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ARTICLE

Placing the Past: 'Groundwork' for a Spatial Theory of History

Philip J. Ethington

This essay presents an argument that the past is the set of all places made by human action. The past cannot exist in time: only in space. Histories representing the past represent the places (topoi) of human action. Knowledge of the past, therefore, is literally cartographic: a mapping of the places of history indexed to the coordinates of spacetime. The author's reply to published commentary emphasizes the multi-perspectival framework of his theory and the non-narrative potential of visual representation of the past.

Keywords: Historical Theory; Mapping; Past; Place; Space; Time

Précis

All human action *takes* and *makes* place. The past is the set of places made by human action. History is a map of these places.

Introduction

The past cannot exist 'in' time, because time cannot be any sort of frame within which anything can exist. By western definitions, time is something *other* than space, and yet it is incessantly portrayed as something spatial: as a line, a frame, a background, a landscape, and as having orientation. In common usage, the past is behind us and the future is ahead. We speak of the distant past and the gulf of time that separates us from the ancients. These spatial metaphors for time are ubiquitous because they are grounded metaphors, arising from the spatial experience of time. In nature, time—*by*

itself—has no being whatsoever. It is a mere measurement of spatial motion. But human, or *lived* time is another matter. Experiential, memorial time is very real because it takes place. The past cannot exist *in* time: only *in* space. Histories representing the past represent the places (*topoi*) of human action. History is not an account of ‘change over time,’ as the cliché goes, but rather, change through space. Knowledge of the past, therefore, is literally cartographic: a mapping of the places of history indexed to the coordinates of spacetime.

If historical knowledge can mean anything that is distinct from other forms of knowledge, it must mean something about the temporal dimension of human experience in the world. What precisely is this temporal dimension? The experience of memory, common sense, and material evidence all around us strongly indicates that the past *did* exist. What can we add, other than rendering the verb ‘to be’ in its past tense? It is circular to say, ‘the past was.’ What is the signified of ‘*the past*,’ and does it have more than a semiotic existence?

Historians have extensively addressed the question, ‘what is history?’ and how best to study the past. This essay begins with a far simpler question: what is the past, that we could seek to know or represent it in any way? That question depends unavoidably on a larger question: what is time? The process of answering these questions leads to a robust account of experience, as action inscribing the places of the past in spacetime. It also leads to a reconception of historical interpretation as the act of reading places, or *topoi*.

This essay attempts to make a contribution to current discussions about historical knowledge and even to knowledge in general. I advocate a new materialism that incorporates, in good faith, two generations of postpositivist, poststructural, postmodern, and postcolonial critique, and yet moves beyond these negations into a practice that can, in principle, achieve cumulative knowledge through intercultural dialogue on the courses and meanings of the global past. Emplacing historical knowledge entails a radical rethinking of many basic terms that have become nebulous through shorthand use and critical neglect.

Placing the past will also help historians to navigate the most recent ‘turn’ in the human sciences, the ‘spatial turn,’ as instigated by such thinkers as Henri Lefebvre, Michel Foucault, Yi-Fu Tuan, David Harvey, Edward Soja, and Edward Casey. Bookshelves groan under the weight of recent discussions of place and space among geographers, anthropologists, and sociologists (Agnew & Duncan 1989; Feld & Basso 1996; Gieryn 2000; Low & Laurence-Zúñiga 2003; Cresswell 2004; Hubbard *et al.* 2004). Amazingly, in the face of all this, almost nothing has been written in the last

three generations by historians directly on the concept of time. I have come to realize that historians cannot merely borrow new ideas about place and space without first conducting a searching examination of their own discipline's home dimension of *temporality*. Just beginning this necessary and long-overdue task may lead to some exciting new possibilities for historical knowledge that can overcome the fragmentations of perspectival contingency.

Before the spatial turn even joined the list of 'turns' in the late 1980s, philosophers, critical theorists, intellectual historians, and others had developed a very advanced debate about the possibilities of producing knowledge of society. This was *not* a debate between some naive believers in objective, scientific value-neutral knowledge on one hand, and relativistic poststructuralists, on the other, as in Peter Novick's (1988) misleading account (Kloppenbergh 1989). Instead, it has been a debate among those who all *agree* that we are in a post-foundational age, aware that linguistic construction, cultural difference, and historical contingency have eliminated the possibility of appealing to timeless, underlying truths, impartial epistemological methods, and the positive accumulation of uncontested knowledge.

Concerned primarily with the possibilities of knowing the past, I shall build my case by remapping the past of knowing. My starting point is the rise of the pragmatic-hermeneutic tradition inaugurated by Wilhelm Dilthey in Germany and William James in the United States, in the closing decades of the 19th century. In that tradition, knowledge of the past lost its atemporal universality and the foundations of universal truth began to crumble. In temporality and historicity, the contingency of knowledge became inescapable. The linguistic turn further separated knowing from the past by adding the semiotic critique of representation to those of historicity and contingency. These traditions branched into several intellectual pathways. Dilthey's historicism was recast by Heidegger, who radicalized Husserl's phenomenology into a temporalization of human being, and then by Derrida, who added semiotics to produce a radical deconstruction of knowledge. James' and John Dewey's closely related pragmatism branched into reconstructive and radically skeptical positions on the possibilities of knowledge, represented by Jürgen Habermas and Richard Rorty, respectively.

I shall argue that a cornerstone of the pragmatic tradition: *temporality* as construed by fin-de-siècle hermeneutics—is in need of reconstruction now that the *spatial* turn has been added to the *linguistic* and *cultural* turns. My interrogation of 'time' will lead back into space and place, through historical regions yet unexplored by the current state of the spatial turn.

From Timeless Historians to an Account of Time

If anything is obvious about the practice of historical research and writing, it is that 'time' is the discipline's most defining feature. For historians, the question 'what is time?' is so basic and essential to our craft that it should be a cause for wonder that historians have evaded it almost completely and for so long. History has been as active as any other discipline in probing its most profound issues of theory and method. The major essayists on the historian's craft, from Carl Becker ([1931] 1966) and Marc Bloch (1953) to E. H. Carr (1961), Fernand Braudel (1980), Siegfried Kracauer (1969), David Hackett Fischer (1970), David Lowenthal (1985), Joan Wallach Scott (1988), Pierre Nora (1996), Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob (1994), Alun Munslow (2000), and most recently, John Lewis Gaddis (2002), show us the necessary limits and also the open possibilities for interpreting and representing the past. I can neither summarize these important works, nor improve on them. Rather, I wish to show that by exposing the ontologic status of time, the questions that all of these works address will take on a new light.

Fernand Braudel's influential scheme of three time scales went farther than most attempts by historians to define the time of the past. In *The Mediterranean* and elsewhere, Braudel argued that human history is composed of three types of time, each 'one aspect of the whole.' In the conclusion to *The Mediterranean*, he wrote of

an attempt to write a new kind of history, total history, written in three different registers, on three different levels, perhaps best described as three different conceptions of time, the writer's aim being to bring together in all their multiplicity the different measures of time past, to acquaint the reader with their coexistence, their conflicts and contradictions, and the richness of experience they hold. (Braudel 1972, II, p. 1238)

The first of these three Braudelian conceptions is the *Longue durée*: 'a history whose passage is almost imperceptible,¹ that of man in his relationship to the environment, a history in which all change is slow, a history of constant repetition, ever-recurring cycles.' The second type of time is also a long time span, but less daunting. This conjunctural history: '*histoire conjuncturelle*,' as Braudel came to call it, is a time of 'slow but perceptible rhythms...one could call it social history, the history of groups and groupings' (1972, I, p. 20, italics in original). The third type, a '*histoire événementielle*,' deals with the 'short time span, proportionate to individuals, to daily life, to our illusions, to our hasty awareness—above

all the time of the chronicle and the journalist ...' (1980, p. 28). 'But the worst of it,' Braudel added,

is that there are not merely two or three measures of time, there are dozens, each of them attached to a particular history. Only the sum of these measures, brought together by the human sciences (turned retrospectively to account on the historian's behalf) can give us that total history whose image it is so difficult to reconstitute in its entirety. (1972, II, p. 1238)

Braudel's brilliant pluralization of time scales emerged from his attempt to see the history of a place, which his training under Lucien Febvre had taught him to see geographically and led to his 'homage to those timeless realities whose images recur throughout the whole book' (1972, II, p. 1239).

The thesis that the time of the past must have multiple scales and simultaneous, yet inharmonious, rhythms, was also developed by the art historians Henri Focillon ([1934] 1992) and George Kubler (1962), and further elaborated by Siegfried Kracauer (1969). Neither Braudel nor Kracauer, however, went further than to subdivide 'time' into multiple registers. Left whole as a single timeline, stratified into three or twelve layers by Braudel's 'depth metaphor' (Megill 1989) or separated into different rhythms, time has remained unquestionably necessary as a frame or background for historians to situate 'the past.'

The most recent, and most suggestive, case of portraying the past as a background is John Lewis Gaddis' recent Oxford lectures (2002), comparing the past to a landscape, as a *simile* or *analogy*. Gaddis convincingly shows that the production of historical knowledge is very much 'like' that of a cartographer: the need to operate at different scales, to contextualize, to generalize and particularize simultaneously, to skip time periods and to portray non-adjacent places. But, when Gaddis freely admits that he is *only* offering a simile, he begs the question of what the object of that simile is: if the past is only *like* a landscape, then what *is* it?

To be sure, historians have studied the social and intellectual history of time as perceived, conceived, and lived by past societies (Kern 1983; Pocock 1989; Haraven 1991; Landes 2000), but amazingly, even these historians have left the entire question of *time* as such—the time that makes it meaningful for *them* to say anything at all about 'the past'—unexamined. To historicize anything, including time, requires some assumptions about the nature of time to the historicizing historian. The mother of all assumptions has been that 'time' is a static background, transcendent in its universality. For all their vast differences, the philosophers Kant, Husserl

and Heidegger took the stand that time is transcendent a priori (Dostal 1993), so historians can hardly be blamed for doing so.

Most commonly, historians simply confuse time with chronology and chronometry—the ‘time’ of calendars and clocks. No one seriously debates whether the 18th century came before the 20th, nor that Denis Diderot lived before Jean-Paul Sartre, so this framework called ‘time’ remains reassuringly stable, unproblematic, and consensual. But this convenient evasion tells us nothing about what time actually is, and without knowing that, we cannot ask: what is the past, or history, to time? An excellent starting point is Paul Ricoeur’s (1984–1988) distinction between *cosmic* or *natural* time—that which seems to occur throughout the universe, independent of humanity; and *human* or *lived* time: time as conceived, perceived, and experienced by individuals and their societies, as for example in the studies of ‘collective memory’ (Halbwachs 1992; Nora 1996; Confino 1997; Klein 2000; Kansteiner 2002). As my argument proceeds, I hope to make it clear that these two types of time actually converge by intersecting in places (*topoi*).

Natural Time

To physicists, cosmic or natural time is only part of relativistic ‘spacetime,’ a large-scale structure postulated by Hermann Minkowski and Albert Einstein. Since humans do not yet travel at speeds nearing that of light, historians can be forgiven for not worrying too much about the behavior of time under conditions other than the plodding Newtonian rotations and orbits of the Earth, which tick off the days and years. Even less do they need, on a daily basis, to ponder the bizarre issues of space and time at the quantum level. The commonplace lesson drawn from relativity theory is that there is no privileged perspective or frame for ‘time,’ and therefore, that time cannot be absolute. The speed of light provides the only parameter. Quantum mechanics holds that a particle can be in two different locations at the same time, a possibility that may have no relevance to human affairs, but one which further confounds reassuring notions of some standard background called ‘time’ against which history happens (Sklar 1974).

Time in nature ‘is no more than an arbitrary parameter that is used to describe dynamics, or the mechanics of motion.’ This arbitrary parameter has proven very difficult to standardize precisely. The basic unit used by scientists and engineers to describe these motions and to coordinate the increasingly complex technology of society is the *second*, fixed in 1956 under the *Système Internationale des Unités* (SI) as ‘1/31,556,925.9747th of

the orbital period of the Earth about the Sun.’ But alas, the Earth’s orbital period actually fluctuates slightly, so *that* standard was replaced in 1968 by Resolution #1 of the 13th Conférence Générale des Poids et Mesures (CGPM), to be, rather, ‘9,192,631,770 cycles of the ground-state hyperfine splitting of the unperturbed cesium atom’ (Diddams *et al.* 2004, p. 1318).

Paired with the basic unit of time is the basic unit of space, the SI meter, today defined as ‘the path length traveled by light in a vacuum during the time interval of $1/299,792,458$ of a second’ (Diddams *et al.* 2004, p. 1318).² The original meter was born in the French Revolution as a neat subdivision of the circumference of the Earth (to supplant earlier measures such as the ‘hand’ and the ‘foot’). Humans will calibrate motion with such arbitrary units until the end of the world, never measuring time itself.

We *never* observe time isolated by itself in nature; only motion and the traces of motions. Those traces are the innumerable various inscriptions by natural events and by purposive beings onto their environments. Because collective action is coordinated by cyclical repetitive motions in nature, as in the Earth’s solar orbit or the Moon’s terrestrial orbit, it should be no surprise that these motions and their periodicity became central to human consciousness of time. Classified into units that vary widely by varying conceptions of time (linear, circular, discontinuous, etc.), ‘time’ is nothing *in itself*, but rather a culturally specific reading of the dynamic environment.

That said, natural scientists and philosophers of science have come to agree that in the physical universe, ‘time’ (enclosed in quotes because what follows is actually about the energies and motions of things, and not about time as something independent) is *asymmetrical*: it only ‘flows’ in one direction, and cannot be run backward as a movie can (Feynman 1965; Savitt 1990). Hans Reichenbach (1956) demonstrated why this is so. The argument is simply that thermodynamic processes have an infinitely higher probability of running from low to high states of entropy (from organized to disorganized) than from high to low states of entropy. Sugar cubes dissolve into hot coffee, but sugar in solution with coffee is extremely unlikely to form itself into a cube and rise to the surface. Hence, ‘the direction in which most thermodynamical processes in isolated processes occur is the direction of positive time’ (Reichenbach 1956, p. 127). Here again, however, time is defined as the interval between one entropic state and another. It is the behavior of matter and energy that is observed, not that of time.

It is easy to see, from the ‘asymmetry of time,’ that time travel is impossible because there is no time *in which* to travel. Understanding the being of the past actually depends on an understanding of why this is so.

The spatial field of human experience is an immense, aggregate complex of subatomic and molecular motion. To go 'back in time' cannot mean anything less than forcing all of the particles in our bodies and the world around us into the negative performance of all the motions that they had just completed. This necessarily includes the molecules of the entire planet, because adjacent energies cannot be separated. No individual could break free of the network of energy and matter to visit an earlier state of that network. Either the entire planet goes backward, or nobody does. And even if we could run the entire planet backward, it wouldn't make a difference to anyone, because no one would remember the difference. Memories—stored in the neurobiological complex of the brain—would be *unmade* as time went backwards, and *remade* as time went forward again. A different 'present' might result, but no one would be able to remember the original 'present.' This kind of time travel means that the entire world must always experience each 'time' for the first time. Natural or cosmic 'time' cannot be a container or background of any spatial sort, in which to travel. Time *is* travel.

All matter is in motion, so all space is dynamic. The only sensible term for this environment is 'spacetime,' which I shall use from this point on.

Lived Time

What then of human, or experienced, time? It may be clear that time is illusory in nature, but isn't our experience of it in daily life, our feeling of it passing, our conviction of it as memory, and our collective knowledge of it as history, real? Let us now enquire whether there can be a substance to this time, and if so, is it possible to speak of a 'past' as something real enough that we can obtain knowledge of it?

Despite historians' indifference, a mountain of philosophical and scholarly texts since antiquity are devoted to unraveling the mystery of human and natural time (Grünbaum 1963; Sherover 1975; Carr 1986; Flood & Lockwood 1986). Models of time—as linear, circular, eternal, fragmentary, discontinuous—are as diverse as the cultures of the globe (Aguessy *et al.* 1977; Fraser 1981). Limitations of space require me to enter this massive background through a single regional tradition: the Euro-American beginning of the 20th century.

In two very different ways, the philosophers J. Allen McTaggart and Henri Bergson cast damning doubt on the 'reality' of the linear, or spatial, model of time. McTaggart's influential 1908 essay, 'The Unreality of Time,' established the convention of distinguishing between two very different kinds of temporal 'series.' In the 'A series,' events occur in moments that

run from the future to the present and then into the past. In the ‘B series,’ events are either ‘earlier’ or ‘later.’ Considering ‘pastness,’ ‘presentness,’ and ‘futurity’ to be either relations among or qualities of events, McTaggart concluded that the A series is contradictory, because past, present, and future are ‘incompatible determinations,’ and yet ‘every event has them all’ in that each event somehow changes its state (1908, p. 468). The A series also clashes with the B series. The event of the death of William Shakespeare (1616) occurred before the event of the death of Queen Anne (1714), and remains, always, 98 years prior to the latter. Thus, these events must remain fixed and yet they are asked to move or change states in the A series from being future, to present, to past—to shift down the line, as it were, to make room for new events. From this, McTaggart reasoned that time cannot be part of reality.

But McTaggart neatly dispatched from ‘reality’ only the *abstract* time that corresponds to another abstraction—space. Since this time is only read from planetary motion with everyday clocks, it cannot function like something spatial in itself, much less something with the capacity to ‘move,’ as when time ‘passes.’ It is not a background or ground of any kind, just the interval point-observations of bodies in motion. But neither consciousness nor social action is possible without a real sense of time. That kind of time was theorized vividly by Henri Bergson.

Bergson cut through McTaggart’s Gordian Knot with his famous distinction between linear time sequences and ‘duration’ (*durée*). In a series of essays, books, and his immensely popular lectures at the Collège de France, Bergson argued that ‘real time’ is essentially a human phenomenon, since two ‘moments’ can only meaningfully constitute a temporal relation via memory ([1890], [1896], [1907], [1922]). ‘To tell the truth, it is impossible to distinguish between the duration, however short it may be, that separates two instants and a memory that connects them, because duration is essentially a continuation of what no longer exists into what does exist. This is real time, perceived and lived’ ([1922] 2002, p. 208).³ In nature then, time in isolation quite definitely cannot exist, but in human consciousness it must. We are left with the result that human, subjective, psycho-socially constructed ‘time’ is real, while natural, objectively measured ‘time’ is an illusion. Given the typical prioritization of the physical over the imaginary, this irony deserves further attention. Indeed, since humans are part of nature, the irony may indicate a conceptual flaw in the distinction between human and natural time. I shall return to this possibility later.

Certainly, if human experience is real, then the temporality of that experience is no less real. But Bergson’s distinction between ‘real’ time and

the abstraction of measured time, and his dismissal of the latter's 'spatial' character, is fundamentally flawed and requires a historical critique.

The Time of Metaphoric Space

Bergson's conception of 'real time' as *duration* thematized 'the present' as the genuine field of human temporality. In this project he had good company. United as 'philosophers of life,' Wilhelm Dilthey, William James, and Henri Bergson successfully raised *presentness* in streams of time as a critical feature of consciousness. The temporality of consciousness, in turn, was a key feature of the pragmatic-hermeneutic project to establish the contingency of knowledge within historic contexts. So far, so good. But I want to reinforce these intellectual achievements by exposing the weak metaphoric spatiality deployed by the founding generation of the hermeneutic and pragmatic traditions.

William James, whose enthusiasm for Bergson is well known, independently developed the idea of 'stream of consciousness' to characterize the indivisibility of lived time. Already in his *Principles of Psychology* ([1890] 1983) he concluded his chapter on the 'Perception of Time'

by saying that we are constantly conscious of a certain duration—the specious present—varying in length from a few seconds to probably not more than a minute, and that this duration (with its content perceived as having one part earlier and the other part later) is the original intuition of time. Longer times are conceived by adding, shorter ones by dividing, portions of this vaguely bounded unit, and are habitually thought by us symbolically. ([1890] 1983, p. 603)

James' influential account apprehends time in its 'flow': the present is specious because as soon as we can think of it, it is past, and the duration of this passage has no fixed measure. As in Bergson's *durée*, the specious present seems to refute the very logic of measured time, which represents moments as points.

'The representations by which we possess the past and the future are there only for us as we live in the present,' writes Wilhelm Dilthey in his uncompleted *Critique of Historical Reason*. 'The present is always there, and nothing is there except what emerges in it.' 'Nothing' is a strong claim. How literally can we take it? If the past is part of reality, then according to Dilthey, it must exist only 'in' the present. 'The present,' continues Dilthey, 'is the fullness of a moment of time being filled with reality; it is reality as distinct from memory or representations of the future as found in wishes,

expectations, hopes, fears, and strivings' (2002, p. 215). *Presenting* the past is a cornerstone of Dilthey's philosophy of history because his goal was to situate both the historical subject and the historian, a goal that had deep epistemological implications.

'Action everywhere presupposes the understanding of other persons,' Dilthey explains, 'so at the threshold of the human sciences we encounter a problem specific to them alone and quite distinct from all conceptual knowledge of nature' (2002, p. 235). Dilthey successfully enshrined 'interpretation' as the core method of the human sciences and therewith erected a formidable barrier between the human and natural sciences. He also made it clear that an endless circle would bedevil the interpreter, whose own interpretive 'position' (a historically situated cultural perspective) would also be implicated in the interpretation of others, and vice versa. Thus, Dilthey also founded 'hermeneutics' as a branch of philosophy devoted to reflecting on the problems of interpretation, the goal of which is to reach intersubjective understanding (*Verstehen*). Further, Dilthey thoroughly historicized the human sciences: 'The decisive element in Dilthey's inquiry,' writes Martin Heidegger, 'is not the theory of the sciences of history but the tendency to bring the reality of the historical into view and to make clear from this the manner and possibility of its interpretation' ([1924] 1992, p. 17).

But Dilthey's clarity regarding historical temporality is mitigated by his lavish use of spatial metaphors, the irony of which requires serious attention. 'The ship of our life is carried forward on a constantly moving stream, as it were, and the present is always wherever we enter these waves with whatever we suffer, remember, and hope, that is, whenever we live in the fullness of our reality' (2002, p. 215). The lack of precision in this sentence was perhaps intentional; Dilthey's 'as it were' flags the image as intended metaphor. But 'wherever' is conflated with 'whenever.' Throughout his direct examination of time, Dilthey never breaks free from a basic spatial metaphorization, which he never stops to examine. 'When we look back at the past, we are passive; it cannot be changed. . . . But in our attitude toward the future we are active and free. . . . thus the lived experience of time determines the content of our lives in all directions' (2002, p. 215). 'Back,' 'toward,' 'directions.' The 'present,' Dilthey writes, is 'there.' *Where?*

As a painter and physician whose literary creativity rivaled that of his novelist brother, William James' richly visual language for time perception delivers a flood of metaphor: '*The knowledge of some other part of the stream, past or future, near or remote, is always mixed in with our knowledge of the present*' ([1890] 1983, p. 571, italics in original). 'To think a thing past is to think it amongst the objects or in the direction of objects which at

the present moment appear affected by this quality' (p. 570). Without irony, James quotes the following: 'Le moment où je parle est déjà loin de moi' (p. 573).⁴ By the end of his chapter on the 'Perception of Time,' James is swept away by his own spatial metaphors: 'In short, the practically cognized present is no knife edge, but a saddle-back' (p. 574). And finally: 'The same space of time seems shorter as we grow older ...' (p. 588). Not surprisingly, James' otherwise compelling chapter on 'The Perception of Space' (pp. 776–912) has nothing to say about spatial metaphors, much less is it marked by temporal metaphors for space.⁵

I contend that this metaphoric entanglement with space is filled with powerful clues as to the nature of time, and holds profound importance for the debate about historical knowledge of the past. In their enthusiastic embrace of temporality, the modernists of Dilthey's generation failed to appreciate the implications of their own metaphors. Spatiality, presumably an indispensable dimension of being, was left behind as these modernists entered the flow of time. Dilthey and James left spatiality in the unthematized condition of metaphor; while Bergson considered spatialization a curse and left it in negation, banishing it from 'real time.' Building in part on Dilthey's historical hermeneutics, Martin Heidegger further radicalized the implications of *Lebensphilosophie* by constituting human temporality as an *ontological* question. He also surpassed his predecessors in the metaphoric evasion of spatiality.

Being and Time (Heidegger [1927] 1962) is the limit case of the modernist prioritization of time over space. 'Our provisional aim,' Heidegger writes in the Preface to *Being and Time*, 'is the Interpretation of *time* as the possible horizon for any understanding whatsoever of Being' ([1927] 1962, p. 1, italics in original). But the temporality of Heidegger's *Dasein* is, a priori, a transcendent dimension, as Dostal (1993) shows. Time to Heidegger is the mother of all assumptions. It simply is, and everything 'whatsoever' appears to consciousness against this 'horizon.' Heidegger's opus, it turns out, helps us to confront time only in an oblique way, because *Dasein* can only know itself temporally. It is always already temporal and always already being-there: 'primordially' ([1927] 1962, p. 385) engaged with the everyday. Despite his profound conceptualization of being-there, and the presentness of *Dasein*, Heidegger is determined to keep the spatiality of that being secondary to its temporality. Heidegger purchased his achievement through a massive (and evasive) metaphorization of space: *Dasein* is '*already alongside*' itself, '*ahead-of-itself*,' or '*thrown and falling*' ([1927] 1962, pp. 141, 375, 477, italics in original).

Heidegger was not neglectful of space in *Being and Time*. On the contrary, he aggressively pursued a project to temporalize it. In section 70 he writes of 'the function of temporality as the *foundation* for *Dasein*'s

spatiality ...' ([1927] 1962, p. 421, emphasis added). But an older and wiser Heidegger admitted that his temporal existentialism had led him into a dead end. In his 1962 essay 'Time and Being' (what was originally, in 1927, supposed to be the title of the second volume of his *magnum opus*), he writes: 'The attempt in *Being and Time*, section 70, to derive human spatiality from temporality is untenable' (Krell 1995, pp. 43–44; Casey 1997, pp. 243–284; Heidegger 2002, p. 23).

I propose reading Heidegger backward: disregarding his unsustainably transcendent temporality, literalizing his spatial metaphors, and imagining *Dasein's* horizon as that of its given spatiality, against which time becomes meaningful. Spatiality is the missing keystone of the pragmatic-hermeneutic edifice, just as temporality is its elusive foundation.

Etymologies Past and Present

The unreflective spatial metaphorization of time by the modernists was a fateful mistake, but it can be easily explained. Spatial metaphors for time are 'grounded metaphors' in Lakoff and Johnson's (1980, 1999) terminology. It is not accidental that we use them to talk about time, because our experience of time is movement in space. If metaphors form a bridge between language and experience, they also open a door to escape the prisonhouse of language, enabling us to express more than that symbolic system can signify (Ricoeur 1981). Metaphor cuts two ways, then. Observed historically, it illuminates the intersection of language with experience. In communicative action, it transcends experience to enable the creative transformation of language in purposive projects.

The metaphoric conflation of time and space is observable in the *Oxford English Dictionary's* historical etymology of 'the present' and 'the past' (*Oxford English Dictionary Online*, accessed 2003). The OED's entry for 'present, *n.*' provides the following account: 'Anglo-Norman and Old French, Middle French *present* (French *présent*) presence (early 13th cent. or earlier in Anglo-Norman), thing which or person who is present (c1225 in Old French), (in grammar) present tense (c1245), present time, period of time now occurring (a1278)' (*Oxford English Dictionary Online*, accessed 2007). To *be* present and to *be in the present* originally held the same meaning. This conflation is evident today in the simple answer to a roll-call: 'present!'

We learn the same lesson from the etymology of 'past.' As the past participle of the verb 'to pass,' it gradually evolved a nominal form. The spelling 'passed' was truncated into 'past' over the centuries by speakers and writers, observable between Chaucer's 'The day is short, and it is passed' (*Franklin's Tale*, 1476) and Charlotte Brontë's 'It was past four o'clock, and the beclouded afternoon was tending to drear twilight' (*Jane Eyre*, 1847).

In both of these examples, time is metaphorically represented as a spatial passing. The nominal form of ‘the past,’ expressing ‘a time that has gone by; a time, or all of the time, before the present,’ did not appear until about 1500, but the same spelling continued to signify a strictly spatial passing, as in Shakespeare’s ‘My lord, the enemy is past the marsh’ (*Richard III*, 1596), and today’s ‘just past the next intersection’ (*Oxford English Dictionary Online*, accessed 2003).

This brief look at the past of ‘the past’ shows evolution from a verb signifying action and motion of bodies in space, to an adjective and adverb signifying time by metaphorizing space, to a noun referring to prior times. Withal, the temporal meaning of ‘the past’ contains a spatial understanding of phenomena in motion: that which had ‘passed’ the observer. ‘Time’ begins to make sense again as a landscape, but only in a de-metaphorized, spatial sense. We *do* push off into the future with every move of our bodies, but that ‘future’ is nothing more than the next emplacement of the bodies of the world, leaving behind the places of the past (passed) with every new configuration of presence. As the later Heidegger explained, even our most fundamental verb, *to be*, evolved from the verb *to dwell* (Heidegger [1951] 1993).⁶

The Social Choreography of Georg Simmel

Georg Simmel was the *only* modernist in the hermeneutic revolution inaugurated by Dilthey to theorize spatiality as integral to the human sciences. His formulation is worth examining in detail because he developed a method of linking the metaphoric with the non-metaphoric senses of space. It provides us with a link to the historicism of Dilthey, and thereby a direct path toward the reconstruction of that tradition. It has also been completely ignored by the current discourse on spatiality.

Spatiality as an analytic category finally came into its own in the 1960s and 1970s, with the work of Gaston Bachelard [1958], Michel Foucault [1967], Henri Lefebvre (1974), and Yi-Fu Tuan (1977). Thanks primarily to the work of Edward Soja (1989, 1996) and David Harvey (1989), a ‘spatial turn’ has occurred in many of the human sciences. So successful have Soja and Harvey been in spreading the pathbreaking ideas of Lefebvre that it is no exaggeration to call the current discourse on spatiality ‘Lefebvrian’ (Elden 2001).

Lefebvre’s *Production de l’Espace* (1974; tr. *The Production of Space* 1991) is justifiably admired as a deep well of insight, reworking many strands of western philosophy to interrogate the category of space from a variety of angles. Lefebvre has contributed permanently to our conceptual tool set with his distinction—already widely cited in the human sciences—between

‘spatial practice’ (the practical material work carried out spatially in any given society), ‘representations of space’ (the ways that society represents its own spatiality), and ‘spaces of representation’ (the arts, architecture, and other environmental texts that society deploys in its self-representation). This triad is useful in itself, but Lefebvre encloses it within an unnecessarily convoluted tangle of neo-Hegelian ‘moments,’ comprehending, in Edward Dimendberg’s (1998) succinct explication,

existing social space as a concrete universal containing three terms (spatial practice, representations of space, and spaces of representation), three levels (perceived, conceived, lived), and three forms of space (absolute, historical, abstract) that particularize themselves with specific contents at different time periods. (1998, p. 29)⁷

The current Lefebvrian discourse, however, ignores the pioneering spatial thinking of Georg Simmel.⁸ Limitations of space force me to summarize my much more extensive treatment of Simmel (Ethington 1997, 2005), but it is notoriously difficult to summarize Simmel’s thought in any case. Max Weber, Siegfried Kracauer, and Talcott Parsons all abandoned the effort, leaving their manuscripts on Simmel unpublished (Frisby 1987, 1990, pp. xxvi, 2; Levine 1991). His own contemporaries ‘... clearly found it difficult to locate Simmel’s work within some readily recognized discipline and tradition’ (Frisby 1990, p. 2). Nevertheless, it is quite clear that his thought is a variation on *Lebensphilosophie*, despite his failure to acknowledge his deep debt to Dilthey.⁹

Integral to Simmel’s formal approach was his spatial understanding of intersubjective social interaction. His distinctive treatment of social spatiality is evident in one of his best-known essays, ‘The Stranger’ ([1908] 1971). Simmel constructs ‘the stranger’ as a social form: ‘a form of being together,’ ‘a form of union based on interaction.’ Strangeness is ‘create[ed]’ by ‘factors of repulsion and distance’ working together (Simmel [1908] 1971, p. 144). Not mobility itself, but the ‘appearance of this mobility within a group occasions that synthesis of nearness and remoteness which constitutes the formal position of the stranger’ (p. 145). Simmel expands this treatment of the near/far synthesis to claim that in the stranger he has identified a feature of ‘every human relationship’:

In the case of the stranger, the union of closeness and remoteness involved in every human relationship is patterned in a way that may be succinctly formulated as follows: the distance within this relation indicates that one who is close by is remote, but his strangeness indicates that one who is remote is near. The state of being a stranger is of course a completely positive relation; it is a specific form of interaction. (p. 143)

Simmel makes space work in two distinct senses in this passage: as *metaphor* for intersubjective intimacy and as non-metaphoric *geometric* space. ‘Closeness’ and ‘remoteness’ are at first unspecified, but after the colon, ‘close by’ and ‘near’ are meant geometrically, while ‘remote’ is meant intersubjectively.

Simmel’s signal achievement is the fusion of metaphoric and geometric spatiality in a single conceptual framework, one that successfully resists hypostatizing or abstracting ‘space’ in the ways Lefebvre (1991, pp. 229–292) complains of. Crucial to Simmelian space is the ineluctable quality of the ‘boundary,’ a social form that is common to both consciousness and to society. Simmel also outlined, but did not fully flesh out, the idea that social interactions are spatial configurations for the same reasons that consciousness is organized (as he took from Kant) by a series of categorical *boundaries*. ‘The boundary is not a spatial fact with sociological consequences, but a sociological fact that forms itself spatially’ (Simmel 1997, p. 143). The boundary is perhaps the most suggestive aspect of Simmelian spatiality, reflecting the indeterminate position of the subject: ‘By virtue of the fact that we have boundaries everywhere and always,’ Simmel writes, ‘so accordingly we *are* boundaries’ (Simmel 1971, p. 353, italics in original).

Simmel’s ‘boundary’ is both geometrically and metaphorically spatial. It is the intersection of these two types of spatiality, a parallel to the pragmatists’ denial of the mind/body dualism. The spatiality of experience complements its temporality in ways that the pragmatic-hermeneutic tradition has not fully appreciated (in large part because Simmel’s sociology was largely a-historic). Historians, ever indebted to Dilthey’s construction of the human sciences, have carried forward his incomplete account of experience, which is historical but placeless. By emplacing experience, Simmel’s theoretically compatible handiwork repairs Diltheyan epistemology by accounting for experience *as form*, with both geometric and metaphorical spatiality.

Placing the Critique of Space

The world comes bedecked in places. It is a place-world to begin with.
(Casey 1996, p. 43)

Simmel’s insistence that all social forms are in a perpetual state of dynamism through sites of interaction; his location of those forms in the embodied self as intersection and boundary; and his refusal to reduce contingency and plurality to system and abstraction, well suit the spirit

of today's post-foundational world. It is no accident that two of his students, Walter Benjamin and Sigfried Kracauer, have returned to prominence with such force (Frisby 1986; Schwartz 2001). Among many other qualities, Simmel's work makes visible the suppressed spatiality of Dilthey's historicism. Simmel's achievements, however, are hard to appreciate in part because most of what he calls 'space' is now understood as place, and this distinction is of major importance in current debates.

Two very different approaches to the space–place distinction will now be explored: Henri Lefebvre's neo-Marxian approach and Edward Casey's much more radical phenomenological approach. While simplistic, it is not misleading to say that in the current discourse, 'place' is good and 'space' is bad. 'Place is an organized world of meaning,' Tuan writes (1977, p. 179). Places are experiential, memorial, emotive, subjective, even poetic (Bachelard [1958] 1964). Spaces are objective, abstract, measurable, 'scientific' and universal. Space in this framework is the alienating and exploitative handiwork of the capitalist bourgeoisie, bearing the same relation to place as exchange value does to use value in the Marxian account of commodities.

Henri Lefebvre's 'history' of the entire period from the Italian *quattrocento* through the 20th century is one long rise of the bourgeoisie and its alienating gaze: 'The outcome has been a brutal and authoritarian spatial practice, whether Haussmann's or the later, codified versions of the Bauhaus or Le Corbusier; what is involved in all cases is the effective application of the analytic spirit in and through dispersion, division and segregation' (1991, p. 308). Lefebvre's broad brush smears the diverse work of the Bauhaus (which in the hands of Walter Gropius was deeply social-democratic) by association with Hausmann's destruction of Paris and Le Corbusier's ill-conceived sterile spaces.

Lefebvre's thesis of panoptic and authoritarian implications of abstract space have been echoed in the neo-Marxian writings of David Harvey, and by a wide range of postcolonial thinkers who trace the abstraction of space and time to European imperialism (Blaut 1993). The development of precision clocks and reliable latitude and longitude measurements for navigation during the 16th and 17th centuries was conducted by imperial, authoritarian regimes, and by the cultures that invented the racial categories and generated the brutal boundaries of colonial exploitation. But the abstract grid of 'space' is ultimately a neutral frame, mere *instrumental* rationality, not to be confused with the *value* rationality of a particular instance of deploying it—to use Max Weber's important distinction.

Technically, flat maps of the globe are not panoptic but orthogonal: every point is seen from its own perpendicular, so they can be instruments of subaltern perspectives and multicultural dialogue as substantially as anything else. Besides, the grid of global spacetime has now become institutionalized among all cultures, so it is more important to understand its relation to place, and that task has been accomplished by a thinker whose intellectual history of the space/place split has now made Lefebvre's ideas on abstract space seem obsolete.

In *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (1997), Edward Casey shows that place long reigned as the 'supreme term' in western thought, but that 'by the end of the eighteenth century, it vanished altogether from serious theoretical discourse in physics and philosophy,' demoted during the rise of modern science into mere *position*. Modern natural and social scientific method relegates places to mere instances or points in space. In the Newtonian model infinite space is the foundation and frame that gives meaning to any given position. All local cases are but variant particularities to be combed for common patterns that are the golden nuggets extracted by scientific methods. But Casey convincingly dismantles this denigration of place by asking: 'What if things are the other way around? What if the very idea of spaces is posterior to that of place? . . . Could place be general and "space" particular?' (1996, p. 17). Casey's starting point is 'our own lived body,' always already emplaced. 'The body,' he writes, 'is the specific medium for experiencing the place-world' (p. 24). Bodies, moreover, are bilateral, with left, right, forward, and backward orientation. In structure and function, bodies orient, and so all (always embodied) perception and consciousness is already emplaced. 'We are never anywhere, anywhen,' Casey writes, 'but in place' (p. 39).

What then is place? 'A place is more an *event* than a *thing* to be assimilated to known categories,' Casey writes; it is not 'a mere patch of ground, a bare stretch of earth, a sedentary set of stones' (1996, p. 26). Most usefully, Casey explains that 'places gather': 'Being in a place is being in a configurative complex of things.' Furthermore, 'places also gather experiences and histories, even languages and thoughts' (pp. 24–25). Places 'hold' and 'keep' in Casey's terminology. Memories 'belong as much to the place as to my brain or body' (p. 25). They are, therefore, collective phenomena, transformed by the sentient bodies that inhabit, know, or recognize them. Places are the condition of possibility for human culture itself: 'To be cultural, to have a culture, is to inhabit a place sufficiently intensively to cultivate it . . . Culture is carried into places by bodies. To be encultured is to be embodied to begin with' (p. 34).

Casey's interpretation trumps Lefebvre's critique of abstract space by demonstrating the dependence of the abstract time/space binarism on the primacy of place:

Not only do imperial space and time require recourse to lowly places in their very definition (rather than conversely), but also the status of space and time as equal but opposite terms is put into question by their common emplacement. The binarist dogma stretching from Newton and Leibniz to Kant and Schopenhauer is undone by the basic perception that we experience space and time together in place—in the locus of a continuous 'space-time' that is proclaimed alike in twentieth-century physics, philosophy and anthropology. (1996, p. 37)

Casey's placeful phenomenology beautifully compliments Simmel's formal sociology. Through both, we can see how social forms take place, how they are always *in statu nascendi*, and why we can find *all human phenomena originally arising in and from places*. It is time to recognize that history must be about those places if it aspires to recount the past.

The *Topoi* of the Past

We are now ready to understand the relationship between the past, time, and history. Every past is a place (emphatically in the present tense because the past is always present). All action and experience *takes place*, in the sense that it requires place as a prerequisite, and *makes place*, in the sense of inscription. Casey draws from Aristotle the observation that it is impossible to think of a phenomenon or event without thinking of it in some place. Even a void is a place of nothingness. Places are prior necessities of all phenomena: place 'takes precedence of all other things' (Aristotle, *Physics*, quoted in Casey 1997, p. 51). Events are places and vice versa.

I propose that we refer to the places of the past as *topoi*. The noun *topos* (place) began its long career in western discourse in the fields of rhetoric and logic. Our everyday term for any subject of study or concern, 'topic,' originates in *topos*. In Aristotle's *Topics*, the first western treatise on logic, *topoi* are the logical stratagems for defending or refuting propositions.¹⁰ Although Aristotle never explicitly defines the term, it was most likely borrowed from the widely practiced mnemonic system of using geographic locations (familiar sites along a road, or rooms within one's own house) to anchor memories. Thus, the 'argument form' necessary for a given refutation could be quickly retrieved in debate (Slomkowski 1997, pp. 43–68; Smith 1997, pp. xxiv–xxx). 'Each *topos* serves as a location at which

many arguments may be found by appropriate substitutions in the relevant form' (Smith 1997, p. xxvii).

Ernst Robert Curtius (1948) and Leo Spitzer (1948) simultaneously recast *topoi* from the classical and neoclassical traditions into a central tool of 20th-century literary criticism. Their basic idea is that the vast field of world literature recycles recognizable 'commonplaces': the same 'analogies, the same bits of doctrine... the same modes or lines of proof, the same myths,' such as 'the reference of values to the ambiguous norm of Nature; the antitheses of nature and art, the simple and the complex, the regular and the irregular, the uniform and the diverse; the notions of progress, decline, and cyclical change...' (Crane 1954, pp. 74–75). R. S. Crane's lucid explication of these recurrent concepts as '*topoi*' constitutes a cartographic method that I wish to retain in my usage: '... Wherever they occur, they represent not so much what the writers in whose treatises, essays, poems, or novels we find them are thinking *about* as much as what they are thinking *with*.' Thus, 'the more broadly learned we are, indeed, the more correspondences of this kind, linking together parts or brief passages in writings of the most diverse sorts, we shall be likely to note in the margins of our books...' (p. 75).

Topoi are recognizable because we can map them within a general topology of the known or familiar. All action, whether building pyramids, making love, writing, or reading, takes and makes place; all individuals are the creative authors of their own presence. Reading our environment is a holistic endeavor, whether in an everyday mode or with the expert methods of the historian. Each element, every sign, is only legible in relation to the entire mental map of the world carried within our crania. The cranium also serves as a referential point-coordinate (perspective). That which has been brought into legible view, such as any aspect of 'the past' (however marked as such) is by definition something that has been mapped into the network of known or familiar phenomena. Anything that cannot be mapped is beyond the event horizon of consciousness.

Topoi collapse time. I use the term *topoi* to denote the specific places of the past because it carries the useful metaphoric Aristotelian and New Criticism traditions, and also the geometric sense of its original usage, from which the metaphor was originally drawn. For Aristotle as for me, it is sometimes useful to think metaphorically of places, as places of memory.¹¹ That familiar understanding (among many others) that I share with this stranger from ancient Greece places us together in a topological relationship. Known pasts (*topoi*) are mapped onto other known *topoi*, in a process that constitutes a vast multi-perspectival atlas of world history.

History is the map of the past, but that map is not merely a representation. *Topoi* touch the ground in myriad ways. They are not in time; they are in space. They can only be discovered, interpreted, and debated via the coordinates of spacetime. *Topoi* are not free-floating signifiers.

History is the map of past. Its elemental units are *topoi*. In my latest vintage of this term, *topos* signifies the intersection of (lived) place-time and (natural) spacetime.

History as Cartography

It matters that history *takes* and *makes* place because knowing the *topoi* of history is literally to map the human past. I mean to expand the meaning of ‘mapping’ very broadly, but I shall not dilute it into merely a suggestive metaphor. Maps represent the relationships among *topoi*, be they points, lines, polygons, or actions, events, experiences, and ideas. Definitions of the noun and verb form of ‘map’ range from ‘the representation of the earth’s surface or part of it on a flat surface,’ to the metaphoric ‘conceptualization or mental representation of the structure, extent, or layout of an area of experience, field of study, ideology, etc.’ (*Oxford English Dictionary Online*, accessed 2005).

I can reach Cambridge from Los Angeles by consulting maps depicting the pathways now in use. I can understand the sense of ‘virtue’ current in 16th-century Cambridge by consulting a range of historical texts that track the discursive pathways both prior to that place and since. Pocock’s brilliant *The Machiavellian Moment* (1975) mapped the vast network of texts (traces of communicative action) that made ‘virtue’ a powerful keyword in early modern Europe. Cartography refers to the making of maps, of course, but there is no official definition of what a map should look like. It can be pictorial, verbal, or mathematical. The only basic requirement is that a map depict the topological relationships among *topoi*, whether ‘Cambridge’ or ‘virtue.’

Pictorial maps communicate via vocabularies of shape (points, lines, and polygons), color, tone, and iconography. Those vocabularies are organized by a syntax comprised of contiguity, scale, paths, distance, area (zones, regions, boundaries), volume, and legend. Pictorial maps are typically synchronic ‘snapshots,’ but they can be drawn and even animated to represent time, motion, and processes. Maps and mapping are today subjected to a critical discourse about the visual representation of space and place that is epitomized in the multivolume *The History of Cartography* (1987–2007), edited by J. B. Harley and David Woodward,

and the work both of these late scholars did to clarify the ideological and ideational constructedness of maps. But, as Jane Azevedo (1997) has argued, although all maps 'are constructed with interests in mind' (p. 108) their validity is not necessarily undermined by that construction because their use value inheres in enabling us to achieve objectives. Even maps of radically different construction must be 'deeply compatible' because 'a mapping relationship exists between any two maps of the same territory' (pp. 107, 144).

Cartography is not inherently flawed because of its reinvention during the imperial epoch of the European Renaissance. The critique of Eurocentric, scientific space is an instance of perspectivalism: the attribution of knowledge or understanding to the social location of the subject. Perspectivalism along with related concepts of 'subject positions' and 'positionality' (LaCapra 2004, p. 5) have been deployed extensively in the current crisis of knowledge to undermine the possibility of any objective or certain knowledge. Postcolonial scholarship has regionalized (Prakash 1999), even *provincialized* (Chakrabarty 2000) western epistemology (Blaut 1993). Perspective itself now must be subjected to critique of its grounded metaphoricality in order to understand subject positions as *topoi* that can be mapped. Mapping cartography is vital to my proposal to rethink historical interpretation as a form of mapping.

We owe to Hayden White (1973, 1985) our map of the 'tropics' of historical discourse. White influentially explicated the ways that irony, metaphor, metonymy, and synecdoche supply the four basic 'tropes' by which historians arrange data about the past. He further claimed that historians arbitrarily 'emplot' these data as Romance, Tragedy, Comedy, and Satire. But we have labored too long under the shadow of White's radical skepticism about the value of the data themselves as sources of historical knowledge. Following the same faulty pathways through the linguistic turn as so many modernists and postmodernists, White failed to see that the past takes place, and that textual narrative is not the only way to present the places of the past. I propose that we move from White's 'metahistorical' tropics toward a *topology* of the past. His tropics, after all, are clear cases of *topoi* as are his own interventions. Cartography's infinitely possible figurations cannot be reduced to narrative form. Indeed, a cartographic history can escape the narrative *topoi* of White's historical epistemology.

It should be very clear by this point that I am not talking about the traditional field of historical geography, although that field is certainly not irrelevant (Baker 2003). Instead, I am claiming that the incalculable volume

of historical writing on all subjects should be thought of as a map because the past can only be known by placing it, and the way of knowing places is to map them. The emplacement of all human action presumes locations in spacetime, which materializes each place. The 'landscape of history,' to return to Gaddis' phrase, proves to be far more than a useful analogy. By interrogating the temporality of history, we have revealed experience as the intersection of place and space, which is also the intersection of human and natural time. Recognizing the placefulness of pastness indicates a clear pathway around the blockades raised by the linguistic turn.

Mapping is the form of interpretation that historians practice. Their hermeneutic operation is intrinsically cartographic, or possibly choreographic, for all life is movement, despite the conceptual utility (as in Benjamin) of freezing it photographically. However daunting may seem the prospect of 'mapping' such intangible *topoi* as love, greed, faith, ambition, racism, justice (and all the various forms of cultural cognition that historians must address), the task is unavoidable given that all human actions inscribe *topoi*, and every *topos* is simultaneously locatable and meaningful.

Conclusions

What does 'placing the past' accomplish? How does this formulation amount to more than a clever new phrase, renaming what we already know? First, I hope that by adding the ingredient of spatiality to the pragmatic-hermeneutic tradition, grafted back into that tradition by way of its lost relative Georg Simmel, we can strengthen recent postpositivist work in the pragmatic tradition (Bernstein 1983; Appleby *et al.* 1994; Kloppenber 1996; Hacking 1999, 2002).

Because it pivots on the concept of grounded metaphors, the method of placing the past could be called neo-foundational. Placing the past recognizes no boundary between natural and human inquiry, because all *topoi* are placeful spacetimes, both meaningful and measurable. The knowing subject is the material world reaching back to itself. Placing the past does not depend on Cartesian dualisms, like John Searle's case for 'external reality' (Searle 1995). I propose that the coordinates of spacetime (using any generally recognized system) are a post-foundational universal, not as a natural truth, but much better: as historical institution. Placing the past anchors dialogic reason to universal, mappable criteria. Placing the past takes 'the past' out of time, locates it in materialized *topoi*, and asserts that history, in any symbolic system, is the map of these *topoi*.

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Notes

- [1] Siân Reynolds' translation of this crucial passage is revealing, however. Braudel's 1949 original of the italicized phrase reads 'une histoire quasi-immobile,' which could well have been translated as 'a history somewhat fixed in place' (Braudel 1949, p. xiii).
- [2] The first universal standard established was that in 1889 by the Bureau International des Poids et Mesures, an 'artifact unit' prototype of a meter made from platinum and iridium and stored under glass in a cool, dry place in Sèvres, France. Intolerably subject nonetheless to expansion and contraction, the stately thing was replaced in 1960 and again in 1983 by the 11th and 17th Resolutions of the CGPM, respectively. See SI Brochure, Section 2.1.1.1, www.bipm.fr/, under 'metre.'
- [3] Jorge Luis Borges makes a powerful case against 'time' in this way, drawing explicitly on Bergson (and Berkeley, and himself) in his anguished and evocative essay 'A New Refutation of Time' ([1944, 1948], 1962).
- [4] Literally, 'The moment where I speak is already far from me,' but idiomatically, 'Just as I speak the moment is already far from me.'
- [5] To the asymmetry of time we might add the asymmetry of spatial and temporal metaphors: time is metaphorized as space, but never vice versa.
- [6] 'What then does *ich bin* mean? The old word *bauen*, to which the *bin* belongs, answers, *ich bin*, *du bist* mean I dwell, you dwell. The way in which you are and I am, the manner in which we humans are on the earth, is *bauen*, dwelling' (Heidegger [1951] 1993, p. 349).
- [7] Edward Soja (1996) has added neologism to obscurity by enthusiastically rechristening these triads 'trialectics.'
- [8] Lefebvre never mentions Simmel in *The Production of Space* (1974); Soja (1989, p. 33) mentions him only in passing.
- [9] On Simmel's infuriating failure to use footnotes, and his failure to acknowledge Dilthey, see Frisby (1992, p. 37).

- [10] The lengthy list of these *topoi* begins in Book 2. W. A. Pickard-Cambridge translates *topoi* as ‘commonplace rules’ throughout the translation included by Jonathan Barnes in *The Complete Works of Aristotle* (Aristotle 1984, vol. 1, pp. 167–277).
- [11] ‘Aristotle’ is no longer a man, nor even merely a text. ‘Aristotle’ is a plural institution, a vast array of *topoi* in popular, religious, and expert discourses.

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COMMENTARIES

Theory, Experience, and the Motion of History

Thomas Bender

Philip Ethington's ambitious paper rightly emphasizes the inextricable connection of time and space, making the point that without a sense of space, historians cannot understand their key concern of time. Yet he underplays the importance of experience and more importantly his framing of issues freezes time in space. He emphasizes time and being, but history's concern is being in time, doing in time. The challenge of what he offers is how to give it narrative force and enrich its spatial connections, with one possibility being Actor–Network Theory.

Keywords: Border; Boundary; History; Maps; Place; Space

We should welcome Philip Ethington's reminder that time and space are inextricably linked, whether one's reference is to physics or to social life. One cannot decouple them, yet historians have long since allowed space and place to fall out of their portfolio. With that loss historians, according to Ethington, effectively impoverished their understanding of their discipline's defining concept—time. He seeks to enrich our sense of time and refocus our approach to it. He argues the centrality to historical practice of space and place, muting the usual distinction made between them. Place, the term I prefer and think connotes something importantly distinct from space, is for him literally foundational for the discipline. To build his case, he brings forward an impressive cast of characters from whose work he cobbles together his argument. The list speaks well of his erudition, though perhaps not all of it is required to make his point. While

this impressive firmament of authorities cited doubtless helped him think through the question at hand, exposition need not precisely track the author's own sometimes less than direct journey. It makes his argument somewhat clunky.

As Ethington points out, space re-entered American social science by way of geographers, most notably David Harvey, who brought to the Anglophone world the work of the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre. Ethington means to carry us beyond Lefebvre, but it is important to remember the French scholar's insistence that each historically contingent 'situation' is located in both time and space (Lefebvre 1996, p. 12). For Ethington, space constructs time, makes it real. But unlike Lefebvre he does not attend to the way time constructs space. There is a mutual constitution that links time and place. If space makes time, time makes place. As Lefebvre puts it, a place is but the 'inscription of time in the world' (Lefebvre 1996, p. 16). A fuller recognition of the mutuality would not weaken his theory but would rather enlarge and enrich it.

Ethington puts together an intellectual cocktail of pragmatism, historicism, and hermeneutics that enables him to move past Lefebvre. He embraces Edward S. Casey's philosophical examination of place, which Ethington says, makes Lefebvre's ideas 'seem obsolete.' Surely that puts the point too strongly, and I am not sure that he needs to reject Lefebvre's notion of abstract space in order to make his larger argument. The real value of Casey's work for him is that it points him toward a way to build space into the historicism of Wilhelm Dilthey. Using Casey to think with enables him to bring together Dilthey's historicism and the spatiality of Georg Simmel.

One of the most striking aspects of Simmel's work is its visuality, which in turn is associated with spatiality. Ethington emphasizes the centrality of 'interaction' in Simmel's account of 'The Stranger,' but he omits consideration of the importance of vision in Simmel's work. The visual character of his analysis of society gives more specificity to the interaction that Ethington stresses. It is a very limited interaction, dependent on sight across space (rather than, say, language). He describes Simmel's conceptualization of this as a linking of metaphorical and geometric space, but the combination is actually—and importantly for Ethington's larger argument, more important than he apparently realizes—a bringing into relation of metaphorical and *experiential* space. (Interestingly, Ethington does not address something nearer the core of Simmel's work: the relation of the subjective self and the objective world, and this omission too, I think, underplays the significance of experience in history and in the theoretical argument he is making.) Moreover, experience is the tie to pragmatism, a

linkage Ethington seems to value. It is also central to his extension of Simmel's work, particularly when he develops Casey's notion that 'a place is more an *event* than a *thing*.' Actually, it is a conjuncture of events operating along axes supplied by time, about which I will comment further below. Still this sustains Ethington's insistence that 'we can find *all human phenomena originally arising in and from places*. It is time to recognize that history must be about those places if it aspires to recount the past' (italics in original).

Because history's actors are, whatever else they are, material beings who must stand in a place, history as the emplotment of human time cannot be separated from place. Here is the crucial material grounding that Ethington contributes to contemporary theory, so much of which has escaped the material world into culture and discourse. Hence the importance, as he explains it, of his claim to be offering a neo-foundational theory. The unavoidable placeness of human life and activity brings history literally down to earth. Although humans, unlike plants, do not have roots, they cannot exist without having a material platform on which to stand—and the products of cultivating that platform are equally essential. It is the most basic and compelling of materialist foundations. But it is not, as he claims, new, for it is akin to the materialist base of the human for Marx.

Ethington's inadequate address to experience is important in another way. In this essay he has a tendency to freeze history. But the task of the historian is to describe, explain, and interpret human action. His distance from this consideration is evident in his otherwise insightful examination of the etymology of key words, most notably 'present.' He explains that 'to be present' once meant the same thing as 'to be in the present.' It is a nice point and good for his argument. But his elaboration of this point fails to take into account what this merging of time and place omits: the mobility of history. History is more than presence; more than time and being. It is about being and doing. The word 'narrative,' which offers a rhetoric of motion, rarely shows up in his account.

This weakness in his notion of a spatializing theory of historical practice is clearest at the culmination of his argument, when he assimilates history to mapping, to cartography. 'I am claiming,' he writes, 'that the incalculable volume of historical writing on all subjects should be thought of as a map because the past can only be known by placing it, and the way of knowing places is to map them.' The problem with cartography as history is the same as the difficulty with former mayor David Dinkins' metaphor for multicultural New York, when he called the city 'a beautiful mosaic.' A 'mosaic' lacks motion. It is made up of many pieces, but they do not move, and they are not subject to rearrangement. While the metaphor of the

mosaic makes diversity a whole, it stops history. The metaphor of a map has the same limitation. Places do not move around, but history makers do.

The history of a place is the working out of a multitude of contingently converging histories. Indeed, the historian's task is to determine those contingencies, establishing or ruling out convergences. But these histories are all in motion (at very different speeds and scales, as Braudel made clear) and history is constructed out of their impact on each other in a place, that point of convergence. I think Ethington may have had something like this in mind with his passing comment that places are 'collective phenomena.' In *The Mediterranean in the Age of Philip II* Braudel explored three structures of time, but elsewhere in more theoretical writing he emphasized that history is the sum of a potentially infinite number of histories that come together and constitute a place—a city, a sea, a nation, an empire, even a person (Braudel 1973). Thus the crucial role of narrative in the spatialized understanding of history that Ethington is proposing. He recognizes the tension, but not the significance, between narrative and cartography: 'Cartography's infinitely possible figurations cannot be reduced to narrative form.' Yes, but the unremarked but crucial point is that without narrative history is denied motion. He does not realize the kind of problem cartography poses because his thinking underplays the active experience of time and space, the centrality of human action to the meaning of history. In what is unfortunately only a passing remark Ethington glimpses a possible solution. He suggests that perhaps instead of 'cartography' he should say 'choreography.' I would urge just that. In that image there are possibilities worth pursuing. In some sense that is precisely the charge made to historians by Braudel, when he suggests that the historian's history is the sum of many histories, woven together in a narrative.¹

At the very end of his essay Ethington makes a much too brief but very bold statement about the implications of his materialist approach. 'Placing the past,' he writes, 'recognizes no boundary between natural and human inquiry.' There are various ways one might interpret this statement, but it brings the non-human into the narrative of history. His intention is to make the materiality of space more than a platform of history. He succeeds in that, but one might even go farther. Had he devoted more attention to *acting* in time and space, he might have been prompted to ask whether the non-human might be an actor in history, a part of a chain of causation or the conditions of enablement.

For someone like me, or Ethington, scholars who have devoted much of our work to teaching and research related to cities, this extension of the causal chain seems obvious. Consider the case of New Orleans at the time

of Katrina, which has, or ought to have, alerted historians to the interconnection of the human and non-human elements of a causal chain. Writing in the wake of that disaster, Stephen Graham points out that ‘the “natural” world mingles inseparably with the urban world. Increasingly it is impossible to separate the natural world from the man-made one of cities, infrastructures, and technologies’ (Graham 2006).² William Cronon’s *Nature’s Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* makes this point (Cronon 1991); it also demonstrates, *avant la lettre*, a technique of social inquiry that dissolves the category of the social, replacing it with heterogeneous chains of actors over space. This approach has come to be theorized by sociologists—most notably the French social scientists Bruno Latour and Michel Callon—as Actor–Network Theory (ANT).³ Within the field of social studies of science this approach, which is still evolving and contested at many points, emphasizes networks of causation that are quite heterogeneous, including non-human as well as human actors. Critiques have been made of the politics of the method, or the absence of politics or normative judgment.⁴ Instead of focusing on a single actor or even a group of human actors, ANT looks to what I would call (though they do not) an ensemble of enabling circumstances. Every element in the ensemble (or network) is essential to explaining the change; it might be called collaborative causation, a collaboration of human and non-human actors. Beyond offering a way to develop Ethington’s suggestion that the distinction separating human and non-human might be set aside for certain forms of analysis, I raise this because networks, if you accept them, make place more complex.

A historian of the city, especially the modern city, ought to have considered more than Ethington has the boundaries of place and their permeability. Cities are the place-specific precipitate of historical time, something most clearly evident in their layers of materiality. But they are also involved in translocal networks, whether of markets or ideas or of people and things. Not only does the city lack firm or definite boundaries, but this quality is central to their very being. The city is not bounded; its function is to be a nodal connection of peoples, things, and ideas, and that demands open borders. This makes place extend into space, but not randomly and not abstractly. Networks are pathways of connection, making a given city a global actor, while at the same time its history—its local change over time—is significantly shaped by forces beyond its placeness, its municipal boundaries or any other purely material definition of its boundaries.

My point with these closing comments is not to press Ethington in this particular direction, but it is to point out to his readers that he has

established a proposition worth thinking with. There is a beckoning incompleteness in his place-oriented materialist approach to history. He has opened up important space for thinking about ways to reconnect history and geography, time and space. Whether or not one follows Ethington's lead, one much appreciates that he emphasizes the importance of that reconnection, a reconnection that will reflect the intellectual culture of our own time. Historical explanation is dependent on both axes of time and space. Our work at its most basic is to explain an event by locating it in time and place. Both are always part of the contextual practice of historical scholarship.

Notes

- [1] Paul Ricoeur is insightful on Braudel and narrative, arguing that his great work, *The Mediterranean in the Age of Philip II*, is in fact a narrative history (Ricoeur 1984, I, pp. 95–110, 206–225).
- [2] Graham's more fully developed theory of the urban environment reaches well beyond this to novel political understandings of privatization and infrastructure (Graham & Marvin 2001).
- [3] Actor–Network Theory is very much a moving target, and both Callon and Latour have at various times been critics and revisers. However, Latour has recently published a good current summary (Latour 2005).
- [4] Latour (2005) addresses this issue, without success, I think. My own address to this problem (Bender 2006) rejects the tendency of ANT to homogenize the heterogeneity he celebrates, a move that devalues one of the theory's central innovations.

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Commentary on ‘Placing the Past: “Groundwork” for a Spatial Theory of History’

David Carr

Philip Ethington’s article offers a very full account, both historical and conceptual, of the role of spatial metaphors and concepts in the understanding of historical time. The author comments on the merits of his paper and raises some questions about the consistency of his approach.

Keywords: History; Metaphor; Philosophy; Place; Space; Time

... si nemo a me quaerat, scio, si quaerenti explicare velim, nescio.

Anyone who has ever tried to think seriously about time can sympathize with Augustine’s anguished cry, in the 11th book of the *Confessions*: If no one asks me, I know, but if I am asked to explain it, I am baffled. It is notoriously difficult to talk about time, but time is so important that we need to understand it; and if we are to understand it we must talk about it. What to do?

Of course, in everyday life and ordinary language we easily and unreflectively talk about time—all the time. If we attend to the ways we talk about time, we notice that we frequently use terms that seem ‘properly’ to belong to space: events seem to be arrayed on a line, like points or locations; like segments of a line, times can be measured and compared, so that some are longer or shorter than others; events seem to be nearer to or farther from us and from each other; the past recedes behind our backs as if we were striding away from it, and the future stretches before us as we walk toward it. Spatializing time is of course not the only way we talk about it.

We also treat it as a commodity: we have it or lack it, lose it and gain it, spend it and earn it, save it or waste it. Sometimes, as if it were a threatening adversary, we try to kill it—but in vain: it survives us in the end.

A confusion of metaphors, you might say, and philosophers will want to avoid these if we are to get at the thing itself. What, then, is time? That is the question Augustine was trying to answer. Not: what is it like? or, to what can we compare it? That is for poets. Philosophers want to grasp the essence, which will *distinguish* it from all the other things we think of when we unreflectively talk about it. Spatializing time, Bergson thought, is a contamination of its nature, perhaps useful for science but a distortion of time itself.

Philip J. Ethington, in ‘Placing the Past,’ raises the Augustinian question ‘what is time?’ but he believes that, rather than trying to avoid space and the spatial expressions we use for time, we should embrace them and perhaps improve upon them, certainly not be embarrassed by them. Is he simply making a virtue of a necessity? After all, philosophers have made precious little progress in trying to understand time on its own terms. But the reason for this may be that space and time are so intimately interwoven that the conjunction of the two in our language is no accident. Perhaps the attempt to isolate them is the mistake. Physicists learned this long ago, in their own specialized way of talking about the world, but the same lesson needs to be applied to human and historical time. Ethington contends that ‘this metaphoric entanglement with space is filled with powerful clues as to the nature of time, and holds profound importance for the debate about historical knowledge of the past.’ Many modern philosophers, like ordinary speakers, have availed themselves of spatial metaphors in dealing with time. But they have done so, Ethington believes, again like ordinary speakers, ‘unreflectively.’ What is called for, then, is reflection on these metaphors and what they tell us about time. Furthermore, theorizing about space has so intensified in recent years—he cites the work of Lefebvre, Foucault, Tuan, Harvey, Soja and Casey—that people now speak of a ‘spatial turn’ in the human sciences. Ethington wants to draw on this work to cast light on the time of history. His results are stated boldly at the head of his essay: ‘All human action *takes* and *makes* place. The past is the set of places made by human action. History is a map of these places’ (italics in original).

These statements are clearly metaphorical, in some obvious sense. All human action takes place somewhere, to be sure, but being *somewhere* is not what makes an action an action, as many things are located without being actions. The past is not *just* a set of places, since a set of places can be all at once, and the element of pastness, the actual temporal character,

seems to be left out of this description. The same is true of the map, which gives us the location of places all at once. And yet if we examine these metaphors more closely, a curious thing happens. When we say an action or event *takes* place, the *taking* is a temporal indicator; the event or action moves into or occupies a place and nudges out its predecessor. If the past is a set of places, as on a map, the map is useless and meaningless unless it provides us with an itinerary for *getting* from place to place. And so for all the other 'spatial metaphors': the line is a pathway from one place to another. If a past event is 'distant,' that means it has taken a lot of time to get from there to here, just as we say 'my house is an hour away.' The past is behind my back, the future in front of me, only if I am moving forward. So the 'spatial metaphors' that are supposed to help us understand time implicitly presuppose time, and they don't work unless we already understand time. Again, time and space are inextricably interwoven, and we may end up asking: what is a metaphor for what?

The documentation of this interweaving of space and time is one of the many merits of Ethington's essay. He shows that like many theorists he is well past the 'linguistic turn' which would treat all metaphors and other elements of language as if they existed in a universe of their own and related only to each other. The interplay of spatial and temporal phrases, concepts and tropes works because they are, in a fine phrase he borrows from Lakoff and Johnson, 'grounded' metaphors—grounded, that is, in our experience: concrete, embodied, active and passive. Understanding space and time and their relations requires leaving behind the abstract, objective space-time of physics and mathematics, but also the rarified intertextual, semiotic world of the structuralists and post-structuralists, and returning to the 'lived' space-time of our ordinary experience, action and interaction.

The discovery—or rediscovery—of lived space-time is an accomplishment of phenomenology and hermeneutics that began in the 19th century and required an immense effort of swimming against the powerful current of objectification that attended the growing success of modern science. Ethington mentions Dilthey, Simmel and Heidegger, but might have included the crucial figures of Husserl and especially Merleau-Ponty. It was these thinkers who introduced the concept of the lived body and its role in constituting the lived and oriented space of human experience and action. Later thinkers like Casey build on this work, but go further in the same direction when they introduce the all-important concept of *place* as the term for the original primary engagement with space that we never leave behind. *Place* has the advantage of being more communal and less subjective and individual than the terms used by most previous phenomenologists. Space is at once more humanized, even as it is less

subjectivized, psychologized and individualized, by the concept of place. And it is also more infused with temporal elements such as event and act. We return, then, to the unavoidable interweaving of space and time.

So far I have explained what I find positive and valuable in Ethington's essay. But I have some questions about it as well. Mostly these questions center on statements in the essay which seem to run counter to its overall message. In conclusion, then, some requests for clarification.

1. While acknowledging that some historians have dealt with the history of concepts and perceptions of time, he says that 'amazingly, even these historians have left the entire question of *time* as such—the time that makes it meaningful for *them* to say anything at all about 'the past'—unexamined' (italics in original). Is this really so amazing? Ethington seems to suggest that historians need to answer the Augustinian question before they can say anything meaningful about the past. If that were so, the great accomplishments of the historians would have been indefinitely postponed until they answered the question Ethington and I and others are still puzzling about a millennium and a half after Augustine. The question of the nature of time is not a *historical* question but a philosophical one, whatever the professional credentials of those who raise it.

2. On the other hand, the suggestion that the philosophers Kant, Husserl and Heidegger simply made the 'assumption' that time is 'a static background, transcendent in its universality,'—'so historians can hardly be blamed for doing so'—bears little resemblance to the philosophers I have read who go by those names, and who have in fact contributed our most profound reflections on time. (It should be pointed out that the essay by Robert Dostal, cited twice in support of this astonishing claim, says no such thing.) It was Newton who took time to be a 'transcendent universal,' and it was Kant who raised the first serious questions about this conception. Time is not a thing, existing independently of our experience: that is the primary insight of these thinkers. Hence it is not an entity that may or may not exist, and it makes no sense to say, as Ethington does, that memory or common sense provides 'evidence' that 'strongly indicates that the past *did* exist' (italics in original). What kind of evidence would count against it? Here Ethington seems to be making claims that conflict with his own insights.

3. As I have said, one of the merits of Ethington's approach is that he wants to deflect us from the anti-metaphorical, abstract approach to the question of time, the one that seeks to isolate it and purify it of anything non-temporal. Yet he seems to criticize John Lewis Gaddis' book *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past*, a book whose main thesis sounds strikingly like that of Ethington himself, for not being sufficiently pure: 'Gaddis convincingly shows that the production of

historical knowledge is very much “like” that of a cartographer . . . But, when Gaddis freely admits that he is *only* offering a simile, he begs the question [*sic*] of what the object of that simile is: if the past is only *like* a landscape, then what *is* it?’ (italics in original). Gaddis may not reflect as deeply as Ethington would like on the comparison he offers, but he cannot be faulted for not addressing a question (what *is* the past?) that Ethington himself is not asking or answering.

4. I am puzzled when Ethington concludes that his approach, ‘[b]ecause it pivots on the concept of grounded metaphors,’ could be called ‘neo-foundational’—especially when, a few lines later, he calls it ‘post-foundational.’ Which is it? I would suggest that invoking the epistemological rhetoric of foundations, universal or otherwise, is counterproductive and misleading here, undermining the considerable value of what Ethington has accomplished. The phrase ‘placing the past’ with which he sums up his approach in this essay indicates a useful way of thinking about the historical past and what historians do with it. As such this essay belongs in the pragmatic tradition, as the author states. To claim more for it would be to adopt a philosophical pose that Ethington has otherwise, for the most part, successfully avoided.

Boundary, Place, and Event in the Spatiality of History

Edward S. Casey

In this commentary on Philip Ethington's essay, I focus on the importance of boundary as a basic parameter of the spatial dimensions of history. I also emphasize the relationship between place and event in understanding these same dimensions. In these ways and others, I agree with Ethington's overall thesis as to the inherent spatiality of history; my effort is to specify further some of the precise ways in which this is the case.

Keywords: Border; Boundary; Event; History; Place; Space

I have profited immensely from reading Philip J. Ethington's provocative essay on 'Placing the Past.' In a series of deftly drawn and wide-ranging moves, the author takes the reader from a consideration of the temporal basis of history to a set of reflections on historical actions as place-based. Along the way, he provides a review of a basic theories of time and space, including discussions of the difference between natural versus lived time as well as metaphoric space. In these brief comments on this rich and provocative work, I will focus on two issues: that of boundary and the event – place relation.

I

The turning point of the essay occurs in the treatment of Georg Simmel, whose seminal status for the rethinking of history (as earlier of sociology) is convincingly maintained. Ethington shows that Simmel's emphasis on the grounded character of social interaction leads to a focus on boundary as a

truly pivotal category. He singles out this sentence of Simmel's: "By virtue of the fact that we have boundaries everywhere and always, so accordingly we *are* boundaries" (Simmel 1971, p. 353, italics in original).⁷ I take this to be a truly remarkable claim. It points to a species of edge as inherent to human interaction, thereby suggesting that the most important arena of action is not in the center of the stage but at the periphery—or better, *peripheries*, as there is always more than one kind of edge in a given circumstance. Rather than being the zone in which human action gives out or comes to an end, the boundary is precisely where it intensifies: where it comes to happen in the most effective or significant sense.

More important still for Ethington's thesis, the boundary as creative edge is the place where time and space join forces: it is the region where we can no longer distinguish between these two parameters in any strict way, being the very region where they merge. Thus a boundary is something that is not just 'geometrically and metaphorically spatial' (in Ethington's phrase) but inseparably temporal as well. Simmel's own celebrated analysis of 'The Door,' not here mentioned by Ethington, is a striking case in point: not only do people meet at a door, they meet there in ways that are specifically spatial and temporal. If I knock on a door and someone answers, I and that other are suddenly conjoined in time and space. Our very confrontation at the doorstep is spatio-temporal, and it is all the more so if I step over the threshold to enter the house: my bodily movement inescapably occurs in space as well as in time. Indeed, my very body, stationary or moving, is bi-dimensional in the same way.

In the wake of Simmel, I would want to distinguish between 'boundary' and 'border.' Where the former is pliable and porous, allowing for two-way transmission of bodies across it, the latter is restrictive and foreclosing. A border is most frequently a definitional or cartographic or legal entity, and as such is designed to distinguish and keep apart: Mexico goes north to just *this* line, and the United States starts from the other side of the same line—which, in this particular case, is revealingly called 'la gran línea.' Where a boundary facilitates the movements of human (and other animal) bodies across it—think only of a mountain stream across which humans and other animals easily move—a border acts to impede. For this very reason, borders are more aptly described in purely spatial terms, as when they are mapped, or in sheerly temporal terms (as in precision clocking); whereas boundaries are equally receptive of spatial or temporal determinations—and, often, of both at once. Thus, when Ethington speaks of 'the brutal boundaries of colonial exploitation,' it would have been more accurate to say 'brutal *borders*' if my preferred terminological distinction were to hold.

I see boundaries in the sense I have just maintained as the crux in Ethington's essay: not just because of Simmel's signal recognition of them, nor only because of their distinctive differences from borders, nor even insofar as they combine spatial and temporal facets, but still more significantly because they demonstrate so tellingly that history occurs as place: which is nothing less than Ethington's primary thesis. I could not agree more with this thesis, which I have striven to establish in my own way in *Representing Place in Landscape Painting and Maps* (Casey 2002, Epilogue). But now, spurred by Ethington's recourse to Simmel and by my own recent research on the place of edges in human lives, I wish to inflect Ethington's thesis by saying that *boundaries are where places happen*. If history is to occur as place, then it will do so most effectively in the boundaries that belong to places. In particular, it will occur mainly in the form of what I would like to call 'boundary events.' I say 'mainly' since I do not want to suggest that boundary events are the sole means by which history happens; but I would argue that they are the most formative such means—the most favorable medium, the privileged region. We see this happening in a broad spectrum of instances, ranging from the history of immigration (in which impassable borders all too often act to replace permeable boundaries) to that of warfare (think only of the seemingly endless wars in many parts of the earth), from the history of discrimination on the basis of race or gender (where the body surface, another form of boundary, is very much at stake) to that of whole nations (which are often defined in terms of their territorial edges). The list could continue indefinitely; the point, however, is straightforward: not only places but more especially the boundaries (and sometimes also the borders) of places serve as the matrix of historical action.

It follows that boundaries are to be construed in a manner that allows them to be *eventmental*. Rather than being determined in strictly spatial ways—as has traditionally been the case—I wish to maintain that such boundaries act as events in their own right. Moreover, precisely as such they are better able to be vessels for historical action than those vehicles that are described in exclusively spatial or temporal terms: for example, the 'battlefield' or the 'historical occurrence' taken as such. These latter are merely instrumental designators for something of deeper import—namely, the boundary event considered as a privileged vessel of historical process. The compound term 'boundary/event' has the merit of combining in one expression both a spatial and a temporal aspect—at least to the extent that the separate terms 'boundary' and 'event' are traditionally construed (i.e. as a boundary *in space* and an event *in time*). But in truth each term is bivalent: I maintain that a boundary is both spatial and temporal, and so is

event (which, as Ethington would insist, has to arise in a concrete place). Better said: each term is placial, where it is place itself that is indispensably spatio-temporal, ineluctably both at once. It follows that the expression 'boundary event' is placial twice over, reinforcing the inherent placiality of history—with a somewhat greater emphasis on space in the case of 'boundary' and on time in the case of 'event.' But since space and time themselves are creatures of place, these are only differences of nuance—of rhetorical stress rather than of conceptual substance. 'Boundary event' remains as a resolutely placial phrase, one that is integral to a re-construal of human history as place-bound and place-making.

In pursuing this last line of thought, I am in fact converging with one of Ethington's most basic claims: 'Events are places and vice versa.' I am also in accord with his linking of 'taking place' with 'making place.' But in the wake of Simmel, I am placing more stress on boundary than does Ethington, despite his express acknowledgement of Simmel's introduction of this term into late modern discourse. The difference between Ethington and myself at this level is not, however, trivial. My effort is to purge from the very idea of event and of place—from both at once—a tendency to consider the center, or middle, of either notion the primary scene of action. Instead of finding this scene on the central battlefield, I prefer to think of historical events as happening for the most part at the edges of the manifest action. For instance, early exploration and trade on the Mediterranean took place along the coast of the Mediterranean rather than in the middle of the sea itself. As Braudel argues, the practice of *costagiere*, that is, of sailing from port to port along the coast at the edge of the sea, was where the crucial action lay (Braudel 1972). The same holds for other, comparable historical events, and this is so even in the case of failed events, as with the Maginot Line in World War I. The sheer imagination of this Line as effective was sufficient to make it a significant boundary event—an event that was a place, and a place because a boundary.

II

Beyond this basic difference of emphasis, I have three quibbles with certain claims of Ethington's. (i) First, is it true that 'history must be *about* those places [that engender historical actions] if it aspires to recount the past' (my italics)? I do not believe that a 'placeful' analysis of history—the term is Ethington's—requires that the writing of history itself need expressly to focus on places per se. It is sufficient if the role of place is tacitly acknowledged as the source of historical actions themselves. For this acknowledgement to be effective, they need not be singled out as such.

(ii) I am skeptical of the merit of the project of ‘a vast multi-perspectival atlas of world history’ that is advocated by Ethington. By the time any such atlas were to be composed, I fear that the places it lists will have become (in my language) mere ‘sites’ that no longer serve as genuine places. (iii) A closely related claim is that history should aim at a ‘post-foundational universal’ by anchoring ‘dialogic reason’ to ‘universal, mappable criteria.’ Promising as it doubtless is, such a sense of the universal is nowhere spelled out, and the reader is left to guess at what it means more exactly: is it ‘abstract’ or ‘concrete’ (in Hegel’s contrast), ‘formal’ or ‘substantial’ (in Chomsky’s choice), or is it tied to the ‘singular’ (as Deleuze insists)?

III

The mention of ‘mappable’ in the passage I just cited above leads me to address a central contention of Ethington’s essay. This is the view that history requires not only the recognition of its placeful origins but their ultimate *mapping*. In his words, ‘[h]istory is the map of the past.’ Much as I value the activity of mapping and have pursued it in my own recent work, just here my questions begin to proliferate. (1) Why select mapping rather than writing—given that the latter, as Derrida has insisted, is itself as much a form of ‘spacing’ as is the drawing of maps? (2) Is it true that ‘[a]nything that cannot be mapped is beyond the event horizon of consciousness?’ What of those modes of consciousness that are less than fully explicit—that are ‘pre-reflective’ or ‘pre-conscious,’ not to mention ‘unconscious’? Are they invalid or useless if they do not lend themselves to mapping? (3) Is it the case that ‘the way of knowing places is to map them?’ Much would here depend on the exact signification of ‘knowing.’ I would want to leave room for having a ‘sense of place’ that is not yet a form of determinate knowledge and that would resist conventional forms of mapping usually labeled ‘cartographic.’ (4) I agree that to accommodate the link between history and mapping, we must ‘expand the meaning of “mapping” very broadly,’ but the list given by Ethington seems to have no effective limit: ‘Maps represent the relationships among *topoi*, be they points, lines, polygons, or actions, events, experiences, and ideas.’ Surely mapping has to possess more specificity than any and every relationship between *topoi*—where *topos* ‘signifies the intersection of (lived) place-time and (natural) spacetime’—while also retaining traces of the Aristotelian sense of common argument-forms. In this instance, both ‘map’ and *topos* have come to signify so much that they are in danger of not signifying anything as such. (For my own distinction between four fundamental forms of mapping, see Casey 2005, Introduction and Epilogue.)

IV

My recommendation is to delimit the scope of these two major terms of Ethington's analysis: map and *topos*. 'Map' needs to be liberated from its alliance with modern cartography so that it can resume its original sense of *charting one's way in a given place or region*. Hence it can be something quite informal—indeed, anything that indicates a sense of direction and gives a basis for orientation. Construed in this way, mapping is *place-finding*, a term that is in the same league as place-taking and place-making. Similarly, *topos* has to be led back to its root sense in Aristotle's *Physics*, where it is conceived as the most snugly fitting container of that which is held in place. But the basis of any such containment is precisely the boundary or border that acts to include what belongs to a given place—that surrounds it in an action of 'having-around' (*periechon* in Aristotle's technical term for the character of the containing surface).

If these two acts of condensation and specification are carried out, Philip Ethington and myself will again, and finally, converge—above all, in the idea that history provides 'a *topology* of the past' (his italics). Certainly so: history investigates and describes the structure (the *logos*) of the particular places (*topoi*) wherein historical actions happen—and, more especially in those boundary places that act to generate historical events: which is to say, in certain particular boundary events. It is to be noticed that Ethington's claim makes no explicit reference to mapping—and *need not*, unless mapping itself is reconceived. Thus in my view it is superfluous to add (as does the last sentence of the essay) that 'Placing the past takes "the past" out of time, locates it in materialized *topoi*, and asserts that history, in any symbolic system, is the map of these *topoi*.' I would rather say that once we place the past in discrete places, and fully recognize it there, we do not have to map these places out. We can leave it, glimmering, in these places themselves.

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The Limits to Emplacement: A Reply to Philip Ethington

Edward Dimendberg

In response to Philip Ethington's project of historical mapping, this paper argues for the inextricability of spatial and narrative schemata. It claims that what Ethington calls 'emplacement' presupposes the modalities of 'employment' theorized by Hayden White as intrinsic to the process of writing history.

Keywords: Abstract Entities; Hayden White; Henri Lefebvre; Maps; Place; Science Studies

If current interdisciplinary research in the humanities is any indication, I am hardly alone in my broad sympathy with the project of mapping history articulated by Philip Ethington in his stimulating essay. Over the past two decades numerous historians of art, philosophy, culture, and media have embraced spatial analysis as both a methodological imperative and an indispensable strategy for playing catch-up with an ever more globalized and globalizing world.¹ It may well be that I am more sanguine than Ethington but his injunction to recognize '[t]he emplacement of all human action' shows every sign of already having been heeded in many quarters of inquiry, from histories of the body and cultural studies of science as 'situated knowledge,' to more traditional investigations of institutions, markets, and ideas.²

Historicism and dialectical thought, the great inventions of the 19th century—rather than discussions of space, geography, and place—today find themselves on the defensive, if not entirely discredited in the wake of the postmodern rejection of metanarratives about the meaning and direction of history. Ethington's suggestion that historians have rejected spatial approaches or that the latter are somehow marginalized, if not precariously poised for survival, does not correspond to my impression of

contemporary historical scholarship. Given the explosion of subfields such as global history, comparative history, and urban history, I would argue that spatiality is rapidly challenging the hegemony of temporality in history described by Ethington, especially among an emerging generation of scholars.

Ethington suggests that the past studied by historians can include 'building pyramids, making love, writing, or reading' and thus comprises everyday life, as well as events such as wars and revolutions and the dynamics of imperialism and urbanization. But what about the history of ideas, particularly scientific theories? How and where do we conceive of them as topoi of human action? On one level, we might respond that science takes place in laboratories, research facilities, and universities. Advancements in science can frequently be linked to the movement of scientists and ideas across national boundaries, all of which can be emplaced, and thus mapped in the fashion Ethington advocates.

What is less obvious is the ontological status and physical location of scientific ideas. In what sense does quantum physics or molecular biology possess specific topoi? Are these to be understood as the sites where these disciplines are practiced, the libraries where their ideas are stored, or the very brain cells of the individuals who conceive them? And what of the not infrequent instances in which groups of scientists pursue similar theories in different locations? Recent scholarship in the history of science argues for the local character of scientific knowledge and the often striking divergence between visualizations and models of a common idea (Daston & Galison 2007).

Yet the underlying problem, one of the oldest in western philosophy and known to Plato, about the reality of mathematical and abstract knowledge, does not disappear simply by localizing these understandings in topoi, or what Ethington terms 'the cranium' 'as referential point-coordinate (perspective).' Even Henri Lefebvre, as vigorous an advocate of spatialization as one might imagine, posited 'the representation of space' in *The Production of Space* to account for scientific thought and descriptive systems of geometry (Lefebvre 1992). Revealingly, Lefebvre does not discuss the sites where these modes of knowing space are practiced. It seems to me that Ethington needs to posit a similar domain of science and mathematics, a realm of abstraction irreducible to specific locations in spacetime, especially if he is to retain his commitment to physics as a standard of human knowledge grounded in a realist ontology.

The alternative, a thoroughgoing conventionalism that understands science as a set of narrative procedures, not as a neutral observation language, is one that I myself embrace. Yet to advocate the inextricability of

science and language is also to challenge the spatialization that Ethington propounds as an alternative to what he considers the excesses of the linguistic turn. Criticizing Hayden White, he writes, 'Cartography's infinitely possible figurations cannot be reduced to narrative form. Indeed, a cartographic history can escape the narrative *topoi* of White's historical epistemology.' Opposing his spatial *topoi* to White's narrative *topoi*, Ethington writes, 'They are not in time; they are in space. They can only be discovered, interpreted, and debated via the coordinates of spacetime. *Topoi* are not free-floating signifiers.'

Here, it seems to me, Ethington's *topoi* collapse back onto White's, for how can we discover, interpret, and debate any feature of spacetime without language? Cartography and map making strike me as no less imbricated in linguistic and narrative forms than any other discourse employed by human beings to make sense of the world. Alfred Korzybski's observation that, 'A map *is not* the territory it represents, but, if correct, has a *similar structure* to the territory, which accounts for its usefulness,' succinctly recalls the inevitable and requisite non-identity between a map, let us say a road atlas, and the highway system of California which it represents (Korzybski 1933, p. 58).

A cartographic representation as large as the actual state of California would be useless for navigating the freeways. The map is a set of representations whose similarity in structure to reality is therefore conventional. Every map is a metaphor and even the simplest possible map, two Xs drawn on a sheet of paper to convey a spatial relationship, entails some understanding of the metaphorical features of language, its resemblance to something else in the world. Maps also suggest directionality, causality, hierarchy, and thus imply narrative. Even the movement from one X on our sheet of paper to the other can be construed as a story capable of being retold in different ways.

Ethington's assertion that cartographic history can escape linguistic figuration and narrative remains unconvincing. Conversely, I would argue that map making is simply a mode of storytelling different from that of traditional history or verbal language. This is not to deny its usefulness. Nor is it to disagree fundamentally with the emplacement that Ethington advocates as a research program for history. It is, however, to assert that spatial knowledge is thoroughly mediated by language and narrative forms, no less than our knowledge of temporality and historical change.

Physicists utilize one particular observation language, and cartographic historians utilize another. The notion that maps are less conventional than other modes of representation strikes me as wishful thinking, if for no other reason than the sheer variety of interpretations that any map can elicit.

Show me a map without figuration, ambiguity, or elements of narrative, and I will show you a document that flattens out the fundamentally polysemic character of reality. Perhaps mathematical statements possess this univocality, but how could historical knowledge?

Descriptive adequacy and explanatory force, not the objectivity of an alleged independent reality, make a particular choice of story, what White calls emplotment and what Ethington calls emplacement, seem compelling. Mapping can no more elude the aporia of representation than any other system devised by human beings for making sense of the world. Scientists depend on their instruments and mathematics to explain reality, historians depend on language. We read and write our topoi with all of the potential for misunderstanding and multiple meaning these activities entail, and only then can space be said to speak to us.

Notes

- [1] Representative examples of this tendency include Dimendberg (2004), Kaufmann (2004), de Grazia (2005), Malpas (2005), Yue (2006) and Zurier (2006).
- [2] The phrase 'situated knowledge' was coined by Donna Haraway. See Haraway (2003).

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Presenting and/or Re-Presenting the Past

Alun Munslow

In a commentary on Philip Ethington's paper it is acknowledged that historians apparently do tend to ignore time believing they have little reason to tinker, it being a concept tangential to their main interests. But this is not, in fact, the case. It might be through inadvertence and not thinking about time in the way Ethington does in his estimable paper, but historians are, of course, centrally concerned with time. Quoting the historian of the American frontier Frederick Jackson Turner as a paradigmatic case it is suggested that historians should engage with a range of theorists who have variously discussed time such as McTaggart, Dilthey, Rorty, Ricoeur, Genette, and Chatman, concluding that the fictive understanding of time demands the attention of historians.

Keywords: Fictive; Narrative; Philip Ethington; Representation; Space; Time

First of all I would like to congratulate Philip Ethington on a substantial and in many respects a remarkable paper. The conception, range of material and depth of analysis is quite overwhelming. And it is because of that, that I will limit my brief comments to what may be a tangential reading and a tack that is or may be deemed to be not that relevant. First of all can I say I tend to accept most of what Ethington has argued. Historians, I agree, do not by and large engage with the concept of time. It is probably because there are what seem to be many very good reasons. But the two that readily come to mind are: (a) its complexity as philosophical problem, and (b) its apparent simplicity as a measure of 'elapsed time' between events. The first makes it too difficult to deal with for most jobbing historians, and the second makes dealing with it unnecessary. So, most professional historians simply regard 'time' as a self-evident boundary of the phenomena we 'find' in the past.

As a boundary condition, therefore, time appears to be an unalterable given and, hence, it is simple to deal with. It is just there as the phenomenon that constrains and delimits all other phenomena. But, time seems also to be complex (if we think about it for too long) because it envelops all phenomena and, therefore, is just too big to get entangled with especially at a theoretical level. But can historians leave it there? Although I think Ethington starts out with sound intentions when he deals with 'timeless historians', he underestimates our rustic sophistication. I believe most historians are not actually interested in time not because it is too difficult or too obvious, but because it is a pointless exercise. If we assume historians are tolerably sophisticated (okay, not necessarily a sound assumption) then most do indeed define history as the mapping of change over time though they may not use that particular metaphor. The emphasis is invariably placed on how 'things change' as time passes. Understanding 'the reality of the past' is what counts for historians, not discoursing on the nature of time. The matter of time is, frankly, an irrelevance best left to philosophers who have little better to do with, well, their time. So yes, Ethington is right, historians do tend to ignore time. And quite right most might say for there are always much bigger fish to fry.

So, when I first read Philip Ethington's paper I was immediately grateful for the opportunity to admit my 'errors' concerning time. To be precise, I have to agree that I have apparently ignored the issue of time *and* space of late. In 2000 I published *The Routledge Companion to Historical Studies* (as the historian's equivalent of Raymond William's *Keywords*). After my prior assault on reconstructionist and constructionist historians three years before in *Deconstructing History* (1997) I wanted to proselytise by producing a text that students could turn to for a handy set of definitions of key historical concepts. I offered those definitions from an epistemologically sceptical perspective. I continued with this agenda in 2006 when I produced second editions of both books—updated and, hopefully, uprated. But in the second editions, once again, I did not talk about time or space *per se*. Phillip Ethington is, therefore, quite right to suggest on the evidence of that record that I have been somewhat negligent with time. Pretty much like most historians?

But wait, am I giving too much away here in my effort to admit my recent faults? And, perhaps, I might be defaming historians by claiming they have no interest in time *and* space? In 1992 I published a book called *Discourse and Culture: The Creation of America, 1870–1920* in which time *and* space—though never indexed as such—were central concerns. In that book (a biographical/intellectual study of the figurative imagination in American history) I devoted a chapter to Frederick Jackson Turner, the

historian of the American frontier experience. In this chapter I acknowledged, as Ethington does, that time can be observed only in and as motion through space. I argued that as a historian, Turner was extremely self-conscious about the culturally formative (and history making) power of, in his case, frontier space. Indeed movement through space (the frontier) was the major boundary condition of American history. While I never indexed 'time' I did index and talk about the 'spatial imagination'.

What did I say that might be relevant to this response to Ethington? I suggested as early as page 7 of that old book that the '... central tenet of Turner's American frontier was the idea of a space characterised as free land, the taming of which constituted and evidenced American republicanism, individualism, and exceptionalism'. I further suggested that Turner '... offered a metamorphosis of American conceptions of time and space by deconstructing American national history to produce a spatial dimension to the social and political imagination' (Munslow 1992). I even went on variously to quote Edward W. Soja as well as Michel Foucault on heterotopia (real places of cultural displacement and cultural creation). Indeed, rather than being indifferent to time and space Turner himself spoke at length about both concepts, concluding in the early 1930s and somewhat eccentrically that 'The factor of time in American history is insignificant when compared with the factors of space and social evolution' (Turner 1932, pp. 6–7).

So, I am not sure that all that many 'timeless historians' do necessarily exist. Most historians can still think it is too hard or too simple to squander valuable time over time or, in fact, they can and some do spend a lot of time worrying about time. What is more, if time and space have been of interest to (Turner and) me (and, I suspect, many other historians—if not all—in their own peculiar ways), more recently I have found myself engaging with time (if not space and spatialisation as such) again. And this became pertinent when I got toward the end of Ethington's consideration of McTaggart's 1908 paper. I agree that historians might benefit from a passing acquaintance with McTaggart's ontological position on the unreality of time. This is simply because it would save them a lot of needless worry about time's complexity. In its essentials McTaggart's argument (for the unreality of time) is as Ethington describes it (at least I think it is) so I will not delay or dither over it. Suffice it to say I agree that time in human nature must be taken to exist, is subjective, and is constructed—and for cultural purposes is taken to be 'real'.

Ethington's third section 'Lived Time' I approached with hope in my heart. If time is a construction (essentially historians always deal with 'the present' even if it is 'in the past') then, as the analytical philosophers have

it, we have to deal with time through its physical manifestations (what we can perceive empirically). Hence, as empiricists, most historians (well, reconstructionists and constructionists) simply accept the reality of time. They rarely consider that time is a construction. Time is just too obvious in the real world of experience, to deny (or fret over). My renewed interest in time is not really concerned with its reality or the A and B series paradox Ethington describes, though I have more interest with Bergson's conception of 'real time' as the enduring present. My interest springs from the book I have just finished on narrative and history, and which is now in that uncertain manuscript stage of sales and reviews. Always a 'worrying time' (Munslow 2007).

In writing that book—a kind of cartographic exercise in mapping the historical narrative—I have expended considerable effort trying to understand how historians deal with time as an elemental part of the narrative making process. I am with Dilthey on this. We can only manage the past (and the future) by representing it in the present. 'Presentism' inevitably means historicisation and dealing with the problems of representation. For me this is the heart of the matter concerning time and the historian. This is where historians would benefit from an engagement with time in terms of *presenting* the past as Ethington suggests. In other words 'present-ing' the past—making the past present. Indeed, a while ago I coined the (ugly perhaps) term 'the-past-as-history'. In other words, grasping the consequences of the notion that the past only exists as we engage with it as an aspect of that present cultural practice that we call history. And that engagement can only be through our representations (hence my interest in narrative making and, specifically, the 'timing' of metaphoric space). I am also with Rorty that contingency is the key feature of our existence and like all else time is contingent as we speak and write (Rorty 1989).

I have long argued that historians interpret the past only through our linguistic representations of it. Hence my shared interest with analytical philosophers on the nature of language as the only way to engage with reality (though I often disagree with their conclusions). I have spent most of my writing career addressing this issue of observer/observed, the hermeneutic circle, the contingency of language and, of all things, the spatial metaphorisation of time usually couched in terms of the relationship between form and content. What I am getting round to saying is that most historians experience all these concerns. They just don't think them through.

It is perhaps reasonable to say that the 'A-series' 'makes sense' to classic common-sense realists and representationalists (reconstructionists). On the

other hand, B-series appeals to positivistic historians (constructionists). My favoured group of historians—deconstructionists—recognise time as a construction, that we can only exist in the fleeting present and, anyway, they would argue on the grounds of linguistic turning that historians ought to think about how they use language to create a time signature for their histories. So, while I agree with Ethington that what he calls the ‘metaphoric entanglement with space’ clues us to the nature of time and how we create historical knowledge using spatial metaphors, I think we need to concentrate more on how historians use language to constitute time in the-past-as-history.

It is the function of ‘timing’ in language to construct the temporal locations of events. In doing this, the basic assumption must be that historical narration is the linguistic representation of past experience viewed from the vantage point of the present. It is no different if the ‘past’ being referred to is real or fictional. Like Ethington I have been engaged with Ricoeur though not to escape the constraints of language. I’m with Lacan on this. I don’t think we can do that. Moreover, I think Ricoeur has more that is useful to say about the construction of time than Ethington gives him credit for.

The notion of time as a boundary condition to the phenomena of existence is always vexed. Ricoeur maintains that history ‘reinscribes the time of narrative within the time of the universe’ (1987, p. 181). The background to this re-inscription is actually pretty straightforward but it has huge consequences for creating history. It is this. The past cannot be re-experienced as it actually was (because it no longer exists in our perpetual present). Now, the present never actually exists either. You have read the last sentence beginning with ‘Now’. As soon as I have said it and you have read it ‘Now’ is in the past and no longer accessible except as a representation. Finally, of course, the future does not exist because it literally never happens. The consequence of this for historical truth is what Ricoeur tackles.

For Ricoeur there is such a thing as historical truth even though we cannot define it as knowledge of what ‘has been’. The solution to this ‘problem’ (though I don’t see it as a problem) is (as it was for St Augustine) a threefold present in which past (memory) and future (anticipation) occupy the mind. This is the function of the mind that Heidegger called ‘presencing’, that distension or perpetual extension of the present negotiated by memory of the past, and anticipation of the future. In this way we can see what St Augustine did when he saw that time is a construction of the mind. For Ricoeur the mechanism for that constructive process is narrative making.

For Ricoeur (and Dilthey for that matter) the historian must take the 'temporal turn' from 'real time' as it is generally conceived to that which I would call 'narrated history time', which is that fabrication aimed at explaining and creating meaning specifically through the narrative function of emplotment (change over time) or 'this happened, then that, because...'. How, in practice, do historians create time? Normally we talk of 'real time' in terms of years, seasons and days and cyclically as well as in a linear fashion. But, even just a passing knowledge of how we create narratives ('real', fictional' or 'fictive' as with history) reveals how historians re-organise 'real time' in terms of what narratologists call 'duration', 'order' and 'frequency'.¹ In this respect the history narrative is what I would call a 'story space' (though what Dilthey called a nexus) in which all past existents are 'connected' by the historian (Dilthey 2002, p. 9).

So, while we can explore as Ethington says, how time 'is metaphorically represented as a spatial passing', perhaps more importantly we need to ask the practical question, how do historians use 'order', 'duration' and 'frequency' to 'time' the past? I do not have time or space (no pun intended) here to do that but I recommend we attend to Paul Ricoeur and in particular the narrativist theorist Seymour Chatman. Along with Ricoeur, Chatman suggests that what I would call the temporal turn pervades every feature of writing history, noting in particular the timing of emplotment in terms of 'beginning, middle and end'.² As Chatman says, this works pretty well in fiction but it cannot organise past reality because reality can never know where it is on the beginning, middle and end spectrum (Chatman 1978, pp. 46–47). Hence an always inaccessible past has to be constructed.

What I think is the central issue in history is what Ricoeur talks about as '...the definitively aporetic character of the phenomenology of time' by which I think he means that time is always beyond our understanding (Ricoeur 1987, pp. 83–4). The upshot is that history exists only through the act(s) of overcoming this 'aporia' that Ricoeur understands to be the principal function of our narrative making. Ricoeur argues that the nature of time is made 'understandable' only through the intervention/invention of what we already know as the emplotment and our constructed timing of the past.

This means that in history we can only have what Ricoeur calls the 'fictive experience of time' in which '...the discordances between the temporal features of the events in the diegesis and the corresponding features in the narrative' are resolved (Ricoeur 1981, p. 186). The empirical dimension remains untouched but the central point about history is revealed: the fictive understanding of time is a textual 'virtual reality'. It is,

significantly, also a reversal of 'real time' where the 'now' anticipates the future as negotiated by our knowledge of the past.

Ethington concludes that rather than revisit the matter of 'what is history?' he has posed a more basic one: What is Time? The answer has led him to evaluate the nature of space and place—the metric and metaphoric spatiality of experience. I have no problem with this undertaking. Indeed I commend it and I believe it is a valuable start on the path he has set himself. I will look forward to the next steps. But, it seems to me that if Ethington is correct and history *takes place* within the spaces of time the need is now to acknowledge that the formal empirical understanding of time of 'A-series historians' and the positivist considerations of 'B-series historians' need to be rethought. It requires rethinking in light of the idea that history takes place within the construction of its narrative. In terms of the phenomenology of time our only experience of it is '*in history*'.

There is much delightful intractability in time and history. The past is not a former 'present' that can be recaptured through tried and tested empirical means. The past remains, ontologically, an invented (fictive might be a less pejorative description) narrative representation which we choose to call history. While the past may have been 'real' it is not now 'actual'. Only the present and what we do with it count in creating history (intention in distension?). This does not do away with memory or the data stream. Indeed, memory is always invoked when we try to escape the present. But ultimately we cannot escape the present because it is an infinitely small yet eternal point of 'becoming'. It is for this reason that the present always forecloses on the past. The past can only have any utility to us when memory, present cognition and anticipation engage. It is for this reason that the past, while it once existed—for we have the empirical evidence that can assist in 'bringing it to mind'—it remains only an effect of history. And it is for this reason that the past exists 'virtually' only as a narrative. And it is how we construct that narrative that determines the nature of our use of time and space.

Notes

- [1] The text *Narrative Discourse* by Gérard Genette (1983), and his response to criticisms of the book in his 1990 *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, offers the most well-known and still the most systematic theory of narrative available.
- [2] Unsurprisingly, perhaps, a recent analysis of the history of time in the work of historians managed to completely ignore the functioning of narrative in the 'timing' of history. See Smail (2005).

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REPLY

Philip J. Ethington

I'm very tempted to acknowledge and admire each of the many excellent ideas that my colleagues have written in response to my essay, but a dire shortage of page space impels me instead to reply to the toughest challenges they have posed. Both the supportive and the skeptical comments, however, have already put me in their debt.

Beyond this short reply, I plan to repay that debt through my ongoing work on a larger project that bears brief mention here. As I developed 'Placing the Past' over the last several years, I was gradually forced to excise crucial chapter-sized themes, which have grown now into two separate essays, neither of which were seen by the commentators. I now conceive 'Placing the Past' as the first of three in a linked series of essays. The second is primarily concerned with the ways that two visual forms of expression—photography and cartography—are linked, via the concept and practice of 'perspective,' to the lived place-worlds of the past and the present. The third essay, also forthcoming, is a review and critique of the growing body of historical scholarship that has been influenced by the spatial turn. 'Placing the Past' attempts to launch this series by executing the most basic of my tasks, which is to outline a historian's theory of time and the past that begins with a critique of the metaphorical treatment of time by the founding generation of historicists, phenomenologists, and pragmatists (*circa* 1880s–1920s).

Alun Munslow begins his response with an apology for the lack of sustained attention paid by historians to the philosophy of time. Its 'complexity as a historical problem' makes it 'too difficult to deal with for most jobbing historians,' and its 'apparent simplicity as a measure of "elapsed time" between events,' makes 'dealing with it unnecessary.' David Carr, quoting Augustine, partially agrees with Munslow. He rightly points out that

it is too much to task modern historians to solve the ‘Augustinian question “what is time?”,’ which has puzzled philosophers for millennia, ‘before they can say anything meaningful about the past.’ Carr’s point is well taken regarding certain passages of my essay. I am not expecting historians to solve ancient philosophical puzzles, however; still less do I think that I have. Rather, I expect historians to learn from the philosophers of time, and to be able to articulate, theoretically, the basic operational categories crucial to their craft. We have been through many theoretical revolutions since the 1960s, so I cannot excuse my fellow historians for their lack of engagement in the philosophy of time so easily as Munslow does. Especially in light of the growing enthusiasm among historians for the spatial turn, which automatically begs the question of time, historians have a responsibility at least to familiarize themselves with the key elements of the philosophy of time.

The sheer disproportionality between the scores of books and articles written in the last two decades by non-philosophers on the question ‘what is space?’ and the near total absence of such on the question ‘what is time?’ is the imbalance I find so revealing. If space and place are so accessible as theoretical topics for geographers, film scholars, anthropologists, and others, then why is time so difficult for historians? It is not enough to observe, as Munslow does, that historians have said many insightful things *en passant* about the nature of space and time. Before the writings by Foucault, Bachelard, Lefebvre, Soja, Harvey, Tuan, and Casey opened a vast dialogue on space and place, the very same objections could have been raised: these terms were too complex philosophically but simple enough for everyday use. Thanks to their labors, however, ‘jobbing historians’ now have greater access to the deep philosophical questions concerning space and place. Most crucially, we have been liberated from the ‘apparent simplicity’ that these concepts once seemed to offer. The apparent simplicity of a linear time sequence (decisively dismantled a full century ago by the very accessible Henri Bergson) is altogether too comforting. In my view, a discipline that cannot face its most defining feature is in need of intensive therapy, beginning with the most obvious symptoms of avoidance, denial, and yes, displacement.

But Munslow has a larger purpose, which is to shift the discussion back from time, place, space, and mapping, to ‘language as the only way to engage with reality.’ Edward Dimendberg similarly asks, ‘how can we discover, interpret, and debate any feature of spacetime without language?’ Both Munslow and Dimendberg raise the flag of narrative at the outer limit (I am tempted to say, ‘along the walls’) of historical knowledge. Munslow, who has written extensively on history as narrative, says far more on this subject than I can adequately address, except to say that I share his admiration for Paul Ricoeur, and do agree that narratives structure the

human experience of time. Our difference really comes down to the ontology of 'the past.' Munslow insists that 'the past exists "virtually" only as a narrative. And it is how we construct that narrative that determines the nature of our use of time and space.' I insist that the past is literally a place, and that mapping is not reducible to narrative.

In many respects we are talking past each other, a phenomenon most pronounced in Dimendberg's critique, which seems to have been written in response to the buttons I pushed rather than to my actual words. Dimendberg drags in the red herring of 'physics as a standard of human knowledge grounded in a realist ontology,' and invokes the bogey of 'the objectivity of an alleged independent reality.' I make no such claims, and in fact, am at pains to reject them myself. But for the fact that the other respondents understood my essay so well, I would take full responsibility for being so completely misread. I am grateful in this regard to David Carr, whose succinct redaction of my argument and my position vis-à-vis the linguistic turn is spot on.

Rather than reiterate the talking-past cycle, I want to observe what I find most telling about both the Munslow and Dimendberg responses. Both clearly assume that historians are limited to lexical forms of expression. Dimendberg, a film scholar, is perfectly aware that, as semiotic genres, photographic and other pictorial forms of representation differ fundamentally from the grammatical structure of natural language. Films as a whole usually follow narrative conventions, but here I want to emphasize still images, the grammar of which is comprised of juxtaposition, interplay, networks of suggested affiliations, connotation, and denotation. Light, shadow, and color produce contrast gradients, points, lines, and shapes, and very little of this has anything to do with linguistic form. Cartography, like all visual arts, is a visual ordering of symbols, the critical reading of which requires methods developed largely by art historians, such as Erwin Panofsky's 'iconology.' But, unlike the linear strings of words that form sentences and successive paragraphs, no map, no photograph, and no painting can guarantee a single entry point and a single sequential path for the reader/viewer. Think of a map in the *Atlas Maior* (1662–1672) by Joan Blaeu, replete with dazzling cartouches bursting with allegorical figures, compass roses, and other eye-catchers. All of its elements can indeed, as Dimendberg observes, 'suggest directionality, causality, hierarchy,' and can 'imply narrative.' But these features are a far cry from the kinds of narrative 'emplotment' that Hayden White developed analytically.

Narratologists should be aware that the noun 'plot' originated in mid-16th-century English (initially synonymous with 'plat') as 'a fairly small piece of ground,' then as 'a map, a plan, a scheme,' and later, in the 17th century, was increasingly applied to literary works, in what can be seen

from historical usage as attempts to *map* (or ‘plat’) those works (‘plot, n,’ *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, accessed 2007). We have only begun to imagine how to read a place; we have only begun to see what maps can accomplish, as Casey makes so clear in his marvelous exploration *Earth-Mapping* (2005).

My point is not at all that maps are objective, neutral, or privileged forms of expression, as Dimendberg charges. Quite the opposite: I say that they are perspectival. But Dimendberg is not alone in his skepticism about my theses on mapping the past. Thomas Bender and Edward Casey also raise objections, using surprisingly restricted definitions of ‘map.’ I want to open the range of mapping far beyond the conventional sense of cartography as an accurate depiction of the locatable social and natural features of Earth’s surface.

For this purpose I heartily welcome the suggestions by Bender, Casey, and Carr. While these three are clearly my friendly critics, they also find much to question in ‘Placing the Past.’ Thomas Bender makes a compelling case that ‘Placing the Past’ is too static, urging me to recover my balance between space and time so that I can adequately accommodate what he calls ‘the mobility of history.’ Bender doubts that cartography can represent this motion because ‘without narrative history is denied motion.’ His unsparing critique makes me realize that I have not given enough attention in my theory to mapping the actions that leave traces and make the places of the past. Casey’s admonitions against excessively extending the meaning of both ‘mapping’ and ‘*topos*’ are actually surprising, for the author of *Earth-Mapping*. In response to both authors’ objections, it should be said first that the cartographic representation of time, action, and change is a poorly developed aspect of map making. Torsten Hägerstrand (1982), however, contributed brilliantly to this goal, and Henri Lefebvre (2004) tried to invent a field of ‘rhythmanalysis.’¹

I am currently developing what I hope will be a much richer set of methods for representing time, change, and action in pictorial maps, for my work-in-progress, a global history of Los Angeles since 1542. This work, called *Ghost Metropolis*, is a hybrid of typography, cartography, and photography. In it, I tell multiple narratives in lexical form, about the social, cultural, political dimensions of the city’s development, as a place, and as an intersection of global places. I narrate the mutual interaction of Los Angeles places with Mexican, East African, Japanese, English and Spanish, and many other places. Casey asks, ‘Why select mapping rather than writing?’ Why indeed! My written stories are inscribed into the visual fabric of the work, just as the multiple narratives of individuals and groups are inscribed into places, and vice versa. In *Ghost Metropolis* I use cartographic overlays of time-coded events, photographic juxtapositions,

and intentional time-discontinuity between adjacent maps to tell cartographic and photographic narratives as well as 'written' ones. As both a cartographer and a photographer, I employ visual vocabularies and grammars to expand the historiographical tool set.

To develop a historical method of mapping the past I have found (formal) inspiration in the great atlases of the European early modern era, typified but not limited to those by Abraham Ortelius, Gerardus Mercator, and Joan Blaeu. These works, unencumbered by considerations of genre (the word 'cartography' was not even coined until 1859), were thickly crowded with verbal exposition in the form of ethnographies, chorographies, narrative histories, travelers' accounts, and wild speculation, in sensuous typography, sharing page space with maps and other pictorial representations. Among many exemplars for this urban historian is the vast project begun in Spain in 1575 under Philip II to 'map' every Spanish town, revealingly titled '*Relaciones histórico-geográfico-topográficas*' (Kagan 1988, p. 121). Giuliana Bruno's recent *Atlas of Emotion* (2002) is a fitting 21st-century counterpart, which reinserts filmic representation into this great multi-genre tradition. I should hardly need to mention the vast atlas of the Internet, which affords extensive experimentation, such as the 'Urban Icons' project I conducted with Vanessa Schwartz (Ethington & Schwartz 2006).² Through a 21st-century reinvention of the 'map' and the 'atlas,' I believe that we can implement what Thomas Bender describes in his account of Actor–Network Theory, if mapping can be rethought in part as an exercise in the topology of a vast global field of *topoi*.

Edward Casey offers a marvelous riff on my essay, proposing that '*boundaries are where places happen*' (italics in original). I'm very enthusiastic about this amendment to my thesis, along with his concept of 'boundary events'—a term which, coincidentally, my graduate advisee Michan Connor seems to have coined independently. Casey's convincing distinction between 'borders' and 'boundaries' rightly puts the emphasis on the periphery of any place as the dynamo of historical development. However, his preference for the term 'border' to denote official lines and for 'boundaries' to denote the porous site of interaction runs counter to widespread usage, in which 'borderlands' has come to mean just his sense of peripherality, or *mestizaje*, where the most interesting processes occur. The prototype is the US–Mexican borderland, which has never stanchd the flow of people, goods, and culture. Whichever term—border or boundary—that we settle upon, the distinction is of enormous value toward the reinvention of mapping.

Finally, I humbly stand corrected by David Carr regarding my use of Robert J. Dostal's essay in my characterization in one passage, of Kant,

Husserl, and Heidegger on time as a background. Dostal makes a compelling case that Husserl and Heidegger shared a conviction about the transcendence of time. Kant's account of time presents another kind of transcendence, and I carelessly conflated what I see as their common belief in the transcendence of time with historians' common assumption that time is a background.

In conclusion, I am delighted that my decision to expose this 'groundwork' to critical review at an early stage has provoked such a valuable array of responses. My greatest hope, however, is that this exchange will stimulate some historians to re-examine their own presumptions about time and the possibilities of historical representation of the past, to join more as contributors than as consumers, and take a little of their time to the spatial turn.

Notes

- [1] 'We need to rise up from the flat map with its static patterns,' Hägerstrand (1982) writes, 'and think in terms of a world on the move, a world of incessant permutations. We need to have concepts which are able to relate events that happen to the strivings for purpose and meaning that we know are hidden behind many of them' (pp. 651–622). I am committed to realizing Hägerstrand's vision, so elegantly put.
- [2] To which Edward Dimendberg contributed a fine paper on Reyner Banham's brilliant 1972 BBC documentary, *Reyner Banham Loves Los Angeles*.

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