Leach, 1999; Miller, 1995).

Heidegger, of course, has been an key figure in the philosophical development of the idea of place – Heidegger is quite explicit in the central role he gives to notions of place (*topos*, *Ort*, *Ortschaft*), dwelling (*Wohnen*), home (*Heimat*), and homecoming (see Malpas, 2006). Yet Heidegger was, as we well know, also a member of the Nazi Party, appointed as Rector of Freiburg University by the Nazis in 1933 (although resigning the post a year later), and many have argued that his involvement with the Nazis was itself bound up with the certain place-oriented elements in his thought, and that his later thinking, in which those elements become more explicit and more significant, represents a continuation of essentially the same

sort of reactionary conservatism. Interestingly, in an Asian context, a similar connection between apparently reactionary politics, and a commitment to the centrality of the concept of place also is often taken to be evident, in similar fashion, in the life and work of Tetsuro Watsuji (和辻 哲郎), a member of the Kyoto School, who himself engaged closely with Heidegger's work from a Japanese perspective. Watsuji's *Fudo* (風土), published in 1935 (Watsuji, 1961) is seen by some as anticipating aspects of Heidegger's later thought (it certainly includes a critique of aspects of Heidegger's earlier thinking). However, during the Second World War, Watsuji, like others of the Kyoto School, also gave his support to Japanese nationalism and expansionism (but see Parkes, 1997 & 2009).

Heidegger's own position is often seen in contrast to that of Emmanuel Levinas, who can himself be seen as taking issue with Heidegger precisely on the basis of the potentially exclusionary character of Heidegger's place-oriented mode of thinking (Levinas, 1990). Indeed, the work of Levinas is taken by many to provide a deeper theoretical underpinning to the connection that is supposedly exemplified, in Heidegger's work, between the emphasis on place and a reactionary, exclusionary politics. The general form of argument that usually appears to be assumed here, although often remaining implicit, is that in asserting one's own connection to place, and thereby taking one's own identity to be determined by that connection, one also excludes the other from that same place, since the other is *other* specifically through being *not* 'of this place.' It is this that gives rise to the opposition of friend and stranger, of home and the foreign. Inasmuch as place-oriented thinking is understood as itself necessarily exclusionary in this way, so it is also understood as necessarily tied to a set of ethically and politically problematic tendencies – including the possibility of violence – and, for that reason, should be regarded with suspicion, or,

perhaps, simply abandoned.<sup>2</sup> On such an account, we must, it seems chose between Heidegger and Levinas – between a mode of thinking that prioritises the ‘topographic’ and one that prioritises the ethical as such.

While not always couched in explicitly place-based terms, there are a number of strands in contemporary thought, quite apart from the Levinasian, that also argue in favour of the abandonment of place-oriented conceptions and attachments.

Cosmopolitanism, a term itself sometimes associated with Levinas, but now much in vogue across a range of discourses, and exemplified in one particularly well-known form in the work of Martha Nussbaum (see Nussbaum, 1994), is often understood in just this way – as a mode of individual or social life that largely eschews any form of local, parochial, or nationalistic attachment. Similarly, utilitarianism, which is perhaps the single most influential ethical position of the last hundred years, advances a purely calculative and impersonal conception of the ethical that sees it as completely abstracted from any particular locatedness in the world – such locatedness, it might be argued, is just what obstructs the possibility of properly ethical deliberation. Whether or not one adopts such a specifically utilitarian ethics or, indeed, some form of cosmopolitanism, the idea that proper ethical and political life depends on abstracting from one’s place-based attachments is a very strong and pervasive one.

### *3. The Indispensability of Place*

Yet in spite of such considerations, there are, it seems to me, very good reasons not to turn away from place-oriented modes of thinking, and, instead, to retain a commitment to place as both a central and productive concept. The reasons at issue here seem to be of two kinds: first, a set of reasons that are based in the very specific ways in which place emerges in conjunction with particular contemporary issues; second, a set of reasons that derive from the more general arguments concerning the role and significance of place that writers such as Casey and I have advanced elsewhere. What both sets of reasons seem to show is precisely that the abandonment of place is not, in fact, an option – that place is indispensable to our capacity to respond adequately to a range of current concerns, as well as being essential to our own conception of ourselves. In relation to the first set of reasons, let me suggest three areas in which place appears to emerge as an indispensable concept: environmentalism and sustainability; community development and regeneration; and indigenous politics and reconciliation.

Sustainability has become a key idea in contemporary environmental discussions – the question is how we can build and maintain communities, and with them, forms of economic organisation, that are environmentally sustainable in the long term. One important suggestion is that this is only possible on the basis of a clear sense of the way in which communities are dependent on the places – the environmental localities – in which those communities are located. Such a sense of dependence also entails a sense of community identity that enables communities not only to take responsibility for the places in which they are located, and on which they depend, but also to act in ways that are consistent with that sense of responsibility.

Thus a leading figure in Australian policy and planning circles, Peter Newman, in a paper written for the Western Australian Government, discusses the relation between that government's 'State Sustainability Strategy (SSS) and the idea of a 'sense of place' writing that: "The SSS [State Sustainability Strategy] makes a lot of the concept of 'sense of place' believing that it is a key way for cultural understandings to be mainstreamed and joined to environmental and economic considerations. I believe people cannot live truly without relating to place.... Sustainability challenges globalisation (the global modernism agenda) to show that bioregions and communities do matter. The SSS tries to show that the social dimension is the missing link of economic planning in regions and even of NRM planning in regions. It suggests that Regional Sustainability Strategies need to develop new ways of bringing 'sense of place' perspectives into regions (in the bush and in the city)" (Newman, 2003). The argument that Newman advances here, and that is echoed elsewhere, can be seen as emphasising the indispensability of a 'sense of place' for any socially effective form of environmental sustainability. It is an argument developed in a more general form, and from what might be viewed as a very different political direction, in a recent volume by Roger Scruton.

The key idea, of course, in Newman's account, as well as in Scruton's, is that a sense of belonging or attachment to place can and does play a key role in motivating and sustaining more sustainable practices. Indeed, some of the most successful environmental management schemes around the world have depended on mobilising individual and community commitment to the places in which they live.<sup>3</sup> Yet the way a sense of place operates here is important not only in relation to environmental practice or issues of sustainability, but also to my second example, namely, urban design and management, and community regeneration in urban as well as rural

settings. Although written from a public history perspective, Dolores Hayden's book, *The Power of Place*, focuses on the importance of the urban landscape as the focus for developing the sense of urban history and community identity that is often essential to maintaining and rebuilding communities, and also to the negotiation of a range of contemporary urban issues. Although one might argue that the impact of the new conservatism in American politics has itself changed the cultural and political landscape somewhat, Hayden claims that changes in American society are inseparable from changes in Americans' sense of place:

Across the country many Americans are starting to reevaluate collective life in inner cities' poorer neighbourhoods. Ghettos, barrios, Chinatowns, Little Tokyos, Little Manilas, and Little Italys are places imbued with bitter memories, such as slavery, internment, deportation, and segregation, as well as more positive stories of hard work and community organizing. A new American sense of identity is emerging as we begin to recognize a diverse society where cultural differences are respected. With acceptance of diversity can come a new sense of place. Americans are just starting to realize the need for public places to celebrate the history of ordinary citizens and the collective significance of our working lives (Hayden, 1997, pp.237-8).

Similar examples can be cited from many other sources concerning the importance of place attachment, and a sense of that attachment, in dealing with a range of community issues, as a basis form which to motivate community development initiatives, and as an important factor in the design and planning of the built environment. In this latter respect, one might argue that the importance of architecture as a discipline that shapes

human lives and activities – what Karsten Harries refers to as ‘the ethical function’ of architecture (Harries, 1997) – is itself a reflection of the key role of the built environment, and so also of place, in ethical formation.

In contemporary Australia, however, the most obvious instance in which place emerges as a central, and, indeed, indispensable concept is in relation to indigenous politics and reconciliation – and the centrality of place here is also mirrored elsewhere. Few Australians, even from a non-indigenous background, would need to be reminded of the importance of place or ‘country’ in Aboriginal life and culture. Country is integral to Aboriginal systems of kinship, and so is directly tied to identity, but so important is country that its protection may, in traditional contexts, over-ride all other considerations – leading Tony Swains to write that ‘Aborigines did not, therefore, protect the integrity of lives but rather the integrity of place’ (Swain, 1993: 54). The importance of native title in the process of national reconciliation is one concrete contemporary indication of this – native title is not merely about land ownership or use, but, much more than this, about giving acknowledgement to and taking account of the way in which Aboriginal identity is intimately bound to country, to land, to place. The importance of that connection was recognized by the National Inquiry into the forced removal of indigenous children from their families that was conducted by the Australian Federal Government in the mid-1990s. The Inquiry specifically noted the effect of such removal in preventing children from having ‘a continuing relationship with their traditional land’, noting that ‘returning to country can be a crucial step in the reunification and healing process for people removed as children’ (*Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families*, 1997: 296). One might argue that it was the European refusal to recognise the importance of place in indigenous life that has

itself been partly responsible for the often violent and oppressive treatment of Aboriginal people – making recompense for such oppression, and finding a new way forward for all Australians, almost certainly depends upon finding ways to give proper account to place and to country – for both indigenous and non-indigenous Australians (see eg, Read 2000).

In these three areas, then (and they are by no means the only areas that could be cited), there seems to be a clear case for taking place, and the attachment to place, to be already a key element in the issues that are at stake, and to play a crucial role in possible responses to those issues. Indeed, to ignore or to abandon the importance of place and the sense of place may well make it impossible adequately to understand or to respond to issues such as those of sustainability, of urban planning and renewal, of reconciliation – and many other issues besides. In each case, of course, the centrality of place reflects the way in which issues of identity and belonging play a key role in human life and society. It is this role that Simone Weil famously alludes to in terms of the need for roots. As Weil writes:

To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul. It is one of the hardest to define. A human being has roots by virtue of his real, active and natural participation in the life of a community which preserves in living shape certain particular treasures of the past and certain particular expectations for the future. This participation is a natural one, in the sense that it is automatically brought about by place, conditions of birth, profession and social surroundings. Every human being needs to have multiple roots. It is necessary for him to draw wellnigh the whole of his

moral, intellectual and spiritual life by way of the environment of which he forms a natural part (Weil, 2002, p.43.)

It is significant that Weil's articulation of this 'need for roots' (which needs to be read in close conjunction with her own account of what this might mean) is seen by her, not as undermining the ethical, but as the very basis for an ethical life, since it is itself directly tied to participation in the life of a community, and that she views the events that surround the rise of Nazism and the trauma of the Second World War as themselves arising, not out of a sense of rootedness or attachment, but precisely out of an experience of the loss of roots, the loss of a sense of attachment and belonging.

Even among many writers who are otherwise suspicious of what they see as the "reactionary" elements that attach to ideas of place and belonging, there is also recognition of the impossibility of any abandonment of the idea of a significant connection to place as a part of human life. Thus the geographer Doreen Massey has famously argued for the need to articulate a "progressive" sense of place that would encompass a sense of our essential relatedness, and that would view places, not as having fixed, internally-focused identities, but as possessing a specificity that is instead "constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus" (Massey, 1994: 154). Such a progressive or 'global' sense of place is seen by Massey as answering to both the continuing preoccupation with place (something of which is evident in the examples I have cited above) and the increasingly globalized character of the contemporary world. While Massey's emphasis on the need to rethink the concept of place is in some ways consistent with ideas that I will sketch out below (in particular, the importance of understanding place in a way that already encompasses its relational character), the

difficulty is that Massey's account is in no way directed at an account of place as such, but rather developing a rhetoric of place that can be deployed within a form of "progressive" politics. In this respect, it is a rhetorical and political agenda that drives Massey's account, not any genuine recognition of the nature or significance of place as such. In relation to the question with which I began, Massey's answer is not that there is an ethics of place, one based around a "global" sense of place, but rather that place can be reconfigured so as to play a role within a progressive politics. On this account, however, it is the prior political commitment that determines the account of place, and not the other way around (for a more general critique of Massey, see Malpas, 2012).

### *3. Towards an Ethics of Place*

If we are to take seriously the conclusions that seem to follow from the three specific examples that I considered above, to say nothing of the considerations adduced by Weil, as well as the acknowledgement of the significance of place found in the work of writers such as Massey, then the abandonment of place that may seem to be called for on the basis of its supposed entanglement in the politics of violence and exclusion must be a mistaken and even illusory notion.. Such a conclusion is, of course, reinforced by arguments such as those that Casey and I have advanced – arguments that would explain the importance of place in cases such as those discussed above, as well as Weil’s own insistence on the need for roots, as a consequence of the necessary role of place in the very possibility of human life and experience. Yet while we cannot abandon the concept of place, at the same time, we cannot ignore the problematic ethical and political tendencies that also appear to be associated with it. It is not sufficient to respond to the tension that is evident here by asserting simply that there are some forms of place-based thinking that are problematic and some that are not – as if the concept of place were only a problem when deployed by Nazi ideologues, but not when deployed by exiled philosophers such as Weil – since this only gives rise to the further question as to just what differentiates those forms of place-based thinking that are indeed problematic from those that are not.

Events such as the ethnic and religious conflicts in Palestine, Kosovo and elsewhere, and the history of Germany in the 1930s, provide graphic illustrations of the way in which the concept of place, and of our attachment to place, actually seems to foster division, exclusion, intolerance and violence – so much so that we may conclude that place, and the attachment to place, serves to undermine a properly

ethical and politically acceptable mode of life. Yet it also seems clear that place, and our attachment to place, is not only an inextricable part of what we are as human beings, but it may also turn out to be an essential problem in responding to a number of pressing contemporary issues. We cannot reconcile the tension that is at here by denying one or another of the elements that give rise to that tension. Place is indeed an inextricable element in human life and being, and yet place also has the potential to be ethically and politically destructive. In fact, it may well be that the former is what explains the latter – it is precisely the centrality of place that allows it to be drawn on in such destructive ways. Indeed, if we are to engage effectively with the aspect of place attachment that is evident in so many parts of the world – and not only Palestine or Kosovo – then we must recognise, and come to some developed understanding, of just what attachment to place involves, and the different forms in which it may be articulated. To adopt a contrary approach – to attempt to encourage more unplaced or detached modes of engagement on the part of individuals and communities – may, in the face of our persisting connectedness to place, actually serve to exacerbate the sorts of tensions and conflicts that appear so widespread.

What is urgently needed in response to this difficulty is indeed an articulation of a true ethics and politics of place (perhaps an ethics and politics of the sort John Cameron calls for in his response to my work). Such a place-based ethics and politics is not currently to be found in any adequate or developed form in the existing literature. Admittedly, the idea of place has been deployed by a number of environmentalist thinkers as the basis for an environmental ethics (e.g. Smith, 2001; Plumwood, 2002),<sup>4</sup> yet such place-oriented environmentalism is typically formulated in terms that are specific to environmental issues in particular (often ignoring or simply not addressing the full range of issues at stake here), and seldom engaging

with the sorts of issues that motivate those who remain suspicious of place and place-oriented thinking. Moreover, environmental approaches often lack any grounding in a developed analysis of place as such (this is equally true of the appeal to place in Scruton's environmentalism as noted above – see Scruton, 2012). There is thus reason to suppose that an adequate account of the ethics of place is still to be developed. It is not my aim to set out the details of such an account here, but I do wish to make some comments about the general direction in which such an account might move – and so to provide some indication of how we might indeed offer a substantive and affirmative answer to the question “is there an ethics of place?”.

One of the key elements in Weil's emphasis on the need for roots concerns the complexity and multiplicity of our modes of attachment and belonging. This is certainly something that is often omitted or glossed over in much of the rhetoric – certainly in the popular rhetoric – that surrounds discussion of place and belonging. Yet if we consider what I have argued is the properly ‘topographical’ character of place and our relation to place, such complexity and multiplicity is an inevitable consequence of the structure of place as such and of our involvement in that structure. Places do not possess single, determinate identities, but are instead constituted out of multiple sets of relations between the entities within those places, between those entities and their environmental circumstances, between events, and between places. This is a point for which I argued at length in *Place and Experience* (Malpas, 1999), and it is a point that is illustrated in that work through the very idea of topography as such. If we look to the topographical structure of landscape as determined by the traditional methods of landscape surveying before the era of satellite imaging, then the character of the landscape cannot be understood as arising on the basis of a single set of independent elements, but instead has a complex structure that emerges through

the interplay between elements within that landscape, which elements are themselves determined through their relation to other such elements. Moreover, the process of triangulation and traverse by which the landscape is mapped requires the physical engagement with that landscape as one walks the distance between landmarks, takes sightings from one landmark to another, and so builds up a picture of the terrain through repeated sighting and measurement.

Our own relation to place, and the character of place as such, must be understood on analogy with such ‘topography’. Our primary involvement with place is not by means of the univocal symbols that are so often associated with the patriotic or the nationalistic, but rather in terms of the complex networks of action and association that are part of what Weil refers to as our participation in the life of a community. Such participation is both complex and singular – it always exceeds the simple characterization in terms of common symbols and images. Those symbols and images are nonetheless important, but a true ethics of place is surely one that would look to the way in which our attachment to and sense of place is based in our concrete engagement with the particularity, the ‘singularity’, of place, and of the persons, environments and things we find within them. A true ethics of place is one that would attend to the local, the particular, the singular, and the concrete. In this, an ethics of place ought to stand in sharp contrast to both the totalizing politics of fascism and to the calculative rationality of contemporary modernity or post-modernity (whether understood in terms of the faceless ethics of utilitarianism or the cosmopolitanism of global capital).

Developing a genuine ethics of place cannot be undertaken without attending to the character of place as such, and of our own involvement in place. What such an investigation reveals is a structure that actually turns out to be antithetical to those

exclusionary forms of thought and action that, while they may draw on the power of place, nevertheless also distort our proper relation to place. There is a tendency, to be sure, to think of the sense of place in terms that emphasize notions of security, sameness, and determinacy – my place, the place in which I am at home, is surely the place I know best, the place that reveals itself to me, and me to myself, as being in a certain familiar way, the place that is comforting and comfortable. Yet it may well be that this is actually a mistaken conception of place right from the very start. Perhaps to have a proper sense of place is not to have a sense of something comforting and familiar, but is rather to have a sense of one's own uncertain and fragile locatedness in the world, and to have to take responsibility for that. In this sense, to have a sense of place, is to have a sense of the way in which one belongs to a place by virtue of one's responsibility to it, and so also, to the multiple and complex relations that make it up. Such a conception of our relation to place, and of the ethics of place, is a sense of place that must operate against the sorts of univocal and simplistic concepts of place – which are really concepts of no *place* at all – that figure in exclusionary politics around the globe. Is there an ethics of place? Not only do I believe that there is such an ethics, but that more than this, that understanding the ethical itself requires an attentiveness to the placed character of human life and existence. Ethics is impossible, I would suggest, in the absence of a genuine sense of place, and one of the tasks of a philosophical topography, as well as of a philosophical ethics, is to articulate the manner in which the two concepts, *ethos* and *topos*, belong together.

## References

- Bambach, Charles (2003), *Heidegger's Roots*. Ithaca, Cornell University Press.
- Blickle, Peter (2004). *Heimat: A Critical Theory of the German idea of Homeland*. London, Camden House.
- Cameron, John (2004). 'Some Implications of Malpas' *Place and Experience* for Place Ethics and Education'. *Newsletter of the Society for Phenomenology and Architecture*, 15: 5-9, and
- Casey, Edward S. (1996). *The Fate of Place*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- Harries, Karsten (1997). *The Ethical Function of Architecture*. Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press.
- Hayden, Dolores (1997). *The Power of Place*. Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press.
- Leach, Neil (1999). 'The dark side of the domus. The redomestication of Central and Eastern Europe'. In Neil Leach (ed.), *Architecture and Revolution. Contemporary perspectives on Central and Eastern Europe*, London, Routledge.
- Levinas, Emmanuel (1990). 'Heidegger, Gagarin, and Us'. In *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism*. Trans Séan Hand, London: Athlone Press, pp.231-234.
- Miller, J. Hillis (1995). 'Slipping Vaulting Crossing: Heidegger'. *Topographies*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Malpas, Jeff (1999). *Place and Experience: Philosophical Topography* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Malpas, Jeff (2004). 'Place and Topography: responding to Cameron and Stefanovic', *Newsletter of the Society for Phenomenology and Architecture*, 15:8-10.
- Malpas, Jeff (2008). 'Place and human being'. In Frank Vanclay et al (eds.), *Making Sense of Place*. Canberra: National Museum of Australia.

- Malpas, Jeff (2012). 'Putting Space in Place: Relational Geography and Philosophical Topography'. *Planning and Environment D: Space and Society*, 30: 226-242.
- Massey, Doreen (1994). 'A global sense of place', *Space, Place and Gender*.  
Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander Children from Their Families (1997). *Bringing them home. Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander Children from Their Families*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Newman, Peter (2003). 'The Social Side of the State Sustainability Strategy'.  
Occasional Paper presented December 2003, Sustainability Policy Unit, Dept. of Premier and Cabinet, Government of Western Australia.
- Nussbaum, Martha (1994). 'Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism', *Boston Review*, 19.
- Parkes, Graham (1997). 'The putative fascism of the Kyoto School and the political correctness of the modern academy'. *Philosophy East and West* 47: 305-336
- Parkes, Graham (2009). 'Heidegger and Japanese Fascism: An Unsubstantiated Connection'. In Raquel Bouso García and James W. Heisig (eds.), *Frontiers of Japanese Philosophy 6: Confluences and Cross-Currents*. Nagoya: Nanzan, pp.347-372.
- Plumwood, Val (2002). *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason*.  
London, Routledge.
- Read, Peter (2000). *Belonging. Australians, Place and Aboriginal Ownership*.  
Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Scruton, Roger (2012). *Green Philosophy: How to Think Seriously About the Planet*.  
London: Atlantic Books.

Sinclair, Paul (2001). *The Murray: A River and its People*. Melbourne, Melbourne University Press.

Smith, M (2001). *An Ethics of Place: Radical Ecology, Postmodernity and Social Theory*. Albany, NY: SUNY

Swain, Tony (1993). *A Place for Strangers: Towards a history of Australian Aboriginal being*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Watsuji, Tetsuro [和辻 哲郎] (1961 [1935]). *Climate and Culture: A Philosophical Study* [a translation of *Fudo* – 風土]. Trans. Geoffrey Bownas Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Weil, Simone (1952). *The Need for Roots*. London, Routledge.

## Notes

---

- <sup>1</sup> While it is true that *Place and Experience* does indeed omit any detailed discussion of the ethics or politics of place, such issues are not ignored. Cameron takes an ethics to be implicit in the book – which certainly accords with my own intention.
- <sup>2</sup> It should be noted that the style of argument at work here seems to operate on the assumption that the opposition of self and other, friend and stranger, is already inherently exclusionary and problematic, and yet it is seldom made clear exactly why this should be so. I would suggest that if anything does underpin this view it is the idea that any assertion of a connection to place that is determinative of identity, and so provides the basis for the distinction between self and other, inevitably entails the assertion of an exclusivity of control or of authority over that place – our belonging *to place* is thus taken to be merely a disguised form of the belonging of place *to us*. This seems to me to be an unwarranted and unargued assumption, and although it is not an issue I take up here, it is something I have discussed briefly elsewhere (see Malpas, 2008).
- <sup>3</sup> In Australia, this seems to be evident in a range of examples, including such initiatives as the Landcare programme, but it is also evident in specific regional instances such as the ongoing problem concerning the management of the Murray River system. Although we are far from having an environmentally sustainable system of management for the Murray, it is striking the extent to which the discussion of the river and its problems have brought to the fore a range of issues about the relation between the river and the people who live in its locality (see Sinclair, 2001).

---

<sup>4</sup> I do not wish to suggest that the contributions of environmental thinkers are not significant or relevant here – only that more is needed to respond adequately to the problem that place appears to present.