29. Place and Situation

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(From Jeff Malpas and Hans-Helmuth Gander (eds), *The Routledge Companion to Philosophical Hermeneutics*, in press)

Regardless of whether *hermeneuein* (the Greek root from which the modern 'hermeneutics' comes) is actually derived from the name of the god Hermes, the nature of hermeneutics undoubtedly reflects the nature of the god. As the bearer of messages between heaven and earth, and also (along with Hestia) a god of the threshold (see Vernant 2006: 157-196), the nature of Hermes is bound to the 'between'. Hermeneutics too belongs to the 'between' – to the space between speaker and hearer, between reader and text, between interpreter and interpreted. It is the 'between' that names the proper place of hermeneutics – just as interpretation and understanding are also seen to be tied to place or situation. Understanding the significance of place and situation in relation to hermeneutic thinking is thus to understand something of the very essence of hermeneutics and the hermeneutical.

1. Hermeneutics, finitude, and limit

The 'between' is not a boundless space, but one that is constituted precisely with respect to that which it both connects and also separates. The 'between' is essentially bounded, essentially relational, essentially placed or situated. Indeed, to be situated

or placed is to be 'between' just as it is also to be 'within'. It is its mode of being as a being 'between' that is characteristic of human being, and as such human being is also essentially situated or placed. Central to philosophical hermeneutics is the understanding of this being 'between' – this being placed or situated – as essentially *productive*.

There is a long tradition in philosophy that takes the fact of human being as always 'between' – always placed or situated, and so as always, in some sense, also in a state of dependence – as a primary obstacle to genuine knowledge and understanding. Philosophy has often aimed at finding a way to overcome such situatedness – to achieve what Thomas Nagel famously describes as a "view from nowhere" (Nagel, 1989).[1] One of the characteristic insights of hermeneutic thinking, however, has been that not only is this impossible to achieve, but that it is in any case unnecessary: far from being an obstacle to genuine knowledge and understanding, it is our very *situatedness* that makes these possible. The only view, then, is a view *from somewhere*, and it is in virtue of our being-somewhere – our *being-in-place* – that we can have a view at all.

As with the character of the 'between', the dependence of understanding on situatedness has been variously expressed within the hermeneutic tradition – although not always in terms of an explicit focus on situatedness or place as such.[2] The famous hermeneutic circle, whether understood in terms of the structure of part-whole dependence or the fore-structure of understanding, may seem not to invoke ideas of place or situation in any explicit fashion, and yet the circle is itself a

'topological' or spatial concept,[3] while the nature of the dependence that it articulates can be construed as indeed situational and orientational in character – what the circle suggest is that understanding is always a function of the manner and direction of approach to what is to be understood, or, as one might also put it, that understanding is always a *standing somewhere*, and it is this standing somewhere that underlies understanding itself.

Similarly, the hermeneutic focus on human *finitude*, and so on knowledge and understanding as belonging essentially to finite existence, and only to finite existence, may seem to involve no appeal to notions of situation or place in the first instance, and yet these notions are surely implicit, being brought directly into view as soon as any close attention is brought to bear on the idea of finitude as such. This point becomes all the more evident when one recognises that situation and place are directly implicated with the notions of bound or limit that are at the heart of the idea of finitude. Understood in terms of the Greek *topos*, place is itself directly tied to the idea of limit or boundary (see especially Aristotle, 1983: 28 [212a5], but also Malpas, 2012: 233-235), while the explication of situation in terms of the idea of horizon (especially as developed in Gadamer) is indicative of the same connection. Moreover, what is also suggested, if it were not evident already, is that as *place* is at issue here, so too is *space*. Although place ought to be distinguished from space, the two are nevertheless closely bound together (see Malpas, 2012: 232-237; also Malpas 1999: 34-43), and place brings with an essential reference to spatiality in part though the idea of an essential *openness* that belongs to place (and perhaps also to situation)

– an idea that becomes especially important in the later Heidegger (see Malpas 2006: 251-256).

Often, however, and especially within twentieth-century hermeneutics, the situatedness of understanding has been construed in terms of its primarily temporal or historical character, rather than in relation to the topographic or the spatial. This is most obviously the case in the early Heidegger (see Heidegger 1962; see also Malpas, 2006: 65-146). Yet there is good reason to reject any reading of the temporal that does not already entail the spatial and the topographic (see Malpas 2012: 235-237), while the very idea of situation is inseparable from the notion of place (so that even a temporal reading of situation would not stand apart from the notion of place, but would rather consist in imposing a temporal reading onto it – the latter being one way of construing Heidegger's project in *Being and Time*[4]). Moreover, although it may appear tempting (and is relatively commonplace), to treat the way in which place and space appear here as 'metaphorical' rather than 'literal' , there is a real question to be addressed as to what such a distinction might mean in this context. What does it mean to talk of space or place – especially in relation to the structure of understanding – as being used 'metaphorically', or indeed, as being used 'literally'?[5]

Nowhere is this issue concerning the meaning of space and place more directly apparent than in Heidegger's famous assertion of language as the 'house' of being (Heidegger 1998: 239) – an assertion that invokes the spatial and topological, and yet does so in a way that cannot be dismissed as merely 'metaphorical'.[6] The dimensionality that Heidegger invokes here, a dimensionality that belongs to being

and to language, is the most original mode of dimensionality, and perhaps the most primordial form of space (although it is not, Heidegger tells us, "something spatial in the familiar sense" – see Heidegger 1998: 254). Language, one might say, gives place to being – being is thereby given the expansiveness that belongs essentially to it – and in so doing language also gives place, and so space, to understanding. Here the question concerning the role of place and situation in the event of understanding is brought together with the question of language and of being, and it is done so in a way that brings to the fore the issue of the metaphoricity or literality of the language that is here deployed. The language of place and situation – and of space – seems a constant feature in the thinking of understanding, and perhaps in all thinking,[7] but how such language should be construed is a question all too quickly answered, if it is raised at all, by the supposition that such language is 'metaphorical'. What metaphor and literality might be, and their role in thinking, is thus a question that the very focus on place and situation itself provokes.

Even if the point is sometimes obscured, the essential insight of hermeneutic thinking is that knowledge and understanding are grounded in human situatedness – in the being of the human in place – and on this basis hermeneutics can be seen to consist precisely in the attempt to elucidate this fundamental situatedness. At the same time, as it does this, however, hermeneutics can also be seen as opening up a path into the understanding of the spatial (along with the temporal, since the two belong necessarily together) as well as the topological. Rather than belonging primarily to metaphysics, the understanding of these notions can now be seen as

belonging properly to hermeneutics, just as hermeneutics emerges as more basic than any of the traditional forms of metaphysics. The focus on place and situation is thus an integral part of the transformation of hermeneutics into a mode of ontological inquiry – perhaps the most fundamental form of such inquiry – an inquiry that is both an inquiry into the being of place and the place of being, as well as an inquiry into the placed, situated, *finite* character of understanding.

2. Orientation and Bound: Kant's Rational Geography

Although often absent from discussions of hermeneutics and its history (two notable exceptions are Makkreel 1994 and Americks 2006), Kant has an especially significant place in any discussion of the hermeneutical significance of place and situation. This is so for a number of reasons. First, because the transcendental framework that Kant develops and deploys, and which is crucial to hermeneutics understood as an inquiry into the *grounds* of understanding, is itself a framework that draws on a set of spatial and topological conceptions. Second, Kant is explicit in addressing questions concerning the structure of situatedness, not only in terms of bodily and mental *orientation*, but also through his focus on the necessary *bounds* of knowledge (those bounds being articulated using explicitly spatial and topological concepts). Third, in his arguments concerning the role of spatiality in relation to thought and to ideas of both objectivity and subjectivity, Kant shows how space and place might

indeed play a fundamental ontological role in the very possibility of knowledge, understanding and also judgment.

There can be little doubt that, in its philosophical form, hermeneutics has an essentially transcendental character – a character it shares with phenomenology. In the terms in which Gadamer puts the matter, drawing directly on Kant, philosophical hermeneutics is centrally concerned with the question: "how is understanding possible?" (Gadamer 1989: xxix). It thus looks to the grounds of understanding and it finds those grounds to be given in the very situatedness of understanding. Although the question of the nature of the transcendental remains a contentious one, there are good reasons for taking the transcendental to depend on a thoroughly topological mode of thinking, and the very implication of the transcendental with the issue of ground indicates as much. Kant famously construes the transcendental in legal terms – the *quid juris* as opposed to the *quid facti* (Kant 1998: A84/B116). Yet much of Kant's language elsewhere, and the language of others since, also associates the transcendental, and the larger project of the bounding and grounding of reason with which it is associated, with ideas of the spatial and topological – even though this fact is all too seldom reflected upon or acknowledged. Not only the language of ground is at issue here, but of turn and return, of movement backwards and forwards, of the unity of a region that is only discernable from within that region itself (see Malpas, 1997). Significantly, the circularity that is often seen as a problem for transcendental argument, but is actually one of its underlying features, is itself associated with the spatial or topographical structure at

issue here, at the same time as it also seems to mirror the circularity of the hermeneutical (see Malpas, 1997).

The structure of spatiality and spatial awareness is something explicitly taken up by Kant in a number of his writings. Central to his thinking is a conception of spatiality as possessed of an orientation that belongs essentially to it. This is a point Kant demonstrates by reference to the phenomenon of so-called incongruent counterparts. Two things may be identical in terms of the spatial relations between their parts, as is the case with each of the gloves that make up a pair, and yet the spatial orientation of each may be quite different, so that a right-handed glove will not fit on the left hand nor will a left-handed glove fit on the right. To be oriented in space is to relate the differentiation present in space to a differentiation present in the self – more specifically, to a differentiation (between left and right, up and down, forward and back) that is given in one's own body and in one's bodily awareness (see eg. Kant 1992: 364-372; see also Malpas and Zöller, 2012). Although often taken to epitomize Kant's prioritization of the subject (as it is by Heidegger, see Heidegger 1962: H109-10), this emphasis on the relation between spatial and bodily differentiation is better understood as indicating the mutual interconnection of subjective and objective within the structure of spatiality, and even of a certain form of relationality that belongs to subjectivity itself as well as to spatiality (see Malpas 2012a: 118-121). It also suggests the fundamental role of orientation, that is to say, of place or situation, in any engagement with world. Indeed, Kant will take spatial

orientation as the starting point for understanding orientation in thinking as such (see Kant, 1996: 1-18).

Kant provides one of the first sustained analyses of the structure of spatiality and spatial awareness. Not only does this include an account of the orientational character of spatiality, but also the unitary and bounded character of the spatial. To be in space is to find oneself within a single interconnected but differentiated domain. It is also to find oneself located within a certain horizon, that is, within certain *bounds* that allow that domain to appear as unitary and differentiated. This idea lies at the very heart of Kant's critical project – experience or knowledge is itself understood as just such a unitary but differentiated domain whose unity is established through the horizon within which it is also enclosed. The horizon – which is the proper bound of reason – is not merely restrictive of experience or knowledge, but rather operates (as the visual horizon operates in respect of the visual field) to make possible the experience or knowledge that arises within it. One might argue that it is this idea as it appears in Kant that represents the first appearance of that key hermeneutic insight according to which situatedness is the real ground for understanding.

Kant's account of orientation suggests that understanding – or knowledge or experience – is itself dependent on spatial locatedness. This is an idea reinforced by other aspects of Kant's analysis in the first *Critique*, including his account of space as the a priori condition for representation. The latter requires differentiation, and differentiation requires a notion of externality in which the differentiated elements

can be grasped as standing apart from one another. Within the *Critique of Pure Reason*, this is a key element in the 'Refutation of Idealism' (Kant, 1998: B274–279), and arguably also plays a part in the 'Transcendental Deduction' (Kant 1998: A84–130, B116–169), especially as developed in the B-edition (see Malpas, 1999b). In the *Critique of Judgment*, the emphasis is not directly on spatiality, but on a notion of 'commonality' or 'publicness' as that which is presupposed by those judgments that aim at universality and objectivity (Kant 2001: §40). Such a notion of commonality seems to imply the idea of a shared space or place within which judgment is located (see Benjamin 2010; 31-34). The deployment of spatial and topological notions, whether implicit or explicit, is thus not restricted to the first *Critique*, but runs throughout Kant's thought.

Whether or not one regards Kant as genuinely a hermeneutic thinker, his position as the first thinker properly to open up the question of finitude as that which enables knowledge and understanding, together with the role played by spatiality, as well as notions of externality, commonality and publicness, in his thinking, nevertheless gives him an important place in the history of hermeneutics – especially with regard to the development of twentieth-century hermeneutics. Although Heidegger's own relationship with Kant is complex, Heidegger's ontologically oriented mode of hermeneutics is heavily indebted to Kant – and not least in the way in which it also gives attention to the spatial and topological.

3. Place and World: Heidegger and Topology

In his lectures on the hermeneutics of facticity from 1923, Heidegger already speaks of the hermeneutical as that which is concerned with "making something accessible as being there out in the open, as public"(Heidegger 1999: 8), thereby indicating the way in which hermeneutics might indeed be connected with a certain place or space of commonality. In both the 1923 lectures and in *Being and Time*, from 1927, Heidegger's use of the term *Dasein* as the focus for his investigations is also indicative of the centrality of the concept of situation, and implicitly of place, to his thinking (see Malpas 2006; 2012a – see also Fell 1979: 38-48). Inasmuch as *Being and Time* is itself a work of hermeneutical, as well a phenomenological, inquiry, so the concept of situation is at the heart of Heidegger's hermeneutical approach in that work. To a large extent, what *Being and Time* attempts is a working out of the idea of 'situation' as that is given in the idea of the there/here that is the *Da* of *Dasein*.[8] Moreover, the situatedness at issue here is not to be construed in terms merely of a feature of some form of internalised subjectivity – as if it were a function of attitude, disposition, or belief – but is rather a matter of Dasein's active engagement with others, with things, and with itself, and so is worked out through Dasein's active engagement *in the world* (Malpas, 2006: esp. chapt. 3 – see also Dreyfus, 1991[9]). Heidegger can thus be seen as implicitly holding to an early form of what is now termed 'externalism' (see Malpas 2012a: 221-222), although that term also suggests a problematic opposition between the internal and external that is itself in tension with a genuinely topological approach.

One of the problems with which *Being and Time* grapples, not altogether successfully, is the extent to which the 'situation' at issue here is indeed to be construed in terms of notions of place or space (the two terms lacking any clear differentiation in Heidegger's early work[10]). As indicated in the introductory comments above, Heidegger's position as worked out in *Being and Time* takes *temporality* to be the key notion, and although Heidegger acknowledges the spatial connotations present in the idea of situation itself ("In the term Situation … there is an overtone of a signification that is spatial. We shall not try to eliminate this from the existential conception, for such an overtone is also implied in the 'there' of Dasein" (Heidegger 1962: H299), he nevertheless argues for the grounding of spatiality in a more basic notion of temporality (see Heidegger 1962: H367-369). The attempt to prioritise temporality is not without its own problems, however, and arguably depends on treating the temporal as in some sense a mode of place (see Malpas). This is something Heidegger comes to recognise fairly quickly, abandoning the derivative treatment of existential spatiality (see Heidegger 1967: 16-17) and taking time and space to be intimately bound together within the single structure of what he terms 'time-space' (*Zeit-Raum*) (see eg. Heidegger 2012: 293ff).

Regardless of exactly how the concepts of time and space, and the relation between them, are to be understood, there can be no doubt, however, that Heidegger views understanding (and indeed any sort of appearing or coming to presence), whether in his early or later thinking, as inextricably bound to situation. The event of understanding is, for Heidegger, always a happening that arises within a locality

that is proper to it – it is an opening of and to the world that occurs in and through a certain singular and concrete placement in the world (such placement being an *openness* within *bounds*[11]). This is especially evident in Heidegger's development of the idea of truth as *aletheia* or unconcealment, and no more so than in the way this idea is elaborated and explored in 'The Origin of the Work of Art', from 1935-36. This essay, originally a series of lectures, is cited by Gadamer as the key text in his own philosophical development (Gadamer 1997: 47). In it Heidegger presents the art work as a dynamic event that is focussed in the work itself, so that through the work establishes and opens up a world (see Malpas 2006: 196-200; 2012a: 244-246). Truth is the concealing/revealing that occurs in the setting-in-place of the work that is also the opening up of world, and in which the possibility of any specific presence or absence, assertion or denial, 'truth' or 'falsity' is itself grounded.

Although the happening of truth as developed in 'The Origin of the Work of Art' cannot be simply identified with the situatedness of understanding as that is thematised in Heidegger's earlier work, a very similar structure is at work in both cases. Truth and understanding stand in an essential relation to world, but they nevertheless arise only in and through a certain happening of place. In this respect, the concept of the *Ereignis* – the Event – that appears in Heidegger's thinking from the mid-1930s onwards (see eg Heidegger 2012) is the idea of just such a happening of place that is also a happening of world; a gathering and belonging together of world and thing, of world and self, of world and other. It is this happening of place

that lies at the heart of what Heidegger himself refers to as the 'topology of being' and to which he tells us all of his thinking belongs (Heidegger 2004: 47).

Although such a topology can indeed be seen at work in Heidegger's early thought as well as his later (and in the early thought is present as much in the lectures on the hermeneutics of facticity from 1923 as it is in *Being and Time* from 1927), it is in the later thought that it is at its most explicit. This is especially true of his discussions of technology and dwelling in essays such as 'Building Dwelling Thinking', 'The Thing' (Heidegger, 1971b: 141-184) and 'The Question Concerning Technology' (Heidegger 1977: 3-35). The idea of the Fourfold that appears in those essays is explicitly topological in character presenting the very coming to presence of things as a gathering in and through place that also is itself the opening up of space (see Malpas 2006: 219-304). Such a topology is also evident in almost all of Heidegger's later inquiries into language, especially those in *On the Way to Language* (Heidegger, 1971a – see also Malpas, 2006: 263-266). In the 'Dialogue on Language' from that volume (Heidegger, 1971a: 1-56) Heidegger explicitly addresses the issue of the hermeneutical in the context of a discussion of language that refers back to language as the house of being while also hinting at a further set of topological themes and implications relating, not only to language, but to the dialogue itself (see Malpas, forthcoming).

The 'Dialogue on Language' is unusual in its explicit thematisation of the hermeneutical, and although it also contains elements of the topological orientation that is evident elsewhere in Heidegger's thought, there is no direct exploration or

explication in the 'Dialogue' of the relation between the hermeneutical and topological as such. Indeed, Heidegger almost nowhere addresses that relation in explicit terms. Yet as hermeneutic ideas and themes proliferate in Heidegger's thinking, and especially in his late thinking, just as do topological ideas and themes, so the two seem to stand in an implicit relation. Indeed, if hermeneutics is itself understood as implying an attentiveness always to the situated character of thinking and understanding, and so an attentiveness to the *place* and *placedness* of thinking, then hermeneutics must already be essentially bound to topology, as perhaps topology must also be bound to the hermeneutical. If there is anything close to an explicit indication of this in Heidegger, it is in the essay on Trakl that also figures in *On the Way to Language* (Heidegger 1971a: 159-198). Heidegger titles this essay 'a discussion', but the term used is *eine Erörterung* – which also carries the sense of 'a placing' or 'situating' (from *Ort* meaning 'place'). Heidegger makes the connection to place here quite explicit at the same time as he also invokes the idea of the bounded character of place as that which preserves and releases – that which enables a genuine coming to presence.[12] Here the hermeneutical task, even if it is not named as such, and which in this essay takes the form of engagement with a poetic text, is understood unequivocally as taking the form of a certain topology – a placing, a heeding, a *saying* of place.

3. *Horizon, Dialogue, and Objectivity: Gadamer, Davidson, Figal*

Although there is an explicit focus on the hermeneutical situation, there is in Gadamer, no explicit thematization of the spatial or the topological such as one finds in Heidegger. This is not because such notions are absent from Gadamerian hermeneutics (the topology present in Heidegger often seems to carry directly over to Gadamer's thought – Gadamer's deployment of the Heideggerian notion of truth as *aletheia* being an important instance of this). Instead it is as if Gadamer simply sees no need to take them up in any direct way in relation to his own hermeneutical project – when these ideas do appear in any direct way it is more often in Gadamer's discussion of Heidegger than in the course of development of his own thinking.

A key concept for Gadamer is that of the interpretive horizon. The notion is one also present in Heidegger, and has its origin in Husserl's analysis of the structure of intentionality. Gadamer says of the notion that it is essential to the concept of situation (Gadamer 1992: 302). The notion of horizon is itself a topological concept: the horizon is that always indeterminate bound within which is established an open space or region that makes possible appearance. Understood in this way, horizonality is clearly at work, even when it is not named as such, at many different points in Gadamer's work – as well as in Heidegger's. Not only does the idea of the horizon already incorporate the central Gadamerian notion concerning the pre-judgmental character of understanding[13] – our prejudgments are what open us to the world and so enable understanding – but the idea of the horizon brings with it the notion of that 'within' which shelters and sustains understanding, that gives it ground as well as 'room'. Moreover, the Gadamerian emphasis on the idea of

understanding as essentially dialogical or conversational – and so as an engagement that occurs always in language, in the space between speakers, and in relation to some subject matter – itself opens up the idea of understanding as always occurring in an open space 'between'.[14]

In Gadamer, the explicitly *dialogical* character of understanding – its being in 'conversation' (*Gespräch*) – and the way such dialogue itself brings with it a conception of the situated or placed character of understanding (a placement that is not only with respect to history and tradition), is suggestive of parallels with Donald Davidson's account of the 'triangulative' structure that is determinative of content. Like Gadamer, Davidson takes understanding, and interpretation, to depend on the interaction between speaker and interlocutor as that occurs in relation to some thing – in Davidson's case to some 'common cause' that is also a common focus of action and intention (see Davidson 2001; also Malpas 2011). In spite of other differences in their approaches, both Gadamer and Davidson thus seem to share a conception of understanding as, in broad terms, grounded in the situated interaction between speakers as this is occurs in an essential relation to language (see Malpas 2002). Taken together with his explicit focus on the interpretive context of thought and action, Davidson's topological approach to understanding provides grounds for reading him as a hermeneutical thinker in spite of his primarily analytic orientation (see Malpas, 1999, 2011) – and even in spite of the mutual misreading that characterises the one published engagement between Davidson and Gadamer in the

Library of Living Philosophers volume devoted to Gadamer's work (see Davidson and Gadamer, 1997; see also Malpas, 2002, 2011).

Concepts of place and situation figure significantly throughout hermeneutical thinking, and yet only occasionally are they directly taken up. In this respect, the way in which such concepts often seem to be taken for granted in Gadamer''s thought reflects a more widespread tendency that extends across almost the entire field of hermeneutics, both in its historical and contemporary manifestations. Hermeneutics has thus seldom addressed the situational, spatial and topological ideas which it so frequently deploys and on which it often depends. Moreover, although Heidegger does address these questions, he tends to do so in a way that, with some notable exceptions, proceeds independently of any explicit connection to the hermeneutical – the idea of a 'topological hermeneutics' is thus something that may perhaps be attributed to Heidegger, but which he does not himself formulate in those terms. In this regard, the work of Günter Figal might be taken to constitute a notable exception within recent and contemporary hermeneutics, since Figal is himself quite explicit in the role he gives what might be thought of as topological and certainly spatial elements within his phenomenologically-oriented 'objective hermeneutics' (see Figal, 2010).

Figal's emphasis on objectivity is intended to correct what Figal sees as an oversight in much previous hermeneutic thinking, and has similarities to Ricoeur's insistence (intended as a corrective to Gadamer) on the importance of *distanciation as* the essential counterpart to appropriation and as underpinning any genuinely

critical interpretive stance (see Ricoeur 2008: 72-85). Like Ricoeur, Figal sees distance or remoteness as playing an essential role in interpretation. It is distance or remoteness that makes possible the experience of something as requiring interpretive engagement, and this distance or remoteness Figal understands in terms of objectivity. In hermeneutical experience, he writes, "one is concerned with something that one himself is not, with something that stands over against [*entgegensteht*], and, because of this, places a demand. Hermeneutical experience is the experience of the objective [*das Gegenständliche*]" (Figal 2010: 2). The experience at issue here – the experience of something that presents itself in a way that originates from itself – is an experience that also occurs within the openness of what Figal refers to as 'hermeneutical space' (see Figal 2010: 121–53) whose structure is given in terms of three dimensions which Figal identifies as freedom, language, and time (Figal 2010: 155ff, esp. 299-300).

There can be no doubt that Figal's position is unusual in its explicit connecting of the spatial and the hermeneutical. At the same time, however, Figal's approach seems to involve disconnecting the hermeneutical from some of the key elements in the ideas of place and situation. The primary emphasis in Figal's account is on *openness* as against *constraint* – as against bound or limit (Figal 2012: 129). Yet one of the characteristic insights of hermeneutics is surely the very dependence of openness on constraint – it is constraint or boundedness, from a hermeneutical perspective, that makes openness possible. Figal's hermeneutical space appears more akin to an elaboration of the homogenous *res extensa* of Descartes than to the heterogenous and

bounded spatiality associated with place or situation or with the hermeneutical 'between'. Perhaps this is itself an indication of the extent to which Figal 's approach does indeed privilege the phenomenological, or a certain mode of the phenomenological (one that is more strongly Husserlian), over the hermeneutical, and so too, over the topological and situational.

4. Conclusion: Hermeneutics as Philosophical Topology

It is commonplace to talk of a turn towards space and place as a characteristic feature of much contemporary theory in the Humanities and Social Sciences. Just what such a turn might mean beyond the deployment of spatial and topographic terms and images is not always clear – often the turn appears more rhetorical and figurative than genuinely conceptual. Yet a turn towards the situational and the topological, as well as the spatial – a turn that is indeed at the level of the conceptual – has certainly been a feature of much hermeneutical thinking even if it has been less commonly acknowledged (Figal being a notable, if ambiguous, exception). If hermeneutics is understood, as I have suggested here it ought to be, as centred on the issue of the essential grounding of understanding in situation or place, then this implies that hermeneutics can also be seen as a form of 'philosophical topology' – where such a topology is itself seen as essentially hermeneutical in character. To understand place, then, is also to place understanding, and vice versa. Conceiving of both hermeneutics in this fashion has implications in terms of clarifying the nature of a hermeneutical approach to thinking as well as of the proper focus for the thinking

in which hermeneutics is engaged (see Malpas, 2012). It returns us to the character of hermeneutics as indeed belonging to the 'between', and to the 'between' as belonging to the hermeneutical. It is this same 'between' that is also the proper place of the human.

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Further Reading (see references in Bibliography above)

[1] In contrast, see Heidegger's critique of the idea of 'freedom from standpoints' in Heidegger, 1999: 63-64.

[2] Although it is worth noting that the term *topos* figures within many forms of traditional rhetorical and hermeneutical practice to designate the 'place' of a discussion or approach, often in terms of the subject or 'topic' to which that discussion or approach is directed and within which it moves, and sometimes, as in Aristotle's *Topics* and in his *Rhetoric*, to mean a general argumentative type or form.

[3] I use 'topological' here to mean 'pertaining to place', but one could as easily use the term 'topographic' (as I have elsewhere – see Malpas, 1999). Heidegger tends towards the former usage referring to his work as a 'topology of being'. Note that the topological and the spatial stand in an important relation – place implies space (as space also, I would argues, implies place) – but they cannot be simply identified, and neither, as I argue above, can the topological be construed as independent of time. If space is often emphasised in discussions of the topological, this is largely because the spatial is so frequently taken as secondary to the temporal.

[4] Of course, one might say that in doing so, *Being and Time* also assumes a topographic understanding of time which it never properly makes explicit nor explores – which is why the question of spatiality remains one of the great

unresolved (and within the terms of *Being and Time*, unresolvable) problems of Heidegger's *magnum opus*.

[5] All too often what space and place are is something assumed rather than put in question, and all too often the assumption is that a *physicalist* reading of these terms must come first, and that it is in such a reading that their 'literal' sense is to be found. Such assumptions deserve to be contested.

[6] "Talk of the house of being is not a transposition of the image 'house' onto being. Rather, from out of the properly conceived essence of being we may someday come to recognize what house and dwelling are" (Heidegger 1998: 272).

[7] George Lakoff and Mark Johnson have argued that spatial and bodily metaphors underpin the structure of all thinking – see eg. Lakoff and Johnson 1999 – although their account is much more oriented towards empirical psychology and biology than the sort of ontological-hermeneutical approach that is at issue here.

[8] Although there is a tendency to insist that the 'Da' of Dasein has nothing to do with anything spatial, or presumably topological, such a view seems to depend on refusing exactly the direction of thought in which Heidegger himself moves in the period after *Being and Time* (and which is already implicit in that work even if in tension with other aspects of it), while also missing the spatial and topographic dimension that remains even when the 'Da' is interpreted in supposedly non-spatial or non-topological fashion – although often the substitution of other terms merely reinscribes the spatial or topological in a different way (as seems to be the

case with Sheehan's insistence that the 'Da' does not mean 'there', but is rather to be understood in terms of 'the open' – see Sheehan, 2001: 193). Not only the argument of *Being and Time*, but Heidegger's own rethinking of that argument in the period after 1927 indicates that the spatial and topographical connotations of the 'Da' cannot be ignored. To insist on a translation of Dasein that ignores those connotations is to refuse the very clue as to the elucidation of the being at issue here that the 'Da' of 'Dasein' already presents (see Malpas, 2006: 47-51).

[9] Although there are serious problems that attach to Dreyfus' pragmatist reading of Heidegger, it is certainly correct in its emphasis on the active and 'externalised' character of Dasein's being.

[10] Although part of the shift to the later thinking may be seen as precisely a matter of the gradual separation of these two terms even while they also remain related.

[11] The idea of the productive

[12] "We use the word 'discuss' here [*Erörterung*] to mean, first, to point out the proper place or site of something , to situate it, and second to heed that place or site … The site, the gathering power, gathers in and preserves all it has gathered, not like an encapsulating shell, but rather by penetrating with its light all it has gathered, and only thus releasing it into its own nature" (Heidegger 1971a: 159-160).

[13] In fact, Gadamer says that prejudgments 'constitute' the horizon – see Gadamer 1992: 306.

[14] The ideas of the 'between' (*das Zwischen*) and of the 'open' (*die Offene*) address aspects of the same topological structure that is invoked by the idea of the horizon, and both ideas figure in Heidegger as well as in Gadamer.