Place is the central theme of this issue of *EAP*. Since the late 1970s, the concept of place has arisen as a major focus of theory and practice in disciplines and professions ranging from philosophy, geography, and sociology, on one hand; to architecture, landscape architecture, and environmental education, on the other.

Place is powerful conceptually and practically because, by its very nature, it gathers worlds spatially and environmentally, marking out centers of human action, intention, and meaning that, in turn, contribute to its making.

This issue begins with a review of political scientist Douglas Rae's *City*, a wide-ranging study of traditional urban place as founded in lively street life and vibrant city districts. Rae's real-world focus is the shifting social and economic geography of the streets, neighborhoods, and districts of New Haven, Connecticut, the city he draws on to typify traditional urbanism in America (see photograph below).

Next, philosopher Jeff Malpas, whose *Place and Experience* has received consider coverage in recent issues of *EAP*, provides a response to recent commentaries on his work by educator John Cameron and philosopher Ingrid Stefanovic.

Last, philosopher Bruce Janz, webmaster of the excellent website "Reach in Space and Place," provides an autobiographical account of his growing interest in place as a concept to foster interdisciplinary and inter-professional research and practice.

We continue to be short of material for future *EAPs*. Please send essays, drawings, reviews, commentaries, news of interest, and so forth. As always, we particularly appreciate student work.

From Douglas Rae's *City: Urbanism and Its End* (p. 90): A New Haven, Connecticut grocery store with female staff (center) and neighborhood children (right), c. 1895. See review, p. 5. © 2003 Yale University.

Items of Interest

Technology and the Body is a conference to be held 4-6 November, 2004, at the Canada Science and Technology Museum, Ottawa, Canada. Themes covered include: The Built Environment, Medicine, Clothing and Adornment, Body Enhancement, Athletics, and The Body Expressive. Speakers include Galen Cranz, who discusses "Body-Conscious Design." Go to: www.sciencetech.technomuses.ca

The Car in History is a conference to be held 20-21 May, 2005, at the Department of History and Munk Centre for International Studies, University of Toronto. This interdisciplinary conference focuses on the history of the car in North America from the perspective of technology, business, cultural landscape, and popular culture. Contact: steve.penfold@utoronto.ca

The *Institute for Sacred Architecture* is a non-profit organization of architects, clergy, educators and others interested in the discussion of significant issues related to contemporary Catholic architecture. The group publishes the bi-annual *Sacred Architecture*, which includes articles and reviews outside the Catholic tradition. For example, the fall/winter 2002 issue includes Nikos A. Salingaros' "Anti-Architecture and Religion," which asks "why the world [has] renounced emotionally-nourishing buildings and instead embraced buildings that literally make us ill." www.sacredarchitecture.org/

Human Studies is a scholarly journal devoted to "advancing the dialogue between philosophy and the human sciences. It addresses issues such as the logic of inquiry methodology, epistemology, and foundational issues in the human sciences exemplified by original empirical, theoretical, and philosophical investigations. Phenomenological perspectives, broadly defined, are a primary, though not an exclusive focus." A online sample of the journal, including submission and ordering information, is available at: www.wkap.nl/journals/huma.

The **Society for the History of Technology (SHOT)** is an interdisciplinary organization devoted to the study of the historical development of technology and its relation to culture, politics, economics, and social change. The group publishes the quarterly journal *Technology and Culture*. Contact: jlorder@jhupress.jhu.edu.

Diversity in Design: the Journal of Inclusive Design Education is a new academic on-line publication sponsored by the Center for Inclusive Design and Environmental Access (IDEA) at the University of Buffalo. Contact: tauke@ap.buffalo.edu.

Citations Received

Andrés Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, & Robert Alminana, 2003. *The New Civic Art: Elements of Town Planning*. NY: Rizzoli.

Largely composed of drawings, plans, and photographs arranged from larger to smaller scale, this lavishly-produced volume seeks to provide "an exposition of excellent urban design." As major figures in the New Urbanist movement, the authors argue that "expert design is a necessary element of urbanism. Policy and administration are not enough to promote re-investment in old places or the development of compact, diverse, walkable new places." The design examples offered are said to provide "a manual of proven practice."

Craig Holdrege, 2003. *The Flexible Giant: Seeing +the Elephant Whole*. Ghent, NY: The Nature Institute.

Holdrege is a major figure in Goethean science, and here he applies Goethe's "phenomenology of nature" to the elephant. His method is to "continually return to the question, 'Who are you, elephant?' The idea of the coherent organism, formed as a question, becomes the guiding light of inquiry.

"The challenge is to articulate this unity—to make it visible to our understanding. To do this demands a particular kind of attention and inner activity.

"First, when I have come to a certain grasp of some area in detail, instead of just progressing further in analysis I make myself—which is not easy—step back and ask, 'How does this relate to the whole?' I may not yet have an answer, but by trying to place every detail into the larger context, I make sure I am not losing sight of the animal in all its parts" (p. 3).

Thomas Dacosta Kaufmann, 2004. *Toward a Geography of Art*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

This art historian examines "how notions of place, of the geographical, have been inflected into writing about change through time as it has been and is still discussed in art history" (p. 6).

He considers how "the impact of the consideration of the spatial dimension on previous discussions of art and architecture, where and when art and architecture have been thought to have a historical dimension" (ibid.).

Unfortunately, the author seems largely unaware of the considerable value a phenomenological focus might offer in exploring such issues. In fact, the author is downright hostile to Christian Norberg-Schultz, the one architectural phenomenologist briefly discussed, whose work is written offas a "mysticization of place" (p. 95). Heidegger's ideas are similarly dismissed.

Christopher Alexander, 2004. *The Luminous Ground* [vol. 4 of *The Nature of Order*]. Berkeley, CA: Center for Environmental Structure.

This last volume of *The Nature of Order* examines "the way in which architecture—indeed, all order in the world—touches the inner human person, our being." In the box, right, we reproduce one short section from this book.

[Note: as of September, volume 3 of the series—*A Vision of a Living World*—had not yet been published, we suspect because of the large number of illustrations that volume appears to contain.]

Richard Kieckhefer, 2004. *Theology in Stone: Church Architecture from Byzantium to Berkeley*. NY: Oxford University Press.

This excellent book by a professor of theology is grounded in "an urge to see more clearly what churches have meant and what they can mean for communities that build and use them" (p. vii). Kieckhefer's aim is to "find aspects of church architecture so basic that they can usefully guide everyone's perception of any church…" (p. 10).

These "aspects" he identifies as four, which he introduces in the form of four questions: "To ask how a church is used is first of all to ask about the *overall configuration of space:* How is it shaped, and how does its design relate to the flow, the dynamics of worship?

"The question of use is secondly a question about the *central focus of attention*, if any, within the church: what is the visual focus, and how does it make clear what is most important in worship?

"To inquire about the reaction a church evokes is to ask first about the *immediate impact* it makes on a person walking through the door: what aesthetic qualities come to the fore, and how do they condition the experience of the holy within the church's walls?

"But the question is also one about the *gradual accumulation of impressions* gained in repeated experience of worship within the church: how does sustained exposure to a building and its markers of sacrality lead to deeper and richer understanding?" (p. 10).

From *The Luminous Ground*

A few years ago I went to mass in Salzburg's great cathedral….The high point of this mass was the *Sanctus*. Full choir, slowly increasing rhythm, deep sounds of the organ and the basses, high song of the trebles, the church filled, the air became tense with the presence of this mass… poised, in the *Sanctus*, as if on the edge of some awakening, and the enormous cave of the building, allowing the sound to roll and fill our minds.

I stood there with my thoughts. At the most awe-inspiring moment, a young man pushed forward to a telephone mounted on one of the columns of the nave. He picked it up and listened. The telephone was tied to a tape-recording, giving interesting facts for tourists. He listened to the tape-recording of dates and facts, white the *Sanctus* blazed around him.

This man became a symbol for me of the loss of awe and of our loss of sense. Unable to immerse himself in the thing which filled the air and surrounded us, perhaps even unaware of the beauty which surrounded him, unaware of the size and importance of the sounds that he was hearing, he was more fascinated to listen to a tape-recording reeling off the dates when the cathedral was built. For a while, during the 20th century, this has become our world: a place where the difference between awe and casual interest had been sanded down to nothing.

But I realized on that day that this young man's behavior could summarize what my efforts as an architect have been about. All the efforts I have made have, at their heart, just this one intention: to bring back our awe… and to allow us to begin again to make things in the world which can intensify this awe (pp. 334-35).

Many memorable case studies of many church types and a major contribution to the phenomenology and hermeneutics of sacred space and sacred architecture, though Kierckhefer does not mention these conceptual traditions directly.

Yodan Rofé, 1995. Space and Community: The Spatial Foundations of Urban Neighborhoods, *Berkeley Planning Journal*, vol. 10, pp. 107-25.

This article provides a useful overview of approaches to the spatial and morphological aspects of neighborhood, drawing on the work of Kevin Lynch, Jane Jacobs, Bill Hillier, M. R. G. Conzen, Anne Bernez Moudon, and Michael Southworth.

Rofé concludes that "the spatial foundation of neighborhoods may be increasingly important in a world where people move often and thus have less time to develop local attachments, and in a pluralistic world where the integrative force of religious or other central institutions is in decline. Spatial proximity and civilized, shared use of public space can help weave the fabric of an otherwise fragmented society."

Edward Robbins, 2004. New Urbanism, in Edward Robbins & Rodolphe El-Khoury, eds. *Shaping the City: Studies in History, Theory and Urban Design*. London: Routledge.

A useful overview of New Urbanism, including positive and negative critiques. Robbins concludes that the New Urbanists, "unlike so many of their postmodern brethren in design [have] not walked away and refused to face substantive problems to which design may be able to make a solution. They have not hid behind an apolitical relativism and elitist poetics but,

rather have been willing to join some of the most political and quotidian realities facing people today."

On the other hand, "the New Urbanists should not force all those concerned with the future of urbanism to get on their bandwagon…. Designers should learn from the past that there are no singular solutions to our urban problems and that no single, one-dimensional approach to urban design can or should shoulder such a monumental and intractable task."

Michael Southworth & Eran Ben-Joseph, 2003. *Streets and the Shaping of Towns and Cities*. Washington, DC: Island Press.

Originally published in 1997 [for a review see *EAP*, spring 1997], this new edition includes a revised and updated introduction. The book traces the history of street design and layout and suggests ways to make current pathway systems more integrated and user-friendly. Sadly, there is still no discussion of Bill Hillier's space syntax, a point of view crucial to creating the kind of humanized street networks the authors hope to facilitate.

Edward T. White, 2004. *Travel Drawing: Engaging the Spirit of Place*. Tallahassee, FL: Architectural Media.

This book "addresses the challenges and joys of finding a drawing subject, planning, the sketch, and producing the drawing on site. The emphasis is "travel drawing as a series of mindful rituals and the inner secret, personal, spiritual aspects of drawing on the road." Includes 238 travel sketches.

Book Review: Understanding Urban Place

Douglas Rae, 2003. *City: Urbanism and its End*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Political scientist Douglas Rae's *City* is a perceptive examination of traditional American urbanism grounded in lively streets, mixed uses, and a place-based commingling of citizenry different in race, ethnicity, and class.

Using New Haven, Connecticut as his case study, Rae creatively draws on archival materials to portray the everyday social and economic geography of the American city from the 1870s to the 1920s. He demonstrates the crucial importance of a locally-grounded network of human relationships

founded in and sustaining urban businesses, civic organizations, and municipal government.

Rae also documents how, from the 1920s onward, the traditional American city unraveled, overwhelmed by new technologies, changing economic forces, regional decentralization, and federal policies that gradually enervated the earlier robust street life. Though he concludes that we can never recreate the old urbanism, Rae believes that we might improve today's cities by understanding and remaking old urbanism's best features—"the magic of

small commitments to place, the value of strangers in ordinary life, the humanity of well-ordered side-walks…" (p. 31).

A Day-to-day Vitality

For a phenomenology of urban place, Rae's most revealing discussion is chapters 3-6, which, through superb archival documentation, reconstruct the day-to-day vitality of New Haven's neighborhoods and their underlying interpersonal, social, and economic foundations.

In chapter 3, Rae examines the city's "social geography of business" by describing the rich fabric of neighborhood stores that not only sold goods and services but also played a central role in governing "sidewalks and the people who walked on them" (p. xiii) [see box, right].

Just as importantly, Rae considers how this dense structure of neighborhood retailing began to collapse—for example, the vulnerability of small enterprises to larger operations like chain stores that generated increasingly efficient economies of scale and thus undercut prices.

Rae finds that chain stores in New Haven appeared as early as 1913 and by 1950 had destroyed most neighborhood shops. The city's locality-based business geography also depended on a "permissive treatment of mixed-use neighborhoods by government," a civic attitude that would be replaced by the mentality of single-use zoning, which New Haven adopted in 1926.

Chapter 4, "Living Local," describes the intimate connectedness between residents and their urban world—so much so, Rae suggests, that most residents could not imagine themselves in any way separate or distinct from that world:

A fully grounded city citizen would work full time within her city, would live her nights and evenings there, would educate her children there, would routinely shop in stores there, would worship there if anywhere, would live in a social network pinned down on the city. Its streets, saloons, restaurants, corner stores, plant gates, ballparks, and many more very particular and localized features would organize her life. It would be hard to say who she is without reference to her city (p. 113-14).

Fabric of Enterprise

In the era of urbanism, one could very nearly describe the city as a vast network of implicit conspiracies between businesses and their customers. City life was sustained by a layered fabric of business relationships—large firms and small, wholesale and retail, engaged in manufacturing or distribution, providing transportation or accommodation, creating housing or health services or entertainment or any of a hundred other things people will pay for.

Businesses which survived for any length of time came to know their best customers and learned to accommodate their needs.

Perhaps the accommodation was nothing more than a cheerful greeting; perhaps it came to knowing that the customer wanted his shirts starched. Perhaps the accommodation provided a retail grocer with the freshest green goods at a slight price premium.

Perhaps, more substantially, it was an agreement on a better price in return for a standing order. Being a citizen of the city meant, among other things, being wrapped up in this web of relationships, being "a somebody" as one produced, sold, bought, and consumed the stuff of everyday life (pp. 73-74).

Again largely through maps, Rae considers the residential geography of New Haven's working and affluent classes [see maps, following pages]. Almost all employees, whether factory workers or Yale professors, lived near their jobs. Sometimes the best-paid and working-class citizens lived close to each other, though Rae also finds that there were important boundaries that marked the well-to-do neighborhoods from the rest of New Haven.

These urban dwellers might not like all the ways the city contributed to their daily life, but the resulting world was inescapable: "the person's sense of well-being and her sense of the place's well-being would be intertwined: it would be hard for her to think all was well with her personally, or with her family, if the neighborhood was going to hell" (p.

114). One result was a kind of unself-consciously reinforced urban civility whereby citizens of different ethnicity, race, and economic class more or less "got on."
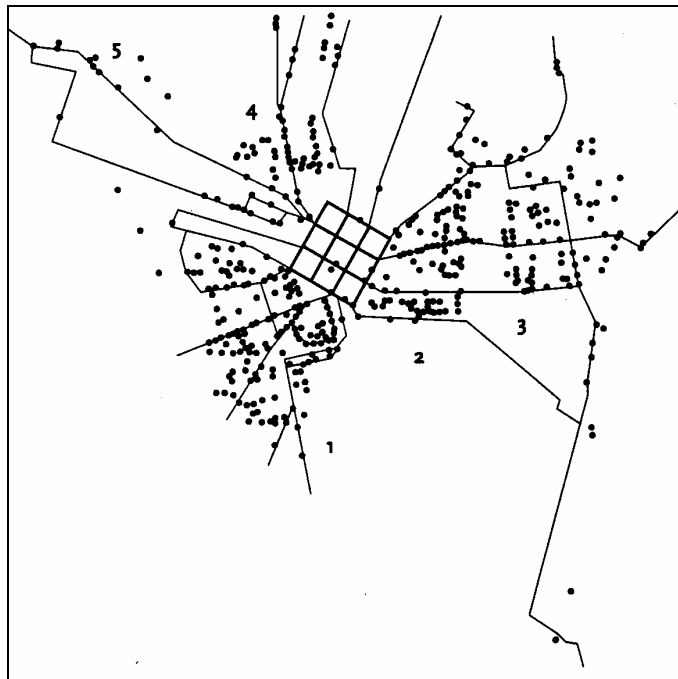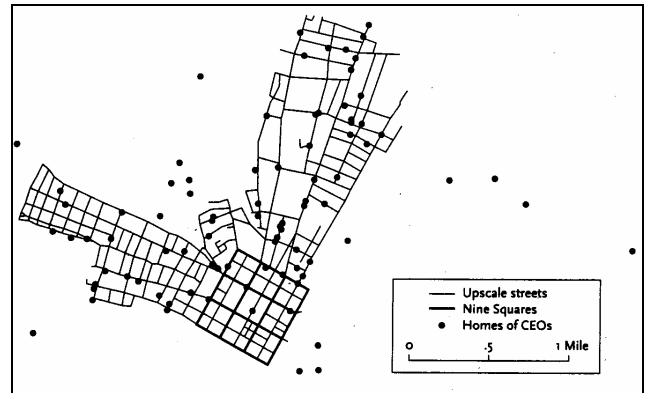

Above: New Haven's grocery stores projected over trolley lines and the city's nine-square central grid, 1913 (p. 87). Numbers indicate neighborhoods. All maps © 2003 Yale University.

Self-Government in Place

In chapter 5, Rae examines the hundreds of volunteer organizations—football clubs, musical groups, religious organizations, and the like—that provided opportunities for community participation in New Haven. These institutions, whether formalized or informal, provided a kind of social capital that played a major role for New Haven's governance in allowing "people to engage with one another, and to build trust across lines of difference" (p. 204).

In chapter 6, Rae examines city government in greater detail, finding it to be, most of the time, honest and well-intentioned but not "particularly farsighted or nimble…." (p. xiii). Rae concludes that, in many ways, city government was marginal to the economic and lived vitality of New Haven because the era was a time of "self-governance" in which "urban society regulated or resolved most of its own conflicts, so that formal government needed

to enter into only a few of them" (p. 203). He explains:

The pressures of centered development, with factory jobs abundantly available, was part of the story. The dense fabric of enterprise, with perhaps three thousand retailers holding down street-corner and mid-block sites throughout the working-class neighborhoods and the downtown, was at once a normative force ('eyes on the street', as Jane Jacobs would say) and a major layer of opportunity for each generation of workers and their families.

The relatively thick layer of housing, thickest of all near industrial plants, was of very uneven quality, yet its residents appear to have regulated their neighborhoods with admirable success. The *joint* impact of housing and retailing was almost certainly a critical element of self-regulating urbanism (p. 203).
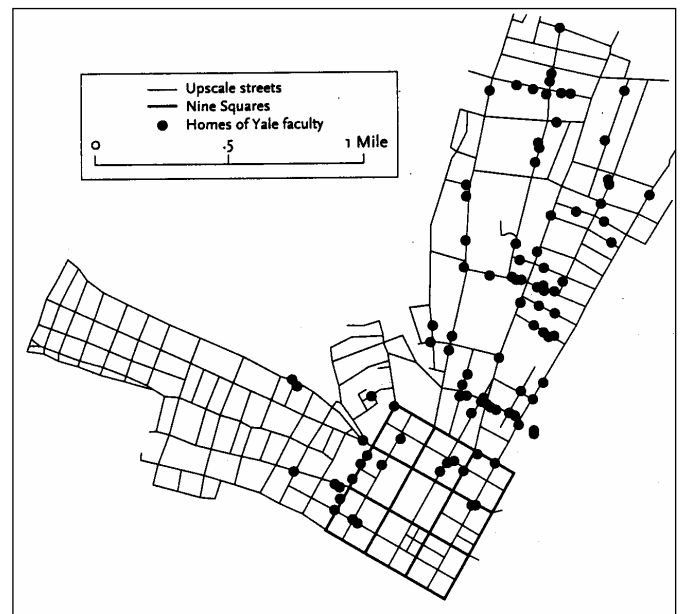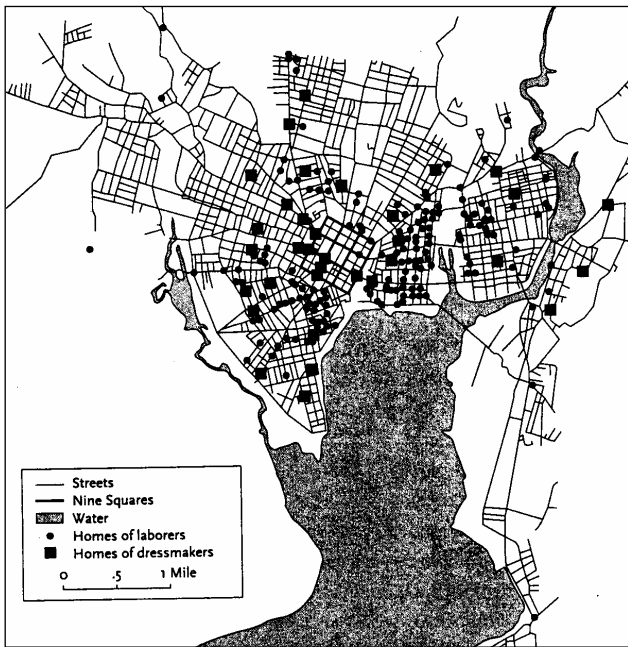

Above: Homes of corporate CEOs, projected over New Haven's upscale neighborhoods, 1913 (p. 129).

Above: Homes of Yale University professors, projected over New Haven's upscale neighborhoods, 1913 (p. 134).

Above: Homes of New Haven clerks, 1913 (p. 125).

Remaking Urban Liveliness

A practical problem in recreating lively cities is that Rae's old urbanism *just happened*—it unfolded for the most part spontaneously because of a particular constellation of historical, geographic, economic, and technological circumstances. If we are to reproduce lively urban places today, we must understand self-consciously how these places work and how physical design might contribute to their everyday dynamism.

Unfortunately, Rae's practical suggestions for urban regeneration are sketchy and steeped in the pragmatist ideas of conventional policy and planning. For example, he emphasizes, at the community level, the importance of historic preservation and adaptive reuse as a way to conserve "the ambience of an earlier age" and suggests that, through a renewed volunteerism, civic organizations might be resuscitated.

In regard to changes at larger environmental scales, he calls for a return to mixed-use zoning and hopes for community building across the complex web of municipal agencies and boundaries that today too often work independently and thus fracture and divide urban regions. He asks for a rethinking of federal public housing programs, particularly the need to find "less isolating ways to improve housing conditions for the urban poor" (p. 424). He argues that all levels of municipal government must be simplified, and elected officials given more authority as they are also made more accountable.

Curiously, Rae suggests that so far the most important 21st-century effort to recreate the traditional city is "New Urbanism," the urban design movement that seeks to create walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods where buildings of a uniform architectural style shape coherent public spaces for neighborly sociability.

I agree with Rae that New Urbanism is a significant attempt to remake urban place, though it must also be said that many New Urbanist projects remain formalist stage sets rather than living places.

In this regard, Jane Jacobs' *Death and Life of American Cities* continues to be the single best understanding of the traditional city because her central notion of "street ballet" recognizes and unravels the intimate interconnectedness between urban lifeworlds and designable qualities of the physical city—i.e., mixed primary uses, small blocks, concentration of users, and range of building types.

Rae's book provides valuable corroborating evidence for Jacobs' street ballet, but practical guides for making street ballet happen in today's cities are better found in Christopher Alexander's theory of environmental wholeness and Bill Hillier's theory of space syntax.

Their ideas, coupled with Jacobs', demonstrate ways in which urban parts might better relate to city wholes. Hillier's work is pivotal because it uncovers the inescapable relationship between pathway structure and the lively street ballet that graced Rae's old urbanism and must grace any city and its districts if they are truly to be healthy urban places.

—David Seamon

Place and Topography:
Responding to Cameron and Stefanovic

J. E. Malpas

Jeff Malpas is a Professor of Philosophy at the University of Tasmania. His *Place and Experience* (Cambridge University Press, 1999) has major bearing on a phenomenology of place. In recent *EAPs*, we have published commentaries on Malpas' book by educator John Cameron (winter 2004) and philosopher Ingrid Stefanovic (spring 2004). Here, Malpas responds to these commentaries. Jeff.Malpas@utas.edu.au © 2004, J. E. Malpas.

*P**lace and Experience* has, as it subtitle, "a philosophical topography." The phrase is not intended merely to indicate the book's orientation to place as the central concept in its analysis, but also to draw attention to a particular methodological orientation within the work, a methodological orientation that looks to give primacy to a non-reductive and relational mode of analysis, while also acknowledging a connection to Martin Heidegger's characterisation of his own thinking as a '*Topologie des Seyns'*—a topology of being.[1]

Although neither Ingrid Stefanovic nor John Cameron make any reference, in their comments on *Place and Experience*, to the idea of topography as such, the issues that they each discuss are directly connected with that idea. Indeed, I am grateful to Stefanovic and Cameron, not only because it is always gratifying to be able to engage in dialogue of this sort, but also because they give me the opportunity, in responding to their comments, to say a little more about what a philosophical topography involves. [2]

Topography and Heidegger

To begin with, however, I should say something about topography as it relates to Heidegger's work, since this is where much of Stefanovic's discussion has its focus. Heidegger talks, of course, not of topography, but rather about topology, and while this can be taken to imply a slightly different orientation, as I use the terms they have a very similar meaning.[3]

As an explicitly cited notion, topology appears only quite late and rarely in Heidegger's thinking. As I have argued elsewhere, however, a topological approach can be seen to underlie much of Heidegger's work both early and late.[4] In spite of the shifts in his thinking that occur between the 1920s and 1950s, all of his work can be seen as an attempt to articulate, that is to 'say', the unitary place in which things come to presence, in which they come to be.

The place at issue here (which appears in various guises as the '*Da'* of Dasein, as the lighting/clearing, *die Lichtung*, that is the happening of the truth of being, as the gathering of the Fourfold in the *Ereignis*) is itself constituted only through the inter-relations between the originary and equi-primordial elements themselves appearing within it.

In *Being and Time* those elements are delineated through the analysis of being-in-the-world and unified in the structure of care and temporality; in "The Origin of the Work of Art," they are seen in terms of the originary strife between earth and world; in the *Beitrage*, as well as later essays such as "Building Dwelling Thinking," it is the interplay between earth and sky, gods and mortals that is seen as providing the basis (the 'ground' even) for the gathering of world.

Topography in *Place & Experience*

The topography at work in *Place and Experience* operates in similar fashion to this Heideggerian to-

pology in that it looks to understand the way in which experience comes to be in place (where experience is understood just in terms of the appearing, the coming to presence of things) through the interplay between the embodied agent, the environment in which agency occurs (and so also the things upon which agency acts), and the other agents with whom agency is invariably coordinated (whether linguistically or otherwise), an interplay in which no one of these can be given priority.

Subjectivity and objectivity are seen as similarly reciprocally determined notions neither of which can be taken as the sole basis for the larger structure of which both are part. Place is presented as the underlying ground here, not as something that stands beneath these elements as some determinate entity, but rather as itself constituted through the interplay of those elements (as Heidegger's Fourfold, and so the World, is constituted through the play of earth, sky, gods and mortals), while also constituting the unitary frame within which those elements themselves come to presence.

These ideas are, of course, difficult to summarise without making them dense and perhaps even opaque, but they are ideas that are set out at greater length in *Place and Experience* and elsewhere. What is perhaps most important in relation to Stefanovic's comments is to see the way in which this account of the grounding role of place involves a reconceptualisation and reappropriation of the notion of ground as such.

Such a reconceptualisation and reappropriation seems to me to lie at the very heart of Heidegger's own thought—it is part of the task of remembrance that is required if we are to overcome, in some way, the forgetfulness of being that is characteristic of metaphysical thinking.[5]

Place as Underpinning

It is largely because my aim in *Place and Experience* was to set out the conceptual and methodological underpinnings for my account of place—to set out, one might say, the basic idea of topography as such—that *Place and Experience* has, as John Cameron correctly notes, very little explicit discussion of the ethics and politics of place

But such issues were certainly not far away in my thinking, and the final chapter of the book does begin to move in the direction of the ethical through the way in which it takes up issues of mortality, finitude, and fragility.

But Cameron has noticed something that is perhaps more important here, and that is the way in which the conceptual and methodological core of *Place and Experience*, what I have been talking about in terms of topography, must also underpin any attempt to arrive at an ethics and politics of place, and more specifically, the special role that narrative has in this regard.

Narrative certainly has a central role in my discussion of place, partly because of the role of memory in the constitution of identity and because of the way I treat memory as itself place-bound, but also because of the way I understand place as itself constituted in terms of agency and movement.[6] The narratives of place are thus the narratives that come with the pathways that open up in and through a landscape, with the possibilities and modes of action that are built into a room, a building, a plaza, a city street, with the saliencies that emerge from engagement with a particular thing or task.

This is, admittedly, a broader use of narrative than the term may traditionally lead us to expect, but it is a use of the term that also picks up on the ways in which place, landscape, country and so forth are narratively articulated within many Indigenous cultures, including those of Aboriginal Australians.

A Poetics of Place

If we understand place as tied to narrative in this way, and of narrative as tied to place in its turn, then inasmuch as our belonging to place must be foundational to any attempt to think place in ethical terms, so we must understand that belonging as essentially underpinned by a dense and interconnected set of narratives—narratives that are constantly being remembered, re-formed and re-articulated.

The articulation of place is also an articulation of ourselves—it is thus that ethics enters centrally into the picture. But it is also an articulation that cannot be undertaken in any general or abstract way. While we can map out the topography of the

concepts at issue here, in the end, the articulation of place is a matter of the articulation of the particular pathways, activities, directions, and concrete relations in which we are already enmeshed. The techniques that are needed in such articulation are the techniques that we have always used: story, song, poem, painting, sculpture, dance—all provide ways by which both place and so ourselves can be spoken, recognised and, in some part, understood.

In this latter respect, the ethics of place is also a poetics, and this, perhaps, is one of the main lessons to be drawn from Heidegger's own talk of 'topology': *logos* and *topos* are not separate from one another, but are already intimately bound together in *poiesis*. Moreover, as Heidegger understands matters, it is precisely the bringing into view of this belonging-together of *topos*, *logos* and *poiesis* that is the task of the thinker.

Notes

1. See "Seminar in Le Thor 1969," in *Seminare, Gesamtausgabe* 15 (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1986), p. 344.

2. Unfortunately, this brief reply will not allow me properly to discharge the debt I owe to John Cameron to say more about the ethical and political implications of such a topography—it is an issue that I intend to address on another occasion.

3. My preference, in *Place and Experience*, for topography over topology is largely determined by the need to distinguish between my own topo-analysis and that of mathematical topology, while at the same time drawing on associations with the techniques of triangulation and traverse associated with old-fashioned topographical surveying. Elsewhere, however, I have employed the language of topology that is favored by Heidegger, who understands it more specifically as a 'saying of place.'

4. See "From the transcendental to the topological: Heidegger on unity, ground and limit," in J. E. Malpas, ed., *From Kant to Davidson: Philosophy and the Idea of the Transcendental* (London: Routledge, 2003); and more particularly "Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World," in Steve Crowell and J. E. Malpas, eds., *Heidegger's Transcendentalism* (forthcoming, 2005).

5. Indeed, the idea of ground ('*der Grund*) is the focus for two key works: "Das Wesen des Grundes, 1929," and *Der Satz vom Grund* (1955/56).

6. Edward Casey has also picked up on the centrality of narrative here, although he sees it in more problematic terms—see our exchange in *Philosophy and Geography, 4* (2001).

Coming to Place

Bruce Janz

Janz is an Associate Professor of the Humanities in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Central Florida in Orlando. His scholarly interests include African philosophy, the philosophy of mysticism, and interdisciplinary approaches to place. Janz is an exceptional webmaster and his academic web pages on such topics as "aesthetics and visual culture" and "critical theory resources" are comprehensive and helpful; see a complete listing on his website at: http://pegasus.cc.ucf.edu/~janzb/.

EAP readers will find Janz's website on *Research on Place and Space* especially useful; it shows the great range of academic and professional work on place and provides a host of references and website links. See a more complete description of this site in the box on the next page. janzb@mail.ucf.edu © 2004 Bruce Janz.

The recent movie *The Terminal*, starring Tom Hanks, raises an interesting question: Is it possible for a non-place to become a place? Marc Augé declared the airport terminal to be the quintessential non-place, the place which has exhausted its symbolic force.[1] All symbols point outside—the airport is, after all, a place of transit, a perennial deferral, not a place where people look for some sort of intrinsic meaning

And yet *The Terminal* suggests that, under the right conditions, even non-places can be places. Nothing is so symbolically or hermeneutically bankrupt that place cannot (re)establish itself. Furthermore, place itself is not stable. It comes and goes, emerges and recedes. While we often think of place in terms of stability or rootedness, we also must recognize that this stability is actually a useful fiction. Places are not only spatially particular but to some extent temporally particular as well.[2]

Place is not, however, simply arbitrary, and that is what interests me as a philosopher. Historically, philosophers have tended to focus on permanences and, preferably, universals. Even those who focus on particulars do not forget universals. Aristotle, for instance, paid attention to the physical as a means to reach the ideal world contained within. Husserl distilled experience to find its universal phenomenological core. In many cases, universality is what is left at the end of philosophical reflection. It is either the prerequisite or the goal of philosophical thought.

The Hermeneutical Circle of Place

Being a philosopher means feeling the tug of the universal. Being a philosopher *today* means understanding the problematic nature of that tug. For many, it is no more than a siren song, beautiful and nostalgic but ultimately futile, coercive, bound to overlook vast areas of human experience and probably evidence of white middle-class heterosexual male privilege. Universals, especially for philosophers who want to remain credible in contemporary cultural theory, must be avoided at all costs.

In the case of place, my sense has always been that there is a gulf between those who deal only with the particularities of place and those who deal with place as a universal concept (that is, a concept that is applied to or generalized over the particulars, rather than derived from them). I have been uneasy with both of those options. Places cannot be irreducibly particular—they become available inasmuch as they are imagined in the context of (or in the absence of, nostalgia for, anticipation of, memory of) other places.

But they also cannot be subsumed under some universal, as instances of a type. To suppose that we have understood a place when we are able to put it in a category ("tourist destination", "home", "suburb", "atrium", "memorial site") is to miss what is human about a place. In some way, the particularities of place that are only available in human experience and the universals of place that make ex-

perience possible must be present at the same time. This is the hermeneutical circle of place.

Particular and Universal Together

This hermeneutical circle has been in my peripheral vision for most of my academic career, even though I did not start by thinking about place as a concept in its own right. My own interest did not begin with the intense attachment to a particular place that some feel, nor in the nostalgic yearning or loss of place that has led others into the field.

Rather, I began with the history of mysticism. My dissertation was on a German mystic named Jacob Boehme (1575-1624). Boehme had little or nothing to say directly about place, but he did have a great deal to say about paying attention to the life that animated and connected nature. I didn't come across the term *genius loci* until later, but it would have fit Boehme's mystical view of nature very well.

What was significant in his thought was that he posited the co-eternal nature of particulars with the divine life that suffused them. In other words, particulars were not pale reflections of a universal cause nor was the universal simply the particulars all added together. He was neither a traditional theist nor a pantheist.

Instead, he held both in hand at the same time, refusing to reduce one to the other. He refused to solve the classical philosophical problem of the many and the one, and in that refusal he recognized that human life itself exists on borders and in tension.

He also recognized that there was a kind of motion through history, that this tension which described life did not remain the same at all times. The change over time was described in a fairly rudimentary manner, as a dialectic, but at least there was the possibility that the relationship created by the tension could shift over time.[3] Boehme offered a model for taking universals seriously but never sacrificing particulars on their behalf, and taking particulars seriously but never seeing them as discrete, unrelated atoms.

Boehme's philosophy may seem a long way from the concept of place, but the foundations are laid here. Place lies between universality and par-

ticularity, reducible to neither. It exists as a tension. It exists between materiality and discourse, reducible to neither. And, like the airport terminal, that tension animates it, making it both stable and always at the edge of emergence or decadence.

Interdisciplinarity and Place

My next stop on the way to place was the concept of interdisciplinarity. For several years I was the director of the Centre for Interdisciplinary Research in the Liberal Arts (CIRLA), at Augustana University College, in Alberta Canada.[4] This center's purpose was to promote interdisciplinary research and teaching, a requirement that made it imperative to think about what counted as interdisciplinarity.

Several of the center's staff, including myself, were rooted in hermeneutic philosophy, and it became clear that interdisciplinarity needed to be more than the application of different disciplines to

the same problem, or the attempt to find a meta-discipline that could organize all other forms of knowledge, or the attempt to contain diverse methodologies within a single person.

What was needed was the actual encounter of disciplinary methods and assumptions with those of other disciplines. If left to itself, a discipline such as philosophy might imagine itself to be the queen of all other disciplines, but that hubris could not be maintained when those engaged in philosophy were brought into dialogue with other disciplines. Philosophy's blind spots become apparent, as well as its strengths.

What does this dilemma have to do with place? It seemed to me that I would better understand philosophy's approach to place if I talked to non-philosophers. It also seemed to me that philosophy might have something to offer the academic discourse on place, not as the one discipline that could theorize place for others, but rather as a way of approaching place that had a set of specific concerns and abilities and which had a particular history in relation to the concept. Philosophy has a place, in all senses of the phrase.

African Philosophy and Place

My third stop on the way to place was African philosophy. Again, this may seem to have little to do with place, but appearances are deceiving. What interested me in African philosophy was that, as a relatively new area within the discipline of philosophy (putting to the side for the moment the claims of priority of Afrocentrism, and the historical philosophical texts and traditional wisdom which can be found in various parts of Africa), African philosophy was under a constant challenge.

The challenge was one of self-defense–European philosophy continually challenged African philosophy to justify its existence. Over time, this defense has become internalized so that a great deal of work in African philosophy is of the form "Here's why this particular thinker or concept is both truly African and truly philosophical."

This struck me as a spatializing activity, in the sense that African philosophers were assumed (by Western philosophy) to have no intellectual territory but were trying to claim some territory. They were

being asked to justify their territorial entitlement. The result was that African philosophers turned to various concepts, such as tradition, reason, culture, language, and so forth, to identify elements in African society that were truly African and truly philosophical.

Most of these efforts, unfortunately, met with mixed success, not because these concepts are not intrinsic to philosophy, but because they cannot serve the spatializing purpose. They cannot guarantee either that the thought that emerges is either truly African or truly philosophical.

Moreso, the real problem is that the wrong question is being asked. Instead of the spatializing question, "Is there an African philosophy?" a question more related to place must be asked: "What is it to do philosophy in this (African) place?" This is a phenomenological and hermeneutical question, but also has the capacity to take symbolic and social constructivist concerns to heart.

The result of taking place seriously in African philosophy is that the Eurocentric challenge is uncovered as an illegitimate one, and African philosophy can attend to the task of philosophically explicating life as it is lived in Africa. [5] This third stop on the road to place suggested to me that, to understand place, we need to understand the questions we ask. Some questions are not platial questions but spatial ones.

A Place Itself

There is a fourth stop on the way to place, and it is not so much an area of research as it is a place itself. In the summer of 2003, I moved from 11 years of teaching in Western Canada to Orlando, to the philosophy department at the University of Central Florida. While the department and university have been congenial, Orlando itself struck me as a very strange place indeed.

I first thought of Augé's non-places, and thought that Orlando might qualify as another example of a non-place. But the signifiers do not all point outside—exactly the opposite. They point inside, as do most tourist destinations. Orlando is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world, and inevitably the area becomes defined by that fact. Instead of Augé's non-places, Baudrillard's

simulacrum came to mind (and of course, Disneyworld is almost the quintessential example).

Living in Orlando as a Canadian has forced me to rethink my ideas of what makes a place. I have rarely seen a stronger division between those who see Orlando as either a non-place or a simulacrum of a place on one hand, and those who see it as a good place, possibly the very model of a good place on the other.

For some Orlandoans, there is absence of culture; for others, profusion. For some, there is transience and lack of roots; for others, the place has deep history. Some find strong communities and coherent cultural narratives which give it a unique character; others fail to find those narratives even after many years and continue to sojourn in Orlando rather than dwelling there. Is Orlando *The Terminal*? Is it wishful thinking, a playground, or perhaps a nightmare? Explicating meaning becomes much more difficult when it is conflicted at every turn.

Some Questions

These stops on the way to place have produced a number of questions:

1. How can philosophy take itself seriously as an emplaced discipline? Philosophy has rarely, if ever, understood itself as an intellectual pursuit that is affected by its places. It has rarely connected itself with the situation from which it comes (apart from identifying contingent philosophical traditions using national or ethnic descriptors, e.g., German or British philosophy). It has rarely considered fieldwork, for instance, as a part of philosophical method. It has rarely thought of its "debts and duties," to use a phrase of Derrida's. What would philosophy look like if it regarded place not just as another concept for analysis but as an integral part of its own self-construction?

This question is not only relevant to philosophy but is a fruitful place to start. Most disciplines regard their methods and knowledge as beyond place, as having no history and as the answer to universal rather than contingent questions, even if the object of their research is place itself. Even many practitioners of cultural studies who would be inclined to value the particularity of human experience tend to regard critical methods coming from Foucault, Derrida, and others as not having come from a place—that is, as not being a response to particular questions in a localized history of thought. This lacuna does not invalidate the use of these critical strategies but does raise the question of how one can be rigorous in recognizing that thought is rooted in places and is a response to concerns that may not exist in the same way elsewhere.

2. How does the discourse on place across the disciplines shape our understanding of place and our approach to it? Why does the concept of place find such a contemporary renaissance? What are its purposes and the ranges of its use?

This question became apparent to me as I developed a tool for the study of place, collecting references and central papers on the concept of place. I thought this effort would be a preliminary task, a kind of literature search. Two things became clear— the task was endless (the amount of work on place is staggering, far more extensive than I anticipated), and this was no mere literature search. If place exists, in part, through the discourse about it, then collecting work on place amounted to a study of that discourse and a contribution to place-making itself. [6] Eventually, the collection of resources became the website *Research on Place and Space* [see box, p. 11].

I found it particularly interesting that the concept of place not only has multiple applications but also applications that are in tension. Place may point to the recovery of individuality in the face of alienating mass society, or it may point to the recovery of community (and the subsumption of individuality) in the face of reductive modernity. Yet again, place may point to stability or, as in the case of *The Terminal,* to fluidity. If the threat to life is its oversimplification (e.g., under an umbrella such as globalization), then place is that which is chaotic or complex. On the other hand, if a threat to life is its complexity, place then becomes what is simple. Nature may be a place, indeed for some the quintessential place; or, nature may be a non-place if, as poet Don McKay writes, place is "nature to which history has happened." Tensions abound, and they become clearer as the uses across disciplines are made

apparent.

3. What are places like at the edge of "place-ness"? Can places die? Where do they come from? What is the "other" of place – globalization? Hyperreality? Limbo? If place is not just seen as a kind of stasis or permanence, what else might it be? And can it serve its purpose if it is seen as transient rather than permanent?

In *The Invention of Tradition,* Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger argue that what has been seen as simply rooted in time may in fact have an unexpectedly recent history.[7] Does this invalidate the tradition? Not necessarily, but it does require that we think about the border between thought and its other. Tradition is that which we are willing to not think about, to regard as simply pre-rationally constitutive of identity. To regard tradition as having recent history is to subject it to thought and, possibly, to raise questions about the identity which it supports.

Place is like this. For many, its stability and permanence are important because they legitimate identity. But if place comes and goes, if it has a history like tradition, can it do the work that many thinkers and practitioners want it to do? Can it really support identity? We create place like we sometimes create tradition, for good reasons. Places tell us who we are at our best, but like tradition, places tend to get out of hand and have the potential as well to show us who we are at our worst. Thus, the transitions of place, rather than just the stability of place, is worthy of attention.

4. How can places be both one and not one at the same time? That is, how is it possible that places can have both a unity and a contradiction of meaning at the same time? The easy answer is to regard this paradox as one of subjectivity—we bring interpretations to places such that the same place can be a completely different experience for different people. But if place exists in a hermeneutical circle, then place itself is already interpreted. So the paradox exists in the very nature of place itself, not as a later subjective interpretation on an objective feature of the world. At the same time, place is not just the product of subjectivity—it is not all relative. Place, like reality, "bites back." Places resist some interpretations and reject others, even as they make some possible.

To me, the lesson in all this is clear. One's path to a concept matters, and the questions that can be raised about that concept become available the more one is clear on where the questions are coming from.

Notes

1.Augé, Marc. *Non-places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*. London: Verso, 1995.

2. I am aware of the problematic phrasing here. What if, as Edward Casey (e.g., *Getting Back into Place*, Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1996) and others argue, place precedes space?

3. Boehme's dialectical philosophy earned him the title of the "first German philosopher" from Hegel.

4. Augustana University College is now the Augustana Faculty of the University of Alberta.

5. See my "Philosophy as If Place Mattered: The Situation of African Philosophy," Havi Carel and David Gomez, eds. *What Philosophy Is*. London: Continuum Publishers, 2004, pp. 103-115.

6. For more on this, see my "Walls and Borders: The Range of Place", *City and Community*, forthcoming.

7. Eric Hobsbawm & Terence Ranger, eds. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, 1992.