The Place of Topology:

Responding to Crowell, de Beistegui, and Young

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The idea of philosophical topology, or topography as I call it outside of the Heideggerian context, has become increasingly central to my work over the last twenty years. While the idea is not indebted only to Heidegger's thinking, it is probably with respect to Heidegger that I owe the most. Moreover, one of my claims, central to *Heidegger's Topology*, is that Heidegger's own work cannot adequately be understood except as topological in character, and so as centrally concerned with place – *topos*, *Ort*, *Ortschaft* (which, I should emphasize, is not the same as a concern with space nor with time taken apart from one another, but I shall say more on this below). I do not regard myself as the only person to make this claim, or something like it. In the 1980s, both Joseph Fell and Reiner Schürmann, from very different perspectives, advanced topological readings of Heidegger, or elements of such readings, that contain important points of convergence with my own.[1] If my work represents in any respect an advance on that of Fell and Schürmann, it is primarily in that I have attempted to set out a definitive case for the topological reading of Heidegger's thinking in its entirety, as well as to articulate an account of topology or topography as itself central to philosophical inquiry. On my account, the attempt to think place, and to think in accord with place, is at the heart of philosophy as such.

Yet the taking of place as a central concept here is not without its difficulties, and the most immediate and obvious of these concerns the very understanding of place that is at issue. Place is an opaque and evanescent

concept, resistant to standard forms of philosophical analysis, often seeming to dissipate like smoke at the first breath of inquiry, leaving us to turn to what may appear to be the more substantial and substantive notions of space and time. It is the very concept of place, with its difficulties and obscurities, which is fundamentally at issue in all three of the discussions here. In Steve Crowell's piece, it is the relation between place and *subjectivity*, and together with this, between topology and *phenomenology*; in Miguel de Beistegui's essay, its relation to *temporality* and also *historicity*; in Julian Young's discussion, its relation to the notion of *Heimat*, as well as to the experience of *wonder*. I will examine these three approaches in turn, but before I do so I should say how grateful I am to all three for having thought the idea of topology as I develop it to be worthy of the critical attention they give to it, and for having put so much effort into reading and engaging with the ideas that it involves. Not only is it a pleasure simply to be able to participate in this sort of exchange, but it also provides a welcome provocation to the clarification and extension of the thinking at issue here.

1. Phenomenology and Subjectivity

One of the key philosophical questions, the very first question, in fact, concerns the origin of our thinking – where does thinking begin? Already to ask this question is to invoke a topological perspective, since it is specifically a question that asks after the 'where', the place, in which thinking has its origin and out of which it comes, and yet it is hard to see how such a perspective can be avoided. While the perspective may be inevitable given the question, the question itself is one that often seems to be ignored in much contemporary philosophy. Even so, it is a question that surely does appear within phenomenology, and might even be said to lie at the heart of phenomenology (something indicated by its concern with *phenomena*, with what appears), and

that is also at the heart of Heidegger's thinking (whether or not it remains itself phenomenological). So far as Crowell's over-arching question is concerned, 'is transcendental topology phenomenological?', my immediate answer is that it is, but that the reason for this is that phenomenology is itself essentially topological. In saying this, however, I mean also to suggest that the phenomenological concern with subjectivity, including first-person subjectivity, does not take us in the direction of the *atopic*, as Crowell suggests, but itself returns us back to *topos*. My answer thus depends on a somewhat opposed concept of the phenomenological to that proposed by Crowell.

The question about the place in which thinking has its origin is the central question of philosophical topology or topography – topology is an attempt to think the place of thinking. But it attempts to think that place in its original and originary character – that is to say, it does not begin with a philosophical *interpretation* of the place in which we first find ourselves, but rather looks to that place as it is given in and of itself. That means that the appearing of place, and what appears with it, cannot be treated as an appearing of an already recognized subject that stands against some object (nor in terms of the appearing of some array of impressions, sense-data, or whatever else we come up with after the fact). What first appears is just the appearing of a place, that is a certain definite region, *bounded* and yet also thereby *gathered*, in which we and the things around us are given *together* (it is this idea that I take to be at the heart of Heidegger's notion of the *Ereignis*[2]).

The concern with the thinking of place *as* the place of thinking immediately brings topology and phenomenology close together. That this is so seems to me evident from Heidegger's own entry into phenomenology as itself a way of re-engaging with life, with our immediate immersed experience – something also evident in the emphasis on hermeneutic situatedness in his early work. But it is also apparent in the very nature of

phenomenological analysis as developed by both Heidegger and Husserl. There are two points that would make here.

First, while the phenomenological *epoché* is often taken to be a bracketing-off of the world, and so as a move that gives priority to pure consciousness (whatever that may be), it can also be read as a bracketing-off of those attitudes and presuppositions that remove us from our primary experience of being already in the world. In fact, this reading of the *epoché* returns to something of the original meaning of the idea as it appears amongst the early skeptics for whom the *epoché* was essentially a putting into abeyance of the philosophical desire to judge the natures of things – rather than first engaging with things through an attempt to determine *what* they are (in the sense of their 'real' natures), we engage with things on the basis of the fact *that* they are (on the basis of their immediate 'appearances'). In Heidegger, this way of understanding the *epoché* (although though made explicit, and certainly without any reference to its skeptical deployment) seems to me to underlie those early expositions in which he emphasizes that our very first encounter with things is indeed with the things as they appear. It can surely also be seen to underlie the phenomenological exhortation to return *to the things themselves* – to what is given, rather than to what, after the fact, we think is given.

Second, the way in which Husserl understands the structure of meaningful experience is in terms of a set of notions that are themselves essentially topological in character, so that the structure of phenomenological presentation is identical with the structure of place. This should be no surprise. If we take Aristotle's famous comments in the *Physics* seriously, then to be is to be in place, and to be a phenomenon, an appearing, is similarly to be placed, or, one might say, to *take place*. This is not merely to say that appearing must be somewhere, but that the form of the appearing will be such as to occur within a certain domain that is open so as to allow for that

appearing, and yet also bounded so that the appearing is indeed an appearing of some thing. Here is the basic structure of *horizon* and *intention* that we find in Husserl. It is significant that for all that Heidegger distances himself from phenomenology in his later work, in 'Conversation on a Country Path' (*Feldweg Gespräch*),[3] in which topological themes predominate, so too does the idea of horizon, and of horizon as connected, through the idea of the region that regions, to gathering, take on a central role.

The concern with the place of thinking is also what determines the 'transcendental' character of topological inquiry, since understood in this manner, such inquiry is always an attempt to think the ground of thinking (the resonance of ground with place is not to be overlooked here), which is just to say that it is the attempt to think that out of which the possibility of thinking emerges. Inevitably, to take topology as transcendental in this way is also to commit to a particular understanding of the transcendental – transcendental thinking itself has to be understood topologically, and this involves some significant shifts in how the transcendental is to be understood.[4]

Heidegger's own critique of transcendental approaches is tied to the increasingly topological character of his thinking. The transcendental is an idea he comes to see, by the 1930s at least, as entailing two problematic elements. First, because he takes the transcendental to be concerned with the conditions that underlie the possibility of transcendence, and transcendence as a structure of subjectivity, he views the transcendental as already given over to a form of subjectivist thinking. Second, because the transcendental sets up a contrast between that which conditions and that which is conditioned, so he also sees it as inadequate to address the proper unity of that which is the coming to presence of what presences – since the contrast at issue here is itself related to the ontological difference, so Heidegger comes eventually to regard that difference as also problematic.

Can one understand the idea of phenomenology without recourse to the notion of the transcendental? My own view, and I have always taken this to be Crowell's view also, is that it cannot – that part of what is distinctive about phenomenology is its transcendental orientation, and so one cannot inquire into the nature of phenomenology without also inquiring into the nature of the transcendental.[5] The transcendental is itself often understood in terms of a concern with subjectivity, and with the self-constituting power of subjectivity – the latter being something explicitly thematized by Kant.[6] I do not disagree with this characterization, so long as we acknowledge that part of what is at issue in such transcendental inquiry is the nature of subjectivity as such. What, we may ask, is subjectivity if it is indeed self-constituting in the required way? This is not a question whose answer I think we can simply assume, and subjectivity is thus a concept as much in need of interrogation as is the transcendental.

Since the transcendental and the phenomenological are so closely entangled, Heidegger's shift away from the transcendental can be seen, as he himself saw it, as entailing a shift away from phenomenology. In Heidegger, of course, this also coincides with a shift away from the approach set out in *Being and Time*, a work that explicitly set itself within a transcendental and phenomenological frame. The shift at issue here is one that can be seen to be driven by Heidegger's increasingly explicit thematization of topological elements in his thinking, and, as a result, the movement away from the transcendental and phenomenological appears as a shift towards topology, thereby setting the transcendental and the phenomenological in apparent opposition to the topological (although with the complication that later Heidegger seems to view *all* of his thinking as a mode of topology – as a *Topologie des Seyns*).

While there have been times when I have found myself tending to favour the contrast that appears in late Heidegger between the topological

and the transcendental and phenomenological, and so to ague for the former as replacing the latter, my more considered view is that once one arrives at a topological perspective, what is required is not an abandonment, but a rethinking of the transcendental and the phenomenological in topological terms – and I tend to think that Heidegger would not have been averse to such a view himself. What this means is that one also has to rethink the way in which those two elements that Heidegger identifies as problematic – the tendency towards subjectivism and the inadequate thinking of unity – can themselves be rethought.

In fact, this was already a key aspect of my work on the transcendental even before I began to think of it in explicitly topological terms.[7] Thus, I have always argued that it is a mistake to think of the transcendental as primarily an argumentative structure in which there is a clear separation of conditioning from conditioned elements, and a movement from one to the other. Instead, the 'circularity' of the transcendental is a reflection of the essential unity that the transcendental itself sets forth and aims to make explicit. The unity at issue is, however, not a simple, but rather a complex unity – a differentiated unity. Moreover, while the transcendental is often interpreted as attempting, in Kantian terms, to ground the unity of experience in the unity of the self-constituting subjective (in the Heideggerian terms of *Being and Time*, to ground the unity of world-projection in the unity of Dasein's own temporalising), it is better understood as attempting to exhibit the already prior unity of experience and subjectivity, or better, of world and of self. Moreover, the unity at issue here is nothing other than a unity given in the differentiated interplay of the elements – and this is the very same form of unity that is exhibited in later Heidegger in terms of the gathering of the Fourfold. It is a form of unity that I argue belongs essentially to place.

Crowell's approach to the question of the relation between topology and phenomenology focuses specifically on the phenomenological concern

with experience, and especially its first-personal character, as well as with the character of subjectivity. Already some of what I have said should indicate that I do not see topology as ignoring such concerns. One way of thinking about topological analysis, in fact, is precisely in terms of a rethinking of subjectivity in terms of *topos* (I would argue that this is just what is presaged in Husserl's own analysis, and in its reliance on notions like that of horizon, as well as in the critical philosophy of Kant – although the latter claim is perhaps harder to explicate and defend[8]). Place or topos is certainly not a univocal concept on my account, but like most significant concepts in philosophy, and especially in Heidegger, it caries with it an essential multivocity – what I refer to in *Heidegger's Topology* as *iridescence* (since the multivocity here is one of overlapping and shifting aspects rather than a set of distinct and easily denumerable senses). [9]

In *Place and Experience,* I explicitly draw attention to what I refer to as the *complexity* of place. This complexity is evident in the 'folded' character of place (which, it should be clear, is not intended to refer in any way to the 'fold' that appears in Deleuze) – the way any place encompasses other places within it while also being encompassed by other places in its turn. It is also evident in the way in which place names both that which supports and grounds the appearing of any and every place as well as the various appearances of place as such – it refers to both this place as and to that place or placedness of which this place or placedness is an instance. The distinction at issue here is, not surprisingly, an analogue of the ontological difference. However, whereas the ontological difference can give rise to the mistaken apprehension that what is at issue is indeed a twofold structure that relates two different and distinct elements – being *and* beings – it is harder to think this way in relation to the difference at issue in regard to place. Place cannot be other than what is given in the multiplicity of places – to suppose otherwise would be to envisage the possibility of place, *topos*, as itself *atopic*,

and while there may be circumstances in which this is a form of words to which we are drawn, the immediate oddity of such a mode of speech and thought ought also to indicate its problematic character (and indicate it in a more direct way than is evident in talk of the ontological difference). One might say that the difference at issue in these two senses of place (which represent only one aspect of the differentiating unity of place) is like that between a surface and the plane to which that surface belongs – a difference that itself insists on the sameness of that which differs.

I will come back to this difference below, since it is also relevant to the issues Young raises. For the moment, the difference is significant because of the way it stands opposed to what seems to me to be a tendency in Crowell's discussion, not only to read place in a more univocal fashion than I indicate here (and I say this is a *tendency*, because I do not think that this is a straightforward element in Crowell's discussion), but also to treat place in a way that overlooks the role of place as ground for the appearing of place at the same time as place is positioned apart from subjectivity, and in a way that seems to take it as identical with *world* or something given *within* the world. Consider Crowell's claim that "within the *topos* of what is disclosed – the world wherein is found the claim-responsive human being together with all the other things that are – the being who is 'claimed by being' is not dependent on the world in the same way that the world is dependent on it." What this passage seems to suppose is that *topos* names "the world wherein is found the claim-responsive human being together with all the things that are". But *topos* cannot be unambiguously identified with the world or with what the world contains. Certainly, specific *topoi* are within the world, but *topos* as such names the very happening of world as that occurs in and through the happening of place. Moreover, the *topos* that is invoked here, in its multiplicity, is constituted in many different modes, including that mode that we encounter in our own selves – in the 'within-ness' of experience that

itself occurs within and in relation to the *topos* (and *topoi*) of worldly locatedness.

At this point, it should be evident that part of the complexity that surrounds topology is a complexity that reflects the dual operation of topology as a mode of philosophical thinking, a mode of analysis if you will, that employs topological structures, figures and distinctions (and which I would argue is implicated in all thinking), and as a substantive focus for such thinking. Place is thus that which thinking essentially addresses and also that which determines the mode of that address. The thinking of place is always a thinking in and through place, and this itself makes for a complexity in the thinking of place over and above even the complexity that attaches to place as such. Moreover, the complexity that appears here is a complexity that runs throughout Heidegger's own thinking, and is one of the reasons for its often dense and opaque character – all the more so since Heidegger never directly thematises nor attempts explicitly to articulate the implications of the topology in which he is engaged.

Crowell's attempt to set subjectivity off from *topos,* as in some sense prior to it, is surely inconsistent with *topos* understood in the multiple and complex fashion set out here, and which I would argue also underpins my work elsewhere. It may be that Crowell would want to contest this way of understanding *topos,* or contest its adequacy for addressing the philosophical issues that concern us, and this would be quite reasonable, but it would raise an additional set of issues, and move us into a further conversation, that cannot reasonably be embarked upon here. There are, however, two related issues that are already present in Crowell's original discussion that deserve some further comment: one concerns the notion of priority, and the other normativity.

Let me take normativity first, since this is a topic that is increasingly at the centre of much contemporary philosophical thinking. Advancing what

may be viewed as a defense of certain aspects of Heidegger's approach in *Being and Time* (of which *Heidegger's Topology* is highly critical), Crowell argues that the dependence of practices of normativity on human subjects, coupled with the centrality of such normativity to the very possibility of the appearing or disclosedness of things, implies that within the structure of disclosedness priority has to be given to human subjectivity. Leaving the issue of how priority itself is to be understood here (an issue to which I shall return below), the difficulty that I have with this argument is that it seems to presuppose the idea of normativity at the same time as it also seeks to elucidate the grounds of normativity.

One reason for saying this is that it is not at all clear that Crowell's conception of subjectivity can itself be elucidated without reference to notions of normative practice. For instance, if one adopts the sort of externalist conception of human subjectivity that I set out in Place and Experience (and that is to some extent presupposed, but not much thematized, in *Heidegger's Topology*), then not only can the subject not be understood independently of the world in which the subject is located (or independently of the places in which the subject acts), but normative content and normative practice cannot be understood independently either – and so cannot be understood independently of the notion of subjectivity or of the subjects interdependence with the world. Against such a background, the idea that normativity, as operating through the structure of existential responsibility, might provide the basis for a notion of the atopic makes little sense. Indeed, it seems that this can only be meaningful if we already presuppose much of what is supposed to be elucidated.

To some extent my concern here could be expressed by saying that subjectivity and normativity are not sufficiently distinct concepts such that one can provide an elucidation of the other, and inasmuch as both are externalistically determined and constrained, so neither can be elucidated

without reference to the subjects prior embeddedness in a world, and in an already given structure of normative practice. To use Davidson as an example here, the structure of triangulation depends on the capacity of the triangulating speaker to engage in normative acts. In a certain sense, triangulation depends on the possibility of subjectivity and normativity. However, the structure of triangulation provides the frame within which normativity and subjectivity are both constituted: to be a subject and to be subject to norms is to be enmeshed within a certain triangulative structure. Without expanding on the point, that triangulative structure is also, I would say, topological.[10]

Crowell's argument for the priority of subjectivity obviously raises a question as to the notion of priority that is in play here, and priority is itself an important topic in *Heidegger's Topology* as well as in *Place and Experience* (although it is perhaps less to the fore in the latter work). Priority has also been a key element in my discussions elsewhere, especially in my treatments of the transcendental. One of the recurrent themes in my thinking has been the idea that traditional philosophy has been preoccupied, not only with understanding certain key concepts univocally, but also with establishing relations of reduction or derivation between those concepts (or between the entities, elements or principles to which those concept refer). In contrast, the idea of philosophical topology or topography is intended as a way of doing philosophy that, while it does not eschew analytic concerns, looks to understand the structures that are the focus of its inquiries in ways, first, that deploy concepts in their multivocity, and so in their complexity and multiplicity, and second, that look to uncover relations of what I term *mutual* rather than hierarchical dependence. This is in keeping with the idea of *topos* as itself a *surface*, and so as constituted in terms of the relatedness of the elements that make up that surface (much as elements in a landscape are determined through their relative location[11]), rather than by anything that lies

beneath or above that surface. Yet as Crowell correctly notes, and as I myself acknowledge,[12] some notion of priority may still be operative even where reductive or derivative approaches do not (one may thus distinguish between strong and weak senses of priority), and it is thus that Crowell finds a space still to argue for the priority of the subject, who stands at the centre of practices of normativity, over the *topos* in which those practices, as well as the subject herself, are located.

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger holds to the presence of certain relations of priority exist even within structures whose elements stand in relations of mutual dependence. Thus, within the structure of originary temporality, the future has a priority with respect to the other temporal modalities.[13] The priority at work here is a weak sense, just inasmuch as it implies a primacy to the future, but does not allow of any derivation from it or reduction to it. In *Heidegger's Topology*, I take the presence of such weak priority to be an inevitable part of what is involved in the very idea of any form of structural analysis that would lay bare the ordering of a domain – weak priority is thus a matter of the order that obtains within that domain. One has to be extremely careful, however, about just how even this notion of priority is understood, and in some ways, considering Crowell's comments, and looking back at my own account in *Heidegger's Topology*, I am tempted to say that priority, even weakly construed, may be the wrong concept to employ here – that it may simply mislead in ways that are too difficult to avoid.

This seems especially so in the case of Crowell's discussion. While priority, as Crowell deploys it, is explicitly shorn of any connection with derivative or reductive modes of analysis, it is hard it can be anything other than the priority associated with hierarchical dependence. The way in which Crowell formulates the notion of priority is fairly general – it requires simply the notion of one-way or asymmetrical dependence. Thus subjectivity is said to be prior to our worldly placedness on the grounds that although we cannot

speak of our place in the world without reference to subjectivity, we can speak of subjectivity without reference to our place in the world. It is, of course, partly because of my externalist conception of the self that I am lead immediately to deny that there is any asymmetrical dependence here, but the more pertinent observation is that priority understood in terms of such asymmetrical dependence almost exactly accords with the definition of hierarchical dependence I advance in *Heidegger's Topology*.[14] The latter definition does not itself call upon the notion of derivation or reduction, although it does argue that relations of hierarchical dependence are typically associated with derivative or reductive approaches. In fact, in very many cases of asymmetrical dependence, some relation of derivation, even if not of reduction, does seem to apply. In the asymmetrical dependence exemplified in generation, for instance, the generated entity or element derives from that which generates, as the child derives from the parent, or the statue is derived from the sculptor.[15] In the relation between universal and particular, also a case of asymmetrical dependence, a relation of derivation can be understood to obtain at least in regard to the formal or intelligible character of the particular (the idea of participation can be seen as one attempt to articulate the particular sort of derivation at issue here). In the case of the asymmetrical dependence between subjectivity and placedness in the world advanced by Crowell, it remains unclear whether the dependence at issue may indeed entail some form of derivation – Crowell asserts that it is non-derivative, but given that Crowell's account does continue to draw on elements from *Being and Time*, one might be forgiven for harbouring the suspicion that some form of derivation may still be in play.[16]

Significantly, asymmetrical dependence does not seem to be a good way to describe the ordering of elements within a 'transcendental' structure, since, within any such structure, all of the elements are given together – one cannot have any one element without having all (and this is true, I would

argue, of the 'transcendental' structure that is set out in *Being and Time* and in Kant's first *Critique,* as well as of the Fourfold in late Heidegger and triangulation in Davidson). Moreover, asymmetrical dependence as deployed by Crowell, cannot even be said to apply, within a 'transcendental' frame, to the relation between condition and conditioned – that which conditions is not something other and apart from than that which is conditioned, but is intimately bound up with it. While one might argue that the conditions obtain irrespective of any particular formation of what is conditioned (so the conditions that make possible experience obtain irrespective of any *particular* experience), it is nevertheless also the case that those conditions do not obtain irrespective of the obtaining of *any* experience. If asymmetrical dependence holds here, then it does not hold in a way that establishes any absolute priority, nor that establishes asymmetrical dependence as the primary sense of priority.

To understand the nature of the ordering that obtains within a structure of mutual dependence, consider the relation between intention and horizon in the structure of meaning-constitution. To suppose that intention comes prior to the horizon is to suppose that intentionality somehow generates the horizontal structure, but it does so only in the sense that intentionality itself always brings horizontality with it, and vice versa. Both are elements within the same structure. Similarly, I would argue that within the structure of temporality, it is mistaken to view the future as prior to the other temporal modes – the idea that it is prior arises only because of the topologically orientational character of temporality. The different orientations that belong to each temporal mode are themselves associated with different orientational priorities in much the same way as we prioritize different orientations in relation to our own bodily orientation. Thus we tend to give priority to that which we face over that which is behind over the very spot in which we stand (and here we can see the same structure of temporal priority

as set out by Heidegger). The priority of the future is thus no more 'absolute' than is the priority of the forward projection of the body – that forward projection is part of the structure of attention, movement, and action, but since such forward projection itself depends upon and is always accompanied by a larger set of bodily capacities and orientations (by, among other things, an overall body-schema, and a larger environmental sensibility), it cannot be said to be 'prior to', in an unqualified sense, the other elements of the structure on which it is embedded . Here one can also see how there can be an ordering that belongs to the structure at issue without any need to specify an absolute priority within that order , and so without any real need to resort to the notion of priority at all.

The fact that it is an explicitly *topological* structure (which does not mean merely *spatial* structure) that emerges as a way of explicating the structure of mutually dependent ordering at issue here is not, of course, accidental. It reflects a key aspect of topology as not including only the thematisation of place as a philosophically central concept, but also the adoption of a conception of philosophical inquiry as itself structured by and in relation to the structure of place. Place thus appears both as determining the 'methodological' structure of inquiry and its 'substantive' focus.

To return to Crowell's discussion, the prioritization of subjectivity over *topos* is not only inconsistent with the character of place itself, but actually depends upon a problematic notion of priority. Indeed, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that, contrary to what I take to be Crowell's intention, the priority of subjectivity that he asserts will be hard to distinguish from more traditional forms of metaphysical subjectivism. This seems almost straightforwardly so, in Heideggerian terms, since Heidegger takes subjectivism to consist in just the assertion of some single entity, structure or principle as underlying the presencing of things – as a *subjectum* or, in the Greek, *hypokeimenon*. In Crowell's account, subjectivity is such a *subjectum,* and it is so in virtue of the

insistence on its ontological priority. In contrast, *topos* does not underlie in the same way, but is instead deployed so as to undermine the very idea of anything that might lie 'beneath'. *Topos* refers us not to a *subjectum*, but rather to that domain of inter-relatedness in which the very things themselves come to appearance, and which does not itself appear other than in and through such appearing. There is a sense in which *topos* is prior to certain other concepts, not as underlying them, but rather though being that in and to which each and every other concept is related, and in and through which each and every concept finds its relatedness to others. Place thus encompasses, even though it is not fully encompassed by, the bodily *and* the environmental, the spatial *and* the temporal, the objective *and* the subjective. It does so, moreover, not only through the way in which all of these may be said to stand in a relation to place, but also inasmuch as all of these share a similar 'topological' structure.

2. Temporality and historicity

The idea that, as Miguel de Bestegui puts it, *Heidegger's Topology* is concerned to explore the "place of place" in Heidegger's thinking, as well as in philosophical thinking more generally, nicely captures some of the ideas that were at issue in the discussion immediately above. In particular, the phrase indicates something of the multivocity that is at work in talk of place (since the first sense of place – '*the place* of place' is not straightforwardly identical to the second – 'the place *of place*'), and so gestures towards the complexity and multiplicity of the structures at issue here.

De Bestegui's account of the argument of *Heidegger's Topology* provides a neat synopsis of many of the work's key ideas, but his discussion also provides, at least to me, something of a reminder and a corrective. I have to admit to having very mixed responses to Heidegger's massive work from

1936-1938, the *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis).* The work seems to me to present too many difficulties, obscurities and inconsistencies to warrant the adulatory attention that has often been given to it by contemporary readers. As a result, however, in *Heidegger's Topology*, I almost certainly give the *Beiträge* less attention than it deserves from a strictly topological perspective. De Beistegui's brief discussion indicates how rich a text the *Beiträge* can be for explorations of the concepts of space and time in Heidegger's thinking – concepts that are, of course, closely bound up with place. Yet it is also significant that the *Beiträge* does not yet take up the notion of *topos* in the explicit fashion of the later work (a clear indication of its transitional character), even though it is quite clear, in hindsight, that the work is a crucial step on Heidegger's way towards a closer engagement with the topological.

De Beistegui uses the *Beiträge* account to demonstrate the close and intimate belonging together of time and space – their mutuality – as developed within the idea of *Zeitraum* – a concept to which the *Beiträge* gives considerable attention. The concept of *Zeitraum* has its first real appearance, so far as I am aware, in the lectures from 1935 that appeared under the title *What is a Thing?*, although the notion is one that seems to me to be adumbrated by Heidegger's use of the notion of *Spielraum* in *Being and Time* and elsewhere – something that would seem corroborated by the sometime appearance in his writings of the term *Zeit-Spiel-Raum*. The way Heidegger treats the notion of *Zeitraum* in the *Beiträge,* and to which de Beistegui draws attention, has close affinities with aspects of Heidegger's account of the happening of truth in the 1935-36 essay 'The Origin of the Work of Art' – as one might expect given that the works were both written in the mid 1930s. Indeed, the *Beiträge* seems to be a development of the ideas already sent out in somewhat less enigmatic form in 'The Origin'.

Within the structure set out in the *Beiträge,* as de Bestegui points out,

time is associated with rapture, with world, with clearing (and also a danger of dispersal), and space with earth, captivation, and self-concealing (and the danger of self-enclosure or alienation). It might be thought that this structure is what is further developed in Heidegger's late work, in the Fourfold, in which there also seem to be temporal and spatial axes within the structure of the Fourfold. In the later thinking, however, the axis of earth and sky appears to be more closely associated with space (and also language), while that of gods and mortals suggests an association with time. Yet the structure set out in 'The Origin of the Work of Art', and in the *Beiträge,* is significantly different from that which appears in an essay such as 'Building Dwelling Thinking'. In the later work, the Fourfold is itself both an opening *and* a concealing, it is properly a *worlding of world*. World is no longer associated with opening alone, nor with time, set against a concealing found only in earth, and connected with space.

In the later thinking, the happening of world is properly topological – the concealing and opening of world corresponds, in fact, the bounding and opening up that is characteristic of place. Moreover, the way in which the earlier work, particularly the *Beiträge,* takes temporality to be at work in opening, and so also in the worlding of world, suggests a continuation of a similar understanding of temporality as was evident in *Being and Time*. While the *Beiträge* abandons the language of projection and transcendence, it retains a conception of the happening of world, and so of the opening up in which things come to presence, as essentially temporal in character. To some extent, one might argue that this is a tendency that Heidegger never entirely overcomes. The late essay 'On Time and Being' retains an emphasis on the priority of temporality over spatiality that is expressed in the fact that time comes before space in the very term *Zeitraum*. In this respect, the idea of *Zeitraum*, while it does indeed express the belonging together of time with

space, also continues to assert the priority of the temporal – in *Zeitraum* it is no accident that *Zeit* comes before *Raum*.

One might argue that the priority of temporality that is at issue here is not itself problematic: the temporality at issue is no longer explicated in terms of any attempt to 'derive' spatiality from temporality (an attempt that Heidegger refers to as 'mistaken'), and so it is indeed a 'weak' sense of priority; it also enables us to understand how time and space may indeed be ordered in relation to one another even when the two are conjoined in the structure of *Zeitraum*, and even when *Zeitraum* is itself understood as part of the very structure of *topos*. It should already be obvious, however, that such a conclusion is unlikely to be one to which I am drawn, and it should also be obvious, at least to some extent, why I might think such a conclusion mistaken. Some of the reasons are the same to those I set out in the discussion of priority above – reasons that concern the understanding of the notion of priority that might be at issue here – but there are also reasons that relate to the ideas of time and space, and the relation between them, and to the idea of place.

If we look to the account of time and space that Heidegger gives in the *Beiträge*, and to which de Bestegui draws our attention, then one of the odd things about that account is the way in which it systematically overlooks the possibility of a reversal of the analysis its sets out. Time, for instance, is associated with rapture, world, clearing, and the possibility of dispersal. But in fact, this surely applies to time only insofar as priority is given to that modality of time that is the future. If we look to time as given in the modality of the past, then time carries those very tendencies and associations that are supposed to belong to space, namely, earth, captivation, self-concealing and self-enclosure (this is clearly evident as soon as one reflects on the way, for instance, the past relates to notions of identity and belonging – to time appearing as itself a form of *ground*). The analysis of space too can be

similarly reversed. If we look to the character of space, not as ground (which is what the *Beiträge* seems to assume), but rather in terms of open-ness (a connotation or modality perhaps more strongly indicated by the German *Raum* – 'room' – than the English 'space'), then space can be aligned with those same elements that the *Beiträge* connects solely to time (in fact, one of the oddities of the analysis in the *Beiträge* is the association of dispersal and dissemination, *Zerstreeung*, with time rather than space, given that, in *Being and Time*, one of the crucial underlying claims is that space disperses, which is why the unity of Dasein cannot be spatial, while time unifies and gathers). What becomes evident, in fact, once one escapes from the sometimes intoxicating atmosphere of the *Beiträge*, is that time and space, earth and world, clearing and self-concealment, do not constitute distinct strands, but rather twine in and through one another, each rupturing the purity of the other, their entanglement such as to destroy the possibility of any simple alignment between them.

It is not clear to me that Heidegger ever arrives at a fully satisfactory account of the relation between time and space, and is constantly seduced by the idea that it is time that plays the crucial role in the happening of world, and in the opening up of space that allows for presence. Part of the problem, of course, is that the very ideas of time and space that are at work here seem not only to be inextricably entangled with one another, but also remain irreducibly obscure. We still await an adequate way of conceiving of time and space (whether or not such a conception can be achieved), being always pulled in the direction of a privileging of one over the other, of forgetting the way in which each always implies the other, even when we try to disentangle them. This is especially so in the context of contemporary thinking. The movement of modernity has thus been one that seeks to pull time and space apart, and to do so as it also tries to collapse both into a single homogenous measurability – a collapse that often appears as a collapse of time into space.

As a result, the relation of time to space, and the relation of both to place, is made even more obscure, and yet the clarification of this relation becomes even more urgent.

The urgency that appears here is an urgency that undoubtedly belongs *to our time*, yet if what I have said about the obscurity of time and space is correct, then what it means even to speak of a time that is ours must be similarly obscure. Thus, while de Bestegui argues that the question of place is itself determined by time in its historical dimension – by the danger of the time in which we now find ourselves – I would contend that this is itself to overlook the way in which the historical is itself configured topologically rather than temporally. History works itself out only in and through the concrete formations of place in which it also becomes evident – and this means that the places of which I speak in *Heidegger's Topology* are to be understood in terms of the *histories* they themselves invoke, and by which they are also constituted, and not merely their geographies. The topological character of the historical – or the historicality of the topological – is itself obscured, we might be tempted to say, by the character of 'the time' in which we seem to find ourselves. But this way of putting things itself obscures, since it both reifies and abstracts the 'time' that is at issue here. 'Our time' is thus all too readily understood as something that stands somehow over and above the concrete sites and situations in which that 'time' is itself made evident.

Heidegger's 'history of being' should be understood as essentially a history of place. This is not , however, to be understood as solely to do with a history marked out by a set of shifts in the philosophical appropriation of place (an appropriation that is explored, not only in the work of such as Ed Casey, but also in Heidegger's own thinking). More than this, the history of being is a history of place that is itself contained within, and unfolds from, the places in which we find ourselves. In this respect, the dominance of the technological – which consists not in the prevalence of technological devices,

but rather in the holding sway of the system of ordering with which they are associated (more specifically, the globalised system of technological-bureaucratic economism) – occurs through certain specific transformations of place. Technological modernity gives priority to certain modes of place as it also covers over both the topological character of its own functioning, as well as the topological character of being as such. The tensions and obscurities that characterize modernity's appropriation of the concepts of time and space can thus be viewed as themselves reflections of the topological working out of modernity's own tensions and contradictions – tensions and contradictions that modernity cannot itself recognize or admit. Thus in the globalised world in which we live – a globalization that is itself invoked problematically invoked by talk of 'our time' as a time that encompasses the entirety of the world – globalization appears only in and through the countless places by which the world is constituted, and yet it is those same places that it also seeks to efface.

3. Heimat and the experience of wonder

It is probably almost twenty years now since Julian Young and I first began talking with one another about issues of place in relation to Heidegger and more generally. For the most part, we seem to share a great deal of common ground, but as is so often the case in such conversations, such commonality sometimes that makes the points of difference all the sharper. One of those points undoubtedly concerns the way we each understand the notion of *Heimat* – a term that has no exact English equivalent, but that is loosely translatable as home or homeland. A large part of Young's discussion focuses on how *Heimat* is to be understood, and connected to that is the relation between place and the experience of wonder. In addition Young also raises questions concerning the way in which we should view death and the gods in the light of the later Heidegger. So far as the last of these is concerned, death

and the gods, I am not so sure that Young's position is as far away from my own as it might first appear. Let me take the death first, and then the gods.

My own reading of death as a 'dark limit' is closely tied to Heidegger's own particular understanding of the notion of limit, taken in the Greek sense, as he would say, as productive rather than merely restrictive. In a number of places Heidegger emphasizes limit as 'not that at which something stops but … that from which something *begins its presencing*'.[17] This is how I have always understood the limit-character of death. Death is not a restrictive limit, and so cannot be understood as the signifier of a simple negation or nullity, but is rather constitutive of the life that it also marks off. This way of thinking of death does not seem to me incompatible with the idea of death as also what I would think of as a 'threshold' – which I take to be another way of capturing Young's talk of death as a 'gate' or 'bridge'. However, perhaps unlike Young, I want to retain the possibility of adopting a critical attitude to some ways of understanding death – including, some traditional religious conceptions. For instance, the religious fanatic, whether Christian, Muslim, or of any other creed, who understands death merely as the gateway to another life, *and* against which this life pales into insignificance and relative worthlessness, seems to me to hold to a position that does indeed treat death merely as a restrictive limit, rather than a constitutive one, and as a restrictive limit that is best overcome sooner rather than later. Young refers of course to 'Orthodox Christians (and Muslims)' and so I take him to exclude the fanatic. But the fanatic nevertheless provides us with an exemplification of a problematic mode of relating to death that is also to be found, in less extreme forms, among at least some of the 'Orthodox'. The contrast here is not, I would argue, between those who treat death as a 'dark limit'; and those who view it as a 'gate or 'bridge', but between those who view death as that which establishes the possibility of a genuine life on the earth, and those who view it

as a means of escape to something that is valued over and above any such earthly life.

Again, when it comes to the gods, much of what Young says can be read in a way that is quite compatible with my own position. His insistence on the gods as 'personalities' is certainly not in opposition to my own account, nor indeed to the account found in Walter Otto's wok on which I draw – for Otto the gods are worlds (I would prefer to talk of aspects or forms of world), but they are also the personalization of worlds. Here it is perhaps worth noting that Otto's approach is itself indebted to that of Schleiermacher, a thinker with whom Heidegger was also familiar, and Otto's view of the Greek gods can be seen as echoing Scheiermacher's understanding of the divine as "a particular intuition of the universe."[18] Where I think Young and I do differ is on the question of the relation of the gods who figure in the Fourfold to the 'heroes' of *Being and Time*. Young claims that the latter, thought of as "in modern jargon" as 'role-models', are the precursors to the gods of the Fourfold. Yet although the figure of a god may well provide a model for life, the idea that understanding of the gods is primarily as role-models seems to me to be mistaken. The gods encompass much more than this, and any exemplary role they play is very much secondary to the way the give shape and form to certain modes of the world. Moreover, if we are to rule out Heidegger's comments on the gods in the *Parmenides* as coming too soon before the working out of the Fourfold in the later essays, as Young argues, surely this must apply *a fortiori* to his comments on 'heroes' in *Being and Time* – all the more so when one reflects on the way the idea of the hero seems itself to be evocative of many of the elements of *Being and Time* (the emphasis on projection, transcendence, and also resoluteness) that are most problematic.

The real focus for Young's discussion is not, however, death or the gods, but rather the concept of *Heimat*, and the question concerning the very

nature of place as it relates to human dwelling. Perhaps the very first point that I should make here is that although I have talked, in my response to Crowell, of one sense of *topos* as associated with subjectivity – so that one way to understand subjectivity is as itself a form of *topos* – place certainly does not consist in 'a state of mind'. Indeed, given the extensive attention I give, not only in *Heidegger's Topology*, but also in *Place and Experience* and elsewhere,[19] to arguing against construals of place in purely 'subjective' terms (as 'constructed', as a form of 'emotional reminiscence', as a human 'projection'), I am perplexed as to how Young could arrive at such a view. Place, and our relatedness to place, can, of course, figure in 'states of mind', which is to say that we can encounter particular places as we can also have a sense of our own placedness. The encounter with such placedness, and so one might say with place, is what I argue underpins the experience of wonder. Here, however, I do not treat wonder as any experience so-called, but rather take wonder to be that particular mode of encounter with the world in which our own placedness in the world, and the strangeness of that placedness, becomes the focus for attention.[20]

We are not 'in place' only when in the throes of wonder. Just as, to use Heidegger's terminology, dwelling is the mode of human being, so human being is essentially a being in place, just as it is also a being in the world. If the relation to place is an essential one, then it is not a relation that we can ever leave without also leaving our very humanity. Indeed, it makes very little sense even to speak of such a departure. We may become estranged from place, we may forget or cover over our essential placedness, but these are all forms of concealing, disguising or denying a relatedness to place that nevertheless perdures. Even under the reign of technological modernity, our relatedness to place is not obliterated, but is rather covered-over, ignored, made invisible. If this were not so, then there would be no basis on which to mount any critique of the placelessness of modernity – such a critique

depends on the contradiction, within modernity itself, between its refusal of place (a refusal that refuses to recognise it as a refusal) in the face of its own inescapeable placedness.

Place, as I have constantly reiterated throughout these responses, is a complex and multiple concept. When we talk of our own relatedness to place, our own placedness, as well as our encounter with such placedness, then place appears in at least a twofold way – and this twofold character corresponds to a twofold character that belongs to the idea of *Heimat*.

Place refers us, first, to that underlying structure of placedness that is essential to our being as human. This underlying, one might say, *ontological*, structure, although properly *topological*, is everywhere instantiated differently, and yet everywhere it is the same. This is why it is indeed correct to say that place for me place "consists neither in Wordsworth's Lake district, nor in John Clare's native Northamptonshire, nor in the Aborigines' central Australian desert, nor in Heidegger's Black Forest. Rather, it is to 'be found in all or any one of these.'" It is this same sense of place to which Heidegger refers when he writes that "[the] nearness 'of' being, which is the *Da* of Dasein …is called the 'homeland' [*Heimat*] The word is thought here in an essential sense, not patriotically or nationalistically, but in terms of the history of being".[21] The experience of wonder as the experience of the nearness of being, the *Da* of Dasein, is thus an experience that can occur in any place – "All that is required" as Heidegger puts it, "is simple wakefulness in the proximity of any random unobtrusive being, an awakening that all of a sudden sees that the being is."[22] Here is one sense of both place, or placedness, and of *Heimat*, although it involves a placedness that is not restricted to any particular 'place'.

Place refers us, in a second sense, not merely to placedness as such, but to the placed character of our own being as that is worked out in and through the specific places in which we live and move – as our lives are shaped and

formed in relation to *this* place and *these* places. While there is no privileged place in which placedness – or being – is made pre-eminently apparent (although perhaps some places are better attuned to enabling such appearing than others), there is nevertheless a privileging of places in relation to the singularity of ourselves as persons. Here is the second, and almost certainly more familiar, sense of *Heimat* – a sense that refers to just this idea of the place-bound identity and determination of human being. If the concluding emphasis on *Heidegger's Topology* is on the appearance of place in and through place (in and through *any* such place), then the emphasis of *Place and Experience* is on the dependence of human life on the singular places in which it is lived. It is this idea that I referred to, in the earlier book, as Proust's Principle[23] – the idea of persons "*being who and what they are* through their inhabiting of particular places". The two senses of place, and of *Heimat*, that appear here are in no way incompatible with one another – if anything, each can be said to imply the other.

Young suggests that it is my concern with the 'problem of place' that leads me to refuse any privileging of places in relation to the experience of placedness that is discussed at the conclusion of *Heidegger's Topology*.[24] But, in fact, this seems to me to be a direct consequence of the book's attempt to explore and to articulate Heidegger's own topological mode of thinking. Such thinking is not exclusively reserved only for those who live in certain special places – although for each one of us, since we are ourselves formed by specific places rather than others, so the possibilities of our own thinking will themselves be similarly and specifically place-dependent. As in Heidegger's own case, each of us may well find that certain places provide the pre-eminent sites for thinking, and for the encounter with the 'nearness of being'. While a concern with 'the problem of place' does not motivate the concluding comments in *Heidegger's Topology*, that problem can adequately be addressed only on the basis of a recognition of the complex and multiple character of

place. It is precisely the way in which place encompasses both the singular and the multiple that it can indeed allow both the foreign as well as the familiar to appear within it; that it can allow a genuine encounter, not only with one's own self, but also with others. It is this placed encounter that is surely the proper source of wonder, and that is also named, in all the equivocity of that naming, by Heidegger's use of the word *Heimat*.

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[1] See Joseph P. Fell, *Heidegger and Sartre: An Essay on Being and Place* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983); Reiner Schürmann, *Heidegger on Being and Acting: From Principles to Anarchy*, tran.s Christine-Marie Gros (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1987). Other writers have also explored aspects of Heidegger's treatment of space and place, but Fell and Schürmann stand out in their recognition of the topological in Heidegger's thinking (in Fell this is quite explicit; in Schürmann, it appears more indirectly).

[2] See my discussion in *Heidegger's Topology*, pp.213-230.

[3] In *Discourse on Thinking*, trans. John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund (New York: Harper & Row, 1966).

[4] See some of my discussions of this in: *Heidegger's Topology*, pp.156-175; 'From the Transcendental to the Topological: Heidegger on Ground, Unity and Limit', in Jeff Malpas (ed.), *From Kant to Davidson: Philosophy and the Idea of the Transcendental* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp.75-99; 'Heidegger's Toplogy of Being' in, Steven Galt Crowell and Jeff Malpas (eds), *Transcendental Heidegger* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), pp.119-134; and also 'The Transcendental Circle', *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 75 (1997), pp.1-20 (although in the latter the connection to topology is not itself directly taken up).

[5] In this respect, one of the dangers that attends on some forms of the contemporary rapprochement between phenomenology and analytic

thought, and particularly between phenomenology and cognitive science is that the transcendental character of phenomenology is overlooked along with the distinctive character of the transcendental as such. This is a danger exemplified most clearly, it seems to me, in Dreyfus' work, in which the neglect of a properly transcendental perspective is itself tied to what amounts to a rejection of Kant as well as Husserl.

[6] This feature of Kant's treatment of subjectivity, and especially of his treatment of the transcendental, is something to which Jaakko Hintikka draws special attention – see Hintikka, 'Transcendental Arguments: Genuine and Spurious', *Nous* 6 (1972), pp.274-281.

[7] See, for instance, 'The Transcendental Circle'.

[8] For some preliminary indications as to the directions in which such a reading of Kant might move, see, Jeff Malpas and Günter Zöller, 'Reading Kant Topologically', forthcoming.

[9] *Heidegger's Topology*, p.37.

[10] See my 'Locating Interpretation: The Topography of Understanding in Heidegger and Davidson', *Philosophical Topics* 27 (1999), pp.129-148.

[11] See *Place and Experience*, p.41.

[12] See *Heidegger's Topology*, pp.108-113.

[13] *Being and Time*, H329.

[14] See *Heidegger's Topology*, p.110.

[15] Significantly, on an Aristotelian account, the derivation in both these cases can be understood as each combining at least three of the causes – material, formal and efficient.

[16] It should be noted that derivation may itself be a completely *formal* notion – the derivation of existential spatiality from temporality in *Being and Time* is not a derivation of the *content* of existential spatiality, but rather consists in

a claim concerning a relation of formal dependence that looks very close to the sort of asymmetrical dependence advanced by Crowell

[17] Building Dwelling Thinking', *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p.154.

[18] Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, ed. Richard Crouter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 52 – the idea recurs at a number of other places in the same work. I am grateful to Alex Jensen for drawing this to my attention. For Jensen's own discussion of this and related matters see his 'Heidegger's Last passing God and Schleiermacher's Speeches *On Religion'* (unpublished typescript), and 'The Influence of Schleiermacher's Second Speech *on Religion* on Heidegger's Concept of *Ereignis'*, *Review of Metaphysics* 61 (2008).

[19] See, for instance, *Place and Experience*, pp.29-43, and *Heidegger's Topology*, pp.155-173.

[20] See especially my account in 'Beginning in Wonder', in Nikolas Kompridis (ed.), *Philosophical Romanticism* (London: Routledge, 2006), pp.282-98.

[21] 'Letter on "Humanism"', in *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.257-58.

[22] *Parmenides*, trans. André Schuwer and Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), p.149.

[23] See *Place and Experience*, p.176.

[24] That there is a problem of place here, along the lines that Young sets out, is an issue that has certainly preoccupied me of late, and is the focus for one of my current projects (a book, *Ethos and Topos*, is currently in preparation), but the concern does not underpin my analysis in *Heidegger's Topology* in quite the way Young suggests.